

Riverside Leadership Academy Family & Scholar Handbook 2026 – 2027



Riverside Leadership Academy
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Welcome

Dear Scholars and Families,

Welcome to another exciting year at Riverside Leadership Academy! Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning for another year as part of our Pirate family, we are honored that you have chosen to partner with us in your scholar's educational journey.

As we reflect on our first two years as a school, we are incredibly proud of all that our scholars, families, and staff have accomplished together. What began as a vision for a different kind of educational experience has quickly grown into a thriving learning community. Our enrollment has continued to increase each year, allowing us to expand opportunities while remaining committed to knowing and supporting every scholar as an individual.

One exciting accomplishment has been the expansion of extracurricular opportunities through our partnership with the YMCA. This collaboration has allowed our scholars to participate in organized sports programs that promote teamwork, leadership, perseverance, and school pride.

Our arts programs have also flourished. From student performances and theatrical productions to our inaugural Art Night celebration, scholars have been given meaningful opportunities to showcase their creativity, talents, and hard work. These experiences not only build confidence but also encourage collaboration, communication, and self-expression.

At the heart of Riverside Leadership Academy remains our commitment to Project Based Learning (PBL). We believe scholars learn best when they are actively engaged in meaningful work that connects learning to the real world. Through authentic projects, scholars are encouraged to ask questions, solve problems, collaborate with peers, and take ownership of their learning. Our classrooms are designed to provide both challenge and support, fostering curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking.

In addition to strong academic instruction, we remain dedicated to developing the soft skills and leadership qualities that scholars need to thrive in college, careers, and life. Communication, collaboration, adaptability, responsibility, and problem-solving are intentionally woven into the learning experience. Through these opportunities, scholars build confidence and develop the skills necessary to become future leaders and productive citizens.

As we look ahead, our mission remains clear: to provide a rigorous, engaging, and supportive educational experience that prepares every scholar for success. We are grateful for the trust you place in us and look forward to partnering with you throughout the year.

Thank you for being part of the Riverside Leadership Academy family. Together, we will continue to learn, lead, and grow.

With Pirate Pride,

Siobhan Brewer
Executive Director
Riverside Leadership Academy

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

All that we do is based on the School's purpose and values as set forth below.

Mission Statement:

Through project based and leadership curriculums, Riverside Leadership Academy develops confident, community focused, future ready leaders. Scholars thrive from meaningful connections between families, school staff, and community members curated by involvement of all stakeholders.

Vision Statement:

Riverside Leadership Academy provides a holistic and innovative approach to the growth and development of our future leaders.

Core Values:

- To lead from where you are
- To empower courage and confidence
- To honor individuality
- To encourage curiosity, ambition, and initiative
- To promote a culture of approachability, open communication, and support

RLA Core Programs

Project-Based Learning

Our school will incorporate Project Based Learning (PBL) as our primary pedagogical method, ensuring that scholars consistently engage in real-life, meaningful projects in all grade levels. Our teachers will facilitate daily project-based learning (PBL) experiences for scholars to enhance scholars' curiosity, creativity, and collaborative skills, and to provide authentic opportunities for learning and growth. These experiences, when paired with traditional methods of teaching, will provide a well-rounded, comprehensive approach to learning.

Responsive Classroom

RLA will use Responsive Classroom as our primary approach to teaching, creating a safe, joyful, and engaging school community. We will include the six principles of this approach in all facets of our daily rhythms and routines.

These principles are as follows:

- Principle 1: Teaching social and emotional skills is as important as teaching academic content.

- Principle 2: How we teach is as important as what we teach.
- Principle 3: Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- Principle 4: How we work together as adults to create a safe, joyful, and inclusive school environment is as important as our individual contribution or competence.
- Principle 5: What we know and believe about our scholars—individually, culturally, developmentally—informs our expectations, reactions, and attitudes about those scholars.
- Principle 6: Partnering with families—knowing them and valuing their contributions—is as important as knowing the children we teach.

Expectations for the Responsive Classroom will be taught to staff through initial professional development and will be reviewed annually, will be taught to scholars through ongoing structured lessons and modeling, and will be posted throughout the building as visual reminders and cues for all.

The North Carolina Charter Act

In 1996, the State of North Carolina established the framework for public charter schools as a way to promote greater educational choice and innovation, from much state regulation applicable to traditional public schools. The state's Charter School Act is currently found in G.S. 115C, Art. 14A, and sets for its purpose as follows:

§ 115C-218. Purpose of charter schools

(a) Purpose of Charter Schools. - The purpose of this Article is to authorize a system of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools, as a method to accomplish all of the following:

- (1) Improve student learning;
- (2) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted;
- (3) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (4) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- (5) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and
- (6) Hold the schools established under this Article accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a

method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.

The School Board

Subject to the Charter Act, the School is operated by the Board of Directors of a private North Carolina non-profit corporation. The Board is responsible for overseeing the School's general operations, including its academic, governance, and financial integrity subject to all applicable laws and the School's state charter agreement. The Board establishes the mission, goals, and policies for the School and is ultimately accountable to the state.

The School Administration

The Board hires an Executive Director to implement and oversee the day-to-day operations of the School. While the Board sets policy and general guidance and oversight, the Executive Director and leadership team sees to the specific details and operational needs. Anytime you have a concern or suggestion, you are encouraged to speak directly with the school staff person responsible for that particular area of interest or concern, up to and including the Executive Director.

School Leadership Team

- **Executive Director: Siobhan Brewer**
- **Director of Upper Grades (5-8): Peyton Jenkins**
- **Director of Lower Grades (K-4): Annie Galban**
- **Dean of Students and School Safety: Kortlyn Templin**
- **School Counselor: Giselle Rykhus**
- **School Operations Coordinator: Brittany Runne**
- **Facilities and Transportation Coordinator: Jessie Blango**
- **EC Coordinator: Kimberly Kramer-Glanton**

Legal Compliance

Throughout this document, Riverside Leadership Academy is referred to as "The School." The School shall always strive to comply with all applicable federal, state, or local health and safety laws and regulations. The School's state-approved charter is like a contract; therefore, the School shall also operate consistent with all provisions in its charter.

Parent-Scholar Commitment and Expectations

A strong partnership between Parents and the School is essential. Parents and families support the School's mission and fulfill their primary role as teachers of their children when they respect and support School efforts and staff, promote the desire for and pursuit of learning, and model

ethical and relational integrity. Respect for and support of the School's mission requires the following commitments by every parent:

- To monitor and support School policies and procedures;
- To ensure prompt arrival to School and to promote their students' daily attendance to the maximum extent feasible;
- To nourish their students' physical and emotional health to promote learning;
- To help their students complete assignments and other academic demands and to communicate with staff as necessary to address particular needs;
- To be willing to volunteer and financially support the School's work as feasible;
- To cooperate with School staff in providing needed information or other support when reasonably requested; and
- To participate responsibly in classroom and School meetings and functions.

School Calendar

Every year, the School will publish a School calendar. The School calendar shall include the School year's beginning and ending dates, staff workdays, holidays, and annual leave days. The academic calendar will consist of at least 1025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months per year G.S. 115C-84.2 (a) (1).

Riverside Leadership Academy 2026-2027 Calendar School Day: 7:50 am - 3:10 pm

July							August							September							October						
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November							December							January							February						
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March							April							May							June						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	25	26	27	28	29	30		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30			
28	29	30	31											30	31												

First Day of School – August 12

Last Day of School (Early Release) – May 21

Quarter 1 – Aug. 12 – Oct. 16 (Report Cards: Oct. 26) 42.5

Quarter 2 – Oct. 20 – Jan. 8 (Report Cards: Jan. 19) 38.5

Quarter 3 – Jan. 12 – Mar. 12 (Report Cards: March 22) 39

Quarter 4 – March 22 – May 21 (Report Cards: May 21) 39

Building open for teachers Required Teacher Workdays
Student-Led Conference Mental Health Day
Holiday/No School PD Day - Early Release at 12:00pm

Required Instructional Hours: 1025 RLA Instructional Hours: 1086

Admission, Enrollment, and Placement

The following provisions describe the School's basic admission and enrollment practices.

Eligibility for Admission

As required by state law (G.S. 115C-218.45(a)), any child who qualifies for admission to a North Carolina public school is also eligible for admission to the School. Admission will not be determined according to the school attendance area in which a student resides.

2.002 ADMISSIONS, WEIGHTED LOTTERY, AND ENROLLMENT POLICY

Riverside Leadership Academy is a nonprofit, tuition-free charter school authorized by the state of North Carolina. As a charter school, Riverside Leadership Academy will be open to all students who would otherwise qualify for enrollment in North Carolina Public Schools. The school will not discriminate against any student on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry.

Riverside Leadership Academy will open enrollment on January 01 of each year. The open enrollment period will end on February 28 of each year. The lottery date, time and location will be published on the school's website by January 15th of each year.

No criteria for admission will be used except the completed application. The application will be available and completed via our website. A paper application will be available upon request.

If the number of applications exceeds the number of available spaces, a lottery will be held to fill vacant seats for the next school year. After seats are filled, the drawing will continue to determine the order of a waiting list. Current year waiting lists dissolve when the next enrollment period begins.

I. Grade Level for the Lottery Application

Parents/guardians will be asked to confirm both their student's current grade as well as the grade for the coming year. Parents/guardians wishing to have their student considered for retention must still submit their student for the subsequent grade level; if admitted, the student will be evaluated by the Executive Director and student's teacher before a retention decision is made. If an admitted student's retention decision was made after the student's name was drawn for enrollment in a specific grade level, the Executive Director reserves the right to withdraw or uphold acceptance.

II. Returning Students

Once enrolled, students are not required to enroll during subsequent enrollment periods. In late winter or early spring, parents/guardians will be asked to sign a letter of intent for the coming year to allow the school to plan appropriately for the lottery.

III. Enrollment Priority

Riverside Leadership Academy will follow all rules and regulations regarding enrollment priority as specified required by applicable North Carolina law.

Riverside Leadership Academy may give enrollment priority under the following circumstances as stated in G.S. 115C-238.29F(g). The priorities shall be executed in the following order as space permits in each grade:

- A. Children of Riverside Leadership Academy's current Board members and full time employees are admitted before the public lottery, regardless of impact on the enrollment cap for those grade levels in which they are admitted. Students given this priority must not exceed 15% of RLA's total school enrollment.
- B. Siblings of currently enrolled students who were admitted to the charter school in a previous year. For the purposes of this section, the term "siblings" includes any of the following who reside in the same household: half siblings, step siblings, and children residing in a family foster home.
- C. If siblings apply for admission to Riverside Leadership Academy and a lottery is needed, Riverside Leadership Academy will allow the family to enter one surname into the lottery to represent all of the siblings applying at the same time. If that surname of the siblings is selected, then all of the siblings shall be admitted to the extent that space is available and does not exceed the grade level capacity.
- D. Students who were enrolled at Riverside Leadership Academy within the previous two school years, but left the school to participate in an academic study abroad program, to participate in a competitive admission residential program, or due to the vocational opportunities of the student's parent(s), may receive enrollment priority upon reapplication.
 - a. For the purposes of this priority, "vocational opportunities of the student's parent(s)" include relocation related to military service, including students who leave and later return as a result of a parent's military orders.

IV. Riverside Leadership Academy Weighted Lottery Policy

Riverside Leadership Academy will use a ***weighted lottery for economically disadvantaged students by weighting a student's individual chances in the general lottery***. Applicants can voluntarily identify as

economically disadvantaged when applying for the weighted lottery. Only students who meet the criteria of being economically disadvantaged are eligible for the weighted lottery. The additional “weight” for economically disadvantaged students will be calculated each year to maximize the probability that 30% of the students enrolled at Riverside Leadership Academy will be economically disadvantaged. Riverside Leadership Academy will continue to use a weighted lottery and the 22% EDS target for students admitted through the lottery until 30% of the students enrolled at the school are identified as economically disadvantaged.

Riverside Leadership Academy will assess eligibility for the weighted lottery by using an optional form for economically disadvantaged status. The form will be clearly labeled as optional and will state that ***“No specific information from your weighted lottery application will be obtained beyond eligibility status, and the information will not be retained”***, in addition to stating that **the family gives consent for the school to verify their economically disadvantaged status**. For economically disadvantaged students, Riverside Leadership Academy will verify the status by using household income and/or free and reduced lunch eligibility. The verification will not take place until a student has been enrolled through selection in the weighted lottery.

If a family is selected for enrollment through a weighted lottery, they must provide supporting documentation of eligibility during Riverside Leadership Academy’s regular enrollment process. If a family is unable to provide the supporting documentation necessary to qualify for the weighted lottery, Riverside Leadership Academy will contact the family to offer assistance in the process. However, if the family is still unable to provide the documentation, the applicant will be returned to the general waiting list.

V. Multiple Birth Siblings

If multiple birth siblings apply to the school, their surname will be entered once to represent all of the multiple birth siblings. If the multiple birth siblings are pulled in the lottery when there is still at least one spot remaining in their grade level, all multiple birth siblings shall be admitted. If their application is pulled after the spots are all filled, they will be added to the wait list in the order they are listed on their application.

VI. Other Siblings

After year one, prior to the general enrollment lottery, the school will conduct a sibling lottery of the students admitted in the prior year if more siblings have applied than there are available spots. If there are more siblings that have applied than there are spots available, a grade level wait list will be started and students not receiving spots will be added to the wait list in the order in which they are pulled.

Once the sibling lottery has been completed (if needed) the general lottery will begin. Riverside Leadership Academy will place all applications received during the open enrollment period into one school wide lottery.

VII. Lottery Results

Riverside Leadership Academy's Board of Directors will hire a third-party firm to administer the public lottery to ensure transparency in the lottery process.

