The White Book
A Handbook for Parents of Mercersburg Academy Students
2018-2019
This handbook is a publication of the parent volunteer organization, known as White Key, and the Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations, and has been compiled with input from past and present Mercersburg parents. Please consult The Blue Book for additional information for Mercersburg parents.
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Part I: Before You Get to Campus

WHAT TO DO OVER THE SUMMER PRIOR TO ARRIVING AT SCHOOL

Forms and Paperwork

There are multiple forms and registrations to be completed before you pack and leave for campus. Refer to the parent page of our website (mercersburg.edu) for a list of summer emails, many of which will direct you to online forms and registrations. Your child will need to have a physical. *Note that health forms need to be completed and received by the Health Center before you arrive on campus.* This is particularly important since students are not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, community engagement, or outdoor education until the physical form is submitted.

Books

*Do not wait until your child arrives at Mercersburg to place your book order.* You should have received an email from the Academic Dean’s Office with information outlining the ordering of books (print and digital) through mercersburg.etechcampus.com, our online bookstore. Information about ordering books is also available on the Mercersburg website. We will also be offering a rental bundle to our students. This is an alternative way of ordering books (print and digital, new or used) at a reduced cost. However, rental books need to be returned to the book company at the end of the school year during the on-campus buyback. Books can be pre-owned. Look for the terms “gently used” if you choose to shop this route. All books purchased or rented through eTechCampus will be automatically shipped to the school and will be ready for your child to pick up during pre-season. If you purchase books from an outside source, have them shipped directly to school. We highly recommend that international students and students arriving by airplane either use our online bookstore or have books purchased through another vendor shipped to Mercersburg. Students will need to have their books in hand for the first day of classes. Math and science classes may require special calculators. Those, too, should be purchased in advance of the first day of classes.

Technology

It is a requirement that each student come to school with an iPad 4 or greater (iOS 10.3.2). Some parents choose to purchase a protective case with keyboard and/or insurance for the iPad. Although not required, some students also bring personal computers. Additionally, each dormitory has a computer for everyone’s use. There are computers and printers that
everyone may use in public spaces in Irvine Hall and Lenfest Hall. There are additional computer labs and printers for use in specific classes in Irvine Hall and the Burgin Center for the Arts. Mercersburg’s campus has a wireless network in all academic and most public areas. Student rooms are equipped with a wired network-connection point for each student. **Students who wish to have campus wireless Internet access must have their computer configured by visiting** [http://monet.mercersburg.edu/config](http://monet.mercersburg.edu/config) **or by visiting the Office of Technology on the fourth floor of Irvine Hall. Additional details will be provided at registration.**

**What to Buy and What to Pack** *(Lists on p. 36–38)*

First, consult *The Blue Book*’s section titled “Room Setup and Arrangement Guidelines.” Note there are restrictions to the types of fabrics and furniture and accessories students are permitted to have in their dorm rooms. The school takes safety issues seriously, particularly fire safety.

Second, consult the list of suggested items to pack found under “Residential Life” on the website. This is a basic list of necessities: clothing, bedding, toiletries, school supplies, and the like. There is a school store in the Simon Student Center where basic school supplies and toiletries can be purchased during the school year. **Note that there are three dress-code categories that apply to every student.** Details of casual, standard, and semiformal dress can be found in *The Blue Book* and on the website. Temperatures do vary greatly during the school year, so appropriate seasonal outerwear is necessary.

Then there is the last list—what many students end up adding to their dorm rooms to make life easier, more organized, and more comfortable. **Not every student has these items.** Use your discretion. These extras can add significantly to your budget. We’ve included this list at the end of this publication to give you another glimpse into dorm life. No parent wants that panicky phone call from a child who is convinced that some necessary element for the dorm room has been forgotten. It’s no fun purchasing items and mailing them in an attempt to settle a child who is away from home. On the other hand, know that the school’s list of suggested items truly does cover the basics.

Hold off on purchasing larger items like rugs, chairs, and curtains until your child arrives on campus and discusses arrangements with the roommate. **Note that ninth graders are not permitted to have extra furniture in their rooms until after the first term ends, at the earliest.** Ninth graders have to earn this privilege by demonstrating that they have adjusted to dormitory and academic life. Keeping a tidy room, having a strong academic start, and following dorm rules are contributing factors. **Also note that there isn’t space for really bulky items.** Each dorm room has two beds, two dressers, two desks, and two rolling drawers, all required to remain in the room. (A few dorm rooms are triple occupancy.) Desk chairs are provided but may be replaced with a desk chair brought from home.
Athletes supply personal sports equipment items, such as lacrosse/field hockey sticks, cleats, sneakers, racquets, golf clubs, or whatever the basics are to participate. Student-athletes are issued team uniforms. Each student-athlete purchases practice apparel, which can be laundered after each use. Purchasing additional team spirit wear is optional. Refer to the website’s athletic information for more details. (Similarly, musicians, dancers, and artists should bring the basics to practice their crafts.)

**Don’t Panic If You Forget Something**

The school does offer trips to area shopping malls (see p. 38) throughout the school year and more frequently at the beginning of the year. Your child can sign up for the trip (the transportation fees are reasonable and will be paid using your student’s Blue Card or charged home, if needed) and purchase the needed or wanted items, depending on your budget. Remember, too, that online retailers like Amazon provide free or reasonably priced delivery of books and supplies.

Students do need to plan in advance to withdraw money from their Blue Card (refer to the “How It Works” section under Blue Card on the parent page on the school’s website) as well as to *The Blue Book*. There is a section on spending money in this handbook, too. The student bank, located in the school store, is open during store hours. All cash from the bank will come from a loaded Blue Card.

Some parents equip their children with a debit card, a credit card, or a credit card company’s gift card. The choice is yours. There is no “norm,” as each family’s circumstance is different. The school provides a Blue Card (which also serves as a student ID and exterior door key) to be loaded with funds for your child’s school expenses at the school store, café, transportation office, technology office, and student activities office (SAC).

**GENERAL TIPS FOR PACKING AND MOVING-IN DAY**

**The Physical Basics**

Pack in small portable boxes, crates, suitcases (preferably with wheels), or footlockers that can be easily stored under the dorm bed. You may have to park a distance from the dormitory entrance. Heavy and bulky loads are quickly tiresome to carry. There is an elevator in each dormitory except for South Cottage and Culbertson House, but using it can be difficult during peak move-in times. Normally, there will be rolling carts at each dorm.
Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. You will be doing a lot of walking during moving-in day. First, you'll have to register, then find the dormitory, and unload the car. There are multiple floors in each dormitory. Pace yourself. Lunch is available before, during, and after registration for your convenience. After lunch, new students report to Inbound (the new-student orientation program) while parents attend a meeting hosted by the Head of School. Returning students register, unload, say goodbye, and head to their fall extracurricular activities.

Bring cold drinks and snacks if you can. It can be very hot when moving into the dorms (and also in May or June when you move your child out of the dormitory).

The Emotional Basics

One of the hardest things to do is remain tranquil. Dropping off a new student is fraught with all kinds of emotions. It is typical for your child to show a desire to unpack their belongings themselves. This is a healthy sign of independence. Involve your child’s roommate as much as you can in the process as it gives them a chance to casually talk while busying themselves with a mutual project. Although parents are legitimately the “workhorses” physically and emotionally, keep in mind that this day is truly about your child starting a new adventure. Therefore, try to minimize the number of people involved in the move, if possible. If siblings accompany you on the trip, try to keep them occupied and out of your Mercersburg child's way. Too many family members can make the new student more anxious, even though your best intention is to show love and support. Packing a snack and some quiet activities and setting up siblings on a blanket on the lawn outside the dormitory can maintain peace for everyone.

For the safety and comfort of everyone, don’t bring pets. Leave your beloved creatures at home. The day is full of enough stress and activity. Many faculty members have pets that your child will come to know and love as a substitute for pets at home.

Football Pre-season: An Exception to Regular Registration

Football pre-season starts before other pre-season team training. New parents dropping off their students for pre-season football have a different experience from regular registration. New parents do not follow the regular registration and move-in procedure described in the next section. Yours is a special and more informal day.
The Athletic Department staff, along with coaches and parent volunteers, will assist with registration and moving in. Please ask questions of coaches, parents, administrators, and faculty members who greet you. Note that parents are welcome to return for the meeting and reception on the later registration day; however, a revisit may not be possible due to time and distance and it is not essential for parents to return for these registration events or for Convocation. Your student will join all new incoming students at Inbound.

