

Student Handbook 2024-2025



MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL

194 W. Laurel Rd. | Bellingham, Washington | (360) 398-8111

MR. SHAUN DOFFING, PRINCIPAL

MR. ROBERT KRATZIG, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

MS. CHERYL McBRIDE & MR. DON McMAINS, COUNSELORS

MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT VISION

In Meridian, we empower all learners to thrive academically, socially and emotionally as valued members of our local and global communities.

MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

BELONGING



Meridian strives to be a welcoming place where understanding and respect are priorities. Everyone will be honored, valued and heard.

- Learners experience a community that embraces and honors who they are.
- Everyone sees themselves represented in their educational environment.
- All voices are invited, heard and empowered.

COMMUNICATION



Meridian commits to proactive, consistent and clear two-way communication that is accessible for all.

- Open communication is encouraged and valued between staff, students and our community.
- Clear, consistent communication from all levels of the district supports student learning.
- Students and families are informed so they can be involved and engaged in school.

SUPPORT



Meridian works in partnership with staff, families, students and community to nurture success in each and every student.

- Each learner has access to support systems and partnerships that meet their individual needs.
- Students engage in their own progress using self-assessment and goal setting.
- Every learner is included as an active partner when determining their level of support.

WELLNESS



Meridian creates an environment that supports staff and students' physical, social and emotional well-being.

- Members of our learning community feel physically, emotionally and academically safe at school.
- Learners are supported in developing their health and wellness.
- Students are taught strategies for emotional regulation and problem-solving.

LEARNING



Meridian is guided by a commitment to equitable education that develops academic and personal skills for life.

- Our youngest learners benefit from an inclusive and robust early childhood education.
- Each learner has access to rigorous grade-level instruction designed to meet their unique needs.
- All students make measurable growth toward meeting or exceeding proficiency on grade-level standards each year.
- Meridian graduates are prepared for their career and life goals.

BASIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

LOCATION & PHONE	SCHOOL HOURS
194 W. Laurel Rd. Bellingham, Washington 98226 Phone: 360-398-8111	School Begins: 7:55am (8:55am on Fridays) School Ends: 2:35pm Office Hours: 7:30am to 3:30pm

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME	ROLE	EMAIL
Mr. Shaun Doffing	Principal	sdoffing@meridian.wednet.edu
Mr. Robert Kratzig	Assistant Principal	rjkratzig@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Cheryl McBride	Counselor	cmcbride@meridian.wednet.edu
Mr. Don McMains	Counselor	dmcmains@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Kelly Gookstetter	Head Secretary	kgookstetter@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Tami McMains	Attendance Secretary	tmc mains@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Lori Blankenship	Registrar	lblankenship@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Stacy King	Nurse	sking@meridian.wednet.edu

CONCERN	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Academic Progress	Individual Teachers or Counselors
Attendance Reporting	Mrs. McMains, Attendance Secretary
Friendship / Relational Concerns	Mrs. McBride or Mr. McMains, Counselors
Illness / Injury / Medication	Mrs. King, Nurse
Sports & Athletics	Mr. Michaelson, Athletic Director
Student Mental Health	Mrs. McBride or Mr. McMains, Counselors
Student Schedules	Mrs. McBride or Mr. McMains, Counselors
9th & 10th Grade Students	Mr. Kratzig, Assistant Principal
11th & 12th Grade Students	Mr. Doffing, Principal

ATHLETIC OPPORTUNITIES

FALL SEASON	WINTER SEASON	SPRING SEASON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross Country • Football • Soccer (girls) • Softball Slowpitch (girls) • Swimming and Diving (girls) • Volleyball (girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball • Bowling • Cheerleading • Dance/Drill • Gymnastics • Swimming • Wrestling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball • Golf • Soccer • Softball Fastpitch (girls) • Tennis • Track and Field

DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES

The following are the specific disciplinary offenses that will be enforced if violated. Please be aware that engaging in any of the following behaviors will result in consequences, potentially including loss of privileges, detention, or suspension. Consequences and restorative solutions will be at the discretion of school administration.