The school will post the results of the lottery on the website within 5 business days of the lottery. If a student has been admitted to the school, the parent/guardian of the student will be contacted via email unless they indicated on their application that they did not have access to email. If the parent/guardian is unable to receive email, an acceptance letter will be mailed to the child's residence.

VIII. Enrollment

Applicants drawn during the application process must accept or decline admission to Riverside Leadership Academy **within 5 business days and complete registration within 10 business days**. Should a parent/guardian decline the enrollment offer or fail to respond before the deadline, the school may offer admission to the next name on that specific grade's waiting list. Applicants who are accepted off the waitlist have 48 hours from notification to accept or decline admission and 5 business days to complete registration. If enrollment is declined and a parent/guardian later decides they would like to enroll their student after all, the parent/guardian must submit a new application and the student will be placed on the waitlist in the next available spot.

As spots at the school become available, the parent/guardian of the student will be contacted via email. If the parent/guardian does not have access to email and has specified that on their application, the school will mail a letter of acceptance to the child's residence.

IX. School's Right to Refuse Enrollment

Riverside Leadership Academy reserves the right to refuse to enroll any student currently under a term of expulsion or suspension by his or her school until that term is over.

Riverside Leadership Academy reserves the right to refuse to enroll a student if a parent/guardian willingly and knowingly provided incorrect information on the enrollment application.

If a student has accepted enrollment at the school, but does not attend in the first 2 days of school, the school will make reasonable attempts to contact the parents/guardians. If there is no response from the parents/guardians by the 3rd day of school, the school reserves the right to remove the student from their enrollment roster and offer the next student on the waitlist the spot.

X. Handling of Errors

a. School Errors

If the school or the 3rd Party contractor makes an error in the lottery, such as leaving a student out, the entire lottery for the affected grade level(s) will need to be redrawn.

If a mistake is made by an applicant resulting in the applicant not being placed at the appropriate grade level in the lottery, the applicant will not be admitted and may submit a corrected application, which will be subject to the process followed for students applying after the enrollment period.

If too many students are included in the lottery at a grade level or if a student's name were to be duplicated in the lottery at a grade level, the student(s) who should not have been included (or the duplicate with the lower priority placement number, as applicable) will be removed, and any applicants with placement numbers behind the applicants who were removed will be advanced in order on the list.

b. Parent/Guardian Errors

If a student name is duplicated in the lottery and the school administration determines that the student was intentionally registered more than one time, the student will be assigned the lowest priority placement number assigned to the student in the lottery.

If an applicant has been incorrectly placed in a grade because a parent/guardian wishes to have their student retained, the applicant will not be admitted and may submit a corrected application, which will be subject to the process followed for students applying after the enrollment period.

Open Applications

The School will hold an annual open application period lasting a minimum of 30 days.

The School will accept applications online while providing direct assistance to anyone who requests it. The School's online platform will automatically send an email to successful applicants once an offered seat is accepted.

Placement

The School reserves the right to place students in grade levels determined by competency tests and other reasonable measures, regardless of the student's grade level at a previous School.

Withdrawal

Parents choosing to withdraw a student from the School should contact the School's office and follow related School procedures. Students will not be released from the School until they are enrolled in another school and a records request has been received.

Change of Contact Information

When moving to a new address or when getting a new phone number or email address, parents are asked to inform the school to ensure that updated information is readily available. Parents or guardians can update their contact information through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal.

Transportation and Attendance

Transportation

By state law, the School may, if it chooses, provide transportation for its students. Regardless, the School shall develop and maintain a transportation plan so that transportation is not a barrier to any student who resides in the local school administrative unit where the School is located.

Transportation Changes

In addition to a phone call to the front office, parents or guardians are required to send in a written note with their child or communicate via email or Class Dojo if there is to be a change in their mode of transportation home for that day. Without written documentation, the scholar may be sent home by their regular mode of transportation. Written documentation should include the following information:

- Student's full name
- Student's grade and teacher
- Date the change is occurring
- Mode of transportation that will be used that day (from _____ to _____). Please note that only scholars assigned to a bus route can ride a bus, due to limited seating.

Any transportation changes must be made by 2:15 pm on the day of the change. Notification must be communicated with a phone call to the office and written notice to the teacher or main office.

RLA School Hours

The 2026-2027 school day begins at 7:50 am and ends at 3:10 pm. The main office hours are 7:15 am to 3:30 pm.

Scholars should arrive at school between 7:00-7:45 am to ensure that they are in class before they are marked tardy (after 7:50 am). Scholars who are arriving by car will be dropped off in the designated "carpool" area, where they will be greeted by staff and escorted into the building as needed. Scholars are expected to come into the building in an orderly manner and walk to class so that they can begin their day. Kindergarten parents will be allowed to park and walk their children into class for the first day of

school only. After their first day, scholars will be expected to begin dropping off their children in the carpool line.

Carpool Procedures

Carpool will begin at 7:00 am each morning. Families should pull into the right hand side of the carpool lane, forming lane 1, where they will wait until they come to a designated cone with an adult to drop off their child. If lane one becomes full, cars will be instructed to pull into the left hand side of lane 1, forming a second line. Families should ensure that scholars are ready to exit the vehicle as soon as they get to the cone, with all materials ready to go. Unless there are extenuating circumstances that have already been arranged with the front office staff, family members should not get out of their car during carpool to assist scholars. Once cars have dropped off their scholars, they should exit the property and follow the direction of school personnel.

The carpool line will close at 7:45 am. After this time, scholars must be dropped off by parking in the parking lot, not the carpool line.

After 7:50 am, scholars MUST be checked in by an adult.

Scholars who ride the bus in the mornings will enter the school through the designated “bus” area and will walk to class as well. Staff members and scholars who are assigned to “safety patrol” will be positioned throughout the school to help younger scholars as needed.

In the afternoons, **parents may begin lining up for carpool at 2:30 pm.** No cars will be allowed to line up prior to this time. Names will be called immediately after buses and vans have departed for their routes. Families will line up as they did in the morning, lining up in lane 1 (all the way to the right of the carpool lane). Families will receive carpool tags for their children the first week of school. These should be displayed on rearview mirrors so that the teacher calling scholars for carpool will be able to see which children to call. **Cars should move up as far as they can in the carpool line and ensure that scholars only enter their car when the car is completely stopped at a cone.** Cars should exit the property promptly and follow the direction of school personnel.

The afternoon carpool will end at 3:30 pm, promptly. After this time, parents can park and pick up their scholars from the front office until 3:40 pm. After 3:40 pm, scholars will be sent to afterschool care. Parents consistently late for pickup may be charged an afterschool care fee after 3:40 pm.

Bus Safety and Procedures

Riverside Leadership Academy offers bus transportation based on need followed by a first-come, first served basis. We utilize community bus stops by partnering with local businesses to pick up and drop off scholars in their parking lots.

Families should arrive at community bus stops a minimum of five minutes prior to the scheduled departure/drop-off time. Given the large area our school serves, buses may arrive up to 15 minutes after the scheduled departure/drop-off time, depending on traffic. Buses will not leave community stops prior to their designated departure time.

In the morning, when the bus arrives at community stops, parents/guardians should wait until the bus is at a complete stop and the doors are open before sending their scholars to board the bus. Younger scholars should be escorted to the bus, as parking lots are public spaces, and Riverside Leadership Academy is not responsible for other drivers in those spaces.

In the afternoon, parents/guardians, or their designee, should take the scholar's car tag to the bus to pick them up from the bus. This practice ensures that scholars are going home with the proper adult each day. If an adult is not present to pick up their scholar in the afternoon, the scholar will be transported back to campus, and an after school supervision fee may be charged. Repeated instances may result in loss of bus privilege.

Bus transportation is a privilege. To maintain this privilege, scholars should remain safe and orderly throughout the bus route, following all bus driver instructions. The privilege to ride the bus can be revoked at any time due to safety concerns.

Attendance

2.013 RIVERSIDE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

I. Attendance

All students must be fully enrolled and should attend school regularly. Riverside Leadership Academy does not accept partial enrollment. Regular attendance ensures that students master the curriculum. Riverside Leadership Academy will make every effort to protect instructional time from interruption and requests that, whenever possible, parents/guardians schedule appointments (doctor, dentist) after school hours. For record keeping purposes, a student is marked absent when he or she misses half of the school day.

II. Excused Absences (all absences not listed below are unexcused)

- **Illness or injury:** When the absence results from illness or injury, which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school. The Executive Director or designee may require an official note from a physician.
- **Quarantine:** When isolation of the student is ordered by the local health officer or by the State Board of Health.
- **Death in the family:** When the absence results from the death of a member of the family of the student.
- **Medical or dental appointments:** When the absence results from a medical or dental appointment of a student.
 - *A written excuse is required and should be presented with a doctor's signature or stamp.*
- **Court or administrative proceedings:** When the student is a party to or is under subpoena as a witness in the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal.
- **Religious observances:** When the student or the student's parent/guardian adheres to a religion whose tenets require, or suggest the observance of a religious event.
 - *The parent/guardian must seek prior approval of the Executive Director for such absences.*
 - *The approval should be granted unless the religious observance or the cumulative effect of religious observances is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the student.*

- **Educational opportunity:** When the student obtains the Executive Director's prior approval of a valid education opportunity, such as travel or participation in a community event.

III. **Unexcused/Unlawful Absences and Tardies**

An unexcused/unlawful absence/tardy, with or without parental permission, is one that does not fall under one of the excused absence categories. Examples include, but are not limited to, oversleeping, hair/beauty appointments, car trouble, shopping, picking up food, traffic, DMV, etc.

IV. **Procedures for Notifying Riverside Leadership Academy about Absences**

In order for absences to be excused, they must be document, lawful, and meet one of the following criteria:

- Be submitted **on the day of the absence**, in writing, by the parent/guardian to a member of the Riverside Leadership Academy staff (teacher or administrator) stating the reason for absence.
 - *This can include an email, doctor's note, or written note from the parent/guardian.*
- If documentation is not submitted on the day of the absence, it must be submitted, in writing, to a member of the Riverside Leadership Academy staff (teacher or administrator) ***within three days of returning to school.***

If Riverside Leadership Academy does not receive the explanatory note within three days, the absence will be marked ***unexcused.***

V. **Make-Up Work for Absences**

Students are responsible for, and permitted to, make up all work missed during absences. All work must be made up within **3 school days** of returning to school, unless the teacher or an administrator determines that extenuating circumstances would support an extension of time. Generally, no homework assignments will be given out prior to a student's pre-planned absence (i.e. trips). Students who are absent due to a suspension from school will be provided an opportunity to complete work and take any tests that were missed.

For students in grades K-5, the teacher will work with the student and the parent/guardian to make up missed assignments, quizzes and tests within the specified time period. At the middle and high school level, the student is responsible for finding out which assignments, quizzes, and tests were missed and completing them within the specified time period.

Any student with 20 or more absences in one or more classes during a school year is subject to failure of the grade. For high school level coursework, any student with 10 or more absences in any semester long class is subject to failure of that class.

If the Executive Director determines that retention or failure of a high school course is necessary based on attendance, the parent/guardian and student will be notified in writing. The parent/guardian or student shall have ten (10) school days from the date of receipt of such notification to appeal the Executive Director's decision pursuant to the School/Parent Grievance Procedure.

VI. Truancy (recurrent unexcused absences)

If a student is truant, the first step will be a conference with the parents/guardians. Should this prove unsatisfactory, next steps include possible notification of appropriate legal authorities and/or possible recommendation for long-term suspension or expulsion. Students absent more than 20 days may not be promoted and must meet with the Executive Director to determine next steps, which could result in expulsion.

VII. Tardiness & Late Pick-up

Tardiness interrupts instruction for the entire class. Students who are tardy must go to the office to sign in. Excused tardies are student illness, medical or dental appointments, and death/illness in the family. An explanatory note should be provided for a tardy to be excused. This includes documentation such as email, doctor's note, or written note from the parent/guardian. All other tardies or tardies with no valid documentation are unexcused.

Students must be supervised at all times while on campus. Parents/guardians who arrive after the carline has ended infringe on the time of the classroom teacher or Riverside Leadership Academy staff who must change their afternoon schedule to accommodate. Though emergency late pick-ups are understandable, routinely picking up students late will receive the same consequences as tardies.

The table below outlines the consequences for cumulative absences, tardies or late pick-ups.

Number of Occurrence(s)	Action to be Taken
Upon 3 Unexcused Absences	Letter home to parent/guardian and phone call from school counselor at third unexcused absence.
Upon 6 Unexcused Absences	Letter home to parent/guardian and scholar. Late pick-up may need to have a conference with an administrator.
Upon 10 Unexcused Absences	Required conference with an Administrator and the School Counselor.
Upon 20 Unexcused Absences	Required meeting with Executive Director and Attendance Committee.

VIII. Releasing Students from School

Parents/guardians and individuals listed on the student's approved pick-up list are the only people allowed to take a student from school. Prior arrangements, however, may allow for other adults to pick up a student. If a parent/guardian would like their child to be released to an adult who is not on their

approved pick-up list, the request must be provided in writing to Riverside Leadership Academy's administration prior to school dismissal. Riverside Leadership Academy's staff will not release a child to anyone other than the student's parent/guardian or an individual on the student's approved pick-up list without written documentation from the student's parent/guardian.

IX. Discipline for Attendance

Rewards and penalties in the form of grades shall not be used as attendance incentives. Riverside Leadership Academy can develop attendance incentives that do not involve grades to encourage attendance. Riverside Leadership Academy's administration does reserve the right to apply consequences for students who knowingly "skip" classes or leave campus without permission. This shall be considered a behavioral issue and disciplinary action shall be administered according to policy 5.004 Scholar Code of Conduct.

