Student Handbook

2026-2027

Mount Carmel Area Elementary School
Administration:
Mr. Peter Cheddar, Superintendent
Mrs. Amanda Stepenaskie, Principal
Ms. Heather Billman, Elementary Assistant Principal
Mr. Michael Brennan, Special Education Coordinator
Ms. Jennifer Wetzel, Assistant Special Education Coordinator
(570) 339-1500

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE

It is our pleasure to serve as the principal and the assistant principal at Mount Carmel Area Elementary. It is with great honor and **Tornado PRIDE** that we serve our dedicated faculty, staff, parents and students. In the following pages you will find important information about the upcoming school year. **Please save this document.**

Our mission is to encourage all students to develop self-confidence and the ability to work independently and cooperatively. Our shared goal is to create a common vision throughout our school community through which high quality classroom instruction nourishes our students and maximizes their growth and development. Please make efforts to know your child's teacher and their classroom expectations. Together, we can make a difference!

Mrs. Amanda Stepenaskie, Principal

Ms. Heather Billman, Assistant Principal

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Mount Carmel Area School District is to continuously promote a school climate that encourages the involvement of students, parents, educators, staff, and community members.

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ART CLASS

Art is an important part of our everyday lives. The Art Education program at Mount Carmel Area Elementary School provides students with opportunities to perceive and respond to ideas, experiences, and environments. They learn that art is a part of history and life. The students will produce art, showing organization, knowledge, goals, and techniques. The students will develop the ability to identify, analyze, and apply information for making visual decisions. Projects are designed for fine and gross motor skills. Design elements are introduced through color, line, shape, form, pattern, texture, and composition. Students will develop self-confidence and responsibility, reinforce communication skills, and develop a better understanding of self, family, and other cultures. In addition, students will experience a wide variety of art mediums and learn to develop planning in their work. These experiences will aid the student in making aesthetic judgments or evaluations.
Students in grades K-6 will have one 40-minute art class in a six-day rotation. Art grades will be given the 2nd and 4th marking periods. Students will be taught how to evaluate their projects for strengths and areas of improvement that will guide the student toward an enriched art experience.

ATTENDANCE

The Mount Carmel Area School District's attendance policy is designed to encourage maximum student attendance and punctuality. No factor has a more direct relationship to a student's success in school than a good attendance record. The school can best fulfill its goals when students are present in the classroom. The child's parents/guardians are legally responsible to ensure that the child attends school on a regular basis and is absent only for the reasons allowed by law (illness, death in the immediate family, and educational excuse are the most common). Any parent/guardian found violating the law is subject to prosecution, fine (up to $300), court costs and sentencing to complete a parenting education course.
If the parent is not convicted and the child continues to be truant, the child will be fined $300 or be assigned to an alternative education program.

Start and Dismissal Times

Students **may not be dropped off at the school before 8:10 a.m. Students must be in their homeroom by 8:45 or they will be marked tardy.*

Start and Dismissal Times

Regular Schedule

Grades K-6: 8:45 a.m. - 3:20 p.m. (3:15 p.m. - walkers)
Pre-K Counts: 8:15 a.m. – 1:40 p.m.

Delayed Start & Early Dismissal Times

School delays & early dismissals occur periodically during the school year.

Early dismissal times are:
Grades K-6: 1:20 p.m. (1:15 p.m. – walkers)
Pre-K Counts: 11:40 p.m. (11:35 p.m. – walkers)

Delayed start times:

Two Hour Delay

Grades K-6: 10:45 a.m.
Pre-K Counts: 10:15 a.m.

Three Hour Delay

Grades K-6: 11:45 a.m.
Pre-K Counts: 11:15 a.m.

In an effort to further reduce truancy our school district has partnered with Northumberland County Children and Youth Agency who has developed a Truancy Prevention Specialized Unit. This Unit utilizes Children and Youth and Juvenile Probation Staff. The purpose is to assist families who by LAW (PA ACT 138) have been identified as truant. This will include:

- Attendance at Student Attendance Improvement Plan meetings (SAIP)
- Direct contact with students and families
- Offer community based supports
- Facilitate Parental Truancy Assistance Program (PTAP)
- Recommend and refer to Children and Youth
- Recommend and attend magisterial hearings.

A child is considered Truant after accumulating 3 or more unexcused absences and habitually truant after 6 or more unexcused absences. Parents can contact Northumberland County Children and Youth at (570) 988-4237 or email truancy@norrycopa.net.

Elementary School Absences:

Parent notes are required for all absences and must be given to the teacher the day following the absence. Failure to provide a note within three days of the absence constitutes an unlawful absence.

- Parents should notify the school by 8:15 a.m. for students in grades Pre K-6 when students are absent. Please call 570-339-1500 ext. 3167. If the school office is not notified, the parent will be contacted to verify the absence.
- Students must present a written excuse for absence to their homeroom teacher, who will forward it to the attendance office within 3 days of returning from the absence. All absences are marked unexcused until the district receives a written excuse explaining the absence.
- After a student has unexcused absences for a total of three (3) days during the school year, an official notice will be mailed to the parents/guardian. Parent/guardian will be invited to attend a Student Attendance Improvement Plan meeting to discuss attendance issues with their child. Parents who fail to comply with the provisions of the compulsory attendance law may, on summary conviction thereof, be required to pay a fine plus court costs.
- After 6 unexcused a referral may also be sent to Northumberland County Children & Youth Service and Juvenile Probation for attendance issues. Any unexcused absence after a warning letter will constitute a fine being levied against the parent/guardian of the student and the student or another suggested disposition by the District Magistrate. Fines will continue for any unlawful/unexcused absences.
- The MCA attendance policy committee will review the attendance records of students who have missed ten (10%) of the days school has been in session. A review will be held on the 45th, 90th and 135th day of the school term.
- Please be advised that truancy is considered public information and may be released to local news agencies, if requested.
- Students who miss an excessive number of school days will be required to provide a doctor's excuse. After 7 days of absence (or 10% of the school term) a warning letter will be sent to the parent. After 10 days of absence (or 10% of the school term) parents will be notified in writing that a doctor's note may be required.
- Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students who are absent 10, or a total of 30 days, without a doctor's note will be dropped from the class rolls as they must adhere to all school attendance policies.

