

MOUNT MERCY ACADEMY
PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

2008-2009



88 Red Jacket Parkway
Buffalo, NY 14220

Mission Statement

Mount Mercy Academy, a distinctively Catholic college preparatory high school, is dedicated to educating young women for academic excellence, compassionate service, Christian leadership, global awareness and life-long learning. Rooted in Catherine's McAuley's unique vision for women and those who are poor, Mount Mercy Academy affirms the uniqueness and dignity of individuals and fosters faith with a commitment to the challenges of building a just society.

Statement of Philosophy

Mount Mercy Academy is a Catholic, private, college preparatory high school for young women, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Regional Community of Buffalo, and dedicated to carrying out its educational mission in the spirit of Catherine McAuley. Rooted in Gospel values, Mount Mercy Academy is dedicated to educating young women of all cultural and economic backgrounds by providing an excellent academic curriculum and extra-curricular program.

The faculty and staff work in collaboration with the Sisters of Mercy, the Board of Trustees, parents, students, alumnae and friends to create a faith community which values the deepening of spirituality, hospitality, and the dignity of each person. Through dedication and professional competence, the Academy strives to impact the hallmarks of a Mercy education – academic excellence, dedication to Christian values, leadership, commitment to service and family in partnership.

Education at Mount Mercy is seen within the context of the whole person. Emphasis is placed on creating challenging opportunities for growth in spirit, mind and body. As true bearers of mercy and members of the global community, Mount Mercy strives to educate young women to proclaim justice, to accept and respect the diversity of all people and to respond to the needs of others and to all creation with compassion.

BELIEF (VALUE) STATEMENTS

Reverence for the dignity of each person –

We recognize that all of humanity is made in the image and likeness of God and we believe that each person is called to embrace his/her own holiness as a manifestation of the sacredness of human life.

Catholic education –

We cherish education rooted in the traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church and focus on the promotion of spiritual, intellectual and physical growth of our students and their families.

Excellence –

We believe that education at Mount Mercy Academy should be consistent with and reflect the hallmarks of excellence integral to a Mercy education.

Integrity –

We seek to maintain a nurturing atmosphere, balanced with a moral and spiritual code of conduct that is rooted in Gospel values, challenging the school community to be people of faith, prayer, knowledge, integrity and compassion.

Justice –

We develop leaders committed to social justice through Christian service to their communities.

Empowerment-

We seek to empower young women to address the social and cultural milieu of our diverse society within the global community.

Family in Partnership –

We honor the role of parent/guardians as the primary educators of their children by fostering collaborative efforts with families, administration, faculty, staff, alumnae, the Board of Trustees and the Sisters of Mercy.

PROFILE OF A MOUNT MERCY ACADEMY GRADUATE

- A woman of compassionate service
- A woman who is respectful towards herself and others
 - A woman who is articulate
- A woman who strives for excellence in all that she does
- A woman who is empowered to take her place in the world

**MOUNT MERCY ACADEMY
PARENT* HANDBOOK
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Our faculty and staff warmly welcome you to a new school year. We are privileged to assist your daughter(s) in developing spiritually and academically into Women of Mercy. Mount Mercy Academy was established by the Sisters of Mercy In 1904. This academy continues, under the sponsorship of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, New York Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community to take its place in the educational mission of the Church as a Catholic secondary school dedicated to imparting and affirming the message of the Gospel.

Our educational program is directed toward the total development of each student. A variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities broadens the education of the whole person, Integrating spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and social aspects so as to prepare each student to become a mature Christian woman, In the words of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, Mother Catherine McAuley, "perfect in her place", both here and hereafter.

TIPS FOR PARENTS OF MOUNT MERCY STUDENTS

In order that your daughter may be successful at Mount Mercy Academy, It is vitally important that home and school work closely together. We strongly urge all parents to read this handbook carefully and to become familiar with the opportunities presented at Mercy as well as the responsibilities required of each student. As an appendix to this Parent Handbook is the complete "Student Handbook", found in your daughter's Student Agenda, which includes all of the policy of the school for the coming year. Please encourage your daughter to become familiar with all of Mercy's policies.