X. Minimum Attendance Requirement

A student who is not present for at least half the school day is absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused. A student who is not present for at least half a class period (middle & high school) is absent from that class, whether the absence is excused or unexcused. Absences resulting from participation in school-sponsored activities will not count against the minimum attendance requirement. This policy does not limit a teacher or Executive Director from imposing disciplinary sanctions for students who miss portions of the school day or a class without excuse.

XI. Partial Attendance for Extracurricular and Special Event Participation

Students must be present at school for at least half of the school day in order to participate in any extracurricular activities and/or special events.

XII. Providing Support to Students with Excessive Absences

The Executive Director and school staff shall take appropriate action to help prevent excessive absences and provide counseling for students with a history of excessive absences. A student's parent/guardian must be notified of excessive absences, and the teacher and counselor shall work with the student and family to analyze the causes and determine steps to eliminate the problem. The Executive Director shall designate a school employee to assist parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and counselors with chronic cases of absenteeism. By law, excessive absences, truancy, must be reported to the appropriate authorities after attempts have been made to meet with the family and assist with attendance issues as the School is able.

Early Checkout

Ensuring your child's presence throughout the school day is crucial to maintaining uninterrupted learning. Whenever possible, please schedule appointments outside of school hours. In cases where this is not feasible, early check-out may be necessary. For early check-outs, **please ensure that your child is checked out by 2:30 PM to minimize disruption to our dismissal process.** Parents arriving after this time will need to join the carpool line for pick-up. Early check-outs require signing out by a parent/guardian or

a previously approved adult. Scholars will only be dismissed once a parent or approved adult is physically present in the building for pick-up.

Parents checking out their scholars early will wait for their scholars in the reception area in the front of the school. Valid photo identification is required to check scholars out of school.

School Meals

For the 2026-2027 school year, RLA will offer school lunches to be purchased through Infinite Campus. We will work with local restaurants to offer varying menus throughout the week. These restaurants will offer a la carte items that range from between 6-7 dollars. Families must order for the entire week, and ordering closes the Wednesday prior to the week ordering for. Meals will be delivered to the school individually packaged and labeled by local restaurants. Our lunch team will sort and distribute lunches.

We LOVE parent volunteers to assist with lunch delivery!

Riverside Leadership Academy will offer a free- and reduced-lunch program for qualifying scholars. This income-based program is a credit program and will ensure that scholars from low socioeconomic households have access to hot meal options daily. Families who qualify for free and reduced lunch will be required to provide proper documentation of family income and household size within the first week of school. Those who do qualify will receive a credit of \$6.00 per day in Infinite campus. One lunch per scholar should be ordered daily. **Any ordering over the credit provided by the school will be the parent's responsibility to pay for.**

2.020 Personal Wireless Communication Devices/Personal Belongings Policy

Purpose and Background

Riverside Leadership Academy (RLA) is committed to preparing students for academic achievement and responsible digital citizenship. In support of **North Carolina House Bill 959 (S.L. 2025-38)**, which requires all public schools to establish clear procedures limiting student use of wireless communication devices to minimize disruption, this policy seeks to:

- Maintain a focused and safe learning environment.
- Help students build healthy habits around technology.
- Teach responsibility and accountability in personal device use.

Definition

A **Wireless Communication Device (WCD)** includes, without limitation:

- Cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, laptops, gaming devices, paging devices, two-way radios.
- Headphones, earbuds, and any device capable of wireless communication.

General Restrictions

- **K–3 Students:** Students in kindergarten through third grade may not possess a personal WCD on campus.
- **Grades 4–8 Students:** Students may possess a WCD only if it remains powered off and stored in backpacks, lockers, or a designated area as directed by the classroom teacher.
-

Scope of Restriction: WCDs may not be used during instructional time, transitions, lunch, or recess unless expressly authorized under the exceptions below.

Exceptions

Use of a WCD during the school day may be permitted only when:

1. **Educational Use** – A teacher authorizes device use for instructional purposes in alignment with approved parameters. Please refer to Board Policy No. 2.014 for Acceptable Use of the Internet.
2. **Emergency Use** – A teacher or administrator authorizes device use in the event of an emergency.
3. **IEP/504 Requirement** – Device use is specified in the student’s individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.
4. **Medical Use** – Device use is required to monitor or manage a documented health condition.

Accountability & Disciplinary Measures

Offense	Action Taken	Consequence	Parent Notification
First	Device remains with the student, provided the student puts it away.	Warning Issued	None
Second	Device given to teacher for remainder of class period.	Second Warning	Parent notified by teacher/ Student picks up device at end of class
Third	Device given to the office for the remainder of the day.	Office Referral	Parent notified by administration/ Parent picks up device
Fourth	Device given to the office for the remainder of the day.	1 day out-of-school suspension	Parent conference required/ Parent picks up device

Students who do not comply with the required action and refuse to surrender the device will receive an automatic 1-day out-of-school suspension. Repeat offenses may result in extended suspensions, loss of privilege to bring devices on campus, or other administrative action.

Personal Belongings

- Students are responsible for securing their personal belongings, including WCDs.
- RLA is **not liable** for lost, stolen, or damaged devices.
- Parents/guardians who allow students to bring personal belongings and/or devices must sign an acknowledgment that:
 - RLA is not responsible for securing or replacing personal belongings.
 - Students who fail to follow this policy may lose the privilege to possess devices on campus.

Administrative Discretion

School administration retains reasonable discretion in applying this policy based on the unique circumstances of each situation.

Academics and Instruction

The School's academic program is designed to foster an excellent learning environment that meets and exceeds student performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education, consistent with the constitutional right to receive the opportunity for a sound basic education.

Instructional Material Selection

The School strives to select the most suitable instructional materials for each grade level based on various factors, including academic content, cost, student maturity level, and relation of the materials to the School's overall mission and grade-level objectives. The School's administration exercises its discretion, subject to Board supervision, in curricular decisions about grade-level goals, content, and delivery.

Testing

The School will conduct standardized testing and provide remediation and intervention for students who do not score at the required levels. A testing coordinator will monitor compliance with this policy.

Parents Requesting to Review Curriculum Selection

If a parent objects to the use of specific instructional materials, the parent may file a written request with the Grade Level Director briefly stating the nature of the objection(s) and/or

requesting that the material not be made available to the parent's child. The School may establish a Review Committee to address all such requests. The following steps apply to a parent request for review:

1. The Parent must file all objections in writing.
2. The Review Committee will review the challenged material. This review may involve any of the following:
 - examining the request and pertinent material;
 - checking the material's general acceptance by reading reviews and consulting recommended lists;
 - considering any explanation contained in the request form;
 - determining the extent to which the material supports the curriculum; and
 - considering the material's other relevant information and attributes, including its overall quality, uniqueness, creativity, authorship, publisher, publication date, and appropriateness for the age group concerned.
3. The Review Committee will make a decision regarding the material and prepare a written recommendation to the Director.
4. The Director may approve, modify, or overrule the Review Committee's recommendation.
5. Pending the review process's outcome, a Parent may request of the Director that the material not be used by the Parent's child pending a final determination. Such a request may be granted at the Director's discretion.
6. Should the Parent disagree with the Director's decision, they can follow the grievance policy and escalate to the Executive Director.

Report Cards

Teachers shall keep parents/guardians informed of scholar progress at school. Each family will receive a report card for their scholar at the end of each grading period. The report may also include teacher comments. In addition to the report card that is sent home, additional information may need to be sent to the parent/guardian or individual conferences may need to be scheduled.

Kindergarten - Fourth Grade: scholars will receive a Standards-Based Report Card. Please see the Riverside Leadership Academy Grading Policy for more information regarding the Standards Based Report Card.

Fifth Grade - Eighth Grade: The report card will include each scholar's grade in all of the courses they are enrolled in based on the 10-point grading scale.

Report cards shall include the number of days absent and the number of days tardy.

Each scholar receiving exceptional children's services will receive an assessment of the scholar's progress toward goals on the scholar's Individual Education Plan (IEP) at the end of each grading period, including whether the scholar is likely to reach IEP goals by the end of the school year. The scholar's IEP shall state how the scholar's parent/guardian will receive this assessment.

Progress Reports

Parental/Guardian communication of scholar progress is essential in providing quality instruction. Teachers will communicate each scholar's progress and identify areas of concern. All parents/guardians will receive communication regarding the progress of each scholar between report cards, regardless of the level of progress.

Interim Progress Reports Schedule

Interim progress reports shall be distributed to each scholar according to a schedule determined by Riverside Leadership Academy's administration.

Homework Expectations

Homework will be given at times, though it should be a minimal amount and shall be used solely to enhance the classroom learning experience and connect families to scholars' learning. Research supports additional practice whenever this practice is brief, has clear purpose, and is relevant to the scholar's individual educational needs. Teachers should also be considerate of families' schedules outside of school hours, allowing for parents to work with their children on assignments when their schedules allow.

In lower grades (K-4), homework may include daily reading (may be recorded on a nightly log), brief practice of math skills, or completion of incomplete class assignments. At times, scholars may be asked to complete activities as an extension to class projects.

In upper grades (5-8), homework may be assigned at the teacher's discretion, but must adhere to the school's overall philosophy, assigned as a brief, relevant practice with clear purpose. Most homework assignments should be carryover work that needs to be completed from the school day. Some teachers may utilize a flipped classroom approach, where scholars are to watch lessons at home and prepare for class with questions, to allow for more time to work in the classroom on the content and have more autonomy in their learning.

Major projects should be completed mostly in school, but may require some work outside of class. This occurrence should be an exception.

Grading System

2.009 GRADING SYSTEM

The policy of the Board of Directors is to strive for a consistent and just evaluation of each student at Riverside Leadership Academy. To ensure the effectiveness of this policy, the Board of Directors endorses the following beliefs and best practices:

- I. Student grades should reflect academic achievement
- II. While attendance and behavior may influence a student's learning, they should be reported separately, and not a factor in the student's grade
- III. Teachers should compare each student's performance against pre-set standards, not against the performance of other students.

- IV. For missing work, teachers should provide reasonable opportunities to complete make-up assignment(s) in order to demonstrate the targeted learning
- V. Teachers should provide students and their parents/guardians with a clear explanation of their grading practices including the weighting of formative and summative assessments and rubrics as appropriate.
- VI. All assessments and assignments, including teacher-made tests should be designed to assess student achievement accurately and aligned with the [North Carolina Essential Standards](#) and the Riverside Leadership Academy Charter.

I. Grading Scale

Kindergarten – Fourth Grade students will not receive traditional letter grades on their report cards. However, they will receive a Standards Based Report Card. A Standards Based approach allows parents and students to understand Riverside Leadership Academy's educational program as well as strategies to support student success. Traditional grades often measure many different factors - how well students do in comparison to their classmates and/or how well behaved they are in class. Standards based evaluations measure how well an individual student is doing in relation to grade level standards and skills, not the work of other students. Teachers use the results of the on-going assessments to determine a student's present level of performance and relation to the mastery of grade level content. The report cards will provide meaningful and relevant information, detailing each student's social/emotional and academic development.

In a Standard Based Report Card, grades reflect four levels of performance. They are:

- 4 – Exceeds grade level expectations with consistency and accuracy;
- 3 – Meets grade level expectations with consistency and accuracy;
- 2 – Making progress/developing- indicates the student is approaching and occasionally meets the standards for the current grade level; and
- 1 – Concern - indicates the student has not yet met minimum level standards.

Fifth - Eighth Grade Letter and/or numerical grades will be given; the grading scale shall be as follows:

- A = 90-100 Excellent
- B = 80-89 Above Average
- C = 70-79 Average
- D = 60-69 Proficient
- F = 0-59 Not Proficient

II. Grading Parameters

Students earn grades based on material outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards. Students' grades will reflect their actual performance in the course. Percentage grades will be used on report cards, cumulative folders, and transcripts.

The following grading parameters are in place for the 2026-2027 school year and will be followed by all Riverside Leadership Academy's applicable grade levels:

- c. **Make-up Work** – When a student is absent, the student has 3 school days to turn in missed work upon returning to school. The day the student returns to school is Day 1 of the 3 days.
- d. **Late Work** – Teachers shall have autonomy to develop a late work policy within their grade level teams. Before each school year the grade level teams will determine their late work policy and communicate it to their student's parents/guardians. When determining their policy, teachers shall consider how the policy effectively helps them assess student comprehension of the curriculum and not student behaviors. Riverside Leadership Academy's administration must approve any late work policy before it is implemented.
- e. RLA teachers will use the following grading categories school-wide for grades 6-12: Coursework, Projects, Assessments, and Work Ethic. Each category will be weighted, and the weights for these grading categories will be uniform school wide. Teachers will have autonomy when determining how assignments in their class will be categorized.
- f. When completing team/group assignments, students shall not be penalized for the incomplete work of others. In some situations, the student could receive a group grade and an individual grade. Teachers will determine whether they assign a group and individual grade.
- g. The final grade may include tests, quizzes, projects, group/team work, labs, research papers, homework, class participation, classwork, etc.

Promotion and Retention

2.003 STUDENT PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Riverside Leadership Academy's Executive Director has the authority to promote and to retain students based upon the standards set by the Board of Directors and by the State Board of Education. Students are required to meet promotion standards that include demonstrated grade level proficiency on local assessments, standardized tests, report cards, and student work. In order to be promoted to the next grade level, students in all grades should be proficient in reading and mathematics, which may be demonstrated through North Carolina End-of-Grade tests, school assessments, student portfolio of work,

and report card grades. A promotion decision should not be made solely on the basis of a state assessment.

The Executive Director shall consider the following criteria when making decisions regarding student promotions:

- Passing final grades in core academic classes
- Satisfactory performance on PBL project content and presentations
- Satisfactory classroom performance on all teacher-initiated standards and criteria for advancement and promotion in core academic classes
- Daily Attendance records
- Satisfactory performance on all relevant state End-of-Grade (EOG) assessments

Students With Disabilities

To the extent possible, students with disabilities shall be held to the same promotion standards as all other students. However, for students with IEPs who take alternative assessments in lieu of the EOG or the EOC tests in their respective grades and/or high school courses, promotion decisions shall be based on criteria as recommended by the IEP team. Such decisions may or may not be tied to passing or failing course grades and/or other promotion requirements.

