

Mt. Union Area School District



# Academy for Customized Learning

Student & Parent  
Information Booklet

Addendum to Junior\Senior High Handbook

2023 – 2024

**MASCOT** – TROJAN

**SCHOOL COLORS** – ROYAL BLUE AND VEGAS GOLD

Revised: 1/18/2024 2:59 PM

## Welcome!

Since its start in 2004, the Academy of Customized Learning (ACL), commonly called the Virtual Academy, has supplied a robust online learning experience for MUASD students. We have grown in number of students, course enrollments, and content opportunities; encompassing original credit, remediation, acceleration, non-traditional course opportunities, AP, honors, and college level courses. It is our goal to supply high quality, rigorous, asynchronous learning experiences that continue to challenge academic growth, prepare for state assessments, and supply real world application of technology as we help students in preparing for post-secondary education, military opportunities, and entry into the work force.

This ACL information booklet is an addendum to the Junior/Senior High Handbook and holds important phone numbers, school calendar, and a summary of the policies and procedures followed throughout the school year. This addendum is not meant to be inclusive of all policies and procedures. Any conflict between the Academy of Customized Learning Policy and this Student Handbook shall be resolved in favor of School Board Policy. If you have questions about this handbook, contact the Coordinator of Online Learning, 814-542-2518. Please use the following link to view current Mount Union Area School District policies: [School Board Policies](#). Give special attention to the sections on **daily schedule**, **student attendance**, and **instructional time**. A student's commitment to complete the required online activity time and complete daily assignments is necessary to succeed online. Time and dedication will result in positive outcomes for students. The student and parent/guardian must acknowledge receipt of this information booklet, acknowledge you understand and agree with the contents.

## SOLUTIONS AND BENEFITS OF ACL

- Alternative to traditional cyber charter schools
- Elementary, Middle School, and High School Courses
- NCAA Approved Courses
- Honors, AP, Career & Technical Education Courses
- College Courses (at parent/guardian expense)
- Flexible Scheduling: full-time (from home) and part-time (in-school)
- Weekly meetings with ACL staff to review progress and complete periodic assessments.
- Students stay enrolled in their home school district.
- Students keep access to community-based resources.
- Curriculum is aligned to district requirements so students can keep yearly progress, promotion, and credit-earning ability to meet local graduation requirements.
- Diagnostic assessment, remedial and supplemental instruction, or enrichment are available.
- Credit-Recovery
- School-to-Work transition programming
- Students complete MUASD graduation requirements and receive MUASD diploma.

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## SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Title	Staff	PHONE	Extension	Fax
Superintendent	Dr. Amy Smith	814-542-8631	191	814-542-8633
Director of Business Affairs	Mr. Ryan Wagner	814-542-8631	193	814-542-8633
Director of Special Education	Dr. Dianne Thomas	814-542-2518	162	
Food Service Director	Mrs. Debbie Lear	814-542-2518	126	
Athletic Director	Mr. Bob Wydock	814-542-2518	124	
Online Coordinator	Mrs. Dawn Shields	814-542-9311	173	
Junior High Principal	Mrs. L. Hope Palm	814-542-9311	128	814-542-8376
Senior High Principal	Mr. Chad Mickle	814-542-2518	121	814-542-5451
Junior High Guidance Counselor	Mrs. Sarah Haefner	814-542-9311	123	814-542-8710
Senior High Guidance Counselor	Mrs. Candace Carper	814-542-2518	130	814-542-8710
Guidance Secretary	Mrs. Stephanie E. Stains	814-542-2518	122	814-542-8710
Junior High Secretary	Mrs. Lisa Waite	814-542-9311	127	814-542-8376
Senior High Secretary	Mrs. Heidi Glunt	814-542-2518	120	814-542-5451
Special Education Secretary	Mrs. Katrina Danley	815-542-2518	160	

## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

**2023-24**

Orris Knepp	Solicitor
Deanna Wagner	Secretary
Linda McClure	President
Curtis Whitesel	Vice President
Duane Gearhart	
Jeff Hoover	
Carol Jackson	
Brian Kritzer	
John Martinez	
Kristie Myers	
Kristen Shields	

# SCHEDULES

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

**Mount Union Area School District  
2023-2024 School Calendar**

July	August <span style="float: right;">S-7 T-9</span>	September <span style="float: right;">S-20 T-20</span>
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	3 4 5 6 7 8 9
9 10 11 12 13 14 15	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	10 11 12 13 14 15 16
16 17 18 19 20 21 22	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	17 18 19 20 21 22 23
23 24 25 26 27 28 29	27 28 29 30 31	24 25 26 27 28 29 30
30 31		

  

October <span style="float: right;">S-22 T-22</span>	November <span style="float: right;">S-17 T-17,9</span>	December <span style="float: right;">S-16 T-16</span>
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	5 6 7 8 9 10 11	3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8 9 10 11 12 13 14	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	10 11 12 13 14 15 16
15 16 17 18 19 20 21	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	17 18 19 20 21 22 23
22 23 24 25 26 27 28	26 27 28 29 30	24 25 26 27 28 29 30
29 30 31		31

  

January <span style="float: right;">S-21 T-21</span>	February <span style="float: right;">S-19 T-19</span>	March <span style="float: right;">S-19 T-19</span>
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	10 11 12 13 14 15 16
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	17 18 19 20 21 22 23
28 29 30 31	25 26 27 28 29	24 25 26 27 28 29 30
		31

  

April <span style="float: right;">S-21 T-21</span>	May <span style="float: right;">S-18 T-18</span>	June <span style="float: right;">S-19 T-19</span>
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	5 6 7 8 9 10 11	2 3 4 5 6 7 8
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	9 10 11 12 13 14 15
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	16 17 18 19 20 21 22
28 29 30	26 27 28 29 30 31	23 24 25 26 27 28 29
		30

  

08/21 Teacher In-Service  
08/22 1/2 day Teacher In-Service  
08/23 First Day of Classes  
08/28 8:00 AM Open House 8:00 PM to 7:00 PM  
08/29 8:00 AM Open House 8:00 PM to 7:00 PM  
08/30 8:00 AM Open House 8:00 PM to 7:00 PM

09/04 No School - Labor Day

10/08 Act 80 Day - No School for Students

10/21 Early Dismissal - Home 11:15 AM High School 11:30 AM  
10/22 Parent-Teacher Conferences  
10/23 No School  
10/24 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM - High School 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM  
10/25 No School  
10/26 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM - High School 11:30 AM - 11:58 AM  
10/27 No School

11/08 Early Dismissal - Home 11:15 AM High School 11:30 AM  
11/09 - 11/28 No School

12/02 Early Dismissal - Home 11:15 AM High School 11:30 AM  
12/25 - 12/29 No School

01/01 - 01/02 No School  
01/15 Act 80 Day - No School for Students

02/15 No School - possible 1st weather make-up day  
02/19 No School

03/08 Act 80 Day - No School for Students  
03/28 No School - possible 2nd weather make-up day  
03/29 No School

04/01 No School - possible 3rd weather make-up day

05/24 Last Day of School

School begins/ends for students

Teacher In-Service or Act 80 Day

Early Dismissal

PSSA Testing Grades 3 - 8

School Closed-Possible Weather Make Up Day

School Closed

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Early Dismissal for Students

Keystone Testing

Make-up days will be utilized in this order:  
02/16, 03/28, 04/01

## DAILY SCHEDULE

JR/SR HIGH

- 7:45 Homeroom entry
- 7:55-8:08 Homeroom
- 7:56-8:08 Late
- 8:09 or after Unexcused
- 2:51 PM Announcements
- 2:56 PM Dismissal

