

alpha



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WWW.MCALPHA.ORG



Staff Spotlight Mrs. Bender

Mrs. Bender is the Learning Management Systems Educator for the Alpha Program. This is her sixth year with Alpha, and the thing she loves about the program is helping students customize their learning paths.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, August 17, 2026
Skyward Family Access for
Students and
Parents/Guardians

Monday August 31, 2026
First Day for Students

Friday, September 4, 2026
Act 80 Day - No School for
Students

Monday, September 7, 2026
Labor Day - No School for
Students

Wednesday, September 9, 2026
Back-to-School Night at MCHS
for grades 6-12 Alpha Students



Welcome and Welcome Back!

New Year. New Goals. New Opportunities...and an Incredible Journey Lies Ahead.

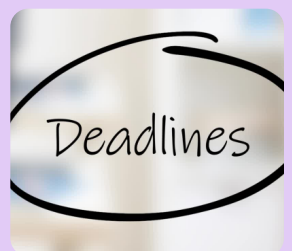
As we begin a new school year, there is an undeniable sense of excitement and possibility throughout our Alpha program! A new year brings new goals, new opportunities, and a renewed commitment to helping every student find success.

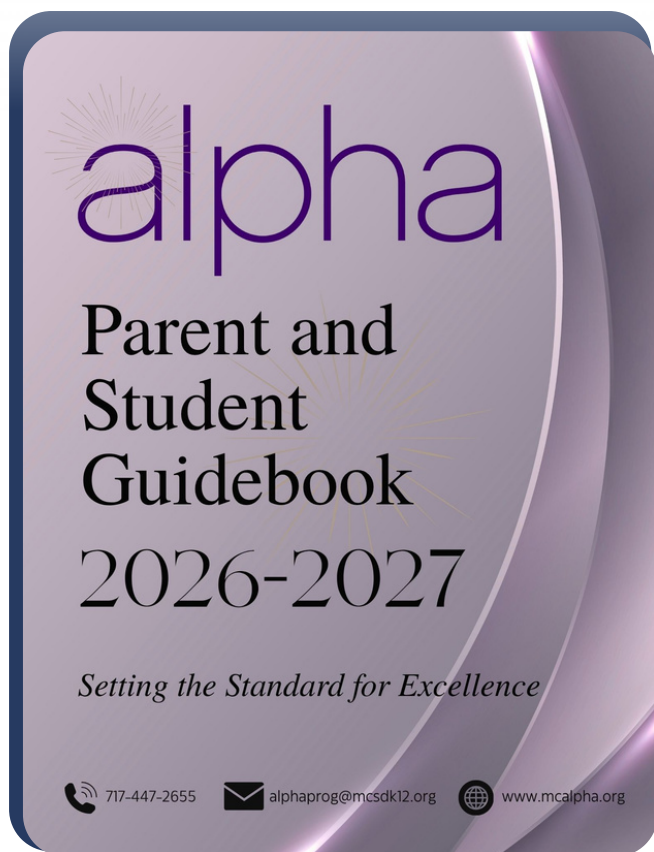
As we begin another year we are focused on building connections, encouraging growth, and making sure every student knows that they matter. Our flexible, personalized approach allows students to learn in ways that meet their individual needs while still benefiting from the support, relationships, and resources of the Mifflin County School District. We look forward to seeing our students set goals, overcome challenges, celebrate accomplishments, and make this another outstanding year for our program. **Welcome back, Huskies! Together, let's make it a great year!**

Christopher M. Gill
Administrator of Online Programs

DROP/ADD DEADLINE

Students have until **Friday, September 4** to drop or add an online course. Please note: students are not in school that day due to an Act 80 day, so any changes must be discussed with your school counselor before September 4. Don't wait — start the conversation early to make sure your schedule is set for success!





2026-2027 PARENT AND STUDENT GUIDEBOOK

For all things Alpha, our 2026-2027 Alpha Parent and Student Guidebook is a must-have resource! How attendance is completed, transportation availability, laptop use, tutoring options, athletic eligibility, and more can be found at the link below. The guidebook should be considered a dynamic publication, as we expect periodic updates due to some recent changes to cyber education at the state level, so you may see changes each time you open the document or refresh.

[Alpha 2026-2027 Parent and Student Guidebook](#)

NEW

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES FOR FULL-TIME ALPHA STUDENTS

Full-time Alpha students will not be required to sign into Skyward for their daily attendance. However, full-time students will need to meet minimum daily activity, cumulative weekly activity, or maintain academic pace according to the online platform's Target Due Dates. For more information, please refer to the Parent and Student Guidebook or reach out to the Alpha Staff.



