



**Indiana State Board of Education
Request for Freeway School Accreditation
Board Date: June 5, 2013**

School: Midwest Elite Academy
Education Director: Rhonda Payne
Address: 8101 Polo Club Drive
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
Grade Span: PK-12
Public/Private: Private
Current Enrollment: 70
Targeted Population: Families seeking a faith-based non-public school environment

Identity: MEPA is located in Northwest Indiana in the city of Merrillville and county of Lake. According to the most recent census, Merrillville is a hub for retail trade in Northwest Indiana. On the US 30 corridor between Taft Street and Colorado Street harbors a large concentration of big-box retailers, hotels, restaurants, and automobile dealerships. The current population is 46.4% White, 44.5% African American, 0.2% Native Americans, 1.2% Asian, 4.6% from other races, and 3.2% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 12.9% of the population.

Curriculum: At the time of this petition the Common Core issue is currently being reviewed and MEPA staff has begun aligning its curriculum with the Indiana State Standards. MEPA's main curriculum is Abeka. According to Abeka, most of the standards have always been met. We also use supplement curriculum which includes Singapore Math, Touch Math and others. Because we are a private school with smaller settings, we have vowed to not let a student move past a lesson until they can at least score an 80% on the exams.

Testing History: Due to cost factors, the students have been tested using the Iowa exam every 2 years. 2011 was the last year of testing. Each time our students tested for the Iowa Exam they have scored within the top 10% in the country. Our students are now actively preparing to take the ISTEP+ along with the Iowa Basic Skills Exam in the fall of 2013-2014 school year.

Staffing: Many teachers are licensed including some in Illinois. More staff are finalizing their education and will be applying for licenses.



Indiana Department of Education

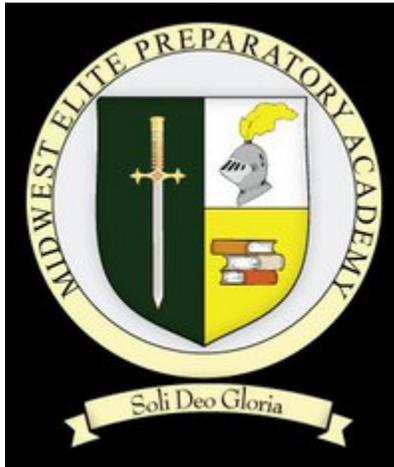
Glenda Ritz, NBCT
Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction

Waiver Requests: Textbook requirements

Issues: None

Recommendations: Full Five-Year Freeway Accreditation

MIDWEST ELITE PREPARATORY ACADEMY INC



WARRIORS

RONDA T. PAYNE CEO/PRINCIPAL

8101 POLO CLUB DRIVE

MERRILLVILLE IN 46410

O: 219-794-1040 F: 219-794-1050

RTPCHILDCARE@HOTMAIL.COM

WEBSITE: MIDWESTELITEPREPACADEMYINC.COM

*ALL REFERENCES TO STATE STANDARDS ARE BASED ON THE 2013-2014 SCHOOL YEAR IN WHICH WE WILL CONFORM TO COMMON CORE STANDARDS IF REQUIRED

I. Identify the School Entity To Be Declared A Freeway School

Midwest Elite Preparatory Academy (MEPA) is a private Christian School for grades Pre-K (3) through 12th.

MEPA was established in 2005 as a Preschool through 12th grade in the form of a one room school setting.

MEPA is a school where students attend all year around which consist of a calendar year attendance for 5 weeks and off for one week (2 weeks during Christmas break, calendar insert with package). MEPA also offers before and after care to the students who are up to 12 years old and enrolled in the program. Anyone over 12 years of age can stay for after school tutoring which is provided by the school.

MEPA is registered as a Non-Public school with the Indiana State Board of Education. (B747)

The school currently has 70 full time students from grades Pre-K (3) through 12th grade. Without accreditation the school has a holding capacity of 150 students and with accreditation the student capacity is 110. (Per State Health Department, and Fire Marshal of homeland security)

MEPA is currently located in a 48,000 square foot building but currently occupying approx. 5200 square feet. The address is 8101 Polo Club Drive in Merrillville IN. (The school has future plans of purchasing the building if ever for sale in which at that time other additions to the school will be added)

MEPA currently has funding 70% private pay, 10% CCDF, and 20% Child and adult food program. All funds increase as new students enroll.