A Lunch			B Lunch			C Lunch		
7:55	HR 1	14 Mins 52 Mins.	7:55	HR 1	14 Mins. 52 Mins.	7:55	HR 1	14 Mins. 52 Mins.
9:01			9:01			9:01		
9:04	2	52 Mins.	9:04	2	52 Mins.	9:04	2	52 Mins.
9:56			9:56			9:56		
9:59	3	52 Mins.	9:59	3	52 Mins.	9:59	3	52 Mins.
10:51			10:51			10:51		
10:54	A	30 Mins. Lunch	10:54	4	50 Mins.	10:54	4	50 Mins.
11:24			11:44			11:44		
11:27	4A	50 Mins.	11:47	B	30 Mins. Lunch	11:47	5	50 Mins.
12:17			12:17			12:37		
12:20	5	50 Mins.	12:20	5	50 Mins.	12:40	C	30 Mins. Lunch
1:10			1:10			1:10		
1:13	6	50 Mins.	1:13	6	50 Mins.	1:13	6	50 Mins.
2:03			2:03			2:03		
2:06	7	50 Mins.	2:06	7	50 Mins.	2:06	7	50 Mins.
2:56			2:56			2:56		

# ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

## ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

We recognize the importance of support for the individual student. We strive to provide diverse opportunities for learning which further prepares students with the foundation of education necessary in the ever-changing world and global economy.

Students must keep passing grades in both classroom and online courses and follow targeted online course pacing. Students can only continue online upon successful online course completion. Students who are not successful online **cannot take additional online courses**.

## ENROLLMENT PROCESS

1. Referral from parent, student, guidance, principal,
2. Administrative approval from Online Coordinator, Pupil Services Director, & Superintendent
3. Course advertisement to teachers
4. Course contract signatures student, parent, teacher, & coordinator
5. Course enrollments

## SUMMER COLLEGE

- Enrollment follows college add/drop time periods and requirements.
- Tuition is parent/guardian responsibility.
- Home Internet REQUIRED
- All work is completed from home.
- Payment made directly to college.

## SUMMER PROGRAM

- Student acceleration (students taking class for the first time)
- ½ credit section
- Students can work online 24 hours per day 7 days per week.
- Home Internet REQUIRED
- Students must BEGIN and COMPLETE mid-term/final tests proctored at school during scheduled sessions.
- Applications and payments must be received by shown deadlines. No late applications or payments accepted.
- Payment must be cash or money order.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

- student remediation (student did not pass class previously)
- 1/4 credit section
- 2-course limit
- Core classes/graduation requirement courses only
- Students must attend EVERY DAILY SESSION. Absence without medical excuse results in summer school dismissal - NO summer school grade earned. No refund.
- All work completed at school during daily sessions (with exceptions).
- Summer school grade averages with 3 highest marking period grades to calculate summer school grade entry in the historical record.
- Original failing course & grade remain in historical record/transcripts.
- No Extensions
- Students fulfill summer school requirements upon successful course completion.

- Applications and payments must be received by shown deadlines. No late applications or payments accepted.
- Payment must be cash or money order.

## INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

State Board of Education Regulations, Chapter 11, Section 11.2 School Day, defines instruction time for pupils as time in the school day devoted to instruction and instructional activities provided as an integral part of the school program under the direction of certified school employees. For the purpose of deciding if an activity, other than instruction of curriculum, conducted during school hours can be counted as instructional hours in lieu of ordinary instruction, please view the [Department website](#).

The Pennsylvania School Code requires all public schools to offer at least 180 days of instruction each year. Additionally, a minimum number of instructional hours are needed as shown below.

Grade Levels	Yearly Hours	Weekly Hours	Daily Hours
K-5	900	25 hours	5 hours
6-12	990	27 hours 30 Minutes	5 hours 30 minutes

For ACL purposes, a week is considered Monday 12:00 AM through Sunday 11:59 PM.