NEW

MANDATORY WELLNESS CHECKS FOR FULL-TIME ALPHA STUDENTS

Recent changes in Pennsylvania state law, amending the PA School Code, now require all full-time virtual students to be seen and heard by school personnel at least once per week. Students can fulfill this requirement by coming to Alpha during the week or participating in a Zoom session on Fridays. More details are included in the infographic below as well as the guidebook. Please note that failure to meet this requirement could result in dismissal from online learning. Please reach out to Alpha staff if you have any questions.



Alpha Virtual Student Wellness: Weekly Check-In & Compliance Guide



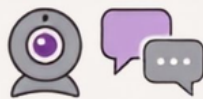
Under Pennsylvania HB 1505 (Section 1327.4 of the PA School Code), all full-time virtual students must participate in weekly wellness checks to verify their well-being and participation. Alpha implements this through a specific weekly schedule that escalates from digital outreach to in-person home visits if a check is missed.

The Weekly Routine



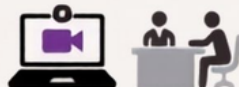
Friday Morning Wellness Check at 10:00 AM

All full-time Alpha virtual students must join the weekly Wellness Check via Zoom if they have not been seen and heard by Alpha Staff during the week. Joining this Zoom satisfies the requirement of the wellness check for the week.



Live Visual & Verbal Interaction

Students must be seen visually and speak in real-time with school staff.



Alternative Verification Methods

Zoom conferencing with an Alpha instructor or attending Alpha in-person also satisfies the weekly requirement.

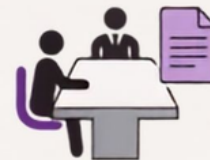
Escalation Timeline for Missed Checks



Within 1 Day of Wellness Check:

If the student has not been seen and heard during the week and misses the Friday Zoom Wellness Check, Alpha contacts parents within one school day via

*ParentSquare to alert the parent of the missed Wellness Check.



Wednesday: Wellness Review Conference

A mandatory Wellness Review Conference must be held if the student is not seen and heard from within three days of the previous Friday's Wellness Check.



Thursday: In-Person Home Visit

If the Wellness Review Conference is missed, a mandatory home visit by school personnel occurs by the end of the school day on Thursday.

*ParentSquare message will alert the recipient that the student was not seen or heard by Alpha Staff during the previous week and must now arrange an alternate time to be seen and heard prior to 10:00 am on the following Wednesday. This message will also include a time on Wednesday for the Wellness Review Conference if needed.

STAY INFORMED

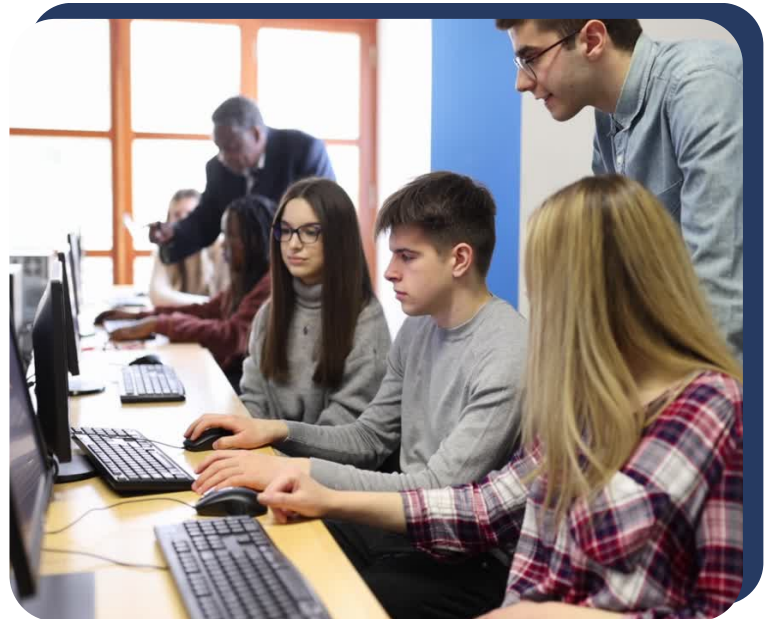


All Alpha students are students of their respective building based schools (Mifflin County Middle School, Mifflin County Junior High School, Mifflin County High School, and the Academy). We encourage all students and parents to review newsletters from your respective school to stay informed. The links are provided below.