MINOR / LOW	MODERATE / MAJOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Dishonesty • Aggressive Behavior* • Defiance • Destruction of Property* • Disrespect • Disruptive Conduct* • Dress Code • Forgery • Inappropriate Language • Lying • Physical Contact • Property Misuse <p>*These types of behaviors may rise to the level of moderate/major depending on the context and severity. Please use professional judgment in following the flow chart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol Possession or Distribution • Arson • Assault • Assault of Teacher • Bullying • Discriminatory Harassment • Drug Possession or Distribution • Fighting • Firearm • Gang Activity • Insubordination • Left Campus without Permission • Possession of Weapon • Robbery • Safety Issue • Sexual Assault • Sexual Harassment • Sexually Inappropriate Conduct • Skipping Class • Theft • Threats / Intimidation • Tobacco Possession or Distribution

THE MERIDIAN MINDSET

In Meridian, all students, staff, and families are valued members of our school community. As a community, the Meridian Mindsets were developed to showcase our aspirations for how our community approaches challenges, interacts with each other, and strives to engage each day.

Members of our school community aspire to be...

Caring

Refers to demonstrating concern and compassion for others, and taking actions to support their well-being. Being caring involves demonstrating kindness and empathy towards classmates, teachers, and staff.

Courageous

Refers to being brave and willing to take risks, even in the face of adversity or uncertainty. Being courageous involves speaking up for oneself or others, and taking on new challenges with determination and perseverance.

Trustworthy

Refers to being reliable, responsible, and truthful in all interactions with others. Being trustworthy involves following through on commitments, being honest in communication, and respecting the confidentiality of others.

Open-Minded

Refers to being receptive to new ideas and perspectives, and willing to consider different viewpoints. Being open-minded involves actively listening to others and being willing to learn from them, even if their ideas differ from one's own.

Learning  thrives here

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

All members of the Meridian High School community - staff, students, parents, and guests – must work together to create a positive environment where all students can achieve at the highest levels. Below are the expectations for student behavior while at school. All community members share the responsibility of ensuring these expectations are met.

	EXPECTATION
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow directions from staff members the first time ● Remain on campus during the school day ● Phones may only be used before or after school, at lunch or during passing time ● Check all medications in with the nurse ● Wear clothing defined as appropriate in board policy (see below) and that also covers the genitals, buttocks, cleavage, and undergarments ● Use appropriate language ● Remain only in designated student areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Off Limits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sports Fields & Track (unless during PE) ■ Parking Areas ■ Staff-Only Areas
Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arrive to class on time ● Give your best effort and have a growth mindset ● Ask for help from peers or staff when needed ● Complete assigned work yourself ● Complete all assignments by the due date
Hallways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep pace at a walking speed ● Continue moving during transition times; help reduce crowding ● Use a hall pass or teacher note when out of class during instruction time
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep your school supplies well-stocked ● Bring all needed supplies to class each day ● Use only your own belongings, unless given specific permission
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stay in designated areas ● Use appropriate trash / recycling bins ● Clean up your area after you finish
Personal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take responsibility for your actions and words ● Keep hands and body to yourself ● Use respectful, positive language toward others ● Treat those different than yourself kindly

TIPS FOR GENERAL ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Use your class time to complete as much work as you can; minimize homework
- Set aside a quiet time and place at home to study each day
- Review your planner to see what you need to accomplish after school each day