Part II: Once on Campus

REGISTERING AND MOVING IN

So you’ve made the decision as a family that your child will attend Mercersburg. You’ve picked courses, ordered books, and bought clothing and dorm-room essentials. The car is packed. Chances are everyone is feeling a little nervous. Now you arrive on campus and wonder how to make sense of the apparent bedlam.

First, take a deep breath. The school has streamlined registration and check-in. Various school administrators and staff are present for registration. Dorm faculty members and advisers are available in the dormitories. Just ask questions. People are there to help you.

Second, try not to fret about unpacking everything and getting the room set up “just right.” Students may not move furniture around until the roommate arrives. After all, students are sharing this space. Let them decide where to put things.

If you can unpack clothes and get a bed made, you’re done. Frankly, your child may welcome the distraction of unpacking paper supplies and books and knickknacks later to combat nervousness or homesickness. Activity is good, especially when students are able to make the new space their own.

Dorm faculty members will instruct your child where to store large suitcases and boxes. There is limited storage space in each dormitory. Items won’t be able to be stored until all students have arrived on campus and cleared their belongings from storage locations. If you can take home any containers and extra luggage, do so. Bring them back at the end of the school year for repacking and traveling home.

Be considerate of your child’s roommate and family members. Remember that this is a new experience for everyone. Don’t pile your belongings all over the place, leaving little room for others to operate. Simple courtesies can make the day run smoothly.
Introduce yourself and your child to the dormitory staff during move-in day. The faculty members are there to greet you and answer questions. These faculty members will come to know your child very well. One of them will be your child's adviser, too. Note that more faculty members are assigned to each dormitory than actually live there. Your child's adviser may not reside in the dormitory, but he/she will have dorm duty.

Go to the dining hall and have lunch together. Try to get your child to eat something. The afternoon will be busy, and dinner will seem a long time away on an empty stomach. Stay as calm and as positive as you can. Chances are the reality of registering and being there has kicked in hard, for you and your child. Be assured that your various emotions are normal. Others feel exactly the same way. Breathe—everything will be fine, really.

After lunch, registration, and unloading, students report to fall extracurricular activities or Inbound (new students) while new parents attend a meeting hosted by the Head of School. You'll say goodbye to your child before the parent meeting. It may be difficult to part—you to your meeting and your child to Inbound. Know that your child will be busy immediately and for the rest of the day.

When it’s time to leave, leave gracefully. Expect some tears and tension from your child. Expect to shed some tears as you drive down Sycamore Lane or East Seminary Street. Even “veteran” parents feel sad to leave their children. If you focus on the adventure, your heart will feel lighter.

**DORMITORY LIFE**

**Equipment and Facilities**

There are appliances like microwave ovens, refrigerators, and sinks available for student use in the dormitory common rooms. Each floor has at least one washer and one dryer. An iron and ironing board are available in some dormitories.

There are televisions, DVD players, computer terminals, and printers in the common rooms. Faculty members use the common rooms as “home base” for duty. Students sign in and out here. The common rooms are used for meetings and special dorm events as well as for “hanging out.” There are trash and various recycling bins in the common rooms as well.

Each dormitory floor or wing has a communal bathroom. There are private shower stalls. Students are expected to carry their towels and toiletries to and from the bathroom, keeping their belongings in their rooms.
Each dormitory has a bicycle rack outside. Students must provide their own locks. *Note that all bicycles must be registered with the Security Office. See The Blue Book for more details.* Storage for bicycles over the summer is available. Your child should watch for school announcements or ask a dorm faculty member for details.

**A Caution about the Reality of Dormitory Living**

While Mercersburg’s dormitories are single-sex and visitation of the opposite sex is highly regulated, new students sometimes forget that both males and females work and live in the dormitories. Keep this in mind and pack a bathrobe, a shower wrap, athletic shorts or pajama bottoms to wear in the hallway while going to and from the bathroom. No one, faculty member or student, wants to be embarrassed! At the risk of stating the obvious, this reality applies to weekdays and weekends, morning, noon, and night.

**Laundry – The Agony of Independence**

Save quarters! Bundle them and send your child off with a few rolls along with laundry detergent. There is nothing worse for a student than to have free time to do laundry and find machines free and not have quarters.

Budgeting time to do laundry is a challenge for new students. Students involved in athletics and fine-arts productions have even more limited free time. Practices, competitions, travel off campus, rehearsals, performances, and community engagement take up much of their time outside of class. Weekends may be no exception.

Have your child learn about doing laundry by practicing at home before leaving for school. Talk about a schedule and make suggestions on how to budget time.

A laundry service is also available. For more information on this option, contact the Office of Student Life.

**ACADEMICS – BEYOND CLASSES AND SCHEDULES**

All pertinent information about placement tests, selecting classes, and scheduling comes from the Academic Dean’s Office and the Registrar’s Office. Details about academic life are covered in *The Blue Book*.

The daily schedule varies as classes rotate periods. Occasionally, special programs or events require an adjustment to the daily schedule. Rotations will be explained to the students before classes begin, typically during the orientation program.
Where Do Students Really Study during Quiet Hours?

Ninth graders attend a monitored study hall in Irvine Hall for at least the first term. New 10th graders also study in a monitored study hall for the first several weeks. Monitored study hall may be extended for students needing or wanting additional academic support or assistance with time management. All other students study in their rooms, in an optional supervised study area, or in the library. Tenth and 11th graders may sign out to Lenfest Hall, the Burgin Center, or Irvine Hall. Only 12th graders may use the Simon Student Center during quiet hours.

How Do Students Get Help during Quiet Hours?

Faculty members are available throughout the day for help during a common free period or a free rotation. Students may also briefly consult particular faculty members when they are on duty in the dorm. Students may ask permission to visit a faculty member in another location. Students can go to the Writing Center, the Math Center, or the Language Media Center during designated evening hours.

Exams – A New Frontier for Some

Exams are given at the end of the fall and spring terms. Except in limited courses, there are no exams for the winter term. Instead, the school community engages in Irving-Marshall Week activities, which culminate in a declamation contest followed by a dance. Most seniors do not take exams the spring term of their final year.

Exams are scheduled over a series of days. A student will have either one or two exams each day. Many ninth graders are unaccustomed to such a schedule; faculty work to prepare the students for the exam schedule and monitor studying to alleviate anxiety.

Grade Report Schedule

Grade and comment reports are sent by email six times per year (fall interim, end of fall term, winter interim, end of winter term, spring interim, and end of spring term). Each grade and comment email alerts parents to when they can expect the next report. Advisers meet individually with their advisees to discuss each grade report.

College Counseling

The College Counseling Office interacts with students throughout their time at Mercersburg. Their mission is to provide a personalized college-
counseling experience based on individual student self-reflection and self-knowledge so that graduates have options that suit their needs and help them continue to grow academically and personally. Along the way, the counselors conduct individual and group meetings with each grade level, providing specific advice, information, and timetables.

While the college-admission process does not begin in earnest until 11th grade, students will be assigned a counselor upon entry to the school. In ninth grade, counselors meet with students in small groups to set goals for the year and to help students learn more about their individual strengths. In 10th grade, all students will take the PSAT and meet in groups to review the results. Most students also take a mock ACT toward the end of the year. In addition, they will meet individually with their counselors to select courses for the following year. In 11th grade, all students take the PSAT. Based on PSAT scores, ACT scores, and grades and courses, students are recommended to prepare for either the SAT or ACT in order to maximize their potential results.

All 11th graders will work individually with tutors from Marks Education and will be given an individual testing plan including recommended dates for taking standardized tests. This personalized test prep is a graduation expectation for all students and is provided at no additional cost. Students meet individually with their counselors to research colleges, create a college list, plan their senior year, and begin work on college essays. In 12th grade, counselors will continue to work with their counselees to finalize a list of schools and to review all applications and written materials that will be submitted to colleges to ensure that all students create the best representation of themselves in their applications.

Parents of student-athletes ought to factor in the reality that the recruiting process begins during 11th grade (and sometimes earlier) and can be finished as early as the summer before senior year. For more information, talk with your student’s coach and college counselor or visit mercersburg.edu/college counseling.

