

**STUDENT HANDBOOK  
MIDDLE SCHOOL DIVISION  
GRADES 5-8**

**Our Lady of Mercy Academy**

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Revised 9-07

***A STUDENT'S PRAYER***

*Come Holy Spirit, great Teacher and Guide  
be with me as I begin this new school year.*

*I ask You to please help me...study hard, learn much,  
make new friends, respect my teachers, and help my classmates.*

*Walk with me, Holy Spirit, and lead the way.  
Shine through me and deepen my faith so that everyone I meet  
this year may know that I am Your follower and friend.*

*Amen*

## **STUDENT CODE OF ETHICS**

We, the Middle School Students of Our Lady of Mercy Academy, will endeavor to act in a charitable, Christ-like manner by:

1. Observing school rules.
2. Being honest.
3. Recognizing the value and uniqueness of others.
4. Respecting school property and the property of others.
5. Coming to class on time; prepared and ready to learn.
6. Continuing to maintain a drug and alcohol free environment.
7. Fostering school pride and spirit.

We believe that all students have a right to be educated in an environment free from fear and intimidation. As students of Our Lady of Mercy Academy, we strive to build a caring community that supports individual diversity and encourages each student to take actions that will make our school a better place. We believe that bullying and harassment are wrong and promise not to be bystanders. If we see bullying or harassment occurring, we will take a stand by saying something.

## **POLICIES**

The Middle School Division of Our Lady of Mercy Academy School follows the general school policies and Code of Discipline as set forth in the Parent Handbook. In addition, the following policies have been developed specifically for Middle School.

### **MORNING GATHERING/HOMEROOM**

The teacher on duty will open the doors to Building Three at 7:50 a.m. for students in grades 5-8. All students will wait in the hallway outside the classroom until the 8:00 a.m. bell. No student may enter the classroom without a supervisor present.

### **LOCKER USE**

Lockers are provided for grades 6-8 and will be assigned by the homeroom teacher. While OLMA respects the right of privacy, lockers are the property of the school. Therefore, OLMA reserves the right to open any locker in any situation deemed an emergency by the school. OLMA prohibits students from sharing combinations and insists that all lockers remain locked. Students are not permitted to store their books on top of the lockers.

### **HALLWAY CONDUCT**

Students should change classes with a minimum of noise and should speak in a low voice when changing classes. Please keep to the right when walking in the hallways. Running in the hallways is not permitted.

## **BULLYING**

OLMA has established a “NO-BULLYING” policy. Our Christian values teach us to respect others, regardless of our differences. Serious disciplinary action will be taken against any student found to engage in bullying practices of any kind.

Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Examples of bullying include,

- punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically;
- spreading bad rumors about others;
- keeping certain people out of a “group”;
- teasing people in a mean way;
- getting certain people to “gang up” on others;
- sending mean text, email, or instant messages;
- posting nasty pictures or messages about others in blogs or on web sites;
- using someone else’s user name to spread rumors or lies about someone.

We encourage any student who becomes aware of another student being bullied to report it to a teacher or the principal immediately. Many students who are bullied are scared to tell an adult for fear that the situation will get worse.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework constitutes 20-25% of your marking period grade. All assignments are to be completed neatly in the format requested by the individual teacher. Each subject may have different requirements regarding homework. You will be informed at the beginning of the term or at the beginning of an assignment as to what is expected of you. It is your responsibility to write everything down in your assignment pad and to check it upon completion of the assignment.

A “No Homework” slip will be issued to a student who fails to complete assigned work. On the 1<sup>st</sup> day following the missed assignment, you must return the slip signed by your parent along with the missed work. If the form and homework are not returned the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, a personal detention will be given and a notice to your parents will be issued for chronic failure to hand in your homework.

If you fail to hand-in a major project on time, your teacher will deduct five points for each day from the final project grade. Once the project grade falls below 70, it becomes an automatic failure and will not be accepted by the teacher.

NEVER be afraid to ask a teacher for “extra help.” All teachers will provide after school assistance at least two days each week. Additional assistance will be arranged by appointment at the convenience of all concerned.