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION	ANSWER
What should I know about riding the bus?	Bus drivers will provide riders with an explanation of rules on the bus. In general, the same rules that apply at school apply on the bus. If your conduct on the bus is inappropriate or disruptive, you may face discipline at school and/or removal from bus service. Information on bus routes and pick-up times can be found online on the Transportation Department website .
What if I'm going to be late to school?	We expect all students to arrive at school on time. There may be times when you have an appointment or other family circumstance that prevents you from being here when school begins. In those cases, your guardian would need to contact the office to excuse your late arrival. Traffic or oversleeping are not excused reasons for being late to school. If no reason is provided, the late arrival will be considered unexcused. If you arrive late frequently, we will help problem-solve with you and your guardian. When you get to school late, you'll need to check in at the office before heading to class.
What are the expectations for my behavior at school?	Meridian High School believes in creating an environment where all students can learn and be their best selves. Please see the "Behavioral Expectations" and "Disciplinary Offenses" sections of the handbook for more information on what is expected of you at school.
What if I don't meet behavioral expectations at school?	Mr. Doffing, Mr. Kratzig, and the counselors (Mrs. McBride and Mr. McMains) work with students who don't meet behavioral expectations at school. Our goal is to use behavioral violations as an opportunity to reteach expectations, practice what students should do next time a given situation occurs, and to help students make amends for any wrongs they may have visited upon others.
Does MHS have a dress code?	Yes, we do! Our dress code is designed to help you make good choices about the clothing you choose to wear to school. In short, you can't wear anything that is a health or safety concern, that will disrupt the education of yourself or others, or that features inappropriate messages, language or topics. We also require all clothing to fully cover buttocks, chest/torso, and underwear. Hats and hoods are allowed so long as they don't violate the above guidelines. For more information, please see the "Dress Code" policy included in this handbook.
Can my parent(s) or guardian(s) visit the school?	Yes! All visitors are required to report to the office and wear a visitor badge while on campus. Parents who wish to volunteer must fill out a volunteer form. Non-MHS students are not allowed on campus.
How do I report an absence?	Your guardian needs to contact the school to have your absence excused within 24 hours of the day you missed. There are three ways to do this: 1) call the main office at 360-398-8111, 2) email our Attendance Secretary Mrs. McMains at tmc mains@meridian.wednet.edu or 3) bring in a note when you return to school. Please make sure your guardian includes your full name, grade level, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence when contacting the school.
What if I lose something at school?	In general, the school is not responsible for lost items. Belongings that are found at school will be placed in the lost and found area in the Main Office. Students who have lost items may look for them there. This area will be periodically emptied and donated, so be sure to check if you're missing something!
What if I need to get ahold of a parent or guardian during the day?	Students may ask to use classroom phones or place a call from the office to listed parents or guardians or emergency contacts. Students may not use school phones without permission. Do not use your personal device during class time.
What if my parent(s) or guardian(s) needs to get a hold of me during the school day?	Parents can contact the office to leave a message for their student. We will do our best to relay messages to students during the course of their school day, but it can be challenging, especially if the messages come within the last hour of the day. We encourage families to communicate their after-school plans to their child prior to the start of the day to minimize the use of our office staff for this purpose.
What can I do during lunch? How long is it?	Lunch is 30 minutes long and occurs in the middle of the school day. You can be in the cafeteria, courtyard, or appropriate student lounge. Food is not permitted in the lounges, however.

SELECTED DISTRICT POLICIES*

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Board [Policy and Procedure 3210](#)

The district will provide equal educational opportunity and treatment for all students in all aspects of the academic and activities program without discrimination based on race, religion, creed, color, national origin, age, honorably-discharged veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. The district will provide equal access to school facilities to the Boy Scouts of America and all other designated youth groups listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society. District programs will be free from sexual harassment. Auxiliary aids and services will be provided upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Conduct against any student that is based on one of the categories listed above that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive as to limit or deny the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the district's course offerings; educational programming or any activity will not be tolerated. When a district employee knows, or reasonably should know, that such discriminatory harassment is occurring or has occurred, the district will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, prevent its recurrence and remedy its effects.

Title IX and Compliance Coordinator: Kurt Harvill, kharvill@meridian.wednet.edu
Section 504 questions and complaints: Aaron Jacoby, ajacoby@meridian.wednet.edu

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

GENDER-INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Board [Policy and Procedure 3211](#)

The board believes in fostering an educational environment that is safe and free of discrimination for all students, regardless of gender expression, gender identity, or sex. To that end, the board recognizes the importance of an inclusive approach toward transgender and gender-expansive students with regard to key terms, communication and the use of names and pronouns, student records, confidential health and education information, communication, restroom and locker room use and accessibility, sports and physical education, dress codes, and other school activities, in order to provide these students with an equal opportunity for learning and achievement.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

STUDENT DRESS

Board [Policy and Procedure 3224](#)

Students' choice in dress should be made in consultation with parents.

Student dress will be allowed as long as it does not:

- Create a health or safety hazard;
- Indicate membership in a gang or hate group;
- Damage school property;
- Demonstrate inconsistency with the mission of the school district; or
- Include lewd, sexual, drug, tobacco, or alcohol-related messages.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3205

The district is committed to a positive and productive education free from discrimination, including sexual harassment. This commitment extends to all students involved in academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic, and other programs or activities of the school, whether that program or activity is in a school facility, on school transportation or at a class or school training held elsewhere.

For purposes of this policy, sexual harassment means unwelcome conduct or communication of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can occur adult to student, student to student or can be carried out by a group of students or adults and will be investigated by the District even if the alleged harasser is not a part of the school staff or student body. The district prohibits sexual harassment of students by other students, employees, or third parties involved in school district activities.

A "hostile environment" has been created for a student when sexual harassment is sufficiently serious to interfere with or limit the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's program. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to demonstrate a repetitive series of incidents. In fact, a single or isolated incident of sexual harassment may create a hostile environment if the incident is sufficiently severe, violent, or egregious.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

STUDENT TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICES

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3245

Student phones may be turned on and used only before school, after school, and during the student's lunch break.