Families are encouraged to take vacations during the summer months to ensure their child's academic success.

REQUEST FOR EDUCATIONAL TRIPS AND TOURS

While the Mount Carmel Area School District recognizes the value of educational trips, it does not encourage students to miss time from school because it could be detrimental to their academic success. The District requires that parents/guardians comply with the following guidelines relative to educational trips.

- The request for an Educational Trip must be submitted to the Superintendent at least seven (7) days in advance of the trip. Failure to meet this deadline will result in the request being denied.
- The trip must be educationally sound.

- The student must be passing all core subjects. It will also be your responsibility to make certain that all educational assignments are completed.
- The trip may not take place during the last two weeks of school.
- The number of cumulative days for educational trips in one school year may not exceed five (5) days.
- The trip may not take place during mandated state testing, such as PSSA or Keystone exams.

Tardiness:

- Tardy students must be accompanied by a parent/guardian and signed in upon entering the building.
- If a student is late because of a medical appointment, a written excuse is required. If one is not provided, the tardy will be unexcused.
- Unexcused tardy minutes will accumulate. Once a student accumulates 60 unexcused minutes, those minutes will equate to one half-day unexcused absence.
- At the 5th unexcused day to school tardy, a student may receive a detention. Subsequent unexcused days to school tardy may result in detention, suspension, and/or parental/guardian meeting.

******Students will be charged a half-day absence if they are more than one hour late to school or if they leave more than one hour before school ends.***

Leaving School for Appointments:

All appointments should be made after school hours if possible. When not possible, appointments should be scheduled first thing in the morning or late in the afternoon. In order to be excused from school, students must submit a written request to the teacher one day in advance. Students are not excused for any reason without written permission from parents.
Parents must sign students in and out at the front table. Parents or designees should pick up students at the office or call to verify arrangements.

BULLYING

The Board is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for district students. The Board recognizes that bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detracts from the safe environment necessary for student learning, and may lead to more serious violence. Therefore, the Board prohibits bullying by district students.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying means an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students, which occurs in a school setting that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of doing any of the following:

1. Substantial interference with a student's education.
2. Creation of a threatening environment.
3. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying, as defined in this policy, includes cyberbullying.

Complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly, and corrective action shall be taken when allegations are verified. Confidentiality of all parties shall be maintained, consistent with the district's legal and investigative obligations. No reprisals or retaliation shall occur as a result of good faith reports of bullying. Please refer to District Policy 249 for a further definition of bullying.

What to Do When You Experience or See Bullying

The intent of our school is to eliminate bullying altogether, but at times, it occurs. Should a student feel bullied or witness bullying, he/she should immediately report it to a teacher, administrator or any adult in the building. The district employee will ensure that the matter is addressed and or the principals are made aware of the situation.

Consequences for Violations of Policy

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Code of Student Conduct, which may include:

1. Counseling within the school
2. Parental Conference
3. Social skills curriculum
4. Loss of School Privileges
5. Transfer to another school building, classroom

6. Exclusion from school-sponsored activities
7. Lunch and/or After School Detention
8. Suspension or Expulsion

Hazing (School Board Policy 247)
Hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the educational goals of the district and are prohibited at all times.

CAFETERIA, SCHOOL LUNCH & BREAKFAST PROCEDURES

The Mount Carmel Area School District will again participate in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) throughout the 2026-27 school year.

Your child/children will be eligible for FREE BREAKFAST and FREE LUNCH at school during the 2026-27 school year. Your child/children can participate in school breakfast and lunch without having to pay a fee or submit an application. No further action is required by you.

All meals will meet the federal and state guidelines. Students must take 3 of the 4 items (Fruit, Grain, Milk) offered at breakfast and one of those items MUST be a full ½ cup fruit. At lunch, students must take 3 of the 5 items (Protein, Fruit, vegetables, Grain, Milk) offered and 1 of those items MUST be a full ½ cup fruit or vegetable.

Students who wish to purchase an extra entrée ($2.25), one of our snack options or just milk ($.65) must pay for them.

This program does not apply to ala carte items and students must have money in their Caftrac account in order to purchase them. Please see Appendix A for more information regarding Caftrac account balances.

CAMPUS SECURITY

A school Security Resource Officer is employed by the district to maintain a safe and secure school environment. The SRO has the authority to issue citations when the situation warrants. All campus traffic must abide by safety regulations established by the district.

ARRIVAL - Student Drop-Off & Parking Procedures

Parents of students in Kindergarten through grade 6 who drive their children to school will drop the student/s off at the following designated arrival location: the end of the elementary school closest to the junior-senior high school.

- All cars will enter the junior-senior high school main parking lot entrance (Fifth Street) and proceed to the right.
- Students will be dropped off near the stop sign/Junior-Senior High School Gymnasium Entrance at the end of the elementary school building (same area where students are picked up at dismissal).
- There will be staff members there to direct you where to drop your child(ren) off and help them into the building through the Main School Entrance (Rotunda).
- Parents wishing to escort their child to the Main Entrance/Rotunda doors may do so by parking in designated areas of the high school parking lot, proceeding up the stairs from the parking lot, and escorting student/s on the sidewalk along the front of the elementary school to the Rotunda.
- Please drop your child off immediately and leave as cars coming in behind you cause a back-up quickly.
- Please do not drive or park in front of the school as the buses coming in need to park in this area.
- Vehicles dropping off must continue in front of the junior-senior high school, turn left at the stop sign, and either exit at the Sixth Street gate or the main entrance to the junior-senior high school (Fifth Street gate).
- **NO STUDENTS CAN BE DROPPED OFF IN FRONT OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OR OUTSIDE THE FENCE DUE TO SAFETY REASONS.**

Should a parent need to come into the building, please park in the designated visitor parking area.