Note: MEPA originally started as a “home school supplemental program”. It is our desire to provide quality Christian based education and allow those of diverse races, socio-economic status and various educational abilities to be a part. At MEPA, we stress an importance on values and morals which are taught by our current Christian curriculum. Students have both academic and Christian education classes.

II. Identify The Demographic Data Of The School And The Community It Serves

MEPA is located in Northwest Indiana in the city of Merrillville and county of Lake. According to the most recent census, Merrillville is a hub for retail trade in Northwest Indiana. On the US 30 corridor between Taft Street and Colorado Street harbors a large concentration of big-box retailers, hotels, restaurants, and automobile dealerships. MEPA is located right off of US 30 exactly right adjacent to the main public library in which children attend on a regular basis, weather permitting.

The current population is 46.4% White, 44.5% African American, 0.2% Native Americans, 1.2% Asian, 4.6% from other races, and 3.2% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 12.9% of the population.

The Median income of the town for a household is \$49,469, the Mean income is \$57,728, the Median income for a family is \$56,911 and the Mean income is \$65,925.

95% of the students attending MEPA live in the Town of Merrillville where the remaining 5% are from surrounding communities.

MEPA has 99% minority students. The entire school population is African American or Bi-racial and Caucasian.

III. Describe How The School's Curriculum will Comply With The Common Core Standards Adopted By The State Of Indiana

At the time of this petition the Common Core issue is currently being reviewed and MEPA staff has begun aligning its curriculum with the Indiana State Standards. MEPA's main curriculum is Abeka. According to Abeka, most of the standards have always been met. (See Abeka book Common Core insert) We will continue to keep up to date with the standards and strive to move above the requirements.

We also use supplement curriculum which includes Bob Jones, Singapore Math, Touch Math, to name a few. Because we are a private school with smaller settings, we have vowed to not let a student move past a lesson until they can at least score an 80% on the exams. (which are created by Abeka in line with the curriculum)

IV. Describe The Plan Allowing Students To Earn An Indiana Academic Honors Diploma Where Applicable

Because MEPA is geared toward "Excellence in Education", we currently only offer the "Academic Honors Diploma".

MEPA is in the process of signing contracts with Ivy Tech State College and Purdue University Calumet in order to offer Dual Credits starting the 2013-2014 school year.

Out of the 50 High School Diplomas that MEPA has issued since 2005, over 50% are "Academic Honors Diplomas". As part of our curriculum, MEPA offers Japanese, Sign Language, Spanish, and Business Economic Classes. We are currently offering the CDA, in order to certify those students beginning their freshman year, to work as assistant teachers in a childcare setting.

We are currently in the process of installing a computer lab which the lab will consist of 1 computer per 5 students.

The past year we have created a library, resource and research area for our students. It is equipped with encyclopedias, dictionaries, and books in various topics.

We were fortunate to receive 70 boxes with 50 to 100 books in each which were donated by the Lake County Public Library as they went through their renovation process.

We are currently working with Sevis Exchange Program in order to issue student visas. We are currently in collaboration with the government in Nigeria, Africa and Nagoya, Japan as we are creating new sister schools for an exchange program.

We are currently becoming NCAA certified. Thus far we have met all of the NCAA requirements and the final step is recruiting a student who is interested in attending a NCAA school. In order to meet the requirement we have enlisted with Sports agent David Marvilla with ISMHoops, who currently recruits international players. We will be moving forward for sure in the 2013-2014 school year.

Our students are held to a high academic standard. We currently have information on the National Honor Society. Upon accreditation we will be able to be a national recognized member.

In order for our students to receive the "Academic Honors Diploma" they must meet all core standards for the Core 40 with academic honors diploma.

Instead of receiving the minimum 47 credit, students are required to have a minimum of 50 credits and instead of receiving a letter "C" grade the students must at least receive a letter "B" grade to successfully fulfill the honors requirement.

We require all students to begin taking the ACT/SAT exams in the freshman year of school. By doing this we can identify the weaknesses and strengths of each student and focus on bringing higher scores.

Students are required to take 2 AP classes, one being Anatomy and Physiology. 3 dual credit classes (equally 9 hours) must also be completed.

MEPA has applied to be a testing site for the National ACT/SAT exam.

V. Freeway Accreditation Requires Educational Benefits for Students In The Performance On ISTEP+ and End of Course Assessments, and for High School's And Improvement in Graduation Rate.

