2026-2027

Parent and Student

Handbook

Midlands STEM Charter School

Winnsboro, SC 29180

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Midlands STEM Charter School

Parent and Student Handbook

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Table of Contents

Philosophy, Mission and Vision..... 6
Arriving to and Departing School Grounds..... 7
School Arrival and Dismissal Times..... 7
Attendance..... 7
Absences..... 7
Tardiness..... 10
Checking Students In/Out of School..... 11
Students on Campus Beyond Normal Operating Hours..... 12
Transportation..... 13
Drop Off and Pick Up by Car..... 14
Pick Up / Drop off by Bus..... 14
School Vehicle Student Behavior Expectations..... 14
Student Parking on Campus..... 15
Safety..... 15
Current Contact Information..... 15
Student Identification Badges..... 15
Emergency Preparation Drills..... 17
Closed Campus Policy..... 17
Visitors..... 18
Volunteers..... 19
Search and Seizure..... 21
Authorized Campus Surveillance..... 21
Student Behavior..... 22
Core Values..... 22
Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy..... 27
Zero Tolerance Policy..... 28
Discipline Processes for Students with Documented Disabilities..... 28
Shared Responsibilities..... 29
Scope of Policy..... 29
Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices..... 29
Audio and Video Recording..... 30
Social Media Platforms..... 31
Content Moderation and Platform Guidelines..... 31
Unauthorized Use of Intellectual Property..... 31
Student Behavioral Expectations and Disciplinary Actions..... 32

Public Displays of Affection (PDA)....32
Hazing, Harassment, Intimidation....32
Retaliation....33
Dress Code....33
Dress Down and Spirit Days....35
Athletic Code of Conduct....36
General School Procedures and Policies....40
Communication....40
School Fees....40
Food and Drinks....40
Restroom Usage....41
Deliveries....42
Tobacco....42
Advertising on School Grounds....42
Pledge of Allegiance....43
Instruction and Academics....43
Bell to Bell Instruction....43
Grading Weights and Scales....44
Grades K-2 Grading and Reports....44
Grades 3-12 Grading:....44
Assessment Retakes or Corrections....45
Grade Reports....45
Homework....46
Make Up Work....46
Extra Credit....46
Technology & Internet Services Acceptable Use Policy....47
Plagiarism....48
Honor Code....48
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools Acceptable Use Policy....50
School Owned Digital Devices....51
Account Clearance: The school business office must receive full payment for any missing or broken items before a new device is issued for take home use and year-end report cards/ diplomas are released....52
Textbooks....52
Field Trips....52
Tutoring....53
Promotion....53
K-8 Retention....54

Read to Succeed Act....54
Acceleration....55
Credit Recovery....55
Homebound....55
Parent Teacher Conferences....56
Student-Teacher Conferences....57
State and District Assessments....57
Other School, State, or District Assessments....59
Students with Disabilities....59
Child Find....60
Students with Disabilities Protected by Section 504....60
Application, Enrollment and Scheduling....60
The Application Process....61
Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Enrollment Policy....62
Student Records....63
Custody Issues Involving Enrollment & Student Records....63
Requests for Teachers (K-5)....64
Class Requests (6-12)....64
Schedule Changes....65
Parent Portal (Power School)....65
Extra Curricular Activities....66
School Dances or Other Spirit Events....67
High School Guest Policies....68
School Dances and Other Formal Ceremonies Dress Expectations....68
Health and Wellness....69
Health Screenings....69
Illness Policy....70
Immunizations....70
Medicines at School....71
Over the Counter Medication....72
Emergency Diabetic Care Assistants....72
Self Medication of Prescription Drugs....73

Philosophy, Mission and Vision

Core Philosophy Statement

We believe STEM education empowers every student to wonder, design, and solve. By blending science, technology, engineering, and math, we teach students how to think deeply and adapt to a changing world. STEM is not an isolated class period. It is a mindset of curiosity and resilience that prepares students to shape the future.

Mission Statement

The Mission of Midlands STEM Charter School is to prepare students for 21st-century innovation by emphasizing critical thinking, hands-on problem solving, and real-world applications of science, technology, engineering, math and language arts.

Vision

To be a dynamic learning community where we grow the individual student's curiosity which inspires discovery, empowering students to become the critical thinkers, collaborative problem-solvers, and bold innovators of tomorrow.

Arriving to and Departing School Grounds

School Arrival and Dismissal Times

Students may arrive on campus no earlier than 7:15 am. Students are dismissed at 2:55 pm Monday through Thursday, and and 12:00 pm on Fridays. Homeroom begins at 7:50 am. Students must be in their first period class by 8:00 am or will be marked as tardy to school. Students who switch classes must arrive to class by the beginning of the class period or will be considered tardy to that class.

Attendance

All students are required to attend school each day school is in session. For grades K-5, attendance is taken promptly in the morning. For grades 6-12, attendance is taken each period throughout the day. When a student is absent, it is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to notify the school by calling or emailing the student attendance clerk. Parent/legal guardians must notify the school within 1 school day of the student's return to school in order for the absence to be considered "excused." Failure to provide timely notice to the school will result in the absence being coded as "unexcused".

The school will make a reasonable effort to telephone and notify the parent/legal guardian of students who have unexcused absences. Excuses that are turned in three days after the student's return will not be accepted. These days will remain coded as unexcused absences.

Only 5 excused parent notes will be accepted throughout the school year. (See MSCS Discipline Policy CCM for consequences of excessive absences and tardies.)

Absences

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) is dedicated to providing a rigorous academic environment. Regular school attendance is a critical component of student success and a legal requirement under South Carolina law. Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50, MSCS strictly adheres to all state charter school attendance mandates and State Board Regulation (S.B.R.) 43-274.

1. Attendance Limits and Credit Forfeiture

- The 10% Attendance Rule: Total absences—whether excused or unexcused—must not exceed 10% of the scheduled instructional days for the

school year.

- Loss of Academic Credit: Students in grades K–12 who miss more than 10% of the school year will go before MSCS Student Discipline Hearing Board for a hearing concerning attendance truancy. Excessive attendance infractions may result in an automatic forfeit and lose academic credit for their courses taken during that semester/ year.
- Students are considered “absent” if they miss 50% of their instructional class/ day for any reason, regardless of the classification of the absence as excused or unexcused.
- Suspension Limits: Excused absences resulting from out-of-school suspensions are factored into this limit and must not exceed 10% of the scheduled instructional days.
- Students in grades 9-12 are allowed the following number of absences before losing course credit:
    - 90- day classes: 9 unexcused absences
    - 180-day classes: 18 unexcused absences

2. Classifying Lawful (Excused) and Unlawful (Unexcused) Absences

In accordance with S.B.R. 43-274, the school categorizes absences as follows:

- Lawful (Excused) Absences:
    - Personal student illness, provided attendance would endanger the health of the student or others.
    - Serious illness or death in the student’s family (bereavement).
    - Medical, dental, or legal appointments.
    - Recognized religious holidays of the student's faith.
    - Special activities or family vacations approved in advance by the Administration.
- Unlawful (Unexcused) Absences:
    - Any absence occurring without the knowledge of the parent or legal guardian.
    - Any absence occurring with the knowledge of the parent or legal guardian, but without an acceptable, documented cause.
    - Note: Out-of-school suspensions are not counted as unlawful absences for truancy reporting purposes, but are counted for course requirement (passing) purposes.

3. Reporting and Documentation Requirements

To ensure an absence is legally counted as excused, families must comply with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-65-70:

- Advance Notification: Parents, legal guardians, or custodial adults must notify the school in advance or at the time of the absence. The school will formally log the date, time, reason, and identity of the person reporting the absence.
- Accompaniment Rule: For a medical, dental, or legal absence to be excused, a student under the age of 16 must be accompanied to the appointment by a parent, legal guardian, or an authorized adult.
- Chronic Illness Protocols: Absences stemming from a documented long-term or chronic medical condition require an approved Individual Health Plan (IHP) on file with the school nurse for the absences to be excused.
- Religious Observations: Documentation requesting time off for religious observations must be submitted to administration prior to the absence. These days will be marked unexcused unless prior administrative authorization is granted.

Assigned classwork is required to be completed within the designated timeframe as indicated by the teacher.

4. State Truancy Definitions and Legal Escalation

Midlands STEM Charter School and the State Board of Education view truancy as a serious matter. MSCS is legally required to implement corrective intervention plans before involving the juvenile justice system.

- Truant: A student between the ages of 6 and 17 who accumulates three (3) consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five (5) unlawful absences during the school year.
- Habitual Truant: A student between the ages of 12 and 17 who fails to comply with the official school intervention plan developed by the school, student, and parents, and subsequently accumulates two (2) or more additional unlawful absences. This status may result in an initial truancy petition filed with the Family Court.
- Chronic Truant: A student between the ages of 12 and 17 who has undergone the school intervention process, failed to comply, been referred to Family Court, placed under a judicial order to attend school, and continues to accumulate unlawful absences. Chronic truancy results in a Contempt of Court petition filed with the Family Court.

5. Additional Restrictions and Disciplinary Actions

- Extracurricular Eligibility: Students who are absent for more than 50% of the instructional day are strictly prohibited from participating in or attending any school-sponsored activities on that day. This includes sporting events, after-school practices, parties, and extracurricular clubs.
- Administrative Intervention: Excessive or unexcused absences will prompt

mandatory administrative interventions. Consequences may include formal attendance contracts, required parent-administrator conferences, or the withholding of grades, promotions, graduation.

6. Parent Notification Protocols

MSCS values proactive communication with families regarding attendance concerns:

- Electronic Alerts: Parents or legal guardians will receive an automated email notification for each unexcused absences their student accumulates.
- Direct Outreach: If a student establishes a pattern of chronic unexcused absences, the administration will conduct telephone outreach or schedule an in-person conference as required by school policy and state law.

Tardiness

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) emphasizes the importance of punctuality as a core component of academic discipline and professional readiness. Students are expected to be inside their designated classrooms and seated at the official start time of each class period.

1. Definitions and Attendance Impact

- Tardiness: Any student who fails to enter their classroom within the first three minutes of the designated start time is classified as tardy.
- Absence Classification: Depending on the arrival time and the structure of the instructional period, excessive lateness (50% of the day/ class period) may result in the student being marked legally absent for that class period rather than tardy as determined by the school administration.

2. Excused vs. Unexcused Tardies

To ensure accurate record-keeping, tardies are classified based on the circumstances of the arrival:

- Excused Tardies: A tardy is considered excused only when caused by verifiable personal illness, medical or dental appointments, observed religious holidays, legal or family emergencies (such as a court appearance or bereavement), or unavoidable circumstances completely beyond the student's control.
- Documentation Requirement: To excuse a tardy, parents or legal guardians may be required to submit a signed note or official medical documentation to the front office upon the student's arrival.
- Unexcused Tardies: Any lateness that does not meet the criteria above, or lacks

proper documentation, will be logged as unexcused.

3. Parent Notification Protocols

MSCS values proactive communication with families regarding attendance concerns:

- Electronic Alerts: Parents or legal guardians will receive an automated email notification for each unexcused tardy their student accumulates.
- Direct Outreach: If a student establishes a pattern of chronic unexcused tardiness, the administration will conduct telephone outreach or schedule an in-person conference as required by school policy and state law.

4. Disciplinary Consequences for Chronic Tardiness

The School Administration is legally authorized and responsible for enforcing disciplinary measures to address chronic lateness. Excessive tardies—whether excused or unexcused—disrupt the learning environment and may result in the following progressive actions:

- Mandatory detentions, scheduled on Fridays after 12:00 PM.
- Mandatory parent-administrative conferences to establish a formal Attendance Contract.
- Immediate loss of eligibility for all extracurricular activities, including sports, clubs, and social events.
- Loss of course credit for students in grades 6 through 12 due to missed instructional time.
- Further progressive administrative or disciplinary sanctions as deemed necessary.

Checking Students In/Out of School

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) prioritizes the safety and security of all students. To maintain an accurate account of campus attendance and ensure a safe environment, the school enforces strict check-in and early dismissal protocols.

1. Standard Check-In and Check-Out Protocols

- Adult Accompaniment Required: Any student arriving late to school or leaving campus prior to the end of the instructional day must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or an authorized representative.
- Identity Verification: The accompanying adult must personally sign the student in or out at the front office and present a valid, government-issued photo identification card.
- Authorized Personnel Only: To ensure student safety, school administrators will

exercise extreme caution before releasing a student. A student will only be released to individuals who are explicitly listed as authorized contacts within the PowerSchool Student Information System.

2. Exceptions for Students Age 17 and Older

- Self-Sign Out Privilege: Students who are 17 years of age or older may sign themselves out of school for pre-scheduled appointments.
- Prior Approval: For this privilege to be granted, a parent or legal guardian must contact the school's front office via email or telephone in advance of the release time to confirm the appointment details and authorize the early departure.

3. Academic Impacts and End-of-Day Restrictions

- Attendance Limitations: Early dismissals can impact a student's academic record. Depending on the exact time of departure, a student who is checked out early may be marked absent for a half-day or a full school day in accordance with South Carolina state instructional minute guidelines.
- End-of-Day Cutoff Period: To prevent classroom disruption and ensure an orderly dismissal process, early check-outs are strictly prohibited within the final twenty-five (25) minutes of the school day, except in the event of an immediate emergency.