Children need not be escorted into the building as we have staff/security assisting the children.

DISMISSAL - Student Pick-Up & Parking Procedures

Parents picking up their children at dismissal must park in designated areas of the high school parking lot. Do not park in the grassy area or areas that are designated as "No Parking". Students will be escorted to the top of the high school parking lot. If exiting vehicles, parents should remain near the high school parking lot. Parents are not permitted to pick up students at the elementary gym doors.

Parking in front of either building during arrival/dismissal times is prohibited. Parking guidelines must also be adhered to during after-school hours when visiting the schools for activities, practices, programs, etc. There is a "No Drive Through" policy in front of the elementary school from 8:00 - 8:45 and 2:50 p.m.–3:45 p.m. to ensure the safety of students getting off the buses and boarding the school buses/vans and walkers being dismissed.

The above guidelines are implemented to ensure the safety of all the students and visitors.

CELL PHONES

Students may carry cell phones to schools provided they are stored in a backpack or locker during the school day. Cell phones must be turned **"off"** at all times. **This means "off", not in the muted or vibrate mode.** Upon entering the building in the morning, phones and all electronic devices must be turned off and should not be visible.

If a student phone or any other personal electronic device is discovered turned "on" or is used in an unauthorized manner, it will be confiscated by the staff member and sent to the office and the following disciplinary actions will be implemented:

- **First Occurrence:** A parent will be contacted and the cell phone / personal electronic device will be returned to the student at the end of the day.
- **Second Occurrence:** A parent will be contacted, the student will serve an after – school detention and a parent will be required to come into the school to pick–up the cell phone / personal electronic device.
- **Third Occurrence:** The third offense constitutes "defiance of authority" and will result in a suspension and loss of cell phone privileges for the remainder of the school year.

The district is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged cell phones or personal electronic devices.

CHILD STUDY TEAM/STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Children who are experiencing any difficulties in school, either academic or behavioral, may be referred to the Child Study Team. Parents will be notified if their child has been referred to the Child Study Team. If there are any parent concerns, please contact your child's teacher in order to start the process. Any teacher, parent, student or community member can make a referral by contacting any member of the team.

Students who are experiencing concerns such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues, depression, physical or sexual abuse, and/or any drastic changes in behavior are eligible for the program.

Members of the Elementary SAP/CST Team include:
Mrs. Stepenaskie - *Elementary Principal*
Ms. Billman – *Assistant Principal*
Ms. Wetzel– Assistant *Special Education Coordinator*
Mr. Brennan - *Special Education Coordinator*
Mrs. Tappe – *School Nurse*
Mrs. Zlockie - *School Counselor*
Mrs. Molesevich - *School Counselor*
Mrs. Lubeskie - *School Social Worker*
Mrs. Francis - *Title I Reading Specialist*
Mrs. Ecker – *Special Education Teacher*
Mrs. Smith – *Remediation Specialist*

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Grades K to 2

Pre-K through third grade will be implementing a positive behavior management system. The system will consist of classroom expectations and consequences. All students will be held accountable for the following expectations:

- Always keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- Always listen when someone else is speaking.
- Always try to do your best work.
- Always use an inside voice in the school.
- Always use kind words.
- Always share community tools and toys.
- Always listen and follow directions from **ALL** adults.
- Always ask questions when you need help.
- Always show respect to others.

Grades 3 to 6

- Students will quietly enter the classroom, prepare for class by taking out appropriate materials, and completing the bell ringer.
- Students will remain in their seats during teacher instruction (unless there is an emergency).
- Students will raise their hands to speak or ask a question. Calling out will not be tolerated.
- Students will move quietly in a straight line while changing classes. Students should wait by the next class's door until all students from the previous section have exited.
- Students may use the restroom during down time in class. Unless it is an emergency situation, students will not be permitted to leave class during instruction. Students must have agendas signed to use this privilege so the hall and bathrooms are monitored.

Offenses

- **First Offense**: Verbal warning with explanation of proper behavior.
- **Second Offense**: Students will be retrained in proper classroom behavior.
- **Third Offense**: Students will be retrained in proper classroom behavior and must develop a written plan to correct the behavior. These plans will be developed by the student and must be signed by the parents.
- **Fourth Offense**: Students will be retrained in proper classroom behavior. Students may also receive detention.

COMPUTER/INTERNET USAGE

Students in grades K through 6 will have three, 40-minute computer lab periods per six-day cycle. The district requires parents and students to sign an internet policy, which defines rules and regulations for internet usage.

DAMAGE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY

All school property such as textbooks, library books, and uniforms must be returned to the school in the condition in which they were given.

Students/parents will be responsible for payment of lost, stolen, and damaged school property. Report cards, diplomas, and schedules will be held until payment is made. All delinquent fines will be turned over to the district magistrate.

In order to keep our school neat and clean the following rules must be adhered to:

- Students are not permitted to chew gum.

- Students will be responsible to pay for any destruction of property/vandalism in or around the school. The SRO will cite any student for this offense.

DATING VIOLENCE (POLICY 252)

The Board encourages students who have been subjected to dating violence to promptly report such incidents. When a student believes he or she has been subject to dating violence, the student is encouraged to promptly report the incident, orally or in writing, to the building principal, guidance counselor, or classroom teacher. Please see school board policy 252.