## **DISCIPLINE**

A central detention day has been established for students whose behavior inside and outside the classroom (i.e. in the cafeteria, hallways, on the bus, field trips, playground, special subject classes, etc.) does not meet the standards outlined in this handbook. Detention is held from 2:30 - 3:15 p.m. and is supervised by a Middle School teacher. Detention notices will be given no later than Tuesday of the week in which the detention should be served. These notices must be signed and returned to the person assigning the detention. Should you receive three central detentions in one marking period, one of your parents will be required to meet with the principal before you are permitted to return to class.

Detention plays a necessary role in the disciplinary actions of the school. Its intent is to teach a student who violates the rules of the school to accept responsibility for his or her actions. Therefore, all detentions must be served. Under certain circumstances and at the teacher's discretion, the detention may be served on an alternate date.

## **INDIVIDUAL REPORTING SYSTEM (IRS)**

In order to enable you to achieve self-discipline and to modify or change inappropriate behavior, OLMA has an individual reporting system for students in grades 5-8. Under the system, the student placed on IRS is given an assignment book and is required to report to the principal at the end of each day for 10, 15, or 20 consecutive days. Each day the student must acquire signatures from all his/her teachers and other supervisors to certify acceptable behavior and completion of work. The teacher or supervisor will indicate a negative response if you arrive to class unprepared or exhibit inappropriate behavior.

IRS is divided into groups of five (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 days). A negative response results in a detention and a return to the first day of the previous group. On the third negative response, the student is assigned a one day in-school suspension.

In school suspension hours are 8:15 to 3:15 p.m. A student may not participate in any school activities while on in-school suspension. During the in-school suspended day, the student must complete teacher assigned work and written punitive assignments. All missed classroom assignments and homework must be completed at home before reporting to school the next morning.

Any student who accrues more than three in-school suspensions during the school year automatically is suspended from school and will not be readmitted without a parent conference. That student is also placed on probation for the remainder of the school year. Subsequent infractions may qualify the student for a letter of dismissal.

## **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

Formal suspension is a serious disciplinary action taken by the school authorities against a student whose actions constitute a major disciplinary infraction and are contrary to the good order of the entire school community. There are two types of suspension:

1. Denial of School Privileges (Out of School Suspension)
2. Denial of Class Privileges (In-school Suspension)

When a student's behavior warrants suspension, the principal will inform the parents and seek immediate cooperation in a corrective program. Should a student receive a formal suspension, he/she is liable for dismissal. Major discipline infractions consist of:

- a) Continued and willful disobedience;
- b) Open defiance of authority;
- c) Conduct of such character as to constitute a continuing danger to the physical well-being of other people;
- d) Physical assault of another pupil or upon any teacher or other school employee;
- e) Taking or attempting to take personal property or money from another pupil/adult;
- f) Threatening the use of physical force to obtain money or personal property from another pupil/adult;
- g) Willfully causing or attempting to cause a substantial damage to school property;
- h) Using or passing on alcohol, tobacco, or any form of drugs, or insinuating a transaction of any contraband;
- i) Immorality;
- j) Habitual use of derogatory language.

## **ABSENCES**

In the event of an absence, a note of explanation signed by your parent or guardian is required on the day you return to school. Each student has a responsibility to be in school daily. Parents who schedule vacation outside of the school vacation calendar assume responsibility for their children's studies during their absence.

While teachers may provide parents with an overview of projected coursework, they are not responsible for providing lessons that have not yet been covered in class.

If you are ill enough to be home, you may be too ill to concentrate on schoolwork. However, parents may request assignments through the school office by 10:00am. These assignments may be picked up after 2:30 on the bench outside the nurses' office by a sibling or a fellow classmate.

Each student will have a homework "buddy" to check on class work and assignments missed during an absence from school. Students **MUST** complete all missed assignments. You are allowed twice the number of days absent to complete your missed work. In extraordinary circumstances, your teachers may make specific arrangements with you.

## **EXAMS**

Final exams (covering material taught during the third Trimester) will be administered in the following subjects: Spanish, Science, Religion, Math, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, and Reading/Literature. Two exams, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, will be administered each morning. Final exam grades will constitute 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the third Trimester average.

## **GRADING**

On your report card, you will notice that some subjects are graded with letters while others are graded using numbers. Grades for Music, Art, Physical Education/Health, Library & Computer Education are expressed as O, S, I and U. All academic subjects including Spanish are graded according to the following code:

A<sup>+</sup> = 97-100

A = 92-96

B<sup>+</sup> = 88-91

B = 83-87

C<sup>+</sup> = 78-82

C = 73-77

D = 70-72

U = Below 70 Failure

The assessment of your personal development and study habits is noted as O, S, I, & U.