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

ACL must check student attendance following all applicable statutes and State Board of Education regulations. ACL staff check attendance daily. **Students are expected to take part in virtual sessions through Microsoft Teams each period every school day.** We follow the schedule as shown on Power School

Compliance with state attendance statutes and regulations is a student and parental responsibility. ACL is bound to keep a correct record of daily attendance. Attendance is reported by period every school day. Attendance is tracked through Power School. We recommend that parents check Power School for attendance information and send absence notes accordingly.

## ACADEMIC REFERENCES

### GRADE SCALE

A	92 - 100
B	84 - 91
C	75 - 83
D	65 - 74
F	Below 65
P	Pass
F	Fail
WP	Withdraw Pass
WF	Withdraw Fail

### COURSE CONTRACTS

All online courses require a signed course contract prior to course enrollment. Course contracts must be signed by the student, parent/guardian, teacher, and online coordinator. The course contract outlines course expectations and serves as the official schedule change document for Power School. Failure to return a signed course contract within 3-school days results in online course denial and the student must return to the traditional classroom.

## ACTIVITY TIME

Student Activity Time is a summary measure of the total time that students are actively engaged and making progress in their online courses. This does not include any work completed outside of the course platform such as: Audio/Video projects, studying for quiz or tests, writing assignments, projects, and research.

- a. **Grade K-5** - Students are expected to complete at least 375 minutes (about 6 and a half hours) per week of activity time, which equals 75 minutes/day 5 days/week.
  - Few students can remain “on pace” if they complete this minimum activity time standard.
  - Students have flexibility in their schedule and can work for longer periods on days and shorter periods on other days.
  - Students can work 7 days per week if they choose.
  - Students should devote the time needed to stay on pace in all courses.
  
- b. **Grade 6-12 Students**- Students are expected to complete at least 750 minutes (about 12 and a half hours) per week of activity time, which equals 150 minutes (about 2 and a half hours)/day 5 days/week.
  - Students should devote the time needed to stay on pace in all courses.
  - Few students can remain “on pace” if they complete this minimum activity time standard.
  - Most students must complete at least 1000 minutes (about 17 hours) or more each week to stay on pace.
  - Students taking more than 5 courses may need to complete 150-200 minutes (about 3 and a half hours/week in each course.
  - Students have flexibility in their schedule and can work for longer periods on some days and shorter periods on other days.
  - Students can work 7 days per week if they choose.

## PACING

- a. Students are expected to be “on pace” in all courses weekly, which means no more than 2 assignments behind pace.
- b. We understand students may fall slightly behind pace as they wait for teacher responses or complete course projects and other longer assignments.
- c. Ideally, a student on pace will complete their course(s) by the end date as scheduled in the course platform.
- d. When students are off pace by more than 5% or 5 assignments, students must report to the ACL classroom each day for the entire school day until all courses are back on pace.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS

Students will take part in scheduled weekly meetings to discuss progress. These meetings are offered both onsite and online via Microsoft Teams. Services offered may include academic review, tutorial support, technical support, face-to-face contact with staff, support connecting to online teachers via phone or live virtual sessions, and transition planning.

## COURSE ADD PERIODS

Online courses are scheduled in partial credit sessions; therefore, online courses can be added throughout the school year. We strive to limit changes to the very beginning of each marking period.



Online college courses are scheduled in semester sessions and are added during college add/drop periods. All college scheduling is processed through the ACL and must be approved by the Online Coordinator. The deadline for adding college courses follows the traditional college add periods in August (fall semester) and January (spring semester). Summer courses are added prior to the summer sessions in early May.

Onsite college courses are scheduled just as traditional high school courses. Students attending onsite are scheduling with the understanding they are choosing both a fall and spring semester course. Any onsite college student that does not wish to schedule both semesters will be expected to pick alternative courses to fill the vacancy in the traditional high school schedule. Onsite students must report grades in person weekly to ACL staff. Onsite students must meet with guidance 2 weeks before each semester course ends.