MEPA has a daily attendance rate that is between 98%-100% on average for the past 8 years. We actively encourage a better attendance rate by rewarding the parents and students with perfect attendance awards each grading period and we also contact the parents of those who are not in school. (For extended absences we do require a formal excuse .i.e. Physician)

MEPA has not taken the ISTEP+ up to this point. Our students in the past have tested for the Iowa Basic Skills exam. The reason for this exam it better measures development when using the Abeka curriculum and also Bob Jones. The Principal Ronda Payne is a certified tester for the Iowa Basic Skills Exam.

Due to cost, the students have tested for the Iowa exam every 2 years. 2011was the last year testing. Each time our students tested for the Iowa Exam they have scored within the top 10% in the country. Our students are now actively preparing to take the ISTEP+ along with the Iowa Basic Skills Exam in the fall of 2013-2014 school year.

Because we have a good attendance rate our goal is to continue on the current path that we have started and to continually reinforce what is already being done and encouraging the parents and students.

To prepare for the ISTEP+ we have hired on an Consultant Sherrill Garth who is a certified ISTEP tester and has been for the past several years. She will help prepare the students academically and also work with the staff and parents to assure success. It is our plan to above the required standard for the ISTEP exam.

It is the goal of MEPA to increase ISTEP+ scores by at least 5% during the 2013-2014 school year, with a 3% subsequent annual increase in the school average testing scores each year, until scores are in the top 95% percentile.

A) Describe the Schools Strategies To Meet These Improvements in Performance

- 1) Identify students who are operating below their grade level in order to work with them to come up to their proper grade level or above. In doing this we will offer reading classes and free tutoring also try to detect if there are any learning disabilities.
- 2) Specific state standards are coupled with the Abeka curriculum. Weekly assessments are given to ensure proficiency of every state standard.

B) Describe Any Additional Measures That Will Be Used To Measure Student Achievement And Growth

We use Test Prep examinations on a regular basis. We test each student 1 year behind their original grade, their current grade and a year ahead. To insure that we are moving in the right direction, we also use various curriculums based assessments by Abeka School which is currently accredited for Pre-K through 12th grade.

For our high school students, at the end of each class a student's is given a comprehensive test to assure the knowledge of the subject at hand. Upon accreditation, end of year assessments per state requirements will be administered.

MEPA currently has a 100% graduation rate with 98% of the students attending four year universities upon graduation. Because we attend all year around, 30% of our more advanced students have been able to maintain a greater work load, therefore graduating at the age of 16. When enrolling for college 95% test program ready and they also do very well on the ACT/SAT exams.

VI. Describe the Curriculum Strategies to Address: Character Education; Hygiene: Alcohol and Drugs: Diseases Transmitted Sexually: Honesty: respect and Abstinence and Restraint.

MEPA holds all parents, staff and students to a value and moral code which is biblically based.

All staff and students are required to respect others personal space along with respecting themselves. Proper hygiene will be addressed by a higher administrator in a way that shows compassion yet firmness and in no way will be used to embarrass the student.

If in any way the school can help to make the situation better we will try to help.

Alcohol, drugs and tobacco are not permitted on site at "anytime".

Students are taught age-appropriate abstinence and restraints. These are issues discussed by trained school officials. Parents are also involved in "parent meetings" and advised to how we will discuss the issues.

The curriculum we have chosen plays a big part simply because it is based on biblical values and morals and we are also allowed to pray about them daily.

Yearly fashion shows, parent nights out, fieldtrips and graduations are held in order to show proper manners.

VII. Describe How Students With Special Needs will Be Identified, Referred to the Local Public School For Testing And How IEP's For These Students Will Be A Part Of Their Instruction

Currently we have students who have been formally diagnosed with ADHD in which we have used a Vanderbilt (school based) Evaluation. This evaluation gives the parents an overall evaluation of what we see and in turn the parent takes it to the child's physician and the physician makes a referral for a proper diagnoses.

MEPA currently has about 10% of the student body that has been formally diagnosed with ADHD, some are on medication and others aren't.

Because of this, our staff has training in knowing the signs and actually learning how to deal with each individual child on a one on one basis. We have created a resource library and come up with different techniques to assure that we can help educate the child along with keeping the environment calm.

We also require lots of parent cooperation in the matter. At times we will slow a student's work down or speed it up depending on whether the child is not understanding or far advanced.

Rolonda Bartnicki a current staff member will be completing her Master's Degree in Special Education this summer from Indiana University Northwest.

Mrs. Bartnicki has been a vital source in the help of determining which children are in special need. She has helped us work on a resource library to help us get insight of what may be going on with a child and it will also help the parents.