DISCIPLINE

All students enrolled in the Mount Carmel Area Elementary School are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules and regulations of the school and their classroom teachers. Students who are suspended from school are not permitted on school property, including the stadium and athletic fields. Misbehavior in school will not be tolerated and may result in the following disciplinary measures:

Category 1:
The offenses listed below represent examples of inappropriate behavior on the part of the student and should not be construed as the only misbehavior for which a student may be disciplined:

- Bullying
- Continued violation of the dress code
- Disrespect
- Inappropriate language
- Leaving school property without permission
- Lying/Cheating/Dishonesty
- Misconduct/disturbance in school or at a school-related activity
- Offensive social behavior
- Physical/verbal abuse of any student or member of the school staff
- Possession of obscene materials
- Running/misconduct in the hallways or cafeteria
- Unauthorized use of electronic devices during the school day

These offenses may result in after-school detention. More than five detentions may result in an out-of-school suspension and a referral to the Child Study Team for intervention.

Category 2:

- Cheating
- Defiance of authority
- Fighting
- Harassment
- Leaving school property without permission
- Possession of lighters and/or matches

These offenses will result in out of school suspension. Subsequent suspensions have escalating consequences. Students are responsible for any missed work or assignments.

Category 3:
More serious violations, listed below, represent a violation of the law. In such cases, students are subject to civil and/or criminal penalties, as well as a suspension of up to 10-days from school for the first offense. A recommendation for expulsion will occur for possession of drugs or weapons, or for an assault of an employee. Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from the school system by the Board of Education. A hearing with the board must be held prior to expulsion.

- A threat to harm others may require a medical evaluation to return to school
- Damaging school property or the property of other school students

- Making a bomb threat
- Possession of weapons or dangerous objects
- Possession or use of a controlled substance and/or drug paraphernalia
- Smoking/possession of tobacco will result in a three-day suspension and arrest
- Theft
- Willfully activating a fire alarm or fire extinguisher

Category 3 offenses will result in school suspension. Parents must contact the school for assignments. Students will not be admitted back into any teacher's classroom following a suspension from school unless they are accompanied by a parent or guardian on the first day back for a conference with the principal and/or student's teacher.

Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from the school system by the Board of Education. A hearing with the board must be held prior to expulsion. Suspension is the temporary removal of a student from school by the school principal. Parents are required to contact the teacher for assignments at the beginning or the end of the day. Students are NOT permitted to attend any school-related activities during the suspension. Students are responsible for work missed during the suspension.

In a continued effort to maintain a safe learning environment for all students and staff, each incident relating to threats, both made in person or electronically, will be fully investigated by school administration. Mount Carmel Area School District expects all parents and guardians to discuss the seriousness of their child making any type of threat. Consequences may include suspension/expulsion from school and will include a threat assessment conducted by the School Resource Officer or local police and/or mental health evaluation by the school psychologist or outside mental health professional before return to school is possible.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to access the FBI website at http://fbi.gov and review the #ThinkBeforeYouPost campaign for more information and valuable tips on how to discuss social media with your child.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION (POLICY 220)

The right of public school students to freedom of speech is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the constitution of the Commonwealth. The Board respects the right of students to express themselves in word or symbol and to disseminate non-school materials to others as a part of that expression. The Board also recognizes that the exercise of that right is not unlimited and must be balanced with the district's responsibility to maintain a safe and orderly school environment and to protect the rights of all members of the school community.

Board Policy 220 addresses student expression in general as well as dissemination of expressive materials that are not part of district-sponsored activities (non-school materials). The policy does not apply to materials sought to be disseminated as part of the curricular or extracurricular programs of the district, which shall be regulated separately as part of the school district's educational program.

The Board requires that students who wish to disseminate non-school materials on school property shall obtain approval by submitting them at least one (1) school day in advance to the building principal or designee, who shall forward a copy to the Superintendent.

The Superintendent shall assist the building principal in determining the designation of the places and times non-school materials may be disseminated in each school building. Such designations may take into account maintenance of the flow of student traffic throughout the school and shall limit dissemination of non-school materials to non-instructional times.

When student dissemination of non-school materials or other student expression violates this policy, the building principal may determine what if any disciplinary or other consequences should be imposed. Disciplinary actions shall be in accordance with applicable Board policy and the Code of Student Conduct.

DRESS CODE

Students are required to be dressed according to the Mount Carmel Area Dress Code Policy (#221.) Please see below for general guidelines to policy #221.

General Guidelines:

1. Leggings are prohibited.
2. Spandex is prohibited.
3. Yoga pants are prohibited.
4. Pajama pants are prohibited.
5. Clothing must be free from holes, rips, or tears. Any type of clothing or pants that are distressed, has holes, tears, and / or have rips are not allowed. Even if they are purchased with these characteristics they are not allowed.
6. Cargo pants or shorts are prohibited.
7. Hooded shirts or hooded sweatshirts are prohibited.
8. Tank tops are prohibited.
9. All shirts or tops must cover midriff, crop tops, belly shirts or any other shirt that exposes the student's midsection skin are prohibited.
10. Hats, bandanas, headbands, gloves, chains, and belts with protruding pointed studs are prohibited.
11. Studded jewelry or studded accessories of any kind are prohibited.
12. Open-toed sandals (flip flops) and / or open-heeled footwear (bedroom slippers) of any kind are prohibited.
13. Leather clothing is prohibited.
14. Shoulder bags or bags must be no more than 5 inches X 8 inches in size to be carried.
15. Underclothing is not permitted to be exposed or seen through outer clothing.
16. See-through clothing is prohibited.
17. Gloves or outerwear coats are not permitted in school unless approved by the principal due to the temperature in the classroom.
18. Any clothing items must be reviewed and approved by the administration before they are advertised, sold or worn as dress code approved apparel.
19. **Staff will use the following guide to determine proper length:** Shorts, skirts and dresses may be worn if they are the same length as the longest finger-tip when shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers are in a normal, relaxed hanging position by the sides of the body. This standard shall be used to determine the appropriate length of short/skirts and dresses, but should be applied in consideration of a student's physical stature. Again an item should be resting on the hip of the student, not below when being measured.

