

**Muskegon Public Schools
Big Red Virtual School
Grades 6 - 12**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK
2024-2025**



550 W. Grand (former Nelson Elementary)
Muskegon, MI 49441

<https://muskegonpublicschools.org/academics/virtual-school/>

Paul Kurdziel, Principal
231-720-2150
pkurdzie@mpsk12.net

Tom Ellis, Counselor
231-720-2868
tellis@mpsk12.net

Laura Shafer, Student Success Specialist
231-720-2247
lshafer@mpsk12.net

Student Commitment:

- Be committed to online learning and adhere to timelines suggested by instructors
- Have basic proficiency in computer skills, such as the use of Google documents, the internet, and the online learning platform
- Participate in a minimum of 1-2 weekly two-way communications with the assigned Student Success Coach
- Act in accordance with standards of reasonable behavior, respect, and civility
- Follow all other expectations as specified by Big Red Virtual School, the school district, and the online teacher(s)

Parent/Guardian Commitment:

- Agree to be accessible to class instructors and the Student Success Coach to discuss student progress
- Act as a learning coach
- Promote good attendance and time management
- Provide an appropriate working environment
- Facilitate two-way communication
- Support the expectations of the Big Red Virtual School and the Student Success Coach

District Commitment:

- The school will develop and explain the process and expectations so that students and parents can make informed decisions when choosing to participate in the Big Red Virtual School
- Teachers will be available during scheduled hours (as communicated by the Student Success Coach) to provide academic assistance, when needed
- If the student has an active 504 Plan or IEP, the district will help determine if the accommodations and support can be delivered virtually or if they will have to be modified

Enrollment process for Big Red Virtual School:

1. Parent and student (including LTS/Expelled students) must schedule a meeting with the MMS or MHS counselor to discuss virtual learning: [Online Learner Readiness Rubric](#). If the student has an IEP, the case manager must also attend the meeting: [LINK TO REFERRAL FORM](#).
2. The MMS or MHS counselor sends the recommendation form to the MMS or MHS administrator; the MMS or MHS administrator meets with the parent and student to discuss the school's recommendation.
3. If the student is approved for virtual learning, the MMS or MHS administrator contacts Big Red Virtual School administrator and sends the referral documentation, who then notifies the Big Red Virtual School counselor as well as the Student Success Coach.
 - a. The BRVS counselor evaluates the student's transcript and assigns appropriate classes.
 - b. The BRVS Student Success Coordinator schedules a meeting with the parent and the student for orientation.

- c. The MMS or MHS counselor will make the necessary changes in the student's electronic records (students status as a virtual student in PowerSchool), afford any MMS/MHS counseling and/or career services virtually, and notify staff of the student's change of placement; the school-of-record case manager will be the liaison between the student and the school relative to IEP and/or 504 services.
4. If the decision is not to place the student in virtual learning, the MMS or MHS administrator will contact the parent and the student and discuss the recommendation for the student to remain in in-person classes with a viable plan for support.
5. The student enrollment in the Big Red Virtual School will be limited to 50 students.

Attendance: Attendance in an online course is as important as attendance in a traditional classroom. Online learners are expected to "attend" class regularly throughout the semester by logging into their courses daily. When logging in, students should check course announcements/messages and actively engage in coursework. Online learners should expect to spend 5-10 hours of online work per week for each online class.

The law in Michigan governing compulsory attendance requires a parent, legal guardian, or other person having control or charge of a child age six to sixteen to send the child to school during the entire school year, except under the limited circumstances specified in subsection (3) of MCL 380.1561. Although the compulsory school attendance law does not apply to children under the age of six, a child who is at least five years of age by October 1 of the school year and is a resident of a school district which provides kindergarten work is entitled to enroll in kindergarten [MCL 380.1147]. Students are required to follow the school calendar. Instructional time can be entered on any day (e.g., weekends, holidays, etc.). Students are expected to log into the Big Red Virtual School each scheduled school calendar day.