4. Emergency and Medical Pick-Ups

- Immediate Response Required: If a student becomes ill or injured during the school day, the school health office will contact the family. Parents, legal guardians, or designated emergency contacts are responsible for picking up the student immediately upon notification.
- Information Upkeep: It is the sole responsibility of the family to keep the school's front office updated with accurate, current telephone numbers and emergency contact records throughout the academic year.

Students on Campus Beyond Normal Operating Hours

Under no circumstances may students remain on campus unsupervised. Per MSCS Student Code of Conduct Policy, students are permitted on campus no earlier than the time designated by School Administration. If students arrive before the designated time (7:15 am), they will not be allowed inside the building or on campus grounds. Students are to vacate campus after the final bell unless involved in an authorized activity such as tutoring or other after school events/activities. Parents/legal guardians should pick up their student(s) within 15 minutes after the end of the school day. Students unaccompanied by a parent/legal guardian will be escorted to a designated waiting area

and parents/ legal guardians will be contacted by administration. If a student(s) is picked up late more than 3 times, they may be removed from the extra curricular activity and/or parent/ legal guardian may be charged $10 for every 10 minutes after the dismissal time. Siblings of students who are involved in an authorized activity but who themselves are not part of that group or activity, are required to be picked up no later than 15 minutes after the end of the school day.

Transportation

To ensure the safety and security of all students, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) enforces strict protocols regarding daily dismissal and student release procedures.

- Default Dismissal Status: All students are designated as car riders by default. Any change to this status must be submitted to the school in writing by a parent or legal guardian.
- Walker/ Bike Rider Eligibility and Restrictions: Students are permitted to walk to and from school only if they reside within one mile of the campus and have an approved parent notification form on file.
    - Walking/ bike routes must lead directly to a residential address.
    - Parents must provide a map detailing the student's walking/ riding path.
    - Students are strictly prohibited from leaving campus on foot to meet a vehicle at a gas station, local business, campus boundary, or any other public area.
- Car Line Requirements: If a student is not an approved walker/ bike rider, parents and guardians must enter the designated car line to pick up their student at the authorized loading zone.
- Authorized Pick-Up Personnel: Students will only be released to adults formally listed as authorized contacts in PowerSchool.
- Alternate Pick-Up Requests: If an alternate adult needs to pick up a student, the parent or guardian must notify the school in writing or via email prior to dismissal on that day.
- Car Rider Pick-Up Tags: Every family is issued two official car rider pick-up tags at the start of the school year. No student will be released to a vehicle that does not display this official tag. If a car tag is not present, they will need to park and enter the building to sign the student out.

MSCS offers limited transportation services to parent/legal guardians. For information regarding bus routes, bus rules, please check the transportation page on the school website. You may also contact the school office.

We take student safety very seriously and thank you for your cooperation in maintaining

a secure dismissal process.

Drop Off and Pick Up by Car

Parents/legal guardians are responsible for safety transporting students to and from school. MSCS is not responsible for carpools and assumes no liability for matters related to the organization, management, or execution of carpools.

Parents/legal guardians are responsible for notifying the school of individuals authorized to pick up the student for carpool transportation.

Substitute Rides Home: MSCS accepts no responsibility for students getting substitute rides home in their carpool. Parents/legal guardians should ensure their students(s) knows whom they are riding with before the school day begins. Parents must provide written notification to the school to allow substitute carpool rides.

Pick Up / Drop off by Bus

MSCS bus stops are located on designated routes. The school takes no responsibility for supervision of these bus stops. All students will be released from the bus at the stop, except kindergarten and first grade students who will be released to a parent/legal guardian or older sibling. If a responsible party is not at the bus stop, the kindergarten or first grade student will remain on the bus and be returned to the school for parents/legal guardians to pick up. Buses are on a tight schedule and not allowed to wait more than 1-2 minutes.

School Vehicle Student Behavior Expectations

The following rules apply to all students when riding MSCS transportation:

- MSCS will not tolerate any student interfering with the bus driver's ability to do her/his job.
- Kindergarten and First Grade- a parent /legal guardian/ older sibling MUST be at the bus stop to receive your student each day. If a parent/ legal guardian is not there, your kindergarten/ first grade student will not be let off the bus. They will be returned to the school at the end of the school route.
- Cell phones and other personal electronic devices should be turned off and put away before the student gets on the school bus.
- Keep the aisle clear of obstructions, including legs and feet.
- Keep the bus clean.
- Be on time for the bus, morning and afternoon.
- Sit facing forward in assigned seats.

- Yelling and vulgar language are prohibited.
- Students shall not extend hands, arms, head, legs or objects through the bus windows.
- Return windows to a closed position if you open them.
- Do not eat, drink, or chew gum on the bus.
- Do not have glass, tobacco, weapons, reptiles, animals, or insects of any kind on the bus.
- Keep all personal possessions in your backpacks or pockets.
- Students must adhere to MSCS's cell phone policy while on the bus (see below)
- In no way damage the bus or other students' personal property.
- A violation of these rules may subject the student to discipline up to and including the loss of student's right to use the bus, and/or other consequences as per the Conduct & Consequences Matrix.

The school bus is an extension of MSCS, therefore all rules and regulations apply to all students riding the bus at all times.

Student Parking on Campus

Students must register their vehicles and complete and return the Midlands STEM Charter School Student Parking Agreement to receive campus parking privileges. To maintain an organized and secure environment, all student drivers must adhere to the vehicle policies as outlined on the MSCS Student parking Agreement.

Safety

Current Contact Information

Parents/legal guardians should ensure that contact information for parents, guardians, and emergency contacts on file is correct and complete (please include cell phone numbers) to enable the school to reach you in case your child is hurt or ill.

Student Identification Badges

To maintain a secure and accountable campus environment, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) requires all middle school students, high school students, employees, and visitors to display an official ID badge at all times while on school grounds.

ID Badge Requirements and Protocols

To support this essential security measure, the school provides wearable ID cards.

Students must strictly adhere to the following rules:

- Proper Display: Students must wear their official ID card around their neck on a break away lanyard.
- Prohibited Modifications: ID cards must remain in their original condition. Students are prohibited from altering, defacing, chewing on, or placing unapproved decals and stickers on their badges.
- Authorized Ownership: Students may only wear their own assigned ID card. Possessing or wearing another individual's ID is strictly forbidden.
- Access to Services: A valid ID card is required for essential daily operations. Students may not check out textbooks, borrow technology devices, or receive lunch without presenting their ID badge.

Issuance and Replacements

- Annual Issuance: Every student is issued an official ID card and a lanyard at no charge upon initial enrollment and at the start of each academic year. The badge displays the student's name, photograph, and current grade level. Students are not permitted to alter, tamper with, or modify their ID badge in any way, including changing the name, photograph, or grade level. Any altered or defaced ID badge will be considered invalid and must be replaced at the student's expense.
- Temporary IDs: Students who forget their ID card must report directly to the front office prior to their first class to purchase a Temporary ID for $1.00. A Temporary ID is valid for one school day only and must be worn in the upper left-hand corner of the student's shirt.
- Replacement ID Costs: Lost or damaged ID cards must be replaced immediately. Replacement ID cards cost $5.
- All ID charges will be billed to parents/guardians at the end of the quarter.

Enforcement and Disciplinary Consequences

An ID badge violation occurs any time a student's card is not properly displayed around their neck on a lanyard while on school property.

- Pre-Class Accountability: To avoid a disciplinary infraction, students who arrive on campus without their ID must go directly to the front office to secure a temporary or replacement badge before entering their first class.
- Progressive Discipline: Any ID violation observed in a classroom after the conclusion of homeroom will be logged. These infractions follow the school-wide progressive discipline tracker and will advance the student to the next step of the consequence matrix.

Emergency Preparation Drills

To ensure the safety of all students and staff, it is imperative that both understand and practice the basic procedures of fire, weather and lockdown drills. Each campus will conduct one fire drill per month and one lock down and weather drill each semester. We are also advised to hold fire and lockdown drills at different times throughout the day. These drills will be unannounced.

Closed Campus Policy

The safety and physical security of our student body is the highest priority of Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS). To maintain a secure, protected, and focused learning environment, the school enforces a strict closed-campus policy.

1. Closed Campus Restrictions

- Student Restrictions: MSCS operates a strictly closed campus. Students are prohibited from leaving the school grounds for any reason during regular instructional hours or during after-school activities.
- Authorized Dismissal: A student may only exit campus if they have been formally excused through the front office or are under the direct supervision of an authorized MSCS staff member or activity coach.

2. Unauthorized Property Access (Trespassing)

- Prohibited Entry: Individuals who are not actively affiliated with MSCS are strictly prohibited from entering school buildings or stepping onto school property without explicit permission from the School Administration.
- Legal Enforcement: Any individual who enters the campus perimeter without legitimate, official school business or prior administrative authorization will be considered a trespasser. The school will contact law enforcement to address trespassing violations immediately.

3. Mandatory Visitor Registration and Badging

To maintain accountability and tracking of all individuals on school grounds, all approved guests must strictly adhere to the following check-in protocols:

- Immediate Check-In: Upon arrival, all visitors must report directly to the campus front office. Guests are not permitted to bypass the front office to access classrooms, common areas, or outdoor facilities.
- Visitor Badging: Visitors must sign in and obtain an official school visitor’s badge. This badge is distributed exclusively by front office staff.

- Display Requirement: The visitor's badge must be worn visibly on the outer clothing at all times for the entire duration of the visit.

Visitors

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) values our partnership with families and welcomes parents and legal guardians to visit, tour, and observe our classrooms. To maintain a safe, focused, and distraction-free environment for our students, all visitors must strictly adhere to the following protocols.

1. Scheduling Classroom Observations

- Advance Notice Required: To prevent disruption to the academic calendar and student learning, all classroom observations must be scheduled at least two (2) academic days in advance, unless the teacher's schedule explicitly permits an earlier visit.
- Observation Etiquette: Observers must remain respectful of the instructional environment. To ensure student focus, visitors are prohibited from interacting with students or staff, and may not assist students with their schoolwork during the observation.

2. Campus Check-In and Security Protocols

Upon arrival, all visitors and volunteers must complete the following security checks at the main office:

1. Sign In: Register immediately at the front office upon arrival.
2. Identification: Present a valid, government-issued photo ID.
3. Verification:
    - For currently enrolled students: The visitor must be listed as a parent/legal guardian or Emergency Contact in the school's Student Information System (SIS), or be accompanied by a listed Emergency Contact.
    - For prospective students: The visitor must be an approved guest with a pre-scheduled tour, visit, or observation.
4. Staff Escort: Allow school staff to accompany you for the duration of the visit, as deemed appropriate by the School Administration.
5. Sign Out: Formally sign out at the front office before exiting the campus.

3. Health, Safety, and Volunteer Guidelines

- Administrative Discretion: Visitor and volunteer access is granted at the discretion of the School Administration and may be limited to comply with active public health mitigation measures.

- Illness Policy: Visitors or volunteers who feel unwell must refrain from coming to campus and follow the health guidelines outlined in the student handbook.
- Background Check Requirements: To ensure student safety.

4. Code of Conduct and Campus Decorum

Midlands STEM Charter School is dedicated to maintaining a professional learning atmosphere. While on campus, all guests must abide by the following behavioral standards:

- Professional Conduct: Visitors must dress conservatively, refrain from using profanity, and interact with MSCS staff and students in a polite, collaborative manner.
- Media Restrictions: Taking photographs, recording video, or capturing audio is strictly prohibited anywhere on campus without express written permission from the School Administration.
- Disruptive Behavior: Disruptive conduct will not be tolerated. This standard of professional communication applies to all business interactions, including emails, letters, personal conversations, and social media.
- Enforcement: Visitors who fail to meet these standards will be asked to leave the campus. In accordance with South Carolina State Law (S.C. Code Section 16-17-530), individuals who consistently interfere with or disrupt the school environment may be formally banned from the property.

Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the educational mission of Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS). To balance parental involvement with the need for a secure, uninterrupted learning environment, MSCS operates structured volunteer programs under the guidance of the School Administration and the Board of Directors.

Because volunteers serve as role models for our students, they are expected to maintain the highest standards of leadership, maturity, and civility.

1. Registration and Screening Requirements

Parents and community members wishing to participate in school-approved volunteer opportunities must complete the following onboarding steps prior to serving on campus:

- Background Check Clearance: Volunteers must submit to and clear a comprehensive criminal history background check before arriving on campus.
    - Background checks operate on a three (3) year renewal cycle.
    - Volunteers are responsible for the out-of-pocket costs associated with initial checks and renewals, though the school may choose to cover these

fees at its discretion.

- Immediate Disqualification: Background check findings that immediately disqualify an individual from volunteering include, but are not limited to, any felony charges, sex offenses, or offenses involving children (such as child endangerment or neglect).
- Required Documentation: Volunteers must sign the official MSCS Volunteer Code of Conduct Form and complete the MSCS Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement.

2. On-Campus Check-In and Supervision Protocols

To maintain campus security, approved volunteers must adhere to these daily protocols:

- Front Desk Check-In: Volunteers must check in at the main office upon arrival, present a valid government-issued photo ID, and check out before leaving campus.
- Identification: A volunteer badge or sticker must be visibly displayed for the entire duration of the visit, including at school-sponsored events.
- Supervision Limits: For student safety, parent volunteers are not permitted to be left alone with any student other than their own child. Volunteers must remain under the direct supervision of MSCS personnel at all times.