If your work becomes unsatisfactory or in need of improvement after the middle of a marking period, your parents will receive a phone call from your teacher who will follow up with a formal progress report.

In most cases, your grades for each marking period will be based on the following criteria:

- Tests: 20%
- Quizzes: 20%
- Homework: 20%
- Classwork: 20%
- Extended Assignments/Projects: 20%

## **HONOR ROLL**

An "I" or "U" anywhere on your report card will keep you off the Honor Roll. The following are the Middle School Honor Roll criteria: Highest Honors--All A<sup>+</sup>s: First Honors--No grade lower than A: Second Honors--No grade lower than B+: Attitude Honor Roll: 5 or more Outstanding grades in Personal Development.

## **PROMOTION/RETENTION POLICY**

Any student who fails two or more major academic subjects for the year is a candidate for retention. He/she will be required to show proof of completion of a summer remediation program administered by a bona fide agency or tutor.

In addition, the student will be placed on academic probation for the first marking period of the new school year and must pass all academic subjects. A student who does not meet this requirement will be given the option either to withdraw or return to the previous grade level.

Any student who fails three or more major academic subjects for the year is a candidate for dismissal.

## **ENRICHMENT PROGRAM FOR LITERATURE**

### **Grade 6**

All sixth grade students will take an Introduction to Literature course during their first semester. For the second semester, they will study literature in either a standard or an enrichment program. The goal of both these programs is to help students become articulate readers who can distinguish between mediocre and superior writing. Students will be placed in an appropriate group during the second semester of the sixth grade.

The enrichment curriculum is designed for students who are strong in reading and who enjoy active participation in the classroom, as well as extensive reading and writing assignments.

## **ACADEMIC HONORS PROGRAM CRITERIA**

### **Grades 7 & 8**

To be eligible for initial assignment in an Academic Honors Program, a student must meet all of the following criteria:

- ❑ Standardized Test Scores indicate that the students are in the top 20% of their class in both mathematics and reading;
- ❑ Subject Final Averages in both mathematics and reading must be no lower than B;
- ❑ A committee of teachers must recommend honors placement. The committee will base its recommendation on the student's:
  - a) Standardized test scores and final averages;
  - b) Ability to work independently;
  - c) Demonstration of a positive, serious attitude toward learning.

Students will be re-evaluated at the end of the first marking period and at the end of the year. If, in the judgment of the teachers, a student's classroom performance during the first marking period warrants a program reassignment, it will occur after parent notification. No further student reassignments will be made after the first marking period. Please note: On "extra help" days an honor student may occasionally require teacher clarification on a concept, assignment, etc. However, an honor student should not need on-going "tutoring." This idea will be factored into the Teacher Committee's decision for placement and/or reassignment of a student.

## **DRESS CODE**

The Middle School follows the general dress code as outlined in the Parent Handbook. Please review this and be aware of the requirements. The Middle School also has additional requirements that are not included in the Parent Handbook:

1. Girls' skirts may be no shorter than 2" above the knee and may not be "rolled;"
2. Boys' pants must be worn at the waist and may not touch the floor;
3. Religious crosses or medals are the only form of necklaces permitted and small posts are the only type of earring that may be worn;
4. Fingernails must be neatly trimmed at the fingertips. Only clear or pale nail polish is permitted;
5. Bleached, dyed, tinted or streaked hair is strictly forbidden;
6. Girls may use natural lip gloss only;
7. No eye makeup is permitted;

8. Girls may use navy or neutral colored “scrunchies” to pull hair back in a ponytail. Standard size headbands are permitted. Ski bands are not.
9. Gum chewing is not permitted.

All students must adhere to this dress code. Any student in violation will be issued a “no uniform” slip and their parents will be notified.

### **TEXTBOOKS AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

All textbooks must have a clean and neat cover at all times. Failure to do so will result in a book fine of 25 cents; and if the situation becomes chronic, a personal detention will be given. Teachers will hold periodic book checks to ensure that the textbooks are properly maintained.