Attendance Responsibilities

- Attendance is logged daily in the Big Red Virtual School by the Student Success Coach.
- Students must log into every course, every school day.
- All families must attend a parent orientation.
- The family must maintain regular communication with the Student Success Coach.
- Students must check their email messages daily. Return response should be within 24 hours or the next business day.
- Students must attend all required daily Big Red Virtual School online seminar sessions.
- Students who do not respond to two-way communication will have their accounts deactivated until two-way communication is reestablished.
- One in-person check-in per week (student schedules an appointment with the Student Success Coach to meet at the physical school site)

Reporting Absences: Please email your Student Success Coach if your student will be absent and unable to log in to the Big Red Virtual School. Please state the reason for the absence in the email as well as the expected duration of the absence.

No Internet Access or Power Outage: It is an expectation for attendance that all students have reliable internet access in the home. Students who are unable to log into school or have a power outage must have an alternative plan to go to a public library/public location with computer access to do their school work. If the student does not have a back-up plan and cannot go to the library, the student must notify his or her Student Success Coach in order to legitimize the reason for the absence.

Excused Absences: The school recognizes student illness, death in the family, prior permission to leave school by parents and administrator, approved family vacations, approved college visitations, required court appearance, religious observations, family emergencies, counseling or administrative appointments to be excused. Remember that regardless of the absence reason students are expected to make up work.

Doctor/Medical Excuses: Students must present doctors' notes when they are absent from school for three or more days consecutively due to illness. Parents should send doctors' notes to the Student Success Coach through email.

Excuse Notes for Absence: In order for an absence to be registered as excused, a parent or guardian must submit a written explanation to the Student Success Coach. Excuse notes or emails must state the student's name, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence. The parent or guardian has three calendar days from the date of absence to submit the excuse through email.

Educational Leave: Pupils may be excused for educational trips not sponsored by the school according to the Michigan School Code. Please understand that it shall be the family's responsibility to contact the teacher(s) to determine what obligations must be met as a result of this proposed absence. Further understand that:

- no more than ten (10) days of absence will result.
- no absence will occur in the last ten (10) days of the school year.
- experiences such as "Long Weekends" and "Vacations" will not justify any request
- request must be submitted and approved 24 hours prior to the trip
- requests will not be approved for time off during the state testing window.

Unexcused Absences: An unexcused absence is an absence not recognized by state law or the Big Red Virtual School. Unexcused absences may result in loss of credit for assignments missed.

Excessive Absences: When students have accrued 5 unexcused absences, a student and parent will be sent a letter apprising them of the status of their absences. When a student has accrued 8 unexcused absences, the parent and student will be required to meet with the administrator or designee to engage in an attendance contract and help the student improve his/her attendance. The attendance contract may require the parent and student to provide the school with a doctor's note for each additional absence. In such a case, if a doctor's note is not provided to the school, the absence will be marked unexcused. If the attendance contract is implemented and consequently broken, the parent and student(s) will be required to meet with the administrator and may be withdrawn from the Big Red Virtual School. Anytime a student has missed three (3) consecutive days due to an illness, a doctor's note will be required.

5 absences = letter

8 absences = contract

10 absences = Potential withdrawal from Big Red Virtual School or possible referral to the prosecutor's office.

Habitual Truancy: A truant student is defined as a student who is willfully absent from school without the knowledge and consent of the parent or school or absent from school when there is an attempt to evade the Michigan Compulsory Attendance Law.

Online courses are set up in a sequential manner; content information and formative assessment completion will be necessary to complete before accessing summative assessments. It is essential that students maintain the recommended course pacing guide and engage in class regularly.

Student Success Coach Requirements: All students will be assigned to a Student Success Coach. The Student Success Coach will meet with or have 1-2 weekly two-way communications with each student enrolled in the Big Red Virtual School to support, monitor, and provide guidance for all enrolled courses. In addition, content-area teachers will hold virtual office hours weekly for additional support.

Students who do not participate in regular two-way contacts will be referred for truancy. One week of missed two-way contacts is equivalent to five days of missed in-person school. **Any student who misses more than ten days of participation will be dropped from the program.**

The Michigan Department of Education conducts a state-wide student count twice a year. The Big Red Virtual School student count is based solely on four required two-way contacts between students and their Student Success Coach. Each student must complete the four required two-way contacts within the dates set forth by the Michigan Department of Education.