After we make an unofficial diagnosis, we will work with the knowledge we have to try to correct it. After a few attempts we will notify the parents with the required paper work to submit to the family physician and/or local agency from our resource information. After speaking with the parents, we will then work closely with all agencies involved to assure that the student receives the quality help needed.

If at any point and time a parent does not cooperate or we feel that we can no longer help the child, we will make a referral back to the child's local public and place all information in the files so that the child can get the help that is needed.

VIII. Identify The Statues And Rules To Be Suspended As A Result Of This Contract

Being that MEPA is a private Christian school, we have selected books and classroom materials that most effectively represent a Christian view. We have and will continue to use books from both secular and Christian publishers, trying in each instance to obtain the very best material available while remaining constant with our Christian views. Because the Christian publishers we have chosen do not appear on the state approved list, we are requesting a waiver for: IC 20-20-5.5-1 THROUGH IC 20-20-5.5-3

IC 20-26-12-24

IC 20-26-12-26

IC 20-26-12-1

IC 20-26-12-2

511 IAC 6.1-5-5

IX. Describe How Technology Will Be Integrated Into Student Instruction

MEPA is committed to a technology- oriented education for all of our students. To incorporate technology into the educational experience of MEPA students and maintain our commitment to a cutting edge education, MEPA has made multimedia part of daily learning.

Students are expected to integrate current technology to complete coursework as deemed necessary by the course work or the teacher.

In accordance with our objective of integrating technology in student instruction, each Kindergarten, Elementary and JR/High school classroom has access to the following:

- 1) MEPA has 2 computers in our resource center that are used for research projects, online assessment testing and educational games
- 2) Each classroom so far has at least 1 computer available for student use, in addition to a teachers computer
- 3) Internet wireless service is available throughout our school
- 4) We will be purchasing 20 new computers when our fall 2013 fundraiser is completed

X. Describe Procedures/Plans To Insure A Safe And Disciplined Learning Environment

All parents and students must complete an application, schedule a tour and conduct an interview with the Principal. Upon enrollment parents receive a package which contains a handbook in which they sign in agreement to our rules, it describes all major policies and what is expected from the parents and the students conduct.

We enforce a strict school policy when it comes to uniforms. Dismissal policies are out lined in the handbook.

All doors at MEPA are locked at all times from the outside. In case of emergency deadbolts are not locked during the day but door knobs which unlock from the inside are activated when turning.

All parents with students under 13 years of age must sign in and out daily. School hours are 7:00am-6:00pm Monday-Friday.

Any individual attempting to pick up a child must be on the emergency list a have proper ID or the parent must prearrange with the school by calling or writing a note and the person must have ID. Child will not be released until proper approval/identified is made.

Our teaching staff ration is 10:1 and our classes range from 9 students and the largest being 30 students and there are 3 teachers.

Once a month a hired consultant comes in and does fire drills, tornado and major disaster drills. We have a certified CPR/First Aid/AED trainer and several registered nurses and Doctors on staff (volunteer)

XI. Describe Plans for Continuing Professional Staff Development

At MEPA we vow to be life learners. In this we conduct weekly staff meetings and we bring in professional consultants which give us insight on how to improve in certain areas.

We have a required 40 clock hours per year of professional training required. These hours are outside of school. Some funding if available is used to pay for the development or the staff has to pay for it.

Currently all of our teachers are enrolled in some type of college courses. Upon completion of 15 credit hours, staff is given a bonus.

Staff evaluations are every 90 days.

At this time suggestions are made by the Principal to assure more effective teaching and planning. The Abeka School sends in an consultant to train on using the Abeka curriculum in august of every year.

New teachers are mentored by all of the current teachers to encourage them.

XII. Confirm the School's Commitment to Indiana's Minimum 180 Instructional Days for Students

MEPA is committed to a 180 day school year. In fact our school exceeds the required number of instructional days and hours, mainly due to the fact that our students attend all year around. (including summers)

*school calendar is attached for reference

XIII. the School's Ability to Produce and Submit All Required Electronic Student Data

MEPA will report annually to the designated Indiana Department of Education Office, the results of our ISTEP+ assessments and any nationally standardized tests in which our students will participate.

We will also submit attendance rates and the school's report on the state of the student body on an annual basis as required.

MEPA pledges to submit any additional required reports to the state of Indiana.