Any student who violates the dress code/school standard dress code policy shall be subject to the following:

1. First offense: Notify parent/guardian and have them bring in appropriate clothing or dress code appropriate clothing will be provided to the student to change into.
2. Second Offense: Parent/Guardian phone call to discuss dress code and to bring in a change of clothes or we will provide them appropriate clothing. The student will receive a detention.
3. Third Offense: Parent/Guardian meeting required. The student will receive a detention.

Repeated violations of the standard dress code shall be treated as defiance of authority as noted in the discipline policy.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS & MESSAGING

If schools must be closed due to inclement weather, the local radio stations will be asked to make announcements. Postings can also be viewed on local television stations, home web-pages and social media sites (Facebook and twitter.)

The School District utilizes the **Parent Square** parent communication platform. Parents will continue to receive automated phone calls alerting them of any type of emergency message. To ensure the accuracy of the new notification system**, it is critical that home and/or cell numbers be updated and accurate.**

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day of the request for access is made. Parents or eligible students should submit to the principal (or appropriate school official) written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements and notify the parent or eligible student of a time and place where the records may be inspected.
- The right to request the amendment of the student's educational records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate. Parents or eligible students should write to the principal or appropriate school official, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
- The right to consent to disclosing or the disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests.

A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the school board; a person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist) or parent serving on an official committee, such as disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her task.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

FIELD TRIPS

Students will be permitted to participate in field trips or school related activities according to the following guidelines:

- **Students must have a passing grade in all subjects.**
- **Students must not have 10 or more unexcused absences.**
- **Students must not have any suspensions.**
- **Students must not have 5 or more detentions.**

Students will be required to complete a field trip /class activity form indicating that all guidelines have been met. ***The principal may use their discretion in declaring a student eligible to participate.***

FUNDRAISING

Prior to approval, fundraiser forms must be completed and approved by a building principal or athletic director. All monies should be turned in to the activity advisor by check. Cash will not be accepted. Any outstanding fundraising money due will be turned over to the district magistrate. The activity fundraising form can be found on our district website.

GENERAL MUSIC EDUCATION

General Music classes are scheduled for students from Kindergarten through sixth grade. Each class meets for one 40-minute class period in a six-day cycle for the entire year. Special studies include instruments, featured composers, basic rhythms and notation and selected listening lessons. Students in 3rd grade will also learn the basics of playing the recorder. Students in grades K-4 are given an opportunity to perform in one musical program each year. Students in grades 5 and 6 will have the opportunity to join Chorus and perform in two concerts throughout the year. Students will receive a grade in music at the end of the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

Elementary Band
Students become eligible for band in grade 4. Beginning band students receive instruction on their instrument in a group setting for the entire school year. In January, a beginning band is formed, with all instruments playing together. The beginning band meets one time per week.

Fifth and sixth grade students with previous band experience receive one group lesson each week on their individual instrument and one group band rehearsal each week. Students may begin lessons anytime during grades four, five, and six, but it is recommended they start in grade 4.

Elementary Chorus
Students in 5th and 6th grades are given an opportunity to experience vocal singing in a choral-performing group. Students may sign up at the beginning of each school year. The group meets for one 40-minute class period in a six-day cycle. Special studies include pitch accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, following along to choral music and singing expressively. Chorus students are held to a high standard. They must attend rehearsals and participate to the best of their ability. There are two Chorus concerts, one during the school day in the fall and one after school in the evening in the spring. The spring concert is mandatory. Students will receive a grade for Chorus at the end of the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

HOMEBOUND EDUCATION

Students who are severely ill and require homebound education as defined by a physician will be provided five hours of instruction per week. Report cards will note modified curricula if the time period is excessive. Students with excessive homebound instruction will not be included in class rankings. PDE must approve all homebound requests. Students may not participate in school activities while on homebound instruction.

HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110, Subtitle B) was enacted to make sure homeless youth have access to appropriate education while removing barriers that homeless children face. The Act defines the term “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Its goal is to minimize interruptions to the education of homeless youth. The Mount Carmel Area School District is committed to working collaboratively with families and local agencies to support homeless youth in our school community. Please see the district website for more information or contact Carole Lubeskie, Homeless Liaison, at 570-339-1500 ext. 3147.

HOMEWORK POLICY

It is the responsibility of the student and parents to see that all homework assignments are completed on time. Students may be required to stay after school when excessive assignments are missed.

Students in grades 1-6 will receive a homework planner/agenda for the 2026-2027 school year. This is an important part of home/school communication and parents will be asked to sign student agendas daily.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

The Mount Carmel Area School District utilizes the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for managing insects, rodents, and weeds. The building(s) and grounds are routinely monitored to detect any pests that are present throughout the school.

Occasionally it may be necessary to use chemicals to manage a pest problem. These materials will only be used when necessary and will not be routinely applied. The school district will contract with a pest management company to perform services on site.

Pesticides will not be applied during school hours and notices will be posted 72 hours prior to applications and for 48 hours following the application.

Parents or guardians of students may request prior notification of specific pesticide applications that will be made at the school. To receive notification, you must be placed on the school notification registry. If you would like to be placed on the registry, please notify the school in writing. You may include your e-mail address if you would like to be notified electronically. Each year the district will prepare a new notification registry.

If a material application must be made to control an emergency pest problem (*stinging insects*), notice will be provided by telephone to any parent or guardian who has requested such notification in writing. Exemptions to this notification include: disinfectants and anti-microbial products, self-containerized baits placed in areas not accessible to students, gel type baits placed in cracks, crevices, or voids, and swimming pool maintenance chemicals.

If you have any questions, please contact Frank Brosh, IPM Coordinator, at the Mount Carmel Area Elementary School.

LEAVING SCHOOL

Students are not permitted to leave school property during the school day without the permission of either the principal or school nurse. Leaving the school site without permission will result in suspension. A parent or parent designee must pick up the child. Students are not permitted to leave the school site unless accompanied by an authorized adult.