## COURSE DROP PERIODS

Online courses have a 3-calendar day trial period. During the trial period, students can drop the course, without the course and grade showing on the historical grade report and/or transcript.

Courses dropped after the trail period will be shown on the historical grade report and/or transcript with the final calculated grade including zeros for all incomplete assignments.

## COURSE EXTENSIONS

Original credit online courses have a 28-day minimum and 120-day maximum enrollment period. If students are unable to complete an online course in the allotted amount of time, an extension may be necessary to complete the course for credit. Students are strongly encouraged to keep course pacing and complete their course(s) in the required time to avoid this issue. Extensions reduce the amount of time available to take more courses and may reduce the total number of credits that can be earned in a given school year. **Extensions have an added fee that is the student and parent/guardian responsibility.**

## LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

ACL subcontracts online learning programs from multiple providers: Edmentum, Educere, Imagine Learning, Schools PLP. Provider list subject to change per board approval.

ACL has partnerships with local colleges, which supply college courses for students (at parent expense). Penn Highlands provides online and in-person college courses in MUAHS classrooms for students. Penn Highlands utilizes Brightspace for these college course opportunities. Juniata College provides on campus in-person college courses. Mount Aloysius provides in-person college courses in MUAHS classrooms.

## PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTNERSHIP

Parent/Guardian monitoring of student work is an especially vital role! It is recommended that parents have their students self-report on their progress daily by reviewing their online work with you. This places responsibility on the student to take ownership for completing their academic assignments and provides you with an opportunity to gain experience in how you can support them in keeping passing grades and completing their work on time. Minimally, parents should use their login and password to check student work weekly and contact the school if they have concerns. Power School will not supply detailed assignment grades; therefore, we encourage parents/guardians to view the online course gradebooks to verify individual assignment grades and work complete.

## COMMUNICATION

Email is our primary method of communication. Parents must keep an active email and phone number and report any changes to these items to the Online Coordinator. See [School Directory](#) for contact information.

We provide more methods to communicate with teachers and staff. Remind and Microsoft Teams are added options for communication. The Remind application is used to help with group communication to both students and parents. Please scan the QR code with your phone camera to join the ACL remind mobile phone application.



## DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION

The ACL is digitally based. Information is distributed to parents/guardians and students by the online learning academy through email. It is crucial for student success that a parent/guardian regularly check and respond to email communication. Keeping ACL informed of telephone and email changes for parents/guardians is vital in supporting the level of communication needed to ensure the success of ACL students. When you have changes to your contact information, please contact ACL Online Coordinator. Contact information is listed in the [School Directory](#).

## REPORT CARDS

Report cards are distributed at the end of each marking period. Current academic progress is available to parents/guardians 24/7 by student access to online course gradebooks. Additionally, ongoing course progress and grades are updated in Power School weekly.

## ACCEPTABLE USE

### MUASD NETWORK FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The ACL requires technology as an instructional tool to support and facilitate learning the creation of digital products, communication and collaboration, access to information, and research fluency. Student use of technology shall be consistent with MUASD and their chosen online learning academy and as support for instructional needs, learning styles, abilities, and developmental levels of students.

The MUASD Technology Usage Agreement will be shared with students and parents as part of the Junior and Senior High Handbooks. [An electronic copy of this agreement can be viewed on the MUASD website by clicking this link.](#)

### TEXTBOOKS, TECHNOLOGY AND SUPPLIES

Textbooks, technology, and school supplies are given to students at district expense. When issued to a student, the student is responsible for returning the same in kind at the end of the school year. If not returned, the student will be charged for the replacement cost. Please note the district does not accept personal checks for repayment of any debt owed. Please supply your payment in the form of cash or a money order to the proper building secretary.