[MIFFLIN COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER](#)
[MIFFLIN COUNTY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER](#)
[MIFFLIN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER](#)
[THE ACADEMY NEWSLETTER](#)

ALPHA EXTENDED HOURS

The Alpha program is open from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This is a great opportunity for students to take exams or to get some extra assistance from two of our Alpha teachers in a low-key environment. We encourage our students to take advantage of this opportunity when needed. **Our first Extended Hours day will be Thursday, September 10th.**



MORNING HOURS



Alpha classroom C207, next to the Alpha Staff Office, is open every school day, starting at 7:30 am. Students may arrive via Door 18 at the back corner of MCHS or by signing out of the MCHS cafeteria. This is another excellent opportunity to receive assistance or take exams.

7 Ways Parents Can Support Online Learners

1. Help Establish a Routine

Create a consistent daily schedule for schoolwork, breaks, meals, activities, and sleep. A predictable routine helps students know what is expected and reduces procrastination.

2. Create a Productive Learning Space

A dedicated, reasonably quiet place for schoolwork can help students transition into “school mode.” It doesn’t have to be elaborate—consistency is more important than perfection.

3. Encourage Students to Check Their Own Progress

Rather than always asking, “Did you do your work?”, try questions such as:

“What are you working on today?”

“What is your goal for this week?”

“What assignments do you still need to complete?”

“Is there anything you need help understanding?”

This helps develop executive functioning and independence.

4. Encourage Communication with Teachers

Teach students to reach out when they are confused, falling behind, or struggling with an assignment. Learning to advocate for themselves is an important part of becoming an independent learner.

5. Monitor Without Hovering

Parents should be aware of attendance, grades, assignments, and overall progress, but students also need opportunities to take ownership. Support the student without doing the work for the student.

6. Celebrate Progress—Not Just Grades

Recognize effort, persistence, improved organization, meeting a goal, asking for help, or making progress after a difficult week. These small victories can build confidence and a growth mindset.

7. Stay Connected With Alpha

Communication between home and school is especially important in an online environment. If you notice a change in your student’s motivation, engagement, attendance, or academic progress, reach out to the Alpha team early. We would much rather work with a family when a small concern first appears than wait until it becomes a larger problem.

A simple message for parents

Your role isn’t to sit beside your student all day. Your role is to help your student learn how to manage the day. Encourage routines, ask questions, monitor progress, celebrate growth, and help your student develop the confidence to take ownership of their education. At Alpha, we want parents to know that you are not in this alone—we are partners in helping your student succeed.

SECONDARY STUDENT HANDBOOK

At Alpha we strive to create a safe, respectful, and engaging learning environment for all students. To support this goal, we ask that families review the Student Handbook for Secondary Education, which outlines important policies, expectations, and guidelines. The handbook can be found on the MCSD website or [at this link](#). We encourage parents and guardians to read through the handbook with their student to ensure everyone is familiar with school rules, attendance policies, and behavior expectations. Please note that as policy updates occur, there may be changes to the Student Handbook.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES – MCSD POLICY 906

The Alpha program is committed to maintaining a positive and responsive school environment. If you have a concern or complaint about Board policy and procedures, programs, personnel, operations or facilities, concerns should be addressed directly with the teacher, staff member, or administrator involved. Many issues can be resolved through open and respectful communication. More information on complaint procedures is provided in Policy 906 of the MCSD Policy Manual.

REVIEW OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS – MCSD POLICY 105.1

Mifflin County School District School Board Policy 105.1 requires annual notification to parents/guardians and students that parents/guardians and students have an opportunity to review instructional materials and have access to information about the curriculum, including academic standards to be achieved, instructional materials and assessment techniques. Requests to review instructional materials and access information about the curriculum, including academic standards to be achieved, instructional materials and assessment techniques should be made by submitting a written request to the building principal.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES – MCSD POLICY 110

The building principal will be responsible to ensure that no student in the school is denied participation in any school program for financial reasons and that the privacy of each student is protected. The principal will use the guidelines of the free and reduced price lunch program to determine the ability of students to provide necessary school supplies. Parents/Guardians must complete the Application For Instructional Supplies and submit required documentation when requesting free instructional supplies for students. Please contact the principal for more information and to request the application.

MCSD POLICY AND SCHOOL BOARD INFORMATION

Please visit the Mifflin County School District website for information regarding Board Policies, Agendas, and Minutes. Information on this site also includes the current school board members and school board meeting dates.

Please visit the following link <https://www.mcSDK12.org/school-board/>.