All intervention strategies and other opportunities, benefits, and resources that are made available to students without disabilities shall be made available to students with disabilities who are subject to these promotion standards. Such opportunities must be in addition to the special education services provided to students with disabilities.

Each IEP team, with the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) as members (and the student themselves as member, where appropriate) shall work together to determine the appropriate course of study for that student.

Retention

If a student appears likely to be retained, then the parent/guardian of the student shall receive at least two (2) notices. The first notice may be a conference; the second notice must be in writing and must be provided by the end of the third quarter. The Executive Director's office must provide in writing an official notice of retention to the parent/guardian by the last day of school.

Pursuant to state law, third graders who fail to achieve reading proficiency may not be promoted unless a statutory exception applies. Parents/Guardians of impacted students will be informed of the law's application. Any parent who wishes to learn more about this law and its application should contact their student's third grade teacher or the Director of Lower Grades.

Children with Special Needs

Legal Compliance

The School admits and serves children with special needs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), state legislation (G.S. 115C-106 et seq.), and in accordance with the State Board of Education's rules and policies. Students with special needs shall receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive and appropriate environment. The School will provide every student suspected of having special needs with a multidisciplinary diagnosis and evaluation.

Services

For each student entitled to special education services, the School will:

1. provide testing and evaluation in a nondiscriminatory manner, administered in the child's native language as necessary;
2. provide the Parent, in writing, the results, findings, and proposals based upon an evaluation;
3. develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for qualified students;
4. provide special education and related services in the least restrictive appropriate environment to each qualified student based upon the IEP; and
5. provide the Parent written notice reasonably before the School proposes to initiate or change the student with special needs identification, evaluation, or educational placement. The written notice will fully explain all procedural safeguards available to the Parents.

Confidentiality

The School and all employees shall protect the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information collected, used, or maintained related to students with special needs. A confidential folder shall be maintained for each child evaluated for or receiving exceptional student services and located in a secure office. Access to such files shall be limited to appropriate personnel and parents in compliance with state and federal law. A confidential folder shall be maintained for each child evaluated for or receiving exceptional student services and located in a secure office. Access to such files shall be limited to appropriate personnel and parents in compliance with state and federal law.

Discipline, Continued Education, and Manifestation Determination

Children identified as special needs students are entitled to special rights related to possible disciplinary actions. The School will ensure that all such rights are followed as established by law when enforcing the student conduct code and imposing possible short- and long-term

suspensions or placements in an interim alternative education setting. Except for short-term suspensions, students subject to long-term suspension or alternative placements are entitled to continued educational and related services.

Parent Rights Information

The School will provide to all parents of special needs students a copy of the state's handbook, "Parent Rights & Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards."

Extra-Curricular Activities and Athletics

The School offers and encourages participation in extracurricular activities as part of a complete education. Such participation, however, is a privilege, not a right. A student's behavior, attendance, and academic standing may determine eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities. Any activity's advisor may set conduct or other academic or performance standards as a condition of initial or continued participation.

If a student is disciplined for violating the student code of conduct, his or her extracurricular activity participation may be curtailed or eliminated, subject to the Executive Director's discretion. The staff activity director or head coach, in consultation with the Grade Level Director as necessary, is responsible for decisions relating to disciplinary action explicitly associated with the extracurricular activity.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of the educational program, designed to support and enhance the educational and community experience. School-sponsored field trips will be well-planned and evaluated in terms of their educational and social appropriateness. Field trips will be reasonable in terms of length, activity, and difficulty, considering the student's age, maturity, and available resources. Overnight trips require special precautions to assure student well-being and to avoid or minimize, to the extent possible, interference with other class studies and attendance.

At the beginning of each academic year, parents must sign a waiver of liability and permission for their children to attend all School-sponsored field trips.

Chaperones

Chaperones who volunteer to transport students for field trips must sign and submit to the School any information required by the Director in advance of a field trip. They must also submit a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of their automobile's current insurance. Each teacher must gather this information from drivers before leaving on the field trip. Those who cannot provide the information required may not transport students.

Every student being transported must wear a seatbelt that is appropriate for their size. Students may not ride in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with airbags unless they are of the proper size, weight, and age. Drivers should arrive early, with their vehicles adequately fueled and in good and proper condition. Teachers will provide each driver with any necessary maps, directions, and instructions, as well as a roster of students being transported by the driver and their respective emergency contact information.

Guidelines

Appropriate instructional activities will precede and follow each field trip. Before each field trip, the teacher will submit a written outline of the trip's instructional objectives to the Director and Executive Director. Procedures for requesting field-trip approval and other related activities are in place by the School. Guidelines include the following:

1. The teacher will send permission requests to parents before the trip, indicating the trip's date, time, and purpose.
2. Parents may be required to provide special additional written permission for their children to participate in a particular field trip. Parental approval forms must be filed with the Principal before the field trip. Copies of these forms are to be retained for at least the remainder of the School year and longer, as circumstances require.
3. All field trips will typically begin and end at the School. When a field trip is made to a place of business or industry, the teacher must ensure, before beginning the

tour, that an employee of the host company will serve as the guide. A reasonable number of adult personnel and volunteers shall accompany and supervise students on all field trips. The School, if feasible, will provide an appropriate educational experience and proper supervision for any students whose parents do not wish their children to participate in a field trip.

Student Records

All scholar records shall be up-to-date and shall be maintained with appropriate measures of security and confidentiality. Riverside Leadership Academy abides by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) with regard to the procedures for inspection, review and disclosure of scholar records as set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, 34 C.F.R. Part 99. Records protected by this policy include any recorded information directly related to a scholar and maintained by Riverside Leadership Academy. Student records do not include the records of school personnel that are in the sole possession of the maker and which are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute for the person who made the record.

The official record shall contain, as a minimum, adequate identification data including date of birth, attendance data, grading and promotion data, and such other factual information as may be deemed appropriate by the Riverside Leadership Academy Board. The official record of each scholar enrolled at Riverside Leadership Academy shall be permanently maintained in the files until after the scholar graduates, or should have graduated, from high school.

Scholar's official record will also contain any notice and notice of any suspension of more than 10 days (long-term suspension) or exclusion and the conduct for which the scholar was suspended or excluded.

Each scholar's official record also shall include notice of any long-term suspension or expulsion imposed pursuant to G.S. 115C-390.7 through G.S. 115C-390.11 and the conduct for which the scholar was suspended or expelled.

The Executive Director or designee shall expunge from the record the notice of suspension or expulsion if the following criteria are met:

1. The scholar graduates from high school or is not suspended or excluded during a two year period following the scholar's return to school after the suspension or exclusion;
2. The Executive Director determines that maintenance of the record is no longer required to maintain safe and orderly schools; and,
3. The Executive Director determines that the maintenance of the record is no longer needed to adequately serve the scholar.

The Executive Director shall expunge a notice of long-term suspension or exclusion from the scholar's record if all of the above criteria are met and a request for expungement is made by a parent, legal guardian, custodian, scholar who is at least 16 years old or scholar who is emancipated. Additional rights of parents and eligible scholars concerning a scholar's special education records are explained in the Handbook on Parents' Rights and the North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities.

Riverside Leadership Academy will adhere to all federal laws relating to maintaining scholar files. The following information regarding The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) comes from the US Department of Education website (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>).

Student Record Request and Withdrawal

North Carolina Public Schools, along with Riverside Leadership Academy, use an electronic scholar database. Once a scholar is registered to attend another school, a request is sent to Riverside Leadership Academy, and records are released to the school. Once we receive a scholar record request, the scholar is dropped from our enrollment.

Access to Student Records

The natural parents/legal guardians of a scholar, or an individual acting as parent in the absence of a parent or legal guardian, have the right to review the contents of the child's scholar record.

Scholars 18-years of age or older or who are married (emancipated scholars) have the right to review their own school records. The parent/guardian of an emancipated scholar may examine the scholar's records if the child is classified as a dependent of the parent/guardian under federal income tax regulations.

When a child's parents are separated or divorced, the records will be open to both parents unless a current court order specifying otherwise is provided to school officials. A copy of any court order restricting a parent's access to a scholar's files shall be included with the scholar's cumulative record and shall be followed by all school personnel.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of scholar education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the scholar when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Scholars to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible scholars."

Parents and eligible scholars have the right to inspect and review the scholar's education records maintained by the school. Riverside Leadership Academy is not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible scholars to review the records. Riverside Leadership Academy may charge a fee for copies.

Parents or eligible scholars have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If Riverside Leadership Academy decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible scholar then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible scholar has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.

Generally, Riverside Leadership Academy must have written permission from the parent or eligible scholar in order to release any information from a scholar's education record. However, FERPA allows

Riverside Leadership Academy to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a scholar is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a scholar;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Riverside Leadership Academy may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a scholar's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. If a parent/guardian would prefer that Riverside Leadership Academy not release directory information about their scholar, they must inform the Executive Director in writing.

Riverside Leadership Academy employees, contractors and volunteers are exposed to confidential information daily. Information concerning scholars and their families should be treated as confidential information, including personally identifiable information from scholars' education records. The Riverside Leadership Academy staff with access to this information do not have the right to give this information to anyone who does not have a legitimate professional reason for access. Teachers or other staff members can be held liable for the individual release of information. Staff members are not permitted to discuss information about their scholars in open areas or where parents or other scholars have access. Anything said in meetings discussing scholars is considered confidential.

A scholar's name should not be placed in the subject box of an email. Their names should also be treated as confidential. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the scholar when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Scholars to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible scholars."

If parents/guardians have questions regarding FERPA or have received a request for educational records, they should contact the Executive Director. See FERPA: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.

5.004 Student Conduct, Discipline, and Procedures

Policy Overview

At Riverside Leadership Academy, we believe that respect and responsibility are essential for a safe and thriving school community. This includes showing respect for yourself, others, and property, as well as practicing honesty, punctuality, reliability, and accountability in all situations. We recognize that positive

scholar conduct is a shared responsibility of scholars, staff, parents/guardians, and community members. Together, we create a climate where everyone can succeed.

To support this, RLA integrates a social-emotional curriculum throughout the school day. This includes daily morning meetings, afternoon closing circles, and consistent use of Responsive Classroom practices and techniques. These routines help build relationships, strengthen community, and guide behavior in positive ways. Our goal is to encourage scholars through positive reinforcement and to help them grow in their sense of ethical responsibility, skills that will benefit them both in school and beyond.

Riverside Leadership Academy's expectations for scholar behavior are based on the following governing principles:

- Scholars will act with courtesy, consideration, tolerance, and patience in all interactions with others both at school and during school-sponsored activities.
- Scholars will treat school property and facilities with care and respect.
- Scholars will respect the property of others.
- Scholars will follow the Student Code of Conduct and act with honesty in both academic and social situations.
- Scholar behavior will reflect positively on Riverside Leadership Academy

Maintaining clear and consistent expectations for behavior is essential to the success of our school community. At RLA, discipline is not about punishment but about helping scholars learn to meet expectations and adjust to their environment. Our approach is responsive, never humiliating or embarrassing, with the goal of building self-discipline.

Each teacher and instructional team is responsible for managing scholar behavior in ways that are consistent with RLA's mission and board policies. Teachers are encouraged to use positive, creative, and constructive strategies to correct and redirect behavior, working to prevent repeated misbehavior.

Teachers and/or administration reserves the right to assign disciplinary measures outside the typical sequence of disciplinary actions when unique or aggravating factors are present. This includes but is not limited to consideration of factors such as the age and/or cognitive ability of the scholar committing the behavior at issue.

Failure to follow the instructions of school staff, or violations of RLA rules, policies, or procedures, will result in appropriate disciplinary measures, as outlined herein:

Definitions of Prohibited Behaviors

Level 1 Behaviors

Level 1 Behaviors are those behaviors that may distract others and/or disrupt the academic environment:

- Tardiness.
- Use of inappropriate language including, but not limited to, profanity and/or any obscene gestures,
- Inappropriate public displays of affection,
- Dress Code violations.
- Littering on school property.

- Repeatedly refusing to complete school assignments.
- Deliberately disrupting the normal educational process in the classroom.
- Failure to follow instructions of school staff.
- Violation of RLA's Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy.
- Repeatedly neglecting to bring computer, notebook, pencil and/or other learning materials to class.
- Unauthorized or inappropriate use of any electronic device not associated with the educational process during normal school hours while on school property, including but not limited to use of a personal mobile telephone.

Level 2 Behaviors

Level 2 Behaviors are those behaviors that significantly distract others and/or significantly disrupt the academic environment:

- Committing a combination of an/or repeatedly committing any Level 1 behaviors.
- Failure to comply with Level 1 assigned disciplinary measures.
- Failure to attend an assigned class without a valid excuse, skipping school, or cutting classes.
- Lying to or deliberately deceiving a teacher or a staff member.
- Willfully leaving the classroom.
- Insubordination.
- Violations of the Honor Code such as cheating and/or plagiarism.
- Bullying/harassing behaviors as defined by Board policy 1.008, Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying.
- Use of Hate Speech, which may include but is not limited to offensive language targeting any individual(s) based upon based on characteristics like race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation
- Engaging in any Level 2 Behavior that is committed off of school property, while representing the school or while attending a school-related function.