Academic Guidance: The Big Red Virtual School counselor, Thomas Ellis, will help students carefully select a program of study, give vocational guidance and information about colleges, and counsel students with academic and social concerns. Parents/Guardians are welcome to make an appointment with Mr. Ellis by contacting him at (231) 720-2868 or tellis@mpsk12.net.

Administrative Guidance: The Big Red Virtual School administrator, Paul Kurdziel, will help students and their families with issues arising from and/or related to the Big Red Virtual School program. Students and parents/guardians are welcome to make an appointment with Mr. Kurdziel by contacting him at (231) 720-2150 or pkurdzie@mpsk12.net.

Communication: For academic concerns, students and parents should contact in the following order:

1. Student Success Coach
2. Math Support
3. ELA Support
4. Science Support
5. Social Studies Support

6. Spanish Support
7. Elective Support

Calendar: There are times when the Big Red Virtual School calendar may not fully align with the Muskegon Public Schools calendar (ex. late starts, half days, snow days, etc.). Students are expected to turn in assignments as required by the Big Red Virtual School calendar.

Textbooks and Course Materials: Textbooks and related materials will be issued to students when appropriate for use in their classes. With the exception of items such as worksheets and consumables, these items become the responsibility of the student but remain the property of the school district. The books/materials must be returned upon completion of the course or if the student withdraws from school at any time during the year. Students are expected to return the books/materials in as good condition as when issued. If books/materials show signs of careless use or abuse, the student will be fined for the damage at the discretion of the district. Materials that are lost must be replaced at the end of the semester at the expense of the student.

Some required materials are typically found at home and are not provided by the school. A list of these items will be made available on our website in advance of the start of the school year so that families can prepare.

Extra-Curricular Activities: All MPS students enrolled in the Big Red Virtual School are allowed to participate in extracurricular activities. However, any student under disciplinary action will be subject to the terms of his or her disciplinary action.

Grade-Level State and Local Assessments: If you are a full-time student taking “core” classes, you are required to take all appropriate state and local grade-level assessments. Students are expected to appear during the designated date and time for all testing. For State testing (M-Step, PSAT, and SAT), students are expected to appear in-person at the designated location during the scheduled testing window. State testing will take place in April and May. Specific dates will be posted when information becomes available from the State.

Academic Integrity Policy: Muskegon Public Schools has high expectations for all students and believes that all students should maintain high expectations for themselves and their classmates. This policy exists to foster an environment conducive to learning and to promote individual student achievement. It is the expectation of the administration and faculty that individual students will adhere to this policy as honor and character are more valuable than any academic grade. Please be aware that unless specifically directed by the teacher, students must assume that all portions of any assignment are to be completed individually. It is the responsibility of each student to understand a teacher’s expectations for any assignment and/or assessment. If a student finds himself or herself in doubt regarding the expectations of an assignment or assessment, the student must ask the instructor for further clarification.

- **Definition of Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.
- Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Willingly and knowingly allowing another student to copy one’s work without the knowledge or approval of the instructor;
- Intentionally or inadvertently leaving one’s written work available in a place that makes it possible for another student to copy;
- **Sending or sharing assessment information, assignments, or projects verbally, in writing or electronically (i.e. pictorially, text, email, Google G Suite programs) to another student;**
- Participating in, contributing to, or withholding information about the academic dishonesty of another student;
- Using or possessing “crib notes” or “cheat sheets,” or accessing any written or electronic information when not permitted;
- Inventing information or giving false information to deceive the educational process;
- Dishonest actions reported by the teacher;
- Any assignment or assessment submitted by a student which is not considered his/her original work;
- The use of course materials obtained without the instructor’s permission.
- **Definition of Plagiarism:** Plagiarism, which is copying work from another source and submitting it as one’s own work, includes, but is not limited to:
 - Altering words or the order of words from another source and submitting them as one’s own work;
 - Submitting work written by college students, former students, tutors, friends, or other adults as one’s own;
 - Copying another student’s work, previously published material, or ideas from any source, including electronic and visual mediums, without citation.
 - Please be aware that plagiarism is not defined simply by the copying of words and phrases, but also by the dishonest copying of ideas and concepts.
- **Consequences:**
 - *1st Offense* - Loss of grade for assignment (project, test/quiz, paper, etc.); parent and administration informed
 - *2nd Offense* - Loss of grade for assignment (project, test/quiz, paper, etc.); conference between student, parent/guardian, teacher, and administration; possible failure of course
 - *3rd Offense* - Loss of grade for assignment (project, test/quiz, paper, etc.); conference between student, parent/guardian, teacher, and administration; possible failure of course; removal from the Big Red Virtual School at the discretion of the Big Red Virtual School administration

Muskegon Public Schools Chromebook Acceptable Use Agreement: For the purpose of this agreement, “Chromebook” includes the Chromebook, power charger/adaptor, license, and case.