Parents of artists and performers can help their children compile materials for portfolios and/or auditions throughout high school. College admission offices allow arts supplements in support of applications; some even require auditions for admission into certain performing-arts programs.

More information including the calendar, upcoming events, and resources can be found on the College Counseling website. Families are encouraged to get a jump on the process by visiting college campuses and scheduling summer enrichment activities with their students. Activities such as summer
camps, school-sponsored travel programs, research opportunities, or working a summer job all contribute to meaningful summer plans.

**CAMPUS LIFE – SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

**Dances**

Dances are held throughout the year, and dress is casual for most. The prom is held in late spring and other special events may also be added. Semiformal dress is sometimes required, though tuxedos are not. Dates aren’t required either. Often, friends go together. Some students invite dates from outside the Mercersburg community, and permission for this must be granted in advance by the Office of Student Life. Ninth- and 10th-grade students may only attend the prom if asked by an 11th- or 12th-grade student.

**Birthdays**

Celebrating a birthday away from home may be a new experience for your child. Parents may order a cake and ice cream through Dining Services. Plan in advance (at least two weeks)—call Dining Services directly at 717-328-6179 or email diningservices@mercersburg.edu to place your order. Also note that you can order special treats at any time of the year. Occasionally student groups will offer special opportunities to order exam packages or other goodies for your child.

Some parents arrange for a special party for their child and friends by contacting the child’s adviser or dormitory dean. Faculty members are usually very willing to assist you in executing a special occasion, provided they have advance notice. Ordering pizza or walking to town to a local eatery are other options.

There is a local florist that will take orders by telephone and online and deliver to campus (see p. 38). Deliveries are made to Traylor Hall, and students are notified to pick them up.

**PERSONAL CARE AND FINANCES**

**How and Where**

Most students wait until they go home for a weekend or a break to get their hair cut or styled; however, there are a couple of shops within walking distance of campus.

Many toiletry items and laundry supplies are available for purchase in the school store. There are local stores, too, that students can reach by walking or bicycling, and periodic weekend trips to Walmart or Target are offered.
Occasionally a parent who lives close to campus or a faculty member will drive students to a store. Please note that students may not leave campus without permission or ride in the car of another parent without the school's and their own parent's permission. Students are permitted to ride with faculty members. Students are never permitted to ride in a day student’s car. In all cases, a student leaving campus must contact the Office of Student Life or the Duty Dean if after 4:30 p.m. or on weekends. The parent(s) must also give permission and acknowledge the plans before the student leaves campus.

**Spending Money**

Ultimately, you need to establish an allowance for your child. There are guidelines offered in *The Blue Book*. Students do need some spending money in order to purchase snacks and the occasional meal out.

There aren’t any ATMs on campus; however, there are several in town. As noted before, some parents give their child a debit, credit, or gift card to make purchases. The Blue Card (see p. 7) will also be a bank card for cash withdrawals. For students to use the Blue Card to withdraw money at the student bank, parents will need to “load” the card with funds according to the instructions that are sent in early August.

Students are discouraged from keeping large amounts of cash in their dormitory rooms. There is no need for large sums of money.

**Rutherford Health and Wellness Center**

Rather than powering through colds, injuries, or flu bugs, encourage your child to visit the Health Center. When combatting head colds, thought processes are not often clear and your child needs to hear you say “seek help.” The Health Center is a quiet place in which your child can recuperate and receive plenty of medical attention. In addition to their watchful eye, your child should not worry about missing classes, rehearsals, or practices. The Health Center staff notifies all necessary faculty and will dictate what course of action is in your child’s best health interest. This alone eases your child’s worry and allows for rest.
Part III: Staying Informed

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SCHOOL

Website/Online

The school’s website, mercersburg.edu, is full of information. You can find a teacher’s contact information, check an athletic team schedule, get directions, peruse calendars and daily events, and so much more. Parents are advised to regularly visit the parent page on the school’s website for information at mercersburg.edu/parents. The school will send other important and timely news to parents’ personal email accounts, including via Parent News (the weekly parent e-newsletter).

You can also follow Mercersburg on Facebook (facebook.com/MercersburgAcademy), Twitter (twitter.com/mercersburg), and Instagram (instagram.com/mercersburg).

The Blue Book

This handbook is the most comprehensive source of information for students and parents. The Blue Book contains rules, schedules, procedures, contact information, and student services; it covers all the people, places, and things that define and govern life in the Mercersburg community.

All parents and students should read The Blue Book and familiarize themselves with the contents. The Blue Book is posted on the website each year and a hard copy of the new edition is distributed to all students and parents at registration.

School Directory

A directory listing all students and faculty is published and mailed shortly after the beginning of the school year. The directory includes photographs, home contact information, parent information, and on-campus residence information for all students. Photographs and contact information are also included for faculty and staff.

Note that home email addresses are not included for privacy reasons. All members of the school community, including parents, are expected to treat the directory as a private resource and not share it with others outside the Mercersburg community.
Mail and Email

Parents are encouraged to read all their mail in its various formats. Often there are forms to complete or information immediately important to you and your child.

It is important for the school to have current mail, email, and phone information for you and for your child. If changes occur during the year, please notify the school by contacting the Registrar’s Office or sending changes to changes@mercersburg.edu.

Various offices occasionally send letters and other information via the mail. Increasingly, the school relies on email and posted notices on the school’s website. Email is sent to home email accounts or the email account you give to the school as preferred. Notices about special events, alerts that mailings are on the way, Parent News, and communications from administrators are a few examples.

New students receive progress reports after the first few weeks of their first term. All students receive interim reports halfway through each term that include grades and teacher comments as well as a final report at the end of each of the three terms. Parents will receive notice of these academic reports and adviser comments via email.

Your child’s email address follows this format:

   LastnameFirstinitialGraduationyear@mercersburg.edu
   (Example: SmithJ18@mercersburg.edu)

To send mail to your child, follow the example below:
   (your child’s name)
   Mercersburg Academy
   300 East Seminary Street
   Mercersburg, PA 17236

Each child has a mailbox at the school post office. The box number is not essential in addressing mail.

If your child receives magazines or other publications by mail, submit a change of address so they will be received at Mercersburg. Remember to reverse this process about six weeks before the end of the school year.
HOW TO REACH SOMEONE AT SCHOOL

Contacting Your Child

One of the hardest things for parents to get used to a boarding school is limited communication with their children. Students are busy most of the day and the evening. Their schedules are packed with classes, meetings, practices, rehearsals, performances, competitions, and studying. In general, their school day starts by 9 a.m. and ends at 11 p.m. There is little “free time” from Sunday evening through Friday evening. Parents of athletes and performers should be prepared to have large blocks of weekends also occupied by practices, rehearsals, athletic contests, performances, and travel. Yes, students may also travel during the week, often missing part of evening quiet hours. Theirs is a demanding schedule and lifestyle.

The switch from having your child at home and accessible to now being miles away and out of contact is one of the biggest adjustments for both parents and students. Be warned: You may get a tearful telephone call, text message, or a panic-laden email. Your first reaction is to call your child. You won’t get an answer or response. Next you’ll contact the adviser, who will check on your child, only to tell you that everything is fine and your child doesn’t know why you’re so adamant to hear back.

Yes, this really happens! And you just have to know that after your child hangs up from a teary telephone conversation or hits the send button, your child goes about business as usual and really, in most cases, is just fine in an hour or so. Even the late-night call usually will result in a peaceful night’s sleep for your child. You, however, toss, turn, and worry.

It is common for parents to hear only the “bad” things. Students rarely share the highlights. Trust in the adage that “no news is good news.”

Be assured that the school community is filled with caring and vigilant members. Your child is monitored by dormitory personnel, teachers, coaches, staff members, and their spouses. Even some administrators who don’t have as much daily interaction with the students know your child and will make contact. Oftentimes, faculty spouses are wonderful at lifting your child’s spirits and engaging in conversations. One of Mercersburg’s strengths is the familial nature of the community. Faculty members and their families live in the dormitories and on-campus residences and eat in the dining hall. There is constant interaction among all members of the community.
Contacting Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

Parents are encouraged to contact someone at the school with a question or a concern. You will learn your child’s adviser’s name at registration and likely meet the adviser while moving into the dormitory. Your child’s adviser is the best place to start. Your child’s teachers will communicate directly with the adviser, too, especially if there are academic concerns. The adviser may refer you to someone else, as necessary. You will find that instructors, coaches, the Dean and Associate Dean of Student Life, the Academic Dean, the Assistant Head of School for Academic Affairs, dormitory deans, the Associate Head of School, and the Head of School are all receptive to telephone calls and emails. Sometimes your patience is required after they receive your message so they can gather information and get back to you. They will respond as quickly as possible.