Level 3 Behaviors

Level 3 Behaviors are those behaviors that cause significant disruption to the academic environment or cause harm to self or others. Level 3 behaviors may result in a short-term suspension (less than 10 days) either on-site or off-site:

- Committing a combination of and/or repeatedly committing and Level 1 and/or Level 2 behaviors.
- Failure to comply with any Level 2 disciplinary behaviors.
- Willfully leaving school property without permission.
- Throwing objects in the classroom or on school property with the intent of harm or to create a disturbance, including throwing objects at any scholar, staff member, or adult.
- Creating or encouraging other scholars to join in a disturbance, so as to cause the disruption of normal school operations.
- Fourth violation of RLA's Personal Wireless Communication Devices/Personal Belongings Policy
- Stealing or possessing stolen property, including items either belonging to a staff member, scholar, or any other person, or consists of school property.
- Defacing school, classroom, staff member, or scholar property.

- Making any type of threat, whether verbal, written, electronic, or physical, toward a scholar, staff member, or adult that expresses intent to cause harm or attack, either on school property or at a school-sponsored event.
- Fighting/inappropriate physical contact (Non-Sexual).
- Extreme or persistent incidents of bullying/harassing behaviors.
- Engaging in any conduct that qualifies as hazing. For the purposes of this policy, hazing is any act that risks a student's physical or mental health in connection with joining or being part of a group. Examples include, but are not limited to, physical harm, forcing someone to consume substances, causing embarrassment or humiliation, or interfering with schoolwork.
- Possessing, handling, transferring or bringing any replication of a weapon or of ammunition (e.g. toy gun, toy knife) on school property or at a school-sponsored event.*
- Engaging in any Level 3 Behavior that is committed off of school property, while representing the school or while attending a school-related function.

**Any scholar who inadvertently possesses or finds a weapon or illegal substance or stolen property, which may subject the scholar to exclusion, may or may not be recommended for these sanctions if the scholar voluntarily surrenders the property to a school staff person prior to discovery by another person. This should be done as soon as the scholar realizes that he/she is in possession of the weapon, substance, or stolen property.*

Level 4 Behaviors

Riverside Leadership Academy scholars will be taught that level 4 behaviors cause extreme breaches in the security, growth, and development of our community. These breaches are often difficult to repair because they disrupt relationships and break down trust:

- Committing a combination of or repeatedly committing any Level 1, Level 2, and/or Level 3 behaviors.
- Trafficking, possessing and/or using tobacco/nicotine products on school property or at a school-sponsored event including the use or possession of electronic cigarettes or paraphernalia.
- Physically striking or attacking a scholar, staff member or adult whether as an individual act or with the assistance of others.
- Possessing, selling, exchanging, distributing, attempting to purchase, using or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, or any substance purported to be an illegal drug, prescription medicine or alcohol on school property or at a school-sponsored event. This includes distribution of or purposely taking more than the prescribed amount of medically necessary prescription medication.
- Any false report, and/or calling-in of a bomb threat, fire, active shooter, and/or similar emergent, life-threatening situation which requires the dispatch of first responders. This includes, but is not limited to, setting off the fire alarm without cause.
- Possession or use of explosives on school property or at a school-sponsored event.
- Touching or conduct perceived as sexual and/or inappropriate in nature. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual activity and/or assault, and/or the taking of and distribution of sexual and/or inappropriate photographs of any scholar, staff member, or adult.
- Damage/destruction/vandalism/arson of or trespassing on school property, that rises to the level of conduct that may be subject to criminal charges.
- Possessing, handling, transferring or bringing a weapon or ammunition on school property or at a school-sponsored event.*

- Engaging in any Level 4 Behavior that is committed off of school property, while representing the school or while attending a school-related function.

**Any scholar who inadvertently possesses or finds a weapon or illegal substance or stolen property, which may subject the scholar to exclusion, may or may not be recommended for these sanctions if the scholar voluntarily surrenders the property to a school staff person prior to discovery by another person. This should be done as soon as the scholar realizes that he/she is in possession of the weapon, substance, or stolen property.*

The behaviors listed in our Student Code of Conduct are not to be construed as all-inclusive. The administration reserves the right to amend or add to these lists as unique situations arise.

Overview of Disciplinary Measures

Definitions of Potential Disciplinary Measures

- **Behavior Referral** - A behavior referral is a specific written record of the scholar's act of misconduct. It documents the date, nature of the offense, and the disciplinary action taken by the teacher, School Leader, and/or dean.
- **Behavior Support Plan (BSP)** - A behavior support plan (BSP) is a written document that identifies the motivation for chronic misbehavior and what steps will be taken in order to help a scholar overcome inappropriate behavior. It will be signed by school administration and offered to the scholar and parent(s) for signature.
- **Behavior Contract** - A behavior contract is a written document that outlines specific behavior expectations, strategies for teaching the appropriate behavior(s), and disciplinary action(s) for a scholar.
- **Exclusion** - Permanent removal of the scholar from school, school activities and school property. A charter school scholar who has been excluded may return to his local educational agency pursuant to North Carolina law.
- **Expulsion** - Permanent termination of the scholar-school relationship. This applies only to scholars 14 years of age or older whose continued presence constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other scholars or school staff.
- **Long-Term Suspension** - Suspension from school, school activities and school property for more than ten (10) school days, but less than exclusion.
- **Short-Term Suspension** - Suspension from school, school activities and school property for a period of up to ten (10) school days.

Procedures for Suspension, Expulsion and Corporal Punishment

Riverside Leadership Academy shall administer all disciplinary consequences in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 115C, Article 27, and all applicable federal laws.

Short-Term Suspension Procedures

The Executive Director or designee may suspend a scholar for up to ten (10) school days at a time (short-term suspension). There is no appeal process for suspensions of ten school (10) days or fewer.

Before a short-term suspension is imposed, the scholar shall be informed of the charges against them and provided an opportunity to respond, except in circumstances where the scholar's presence poses an immediate threat to safety or substantially disrupts the educational environment.

The Executive Director or designee shall confer with the parent/guardian and provide written documentation to the scholar's parent/guardian stating:

- The specific conduct resulting in the suspension;
- The length of the suspension;
- The process for reentry, if applicable.

Short-term suspensions shall not exceed ten (10) school days.

There is no appeal process for suspensions of ten school (10) days or fewer.

Long-Term Suspension, Exclusion, and Expulsion Procedures

For certain offenses, the Executive Director may recommend a long-term suspension (10 school days or more) or exclusion from school.

For disciplinary actions exceeding ten (10) school days, the scholar and parent/guardian shall receive written notice that includes:

- The alleged violation(s);
- A description of the evidence;
- The recommended disciplinary consequence;
- The right to request a hearing; and
- The procedures for appeal.

A scholar recommended for long-term suspension, exclusion, or expulsion shall be provided the opportunity for an appeals process before the Board of Directors or its designated hearing committee. Appeals of long-term suspension or exclusion decisions must be submitted in writing to the Board Chair within five (5) school days of the decision. A Hearing Committee of three or more Board members, appointed by the Board Chair, will review the appeal and conduct an investigation and hearing within thirty (30) days of the requested appeal. After reviewing the evidence and hearing from all parties, the Hearing Committee will offer a recommendation for action to the Board of Directors at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. The Board of Directors may confirm, overturn, or modify the decision. The Board's decision will be provided in writing and is final.**

**For more information about this process, please refer to the [Policy 1.006 Scholar/Parent/Guardian Grievance Policy](#)

Expulsion shall only be considered for scholars fourteen (14) years of age or older whose continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other scholars or staff, consistent with North Carolina law.

Corporal Punishment

Riverside Leadership Academy prohibits the use of corporal punishment by any employee, volunteer, contractor, or agent of the school. No scholar shall be subjected to physical punishment, physical force intended as discipline, or any disciplinary practice that is humiliating, degrading, or abusive.

Discipline Procedures for Students with Disabilities

Riverside Leadership Academy shall comply with all applicable provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and North Carolina law when disciplining scholars with disabilities.

Disciplinary actions involving scholars with disabilities shall consider whether the conduct in question was a manifestation of the scholar's disability. Prior to imposing disciplinary removals that constitute a change in placement under IDEA or Section 504, the school shall conduct all required reviews, determinations, and procedural safeguards.

Scholars with disabilities who are suspended or removed from their educational placement shall continue to receive educational services to the extent required by law.

Parents/guardians shall be provided notice of their procedural safeguards and due process rights as required by federal and state law.

Annual Publication and Distribution of Policies

The Riverside Leadership Academy Student Code of Conduct and all related disciplinary policies and procedures shall be published annually in the student/family handbook and made available to scholars, parents/guardians, and staff through the school website and other appropriate communication methods. Families will be notified annually of any significant revisions to the Code of Conduct or disciplinary procedures.

Annual Publication and Distribution of Policies

The Riverside Leadership Academy Student Code of Conduct and all related disciplinary policies and procedures shall be published annually in the student/family handbook and made available to scholars, parents/guardians, and staff through the school website and other appropriate communication methods. Families will be notified annually of any significant revisions to the Code of Conduct or disciplinary procedures.

2.006 Dress Code Policy

Riverside Leadership Academy's Board of Directors created a dress code to help promote unity by encouraging a sense of belonging and pride in the school community. It also is designed to discourage bullying, victimization, and socio-economic discrimination. It reduces social pressure and peer conflicts and encourages students to concentrate more on their studies than on their wardrobe by creating a learning environment free of unnecessary distractions.

Any apparel that includes graphics or lettering that are vulgar, obscene, have profane language or that Riverside Leadership Academy Administration deems inappropriate, such as clothing that inappropriately exposes students' bodies, is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. If a student's dress or appearance violates the dress attire policy, it will result in a Class 1 infraction (see student discipline policy) and students may be required to change.

In all aspects of student dress, Riverside Leadership Academy Administration reserves the right to deem student apparel out of compliance and inappropriate. The school administrators shall exercise appropriate discretion in implementing this policy, including making reasonable accommodations to these rules for religious, cultural, or medical reasons.

I. Tops

Tops are defined as shirts, sweatshirts, hooded sweatshirts, blouses, jackets, vests, and sweaters.

A. Permissible Tops include:

- Tops that have a primary color that are one of RLA's official school colors, which includes gray, white, black, or blue (*any shade*).
- Any official RLA school apparel, regardless of color including tops related to athletic teams, clubs, and other programs endorsed by Riverside Leadership Academy.
- Tops that have small brand logos such as those on the breast pocket of a polo or T-shirt.

B. Prohibited Tops include:

- Tops in any color other than the permissible colors listed under Permissible Tops.
- Tops that extend beyond the length of the student's shorts or skirt.
 - If a top fully covers the shorts or skirt, the garment underneath is considered too short and not in dress code compliance.
 - Students may wear shorts underneath a dress/skirt as long as the dress/skirt itself meets the required length guidelines.
- Tops that expose the midriff at any time, including when arms are raised.
- Tank tops, sleeveless tops, camisoles, or cut off shirts.
- Tops that expose undergarments, including bra straps or sports bras.
- Tops with images, words, or lettering.
- Tops with necklines that extend below the student's armpit.

II. Outerwear

All jackets, coats, pullovers and hoodies, worn in the school building, must meet the same standards of Permissible Tops as described above. If a student wears a jacket or coat that does not meet these requirements they must remove it once they enter the school building.

III. Bottoms

Bottoms are defined as shorts, pants, jeans, leggings, athletic pants/shorts, capris, skirts, and dresses.

A. Permissible Bottoms include:

- Bottoms that have a primary color of blue, gray, black, or khaki.
 - Any official RLA school apparel, regardless of color including tops related to athletic teams, clubs, and other programs endorsed by Riverside Leadership Academy.
 - Bottoms that have small brand logos such as those located on hips, hems, or pockets.
 - Bottoms must cover completely and clearly cover the top of the thigh and the buttocks, ensuring that the garment provides full coverage when standing, sitting, or moving.
- B. Prohibited Bottoms include:
- Bottoms with holes, rips, or excessive distress that exposes undergarments or students' bodies.
 - Bottoms in any color other than the permissible colors listed under Permissible Bottoms,
 - Bottoms that expose undergarments or do not cover the buttocks completely when standing, sitting or moving.
 - Bottoms with images, words, or lettering,
 - Bottoms that are completely covered by a top (if the top covers the bottoms, the outfit is not in compliance).
 - Students may wear shorts underneath a dress/skirt as long as the dress/skirt itself meets the required length guidelines.

All bottoms must be worn at or above the waistline. Waistline is defined as in line with the student's navel. Students who wear bottoms that RLA administration deems inappropriate will be considered out of dress code.

IV. Other Apparel

- A. Socks/Shoes
- For students in grades K-5, all shoes must have a back or heel strap. Flip flops and slides are NOT permitted.
 - For students in grades 6-12, all shoes including flip flops and slides are permitted.
 - Slippers/house shoes are prohibited for all students K-12.
- B. Headgear & Sunglasses
- Sunglasses are not to be worn inside the school building.
 - Hats, bandanas, & beanies are not to be worn inside the school building.
 - Religious or culturally significant headgear including, but not limited to hijabs, yamakas, or headscarves are permitted inside the school building.
- C. College Day Guidelines
- Students may wear a permissible top with a College/University logo or lettering displayed on it.
- D. Dress Down/Spirit Day Guidelines

- Students can dress outside of the primary color requirements and clothing should meet all other dress code requirements.
- Dress down days include project celebrations, athletic events, and other occasions as noted on the calendar and directed by school administrators, school leaders, or coaches.

Student Searches

To promote safe and orderly operations, School officials may reasonably search a student's person and materials as necessary, in accordance with the student's constitutional rights. A student may be subject to a search based on reasonable suspicion that the student has violated a law or policy, School Officials may also conduct random student searches with individualized suspicion if reasonable conditions legally exist for such a search. Reasonable suspicion to search an individual student is not required when a student voluntarily and knowingly consents to such search. School officials should normally first ask a student to consent to a search. If the student refuses to give consent, the official may proceed if there is reasonable suspicion.