3. Classroom Volunteer Guidelines

Volunteers approved to assist inside a classroom must coordinate their schedules directly with the classroom teacher and School Administration.

- Supporting the Teacher: Volunteers are present to support the teacher's instructional goals and assist in maintaining an orderly, productive environment.
- Avoiding Disruptions: Volunteers must refrain from any actions that disrupt classroom instruction or distract students from learning.

4. Behavioral Standards and Environment

Midlands STEM Charter School is dedicated to maintaining a safe, moral, and wholesome environment for children. Volunteers must uphold these standards across all interactions:

- Professional Demeanor: While on campus or attending school events, volunteers must dress conservatively, refrain from using profanity, and conduct themselves in a collaborative, professional manner.
- Digital and External Communications: This standard of professional civility extends to all business and social interactions related to the school, including emails, letters, text messages, personal conversations, and social media posts.
- Health and Wellness: To protect the health of our campus, volunteers who feel

unwell must refrain from coming to school and strictly follow the illness policy outlined in the student handbook.
- Administrative Discretion: Volunteer opportunities are granted at the sole discretion of the School Administration and may be adjusted or limited to comply with active public health mitigation measures.

5. Enforcement and Revocation of Privileges

Volunteer placement is a privilege, not a right. MSCS reserves the right to immediately release a volunteer from their duties and ban them from future campus opportunities for any violation of school trust. Grounds for immediate removal and restriction include, but are not limited to:

- Improper or inappropriate advances toward students.
- Use of vulgar, offensive, or discriminatory language.
- Defacement or destruction of school property.
- Promotion of disruptive, uncivil, or uncooperative behavior.
- Failure to follow the directives of school staff or administration.

Search and Seizure

School administrators have the authority to conduct searches when there is reasonable suspicion that a student has violated school policy or the law.

- Personal Property Searches: Administrators may search student backpacks, vehicles, purses, clothing, or other personal belongings to investigate suspected violations.
- Electronic Devices: Cell phones, computers, laptops, tablets, smart watches, and other digital devices are subject to search if there is reason to believe they contain evidence of a violation.
- School Property: Items provided to students for storage—such as desks and lockers—are school property loaned as a courtesy.
- Expectation of Privacy: Because desks and lockers remain under the control and supervision of the school, students do not have an expectation of privacy regarding these storage areas. School leaders may inspect them at any time.

Authorized Campus Surveillance

To ensure a secure environment, MSCS utilizes institutional monitoring equipment under strict administrative guidelines:

- Safety and Security Monitoring: Surveillance cameras, recording equipment, and monitoring software are deployed across the MSCS campus exclusively by

authorized school personnel.
- Purpose of Security Footage: These systems are utilized to safeguard public safety, deter criminal activity, and facilitate official investigations into safety breaches or violations of MSCS institutional policies.

Student Behavior

Core Values

At MSCS, we want every student to feel safe, respected, and ready to learn. To make sure our school is a happy and focused place for everyone, our students agree to follow these simple everyday habits:

Be a Great Classmate

- Build a Safe Classroom: Work team-by-team with your teachers to keep your classroom safe, clean, organized, and free from distractions.
- Use Polite Speech: Always use your best manners and speak kindly to others.
- Treat Others with Respect: Treat your classmates, teachers, and school staff the exact way you want to be treated.

Act with Integrity

- Be Honest: Always tell the truth and take pride in doing your own best work.
- Accept Guidance Respectfully: If a teacher or staff member corrects your behavior, listen politely and make a positive change.
- Keep a Positive Attitude: Bring a cheerful, ready-to-learn mindset to school every single day.

Protect Our Campus

- Take Care of School Property: Treat school books, technology, desks, and buildings with respect.
- Leave Distractions at Home: Keep toys, pets, electronic gadgets, or inappropriate books and media at home. These can easily disrupt the learning environment or cause safety issues.
- Follow the Values: Know and follow all standard MSCS school policies and guidelines.

Code of Conduct

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) maintains high academic and behavioral

expectations to maximize instructional time and foster student success. This Student Code of Conduct was developed in alignment with state and federal guidelines to ensure a safe, orderly learning environment. Our school uses a progressive discipline system to address student misbehavior. Administration reviews each situation individually to ensure fair consequences.

- The CCM Matrix: School leaders guide their decisions using the Code of Conduct Matrix (CCM).
- Administrative Discretion: Administrators match the discipline to the severity of the behavior. They have the final authority to decide on proper consequences.
- Immediate Referrals: Serious violations must be reported to law enforcement and the South Carolina Department of Education. These include possession of weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, or any form of abuse.

Levels of Misconduct

The Student Code of Conduct categorizes prohibited behaviors by their level of disruption and assigns a progressive matrix of corrective actions. For major infractions (Levels 2 and 3), the principal or a designee will determine consequences based on the nature of the misconduct, the student's disciplinary history, and the severity of the situation.

Level One: Minor Misconduct

Level One behaviors contradict the core values of MSCS but are considered minor. This list is illustrative and may be amended as needed:

- Being untruthful to an adult
- Creating excessive noise
- Disrupting class or hindering the learning of peers
- Eating or drinking prohibited items, or consuming them at unauthorized times
- Engaging in inappropriate public displays of affection (mutual)
- Engaging in horseplay, simulated fighting (mutual), or simulated assault (one-sided)
- Littering or failing to clean up personal mess
- Misusing computer or school-provided technology (unless addressed elsewhere)
- Violating specific classroom rules or stated school procedures
- Using unkind or disrespectful language toward another person

The Demerit System (Daily Progressive Matrix)

Level One behaviors are managed through a daily progressive demerit system. Recognizing that younger students are still learning behavioral regulation, the matrix varies by grade level to allow more growth opportunities:

Daily Occurrence	Pre-K through Grade 2	Grades 3 through 12
1st Offense	1 demerit and verbal warning specifying the unwanted behavior	1 demerit and a verbal warning specifying the unwanted behavior
2nd Offense	1 demerit and 15-to-30-minute loss of privilege (teacher's discretion)	1 demerit
3rd Offense	1 demerit	1 demerit
4th Offense	1 demerit	Immediate office referral (Level Two consequences apply)
5th Offense	Immediate office referral (Level Two consequences apply)	N/A (referred at 4th offense)

Demerits and Detention Regulations

While daily behavior tracking resets each morning, a student's accumulated demerits only clear once the corresponding detention is served.

- Scheduling: Detentions are held during non-school hours (typically Friday afternoons, though subject to the school calendar). Parents will receive notice via the Parent Portal at least 18 hours in advance.
- Transportation: Parents or guardians are solely responsible for providing transportation to and from detention.
- Failure to Attend: Missing detention or violating behavioral expectations during detention results in an automatic out-of-school suspension of at least one day.
- Medical Exemptions: The only exception to a missed detention is a signed note

from a licensed medical professional, which must be submitted to the administration by 8:00 AM on the day the student returns. The administration will reschedule the detention at the school's convenience.
- Attendance Patterns: A documented pattern of missing scheduled detentions will be upgraded to a Level Two violation.

Demerits and Detention

Number of Demerits	PreK-2	3-12
1	No detention	No detention
2	No detention	45 minutes
3	45 minutes	90 minutes
4	90 minutes	Administrative consequences as outlined in Level Two
5	Administrative consequences as outlined in Level Two	N/A

Key Definitions

These definitions apply to all enrolled students throughout the school year, including participation in all school-affiliated clubs and athletic teams.

- Harassment: Purposely disrupting or threatening another student. This includes stalking, name-calling, unwanted touching, or leaving people out based on race, religion, appearance, or other traits.
- Intimidation: Intentionally making a student feel afraid of physical harm or damage to their property. This can happen face-to-face or online.
- Bullying: Repeated, unwanted, and aggressive behavior that uses power or control to hurt another child physically, emotionally, or socially.
- Cyberbullying: Bullying that happens through electronic devices, social media, or school internet networks.
- Hazing: Any dangerous or humiliating act forced upon a student to join or stay in a school club or team.

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

In agreement with the Safe School Climate Act (S.C. Code Ann. §59-63-110), the school forbids harassment, intimidation, bullying, or hazing. This rule applies on school grounds, school buses, at bus stops, during school events, and when using school technology.

All students and staff must do their part to prevent these behaviors. Any behavior that disrupts the learning environment—even if it happens off-campus—will face immediate action, up to expulsion.

Zero Tolerance Policy

MSCS enforces a strict Zero Tolerance Policy for egregious acts or threats of violence that jeopardize the safety of students and staff. This policy targets severe offenses exclusively and does not apply to minor behavioral issues.

The following violations carry an automatic minimum one-calendar-year expulsion and immediate referral to both law enforcement and mental health services:

1. Bringing a firearm or deadly weapon to school, a school function, or onto school-provided transportation.
2. Issuing a deliberate threat or false report (such as a bomb threat) targeting school property, transportation, or school-sponsored activities.

Discipline Processes for Students with Documented Disabilities

Disciplinary actions for students with a prior documented disability strictly comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These frameworks require behavioral assessments, manifestation determinations, and specialized intervention plans prior to any significant change in placement or expulsion.

Individualized Education Programs (IEP) Guidelines

1. All expulsion proceedings must adhere to the Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students.
2. Upon an expulsion referral, the Chief Executive Officer or a designee will convene the IEP team to conduct a Manifestation Determination Review to

evaluate if the behavior was directly caused by or related to the student's disability.
3. If the behavior is a manifestation: The student cannot be expelled. A structured change in placement may occur only if it complies with federal and state regulations and supports the student's progress toward their IEP goals.
4. If the behavior is not a manifestation: The school may apply the standard Code of Student Conduct up to expulsion; however, educational services must continue to be provided in alignment with the student's IEP.

Section 504 Guidelines

1. If a student with a 504 plan is referred for expulsion, a Special Review will be conducted by a team familiar with the student to determine if the misconduct is directly related to their disabling condition.
2. If the behavior is not related: The student may be disciplined in the same manner as their non-disabled peers under the standard Code of Student Conduct.
3. If the behavior is a manifestation: The student may not be suspended or expelled without a continuation of services. The 504 team will document necessary accommodations and behavioral recommendations to ensure uninterrupted service delivery.

Shared Responsibilities

- Parents and Guardians: Families are responsible for ensuring their children understand and follow the Student Code of Conduct.
- School Staff: Teachers and staff will explicitly teach classroom rules, school procedures, and common behavioral expectations.
- Sensitive Topics: Certain serious violations, such as those involving controlled substances or sexual misconduct, will not be taught to the general student population out of respect for family privacy and varying parental preferences.

Scope of Policy

These behavioral standards are not limited to the traditional classroom. They apply to students throughout the entire school day, as well as any time they represent MSCS in the community, including:

- Extracurricular activities, clubs, and athletic competitions.
- Field trips and off-campus educational excursions.
- Any other school-sanctioned or sponsored events.

Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices

In accordance with the S.C. Free to Focus law, under the Proviso 1.103 in the General Appropriations Bill, H.5100 of 202, cell phones, smart watches, bluetooth headphones, earbuds, and any other communication devices are not allowed to be used on school buses or campus. If a student has them on their person they are to be turned off and out of sight, in backpacks, or as otherwise directed by school administration, from the time they enter school property (bus/ campus) until the end of the school day. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action and surrender of the personal electronic device to administration until parents pick it up. Violations of this policy may result in consequences as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. MSCS assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen items. Earbuds/ wireless headphones are NOT allowed to be used during school hours and may not be worn on any part of a student's body during the school hours. Expectations to this policy may be granted by School Administration for assignment completion or for students with IEPs, Medical Plans, or 504 plans.

Audio and Video Recording

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) is dedicated to protecting the privacy, intellectual property, and safety of our students, employees, and community members. To balance the legitimate academic uses of media with serious privacy and data security concerns, MSCS enforces strict regulations regarding the audio or video recording of school activities.

1. Purpose and Scope

These guidelines establish the standard expectations for recording any classes, meetings, or oral conversations. This policy applies to all interactions:

- On the physical MSCS campus perimeter.
- Offsite at any MSCS-organized or school-sponsored events.
- Over the telephone or via digital communication channels between members of the school community.

2. Strict Prohibition of Unauthorized or Covert Recordings

MSCS is committed to maintaining an environment of mutual trust. To respect the privacy rights of all individuals, the following rules must be strictly observed by all students, parents, legal guardians, volunteers, and staff:

- Prior Written Consent Required: Audio and video recordings of any school proceeding, meeting, or classroom activity may only be conducted with the prior

written authorization of the School Administration.
- Covert Recording Ban: The secret or surreptitious recording of any classroom instruction, official meeting, or casual conversation—including telephone calls—is strictly prohibited.
- Third-Party Arrangements: Individuals are strictly prohibited from arranging, hiring, or directing third parties to record school conversations, phone calls, or activities without the express written permission of all participants.
- Unauthorized Distribution: Downloading recorded conversations to a computer, uploading them to the internet, or otherwise sharing, transmitting, or publishing media files without the prior written consent of all affected participants is strictly prohibited.

Social Media Platforms

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) maintains official social media platforms to foster a positive, collaborative, and informative digital space for parents, legal guardians, staff, students, and community members. To ensure these forums remain welcoming and aligned with our educational values, the school enforces the following standards of digital conduct.