We encourage you to refer regularly to your daughter's Activities Calendar so that you are aware of the multitude of events that are part of Mercy. Please read carefully all communications mailed from the school or available on the school website at www.mtmercy.org. Feel free to call the school if you have any questions.

Many of the questions about Mount Mercy are about ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE, FIELD TRIPS and HEALTH SERVICES. Please pay special attention to these sections in the Student Handbook appendix.

ACTIVITIES

A full range of activities is offered to complete the high school experience. We hope you will encourage your daughter to be involved in at least one school activity apart from her academic courses to:

- have fun and meet new friends
- find out more about her own maturing interests and abilities
- meet teachers in another setting
- explore opportunities to learn about different careers

ORGANIZATIONS THAT DEVELOP STUDENTS' CREATIVE, LITERARY and JOURNALISTIC TALENTS

Madrigal - literary publication
Merciette - newspaper

Mercienne - yearbook

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT BUILD LEADERSHIP AND PROVIDE SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Art Club
Spanish Club
French Club
Latin Club

National Honor Society
Student Government
Student Relations Board

SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE SCHOOL - CAMPUS MINISTRY

Lenten and Advent Masses
Reconciliation Services
Eucharistic Ministers
Class Retreats
Catholic Charities

Ministers of the Word
Communion and Prayer Services
Mother-Daughter Masses
Class Masses

*Throughout these handbooks the use of the word "Parent" refers to the parent, parents or legal guardian responsible for a Mount Mercy Academy student.

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT DEVELOP PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Drama Club
Mock Trial

Freshman and Women's Chorus
Model United Nations

Magic Belles
Pure Magic

CLUBS THAT EMPHASIZE SOCIAL ACTION and COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Environmental Club
Students Against Destructive Decisions (S.A.D.D.)

Mercy Outreach

ACTIVITIES THAT ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK, SPORTSMANSHIP AND ATHLETIC SKILLS

Interscholastic Sports - The Monsignor Martin League
Fall: Cross Country Soccer Swimming Volleyball Golf
Winter: Basketball Bowling
Spring: Lacrosse Softball Tennis Track

Club: Downhill Skiing

SPECIAL EVENTS AT MOUNT MERCY

Baccalaureate Liturgy
Field Trips
Honors Assembly
Meet the Teacher Night
Open House
Student Government Dance

Commencement
Holiday Dance
Junior Ring Day Liturgy
Mercy-Timon Musical
Proms

Father-Daughter Dance
McAuley Auction
Mother-Daughter Masses
Spirit Week

The development of leadership qualities and a well-rounded personality is fostered by the interaction experienced during these shared activities. As parents, you are encouraged to support your daughter's interest in school activities and to be present on occasions of importance to her.

ATTENDANCE (See Student Handbook)

Regular school attendance is necessary for scholastic progress. The school day begins at 7:59 AM and runs through 2:38 PM. Parents are asked not to permit absence from school for trivial reasons. Absence from school without parental consent constitutes truancy.

Parents are asked to call the Attendance Office (825-8796 Ext. 216) before 8:15 to notify Mercy that you daughter will not be in school. Messages may be left on the answering machine. **For each absence, your daughter, upon returning to school, must bring in a dated and signed excuse explaining the reason for the absence.** If it is known in advance that a student will be absent on a particular day, her parent is asked to report this in writing before that day.

Students who are tardy to school because of a medical appointment must bring the appointment card to school as verification. Failure to do so will result in a demerit and an unexcused tardy on the student's attendance record.

Extended Absence Policy - Absences from school for an extended period of time for non-medical reasons are considered unexcused absences. As such, teachers are not required to provide assignments, make-up tests or extra tutoring to make up for missed instruction.

ACCESSIBILITY OF BUILDING AND FACILITIES

In light of the Mission Statement and the effort to be inclusive and accommodating of all persons, Mt. Mercy Academy will do all that is practicable within the limits of the resources available to meet the needs of faculty and students who are physically challenged.

APPOINTMENTS

If parents wish to meet with a teacher, counselor or administrator, they may call the school office (825-8796) for a mutually convenient appointment. Each teacher also has an email address. Parents may wish to contact the teacher via email as well. We are always willing and able to meet with you; we are here to assist you in any way possible.