If an authorized School official reasonably suspects that the student has any item or material on his or her person or in his possession that risks serious harm to persons or property, an authorized School official may perform a more intrusive search of a student's person as necessary to avoid a threat of imminent and serious harm or damage. In such instances, any invasive bodily search shall, to the extent feasible, be conducted privately by an authorized School official of the same sex, with an adult witness of the same sex present.

In no instance are parents required to be present during a search. However, School officials may determine that circumstances dictate that having a parent present may be appropriate.

Dog-aided Searches

School officials may use trained dogs to aid in inspections for materials that may be in violation of law or policy. Thus, without notice, the School may use trained dogs to sniff lockers, student motor vehicles, and other objects. Dogs will not be used, however, in random searches of individual students.

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures for Serious Offenses

Article 27 of Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes requires the School to follow specific rules and due process relating to serious disciplinary matters, including the use of reasonable force, short- and long-term suspensions, and expulsions. The School will follow those rules in such instances and provide students and parents with necessary notice when applicable.

The following are possible forms of serious disciplinary measures, subject to state law:

1. **Reasonable Force/Exclusion or Restraint:** The force or restraint reasonably required to restrain a student from or because of conduct that threatens to or causes harm, or damage to school property or for reasons otherwise necessary for the school's well-being and operation.
2. **In-school Suspension ("ISS"):** Placement of a student in an alternative school setting during which the student is expected to continue educational engagement apart from the regular classroom setting.
3. **Short-term Suspension ("STS"):** Exclusion of a student from school and school activities by the Dean of Students and Director of grade level for up to ten consecutive days. The student will be notified of the reasons for the suspension and provided a prior opportunity to be heard and explain his or her conduct. Parents will be promptly notified in writing of the suspension. The Director's decision may not be appealed.
4. **Long-term Suspension ("LTS"):** Exclusion of a student from school and school activities for more than ten consecutive days. An LTS shall take place upon the recommendation of the Executive Director. The student and parents will be entitled to due process requirements, including full written notice, an opportunity to appeal, and full hearing rights, within 10 days before the suspension is approved.
5. **Expulsion:** State law permits the head of a charter school to recommend to the Board the permanent expulsion of a student who is at least fourteen years old and poses a clear threat of harm to the school community based on clear and convincing evidence. Expulsions require the board to hold a hearing before expelling a student.
6. **Withdrawal:** The Charter Act permits charter schools to withdraw a student based on grounds related to conduct specified in the school's charter.

Emergency and Special School Procedures

[Inclement Weather](#)

In the event of inclement weather that will require a change in the school's operating hours, parents and staff will be notified by telephone through our automated notification system with Infinite Campus Messenger. For this system to be effective, it is extremely important for families to ensure that the school always has updated contact information on file. Our social media presence and local news stations will also share notifications from the school about these changes.

Inclement Weather Delay Schedules

Type of Delay	Schedule
Two-Hour Delay	Carpool begins at 9:00 am; School day begins at 9:50 am
Three-Hour Delay	Carpool begins at 10:00 am, School day begins at 10:50 am
Two-Hour Early Dismissal	School dismisses at 1:10 pm
Three-Hour Early Dismissal	School dismisses at 12:10 pm

Fire Drills

The Executive Director will conduct a fire drill during the School year's first week and at least one fire drill each month thereafter. The route of egress and alternate routes will be posted in each classroom in each building. Evacuation, tornado, and lockdown drills will also be conducted routinely. Students and staff will be instructed on the procedures to follow.

School Safety, Health, and Wellness

Selected Statutory Provisions

The School will comply with all other operating and safety requirements set forth in G.S. 115C-218.75 (as amended over time).

- (a) **Health and Safety Standards.** The School shall meet the same health and safety requirements required of the local school administrative unit.
- (1) **Meningococcal meningitis and influenza (Parents).** The School shall apply any information from the Department of Public Instruction and provide parents and guardians with information about meningococcal meningitis and influenza, as well as their respective vaccines, at the beginning of every school year. This information shall include the causes, symptoms, and how meningococcal meningitis and influenza are spread, as well as the places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children.
 - (2) **Cervical Cancer and Vaccines (Grades 5-12).** The School shall provide parents and guardians information about cervical cancer, cervical dysplasia, human papillomavirus, and the vaccines available to prevent these diseases. This information shall be provided at the beginning of the school year to parents of children entering grades five through 12. This information shall include the causes and symptoms of these diseases, how they are transmitted, and how they may be prevented by vaccination, including the benefits and possible side effects of vaccination. Additionally, it shall provide information on where parents and guardians can obtain further details and vaccinations for their children.
 - (3) **Preterm Birth Bisks (Grades 7-12).** The School shall provide students in grades seven through 12 with information annually on the preventable risks for preterm birth in subsequent pregnancies, including induced abortion, smoking, alcohol consumption, the use of illicit drugs, and inadequate prenatal care.
 - (4) **Diabetes Care Plans.** The School shall follow the guidelines for individual diabetes care plans adopted by the State Board of Education and shall comply with the provisions of

G.S. 115C-375.3 regarding the care of students with diabetes.

- (5) **Epinephrine.** The School shall comply with G.S. 115C-375.2A and shall retain on hand a sufficient supply of emergency epinephrine auto-injectors necessary to carry out the provisions of that statute.
- (b) **School Safety Exercises.** At least once a year, the School will conduct a school-wide lockdown exercise in conjunction with local law enforcement and emergency management agencies.
- (c) **Anonymous Tip Line.** The School offers an anonymous tip line in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.51 and will provide necessary information and education to the School community.
- (d) **Child Sexual Abuse and Sex Trafficking Training Program.** The School shall offer a child sexual abuse and sex trafficking training program in accordance with G.S. 115C-375.20.
- (e) **Mental Health Plan.** The School has adopted mental health plan, including a mental health training program and suicide risk referral protocol, in accordance with G.S. 115C-376.5.

Communicable Diseases

The School aims to provide a safe and secure environment free of infection from communicable diseases for all students and employees. To balance the need to protect students' and employees' privacy rights with the control of infectious diseases and conditions, decisions concerning necessary action shall be made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with this policy, sound judgment, and applicable legal requirements.

A communicable disease or condition is defined as an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic products, which an infected person or animal transmits directly or indirectly to another person.

This applies to all legally reportable communicable diseases, including HIV and AIDS, as set forth in state regulations.

To prevent the spread of communicable diseases, the Principal (or designee) shall distribute universal health and safety precautions, which include regulations regarding the cleanup of all bodily fluids (including blood). All School employees shall follow these precautions.

In accordance with state law, the Principal (or designee) shall report suspected cases of reportable communicable diseases or conditions to the county health director for investigation and shall provide available factual information to substantiate the report. Such reports shall remain strictly confidential and may be shared only with other staff members as necessary to prepare and file a report. All staff members who are made aware of any such report shall maintain the confidentiality of such information. Without releasing any information that would

identify the affected student when not required, the Principal or supervisor shall report suspected cases of reportable communicable diseases or conditions to the Board Chairperson.

Any student suffering from a communicable disease or condition shall follow all control measures issued by the county health director and shall take all necessary precautions to prevent transmitting the disease or condition. Any School employees who have reason to believe that a student is suffering from a reportable communicable disease and is not following safe practices shall report this to the Principal, their supervisor, or the health director. Failure to follow control measures may result in disciplinary action. The Parent(s) of a student suffering from a communicable disease should inform the Principal so that appropriate accommodations and precautions may be put in place.

If the county health director notifies the Principal that a student with a communicable disease or condition may pose a threat to public health, the student and his or her Parents shall cooperate with the health director to eliminate the threat. The health director is responsible for determining when the School community must be notified of a contagious disease outbreak. School officials shall cooperate with the health director in issuing such notification.

The county health director is responsible for notifying the School if a student infected with HIV is enrolled at or scheduled for admission to the School and if there is a serious risk of the student transmitting the virus

Head Lice Procedure

The School will take prompt action to eliminate the threat of head lice. Head lice do not represent a disease or infection and can, therefore, be readily treated. Because lice are transmittable, any student School officials suspect of having head lice will be sent home promptly for treatment.

The student may not return to the School until treatment has been received and the School nurse or other designated School official has determined that no head lice or live nits are present. The School provides assistive information to parents about head lice. Any member of the School community who knows of a manifestation of head lice should report it to a responsible staff member.

Illness and Injury

Sick children should not attend school to protect their health and the health of other members of the School community. A student with the following symptoms should remain home and not return to School until he or she is symptom-free for 24 hours: vomiting, diarrhea, or a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or above.

Any student with any contagious symptoms—such as frequent coughing or sneezing, eye discharge, or cloudy nasal discharge, all of which may involve the spread of illness—should not attend school. If a student with a contagious illness has attended classes, parents should notify the teacher immediately.

When a student is injured or becomes ill at School, the student will normally be sent to the main office to be assessed by the proper School employee. The student will be treated in the office and sent back to class if appropriate, provided they do not pose a threat to others or disrupt classroom order. Any student, a School nurse, or other caregiver may be given documentation explaining the nature of the problem and the measures taken. The School office will notify the parent(s) if the child requires further assistance or needs to leave the School.

No underage student may leave the School unsupervised. Any significant injury or accident occurring during the School day or a School activity will be reported to a parent. The School will treat minor injuries or contact a parent to take the student to a medical facility for attention.

Immunizations

In accordance with North Carolina statutes, all students are required to receive specific immunizations. These requirements are established to safeguard the health and well-being of our entire school community.

Riverside Leadership Academy must verify immunization compliance for scholars entering kindergarten and seventh grade. These mandatory health standards apply universally across all public, private, and religious educational institutions within the state.

Families are required to provide a valid "certification of immunization" from a licensed healthcare provider, or submit official documentation for a medical or religious exemption.

Medications

General procedures. If a child must be medicated (including over-the-counter and prescribed medication) during School hours and the parent cannot be at School to administer the medication, only the Executive Director's designee may administer the medication in compliance with a physician's written, signed, and dated instructions. No teacher may be required to administer medication against his or her wishes.

The medication instructions must include at least the following:

- Child's name;
- Name of medication;
- Purpose of medication;
- Time and dosage to be administered;

- Possible side effects and related treatment;
- Termination date for administering the medication; and
- Special information about the medications (i.e., storage requirements).

Riverside Leadership Academy Authorization forms to give medication on campus and medication records must be retained in the student's confidential medical file.

Exceptions to Medication Administration. Upper Grade students may, upon proper written authorization and approval by the Principal (or designee), self-medicate with the following medications: Asthma rescue inhaler and/or an epi pen that are labeled and packaged in the original container and are required for a medical condition. Students with diabetes or asthma or a student subject to anaphylactic (life-threatening) reactions will be allowed to carry and self-administer their medication if the parent, physician, and student sign a completed medication request form and the student demonstrates appropriate proficiency in delivering the medication. Self-administering privileges will be withdrawn if the student exhibits a lack of responsibility towards self or others concerning his or her medication. Any student who abuses the privileges described in this section may be subject to discipline.

Special Medical Needs, Diabetes Plans, and Epinephrine

The School shall implement procedures for students with special medical needs. This includes making necessary information and staff development available to teachers and school personnel to support and assist diabetic students appropriately, in accordance with their diabetes care plans.

Parents and the Community

Parent Rights

North Carolina law requires the implementation of the Parents Bill of Rights and associated policies regarding parental involvement in their children's education. The School values the critical role of parents in school and the education of their children. Each parent is encouraged to learn about the School's educational program and his or her child's educational progress.

A§115C-76.25 establishes the following list of parental legal rights.

The right to consent or withhold consent for participation in reproductive health and safety education programs, consistent with the requirements of N.C.G.S. § 115C-81.30.
The right to seek a medical or religious exemption from immunization requirements, consistent with the requirements of N.C.G.S. §§ G.S. 130A-156 and 130A-157.
The right to review statewide standardized assessment results as part of the State report card.

The right to request an evaluation of their child for an academically or intellectually gifted program or identification as a child with a disability, as provided in Article 9 of Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes.

The right to inspect and purchase public school unit textbooks and other supplementary instructional materials, as provided in Part 3 of Article 8 of 21 Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes.

The right to access information relating to the Board's policies for promotion or retention, including high school graduation requirements.

The right to receive student report cards regularly that clearly depict and grade the student's academic performance in each class or course, the student's conduct, and the student's attendance.

The right to access information relating to the State public education system, State standards, report card requirements, attendance requirements, and textbook requirements.

The right to participate in parent-teacher organizations. This information will be provided directly from the parent-teacher organization.

The right to opt in to certain data collection for their child.

The right for students to participate in protected student information surveys only with parental consent.

The right to review all available records of materials their child has borrowed from the school library.

[Administrative Provisions Regarding Parent Rights and Remedies](#)

The School Administration shall follow state law regarding parental rights and remedies via the Administration's policies and practices. [Parent's Bill of Rights Policies](#) addresses these in more detail based on statutory requirements.

[Open Communications](#)

2.007 FAMILY AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Riverside Leadership Academy's Board of Directors recognizes that parents/guardians, families, caregivers, schools, and the community share the responsibility for the education of our students. Creating positive home, school, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully. To promote high student performance, school administrators, teachers, and parents/guardians must work as knowledgeable partners and communicate effectively to promote student achievement. In order to encourage effective communication, the Board also encourages parents/guardians to participate in activities designed by school personnel to involve them, such as parent/guardian conferences.

I. Parent/Guardian Communication and Conferences

The Board encourages regular contact with parents/guardians by school personnel with notification of both positive and negative interactions with their students. Riverside Leadership Academy's administrators shall plan for periodic communications with parents/guardians annually. Teachers are responsible for scheduling and hosting three student-led conferences with parents/guardians. These conferences are not the same as parent/teacher conferences, as they are led by the student as a reflection on the previous quarter.

Student-led conferences dates are located on the school calendar.