A consultant Alan Jordan and alternate Bernetta Ford have been contracted to assure that all requirements are met, correct and submitted in a proper time frame. (Resumes available upon request)

Appendix A: Insert Copy of the Governing Body's Policy Requiring New Employees/Volunteers to Provide a Current Expanded Criminal Background Check

Because Midwest Elite Preparatory Academy is certified to receive CCDF vouchers, it is mandatory that every staff member, parent volunteer and anyone who will be around the children have a completed expanded criminal background check, drug screening, TB test and they must also be certified in CPR/First Aid/AED Training.

No one will be hired and available to begin work at MEPA until all of the above requirements are met.

When one shows interest in a position, we will first run a background check. Upon approval of the background check, we will proceed with the rest of the requirements.

If at any point a background check comes back unclear, the Principal will consult with CCDF on advice how to proceed. Upon accreditation, the Principal will consult the Indiana State Board of Education for the best course of action.

Appendix B: Provide a List of Staff Members, Roles, Teaching Area/Subjects, Indiana Educator License and Confirmation of Expanded Criminal Background Check

Ronda T. Payne- Owner and Principal of Midwest Elite Preparatory Academy Inc., Experience over 23 years of first owning a daycare center and the past 9 years the owner of MEPA. Payne is currently completing the last 2 semesters at Purdue University Calumet with a double Bachelors in Human Development and family studies and Elementary Education. She holds an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Ivy Tech Community College. She has been accepted by Governors State University in the Board of Governors program, pursuing a Master's in Education/Administration.

Payne is currently, a licensed tester for the Iowa Basic Skills and Stanford exams and also a mentor for the CDA program.

Payne is currently Principal and Instructor for the 4th through the 6th grade and will be applying for emergency teacher's license. **(background check completed and clear)**

Rolonda Bartnicki- Currently enrolled at Indiana University Northwest in the Master's of Education program with an emphasis on Special Education. Currently the facilitator of grades 9-12 at MEPA.

Will have teachers license in Summer of 2013 upon graduation in May. Over 15 years of experience working as a licensed paraprofessional in Junior high and High school programs. Certified CPR/First Aid/AED trainer through Heart savers. (American Red Cross) Applying for emergency teachers license. Over 15 years of teaching which includes the public school system. **(background check completed and clear)**

Sherell Garth- Over 30 years of experience. Doctorate level of Education. Type 01 and type 02 teachers license in both Illinois and Indiana (k-12). Currently a teacher training consultant at MEPA for Kindergarten. Certified tester for ISTEP. Will help with the administration of the ISTEP test. **(background check completed and clear)**

Bernetta Ford- Bachelor's in Culinary arts Master's in Business administration. Working as an instructor in the Dual Credits program for the high schooler's with classes related to computers, culinary arts and business. Certified in Excel and contracted to work with State files upon accreditation. Also, currently an instructor at Ivy Tech State College. Applying for emergency teaching license. **(background check completed and clear)**

Patricia Thornton- Bachelors of Science in Organization Management with a Human Resource Concentration. Working in the Dual credits program with high school students. 7th and 8th grade instructor. Also works with need organization. Applying for emergency teacher's license. **(background check completed and clear)**

Tiffany Blackman- Substitute- over 25 years experience. Holder of a Type 01 and Type 02 teachers license for K-9 in Illinois. (will apply for an emergency teachers license)

Master's in Early Childhood Education

Endorsements: Reading

Kindergarten- 9th grade Elementary Teaching

Work with dual credits with Early Childhood/CDA program **(background check completed and clear)**

Annette Wright- working with Kindergarten Program Bachelors of Arts/English/Writing

Over 25 year's of experience licensed as a teacher's aide and other non-certified personal. Approved state and NCLB approved paraprofessional through State of Illinois. Currently licensed in Illinois. **(background check completed and clear)**

Lisa Daniels- teacher assistant for 4-6th grade currently attending for Elementary Ed **(background check completed and clear)**

Carla Stanley-Mckinney- facilitator/ teacher for 1st-3rd. Current holder of CDA pursuing Elementary Education **(background Check completed and clear)**

Louise Jackson- Assistant in Kindergarten **(background check completed and clear)**

Shanell Jefferson- Assistant in kindergarten, currently attending college for early childhood **(background check completed and clear)**

Erin Pratt- assistant teacher/floater, Administrative assistant. Attending college for Early childhood Education **(background check completed and clear)**

Desiree Jackson- Afterschool Assistant **(background check completed and clear)**

Kim Perez- Teacher assistant for kindergarten. Currently attending college for special education. **(background check completed and clear)**