Each teacher will provide a supply list on “Fly-Up Day” and on the first day of class. In order to conserve paper and to cut down on the number of notebooks you carry, we suggest purchasing 3 or 5-subject notebooks or loose-leaf binders that can be divided into specific subject areas. Marble composition notebooks may be required for labs in science and composition. Among the supplies needed for each class are an assignment pad (purchased through the school), loose-leaf/theme paper, an eight pocket folder, a zippered pencil case, erasable ball-point pens, sharpened pencils, a pen, a highlighter, a set of markers. In addition, students in grades 5 and 6 will need a 6” ruler (metric/inches), a compass and a protractor.

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The use of personal electronic devices during school is prohibited. These include but are not limited to, cell phones, iPods/MP3 players, CD players, video games and laptop computers. While cell phone use is prohibited, students may keep a cell phone turned off in their locker or backpack, at their own risk, for use after school. If a student is found using a cell phone without an adult supervisor’s permission during school hours, the following will apply: **First Offenders** will have their phones confiscated and returned to them at the end of the school day; **Second Offenders** will have their cell phones confiscated, assigned a detention, and their parent will be required to pick-up the device. **Third Offenders** will be placed on in-school suspension, the device will be confiscated, and their parent will be required to pick it up. For any subsequent offenses, students will be liable for suspension and/or dismissal. OLMA is not responsible for the loss of any cell phone or any other personal electronic device.

### **COMPUTER USE**

OLMA has established guidelines on computer usage during school hours and during the After School Program. Computer use is limited to research assigned by a teacher for homework or special projects. In addition, students may access additional sites that have been approved by the school. Both parents and students are required to sign an Internet Usage Agreement with the school.

## **USE, POSSESSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES**

### **Definitions:**

Controlled Dangerous Substances are defined in sections I through V of the NJ Criminal Code. They include, but are not limited to: marijuana, heroin and anabolic steroids. The term controlled dangerous substance shall also include alcohol.

Under the Influence: A student is judged to be under the influence whenever she/he exhibits physical or physiological symptoms (including but limited to unsteady walk, dilated pupils, slurred speech, erratic or uncharacteristic emotional reactions) which are commonly associated with the use of controlled dangerous substances.

Possession is defined as knowingly or purposely obtaining or possessing, actively or \*constructively, a controlled dangerous substance or drug paraphernalia: a) on or off school property; b) on the person; c) in an accessory (including but limited to purse, book bag, gym bag or knapsack); d) in a locker or desk; and e) in a privately or school-owned vehicle.

- \* Constructive possession refers to a student who intends or has the capacity to exercise control over the drug/paraphernalia even if s/he does not have physical possession of the item. For example, anyone who hides drugs on school property or asks a classmate to hold drugs for him/her, constructively possesses the drug.

Distribution is defined as sharing, selling, or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance a) on or off school property; b) with or without receiving payment; and c) to individuals enrolled or not enrolled in the school.

Possession with Intent to Distribute applies regardless of whether or not a student intended a) to receive payment; b) to distribute the controlled dangerous substance to an individual enrolled or not enrolled in school; and c) to distribute the controlled dangerous substance on or off school property.

### **Policy:**

1. A student shall be considered in violation of school policy if s/he is observed a) to be under the influence; b) in possession; c) engaged in distribution, or d) have possession of a controlled dangerous substance.
2. Such a student shall be subject to the following provisions and to the general discipline policy stated in this Handbook. a) When a student is identified as being "under the influence" or "in possession" of a controlled dangerous substance, the principal MAY refer the matter to local law enforcement officials; b) when a student is identified as "distributing" or "in possession with intent to distribute" a controlled dangerous substance, the principal MUST refer the matter to local law enforcement officials.
3. A student suspected of violating the policy governing controlled dangerous substances will be immediately placed under suspension for an indefinite period. The student and parents/guardians shall be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegation as quickly as possible.

4. If the principal determines that there a) was no violation of policy, b) was a violation of policy, the principal may discipline the student according to the general discipline policy stated in this Handbook up to and including expulsion.
5. The principal may require the student to participate in an appropriate treatment or counseling program as condition of the student's eventual return to school.
6. When violation of this policy involves "distribution" or possession with intent to distribute of a controlled dangerous substance, the student will be expelled immediately and the local law enforcement officials will be notified.

***Middle school lays the foundation for high school. All of your teachers are here to guide you through these important, formative years. By cooperating with them, doing your best, studying hard and following the rules and regulations in this handbook; you will be prepared and confident for your freshman year.***

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND ALL YOUR EFFORTS!**