LOST AND FOUND

Please turn in found textbooks, workbooks, notebooks, articles of clothing, etc. to the office. Students who misplaced one of the above articles should check with the office. Students will be responsible to pay for lost books prior to obtaining a new book or their final report card. Personal property should be labeled. Report any lost items to the office.

METAL DETECTOR OPERATIONS

The Board recognizes that the educational environment of the schools is an important factor in the student's ability to learn and a teacher to teach. Weapons and drugs in the schools, on school grounds, and in the surrounding communities are a danger to that environment and learning has suffered as a result. Through this procedure, it is the hope and desire of the Board to foster a proper educational environment for all students and to help promote the safety and welfare of students, staff, and visitors by authorizing Mount Carmel Area School District to conduct metal detector screenings of anyone entering the Elementary School building daily.

Searches are conducted for the district's purposes and not for the primary purpose of gathering evidence or instituting criminal proceedings; however, if a weapon and/or illegal item(s) are found, the appropriate law enforcement authorities shall be notified and the student or adult with a weapon and/or illegal items(s) shall face the penalties set forth in the Board policies and State laws.

In conjunction with using the metal detectors, designated school personnel may inspect the contents of any backpack, book bag, purse, or parcel for the limited purpose of determining whether a weapon is concealed therein, in accordance with Board policy. In the event a further search is necessary, the student and/or visitor will be removed to a private location. In cases involving students, a parent and guardian will be called prior to continued search. The parent/guardian will be given the option to be present for extended search, unless school staff believes immediate danger to the safety of students exists. A student and/or visitor can be refused admittance for refusing to follow metal detector operation protocol.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION GUIDELINES

Medical Excuses:
All students will participate in Physical Education except for those with a written excuse. If a child comes to school with crutches, a cast, etc., a doctor's note must be given to the physical education teachers stating how long the child is to be excused. If the child does not have a doctor's note, then the student will be excused until a doctor's note is given to the physical education teacher. A student **may not** participate in physical education class with a cast no matter what the doctor recommends. This is to ensure the safety of all children. This note needs to be submitted to the P.E. teacher, not the classroom teacher.

Students must wear approved physical education clothing as defined in the dress code, which includes sweatpants, shorts, athletic pants and appropriate sleeved shirts. Cargo pocket pants and jeans are not permitted.
Students who are not properly attired will not be allowed to participate in gym class.

Physical Education Grading Criteria:
Grading is not based on athletic ability, but is based on proper dress, participation, and individual student improvement. The student's grade will be negatively affected by coming to gym class unprepared.

PROMOTION/RETENTION

1. Assure that every effort will be made to remediate the student's difficulties before he/she is retained.
2. Assure that no student will be retained more than two (2) times.
3. If promotion is in danger, the parents shall be informed in writing by no later than the end of the third marking period.
4. Parental requests for retention must be supported in writing by an independent evaluation or a physician's recommendation.
5. The building principal has the final responsibility for determining the promotion or retention of each student.

Promotion/Retention Guidelines:
1. A student in grades 1-3 may be considered for retention if he/she is failing reading and/or math, and all avenues for correction, including staffing through the Child Study Team, have been tried in an attempt to correct the deficiency.
2. A student in grades 4-6 may be considered for retention if he/she is failing two (2) major subjects: reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies and science, for the year and has not been retained already in that grade.

PROTECTED HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

In compliance with state and federal law, the Mount Carmel Area School District will provide services to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, as follows: those related aids, services or accommodations needed to provide the student with an equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extra-curricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. To qualify as a protected

handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability, which substantially limits or prohibits participation in, or access to, an aspect of the school program.

These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are different from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled or seeking enrollment in special education programs.
For more information on the evaluation procedures and provisions of service protected handicapped students, contact the special education office at x3145.

PSSA STATE ASSESSMENTS

Pennsylvania has adopted the Common Core State Standards as the academic standards to identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a single set of clear educational standards for English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics that states can share and voluntarily adopt. CCSS were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce. Individual student scores can be used to assist teachers in identifying students who may be in need of additional educational opportunities, and school scores provide information to schools and districts for curriculum and instruction improvement discussions and planning.

Pennsylvania School of Student Assessment (PSSA)

The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based criterion referenced assessment used to measure a student's academic performance. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 3 through 8 is assessed in English Language Arts & Math. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 4 and 8 is assessed in science.

State Assessment Calendar 2023-2024

Assessment	Testing Window	Grade(s)
PSSA English Language Arts	April 26 – 30, 2027	3 through 8
PSSA Math	May 3 - May 7, 2027	3 through 8
PSSA Science	May 3 - May 7, 2027	4 & 8
Make-Up Window	May 10 - May 14, 2027	

Parents are asked to avoid arranging appointments and educational trips during this time.

REPORT CARDS /PROGRESS REPORTS / HONOR ROLL

At the end of each 9-week period, students will receive a report card in grades 1 to 6. Parent conferences will be held toward the end of the first marking period for Kindergarten and grade 1. Conferences for Pre-Kindergarten students will be held after the second marking period. Conferences for all other grade-level students are available upon request.
Parents of students who are in danger of not passing a particular subject will be notified by school personnel. Please check the Student Information System daily for student progress, homework and updates.
Numerical grades are placed on report cards for each marking period for students in grades 3 – 6. These grades correspond to the marking system listed below:

- A 90 – 100 Excellent
- B 80 – 89 Good
- C 70 – 79 Average
- D 65 – 69 Poor

- F 0 – 64 Failure

Students may be recognized for the Honor Roll using the following criteria:

- Distinguished Honors 95 – 100
- 1st Honors 90 – 94
- 2nd Honors 85 - 89

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Our elementary school has 2 school counselors for all students. The counselors are available to assist students with problems. Students can stop in the guidance office or parents can contact the school counselor. The school counselors, Mrs. Carleen Zlockie, can be contacted at 339-1500, ext. 3171 and Mrs. Kerri Molesevich can be contacted at 339-1500, ext. 3156.