CURRICULUM

The Mount Mercy curriculum emphasizes learning not for today only but for life. Modern education theory is integrated with directed experience and drill. The academic program aims to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of every student. Students are required to earn 26 credits. Two of these units must be earned in religious studies. Promotion is based on an average of the four quarters and the final assessments. If a student receives a final exam mark of less than 55%, she does not receive credit for the course.

Parents are asked to read our Course Description Catalogue that appears on the website each year. This contains the summary of grading and promotion policies and brief outlines of all courses. Selection sheet guidelines are provided by the counseling center. In order to achieve at Mercy, students are expected to spend about two hours daily on homework. Homework assignments often consists of written work, but your daughter is just as likely to be asked to read from her textbook and outline the passages, review notes, study for a quiz/test or prepare an oral presentation. Parents are urged to arrange a definite time and place for study at home and to check homework frequently, assess test results and monitor your daughter's progress.

Mount Mercy also has a wide range of Advanced Placement and college level courses to challenge your daughter.

Religion is not only a required course for every student, but it is integrated into all areas of the curriculum. The specific course descriptions for Religious Studies are found in the annual Course Catalogue. The academic aspects of Religion are regularly assessed through unit and semester testing. The Service Requirement is in the Student Handbook. Students are invited to take part in Mass and Reconciliation services as well as retreat and renewal experiences. Our Campus Minister is available to assist students in the planning and participation for these events.

CUSTODIAL AND NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mount Mercy Academy abides by the provision of the Buckley Amendment (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1974). When parents of a student are separated, involved in divorce proceedings, or are divorced, the administration will respect the rights of both the custodial and non-custodial parents. Court orders concerning special restriction will also be respected and followed by the school administration. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, Mount Mercy Academy will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and to other school-related information regarding the student; Mount Mercy Academy is not required to inform the custodial/legal guardian(s) if such information has been requested or given to a non-custodial parent/guardian. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order.

For the school's purposes, the parent with whom the child resides is known as the custodial parent. If both parents claim to be the custodial parent, enrollment records will be examined; the parents who enrolled the child is considered the custodial parent until a legal document naming the custodial parent can be provided to the school.

Parent rights include access to student records and school mailings, attendance at parent/teacher conferences, and authority to request that a student be released early or be absent from school for a legitimate reason. Only the custodial parent has the right to remove the student from school property.

It is the responsibility of the non-custodial parent to inform the school office of his/her name, address, and telephone number if he/she wishes to be consulted regarding his/her child or wishes to be placed on the school's mailing list.

DINING HALL (See Student Handbook)

Our school participates in the Government Lunch Program. Students are served a nutritious lunch at a reasonable price. Menus are published monthly on the website and a soup and salad bar is available. Breakfast items are available from 7:15 AM to 7:50 AM. Applications for free or reduced price lunches are made available in the August mailing. Prices for the reduced and full lunches are announced at the start of the school year.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

Tuition Collection Policy

In the spirit of mercy and Christian justice, expressed in the philosophy and mission statement of the Academy the following tuition payment policy is enacted:

An annual tuition payment contract will be drawn up with parents or guardians at the time of registration. All tuition payments are to be made according to the payment plan of the contract. If this contract is not adhered to, the student will not be re-admitted for the next quarter. The principal makes the necessary determination that student may no longer remain in the school for failure to adhere to the tuition contract. In such an instance, the parent may appeal for a review of their case by the Tuition Appeal Committee, appointed by the Board of Trustees. All debts need to be paid in full prior to graduation. (Board of Trustees 3/10/94)

Parental Involvement in Institutional Advancement Activities

The Mount Mercy Institutional Advancement office is responsible for raising significant funds to subsidize tuition and provide funding for student programs which are not able to be financed through the operating budget. Active involvement in Mount Mercy's institutional advancement activities offers an opportunity to meet with other Mercy parents and to provide for the current and future needs of the school. Parental participation in some aspect of fund raising activities is expected each year that your daughter attends Mount Mercy Academy.

GUIDANCE (See Student Handbook)

Each student is assigned a school counselor in September. This counselor works with your daughter in assessing and meeting her developmental needs. The counselor helps the student with academic evaluation and planning, career and college awareness and problem situations.