Content Moderation and Platform Guidelines

MSCS actively monitors its official social media channels. The school reserves the right to immediately remove any content deemed inappropriate, offensive, or counterproductive to a respectful learning community.

Prohibited content includes, but is not limited to:

- Personal Attacks: Abusive, derogatory, or personally targeted commentary.
- Unlawful or Harmful Material: Content that is defamatory, hateful, threatening, harassing, obscene, or intentionally embarrassing to any individual or group.
- Privacy Violations: The publication of confidential information or personally identifiable data regarding students or staff members.
- Commercial Solicitation: Unapproved third-party advertisements, promotional links, chain letters, or spam.

Enforcement Notice: Individuals who post prohibited material or repeatedly violate these standards will be blocked from future participation and may lose access to all official MSCS social media pages.

Unauthorized Use of Intellectual Property

To protect the institution's official branding and public reputation, the school strictly regulates its digital trademarks:

- Logo and Name Protection: The unauthorized use of MSCS trademark names, logos, official images, or other institutional intellectual property is strictly prohibited.
- Unofficial Accounts: Community members, parents, and students may not use MSCS branding to create or maintain unofficial or personal social media accounts, community forums, pages, posts, or messaging groups without explicit, prior written authorization from the School Administration.

Student Behavioral Expectations and Disciplinary Actions

A student's digital conduct outside of school hours can have a direct impact on the campus learning environment.

- Scope of Conduct: As outlined in the Student Handbook and the Conduct and Consequences Matrix, students are expected to maintain accountability online.
- Disciplinary Consequences: Any student who utilizes social media—whether on personal accounts or unofficial forums—in a manner that negatively impacts, disrupts, bullies, or harasses MSCS students, staff, or school activities will be subject to immediate disciplinary intervention, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Public Displays of Affection (PDA)

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) maintains an environment focused on concentration, learning, and mutual respect. Students must refrain from inappropriate or intimate behaviors on campus, on school transportation, and at all school-related events and activities. Students are expected to demonstrate professionalism and conduct themselves respectfully at all times.

Prohibited Behaviors

Public displays of affection are not conducive to an academic environment. Examples of prohibited PDA include, but are not limited to:

- Kissing or embracing
- Prolonged or inappropriate hugging
- Holding hands or touching another student's face
- Sitting on another student’s lap or resting legs across another student’s lap

Disciplinary Consequences

Violations of the PDA policy will be addressed through the school's Code of Conduct Matrix.

Hazing, Harassment, Intimidation

Hazing, soliciting hazing, or helping someone else engage in hazing is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. A victim's consent or agreement to participate does not excuse a violation of this policy.

- Student Penalties: Students who engage in harassment, intimidation, bullying, or hazing will face consequences up to suspension or expulsion.
- The CCM Matrix: School Administration uses the Student Code of Conduct Matrix (CCM) to ensure consequences match the severity of the behavior.
- Law Enforcement: All suspected violations of state law will be reported to local police.
- Off-Campus Behavior: The school may discipline students for actions that happen outside of school hours and off school grounds if the behavior harms a student's well-being at school or disrupts the school's ability to maintain order.

Retaliation

- No Retaliation: MSCS prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports a violation. Students who retaliate will face disciplinary action under the CCM.
- Club and Team Penalties: Any school organization or club that permits, authorizes, or condones these behaviors will have its permission to operate at MSCS suspended or revoked.

Dress Code

To prepare students for college and career success in an engaging environment, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) requires student attire to promote campus safety, respect for others, and the orderly operation of the school.

Required Attire

All students must wear the following standard garments while on campus:

- Tops: Shirts, blouses, sweaters, or sweatshirts must have fabric that completely covers the front, back, sides, and directly under the arms.
- Bottoms: Pants, shorts, skirts, or dresses must extend past the tip of the student's lower middle finger when standing straight.
- Footwear: Solid-soled shoes are required to ensure safety during all school activities. Slides without back straps, flip-flops, open toed shoes, house slippers, and bedroom slippers are strictly prohibited due to safety issues. If there is a medical need to wear restricted shoes, please submit a note stating why and the

timeframe to the school nurse or administration.

Prohibited Attire

Students are not permitted to wear clothing or display items that:

- Pajamas/lounge pants, sleep bonnets, head scarves, hats, hoods, etc…
- Blankets as wraps
- Obscure the face or prevent immediate identification from the front or back, such as ski masks (excepting face coverings worn for documented religious purposes or medical masks).
- Feature threats or promote illegal or violent acts.
- Promote alcohol, tobacco, smoking, vaping, drugs, or other age-restricted products.
- Demonstrate hate group affiliation or utilize hate speech targeting race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or other protected classes.
- Reveal private anatomical areas (swimsuit zones); all such areas must be completely covered by opaque, non-see-through fabric.
- Expose skin on the abdomen or midriff area between the upper and lower garments.
- Feature rips, tears, or holes above the knee, unless permanent patches or leggings are worn underneath (temporary fixes like paper, napkins, or bandannas are unacceptable).
- Expose any portion of a student's undergarments.
- Feature leggings or tights unless they are covered by an upper-thigh length garment (such as a tunic, long shirt, dress, skirt, or shorts) that completely covers the student's backside.
- Display gang symbols, colors, or associations.
- Contain items or accessories that could be utilized as a weapon.

Headwear and Accessories

Hats, sunglasses, hoods, and other head coverings may not be worn inside any classroom, hallway, or school building. Wearing these items on campus grounds is a privilege that will be modified or revoked if students fail to remove them upon entering a building.

Policy Exemptions

- Religious Observances: Attire worn in accordance with a student’s documented religious beliefs is exempt from these guidelines.
- Specialized Activities: The Principal or an administrative designee may require additional dress provisions to ensure safety or compliance during sports, fine

arts, approved spirit days, or extracurricular events.

Appearance and Grooming Guidelines

Clothing and/or hair should not be so extreme or inappropriate to the school setting as to disrupt the educational process. Therefore, clothing and/or hair deemed distracting, revealing, overly suggestive or otherwise disruptive shall not be permitted.

Enforcement Guidelines

To maintain student dignity and a positive school climate, staff will enforce the dress code using the following professional standards:

- Corrective Actions: At the discretion of administration, a student may be asked to briefly step out of class to adjust, cover, or change non-compliant clothing.
- Discretionary Dialogue: Staff will make every reasonable effort to address dress code violations privately.
- Administrative Oversight: School Administrators are responsible for ensuring all faculty members thoroughly understand and uniformly apply these enforcement guidelines.

Disciplinary Consequences

Students who arrive on campus in violation of these guidelines may be asked to contact a parent or legal guardian to bring an appropriate change of clothes, or they may be required to change into school issued clothing (if available) for the remainder of the day. Violations of the Student Dress Code Policy will follow the Code of Student Conduct Matrix.

Dress Down and Spirit Days

Throughout the academic year, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) may authorize designated "dress-down" or themed "spirit days." These events are a privilege designed to celebrate school pride and foster community. While participating, students must maintain a standard of appearance that aligns with our campus learning environment.

1. Core Attire and Presentation Standards

All student attire must reflect a clean, modest, and neat appearance. Students must adhere to the following baseline rules:

- Proper Fit and Sizing: All clothing must be of an appropriate size, fit comfortably, and be worn correctly according to its design.
- Garment Orientation: Clothing must be worn right-side out.
- Themed Participation Options: On specific themed or spirit days, students are

expected to either fully participate in the designated theme or arrive on campus dressed in their standard, daily MSCS Dress Code attire.

2. Administrative Authority and Guidance

- Event-Specific Protocols: Specific, detailed guidelines for each dress-down day or themed event will be formally distributed by the School Administration prior to the date of the event.
- Final Compliance Determinations: To ensure a safe and non-disruptive learning environment, the School Administration reserves absolute authority to determine whether a student's attire complies with the MSCS dress code and spirit day standards.

Athletic Code of Conduct

Midlands STEM Charter School believes that a student should consider participation in athletics as both a privilege and a responsibility. The privilege is the opportunity to take part in the athletics program provided by the school, and this privilege may be revoked when the student fails or refuses to comply with the rules. The responsibility is found in representing the school, which involves maintaining academic eligibility, high standards of citizenship at all times, sportsmanship and playing the game to the best of his/her ability. Respect for and compliance with the school's Student-Athlete Code of Conduct is expected of every student who participates.

Academic Eligibility

All student-athletes must meet both SCHSL and MSCS Academic eligibility standards in order to participate in athletics. Students who are in danger of not meeting such guidelines will be required to attend tutoring. Students with a grade of 65 or below at the end of the previous QTR will be required to attend tutoring at a minimum until the next progress report and continuing until the grade reaches 65. Students with a final grade of 65 or below from the previous school year will begin the year in tutoring until reassessed at the midterm. If a student receives a grade of 65 or below at the progress report, they will be required to attend tutoring until the grade surpasses 65. Failure to comply will result in the following consequences:

- First Offense - Warning to Head Coach- Sport level punishment.
- Second Offense - Suspension of one half of the next game/contest.
- Third Offense - Suspension of the next game/contest in its entirety.
- Fourth Offense - Suspended from athletics indefinitely.

All returning athletes are expected to attend tutoring, if assigned, regardless of whether or not the athlete is in season. Any returning athlete, who is assigned out of season

tutoring and fails to attend, will forfeit their chance to appeal the GPA decision if the athlete is deemed ineligible.

Participation/Lettering

Students are expected to complete the entirety of the season in which they begin. Students who quit or are removed from a team are ineligible from participating for another team until the previous season has ended (including postseason) and forfeit their eligibility for lettering. All students who are members of varsity teams for 50% or more of the varsity season and finish the season in good standing will be awarded a letter. Students are expected to notify their head coach if participating in an outside sports team concurrently with their MSCS sport season. Students MAY participate in two sports simultaneously at MSCS with the Athletic Director and Head Coaches' permission.

Transportation

All student-athletes are required to be transported to and from athletic events with the team. Sub-varsity athletes traveling with varsity teams are expected to stay until the conclusion of the varsity event. If extenuating circumstances arise, parents may request a waiver in writing through the Head Varsity Coach, to be approved by both the Head Coach and AD. This request must be done a minimum of 24 hours before departure. Students will be required to be signed out by the parent at the appropriate time at the conclusion of the event. Failure to comply will result in an indefinite suspension from athletics to be resolved by the Athletic Director.

Attendance

In order to be eligible to participate in after school athletic events to include practice, conditioning, contests, etc. students are required to be present for at least half of the current school day. All athletes are expected to attend all practices, team meetings, and organized team activities. Failure to do so could lead to athletes losing playing time, game suspensions, and ultimately removal from a team.

Equipment

Athletes may be required to provide certain personal equipment items per sport. These are required for participation and vary per sport. The school/team will also provide team used equipment, ADIDAS uniforms, and other items. All team issued equipment and uniforms are to be returned no later than 5 school days after the conclusion of the season without damage other than normal wear and tear. Failure to do so will result in a

fee applied to the students account. Students may not participate in other sports until all athletic fees have been resolved.

Financial

There is a $30 ($50 family maximum) insurance fee that is required to be paid before an athlete can begin competition. This fee is required by MSCS and is only paid once per school year. Families qualifying for the $50 family maximum must request an adjustment to their online fee prior to payment. Requests must be made in writing to the Athletic Director. There are no refunds for inaccurate payments.

Students and families may be asked to participate in fundraising activities for their teams and certain sports may collect funds for pre or postgame meals. Participation is highly encouraged, but not required.

Social Media/Internet/Digital

Student-Athletes are expected to represent themselves, the school, and their team appropriately with their social media/internet/digital presence. If the student-athlete's use of such media causes a disruption within the school, athletic department, or team, the student may face athletic discipline in addition to school discipline at the discretion of the Head Coach or Administration.

Alcohol/Drugs/Steroids

All student-athletes are expected to refrain from using alcohol, drugs or steroids. Any athlete witnessed, caught, or found to be in use off campus will be face the following:

- 1st Offense - suspended for the equivalent of 50% of the regular season game schedule and school policies will be in effect. (suspension).
- 2nd Offense - Dismissed from team.

Any athlete witnessed, caught, or found to be in use on campus or at a school event will be face the following:

- 1st Offense - suspended for the remainder of the current season. A contract must be signed to play again with a second sport.
- 2nd Offense - suspended from all athletics for one calendar year from the date of the infraction.

School Discipline

Any student-athlete receiving out of school suspension will be suspended from competition for the same number of days of OSS received once returned to school. For example, if a student received 3 days of OSS, they would be suspended from competitions (not practices) for 3 additional days upon their return. If a student is recommended for expulsion but returned to school, that student is to be suspended for the remainder of the current season to extend into the following season until a minimum of 50% of a season is served.

Athletic Facilities

All athletic facilities at MSCS are closed for public use and are only open to student-athletes during official team events. The SCHSL regulates use of school facilities by student-athletes and use of facilities during unapproved times and/or other violations could cause the school, team and/or athlete to face league issued discipline. Any athlete found using school athletic facilities outside of official team events will face the following:

First Offense- Warning to Head Coach- Sport level punishment.

Second Offense- Suspension of next game/contest in the sport in which the athlete participates.

Third Offense- Dismissal from Athletic Team.