Sometimes there are issues—whether a minor illness, a lingering concern (homesickness, adjusting to life at boarding school, academic pressure), or more serious difficulties—requiring specific professional help. Mercersburg has a variety of resources available to students and parents on campus, including the Health Center and academic, psychological, and college counseling. Refer to The Blue Book. Do not hesitate to use these resources. These faculty and staff members are here to assist you and your child.

You can always reach someone at Mercersburg by calling the Office of Student Life, the Dean on Duty, the Campus Safety and Security Office, or the Health Center. Consult The Blue Book for telephone numbers and instructions on which office to try depending on the time of day (or night), weekday, or weekend.

REALITIES ABOUT COMMUNICATION

The Reality of Independence Affecting Communication

Parents need to be prepared for sporadic word, or no word at all, from their child. The beginning of the year is a particularly busy time. New students have much to learn and take in. They lose track of time between telephone calls, texts, and emails. Don’t be offended. Don’t panic. It’s actually healthy for your child not to contact you or hometown friends very often. Let your child establish new relationships at Mercersburg and spread his/her wings while getting used to the newfound independence.
Independence is a double-edged sword. As a parent, you may have to purposefully “take a back seat” and let your children be their own advocates. While you may be used to helping and interceding on your child’s behalf, at boarding school your role is different. Your child is to take the lead to seek help, to ask questions, and to deal with difficulties. It can be hard, but bide your time. This change is good for you both. Chances are your relationship, though changed, will be stronger. Be prepared for communication to vary throughout the year and over the course of your child’s time at Mercersburg. The school’s website as well as the parent page are good resources for keeping up to date with what’s happening at the school.

The Reality of Phone Communication

It can be difficult to reach your child by telephone. There are restrictions when students may receive and place calls, whether via cell phone or landline. Students are allowed to have cell phones, but they may only use them according to specific school guidelines outlined in The Blue Book. All cell phones must be on file with the Office of Student Life. This can be done at registration at the beginning of the school year. Be warned that reception in some dormitories can be intermittent. Land lines are provided in each dormitory room, but there is no voicemail on these telephones. These phones also serve as emergency notification devices and must be connected at all times.

Note that students may not use telephones or cell phones outside of their dormitories from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. each weekday, and they are not allowed to use phones during quiet hours Sunday through Thursday evenings. Similarly, Internet access is restricted after study hours. Some parents establish a specific time each week to call their child. This tactic is particularly helpful for parents who live a great distance from the school.

The Ease of Email and the Pleasures of “Snail Mail”

Email and texting are some of the best ways to communicate with your child. The Internet is a great way to share photographs and even schoolwork, all at your own convenience, regardless of the hour or time zone. Video communication is an option through programs such as Skype, FaceTime, and other options.

Don’t overlook the postal service as a means of communication. Students love to get mail! Each student has a mailbox at the school post office in the Simon Student Center. Packages can be claimed during posted hours (usually after lunch on weekdays). Note that overnight mail is not always guaranteed.
Internet ordering has made getting items easy, whether it’s something your child forgot or a special surprise. Many a wardrobe crisis has been resolved with an online order and delivery directly to Mercersburg!

Part IV: Seeing Your Child Throughout the School Year

VISITING ON AND OFF CAMPUS

Visiting Campus

There are several special-event weekends during the school year. Consult the calendar on the school website for dates.

Parents are often disappointed when they travel miles and miles to see their children at school, only to spend very little time with them. Family weekends are full of activities that demand your child’s participation, especially during performances and athletic events.

Check the schedule in advance anytime you plan to visit. Make certain your child will be competing on campus. Note performance times. Realize that you may not be able to go out to eat at a restaurant as planned.

Students may sign out overnight with their parents, in essence taking a weekend. Proper forms have to be submitted in advance. Check The Blue Book or contact the Office of Student Life for procedure and permission. Remember, the burden is on the student, not you, to submit forms and secure permission. One codicil: Parents may not take their children off campus without contacting the Office of Student Life, nor may another parent take your child off campus without your permission given to the Office of Student Life, even if it’s only downtown for dinner. Simply call the Office of Student Life during the school day or the Dean on Duty after 4:30 p.m. and on weekends. It is imperative that someone at Mercersburg knows where your child is at all times.

Alternatives to “Big Weekends” on Campus

To enhance your time together, consider visiting campus on an “off” weekend or travel to the venue where your child will be as part of a team or performance group off campus. It’s nice to see the school in a more normal mode, when there aren’t lots of special events planned. You’ll find that you have more time to spend with your child on these “off” weekends. It may also be easier to meet with advisers, coaches, and teachers.

Some of the best visiting times can occur away from Mercersburg. You can see your child and support school activities by traveling to see the rest of the group. Check with other parents of students with whom your child
is participating. Parents sometimes plan tailgates, snacks, or cookouts at or after an off-campus event. Coaches and directors can facilitate this communication. Remember, you have a directory with contact information.

**Weekends Your Child Is Off Campus**

Each student is allotted a specific number of weekends away from campus. One fall break and two long weekends are scheduled as part of the school calendar. For these weekends, students do not have to leave campus, as the school remains open. For longer vacations, the school does close its facilities and students must depart campus.

Parents of student-athletes beware! Oftentimes athletic teams are competing, so students may not leave campus. Depending on when the competition is held, athletes sometimes can leave after the event and benefit from an abbreviated weekend. Athletes frequently return to campus early from holidays or long weekends to begin practice, so pay close attention to team calendars and contact the coach if you have questions.

Many times students don’t use all the weekends allotted to them. Don’t be offended if your child doesn’t ask to come home; it means Mercersburg is fun. Similarly, don’t be offended if your child wants to take a weekend with another student and family. The school becomes the child’s new community and center of your child’s life. This fact becomes even clearer during longer breaks and over the summer. While you might have mixed feelings about your child’s attachment to this new world, remember this is a sign that your child is adjusting to living away from you. Hopefully, your child is busy and happy with new friends and experiences. After all, isn’t this the reason you enrolled your child in boarding school?

**PLANNING TRAVEL TO AND FROM CAMPUS**

**What to Keep in Mind for Your Child**

*Plan in advance as much as possible.* Consult the school calendar and *The Blue Book* for transportation options and policies. The school expects all students to depart and arrive at the designated times. Refer to *The Blue Book* for details. It is important to allow sufficient time to reach destinations like airports and train stations.

Mercersburg has a transportation coordinator who will assist with travel arrangements from regional airports, train stations, and bus stations for vacations and school-designated long weekends. Students will have their Blue Card scanned for these trips or charged home, if needed. If more than one student books transportation services, costs are shared, thus
decreasing the fee. Students will receive emails asking them to sign up for transportation in advance, and then receive a reminder closer to the date of departure.

A helpful hint: Have your child take responsibility for making travel arrangements, at least the segment that involves getting to or from the airport or train station. Caution your child to be packed and ready to go. Cars and buses leave promptly after classes end. Drivers do not want to be rushed. Other student travelers don’t want to feel as if they will be late making a connection.

**What to Keep in Mind for You and Your Family**

It is a good idea to make reservations for travel and hotels far in advance. Area hotels book quickly for major event weekends. Many hotel chains allow you to make reservations 50–52 weeks in advance. Join their membership clubs and earn free rooms if you travel to campus (or elsewhere) frequently. Over the course of your child’s tenure at Mercersburg, you’d be surprised how the benefits can add up! Online booking is often less expensive. Make dinner reservations a bit in advance, too, if you can. Many area restaurants take reservations.

**Part V: Reentry at Home**

The adjustment to life at home for the summer may take time for both you and your child. Your child is used to relative independence. Your routines, too, have changed during his or her absence.