SCHOOL HEALTH

Every student will have growth measurements (height and weight) evaluated yearly. Vision screening is done every year for every student. Hearing screenings are conducted for all students in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and grades 1, 2, 3, and 7. Either a private physician or school physician conducts physical examinations for students in Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten, and grades 6, and 11. Dental examinations are conducted by either a private dentist or school dentist in grades Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten, and grades 3 and 7. Students in grades 6 and 7 are screened yearly for scoliosis.

Medications

If medication/treatment must be administered during school hours, a medication permission form must be obtained from the health office. The following procedures must be followed:

1. The medication permission form must be completed by the physician and the parent and returned to the health office before any medication/treatment is administered.
2. All medication to be given during school hours must be delivered directly to the health office.
3. All medication must be brought to school in the original pharmaceutically dispensed and properly labeled container.
4. All medication must be administered through the health office. No medication/treatment will be administered unless these procedures are followed.

Immunizations

Pennsylvania Immunization Law requires all students to be adequately immunized according to their age and grade level. Please check with your family physician/school nurse to ensure student immunizations are up to date. Forward records to the school nurse.

Accident Insurance

It is recommended that all students be covered by accident insurance. A school accident insurance policy is available to students for a nominal fee. These forms are distributed to all students at the beginning of each school year. Insurance forms can also be obtained through the principal's office. If a student does not purchase the district accident policy, they will be held liable for any injuries occurring on school property.

Health Updates

It is very important for parents to update students' health information. Please notify the health office of any health-related problems occurring during the school year or summer months. Please also notify the health office of any immunizations received at any time during the calendar year.

The telephone number of the health office is: 339-1500, ext. 3103.

Latex-Free Facility

The Mount Carmel Area School District provides a latex-free environment to accommodate staff and students with severe allergies. Please note that this prohibits the presence of latex balloons in any district buildings.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

The Mount Carmel Area School District has a responsibility to provide safe, efficient transportation for all children. Drivers are responsible for maintaining control of students on or near their vehicles. Whenever problems arise that the driver is unable to resolve, he or she will complete a bus conduct report and the building principal or designee will address the situation. A conduct report will be sent to the parents. The following is a list of categories and disciplinary actions:

CATEGORY I Violations:

- Being rude, discourteous, or annoying to the driver
- Littering
- Eating or drinking on the bus
- Excessive mischief
- Littering
- Unacceptable language
- Violation of safety procedures

CATEGORY I Violations occurring on or near the vehicle will result in the following consequences:

- **First offense:** conduct warning to the parents
- **Second offense**: one-day to three-day bus suspension
- **Third offense:** three-day to ten-day bus suspension

CATEGORY II Violations:

- Violation of safety procedures
- Destruction of property
- Fighting, pushing, tripping
- Possession of tobacco products (probably arrest)

CATEGORY II Violations that occur on or near the vehicle will result in the following consequences:

- Automatic three-day bus suspension
- Possible extended bus suspension and / or permanent expulsion.
- Students suspended from school cannot participate in extracurricular activities during their suspension.

Bus Assignments:

Students transported to school are assigned to a bus and must always ride on that bus. They will not be permitted to ride any other bus. Only in the case of extreme emergency or hardship will exceptions be made. To request a valid change, a Transportation Change Request Form must be submitted to the building principal's office. The Superintendent or his designee must then grant approval.

Please keep in mind that submission of said request does not guarantee approval. All inquiries concerning transportation should be made to the Superintendent's office (339-1500, ext. 3112).

Students in Kindergarten and Grade 1 are required to have parent/guardian supervision at the bus stop at all times. A parent must be present when children are dropped off after school, as well. If no parent is present, the child will be returned to the elementary school office. **After the third occurrence of no one present to pick up their child at the bus stop, or at dismissal, a referral will be made to Northumberland County Children & Youth.** It is the responsibility of all parents to assure adequate supervision of their children following dismissal from school.

SCHOOL VISITORS

Visitors are welcome in our building. However, to protect the interests and safety of students and staff, **all school visitors**, including parents, relatives, and friends **must:**

- Use the intercom system outside the school for admittance.
- State name and business.
- Report to entrance table and present valid ID that will be scanned through the school's electronic Visitor
- Management System.
- Sign in and obtain a visitor's pass.
- Return the pass and sign out when leaving.

Security will address any visitor not signed in. Visiting a staff member during instructional time is not permitted. Video cameras are utilized in the buildings and on school grounds, and may be used on school buses, as well.

Also, please note our school policy for the following:

- Conferences with individual teachers must be scheduled ahead of time. Permission to visit a staff member during instructional time will be refused.
- Snacks, birthday treats, etc. are to be taken to the office. The office staff will make sure the treats are properly delivered.
- Visitors may park in front of the school from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please do not park in bus lanes at any time during the school day.
- Parents may not accompany their children into the building, to lockers or to classrooms.
- All transported students should be dropped off in the designated drop-off zone between the elementary school and the junior-senior high school.

SCHOOL WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PROGRAM

School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) is a proactive approach to discipline that promotes appropriate student behavior and increased learning. The SWPBS model conceptually aligns with Pennsylvania's three-tiered Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. This program is not a curriculum that students participate in for only a few weeks. Rather, it is a coordinated effort by all of the adults in the school to teach expected behaviors, supervise, and intervene when any inappropriate behavior occurs. As individual needs arise, staff, families, and students will be made aware of available interventions.

As student behavior concerns arise, our Tier II team will work with the teachers, students, and families with inter
The first week of school is dedicated to teaching expected behaviors throughout all areas of the school. As the school year progresses, students are awarded "Tornado Tokens" when they exhibit exceptional examples of appropriate, positive behavior. The tickets may be turned in and entered in a drawing for prizes.