Appeals/Administration Discretion

Any athlete or family wishing to appeal any enforcement or interpretation of the rules above must do so in writing to the Athletic Director within 2 school days of initial ruling. Appeals will be ruled upon as soon as reasonably possible by athletic and/or school administration.

Athletic and School administration reserves the right to alter or modify interpretation or enforcement of the above rules when extenuating circumstances require so.

Definitions/Interpretations

Suspension - Suspended athletes are not allowed to be present with the team during the suspended time. They may not travel with, nor attend games, practices, or other team functions. Student-athletes with lengthy suspensions may be allowed to practice prior to their completing their suspension at the discretion of the Athletic Director.

Percentage of Season - Percentage of season is defined by using the total number of allowed contests as the total season, not the number of actually scheduled games. These figures are set by the SCHSL and can be found under the SCHSL rules and regulations. For example- Golf is allowed 16 matches at the varsity level, and 12 at the JV level. A 25% suspension will equal 4 matches at the varsity level and 3 at the JV level regardless of the actual schedule. Any game cancellations/postponements, etc will be interpreted by the Athletic Director.

Scrimmages/Jamborees - These games do not count as games for suspension. Participation in these events will be left to the interpretation of the athletic/school administration.

General School Procedures and Policies

Communication

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) is committed to maintaining open, clear, and frequent communication between families and the school.

- Channels of Communication: To keep families informed, the school utilizes a variety of outreach methods, including:
    - The official school website and newsletters
    - Telephone calls and emails teachers, coaches, then office staff (Protocol: contact the teachers/ coaches prior to administration)
    - The Parent Portal for real-time access to progress reports and report cards
    - Scheduled parent-teacher conferences and in-person meetings
- Scheduled Conferences: School administration and faculty welcome the opportunity to meet with parents and guardians. To ensure focused attention, all conferences must be scheduled in advance directly with the teacher before/after school or on Fridays.
- Distraction-Free Windows: Parents are asked not to visit a classroom unless a formal appointment has been made. Impromptu or unscheduled conferences before or after school are strictly prohibited. These unexpected meetings detract from a teacher's ability to plan instruction and properly supervise students.

School Fees

All fees (extra-curricular activities, course fees, lunches, and athletic fees) will be collected prior to participation in the event or activity. Failure to pay fees will result in removal from the program. Students with unpaid fees may be designated as ineligible to

participate in extra-curricular activities until fees are paid. Fees may be paid by cash, check, or online via PowerSchool Parent Portal. School Administration may waive fees, as appropriate, if enforcing the fees presents an economic hardship.

Food and Drinks

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) operates an open campus environment; our facilities are not allergy-free or nut-free. To protect student health and accommodate specific dietary needs, the school enforces the following procedures:

- Allergy Reporting: Parents and legal guardians must report all student food allergies directly to the school nurse.
- Allergy Action Plans: For students with severe or life-threatening allergies, parents must provide a formal Allergy Action Plan. The required forms are available in the school health room.
- Special Meal Requests: Any request for specific meal substitutions or dietary modifications within the school lunch program requires formal medical documentation from a licensed healthcare provider. The necessary medical request forms can be obtained from the school nurse.
- Inquiries: Any questions or concerns regarding school menus, ingredient lists, or cafeteria safety should be directed jointly to the school food services manager, School Administration, and the school nurse.

- Food Sharing: Due to the growing number of students with a wide variety of food allergies MSCS will no longer allow students to share food with any other students, except during specific class and school celebrations. During these designated times all items will need to be individually wrapped store bought items in the original packages.

- To keep our learning spaces clean and free from pests, students may not eat food anywhere except the cafeteria, without teacher expressed permission.
- Students may only drink water. Any flavorings that are added can not change the color or transparency of the water. It must be in a transparent and spill-free container.

Prohibited Items:

- Students are not allowed to bring, drink, or share energy drinks on school property during any school sanctioned activities. Energy drinks include beverages with high caffeine or other stimulates, such as taurine, and/or guarana.
- Any type of food/ beverages that contain the harmful substances such as the following but not limited to THC, nicotine, and smokeless tobacco products.

Energy drinks can cause fast heartbeat, anxiety, trouble sleeping, dehydration, and other health problems. Teens are more sensitive to caffeine and other stimulants because of their age and body size. Avoiding energy drinks helps students focus, feel well, and stay safe learning.

Restroom Usage

To ensure student safety, maintain privacy, and prevent the disruption of instructional time, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) enforces the following regulations regarding restroom usage:

- Designated Facilities: Middle and high school students are restricted from using restrooms located in the elementary wing. Exceptions will be made only during an active building emergency or during scheduled facility maintenance. Students are to use restrooms according to gender assigned at birth.
- Instructional Block Restrictions: To protect core instructional time, students are prohibited from leaving the classroom during the first 15 minutes and the final 15 minutes of any class period.
- Sign-Out Procedures: Classroom teachers will maintain and manage a structured sign-out documentation system. Only one student may be excused to use the restroom at a time. Students are expected to use the restroom responsibly. Multiple restroom visits during the same class period (block) are generally not permitted. Students with a documented medical condition that requires more frequent restroom use must provide a doctor's note to the school nurse. Approved medical accommodations will be honored.
- Privacy Standards: To protect the privacy rights of all individuals, only one student is permitted per restroom stall at any given time.
- Prohibited Items and Activities: Restrooms are strictly designated for their intended purpose. Contraband items are forbidden in these facilities. Additionally, students are prohibited from using restrooms for vaping, social media content creation, or any other unauthorized activities. (No aerosolized materials are allowed in the restrooms at any time.)

Deliveries

No deliveries of any kind addressed to students will be accepted at school. These deliveries include but are not limited to, balloons, flowers, food, or any other type of deliveries to the school for a student.

Tobacco

Smoking, along with all tobacco products of any kind, is strictly prohibited to all people

on school property and all school events, including any event sponsored by the school and all off-campus activities. This includes while on school property for drop-off and pick-up.

Advertising on School Grounds

To maintain an orderly and professional school environment, all flyers, posters, and written materials must receive formal approval prior to being posted or distributed on school grounds.

- Submission and Approval: All materials must be submitted directly to the front office for review and approval by the School Administration before distribution.
- Verification: Once approved, items must display an official administrative marker or notation indicating formal authorization.
- Enforcement: Any unapproved materials found on campus will be immediately removed or confiscated by school staff.

Pledge of Allegiance

The United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance are important symbols of the democratic heritage of the United States. The pledge is said at the beginning of the day in school. Students who, because of religious or other deep personal conviction, do not participate in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag will stand or sit in silence.

Instruction and Academics

The curriculum at Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) is fully aligned with the South Carolina K-12 State Standards.

- State Standards: Parents and guardians can view the complete academic requirements on the South Carolina Department of Education website.
- Regular Updates: We update our curriculum frequently to reflect updates in state standards, valuable teacher feedback, and student testing results.
- Curriculum Questions: If you have questions about what your student is learning, please contact your child's teacher or a school administrator.

Bell to Bell Instruction

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) teachers maximize every minute of instructional time to support student learning. To help us maintain an environment free of distractions, please observe the following guidelines:

- Deliveries and Messages: Please drop off all student messages, money, and materials directly at the front office. Staff will ensure these items are delivered to students at an appropriate time.
- Classroom Interruptions: Front office staff will only interrupt core instructional time to deliver messages or items in the event of an extreme emergency.
- Celebrations: Personal birthday celebrations are not permitted during the school day, as they disrupt scheduled instructional time.
- Appointments: Parents and guardians should schedule all personal and medical appointments for students outside of regular school hours.

Grading Weights and Scales

Midlands STEM Charter School employs a traditional system that relies on averaging separate quarterly grades. Teachers will enter scores into Power School within two weeks of an assessment/ assignment. Parents are encouraged to review their student's grades via PowerSchool (Parent Portal) regularly. Any questions/concerns need to be discussed with the assigned teacher prior to the end of the grading period.

Students in grades K-8th will be given Interim reports at the 4.5 week mark of each quarter and report cards will be sent home at the end of every quarter. Students 9-12 will receive midterm reports and semester report cards.

New State Policy: Ban of Grade Floor

South Carolina's ban on grade floors is outlined in Act 204 of 2026 Grade Floor. This legislation prevents districts and schools from requiring teachers to assign a minimum grade (such as a 50%) that is higher than the actual academic performance of a student.

The legislation includes these key provisions:

- No Minimum Grades: Prohibits public school districts from mandating that teachers inflate a student's grade or score.
- Credit Recovery Rules: Requires students to submit all necessary assignments and show effort before they are allowed to enroll in credit recovery programs.
- Benchmark Test Limits: Restricts the use of formative or benchmark assessments from being calculated into a student's final grade, unless the material has already been taught and reviewed.
- Funding Penalties: School districts found violating these grading policies can face a 10% reduction in their State Aid to Classroom funding.

You can review the full text of the enacted policy directly on the South Carolina Legislature (H. 5073) page.

Grades K-2 Grading and Reports

Kindergarten through second grade use a standards based interim and quarterly grading system utilizing descriptive feedback, competency scale, or portfolios. These assessments are meant to provide deeper, more personalized insights into a student's progress on individual standards and skills.

Grades 3-12 Grading:

Third through twelfth grade uses a traditional grade based on numerical values from various assessments of student learning. Each teacher is responsible for communicating their grade computations (how assessments will be weighted) before the first graded assessment is given.

Select high school courses must give a state mandated End-of-Course exam (EOC). These scores must count for 20% of the students' grades.

Percentage	Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-50	F

Assessment Retakes or Corrections

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) provides structured opportunities for students to demonstrate academic mastery. MSCS Retake Policy

- Retake Eligibility: Test retake guidelines are managed at the discretion of each teacher and are detailed in their individual class procedures. If a teacher warrants a retake on a given assessment students will be permitted a maximum of one retake for the assessment.
- Retake Scheduling: All assessment retakes are administered either before school or after 12:00 PM on Fridays. The teacher administering the retake will provide the specific date and time for the scheduled session.
- Assignment Extensions: Deadlines for assignments, projects, and classwork may be extended only if the teacher determines that an extension is educationally warranted.

Grade Reports

Parents, legal guardians, and students are able to view student progress in their courses through the PowerSchool Parent Portal. Parents/legal guardians have the ability to print all grade reports through their Parent Portal. If you require assistance with obtaining a paper copy of a grade report, please contact your child's teacher.

Homework

MSCS believes that meaningful homework is integral to the learning process and should be provided at all grade levels for the following purposes:

- To provide additional practice on previously learned skills (For example: completing math drills & problem sets, reading, researching and/or writing)
- To enrich learning experience (For example: sharing ideas with parents/legal guardians or using creative thought to complete a project or assignment)
- To provide students the opportunity to complete unfinished class assignments or make-up work due to absences.

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) expects students to develop strong organizational habits and take full personal responsibility for completing their coursework.

- Submission Deadlines: All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on their designated due date. If a student is unable to produce an assignment when the teacher collects or calls for it, the work will be marked late.
- Academic Integrity: Students must complete their homework and classwork independently. If a student is caught copying another student's work, both the student who copied and the student who shared the work will receive an automatic grade of zero on the assignment.
- Clarification and Assistance: Students are responsible for tracking their own deadlines and understanding instructions. If a student requires clarification on an assignment, they must proactively speak with or email their teacher, or consult with a reliable classmate before the assignment is due.

Make Up Work

Homework that is assigned the day that a student is absent, the student has one day to complete and turn it in. Assignments missed due to an absence will be given an equal number of school days to complete assignments. Missed assignments

may be picked up by the parent/guardian after 3 pm on the day the student is absent or will be sent home with the student on the day he/she returns. Students or parent/legal guardians must request make-up work 24 hours in advance of pick-up.

Extra Credit

In order to ensure that Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) lessons, assignments, and assessments accurately reflect student academic mastery, our academic program does not offer extra credit opportunities.

Technology & Internet Services Acceptable Use Policy

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) provides managed internet services to qualified students to support their academic growth and research needs. To ensure that our digital resources are used exclusively for intended educational purposes, all students utilizing the MSCS network must strictly adhere to the following guidelines and behavioral procedures.

1. Compliance and Access Overview

- Privilege of Access: Access to the MSCS internet network is a privilege, not a right.
- Revocation and Discipline: Any student who misuses, abuses, or violates network guidelines will face immediate termination of their internet access privileges. Inappropriate digital behavior will also result in progressive disciplinary action, up to and including long-term suspension or expulsion.
- Monitoring and Privacy: Students must understand that electronic mail, direct electronic messaging, and all network activities conducted on school-provided infrastructure are not private. MSCS personnel actively monitor and review network traffic to ensure compliance and student safety.

2. Student Responsibilities and Expected Conduct

Every student accessing the MSCS internet network is required to:

- Support Academic Objectives: Utilize the network solely to advance personal educational goals that align with the curriculum and mission of MSCS.
- Uphold Digital Safety: Protect personal data by never revealing home addresses, personal telephone numbers, or other personally identifiable information unless explicitly authorized by a designated school official.
- Observe the Code of Conduct: Maintain the same standards of integrity, respect, and professionalism online as required in the physical classroom.