Many parents find that their relationship is stronger and healthier because of the boarding-school experience. For a large part of the year, you haven’t been the enforcer of rules and expectations—Mercersburg’s staff has.

During summer breaks, your child may want to participate in programs sponsored by Mercersburg. For example, there are opportunities for travel, study, community service, and athletics. Don’t be dismayed if your child wants to do something away from home for part of the summer.

Expect your child to miss friends, activities, and routines from Mercersburg. Don’t be offended. This is proof that your child has developed into a member of the Mercersburg community and has become immersed in the boarding-school experience.
Part VI: Parent Involvement On and Off Campus

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

There are a variety of ways parents can volunteer at Mercersburg, participating on or off campus. Parents interested in volunteering should visit the White Key link on parent web page to learn more or contact White Key co-chairs Brendan and Katie Fitzsimmons P ’17, ’20 at kgroh@myactv.net.

White Key is Mercersburg’s parent volunteer organization. White Key has volunteers who assist the Office of Admission, the Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations, and each other. White Key sponsors occasional activities throughout the year in an effort to serve school administrators, students, and parents. This handbook is just one example of a White Key project.

Parents can volunteer to host local receptions for current students and their families as well as for prospective students and their families. The Office of Admission also uses parent volunteers to call prospective students and their parents to answer questions and serve as a welcome contact to those who are accepted. Parent volunteers also provide a presence at Revisit Days, Open Houses, and Spring Preview Day. The Office of Admission relies on current parents to market the school and refer prospective students.

The Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations works with parent volunteers to communicate with other parents to encourage event attendance, identify new events or new variations of yearly events, and facilitate parent participation in coordinating or hosting an event. Volunteers staff hospitality areas at Registration, Moving-In Day, and Family and Alumni Weekend to encourage communication between parents. They also partner with the Athletic Department to have a Mercersburg presence at on- and off-campus competitions. Parent volunteers solicit gifts for the Mercersburg Annual Fund, either by calling from home or attending phonathons.

Additionally, parents may volunteer to host an international student or a student who lives quite a distance from Mercersburg in their home for a long weekend or extended vacation. Your children may know a student they wish to invite, or you may contact the Office of Student Life or Office of Admission (see Part VIII for more information).
INFORMALLY ORGANIZED SUPPORT

Parents also informally gather in support of athletic teams and the arts. Organization is spearheaded by a group of parents, usually with the supervision of the school, but run independently. For example, in recent years the football team has had a very active parent group that organizes tailgate picnics after games (both home and away) and maintains a website with weekly game reviews and photos posted. Occasionally parents will host a team at their home following an away competition. White Key occasionally sponsors a parent reception on campus as well.

Part VII: Welcome to Mercersburg Traditions – A Parent’s Primer

CLASS NOMENCLATURE

Mercersburg has its own names for each grade. You can be easily confused if you use standard high-school identification.

Ninth graders are called Juniors.
10th graders are called Lower Middlers.
11th graders are called Upper Middlers.
12th graders and PGs are called Seniors.

FAMILY AND ALUMNI WEEKEND AND OTHER WEEKEND EVENTS

Family and Alumni Weekend is held in the fall. Parents are invited to attend their children’s classes, a lunch, and dinner. There are various special-interest meetings (parent-advisee and college counseling) scheduled as well as student athletic contests. Stony Batter, the theatre group, often holds a performance during the weekend.

All alumni are invited back to campus as well. Students get involved in the festivities by singing Step Songs on Friday evening in front of Main Hall and attending a bonfire. Step Songs, first held in 1894, is a collection of Mercersburg standards heralded through the ages. The entire school community is involved in welcoming back alumni, promoting school spirit, cheering on the athletic teams, and building relationships between current students and members of the alumni body.

Finding something to do while on campus is easy, as there are plenty of wonderful activities planned throughout the weekend. It’s recommended that you make hotel reservations as soon as you know your plans.
In the spring there isn’t a formal Family Weekend; however, there are many events parents may plan to attend, such as the music and dance concerts or theatre productions and a series of talks/workshops hosted by the College Counseling Office. This, of course, is in addition to multiple athletic contests.

Parents are given advance notice and a schedule of events by the Head of School’s Office and/or the Office of Student Life. Consult the school’s website for details.

**IRVING-MARSHALL WEEK**

The entire student body is divided into two societies: Irving and Marshall. The two societies are the school’s oldest organizations, actually older than the prep school itself. Chartered in 1873, Irving and Marshall started as debating societies and social clubs. In the 1890s, the founding headmaster, Dr. William Mann Irvine, strengthened both societies and revived the rivalry, setting a tradition of midwinter weekend (now weeklong) competitions on or near February 22.

Each weekend’s competitions culminated in an individual debate. Over the years, the debate changed to a team debate, then to a declamation contest. Later, sporting events like basketball, soccer, swimming, squash, and volleyball, as well as games such as pool, poker, chess, checkers, foosball, and backgammon, became featured competitions. But the debate or declamation contest remained supreme.

Today, spirited announcements and skits mark Irving-Marshall Week. Students don their societies’ colors—red and white for Irving, blue and gold for Marshall—and cheer on participants. Siblings and alumni children have a particular pride in carrying on their families’ societal affiliations.

During Irving-Marshall Week, the class schedule is adjusted. There are no winter term exams for yearlong courses, but term courses may administer an exam. The week culminates in a special dinner, followed by the declamation contest and dance. All students must attend the dinner and the declamation contest. Semiformal attire is required. The winning society is announced at the dance following the declamation contest. Usually the society that places highest in the declamation contest wins the weekend… and bragging rights until the next February.

This is a fun and spirited time at Mercersburg for the students and the faculty. Many believe the tradition was established to help relieve stress and conquer winter “blahs.” Students have the opportunity to participate in contests in which they normally wouldn’t engage, to the delight of many. This is one tradition that any and all alumni remember, cherish, and regale.
THE MERCERSBURG ANNUAL FUND

Since its earliest days, Mercersburg has been supported and strengthened by philanthropy. Mercersburg parents have a long history of participating in the Annual Fund. Because tuition and income from the school’s endowment don’t meet the full cost of a Mercersburg education, Annual Fund gifts directly support every student, ensuring the school has what it needs to thrive. Your participation has a tangible impact on the school year, is a symbolic vote of confidence in Mercersburg’s mission, and extends the long blue line of support that has sustained Mercersburg since its founding in 1893. For more information, visit mercersburg.edu/annualfund.

Part VIII: International Parent Information

International students from about 40 countries account for approximately 22 percent of students entering Mercersburg Academy each year. These students may encounter challenges that differ from those of American students, as they are usually geographically much farther away from parents and family, and may be unfamiliar with American culture or the educational system. There may be times when parents are unable to immediately provide help should a problem arise. Parents of international students greatly benefit by sharing information with each other. Advisers and all other school personnel help students, and families should contact the Associate Head of School’s Office if there are ever any general concerns or needs.

When is the best time for a school visit if we do not live in the U.S. and find it difficult to visit often?

If at all possible, it is best for you to accompany your child when school begins (see p. 9). All new students entering Mercersburg are required to take part in a two-day student orientation program called Inbound.

Another opportunity to visit Mercersburg is during Family and Alumni Weekend, held every September or October. This is a chance to attend classes and extracurricular activities such as athletic events, hold necessary parent-adviser conferences in order to gain a better understanding of school life, and give a boost of confidence to your child.

Often it is not easy to make two visits over such a short period of time. If you are not able to travel to campus for Family and Alumni Weekend, be encouraged to know that other Mercersburg parents will be there and will lend your child encouragement.
How should international students make use of long weekends and vacations?

It is possible to stay on school grounds during long weekends, as the dorms and dining hall are kept open. For students who have newly arrived and have not yet completely adjusted to life in America, it may be advisable to remain at school and take a rest while catching up on schoolwork. Many American students return home, so the campus may feel somewhat empty during long weekends. Therefore, international students may prefer to find more diverse means for spending long weekends. They may visit the homes of American friends and relatives or travel to nearby cities, such as New York and Washington, D.C., to sightsee and tour prospective universities.

Everyone must leave the dorms during Thanksgiving, winter, spring, and summer vacations. Aside from summer vacation, the other three breaks last 10–20 days, often making it challenging to return to their home countries. Some students may return home for the short period. Many international students seek various new experiences by visiting relatives or friends in the United States.