#### **Equipment Repair/Replacement Costs**

- iPad Screen Replacement: \$50.00
- iPad Charger: \$40.00
- Lost Charger: \$35.00
- Keyboard replacement for laptops: \$25.00
- Damage to all student laptops including, but not limited to broken screens: \$75.00.
- Total device replacement in case of loss, water submersion, theft, etc.: \$500.00

## SCHOOL COUNSELOR SERVICES

The School Counselor can supply counseling services in academic, career planning, and personal-social development. Students may refer themselves for school counseling or by teachers, staff, or parents. The School Counselor follows ethical guidelines set up by the American School Counselors Association (ASCA). Counseling services are confidential. Refer a student or yourself to the School Counselor by calling the Guidance Office. See [School Directory](#) for contact information.

# TESTING

## COURSE TESTING

Course midterm and final tests must be proctored. This means that the tests must be completed at school with an approved instructor.

## STATE TESTING

During testing windows assigned by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, ACL students will take part in relevant testing. Location of testing will occur at the Junior High or Senior High School, respectively. Parents and students will receive notification of test date(s) and testing room location. Students can ride district transportation or parents/guardians can supply transportation to these sessions.

## SUCCESSFUL ONLINE LEARNERS

Two key advantages of online learning are flexibility and convenience: however, online learning is much more challenging than it may seem. First, make sure you're ready to succeed. Online learning can sound wonderful, and students may start with an unrealistic vision. The reality of online coursework is they need just as much, if not more, time and energy as traditional classroom courses. Online learning also requires specific computer skills and learning strategies necessary to succeed.

To see if you're ready, see how many of the following skills you have:

### 1. **Persistence**

This is perhaps the biggest key to success online. Successful students tolerate technical problems, seek help when needed, work every day in every class, and work through challenges.

### 2. **Effective Time Management**

You must manage your time. Our online classes are asynchronous (not taught in real time). This flexibility is one of the great benefits of online learning. It is also one of the greatest challenges to students that procrastinate, cannot stick to routine schedules, or cannot work independently. Effective time management skills must be learned.

- Review each course syllabus.
- Develop long-range plans.
- Prioritize assignments to complete each day but also begin longer assignments before their due date.

### 3. **Effective and Appropriate Communication Skills**

The ability to communicate is important when working online. Teachers are willing to help students, but they may not notice non-verbal cues from online students.

- **Use the tools provided by the school to communicate with your teachers.** We provide multiple methods to communicate with teachers and staff. Office 365 Outlook, Remind, Phone, Microsoft Teams are the main options for communication.
- **Use proper style and language for school.** When communicating with teachers and staff, you should write in full, grammatically correct sentences and with a respectful tone. Online teachers and staff are professionals; treat them with respect and courtesy.

### 4. **Basic Technical Skills**

Online learners need basic technical skills to succeed online.

- Ability to create new documents.
- Use word processing programs (Word)
- Navigate Internet

- Share online documents.
- Utilize legitimate web sources

## 5. Reading and Writing Skills

Reading and writing are the foundation for communication in online courses. You should be comfortable reading content online. Typing is another skill that is useful for online learners. All online courses require writing short and long answers.

## 6. Motivation and Independence

Successful online students want to succeed. Online learning requires discipline, independence, motivation, and responsibility.

- Think about your reason for attending school.
- Are you determined and motivated to succeed in school online?

## 7. A Good Study Environment

Another critical part of academic success online is a good study environment.

- **Find peace and quiet.** You will need a quiet place to work without distractions from things like television, family, and friends.
- **Avoid games.** Software cannot be downloaded on your computer, but online games can be a huge distraction.
- **Turn off ALL electronics.** Let friends and family know your school hours.
- **Beware surfing the Internet.** It is easy to lose track of time while paging through social media and other Internet sites.
- **Setup comfortable seating.** Adjust the height of your chair, keyboard, and screen so that you are comfortable. Forearms and thighs should be level and parallel to the floor. Wrists should not be bent while typing.
- **Set up good lighting.** The lighting in the room should be at least as bright as the computer screen to avoid eye strain.