3. Strictly Prohibited Digital Activities

The following activities are strictly prohibited on the MSCS network and will result in immediate administrative intervention:

- Inappropriate Content: Submitting, publishing, displaying, downloading, or retrieving any defamatory, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, or illegal material.
- Unauthorized Downloads: Downloading unapproved software, applications, games, files, or media packages onto school equipment.
- Copyright Violations: Infringing upon trademark laws or violating international copyright regulations.
- Social Media Misconduct: Posting photographs or videos of MSCS students while on school property (bus/ campus) or on a school sponsored trip (athletic/ field trip) to social media platforms without a verified, signed parental media release form on file with the office.
- Network Disruption: Engaging in behaviors that deliberately slow down, interrupt, or disrupt network services for other users.
- System Tampering: Bypassing system security protocols, altering network configurations, or attempting to harm, modify, add, or destroy school-managed software.

Plagiarism

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) upholds the highest standards of academic honesty. Students must complete all assignments, assessments, and projects independently using their own words and ideas.

- Definition of Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else’s words, insights, or ideas without proper acknowledgment. This policy explicitly includes the unauthorized use of text or concepts generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms.
- Proper Attribution: To avoid plagiarism, students must properly quote and cite, or paraphrase and cite, any external sources used within their academic papers and projects.
- Consequences for Plagiarism: Any submission found to contain plagiarized content will automatically receive a grade of zero. In addition, the student will receive a formal disciplinary referral.
- Collaborative Infractions: Academic integrity applies equally to all parties involved in an infraction. If a student shares their work with a peer, or otherwise contributes to the plagiarism of another student's assignment, that student will face the exact same academic and disciplinary consequences.
- Unauthorized Sharing: The unauthorized sharing of information regarding tests,

quizzes, homework, or any other school assignments is strictly prohibited. Both the student providing the information and the student receiving it will receive an automatic grade of zero on the assignment and a formal disciplinary notice.

Honor Code

The Midlands STEM community embodies a spirit of mutual trust and intellectual honesty that is central to the very nature of the school and represents the highest possible expression of shared values among the members of the school community. The fundamental beliefs underlying and reflected in the Honor Code are:

- The student will abide by the rules and standards of the school as written in this school handbook.
- The student will behave with integrity, respect, and dignity in all relationships with teachers and peers.
- The student will acknowledge the rights and property of the school and his/her peers.
- The student will treat others as they would want to be treated.

This Honor Code summarizes the Honor Policy, which defines the expected standards of conduct in academic affairs. The Honor Policy is published on our school website www.midlandsstem.org. The Honor Council is the school body charged with enforcement of the Honor Code. The student body and faculty at Midlands STEM will not tolerate any violation of the Honor Code.

Pledge

1. I will foster a passion for discovery, learning, and growth in all aspects of life.
2. I will inspire myself and others through the pursuit of personal excellence.
3. I will commit myself to serving my school community and the larger community in which I live.
4. I will maintain the highest standards of leadership through personal and professional conduct in and out of school.
5. I will encourage inclusivity and collaboration with myself and others.

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) requires all students to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and adhere strictly to the school Honor Code at all times.

- Reading Assignments: Students are expected to thoroughly read all primary texts and assigned source materials. The use of summary guides (such as SparkNotes or CliffsNotes) is permitted only as a secondary study aid and may not replace the reading of the primary texts.
- Independent Work: Students must complete and submit their own authentic work. Plagiarism, copying another individual's work, or claiming external ideas as one's

own will not be tolerated. These actions undermine personal learning and compromise the academic integrity of MSCS.
- Consequences for Violations: Any academic infraction will result in an automatic grade of zero on the assignment for all students involved. Additionally, formal disciplinary notices will be issued, and the incidents will be referred to the Honor Council to determine if further disciplinary action is warranted.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools Acceptable Use Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

These guidelines establish the standard expectations for the acceptable, responsible, and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by students. MSCS recognizes that tools such as large language models (e.g., ChatGPT), advanced editing software (e.g., Grammarly), and generative media platforms can serve as valuable tools to support creativity and academic growth when used with integrity.

2. Authorized Academic Applications

Students may utilize approved AI tools to enhance their educational experience under the following parameters:

- Research and Conceptual Comprehension: Utilizing platforms to explore academic topics, brainstorm creative outlines, and clarify complex learning concepts.
- Instructional Writing Assistance: Applying tools for syntax correction, grammar refinement, and structural analysis—strictly when explicitly authorized by the course instructor.
- Multimedia and Creative Pursuits: Enhancing artistic, musical, literary, or digital media projects, provided that all AI-generated foundational elements or modifications are clearly documented and labeled.

3. Prohibited AI Activities and Misconduct

The misuse of AI technologies undermines the learning process and violates institutional expectations. Students are strictly prohibited from utilizing AI for:

- Academic Dishonesty: Submitting completely or partially AI-generated content as their own original work without explicit disclosure or prior instructor approval.
- Circumvention of Learning: Relying on automated tools to complete daily assignments, essays, or assessments in lieu of developing an independent understanding of the curriculum.
- Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement: Replicating generative outputs without formal citation, or utilizing tools in a manner that violates international intellectual

property and trademark laws.
- Harassment and Malicious Content Generation: Employing AI technology to generate harmful, offensive, defamatory, or unsafe textual, audio, or visual media.

4. Transparency, Citation, and Instructor Authority

- Mandatory Disclosure: Students must formally disclose the use of AI tools on any submitted coursework where the technology substantially contributed to the final output.
    - Standard Attribution Format: Students should include a clear statement, such as: "Portions of this assignment were developed with the technical assistance of [Insert AI Tool Name]."
- Instructor Directives: Individual course instructors retain absolute authority to establish specific, localized rules regarding AI utilization within their specific classrooms. Students bear the sole responsibility for understanding and adhering to the unique academic expectations of each class.

5. Data Privacy and Information Security

To comply with student data privacy laws and maintain robust cybersecurity protocols, students must adhere to the following data safety restrictions:

- Protection of Personal Data: Students are strictly prohibited from inputting personally identifiable information, private medical or family data, or sensitive institutional school records into external AI platforms.
- Approved Networks Only: Students must utilize only those school-sanctioned AI platforms that officially comply with state and federal data protection standards.

6. Enforcement and Disciplinary Sanctions

Violations of this policy constitute a breach of the MSCS Academic Integrity Guidelines. Inappropriate or unauthorized use of AI tools will trigger immediate administrative review and may result in the following progressive consequences:

- Academic Penalties: Forfeiture of credit, immediate grade reduction, or a mandatory requirement to resubmit the assignment under strict supervision.
- Disciplinary Interventions: Referral to the School Administration for formal disciplinary action in alignment with the Conduct and Consequences Matrix, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

School Owned Digital Devices

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) provides students with school-issued laptops/

digital devices to support their academic growth. For rules regarding the proper care and handle of technology, please refer to the Technology & Web Policies.

- Device Care by Grade Level:
    - Grades K–5: Students are required to leave their assigned devices at school at the end of each instructional day.
    - Grades 6–12: Students are permitted to take their assigned devices home daily for educational use only.
- All students and parents are expected to sign and return the MSCS Technology Agreement prior to devices being issued to students.
- Financial Responsibility: Students and families are responsible for keeping all school items safe, at school and at home. Devices, chargers and other school-owned items must be returned in the condition they were received, accounting for normal wear and tear. Parents/guardians are responsible for replacement or repair of school-owned technology caused by neglect, misuse, or loss. Fees will be based on actual replacement or repair costs. As an example, the fee to replace a broken Chromebook, laptop, or iPad is $300. Please see Technology Agreement for additional information.

Account Clearance: The school business office must receive full payment for any missing or broken items before a new device is issued for take home use and year-end report cards/ diplomas are released.

Textbooks

Textbooks are assigned to students for the current school year only. Students are responsible for proper care of all books. Textbooks will be collected at the end of the year or courses for semester classes are expected to be in good condition. Students will be charged for books damaged beyond normal wear. Books must be returned to MSCS if a student withdraws from the school. Report cards may be withheld and fees added to the students account until all books are returned and/or fees paid.

Field Trips

Field trips at Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) are carefully selected and approved to directly support classroom learning outcomes. To ensure safety, accountability, and order, all participants must adhere to the following regulations:

- Student Requirements: Every student must submit a signed parental permission slip and pay any required fees before the date of the trip. Students marked absent on the morning of the field trip will not be allowed to participate.

- Refunds and Transportation: Field trip fees are non-refundable. To maintain student accountability, all students must ride designated school transportation both to and from the field trip destination.
- General Chaperone Guidelines: Approved chaperones must remain with the school group for the entire duration of the trip, register at the front office to receive a name badge, and wear the badge prominently. Chaperones are responsible for any applicable personal entrance fees. Background checks are required 5 days prior to the trip.
- Chaperone Restrictions: Siblings of students are not permitted to accompany chaperones on field trips. Furthermore, chaperones are strictly prohibited from being left alone with any one student other than their own child.

Overnight Field Trip Regulations

Overnight field trips require enhanced supervision and security measures. The following strict protocols must be enforced:

- Background Checks: All overnight chaperones and leaders must possess a valid, school-approved background check prior to the trip.
- Supervision Ratios: A minimum of two adult leaders must be present on all overnight trips. A student must never be left alone with an adult who is not their parent or legal guardian.
- Lodging Restrictions: Male and female leaders may not share a room unless they are legally married.

Tutoring

Please contact your student's teacher and/or the School Administrators for available tutoring opportunities, specific dates and times. Parent/legal guardian pick-up is required for all students participating in before or after school tutoring support.

Promotion

Promotion is the standard advancement of a student to the next grade level after successfully completing an academic year of study. Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) determines promotion readiness based on the following criteria:

- Elementary School (Grades K–5): Students will be promoted if they demonstrate readiness to succeed at the next academic grade level and meet the attendance requirements as explained in the attendance policy in the handbook.
- Junior High and High School (Grades 6–12): Students will be promoted if they

demonstrate readiness for the next grade level by earning a passing grade in every course taken during the academic year and meet the attendance requirements as explained in the attendance policy in the handbook. Students must acquire all needed credits prior to graduation in order to participate in the ceremony.

- Evaluation Process: School administration and classroom teachers work collaboratively to review student performance and formulate promotion recommendations.
- Evaluation Criteria: Team recommendations are based on a holistic review of the student's age, maturity, school attendance, mastery of grade-level standards, and overall course grades.

K-8 Retention

If a student in grades K–8 does not demonstrate the competencies required for success at the next grade level, they may be considered for grade retention (repeating a grade). Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) utilizes a structured intervention process to support students experiencing academic difficulties.

- Early Intervention Steps: If a teacher notices a significant decline in academic performance, they will first meet with the student to address the issue. If the decline continues, the teacher will contact the family to create an academic plan to help the student improve. This plan may include available tutoring sessions.
- The MTSS Watchlist: Students requiring continued support will be placed on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) watchlist under the school's Student Intervention Team (SIT).
- Monitoring and Reporting: Once placed on the watchlist, the student's academic progress will be evaluated every four weeks through targeted instructional lessons. Parents and guardians will receive progress reports after each SIT Data Review meeting.
- Retention Decisions: If retention is deemed necessary for the student's academic well-being, the parent or legal guardian, teacher, and school administration will collaborate to prepare the student for the upcoming school year.
- Final Authority: School administration retains final authority on all retention decisions.
- Special Education Context: Retention decisions for students receiving special education services are made on a case-by-case basis. These decisions will align with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and all relevant state and federal laws.

Read to Succeed Act

The South Carolina Read to Succeed Act states that a student must be retained in third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of the third grade. The law specifies six good cause exemptions from mandatory retention; one of these exemptions is student attendance at the Summer Reading Camp. SC READY reading scores will be used to identify students who do not demonstrate proficiency in grade 3 reading and are candidates to attend Summer Reading Camp (one of the six “good cause” exemptions).

For more information on the Read to Succeed Act, parents should contact the school, or visit the SC READY webpage at https://ed.sc.gov/tests/middle/sc-ready/.

Acceleration

Grade placement acceleration is evaluated on a case-by-case basis following a comprehensive review of the student's holistic growth and development. All acceleration requests must be approved by School Administration and are based on the following criteria:

- Student Well-Being: The acceleration must serve the overall best interest of the student.
- Data Evaluation: Decisions are guided by sufficient data collected over time regarding the student's academic achievement, physical development, social development, and cognitive abilities.
- Collaborative Review: School staff and parents or legal guardians will work in close cooperation throughout the evaluation process.
- Final Authority: School Administration retains final authority regarding all student acceleration decisions.
- Written Consent: Parent or legal guardian consent for grade acceleration must be submitted in writing and will be maintained in the student’s permanent educational file.

Credit Recovery

Prior to enrollment in a credit recovery course, students must have demonstrated a grade of “F” in the traditional courses. Credit recovery courses are delivered through asynchronous courses.

Homebound

Midlands Stem Charter School believes that the school environment is the best place for a child to grow both academically and socially, even for those with significant physical or mental health concerns. When a student is absent from school, they miss important classroom instruction and social experiences.

Midlands Stem Charter School's Medical Homebound service is intended for students who are unable to attend school for a limited period of time due to an acute or recurring/chronic medical issue. A licensed Physician, Nurse Practitioner, in compliance with the requirements of the Nurse Practice Act, Physicians Assistant, in compliance with the requirements of Article 7 of the Medical Practice Act, or Psychiatrist, determines the need for Homebound services.