Phones cannot be used to cheat or engage in academic dishonesty or violate the privacy rights of others. They also cannot be used to show explicit content while at school, on school district property, or in school district vehicles.

Phones may be confiscated if they violate the above or any school rule.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

STUDENT PRIVACY & SEARCHES

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3230

All students possess the constitutional right to be secure in their persons, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures. Staff will take particular care to respect students' privacy.

School officials have authority to maintain order and discipline in the schools and to protect students from exposure to illegal drugs, weapons, and contraband. The superintendent, the principal, and other staff designated by the superintendent will have the authority to conduct reasonable searches on school property as provided by board policy.

Students may be assigned lockers for storing and securing their books, school supplies, and personal effects. Lockers, desks, and storage areas are the property of the school district. No right or expectation of privacy exists for any student as to the use of any space issued or assigned to a student by the school.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

EXCUSED & UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Board Policy and Procedure 3122

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate remotely. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences. The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

The following are valid excuses for absences:

1. Illness, health condition or medical appointment;
2. Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
3. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
4. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
5. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
6. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW [28A.225.055](#);
7. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
8. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW [28A.705.010](#);
9. Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions imposed pursuant to chapter [392-400](#) WAC if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC [392-121-107](#);
10. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
11. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
12. An approved activity that is consistent with district policy and is mutually agreed upon by the principal or designee and a parent, guardian, or emancipated youth.
13. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19;
14. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19;
15. Absences related to the student's employment or other family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary due to COVID-19 until other arrangements can be made, including placement in a more flexible education program;
16. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made;
17. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet broadband access or connectivity; and
18. Other COVID-19 related circumstances as determined between school and parent or emancipated youth.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Board Policy and Procedure 3220

The free expression of student opinion is an important part of education in a democratic society. The district encourages students' verbal and written expression of opinion on school premises so long as it does not substantially disrupt the operation of the school or otherwise violate this policy. Students are expressly prohibited from the use of vulgar and/or offensive terms in classroom or assembly settings.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

PROHIBITION OF HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, & BULLYING

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3207

The board is committed to a safe and civil educational environment for all students, employees, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and community members that is free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying. As defined in legislation, "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any intentionally written message or image — including those that are electronically transmitted — verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by any characteristic in RCW 28A.640.010 and 28A 642.010, or other distinguishing characteristics, when an act:

1. Physically harms a student or damages the student's property;
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
3. Is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
4. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

This policy recognizes that 'harassment,' 'imitation,' and 'bullying' are separate but related behaviors. Each must be addressed appropriately." Nothing in this section requires the affected student to actually possess a characteristic that is a basis for the harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

USE OF TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SUBSTANCES

Board [Policy](#) 4215

The board of directors recognizes that to protect students from exposure to the addictive substance of nicotine, employees and officers of the school district, and all members of the community, have an obligation as role models to refrain from use of tobacco products and delivery devices on school property at all times. Tobacco products and delivery devices include, but are not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, nicotine, electronic smoking/vapor devices, and vapor products, non-prescribed inhalers, nicotine delivery devices or chemicals that are not FDA-approved to help people quit using tobacco, devices that produce the same flavor or physical effect of nicotine substances and any other smoking equipment, device, material or innovation.

Any use of such products and delivery devices by staff, students, visitors and community members will be prohibited on all school district property, including all district buildings, grounds and district-owned vehicles, and within five hundred feet of schools. Possession by or distribution of tobacco products to any person under twenty-one years of age is prohibited.

Please review the full policy on the district website for more information.

*The full listing and text of all policies and procedures can be viewed [on the district website](#).

HIB PROCESSES

OUR SCHOOLS PROTECT STUDENTS FROM HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, AND BULLYING

Schools are meant to be safe and inclusive environments where all students are protected from Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB), including in the classroom, on the school bus, in school sports, and during other school activities. This section defines HIB, explains what to do when you see or experience it, and our school's process for responding to it.

What is HIB?

HIB is any intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act of a student that:

- Physically harms another student or damages their property;
- Has the effect of greatly interfering with another student's education; or,
- Is so severe, persistent, or significant that it creates an intimidating or threatening education environment for other students.

HIB generally involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. HIB is not allowed, by law, in our schools.

How can I make a report or complaint about HIB?