Riverside Leadership Academy believes it is important for the student to take personal responsibility for his or her own education, when developmentally appropriate. Students should be included in each parent/guardian conference as appropriate. Students should be encouraged to tell their parents/guardians about their own educational progress. At the conferences, teachers should take the time to explain all academic data to the parents and answer any questions the parents/guardians might have about their student.

Should a parent request any additional parent/teacher conference, teachers should respond and schedule a conference within a reasonable amount of time to review the academic progress of the student.

We expect that all staff will respond to parent/guardian emails or phone calls within two school days. Any electronic communication to groups of parents shall be done using the blind-copy function so as to protect the email addresses of parents/guardians. All email communications sent to parents/guardians or other staff must be done from their school email address.

II. Annual Notifications

The Executive Director or their designee shall effectively notify parents each year of the following:

- h. The Code of Conduct and school rules.
- i. The Student-Parent Grievance Procedure.
- j. Grading Practices.
- k. The manner in which school officials, in emergency situations during non-school hours, may be contacted.
- l. Procedural safeguards for parents/guardians of students with disabilities.
- m. That the school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age.
- n. A list of athletics and extracurricular activities available to students.
- o. Information about meningococcal meningitis and influenza, including the causes, the symptoms, the vaccines, the manner in which diseases are spread, and places at which additional information and vaccinations may be obtained.

- p. For students in grades five through twelve, information about cervical cancer, cervical dysplasia, and human papillomavirus, including the causes and symptoms of these diseases, the manner in which they are transmitted, the manner in which they may be prevented by vaccination, including the benefits and possible side effects of vaccination, and places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children.

III. Parental/Guardian Permission is required prior to the following:

- VII. Administration of medications to students by employees of the school.
- VIII. Any release of student records that are not considered directory information unless the release is allowed or required by law.
- IX. Off-campus trips.
- X. All decisions or actions as required by the IDEA with regard to providing special education (EC) or related services to children with disabilities.
- XI. Certain health services, as required by law.
- XII. A student's participation in programs or services providing information about the manner in which students may obtain contraceptives or abortion referral services.
- XIII. Disclosure of a student's free and reduced lunch eligibility status.

Any parent or legal guardian wishing to withhold consent for any of these program activities must do so in writing after receiving notice. Otherwise, consent for their student's participation in all programs or activities not opted out of are presumed.

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[School/Family/Community Partnerships](#)

At RLA, we believe that our greatest success is in our partnerships with families and community members. Parents are welcome to come into our school as visitors or volunteers, provided that they adhere to the campus Visitor Policy. We recognize that strong relationships between families and schools are necessary for scholar engagement and growth, and these relationships are best fostered through open communication, active family involvement, and commitment to the school's overall vision and mission.

As part of our school-wide commitment to celebrate the individuality of all of our Pirates, scholars will participate in projects at each grade level that will provide specific opportunities for family cultural elements to be shared. We embrace the diversity of our scholar population and encourage parents to reach out to teachers to collaborate on additional ways to share unique traditions and celebrations.

Our school will also actively seek out opportunities to partner with local community members and businesses, to find ongoing ways to enhance the learning experiences and environment for scholars, families, and staff. One opportunity that RLA will provide for family and community engagement is our designated Curriculum Nights and family events. RLA is committed to providing AT LEAST one of these events in the fall semester and one in the spring semester. Additional events sponsored by our exploratory teachers and/or Parent Teacher Organization will also be offered.

[Visitors](#)

All visitors at Riverside Leadership Academy must sign in at the front office. All visitors are required to wear a visitor badge while on campus. Once a visitor has checked in, they will be escorted to their destination. All visitors must abide by the policies set forth in the Riverside Leadership Academy Parent-Student handbook at all times. Parents/Guardians and some visitors may be required to read and agree to our Adult Code of Conduct.

Family members are welcome to join the scholar during lunch on special occasions and upon the discretion of the teacher. Visitors and volunteers should notify the teacher if they plan to visit during lunch so that the teacher can plan accordingly and/or let the visitor(s) know of any changes to the daily schedule.

In the event a parent/guardian requests to observe their scholar's class, the parent/guardian must make an appointment directly with the Grade Level Director and the teacher to visit a class for this purpose. Unexpected visits are not allowed because they disrupt classroom instruction and routines.

Volunteers

The School's viability largely depends on an effective volunteer program. Parents of students attending the School are encouraged to commit time to such volunteer work for the School. Parent volunteer help is needed to support field trips, special classroom events, and special School activities. The School Operations Coordinator is responsible for volunteer oversight, including selection, recruitment, screening, and assignment. Volunteer services may be controlled or terminated at the School's discretion. Volunteers are subject to applicable Visitor Policies and must report to the School office upon their arrival on campus. Volunteers are bound by the standards of conduct set forth in the Code of Ethics.

A-V Recording by Parents and Visitors

Unauthorized video or audio recording of students, staff, or school activities on school property is generally prohibited to the extent allowed by law. Where the law permits recording, all parents and visitors are still encouraged to disclose their interest or intent to record, thereby maintaining trustworthy communications. The school environment often requires a reasonable expectation of privacy for individuals, particularly minors. Unregulated recording can create an intrusive atmosphere, disrupt instruction, and lead to potential misinterpretation or misuse of captured content.

Exceptions apply to publicly held, school-sanctioned events such as performances, athletic competitions, or graduation ceremonies, where recording for personal, non-commercial use is generally permitted, provided such recording does not interfere with the event or infringe upon the privacy of others.

Addressing Parental Suggestions, Concerns, and Complaints

Parents are discouraged from directly contacting Board members whose volunteer time is limited and devoted to general oversight. Board members, if contacted, will generally refer you to school employees via the chain of command. The School's grievance process exists for instances where a formal process may be required to address a concern. That process begins at the School and Administrative level, not with the School Board, and is addressed in more detail later in this handbook.

Parental/Visitor Conduct Expectations

School and student success requires a safe, respectful, and effective learning and working environment for students, staff, and the entire school community. Parents, volunteers, and other visitors are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful and appropriate on school property, at school-sponsored events (both on and off campus), and in all forms of electronic or telephonic communication with members of the School community. Parents and visitors to The School may be required to sign a Code of Conduct Agreement.

Prohibited Behaviors. Behaviors that are strictly prohibited include, without limitation:

1. **Disruptive Behavior:** Any action or sustained pattern of conduct does or is reasonably likely to substantially interfere with school operations or pose a threat of serious misconduct or harm. This includes but is not limited to excessively loud or abusive language, persistent or unreasonable demands that divert staff from their duties, unauthorized presence in restricted areas, or inciting disorder.
2. **Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation:** Any verbal, written, electronic, or physical act that demeans, frightens, or creates a hostile or offensive environment for students or staff. This encompasses bullying, cyberbullying, defamatory statements, personal insults, or discriminatory remarks based on protected characteristics.
3. **Threats:** Any communication, electronic message, gesture, or physical action that indicates an intent to cause harm, injury, fear, or damage to property or individuals. This includes direct threats, veiled threats, or threats of violence, whether immediate or implied.
4. **Physical Aggression:** Any act of physical violence, assault, battery, or hostile physical contact against any student, staff member, or other individual on school premises or at school-sponsored events.
5. **Trespassing:** Refusal to leave school property or a school-sponsored event when explicitly requested to do so by authorized school personnel (e.g., principal, assistant principal, security staff).
6. **Violation of School Rules:** Failure to adhere to established school rules, policies, and procedures that apply to visitors and designed to maintain order, safety, and proper functioning of the school environment.

Procedures and Consequences. Upon observing or receiving a credible report of prohibited conduct, the School officials will take prompt and appropriate action. The response will be commensurate with the severity and nature of the misconduct and may include, but is not limited to:

1. **Initial Intervention:** A verbal warning to cease the behavior and a clear explanation of the expected conduct.
2. **Removal from Premises:** The individual may be immediately required to leave school property or a school-sponsored event to prevent further disruption or potential harm.
3. **Restriction from School Property:** The school principal, in consultation with district leadership, may issue a formal no-trespass warning. This warning will prohibit the individual from entering school grounds or attending school events for a specified period (e.g., temporary, extended, or permanent exclusion), as deemed necessary to protect the school community. Written notification of such restrictions will be provided.
4. **Law Enforcement Involvement:** In cases involving repeated non-compliance, threats, physical aggression, criminal trespass, or other illegal acts, law enforcement will be contacted immediately.
5. **Legal Action:** The school district reserves the right to pursue all available legal remedies, including civil actions (e.g., restraining orders) or criminal prosecution.

These provisions do not limit the school's inherent ability to take any other action deemed necessary to protect the safety, well-being, and educational environment of the school community.

Grievance and Complaint Procedures

1.006 Parent/Guardian/Scholar Grievance Policy

Purpose

Riverside Leadership Academy is committed to providing a fair, consistent, and timely process for addressing complaints and grievances from scholars and parents/guardians, in accordance with North Carolina charter school laws and regulations.

Whenever possible, RLA encourages parents/guardians to first address concerns directly with the appropriate school employee by setting up an informal meeting to discuss the matter. If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the formal grievance procedure outlined in this policy will apply.

Definitions

- **Grievance:** A formal, written complaint filed by a scholar or parent/guardian alleging that a specific decision, action, or inaction by school personnel has adversely affected the grievant. A grievance may include, but is not limited to:
 - Alleged violations, misapplications, or misinterpretations of state or federal law, board policy, or administrative procedure;

- Allegations that a decision or action by a school employee is unfair, discriminatory, or not in the best interest of a student.
- **Grievant:** Any scholar or parent/guardian who files a grievance.
- **Respondent:** The person or entity against whom the grievance is filed.
- **School Day and/or School Events:** Any day when school is in session according to the official school calendar, including any sanctioned school-sponsored events.

Informal Resolution

Before filing a formal grievance, the grievant is strongly encouraged to seek resolution by first addressing the concern directly with the individual(s) involved. Many concerns related to the classroom, teacher, or school can be appropriately resolved at this level through open, respectful communication with the teacher or staff member

If, after seeking resolution with the parties involved, the issue still meets the definition of a grievance and remains unresolved, the parent/guardian/scholar may proceed with the Formal Grievance Process as outlined in this policy.

Scholar/Parent/Guardian Formal Grievance Process

Riverside Leadership Academy emphasizes informal communication whenever possible; however, if a grievance cannot be resolved through this process, the formal procedures will apply. Failure of the grievant to comply with the timelines outlined in this policy will result in denial of the grievance or appeal. Failure of school administration to comply with these timelines will result in an automatic right of appeal to the next level.

Step 1:

1. The student, parent, or guardian should notify the staff member/teacher of their concern within **five (5) days** of the incident. This may be done through an email, phone call, or conference. The issue should not proceed to the next step without first attempting direct communication. If the scholar, parent, or guardian does not feel comfortable addressing the staff member directly, they may contact school administration instead.
2. If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, the grievant must submit a formal written grievance to the **Grade Level Director** within **ten (10) school days** of the event or action giving rise to the concern.
 - The written grievance must include:
 - The grievant's name and contact information
 - Date of submission
 - A detailed description of the grievance, including dates, times, and specific facts
 - Names of any witnesses
 - Reference to any relevant policies, laws, or regulations
 - Description of prior attempts at resolution

■ The specific remedy or action requested

3. The Grade Level Director shall acknowledge receipt of the grievance within three (3) school days.
4. The Grade Level Director shall investigate the grievance, which may include meetings with the grievant, respondent, and any witnesses.
5. The Grade Level Director shall provide a written decision within ten (10) school days of receiving the grievance, unless additional time is necessary and communicated to the grievant.
 - If a grievance concerns a Grade Level Director, Dean, or Coordinator I, the written grievance must be submitted directly to the **Executive Director**. In this case, the Executive Director will assume the responsibilities normally carried out by the Dean of School, and the grievance will proceed through the same process outlined in this policy.
 - If a grievance concerns the Executive Director, the written grievance must be submitted directly to the **Board Chairperson**. In this case, the Board Chairperson will assume the responsibilities normally carried out by the Executive Director and the grievance will proceed through the same process outlined in this policy.

Step 2:

1. If the grievant is not satisfied with the Grade Level Director's decision, the grievant may appeal to the Executive Director within five (5) school days of receiving the Grade Level Director's decision.
2. The appeal must be in writing and include:
 - a. A copy of the original grievance
 - b. A copy of the Grade Level Director's decision
 - c. A statement explaining why the grievant disagrees with the Grade Level Director's decision
3. The Executive Director shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal within three (3) school days.
4. The Executive Director shall investigate the grievance, which may include meetings with the grievant, respondent, and any witnesses.
5. The Executive Director shall provide a written decision within ten (10) school days of receiving the grievance, unless additional time is necessary and communicated to the grievant.

Step 3:

1. If the grievant is not satisfied with the Executive Director's decision, the grievant may appeal to the Board of Directors within five (5) school days of receiving the Executive Director's decision.
2. The appeal must be in writing and include:
 - A copy of the original grievance
 - A copy of the Executive Director's decision
 - A statement explaining why the grievant disagrees with the Executive Director's decision
3. The Board Chair shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal within three (3) school days.

4. The Executive Director will provide the Board with all objective data and findings from the investigation.
5. The Board will then schedule a hearing within ten (10) school days of receiving the appeal, and the Board chair will designate a committee to conduct an appeal hearing within thirty (30) days of receiving the written appeal.
 - The appeal hearing will include a committee of at least three Board members, and all parties will have the opportunity to present their case.
 - The designated committee will review the grievance record and may, at its discretion, hear additional information from the grievant, respondent, or other relevant parties.
6. After hearing testimonies and reviewing all evidence, the designated committee will present their recommended determination of the appeal to the full Board at the next scheduled Board meeting in a closed session. The Board may confirm, overturn, or modify the committee's recommended determination of the appeal.
7. The Board will issue a written decision within ten (10) school days of the meeting where the grievance was considered. This decision is final, except in cases involving:
 - An alleged violation of state or federal law,
 - An alleged violation of the school's charter agreement with the NC State Board of Education, or
 - An alleged violation of the school's bylaws.