There are two different types of Homebound statuses:

- Full-time status - the student is out of school 10 or more consecutive days (for elementary or middle school) OR 5 or more consecutive days (for high school) for a specific diagnosis.
- Intermittent status - the student is attending school on a regular basis but is absent when he/she is experiencing medical difficulties related to the specific diagnosis on the homebound paperwork.

Parents interested in homebound services must call and schedule an Initial Homebound Meeting with the Special Needs Administrator. Refer to our Medical Homebound Instruction Guide for Parents for additional information.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences for all students are held in the fall (for year round courses or Semester One courses) or in the winter (for Semester Two courses). Conferences are required for all students regardless of performance status. During this time, parents/legal guardians have the opportunity for a one-on-one meeting with their student's teacher to discuss progress, celebrations, and concerns. Conferences are preferred to be primarily in person, but available to be scheduled via phone or virtual when a scheduling conflict is presented. Conferences must be scheduled to ensure teachers and/or administrators are available. Parents/Families MUST be notified by the

teacher at the Progress Report window of any student not meeting performance standards. An academic intervention plan will be developed within an MTSS academic conference.

Parent/legal guardians that are concerned about their student's progress may schedule a meeting with their student's teacher and School Administration prior to or in-between these conference dates.

Student-Teacher Conferences

Teachers are available for academic conferences before school, after school until 4:00 PM, and on Fridays after 12:30 PM, based on their availability and unless otherwise specified. Academic conferences are not tutoring sessions. They are meant to be a conversation about how the student can improve their achievement. To ensure proper planning and availability, students must observe the following scheduling procedures:

- Advance Request: Students must submit a conference request at least 1 school day in advance of the day requested..
- Scheduling Priority: Conferences will be scheduled at the teacher's earliest availability to best support the student.

State and District Assessments

Students' progress towards grade level objectives is assessed throughout the school year. Classroom assessment content and dates will be communicated via class newsletters/ course syllabus.

The following assessment schedule is followed to ensure that relevant and timely information can be shared with families regarding their student's academic performance:

GRADE	ASSESSMENT	FREQUENCY	RESULTS/ PURPOSE
Kindergarten	KRA- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	Beginning of the year	Shared Parent-Teacher Conferences Used to inform classroom

			instruction
K-12th Grades	Universal Screener	Three times a year (Fall/ Winter/ Spring)	Shared Parent-Teacher Conferences Used to inform classroom instruction
K-8th Grades	MAP- ELA and Math	Three times a year (Fall/ Winter/ Spring)	Shared Parent-Teacher Conferences Used to inform classroom instruction and Tier II/ III Intervention
9th-12th Grades	All Courses	Mid-Term and Final Exams or Performance Assessments	Shared Parent-Teacher Conferences Used to inform classroom instruction
3-8th Grades	SC READY- ELA, Math, Science (4/6 only)	Last 20 days of the School Year	State Mandated Assessment
Biology, Algebra I, US History, English 2	EOCs- End of Course Exams	At the end of the course	20% of the Final Grade State Mandated Assessments
10th Grade	PSAT	1 Day (Fall)	Report Available through Student Services
11th Grade	ACT/ SAT	1 Day (Spring)	Online Score Report

11th Grade	ASVAB	1 Day (Fall)	Purport Available through Student Services

Other School, State, or District Assessments

Gifted Assessments: The identification of gifted and talented students is a multi-step process that consists of screening and referral, assessment of eligibility, and placement. Testing begins in the second grade. The objective of the grade 2 testing program is to evaluate all students to determine if they meet the requirements for Gifted and Talented placement.

Multi Language Learners: WIDA ACCESS The annual test administered to multilingual learners to measure academic English growth. WIDA ACCESS evaluates English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing for students in kindergarten through grade 12

Final Exams/ Midterms: Students may not take midterm or final exams prior to the time they are scheduled. Students who are absent during semester midterm or final exams will receive a zero for the exam. In order for the grade to be changed, students must take the exam within ten school days of the start of the next quarter or semester, as arranged through School Administration.

Students with Disabilities

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) provides comprehensive special education and related services to students who meet eligibility requirements based on comprehensive evaluation data.

- Collaborative Planning: Parents, legal guardians, and school staff work closely together to determine eligibility and to design an Individualized Education Program (IEP) tailored to the student's unique needs.
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The IEP team, which always includes the student's parents or guardians, determines the least restrictive environment for learning. Our priority is to keep students in the general education classroom as much as possible, with the ultimate goal of supporting them until they no longer require specialized services.

- Continuum of Services: MSCS offers a full continuum of placement options and supports to guarantee that every student's academic and developmental needs are met.
- Inquiries: If parents or legal guardians have questions regarding special education services or the evaluation process, please contact the School Administration.

Child Find

Child find is a component of the IDEA. Child Find is the ongoing obligation of Midlands STEM Charter School to locate, identify, and evaluate all students with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services within the enrolled population of the school.

Special education services are available for school-aged children in kindergarten through the age of 21, including specialized instruction and services to assist in the education environment.

Students with Disabilities Protected by Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a civil rights statute designed to help prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities and to assure that students with disabilities have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to non-disabled students.

Application, Enrollment and Scheduling

In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50(8), MSCS accepts all students who submit a timely application unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a problem, class, grade level, or building. Enrollment priority is given to the following students:

1. Limited to no more than twenty percent (20%) of the school's total enrollment, unless granted a waiver by the State Board of Education, the following:
    a. Children or legal wards of MSCS Board of Directors;
    b. Children or legal wards of persons employed full-time by the school.

2. Students enrolled in the charter school the previous year. (This preference excludes returning students from the need to reapply each year.)

MSCS does not limit admission based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, income level, disability, English proficiency, or athletic ability.

MSCS may refuse to admit any student expelled or awaiting expulsion from their previous school (see S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50(C) and § 59-63-217(A)).

The Application Process

1. The Application Process

- Open Enrollment Window: Applications must be submitted during our formal open enrollment period prior to the start of the school year. Specific dates for the upcoming year will be published on the school website.
- Application Forms: Application forms are available digitally on our website or in print at the school's front office.
- Admission preference is given to applicants with siblings currently enrolled in the MSCS program.
- Required Submission Forms: Parents must submit an up-to-date transcript from the student's current school and give Midlands STEM permission to speak to the current school about the student as part of the application submission process.
- Submission and Verification: Applications receive an official time-stamp upon receipt. Please note that an application is only considered complete once parents or legal guardians have completed the application form, submitted required forms, and completed a school tour and met with campus administrators.

2. Acceptance and Confirmation Deadlines

- Response Window: Upon receiving an offer of acceptance, parents or legal guardians have five (5) business days to confirm acceptance and submit all required enrollment documentation.
- Loss of Priority: Failure to return the necessary paperwork within this five-day timeframe may result in the forfeiture of your student's priority status.
- Course Placement: Prompt submission of all records is vital, as complete documentation is required to ensure accurate academic and course placement for your student.

3. Required Documentation

The enrollment process is finalized only after the school receives and verifies the

following items:

- Completed MSCS Application Form
- Valid Proof of Residency
- Student Birth Certificate
- Up-to-date Student Immunization Records
- Supplemental Documentation: If applicable, families may provide additional specialized records, including but not limited to Individualized Education Programs (IEP), 504 Plans, or official records transfer requests to ensure proper services are provided.

4. Accuracy of Information

Please ensure all information provided on the application and enrollment forms is completely accurate. Any intentional omissions or false statements—including the misrepresentation of priority eligibility—may result in the immediate revocation of the enrollment offer.

5. Unenrollment

- Preferably, parents will complete an unenrolment form when they decide to leave Midlands STEM Charter School.
- However, students will be unenrolled automatically when another PreK-12 school requests transcripts from our school, other than for dual enrollment purposes.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Enrollment Policy

Pre-Kindergarten Eligibility Requirements

- Age Requirement: Applicants must turn four years old on or before September 1 of the current school year.
- Independence Skills: Children must be fully toilet trained and able to navigate classroom routines independently.

Kindergarten Eligibility Requirements:

- Age Requirement: Applicants must turn five years old on or before September 1 of the current school year.

If there is a waitlist, students with a birthday on or before September 1 will be given priority over students with a birthday after September 1. Kindergarten enrollment students with older students already enrolled at MSCS also have priority. Kindergarten enrollment students are subject to relevant additional stipulations of Midlands STEM Charter School adopted Enrollment Policy.

Student Records

In accordance with MSCS Enrollment Policy, all documentation generated by the school via the school's Students Information System (SIS) will contain the full legal name and gender of the student listed on the student's official birth certificate. Such documentation may include, but limited to, official transcripts, report cards, school correspondence, attendance reports, etc. Notwithstanding the above, school staff will, upon request, refer to the student by a nickname sanctioned by the student and his/her parents/ legal guardians.

Custody Issues Involving Enrollment & Student Records

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) is committed to focusing on the academic success and well-being of our students. To maintain a stable learning environment, the school remains neutral in all family custody matters and strictly adheres to the following guidelines.

1. Custody Disputes and Student Withdrawal

- School Neutrality: MSCS does not participate in custody disputes, negotiations, or mediation between parents or guardians.
- Disagreements on Enrollment: In cases of shared or joint legal custody where parents disagree on withdrawing a student from MSCS, the school will maintain the student's current enrollment.
- Resolution Requirement: The student will not be withdrawn until both parents provide a signed, written agreement resolving the enrollment decision.

2. Access to Educational Records

- Equal Access: Unless explicitly restricted by a legally binding court order or state law, both parents are entitled to equal access to all educational information, including report cards, attendance logs, and school records, upon reasonable request.
- Parental Responsibility: It is the sole responsibility of the parents or guardians to provide the school's front office with a certified, current copy of any custody orders, parenting plans, or legal decrees. MSCS will strictly follow the most recent, valid legal documentation kept on file.

3. Guardianship and Third-Party Information Sharing

- Legal Guardianship: If an individual other than a biological parent has been

granted legal guardianship, that guardian must notify school officials of the specific terms and provide all pertinent legal documentation.
- Third-Party Authorization: School personnel will not discuss a student's academic performance, behavior, or personal information with any outside individuals (including step-parents, grandparents, or family friends) without prior written authorization from the primary parent or legal guardian.

Requests for Teachers (K-5)

For students in grades K-5, MSCS does not allow parents/ legal guardians to request a teacher and/or class. Student placement will be made at the sole discretion of School Administration.

Class Requests (6-12)

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) strives to provide an academic schedule that supports the educational goals of every student. To ensure balanced classrooms and effective learning environments for grades 6–12, we utilize the following placement and schedule adjustment guidelines.

1. Student Course Placement

- Course Selection Options: Parents, legal guardians, and students in grades 6 through 12 may request specific elective or advanced courses during the scheduling window.
- Final Placement Rights: While student preferences are highly valued, MSCS reserves the right to make all final decisions regarding course placement. Final schedules are determined based on course availability, class size limits, facility capacity, and other essential academic factors.

2. Schedule and Teacher Change Requests

Schedule modifications or teacher transfer requests are only reviewed during the first two (2) weeks of the school year. For a core course or teacher change to be considered, families must meet all of the following criteria:

- Parent-Teacher Communication: The parent or legal guardian must first directly communicate with the current classroom teacher to address any concerns.
- Academic Necessity: Families must provide objective student data or academic evidence demonstrating that the student is severely struggling in the current course environment.
- Administrative Review: Final approval must be granted by a School Administrator. Requests are not guaranteed and are subject to schedule

compatibility and classroom capacity.

Schedule Changes

Schedules may be changed during the first two weeks of the school year in the following instances:

- Missing a period in schedule
- Incorrect placement
- Lacking a prerequisite
- Missing a course needed for graduation
- Missing a lunch period

Notwithstanding the above, the School Administration may need to change a student's schedule due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. addition of teaching staff).

Parent Portal (Power School)

The PowerSchool Portal is a secure communication tool designed to connect Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) with parents, legal guardians, and students. This platform provides real-time access to vital student data, including academic grades, attendance records, course schedules, immunization history, and system access logs.

1. Access and Security Overview

- Privilege of Access: Access to the PowerSchool Portal is a privilege extended to families, not an absolute right. MSCS retains full authority to determine user access levels.
- Revocation of Access: The school reserves the right to suspend or permanently discontinue portal access at any time, with or without prior notice. Grounds for disconnection include, but are not limited to, portal abuse, court orders, or legal proceedings that restrict the sharing of private educational data.
- Compliance: All users must strictly comply with the guidelines outlined below, as well as all applicable state and federal data privacy laws.

2. Security and Confidentiality Obligations

To protect student privacy and system security, all users must adhere to the following standards:

- Account Confidentiality: Users are entirely responsible for keeping their PowerSchool login credentials private. Every reasonable precaution must be taken to prevent unauthorized individuals from gaining access to the account.
- Automatic Logins Prohibited: For security reasons, users must not configure their

web browsers or computers to automatically save passwords or log into the PowerSchool Portal.
- Reporting Vulnerabilities: If a user discovers a potential security flaw or glitch within the system, they must report it to the school's front office immediately. Users must not demonstrate or share the vulnerability with anyone else.

