

August 2026

Re: Changes Affecting Full-time Online Students

Dear Alpha Students and Parents/Guardians:

Welcome to the **2026–2027 school year!** We are excited to continue providing students with the flexibility, personalized support, and academic opportunities that make the Alpha Program an important part of the Mifflin County School District.

As we begin the new school year, I want to make you aware of important changes that will affect how we operate our online program. The Pennsylvania General Assembly recently enacted **Act 47 of 2025** and **Act 20 of 2026**, which amended portions of the Pennsylvania Public School Code related to online education, student attendance, participation, and student well-being.

While these changes apply to schools and programs across Pennsylvania, they will result in two important changes **for full-time Alpha students** and families.

1. Weekly Wellness Checks

Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, **full-time Alpha students will participate in a required weekly wellness check.**

The purpose of the wellness check is to help ensure that every online student is safe, well, and actively participating in his or her educational program. The requirement is not intended to be burdensome. Rather, it provides an opportunity for an Alpha staff member to have regular direct contact with each student.

What does this mean for full-time Alpha students?

- Each student must be **visibly seen and communicated with in real time** by an Alpha teacher, administrator, or other designated representative at least once during each instructional week, either in-person or virtually.
- **In order to meet the wellness check requirements, students will**
 - **attend in-person at the Alpha program at least once per week on a scheduled basis**
 - OR**
 - **participate in the regularly scheduled virtual session.**
- When the check occurs virtually, students will need to be visible to the staff member and participate in a real-time conversation.
- Failure of the student to satisfactorily complete the weekly wellness check will result in additional interventions consistent with Pennsylvania's Wellness Check requirements and Mifflin County School District policies and procedures.

These checks are intended to be a positive point of connection between students and the adults who support them. They also provide an additional opportunity for us to identify students who may need academic, social, or other support.

The wellness check requirements are part of Pennsylvania's broader effort to ensure that students participating in online education remain connected to their schools and that schools can verify student participation and well-being.

2. Changes to Attendance for Full-Time Online Students

Another important change involves **how attendance is recorded for students enrolled full-time in an online program**. For the 2026–2027 school year, **full-time Alpha students' attendance will be recorded based on documented participation in the educational program**.

Online learning provides flexibility in *where* and, within appropriate limits, *when* students complete their work. However, being enrolled in an online program does not eliminate the requirement for regular school attendance and participation.

What does this mean for full-time Alpha students?

- Students are expected to participate in their assigned coursework and instructional activities on a regular basis.
- Simply being enrolled in Alpha or having access to the online learning platform does not, by itself, demonstrate satisfactory participation.
- **In order to meet the attendance benchmarks, students will**
 - **complete a minimum of 3 hours of daily activity**
OR
 - **complete 15 hours of cumulative activity, Monday through Sunday,**
OR
 - **maintain pacing and satisfactory academic progress as determined by the Target Due Dates.**
- Attendance concerns may result in additional interventions consistent with Pennsylvania's compulsory attendance requirements and Mifflin County School District policies and procedures.

Our goal is to ensure that attendance reflects a student's actual participation in learning while preserving the flexibility that makes the Alpha Program valuable to our students and families.

More information regarding the specifics of our weekly wellness checks and attendance requirements for our full-time online students will be forthcoming; however, we strongly encourage all of our full-time students, parents, and guardians to reach out to Alpha to discuss these changes and their impact on the student. Meeting face-to-face, whether in person or virtually, is often the best way to communicate how these changes affect an individual student. Please feel free to reach out to us at 717.447.2655 or email us at alphaprogram@mcsdk12.org.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for trusting the Alpha Program to support your student's education. We look forward to a successful 2026–2027 school year and to continuing to provide an online learning experience that combines flexibility with meaningful connections, accountability, and support.

Sincerely,

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