The agreed upon positive behavior theme is Tornado **P.R.I.D.E.**, as all students will be expected to adhere to expected behaviors according to **P**ride, **R**espect, **I**ntegrity, **D**edication, & **E**ffort. We are excited for the implementation of this program as it has the potential to be very successful in preventing problem behaviors and instead, teaching all students what is expected of them. The program is about acknowledging students who choose to do the right thing.

STUDENT RECORDS

Natural parents have the right to review official school records unless a court order is on file specifying otherwise. School policy prohibits the release of confidential student information to individuals or agencies outside the school staff without parent knowledge and consent. Parents/students should contact the principal's office to make an appointment to review records. Notarized guardianship documents need to be on file in the office.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

The MCASD has varied technological resources available to assist you in research and learning. The MCA Elementary home page contains numerous links that can be accessed from both home and school computers.

TITLE I - SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAM SERVICES

Title I is a federally funded program providing academic support in math and reading for students in grades K - 6. MCAE is a School Wide Program, meaning all students are considered Title I students. A School Wide Program is a strategy designed to upgrade the entire educational program. Our goal is to ensure that all students, especially those who are low achieving, demonstrate proficient and advanced levels of achievement on the state academic achievement standards. For further information concerning the Title I program, please contact the elementary principal's office at 339-1500.

TORNADO eLEARNING ACADEMY (TELA)

TELA is a comprehensive K –12 curriculum delivered in an online format. In addition to providing individualized scheduling and pacing for students, the Tornado eLearning Academy is able to offer unique opportunities that are unavailable from other cyber charter schools.

- The Academy offers a fully blended approach to learning. All students have the opportunity to participate in any District run program such as vo-tech education, music, clubs, athletics, etc. Students are a part of the Mount Carmel Area community and have access to the opportunities afforded to students who attend our elementary and junior/senior high school.

- Students who graduate from the Tornado eLearning Academy will receive a Mount Carmel Area High School diploma and will be able to participate at commencement ceremonies with other members of the graduating class.

- A unique aspect of the Academy is our commitment to work in a collaborative partnership that allows prospective students and families to access the District's resources and services in a way that suits their individual needs.

****For more information on TELA contact the principal or guidance office.*

TV STUDIO

The MCA TV Studio broadcasts live school news daily 7:35 – 7:50 A.M. Rebroadcasts of community interest programs are aired every Wednesday from 8:00 – 11:00 P.M. on channel 13.

APPENDIX A

Mount Carmel Area School District
600 W 5TH ST
MOUNT CARMEL PA 17851-1897
PHONE: 570-339-1500 FAX: 570-339-0487

Cafe Trac Meal Account

If you have a student who has graduated or moved out of district and would like a refund please follow these steps:

Parent/guardian should email shearnl@mca.k12.pa.us and include the following information:

- Student Name
- Student school last attended
- Relationship to student
- Name and address to send refund

If you have a student who has graduated or moved out of district and would like to transfer the balance to a sibling or give as a donation please follow these steps:

Parent/guardian should email shearnl@mca.k12.pa.us and include the following information:

- Both Students Names
- Student School last attended
- Amount of transfer/donation
- Relationship to student

Parental Acknowledgement

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received the Mount Carmel Area School District 2026 - 2027 handbook. I have read, understand, and will comply with all district policies and procedures described in this handbook.

Parent (Please Print): _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Student's Name: _____

In an effort to better prepare for possible unexpected school closure, please let us know if your household has the following:

_____ Household internet and wi-fi

_____ Computer device

Please sign and return this form to your child's classroom teacher.

We embrace our responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that allows all students to meet the State's academic achievement standards or yearly growth. We agree to:

- Use research and best practices when choosing our textbooks, materials, technology, and assessments.
- Train teachers to effectively use proven teaching strategies, including lesson essential questions, summarizing, vocabulary, graphic organizers, differentiation, scaffolding, multiple intelligences, learning styles, and balanced literacy.
- Regularly assess students' strengths and weaknesses using research based progress monitoring assessments and practices
- Provide fluid instruction and interventions to make sure that all students are growing.
- Provide opportunities to inform parents of the above strategies and offer concrete ways for parents to support student academic success at home.

Teacher Agreement

We, the instructional staff members of Mount Carmel Area Elementary School, understand the importance of our role in helping all students grow and achieve success in the State standards and in life-long learning to the best of our ability. Therefore, we agree to carry out the following responsibilities:

§ Serve as a teacher and model to all students
§ Create a nurturing environment that encourages growth and learning
§ Teach the necessary concepts to your child as determined by the State standards
§ Use the best research and evidence based materials, strategies, and assessments
§ Be aware of the emerging strengths and needs of your child and address them
§ Communicate with parents and all school teachers and staff on a regular basis, and be accessible for consultation, when requested or necessary.

Student Agreement

I, _____, know my education is important to me. It will help me become a better person and succeed in life. I will work with my parents on my homework, reading, and math, but realize that I am the one who has to do the work. Therefore, I agree to do the following to the very best of my ability:

§ Come to school with a positive attitude, ready to learn
§ Do my classwork and homework on time
§ Pay attention and do my work
§ Ask for help when I need it
§ Return all corrected work to my parent/guardian
§ Be at school on time unless I am sick
§ Be responsible for my own work and behavior

Parent/Guardian Agreement

I, _____, realize that my child's years at school are very important. I also understand that my participation in my child's education will help his / her achievement and attitude. Therefore, I agree to carry out the following responsibilities to the very best of my ability:

§ Go over my child's assignments with him/her and make sure they are complete
§ Provide a quiet place for my child to study
§ Make sure my child gets enough sleep each night
§ Make sure my child is at school on time
§ Spend at least 10 minutes each day reading with my child
§ Spend at least 10 minutes each day doing math with my child
§ Participate in parent/teacher conferences, parent meetings, and parent trainings focused on helping students at home with math, reading, and study skills.

Administration:_____ Classroom Teacher:_____
Student:_____ Parent/Guardian:_____