I understand that:

- The Chromebook remains the property of Muskegon Public Schools at all times and places.
- It is a privilege, which may be revoked, to receive the Chromebook, and it is the responsibility of the student to protect and use the Chromebook in the same condition as it was issued, less reasonable wear.
- Any failure to comply with the guidelines and expectations may result in disciplinary action which may

include the removal of the Chromebook from being in possession on a daily basis.

- The Chromebook is used for school/educational purposes only.
- Students may place school appropriate stickers on the case of the device, but not on the device itself. Paint, Sharpie, markers, and/or any other defacing of the case or Chromebook is prohibited. The MPS internal documentation stickers must remain on the device at all times.
- In terms of privacy, students and parents/guardians have no right or expectation of privacy or confidentiality with respect to the use of Muskegon Public Schools' owned devices and connections regardless of whether the use of such device is for district, school, classroom, or personal related purposes.
- Damage, whether intentional or unintentional, will result in fees or fines being issued. Intentional or neglectful damage may incur disciplinary actions and may include the loss of Chromebook privileges. If any device damage occurs due to extreme neglect and needs a total replacement, a meeting between a school official and the parent(s) will need to take place before a replacement is issued. The cost of a total replacement will occur as well.
- If a student's device requires replacement more than twice due to neglect then a meeting is required with a school official.

Student Internet Acceptable Use All use of electronic network use must be consistent with the school's goal of promoting educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. These rules do not attempt to state all required or proscribed behavior by users. However, some specific examples are provided. The failure of any user to follow these rules will result in the loss of privileges, disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

Acceptable Use - Access to the electronic network must be: (a) for the purpose of education or research, and be consistent with the District's educational objectives, or (b) for legitimate business use. Privileges - The use of the electronic network is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges. The system administrator or Building Principal or designee will make all decisions regarding whether or not a user has violated these procedures and may deny, revoke, or suspend access at any time. His or her decision is final. Unacceptable Use - The user is responsible for his or her actions and activities involving the network.

Some examples of unacceptable uses are:

1. Using the network for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other contracts, or transmitting any material in violation of any State or federal law;
2. Unauthorized downloading of software, regardless of whether it is copyrighted or devised;
3. Downloading of copyrighted material for other than personal use;
4. Using the network for private financial or commercial gain;
5. Wastefully using resources, such as file space;
6. Hacking or gaining unauthorized access to files, resources, or entities;
7. Invading the privacy of individuals, that includes the unauthorized disclosure, dissemination, and use of information about anyone that is of a personal nature including a photograph;

8. Using another user's account or password;
9. Posting material authored or created by another without his/her consent;
10. Posting anonymous messages;
11. Using the network for commercial or private advertising;
12. Accessing, submitting, posting, publishing, or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, harassing, or illegal material; and
13. Using the network while access privileges are suspended or revoked.
14. Cyberbullying.

Online Safety and Digital Citizenship - The user is expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Be polite. Do not become abusive in messages to others.
2. Use appropriate language. Do not swear, or use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language.
3. Do not reveal personal information, including the addresses or telephone numbers of students or colleagues.
4. Recognize that email is not private. People who operate the system have access to all email. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to the authorities.
5. Do not use the network in any way that would disrupt its use by other users.
6. Consider all communications and information accessible via the network to be private property.

Lost or Stolen Chromebooks: Parents/guardian/student will be responsible for the price of the device and license so that it can be replaced.

Agreement: Enrollment in the Big Red Virtual School means the student has read, understands, and agrees to the guidelines and expectations in the Muskegon Public Schools Chromebook Acceptable Use Agreement and The Student Internet Acceptable Use guidelines.