The Office of Student Life and Office of Admission frequently help students find a place to stay if they need suggestions.

The Admission Office keeps passports, I-20s, foreign cash, and plane tickets in a locked safe.

How do we get our child’s belongings to school?

There may be times throughout the year when students need clothing or other supplies that they are unable to purchase on campus. In such cases, students generally sign up for regularly scheduled trips to shopping areas organized by the school. As for articles that are too big or difficult to purchase at a nearby store (such as furniture), students may choose to order them on websites such as Amazon and have them delivered to campus. It usually takes around three to seven days for goods to reach your child in the U.S. Packages are delivered to your child via the school post office.

International families may choose to ship boxes or trunks one or two weeks before the start of the school year. Make certain your child’s name is printed clearly on the shipping label—the bigger, the better. In addition to your child’s name, also include the following: Mercersburg Academy, 300 East Seminary Street, Mercersburg, PA 17236 U.S.A. Make a note on the shipment indicating it is for a current student. You do not need to include a post office.
box number. Shipments will be stored in a secure area in the school. Your child may claim his/her belongings upon arrival on campus.

During the first week of school, and before the school-sponsored trip to the local stores, students living abroad have access to a collection of items (free of charge) including hangers, lamps, trash cans, extension cords, and other miscellaneous items collected by dorms at the end of the previous year.

**What do we do with our child’s belongings at the end of the school year?**

Students must change dorm rooms at the end of each school year. They are required to empty out the rooms when summer vacation begins in late May or early June. Most students keep their luggage in the basement storage areas in each dormitory. Articles may become damaged, lost, or switched, so valuables and necessities should be taken home, if at all possible. Articles such as bed covers are bulky and difficult to take home but also hard to keep in storage, so families may want to consider donating these items at the end of the year and purchasing new ones in the fall. (International students or students who are a plane ride away may keep these in storage.) Donated items are included in an end-of-year yard sale and the proceeds go to charity.

**How do we communicate with our child over the time difference?**

It is important to secure your child’s weekly schedule at the beginning of the school year. This enables you to find the best time period to contact your child in between extracurricular activities and classes. Students generally have extremely busy schedules on weekdays, so it is better to use hours between 18:00–20:00 or after 22:00 but before lights-out (U.S. Eastern Time). Mobile phone programs like FaceTime and Internet messenger services may be more convenient for long conversations (even some American families who live long distances from Mercersburg utilize these methods). It is recommended that you agree on a time to reach your child on weekends.

**What are the means of transportation for students or parents within the U.S.?**

For school breaks, students can sign up for transportation to train stations, bus stations, or airports arranged by the school’s transportation coordinator. Transportation requests should be emailed two weeks in advance. Transportation request forms can be found online in the Campus Life section of the school website along with a chart of fees. If transportation cannot be provided by the school, the student will be referred to an outside company, such as Road Runners. If students use outside transportation to get to or
from campus, they should inform the Office of Student Life of their plans. Transportation fees should be paid using the Blue Card. It is highly recommended that parents rent a car when visiting the school.

**How do international families break language barriers to communicate with teachers?**

It is recommended that parents contact their child's adviser or the Academic Dean if there are questions for individual teachers. The adviser will help connect parents to teachers and can help find an interpreter, if one is needed. In addition, there are times when the Head of School or other school officials make overseas trips. Parents are encouraged to actively participate in school events when they have the opportunity.

**What are the issues that an international student may encounter at school?**

Mercersburg Academy takes good care of its many international students; however, there are some issues that international students may face, such as:

**Food** – Food provided at the school dining hall is generally Western style. Therefore, international students may encounter difficulties with their meals depending on their preferences. There is no need for great concern, however, as most students tend to adjust to their new environment. First-year students may choose to vacuum wrap food from their home country to have some familiar food nearby and/or store it in the dormitory common room fridge. Throughout the school year, trips can be arranged to specific shopping centers near major metropolitan areas that might offer a “taste of home.”

**Language** – Mercersburg doesn’t offer an ESL program during the school year, but students should enter with the English ability necessary for following along in the academic program. There are times when they may encounter a language barrier in academic-related areas such as classes, homework, and exams, or in relationships with their peers, so international students should work to quickly heighten their English skills. The Director of Learning Services is available for consultation on needs in that area.

**Relationships with Peers** – Some international students may find it difficult to develop close ties with their American peers and choose to group together with other students from their home country; however, it is important to take steps to build friendships and become part of the school community. Thus, international students are encouraged to participate in many clubs, athletics, fine-arts activities, and volunteer activities and trips to develop common interests and establish widespread relationships with peers.
Homesickness – All students may encounter challenges while living away from their family, and for international students the cultural differences are an added adjustment. It is important for parents to closely communicate with their child and monitor their child’s situation to determine what measures may be required if matters appear serious. Many support services are available through the school. Your child’s adviser is always the first point of contact. Additionally, the school has a staff of counselors to help students through difficult times. There is usually no cause for great concern, as most issues are readily resolved. The adjustment period can be longer for international students, and most come to truly enjoy their school life in the U.S.

Part IX: Day-Student Parent Information

As the parent of a day student, you will have your own set of questions and concerns. Here are a few:

What does my child call “home base” on campus?

Each day student is assigned to a dormitory and provided with a locker and lock during registration. There is a common room area in each dorm where students can relax between classes or during free rotations. This is most likely where your child will be dropped off and picked up each day. Each student is assigned a faculty adviser associated with the dorm. It is helpful for day students to store in their lockers an umbrella or rain coat, snacks, extra socks, personal hygiene items, and a small amount of cash.

How does my child fit in as a day student?

Your child will quickly become involved in sports, arts, and other activities. Have your child spend weekend time on campus attending sporting events, dances, and outdoor activities. Day students can also participate in school-sponsored day trips (like excursions to a mall or movie theater, a concert, or an amusement park).

Sometimes it is harder for day students to blend into campus life, so encourage your student to stay for dinner and come to campus on the weekends as much as possible to experience school activities just as boarding students do. Some students find it helpful to talk through their struggles, and on-campus counseling services are available to them.

In addition to dormitory prefects (student leaders in the dorms), we also have a select number of day-student prefects, students in their 11th-grade year who coordinate day-student activities and serve as one point of contact for all day students who have ideas or suggestions to share.
How do I fit in as a day-student parent?

There are many ways to get involved. They include hosting your child’s advisee group at your home or at a local restaurant or event, hosting overnight or weekend visits for your child’s friends, and attending on- and off-campus events. White Key, Mercersburg’s parent volunteer organization, is another way for day student parents to get involved. There are many volunteer opportunities throughout the year, which are shared in the parent newsletter and in personal messages from the White Key chairs. More information about White Key is available on the parent webpage at mercersburg.edu.

How do I get my child to/from campus each day?

There are various modes of transportation by which day students arrive at Mercersburg. Some parents drive and some form carpools by exchanging names and phone numbers with other day student parents on move-in day. Some local school districts provide a van/bus service.

Note that classes begin each day at 8:50 a.m. and day students need to arrive early enough to put things in their lockers and arrive on time for class. They are also welcome to arrive early enough to eat breakfast in the dining hall.

May day students drive to school?

Day students are permitted to drive to school, and the school provides a parking lot for their vehicles. To ensure the safety of all our students, the school asks that day students not move their cars during class hours. Day students may not use their cars to provide transportation for boarding students. Day students must register their vehicle. A form can be picked up in the Office of Student Life. Students will receive a sticker for their vehicle window.

When are students done each day?

Because of after-school sports and theatre, dance, and other performance-group activities, most students are done for the day at 6 p.m. Off-campus sporting events, rehearsals, and required lectures may make the end of the day later for some students. On Wednesday nights during the fall term and half of the winter term, all ninth-grade students are required to attend Peer Group sessions that finish at 8 p.m. Parents of day students need to be flexible, as the daily schedule can change to accommodate a special event, a shortened day, or a required evening appointment. Parents and students will receive the specific dates at the beginning of the school year.
Most weekends there are activities or trips that day students are welcome to attend. On weekends, day students are welcome on campus for activities, interscholastic athletics, and entertainment. On Fridays and Saturdays, they must leave the campus no later than 11 p.m., when boarding students are required to return to their dormitories for the night.