Sexual Discrimination and Harassment

1.008 Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy

It is the policy of Riverside Leadership Academy that students should not be subjected to forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, or hazing, while at school or school-sponsored activities. Furthermore, the policy's intent is to address the issue in a proactive manner through the establishment of a system for educating students and staff at Riverside Leadership Academy regarding the identification, prevention, intervention, and reporting of such harmful acts. Riverside Leadership Academy acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students and strives to create a safe, orderly, caring and inviting school environment to facilitate student learning and achievement. Riverside Leadership Academy prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, family status, socioeconomic background, creed, or any other characteristic prohibited by law. Riverside Leadership Academy will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying in any of its educational or employment activities or programs.

I. Prohibited Behaviors And Consequences

- A. **Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Students:** Students, employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors are expected to behave in a civil and respectful manner. Riverside Leadership Academy expressly prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, and hazing. Students are expected to comply with the behavior standards established by board policy, the Student

Code of Conduct, and any applicable laws. Any violation of this policy is serious and Riverside Leadership Academy shall promptly take appropriate action.

1. Students will be disciplined in accordance with the Riverside Leadership Academy student behavior management plan. Based on the nature and severity of the offense and the circumstances surrounding the incident, the student will be subject to appropriate consequences and remedial actions ranging from positive behavioral interventions up to, and including, expulsion.
 2. When considering if a response beyond the individual level is appropriate, Riverside Leadership Academy will consider the nature and severity of the misconduct to determine whether a classroom or school-wide response is necessary. Such classroom or school-wide responses may include staff training, harassment and bullying prevention programs and other measures deemed appropriate by the Executive Director or designee to address the behavior.
- B. **Retaliation:** Riverside Leadership Academy prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person for reporting or intending to report violations of this policy, supporting someone for reporting or intending to report a violation of this policy or participating in the investigation of reported violations of this policy. After consideration of the nature and circumstances of the reprisal or retaliation and in accordance with applicable laws, policies and regulations, the Executive Director or designee shall determine the consequences and remedial actions for a person found to have engaged in reprisal or retaliation.

II. Application Of Policy

- A. This policy prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying by students, employees, volunteers, contractors, and visitors. This policy is intended to apply to students vis a vis other students, employees,, volunteers, contractors, and visitors. . Riverside Leadership Academy's policies on unlawful discrimination and harassment as applied to employees, volunteers, visitors, and contractors can be found in the school's Employee Handbook. This policy applies to behavior that takes place:
1. In any school building or on any school premises before, during or after school hours;
 2. On any bus or other vehicle as part of any school activity;
 3. During car line;
 4. During any school-sponsored activity or extracurricular activity;
 5. At any time or place when the individual is subject to the authority of school personnel;
 6. At any time or place when the behavior has a direct and immediate effect on maintaining order and discipline in the schools; and
 7. While using school or personal electronic communications.

III. Definitions

- A. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:
1. **Discrimination:** Discrimination means any act or failure to act that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category that is protected by law, such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional.

2. **Harassment:** Harassment is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication that:
 - a) Places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or
 - b) Creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits.
 3. **Bullying:** Bullying means unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying may also place a student in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property. Bullying behavior is often repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.
 - a) Bullying includes intentional actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose or any action that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.
 - b) Bullying can also include behavior that constitutes harassment or sexual harassment and can include cyberbullying.
 - c) **For Cyberbullying:** Refer to *Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy*.
 4. **Hazing:** North Carolina law makes it unlawful for any student in attendance at any school in the State to engage in hazing, or to aid and abet any other student in the commission of this offense. For the purpose of this section hazing is defined as follows: "to subject another student to physical injury as part of an initiation, or as a prerequisite to membership into any organized school group, including any society, athletic team, fraternity or sorority, or other similar group."
 5. **Hostile Environment:** Hostile environment means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as harassment or bullying and that the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is harassment or bullying. A hostile environment may be created through pervasive or persistent misbehavior or a single incident, if sufficiently severe.
 6. **Electronic Communications:** Electronic communications apply to employee and student emails, text messaging, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogging, websites and social networking websites (i.e. Snapchat or Instagram). Employees are required to report any actual or suspected violations of this policy. Students, parents, volunteers, visitors or others are also strongly encouraged to report any actual or suspected incidents of discrimination, harassment or bullying. Reports may be made anonymously, and all reports shall be investigated in accordance with that policy.
- B. Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, behavior described above that is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic that is protected by law or motivated by an individual's association with a person who has or is perceived to have a differentiating characteristic that is protected by law, such as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or age.
1. Examples of behavior that may constitute bullying or harassment include, but are not limited to, verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, lewd propositions, exclusion from peer groups, extortion of money or possessions, implied or stated threats, assault, impeding or blocking movement,

offensive touching or any physical interference with normal work or movement, and visual insults, such as derogatory posters or cartoons.

a) Legitimate age-appropriate pedagogical techniques are not considered harassment or bullying.

- C. Harassment, including Sexual or Gender-based harassment, is not limited to specific situations or relationships. It may occur between fellow students or co-workers, between supervisors and subordinates, between employees and students, or between non-employees, including visitors, and employees or students. Harassment may occur between members of the opposite sex or the same sex.
- D. Sexual harassment is one type of harassment. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
 - 1. Submission to the conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's academic progress or completion of a school-related activity;
 - 2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used in evaluating the student's performance within a course of study or other school-related activity; or
 - 3. Such conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a student's educational performance, limiting a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or environment, or creating an abusive, intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment.
- E. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, deliberate, unwelcome touching that has sexual connotations or is of a sexual nature, suggestions or demands for sexual involvement accompanied by implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats, pressure for sexual activity, continued or repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances or propositions, continued or repeated verbal remarks about an individual's body, sexually degrading words used toward an individual or to describe an individual, sexual violence, or the display of sexually suggestive drawings, objects, pictures or written materials.
- F. Acts of verbal, nonverbal or physical aggression, intimidation or hostility based on sex, but not involving sexual activity or language, may be combined with incidents of sexually harassing conduct to determine if the incidents of sexually harassing conduct are sufficiently serious to create a sexually hostile environment.
- G. Gender-based harassment is also a type of harassment. Gender-based harassment may include acts of verbal, nonverbal or physical aggression, intimidation or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping but not involving conduct of a sexual nature.

IV. Training And Programs

- A. The Executive Director or other designated Title IX Coordinator shall establish training and other programs that are designed to help eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying and to foster an environment of understanding and respect for all members of the school community. Information about this policy and the related complaint procedure must be included in the training plan. The training or programs should:
 - 1. Provide examples of behavior that constitutes unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying;
 - 2. Teach employees to identify groups that may be the target of unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying; and

3. Train school employees to be alert to locations where such behavior may occur, including locations within school buildings, campus wide locations, on cell phones and on the Internet.

V. Notice

- A. The Executive Director or designated Title IX Coordinator is responsible for providing effective notice to students, parents and employees of the procedures for reporting and investigating complaints of unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- B. This policy will be posted on the School's website, and copies of the policy are available at the front office. Notice of this policy will appear in all student and employee handbooks and in any School publication that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures and standards of conduct for students and employees.

VI. Coordinator

- A. The Executive Director or designee shall appoint one or more individuals to coordinate the School's efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under federal non-discrimination laws. These responsibilities include investigating any complaints communicated to Riverside Leadership Academy alleging noncompliance with Title VII or Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and/or the Boy Scouts Act, or alleging actions which would be prohibited by those laws.
- B. The Executive Director or designee shall publish the name, and phone number of the compliance coordinator in a manner intended to ensure that students, employees, parents and other individuals who participate in the school's programs are aware of the coordinator.

VII. Records And Reporting

- A. The Executive Director or designee shall maintain confidential records of complaints or reports of unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying. The records will identify the names of all individuals accused of such offenses and the resolution of such complaints or reports.
- B. The Executive Director shall maintain records of training conducted and corrective action(s) or other steps taken by Riverside Leadership Academy to provide an environment free of unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- C. The Executive Director shall report to the Board all verified cases of unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying under this policy.

VIII. Evaluation

- A. The Executive Director or designee shall evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to correct or prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying and shall share these evaluations periodically with the Board.

IX. Reporting

- A. **Reporting Incidents of Bullying:** Students and families may report incidents of bullying directly to any teacher, administrator, school counselor or to the Executive Director verbally, via email/electronic communication, or in writing. Incidents of bullying can also be reported using RLA's anonymous tip application.
- B. **Reporting Incidents of Discrimination or Harrassment:** For discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment complaints, students or their parents/guardians should contact the students'

teacher, school counselor, Executive Director, and/or Title IX coordinator immediately and file a complaint.

X. Investigation Process

- A. The Title IX coordinator is charged with ensuring that all such complaints are timely, impartially, and appropriately investigated in accordance with applicable law. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of the complainant. There may be times where confidentiality may not be possible for Riverside Leadership Academy to conduct a thorough investigation. There may also be instances where Riverside Leadership Academy has a legal obligation to report certain information it receives to state or local authorities.
- B. While the timeframe for completing an investigation into individual complaints may vary depending on the circumstances, the Title IX coordinator will ensure that timeframes are reasonable and endeavor to complete any investigation, including any decision and hearing, within sixty (60) days of the filing of a complaint.
- C. The Title IX coordinator shall designate an impartial investigator to conduct the investigation. The investigator shall have full authority to conduct an investigation, including the authority to interview witnesses and make a decision about the complaint. The investigator shall timely provide written notice of the outcome of the complaint to the relevant parties.
- D. In the event a party is not satisfied with the investigator's decision, it may appeal that decision to an impartial hearing panel (explained below). Such appeal shall be made in writing and provided to the Title IX coordinator within five (5) days of the investigator's decision.
- E. Upon appeal of the investigator's decision, the Riverside Leadership Academy Board of Directors will appoint a panel of three board members to serve as the impartial hearing panel. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws. All parties will have an opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence and to be represented by an attorney or third party of their choosing. After the hearing, the three member hearing panel will make a decision and will provide written notice of the outcome of the appeal.

Appeals of Long-term Suspension and Expulsion Recommendations

North Carolina statutes set for the due process notice and hearing requirements in the event of a recommendation that a student be suspended or expelled from the School. These are addressed previously in the section on Disciplinary Policies and Procedures for Serious Offenses.

Requests for Curricular Review and Appeals

State law allows parents to request consideration and review regarding various statutorily designated matters. These include the following:

- Parent Concerns Regarding School Procedure or Practice Related to Student Physical and Mental Health
- Curricular, Instructional, and Media Center Materials

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- Parent Information Requests

Contact the school's administration regarding any such matter of concern.

Lost and Found

Riverside Leadership Academy's Lost and Found is maintained by our Pirate Support Network. Items that are found on campus and not claimed by their owner will be placed in the Lost and Found area.

Families and scholars are encouraged to check the Lost and Found regularly for missing items. At the end of each month, a reminder will be sent to families to review the Lost and Found before items are removed.

Any unclaimed items remaining after the monthly reminder will be laundered, when appropriate, and placed in the school store or donated at the school's discretion. To help ensure lost items are returned promptly, families are encouraged to label clothing, water bottles, lunch boxes, and other personal belongings with the scholar's name.

Animals/Pets

To ensure the safety, health, and comfort of all scholars, staff, and visitors, pets and other animals are not permitted inside school buildings or on school grounds. The only exception is for service animals as defined by applicable law or animals that have been specifically approved by school administration for an educational purpose. Families should not bring pets to campus during arrival, dismissal, or school events unless prior approval has been granted.

Payments and Outstanding Fees

Families are responsible for paying any fees incurred during the school year, including but not limited to lunch account balances, property damage fees, lost or damaged school materials, and other school-related charges. All payments should be made through Infinite Campus whenever possible.

Scholars with outstanding fees may be restricted from participating in certain school activities, including field trips, dances, and other extracurricular events, until the balance has been paid. In addition, report cards and other school records may be withheld until all outstanding financial obligations have been satisfied.

Families are encouraged to monitor their accounts regularly and contact the school office with any questions regarding fees or payments.

Reporting Suspicious Behavior

The safety and security of our scholars, staff, and visitors is a shared responsibility. Any scholar, parent, staff member, or visitor who observes suspicious behavior, concerning statements, potential safety threats, or unauthorized individuals on campus should immediately report the concern to a staff member or the Dean of Students and School Safety.

Reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. Individuals are encouraged to report concerns even if they are unsure whether a situation poses a threat. Timely reporting helps maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all members of the Riverside Leadership Academy community.

Solicitation and Fundraising

To maintain a safe and focused learning environment, solicitation, sales, distribution of materials, or fundraising activities by outside individuals, organizations, or groups are not permitted on school property without prior approval from the Executive Director.

Any requests to conduct fundraising activities, distribute information, collect donations, or promote products, services, or events must be submitted to and approved by the Executive Director before any activity takes place on campus or through school communication channels.

Unauthorized solicitation or fundraising activities are prohibited and may be discontinued at the discretion of school administration.

Scholar Recognition

Riverside Leadership Academy values and celebrates scholar achievement throughout the school year. All recognition events will occur during the school day to ensure maximum scholar participation and instructional continuity.

The first quarter awards ceremony will be an in-house celebration for scholars and staff only. During the second quarter/first semester, awards ceremonies will be held with parents invited to attend in recognition of scholars' accomplishments.

Third quarter and final year-end recognitions will be highlighted during an open house event, where certificates will be displayed to honor scholars and their achievements. After the display period concludes, certificates will be sent home with scholars so families may celebrate their accomplishments.