Individuals with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provide that no individual will be discriminated against on the basis of a disability. A student can access special education services through proper evaluation procedures. Parent involvement in this procedure is important and required by Federal (IDEA) and State law. Please contact Dr. Christine Robertson, Director of Special Education, at (231) 720-2010, to inquire about evaluation procedures and programs.

Reasons for denial of enrollment and appeal process information

A district may not establish additional requirements that would prohibit a pupil from taking a virtual course. If a pupil is denied enrollment in a virtual course, the district shall provide written notification to the pupil of the denial, the reason or reasons for the denial, and a description of the appeal process.

Enrollment in a virtual course may be denied for any of the following reasons:

- a. The district determined that the enrollment is inappropriate for a pupil who is enrolled in any of grades 6-12.

- b. The pupil has previously gained the credits that would be provided from the completion of the virtual course.
- c. The virtual course is not capable of generating academic credit.
- d. The virtual course is inconsistent with the remaining graduation requirements or career interests of the pupil.
- e. The pupil has not completed the prerequisite coursework for the requested virtual course or has not demonstrated proficiency in the prerequisite course content.
- f. The pupil has failed a previous virtual course in the same subject during the two most recent academic years.
- g. The virtual course is of insufficient quality or rigor. A district that denies a pupil's enrollment request for this reason shall enroll the pupil in a virtual course in the same or a similar subject that the district determines is of acceptable rigor and quality.
- h. For a course selected from the statewide course catalog, the cost of the virtual course exceeds the amount allocated to a course under Section 21f (6.67% of the minimum foundation allowance for the current fiscal year as calculated under Section 20 of the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1620)), unless the pupil or the pupil's parent or legal guardian agrees to pay the cost that exceeds that amount.
- i. The virtual course enrollment request did not occur within the same timelines established for enrollment and schedule changes for regular courses.
- j. The request for a virtual course enrollment was not made in the academic term, semester, trimester, or summer preceding the enrollment. This does not apply to a request made by a pupil who is newly enrolled in the district.
- k. The course has reached capacity and the district has restricted enrollment to resident applicants.
- l. The district does not support the enrollment in more than two (2) virtual courses in an academic term, semester, or trimester.

Enrollment Denial Appeal Process

If a pupil is denied enrollment in either of the first two virtual courses requested by the pupil, the pupil may appeal the denial by submitting a letter to the superintendent of Muskegon Public Schools. The letter of appeal shall include the reason provided by the denying district for not enrolling the pupil and the reason why the pupil is claiming that the enrollment should be approved. The district superintendent or designee shall respond to the appeal within five business days after it is received. If the school district superintendent or designee determines that the denial of enrollment does not meet one or more of the reasons specified above, the pupil shall be allowed to enroll in the virtual course.

Appeals should be made in writing to:

Matthew Cortez, Superintendent
Muskegon Public Schools Administration
1458 Fifth Street
Muskegon, MI 49441

The Big Red Virtual School
Secondary (6-12) Family Contract

My parent/guardian and I, as a student, understand that by requesting to participate in the Big Red Virtual School, I am making a commitment to the following:

- Participation in the Big Red Virtual School orientation session
- Understand that non-participation in the two-way communication process will result in account being deactivated until the two-way communication is reestablished
- Fewer than four missed weekly two-way contacts with the Student Success Coach per semester
- Full participation in two-way contacts during the State-mandated Count Period
- Adequate weekly progress in each course
- Participate in intervention services, if identified
- Attend office hours or contact my course/homeroom teacher if I am struggling or have questions
- Attend virtual required District-level testing and in-person required State-level testing
- One in-person check-in per week (student schedules an appointment with the Student Success Coach to meet at the physical school site)
- Follow the student handbook for academic integrity and technology use

My parent/guardian and I have read and understand the student and parent expectations as defined in the Student Handbook. We understand that if the elements laid out in the handbook and in this contract are not followed, we will be placed “on watch” for removal from the Big Red Virtual School at the end of the semester. Once placed “on watch,” students must make significant improvements by the end of the semester, or they may be placed back into in-person learning.

Signature of Agreement:

By signing this document, we acknowledge that we have read, understand, acknowledge, and agree to abide by all expectations and policies set forth in the Student Handbook and this contract.

Signature

Date

Signature Parent/Guardian

Date