Talk to any school staff member (consider starting with whoever you are most comfortable with!). You may use our district's reporting form to share concerns about HIB (<https://meridian-wa.safeschoolsalert.com/>) but reports about HIB can be made in writing or verbally. Your report can be made anonymously, if you are uncomfortable revealing your identity, or confidentially if you prefer it not be shared with other students involved with the report. No disciplinary action will be taken against another student based **solely** on an anonymous or confidential report.

If a staff member is notified of, observes, overhears, or otherwise witnesses HIB, they must take prompt and appropriate action to stop the HIB behavior and to prevent it from happening again. Our district also has a HIB Compliance Officer (Assistant Superintendent Kurt Harvill, kharvill@meridian.wednet.edu, 360-398-2111) that supports prevention and response to HIB.

What happens after I make a report about HIB?

If you report HIB, school staff must attempt to resolve the concerns. If the concerns are resolved, then no further action may be necessary. However, if you feel that you or someone you know is the victim of unresolved, severe, or persistent HIB that requires further investigation and action, then you should request an official HIB investigation.

Also, the school must take actions to ensure that those who report HIB don't experience retaliation.

What is the investigation process?

When you report a complaint, the HIB Compliance Officer or staff member leading the investigation must notify the families of the students involved with the complaint and must make sure a prompt and thorough investigation takes place. The investigation must be completed within 5 school days, unless you agree on a different timeline. If your complaint involves circumstances that require a longer investigation, the district will notify you with the anticipated date for their response.

When the investigation is complete, the HIB Compliance Officer or the staff member leading the investigation must provide you with the outcomes of the investigation within 2 school days. This response should include:

- A summary of the results of the investigation
- A determination of whether the HIB is substantiated
- Any corrective measures or remedies needed

- Clear information about how you can appeal the decision

What are the next steps if I disagree with the outcome?

For the student designated as the “targeted student” in a complaint:

If you do not agree with the school district’s decision, you may appeal the decision and include any additional information regarding the complaint to the superintendent, or the person assigned to lead the appeal, and then to the school board.

For the student designated as the “aggressor” in a complaint:

A student found to be an “aggressor” in a HIB complaint may not appeal the decision of a HIB investigation. They can, however, appeal corrective actions that result from the findings of the HIB investigation.

For more information about the HIB complaint process, including important timelines, please see the district’s *HIB Policy [3207] and Procedure [3207P]*.

Our School Stands Against Discrimination

Discrimination can happen when someone is treated differently or unfairly because they are part of a **protected class**, including their race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, creed, disability, use of a service animal, or veteran or military status.

What is discriminatory harassment?

Discriminatory harassment can include teasing and name-calling; graphic and written statements; or other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating. Discriminatory harassment happens when the conduct is based on a student’s protected class and is serious enough to create a hostile environment. A **hostile environment** is created when conduct is so severe, pervasive, or persistent that it limits a student’s ability to participate in, or benefit from, the school’s services, activities, or opportunities.

To review the district’s *Nondiscrimination Policy [3210] and Procedure [3210P]*, visit [<https://www.meridian.wednet.edu/our-district/school-board/policies-procedures/>].

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct or communication that is sexual in nature and substantially interferes with a student’s educational performance or creates an intimidating or hostile environment. Sexual harassment can also occur when a student is led to believe they must submit to unwelcome sexual conduct or communication to gain something in return, such as a grade or a place on a sports team.

Examples of sexual harassment can include pressuring a person for sexual actions or favors; unwelcome touching of a sexual nature; graphic or written statements of a sexual nature; distributing sexually explicit texts, e-mails, or pictures; making sexual jokes, rumors, or suggestive remarks; and physical violence, including rape and sexual assault.

Our schools do not discriminate based on sex and prohibit sex discrimination in all of our education programs and employment, as required by Title IX and state law.

To review the district’s *Sexual Harassment Policy [3205 and Procedure [3205P]*, visit [<https://www.meridian.wednet.edu/our-district/school-board/policies-procedures/>].

What should my school do about discriminatory and sexual harassment?

When a school becomes aware of possible discriminatory or sexual harassment, it must investigate and stop the harassment. The school must address any effects the harassment had on the student at school, including eliminating the hostile environment, and make sure that the harassment does not happen again.

What can I do if I’m concerned about discrimination or harassment?

Talk to a Coordinator or submit a written complaint. You may contact the following school district staff members to report your concerns, ask questions, or learn more about how to resolve your concerns.