How late can my student stay on campus during the week?

After 8 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, day students in ninth grade should not be on campus unless they have to attend a school function, have a required appointment with a specific adult in charge of that activity, or have a specific assignment to be completed in the library. In each case, special permission from the teacher is required. In very rare cases, a ninth-grade day student may be given permission to attend supervised study hall for ninth graders. It is always best for ninth-grade day students to get home and develop their study routines in the evening.

When day students are on campus, they are under the rules of boarding students in their same grade. In the evening, cars of day students may be parked near the building where the scheduled activity is taking place. At the conclusion of any activity of this kind, all day students are expected to leave campus as soon as possible.

Are students required to stay for dinner?

Day students are required to attend lunch each day, Monday through Friday, and are welcome to attend any of the meals available in the dining hall. Day students who are on campus over the dinner hour (when dinner is required for boarding students) are required to attend dinner. If they choose to be at an off-campus restaurant during this mealtime, that is allowed. There are several dinners throughout the year that all students are required to attend.

When do day students have time to study?

Finding time for homework and studying for tests can be a challenge. All students are encouraged to use their free periods and establish evening routines, taking into consideration the time it takes to travel to/from school. It may be a struggle at first, and your child may be up late finishing assignments. They do eventually fall into a routine and learn great organizational skills.

May day students stay overnight in the dorm?

Each dorm has its own set of rules for the number of students who may spend weekend nights with boarding students. With the dorm dean’s permission, a day student may occasionally spend a weekend night in the
dormitory to which the day student is assigned. This permission should be sought from the dormitory dean by Thursday before the requested weekend stay. Further information is shared with students and posted on the website in the parent section.

**Do I need to contact anyone if my child is ill?**

Yes, you should contact the Health Center when your child is home ill. The Health Center sends out a daily report of students who are home ill, are at the Health Center, or are leaving school for an appointment. Contact the Health Center when your child returns to school from illness.

**Whom do I contact if my child has a dentist, doctor, or other medical appointment?**

You should contact the Health Center any time your child will be away for a medical appointment. The child’s name will be placed on the daily Health Center report and he/she will be excused from classes. You should inform the Health Center when your child returns to campus.

**What happens if my child needs to be away from school for the day?**

Except for medical appointments, normally students are not given special permission to miss a day of school, since there are so many days of vacation during the school year to take care of other obligations. Students, including day students, are allowed to apply for one long weekend of their choosing each school year. If your child needs to miss a day for a special reason, you must first get permission from the Office of Student Life. If permission is granted, your child must fill out a petition form to miss class, which is signed by teachers, the adviser, the Academic Dean, and the Office of Student Life.

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**Part X: Postgraduate and One-Year Senior Parent Information**

Mercersburg admits a small group of students who study at Mercersburg for their senior year. Seniors who have completed their high-school degrees are postgraduates (PGs), although all are designated as members of the senior class.

Students elect to do a postgraduate year before going to college for several reasons. Some look to improve their academic record and standardized test scores to strengthen their college applications. Others use the extra year to bolster their athletic profile in the college-admission process, wanting extra time
to be recruited and/or recover from injury or illness. Still other students want the “gift of time” that another year can bring, to mature as a student and as an individual before heading to college. There has also been a tradition of service-academy candidates completing a postgraduate year at Mercersburg before attending the Naval Academy, West Point, or the Air Force Academy. Each year there are usually 10–20 postgraduates and one-year seniors.

All PGs and one-year seniors take at least five classes, one of which must be senior English (either an AP course or three term courses). Because textbooks must be ordered and received before the student comes to campus, it is imperative that PG and one-year senior students know their class selections. It is advisable for PGs and one-year seniors and their families to contact the College Counseling Office to review course selection and to begin college-application procedures. Those students with special interests and talents, whether athletic, artistic, or otherwise, should inform the college counseling staff of contacts they have had with college-admission representatives, recruiters, or department heads.

There are special considerations and restrictions that PGs and one-year seniors face. First and foremost, they are the oldest students on campus. There is a big age and maturation difference between a 19-year-old and a 14-year-old. Second, they have to quickly blend into a community of which they will only be a part for one year. While younger students look up to the PGs and all seniors, it can be difficult for these one-year seniors to be in the spotlight, especially as they are adjusting to a new school, a new community, a new set of rules, and a new lifestyle (i.e., living away from home).

Initially, PGs and one-year seniors have restrictions that other seniors do not have until the midterm fall teachers’ reports are issued. All PGs and one-year seniors must sign in for “quiet hours,” indicating they are going to study in the dormitory or sign out to Lenfest Hall, the Burgin Center, or Irvine Hall when open and supervised.

The first few weeks can be challenging for PGs and one-year seniors, who may feel slighted for having to prove themselves. In sharp contrast, they are communicating with friends at college who have no such rules and restrictions. These seniors often come from high-school and family experiences where there are fewer rules and restrictions than at boarding school. Adjusting to the expectations and limitations may take some time.

One-year seniors and PGs often need to get used to how different Mercersburg is from a typical large public high school. There are fewer students overall. Class sizes are substantially smaller. There are no busy, noisy, crowded hallways. Classes are held in different buildings. The class schedule rotates:
classes are not held in the same order at the same time every day. There are weekly all-school gatherings and meals that must be attended. There is a dress code that clearly states what one must wear in different situations at Mercersburg. There is required participation in extracurricular activities. Cars can’t be driven. And, of course, these one-year seniors and PGs face all the other changes and challenges that every boarding-school student faces in living away from home.

At the fall midterm, PGs and one-year seniors are extended full senior privileges, providing they are in good academic and social standing. Oftentimes PGs and one-year seniors are offered the chance to interview and apply for prefectships in the dormitories, allowing them to be part of the dormitory leadership. It is the school’s hope that by this time PGs and one-year seniors are fully immersed in the Mercersburg community and well on their way to a happy and successful year.

The first term is crucial, especially academically. Due to the three-term system, the first-term's grades and standardized test scores are what count most on their transcripts. PGs or one-year seniors cannot afford to be “slow starters.” Their best performance is necessary from the very first day of class in September. PGs or one-year seniors must also get to know their teachers, adviser, athletic coach or fine arts director, and college counselor quickly in order to enlist their support.

Getting along with one’s peers usually isn’t an issue at Mercersburg. PGs and one-year seniors are readily accepted by their fellow class members. Mercersburg students don’t have an “entitlement” attitude. Students don’t have to be multi-year in order to be an active part of the class or student body.

Part XI: The Lists

THE BASICS AND “EXTRAS” FOR DORM ROOMS

First, consult The Blue Book under Residential Life for an overview. Also refer to Part I of this handbook under What to Buy and What to Pack.

The list below is a reprint of the list issued by the Director of Dormitories. This is the same list that is part of the summer email to new students and is found on the website.

• 2 sets of bed linens (standard twin size flat sheet and fitted sheet to fit a mattress that is 39” x 75” x 6”)
• 1 pillow
• 1 bedspread or comforter
• 1 washable mattress protector
• 1 laundry bag
• 2 sets of towels
• 1 desk lamp and light bulbs (compact fluorescent bulbs and energy-efficient lamps are recommended; halogen lamps are not permitted)
• 1 floor lamp
• 1 wastepaper basket
• 1 closed container and utensils for any food kept in the room
• 1 large rug, not exceeding 9 x 12 feet (or 2 medium rugs)

What follows is a list of items that many students include to make their rooms more comfortable and their life more convenient. Check out discount stores, drugstores, odd lot stores, and dollar stores for some of these items in order to save money.