***Applications for Colleges and Scholarships** - Applications for colleges and scholarships should be received by the counseling center for processing **10 working days** before they are due to be received by the college or scholarship agency. This is necessary to expedite the application process and to minimize the possibility of any error in processing. Seniors are **strongly encouraged** to meet this **ten working days** deadline in order for the applications to be reviewed and completed on time. The first transcript request is free. All subsequent transcripts request will incur a \$2 per transcript fee. **A \$10 transcript fee will be charged for each application submitted within five working days of its due date.** The counseling center cannot guarantee that a deadline will be met if processing is requested less than five working days before the due date. The school registration code is 331065.

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Active participation by parents in Mount Mercy's Parents' Association both deepens your involvement in your daughter's school life and provides opportunities for you to meet new friends who share the same values and ideals. The spirit and purpose of this organization is to insure the best possible educational advantage for your daughter. Your views and insights are invaluable in shaping the school's response to student needs. Parent Association meetings keep you in touch with school policy and events while offering spiritual and social activities and programs designed to help you in guide your daughter in this challenging world.

POLICY ON PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Mount Mercy Academy, consistent with its philosophy and mission statement, will not tolerate any physical, emotional or sexual abuse, by or against any member of the faculty, staff or student body. Included in this prohibition are all forms of corporal punishment, use or threatened use of physical force or violence, endangering the health or safety of persons, and improper sexual conduct or sexual harassment. (Sexual Harassment is defined as: Verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature which is unwelcome or offensive, which interferes with academic performance, or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive academic environment.)

Incorporated by reference into this policy are the Buffalo Diocese's "Policy Relating to Sexual or Physical Misconduct" and the applicable sections of New York State Law. Any person aware of incidents such as described shall report same to the Administration so that appropriate action may be taken.

All faculty and staff are legally obligated to report suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of students occurring outside the Academy environment. All reports will be made to the Administration who will follow the required procedures.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The Student Government is made up of elected officers and representatives. Students may also become members at large. These young women of exemplary character serve to express the opinions and needs of the Student Body to the Administration. SG members assume leadership by accepting responsibility for various school activities and functions.

Another important means of fostering leadership and giving students a voice in developing school policy is the role of class officer. Elections are held in May for Grades 10-12 and in the fall for Grade 9.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation for school is available from NFTA Metro buses in the City of Buffalo and from most suburban school districts. Requests for transportation must be made to your school district before April 1. Check with the district to find out their requirements. If a problem arises about transportation parents should call their school district. If any parent feels that a school district is not providing safe and sufficient transportation, please notify Mercy's school office.

SPECIAL NOTES

Parents receive a Dance Policy Statement for any class dance held at Mercy or Prom. You are asked to discuss the policy carefully with your daughter and to cooperate with the school so that a safe, enjoyable and fun-filled time is had by all the dance attendees. *See the section on ALCOHOL and DRUGS in the Student Handbook for further details.

A FINAL WORD

Mount Mercy Academy makes every effort to guide your daughter's development to her fullest potential -spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically. This is an awesome responsibility we share with you. We look forward to your active involvement in school life and encourage you to share your thoughts, insights, ideas and concerns. Through your support and reinforcement of school policy and the Mercy Ideals, we can together, share in the delightful and sometimes strenuous challenge of educating young women toward adult Christian commitment to self, family, our Church, our nation and our world.

We will keep you informed through our monthly Parent Newsletter and are always willing to assist you in any way possible. Please keep us informed too. We thank you for the privilege of working with you and with your daughter.

"The Christian community has every reason for hope in confronting the challenge of educational ministry today. To all our efforts we join in prayer for God's help, and for the intercession of Mary, Mother of Jesus. We face problems; so did those who came before us and so will those who follow. But as Christians we are confident of ultimate success, trusting not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ, who is at once the inspiration, the content, and the goal of Christian education: the way, and the truth and the life."

To Teach As Jesus Did (p. 42 #155)

The Administration of Mount Mercy Academy retains the right to amend the Parent-Student Handbook for just cause. Parents and students will be given notification if changes are made.

7/2008