3. Prohibited Activities

Violations of the following restrictions will result in immediate termination of portal privileges and may lead to disciplinary action or legal prosecution:

- Unauthorized Access: Users must not attempt to breach the system, bypass security boundaries, or log into the portal using another individual's credentials.
- System Disruption: Any deliberate attempt to disrupt the PowerSchool network, alter or destroy data, upload malicious viruses, or interfere with other users is strictly prohibited.
- Vandalism: Users shall not cause damage to school computer hardware or network infrastructure, nor assist others in doing so.
- Illegal Activity: The portal must never be used for unlawful acts. Any violation of state or federal Data Privacy Laws will be reported to law enforcement and may result in civil and/or criminal prosecution.

Limitation of Liability: Students and parents/legal guardians are responsible for their use of PowerSchool. MSCS and its staff make no guarantees that PowerSchool will be error-free or defect. MSCS will not be responsible or liable for any damage a student or parent/legal guardian may suffer as a consequence of using PowerSchool or information through PowerSchool. MSCS reserves the right to revise this policy at any time, with or without notice and for any reason MSCSS deems appropriate.

Extra Curricular Activities

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) offers students the opportunity to participate in a diverse range of extracurricular activities, including after-school sports, intramurals, supplemental educational programs, and field trips. These activities are established based on student interest and the availability of qualified faculty or coaching staff for proper supervision.

- Behavioral Expectations: Students representing MSCS must maintain exemplary behavior and strictly abide by the Student Code of Conduct at all times. This policy applies to all school-sponsored events, including athletic competitions, field trips, and creative performances.
- Disciplinary Consequences: Failure to uphold behavioral standards will result in immediate suspension from extracurricular activities and may lead to further disciplinary actions under the Code of Conduct Matrix (CCM).

- Academic Eligibility: To participate in extracurricular activities, students must maintain a minimum cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher and have no failing grades in any course.
- Governing Body Compliance: Student-athletes and participants must also adhere to all rules, policies, and procedures established by the relevant league or external governing body.

Suspension Disqualification Windows: Students are temporarily ineligible to participate in extracurricular events if they have received the following disciplinary consequences:

- In-School Suspension (ISS): Disqualified from all events for six weeks following the date of the infraction.
- Out-of-School Suspension (OSS): Disqualified from all events for nine weeks following the date of the infraction.

Scope of Disciplinary Consequences: These exclusion windows apply to all high-level misconduct violations, as well as to repeated, low-level behavioral infractions that escalate through the school-wide progressive discipline matrix (CCM).

Event Day Attendance Requirements:

- After-School Events: Students must attend school for the entire instructional day before an after-school activity to be eligible to participate.
- Field Trips: Students must not have an unexcused absence on the school day directly preceding a scheduled field trip

School Dances or Other Spirit Events

To ensure a safe, orderly, and enjoyable environment, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) enforces the following regulations for all school-sponsored dances or other spirit events:

- Admission and Re-entry: Students must present their official Student ID at the door for admission. Students without an ID will not be permitted to enter. To maintain student safety, re-entry is prohibited; students who leave the building will not be readmitted to the dance.
- Conduct and Supervision: Loitering near the entrance or on school grounds during the event is strictly prohibited. Students are expected to dance in an appropriate manner. Individuals engaging in inappropriate behavior will be removed from the event, and their admission fees will not be refunded.
- General Event Guidelines: Specific details for each dance—including the date, times, theme, and eligible grade levels—will be announced prior to the event.
- Homecoming Court titles are awarded based on traditional gender categories.

High School Guest Policies

Guests are permitted only at select high school events, such as Homecoming or Prom, and are subject to the following criteria:

- Eligibility Standards: Guests must be currently enrolled in grade 9 or higher, must not have reached their 21st birthday, and must not have graduated more than one academic year prior to the current term.
- Approval Process: All guests must receive prior approval at the discretion of the MSCS School Administration. Guest passes must be requested from the front office and submitted two weeks in advance.
- Minor Guest Signatures: For guests under the age of 18, the guest pass must be signed by the guest's home school administrator, the guest's parent or legal guardian, and MSCS School Administration.

School Dances and Other Formal Ceremonies Dress Expectations

Throughout the academic year, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) hosts special events, ceremonies, and milestones that warrant formal dress-up attire. For these occasions, the School Administration may approve specific departures from the standard daily MSCS dress code.

The guidelines below outline the expectations for formal dress. Please note that these items serve as a baseline for presentation and do not constitute an exhaustive list. The School Administration reserves the right to issue further instructions or specific restrictions depending on the nature of the event.

1. Formal Attire Standards

- Guidelines for Female Students: Attire consists of a conservative and modest blouse paired with a skirt or slacks, or a formal dress. All skirts and dresses must be knee-length or longer. Clothing must fit appropriately and must not be tight, sheer, or revealing. Midriffs must be completely covered, and necklines must be modest and professional.
- Guidelines for Male Students: Attire consists of a long-sleeved, button-up, collared dress shirt worn with a conservative necktie, dress slacks, and a belt.

2. Accessibility and Inclusivity

MSCS is committed to ensuring that all school milestones are accessible to our student body. If a student does not possess formal dress-up attire, there is absolutely no

expectation or financial burden placed on the family to purchase new garments. Arriving in the standard, daily MSCS dress code is entirely acceptable and welcomed for all formal events.

3. Administrative Authority and Compliance

Participation in these special events is a privilege. To maintain the dignity and decorum of these occasions, the School Administration retains final authority regarding dress code compliance. Students who arrive inappropriately dressed will be denied entry to the event and may be required to secure a change of clothing adhering to MSCS's dress code before participating.

Health and Wellness

Health Screenings

The purpose of school health screenings is to identify potential physical concerns that could negatively impact a student's academic progress or overall well-being, ensuring timely referrals for necessary follow-up care.

- Vision and Hearing Screenings: Trained personnel—including the school nurse, certified volunteers, or designated school employees—conduct these assessments. Vision and hearing screenings are legally mandated prior to any initial evaluation or scheduled reevaluation for special education services.
- Referral Process: If a student does not meet the passing criteria for a screening, parents or legal guardians will receive a formal referral letter encouraging further evaluation by a licensed healthcare provider.
- Dental Screenings: Pursuant to the South Carolina Safe Access to Vital Healthcare Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 44-8-10 through § 44-8-60), dental screenings may be offered to students in grades K, 3, 7, and 9–12. These screenings strictly adhere to state public health guidelines and recommendations.
- Opt-Out Provision: Parents and legal guardians who wish to decline these services may access the hearing, vision, and dental opt-out form on the school website or complete it during the standard student enrollment process.

Illness Policy

To maintain a healthy learning environment and prevent the spread of disease, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) requires parents and guardians to adhere to the following medical exclusion guidelines:

- Fever: Students with a temperature of 100.0°F or higher must stay home. They may return to school only after being completely symptom- and fever-free for at least 24 hours without the assistance of fever-reducing medications (such as Tylenol or Motrin).
- Vomiting and Diarrhea: Students must remain home until they are symptom-free for 24 hours and are able to tolerate a regular diet without difficulty.
- Strep Throat: Students may return to school 24 hours after initiating prescribed antibiotic treatment, provided they are also symptom-free.
- Chickenpox: Students must stay home until all blisters have formed dry scabs, which typically takes 5 to 6 days. Parents must immediately notify the front office if a student receives a chickenpox diagnosis.
- Head Lice: Students with active head lice may not attend school until they have received appropriate treatment. Before re-entering the classroom, the student and a parent or guardian must report to the school nurse for a clearance check.
- Respiratory Viruses (COVID-19, Influenza, RSV): Students exhibiting new respiratory symptoms must stay home. They may return once all symptoms have significantly improved for at least 24 hours and they are fever-free without medication for 24 hours. A negative test result is not required for re-entry.

Illness Pick-Up Protocol: If the school nurse contacts a family regarding a sick student, the parent, guardian, or a designated emergency contact must pick up the student as soon as possible, and no later than one hour after notification.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our school community healthy and safe.

Immunizations

Per Regulations 61-8, before a student may attend school their parent/legal guardian must provide the student's immunization certificate to school staff. The immunization record is typically given to parents/legal guardians by their doctor or clinic, and must

show the date each required vaccine dose was received as well as the signature or stamp of the health care provider.

Acceptable forms of immunization records to enter school include:

- A copy of the South Carolina certificate of immunization (DHEC 4024). The record must include the students first/last name, date of birth, provider information, and dates doses were given.

Contact the school nurse or School Administration if additional information is needed.

Medicines at School

To ensure the safety of our students and maintain compliance with state regulations, Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) enforces a strict policy regarding the administration of medication during the school day.

- Alternative Scheduling: Parents and guardians are encouraged to consult with their medical providers to see if medication schedules can be adjusted to hours outside the school day. Alternatively, parents may come to campus to administer medication directly to their child after checking in at the front office.
- Administration Personnel: Routine school-day medications are administered by a Registered Nurse (RN). In the temporary absence of a nurse, parents or legal guardians may be requested to come to campus to administer their student's routine medication.
- Required Documentation: Every prescription and naturopathic medication must be accompanied by a completed MSCS Medication Packet, which requires signatures from both the parent/legal guardian and the prescribing healthcare provider. These forms must be updated annually for each school year and are available through the school health office.
- Drop-Off and Storage: All medication must be brought directly to the school health office and signed in by a parent or legal guardian. Students are strictly prohibited from carrying or dropping off medications. All medications are securely stored in a locked cabinet within the health office.
- Medication Acceptance Criteria: Medications will only be accepted under the following conditions:
    - Prescriptions: Must be in the original pharmacy container and clearly labeled with the student's name, date, medication name, dosage, timing, and administration directions.

    - Over-the-Counter (OTC): Must be in the original, unopened, and unexpired manufacturer packaging, with all ingredients, dosages, and directions clearly visible.
    - Regulatory Approval: The medication must be FDA-approved.
- Specialized Administration: Non-oral medications requiring alternate routes of administration are evaluated and approved on a case-by-case basis by the overseeing campus RN.
- Accountability: Every instance of medication administration is strictly documented in the school's medical logging system to maintain an accurate health record.

Over the Counter Medication

Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) requires explicit parental consent to administer any over-the-counter (OTC) medications to students during the school day.

- School-Supplied OTC Medications: Parents and legal guardians can grant permission for specific school-provided OTC medications during the annual student enrollment process. If permission is not on file, school staff will contact a parent or guardian for authorization prior to administering any medication. Consent preferences can be updated at any time by contacting the school nurse.
- Parent-Supplied OTC Medications: Any OTC medications provided by a family for their specific student must be delivered directly to the school health room by a parent or guardian.
- Three-Day Administration Limit: Parent-supplied OTC medications will only be dispensed with written parental consent for a maximum of three consecutive school days.
- Healthcare Provider Order Requirement: To ensure that prolonged medication use is not masking symptoms of a more serious medical condition, a formal order from a licensed healthcare provider must be submitted to the health room for any OTC medication administration that extends beyond the three-day limit.

Emergency Diabetic Care Assistants

In compliance with South Carolina regulations (S.C. Code Ann. §§ 40-33-20–40-33-42), Midlands STEM Charter School (MSCS) permits two or more trained school employees to volunteer as emergency diabetes care assistants.

- Emergency Authorization: Volunteer diabetes care assistants are authorized to administer glucagon and provide critical first aid exclusively during an emergency.
- Routine Management Restrictions: Under South Carolina law, the routine administration of insulin and daily blood sugar monitoring must be performed by a Registered Nurse. Non-nursing school staff are strictly prohibited from managing routine diabetic care.
- Required Documentation and Supplies: To authorize emergency care, parents or legal guardians must provide the school health room with the following items:
    - Glucagon Kit: An unexpired glucagon kit prescribed specifically for the student by a licensed healthcare professional or nurse practitioner.
    - Diabetes Medical Management Plan (DMMP): An up-to-date DMMP signed and dated by the student's medical provider, outlining the specific emergency protocols the volunteer assistants are to follow.
- Glucometer Maintenance: Parents and legal guardians who provide glucometers for their student's use are solely responsible for ensuring the devices are in proper working order. This includes executing manufacturer-recommended control checks and routine equipment maintenance.
- Volunteer Training Verification: Before acting in this capacity, volunteer diabetes care assistants must provide the school with a written statement signed by a licensed healthcare professional confirming they have completed proper training in emergency glucagon administration and first aid.
- Employee Protection: Serving as a diabetes care assistant is entirely voluntary. No school employee will face penalties, discrimination, or disciplinary action for declining to serve as a volunteer assistant.

Self Medication of Prescription Drugs

Students are strictly prohibited from possessing medications on school property, with the exclusive exception of emergency medical supplies such as asthma inhalers, epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens), or diabetic supplies.

- Required Authorizations: To self-carry emergency medical supplies, a student must have written authorization from both a parent/legal guardian and the student's prescribing physician. The required forms are available in the school health room and on the school website.
- Competency Demonstration: The student must demonstrate to the school nurse the knowledge and skill required to safely self-manage their condition. This

includes knowing when the medication is indicated, how to properly administer it, how to identify adverse reactions, and what emergency steps to take if an adverse reaction occurs.

- Distribution Prohibition: Students authorized to self-carry are strictly forbidden from distributing, sharing, or dispensing their medication to any other individual.
- Security and Accountability: Students must take extraordinary precautions to keep their medication secure at all times. Under no circumstances may these items be left unattended or made accessible to other students.
- Policy Violations: Any violation of this self-carry policy—including unauthorized sharing or negligent handling of medication—will subject the student to immediate disciplinary action.