• Curtains and tension rods – for window treatments and covering open closets – fabric shower curtains work really well as an affordable and quick trick
• Upholstered chair or sofa – check with roommate first; make certain the piece will fit; note that ninth graders may not have extra furniture for the first part of the year
• Wall hangings and decorations – note restrictions in *The Blue Book* due to appropriateness and fire safety
• Additional mirror – there is a small one in each dorm room
• Fan – useful, even though dorms are heated and air-conditioned, especially as seasons change
• Mattress topper
• Additional reading light
• Extension cords and surge protector
• Extra hangers—slim-design ones with fabric covering—keep clothes hanging neatly and allow more storage space in small closets; also consider hangers that hold multiple numbers of the same kind of garment (pants, skirts) to save space
• Fabric cubes to store piles of T-shirts, sweaters, tops, shorts, socks, etc., work well to keep belongings organized and neat, especially on closet shelves or on the closet floor
• Hanging shoe rack to attach to closet clothes pole
• Removable plastic hooks for the closet
• Belt or tie rack
• Clothes tree – particularly helpful for hanging coats and jackets
• Over-the-door hanger – particularly helpful for airing out wet towels (the towel bars typically are very narrow) and wet/smelly athletic gear
• Clear plastic stackable bins or small plastic shelving unit – great for storing food, school supplies, extra small items of clothing like socks, toiletries, and the like; these can fit in the bottom of a closet or under a lofted bed
• Lights – desk and floor lamps as well as stick-on closet lights may be useful for dorm rooms that do not receive a lot of natural light.

Note that there are restrictions and prohibitions regarding electronic and cooking appliances. There is no need to bring blocks to loft beds. The school furniture is equipped to be raised off the floor.

LOCAL STORES

FOOD LION
431 Fort Loudon Road, Mercersburg, PA, 717-328-2312

DOLLAR GENERAL
11900 Buchanan Trail West, Mercersburg, PA, 717-328-5087

PHILIPS’ FLOWER & GIFT SHOP
112 Oregon Street, Mercersburg, PA, 717-328-2711 or 877-328-2711

MODNUR PHARMACY
52 Keefer Drive, Mercersburg, PA, 717-328-3612

RUTTER’S FARM STORE
328 North Main Street, Mercersburg, PA, 717-498-0676

AREA MALLS, OUTLETS, AND STORES

CHAMBERSBURG MALL
3055 Black Gap Road, Chambersburg, PA, 717-263-5797

CVS
305 West Baltimore Street, Greencastle, PA, 717-593-0170

HAGERSTOWN PREMIUM OUTLETS
495 Premium Outlets Blvd, Hagerstown, MD, 301-790-0300

VALLEY MALL
17301 Valley Mall Road, Hagerstown, MD, 301-582-0700
TARGET
913 Norland Avenue, Chambersburg, PA, 717-709-2062
17213 Cole Road, Hagerstown, MD, 301-582-9118

WALMART
1730 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA, 717-264-2300
17850 Garland Groh Blvd, Hagerstown, MD, 301-714-1373

KOHL’S
955 Norland Avenue, Chambersburg, PA, 717-261-9940
17145 Cole Road, Hagerstown, MD, 301-582-4120

MARSHALL’S
17646 Garland Groh Blvd, Hagerstown, MD, 240-420-2699

TJ MAXX
1320 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA, 717-263-7152

MICHAELS
967 Norland Avenue, Chambersburg, PA, 717-263-9358
17225 Cole Rd. #2, Hagerstown, MD, 301-582-9120

HOBBY LOBBY
1695 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA, 717-709-9034
1580 Wesel Blvd, Hagerstown, MD, 301-733-2616

OFFICE MAX
17664 Garland Groh Blvd, Hagerstown, MD, 301-655-9185

STAPLES
963 Norland Avenue, Chambersburg, PA, 717-263-2550
1631 Wesel Blvd, Hagerstown, MD, 301-714-0370

Note that you may save yourself time going to Hagerstown from Mercersburg by using a country route through Welsh Run and Cearfoss instead of taking Route 16 through Greencastle to get to I-81. Check Mapquest or Google Maps for directions.

AREA RESTAURANTS

Mercersburg, PA

EGG ROLL KING
11902 Buchanan Trail West, 717-328-9888

STONERS ON THE SQUARE
5 North Main Street, 717-328-5011
FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN
14191 Buchanan Trail West, 717-328-2960

JAMES BUCHANAN PUB & RESTAURANT
15 North Main Street, 717-328-0011

MAMMA’S PIZZA
347 North Main Street, 717-498-0395

THE MANSION HOUSE
2 South Main Street, 717-498-0011

THE MERCERSBURG INN
405 South Main Street, 717-328-5231

ROMEO’S
66 Church Street, 717-328-3323

Greencastle, PA

B STREET 104
104 East Baltimore Street (Route 11), 717-693-1621

BROTHER’S PIZZA
50 Pine Drive, Suite 3 (Route 11 & I-81), 717-597-5322

EL SOMBRERO
25 West Franklin Street, 717-643-1296

JOHN ALLISON PUBLIC HOUSE
155 South Antrim Way (Route 11), 717-643-0218

MIKIE’S ICE CREAM & GREEN COW GIFT SHOP
179 South Antrim Way (Route 11), 717-597-4011

PIZZA HUT
152 South Antrim Way (Route 11), 717-597-7164

PURE & SIMPLE CAFE
164 East Baltimore Street (Route 16), 717-593-4676

SORA SUSHI ASIAN CUISINE
510 North Antrim Way (Route 11), 717-643-1568
TONY’S PIZZA
42 South Antrim Way (Route 11), 717-597-2152

*In addition to the above restaurants, there are numerous chain, local, and fine-dining restaurants in nearby Chambersburg, PA and Hagerstown, MD.*

**AREA LODGING**

**Mercersburg, PA**

ANNE’S BED & BREAKFAST
11478 Fort Loudon Road, 717-729-4156

FOX’S JUS-EM-TYME BED & BREAKFAST
11883 Mercersburg Road, 717-328-3259

JAMES BUCHANAN HOTEL
15 North Main Street, 717-328-0011

MCFADDEN’S WILLOW GOLD BED & BREAKFAST
6968 Pine Road, 717-328-5522

THE MERCERSBURG INN
405 South Main Street, 717-328-5231

**Greencastle, PA**

THE BLUE WINDOW BED & BREAKFAST
155 South Washington Street, 717-597-3700

COMFORT INN
50 Pine Drive, (I-81, Exit 3), 717-597-8164

WHITE HALL MANOR BED & BREAKFAST
501 East Baltimore Street, 717-643-0673

*In addition to the above accommodations, there are numerous chain hotels in nearby Chambersburg, PA, and Hagerstown, MD.*

**AREA CHURCHES/HOUSES OF WORSHIP**

This is not a complete list of all area churches or houses of worship. Please note that the school minister, Will Whitmore, is available to you or your child for any questions regarding religious services other than those listed.

Mercersburg Academy Chapel
300 East Seminary Street, Mercersburg, PA, 717-328-6137
Rev. Will Whitmore – whitmorew@mercersburg.edu
Parent Contributors

Nancy Moore Banta ’77 and
Neil Banta P ’06, ’09, ’11
Julie Bell P ’17, ’18
Claire Birney P ’09
Melissa and Joe Blanchard P ’11
Carol Furnary Casparian ’79, P ’11, ’13, ’16, ’20
Jennifer Cort P ’18
Terri Firestein P ’11
Judy Firestone P ’10, ’13
Katie Fitzsimmons P ’17, ’20
Kathleen Heidecker P ’19
Paul Irving P ’12
Melanie Jones P ’17

Christin Klaff P ’16, ’18, ’20
Ann Lewis P ’20, ’21
Min Young Lim P ’16
Kim Magazine P ’17
Ginger Pape P ’16
Laurie Rice P ’11, ’14, ’17
Liz and Ned Schwing P ’12
Kim and Mark Siner P ’14, ’17
Kristen Butterfield Vickery ’88, P ’18
Ann Shabb Warner ’76, P ’10, ’11
Harriett and Neale Trangucci P ’09
LynneAnn Trask P ’13, ’13
Dr. Yoon Sun Yang P ’10 and the
Korean parents group

Parent feedback about this handbook is welcome.
Please send your comments, questions, and suggestions to
White Key Co-Chairs Brendan and Katie Fitzsimmons at
kgroh@myactv.net or Carolyn Griffin Yeager in the Office of
Advancement and Alumni Relations at yeagerc@mercersburg.edu.
For a quick glance at important and frequently used numbers, print out the image below, fill in your child's information, and attach to your refrigerator, computer, or keep in your wallet and purse.

MERCERSBURG ACADEMY

Campus Safety: 717-328-1111
Dean on Duty: 717-860-0488
Health Center: 717-328-6136

Adviser: ________________________________
College Counselor: _______________________
Dormitory Dean: ________________________

Brendan and Katie Fitzsimmons
White Key Co-Chairs: kgroh@myactv.net