Concerns about discrimination:

Civil Rights Coordinator: Assistant Superintendent Kurt Harvill, kharvill@meridian.wednet.edu, 360-398-2111

Concerns about sex discrimination, including sexual harassment:

Title IX Coordinator: Assistant Superintendent Kurt Harvill, kharvill@meridian.wednet.edu, 360-398-2111

Concerns about disability discrimination:

Section 504 Coordinator: Special Services Director Aaron Jacoby, ajacoby@meridian.wednet.edu, 360-398-2111

Concerns about discrimination based on gender identity:

Gender-Inclusive Schools Coordinator: Special Services Director Aaron Jacoby, ajacoby@meridian.wednet.edu, 360-398-2111

To **submit a written complaint**, describe the conduct or incident that may be discriminatory and send it by mail, fax, email, or hand delivery to the school principal, district superintendent, or civil rights coordinator. Submit the complaint as soon as possible for a prompt investigation, and within one year of the conduct or incident.

What happens after I file a discrimination complaint?

The Civil Rights Coordinator will give you a copy of the school district's discrimination complaint procedure. The Civil Rights Coordinator must make sure a prompt and thorough investigation takes place. The investigation must be completed within 30 calendar days unless you agree to a different timeline. If your complaint involves exceptional circumstances that require a longer investigation, the Civil Rights Coordinator will notify you in writing with the anticipated date for their response.

When the investigation is complete, the school district superintendent or the staff member leading the investigation will send you a written response. This response will include:

- A summary of the results of the investigation
- A determination of whether the school district failed to comply with civil rights laws
- Any corrective measures or remedies needed
- Notice about how you can appeal the decision

What are the next steps if I disagree with the outcome?

If you do not agree with the outcome of your complaint, you may appeal the decision to the Superintendent or their designee and then to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). More information about this process, including important timelines, is included in the district's Nondiscrimination Procedure (3210P) and Sexual Harassment Procedure (3205P).

I already submitted an HIB complaint – what will my school do?

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying (HIB) can also be discrimination if it's related to a protected class. If you give your school a written report of HIB that involves discrimination or sexual harassment, your school will notify the Civil Rights Coordinator. The school district will investigate the complaint using both the Nondiscrimination Procedure (3210P) and the HIB Procedure (3207P) to **fully resolve your complaint**.

Who else can help with HIB or Discrimination Concerns?

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

All reports must start locally at the school or district level. However, OSPI can assist students, families, communities, and school staff with questions about state law, the HIB complaint process, and the discrimination and sexual harassment complaint processes.

OSPI School Safety Center (For questions about harassment, intimidation, and bullying)

- Website: ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/school-safety-center
- Email: schoolsafety@k12.wa.us
- Phone: 360-725-6068

OSPI Equity and Civil Rights Office (For questions about discrimination and sexual harassment)

- Website: ospi.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/equity-and-civil-rights
- Email: equity@k12.wa.us
- Phone: 360-725-6162

Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO)

The Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds works with families, communities, and schools to address problems together so every student can fully participate and thrive in Washington's K-12 public schools. OEO provides informal conflict resolution tools, coaching, facilitation, and training about family, community engagement, and systems advocacy.

- Website: www.oeo.wa.gov
- Email: oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov
- Phone: 1-866-297-2597

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces federal nondiscrimination laws in public schools, including those that prohibit discrimination based on sex, race, color, national origin, disability, and age. OCR also has a discrimination complaint process.

- Website: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>
- Email: orc@ed.gov
- Phone: 800-421-3481

Our School is Gender-Inclusive

In Washington, all students have the right to be treated consistent with their gender identity at school. Our school will:

- Address students by their requested name and pronouns, with or without a legal name change
- Change a student's gender designation and have their gender accurately reflected in school records
- Allow students to use restrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identity
- Allow students to participate in sports, physical education courses, field trips, and overnight trips in accordance with their gender identity
- Keep health and education information confidential and private
- Allow students to wear clothing that reflects their gender identity and apply dress codes without regard to a student's gender or perceived gender
- Protect students from teasing, bullying, or harassment based on their gender or gender identity

To review the district's Gender-Inclusive Schools Policy [3211] and Procedure [3211P], visit [<https://www.meridian.wednet.edu/our-district/school-board/policies-procedures/>]. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Gender-Inclusive Schools Coordinator: Special Services Director Aaron Jacoby, ajacoby@meridian.wednet.edu, 360-398-2111

For concerns about discrimination or discriminatory harassment based on gender identity or gender expression, please see the information above.

