

# CODE OF RESPONSIBLE ETHICS FOR FAMILIES, VISITORS & VOLUNTEERS



## Statement of Purpose

The participation of families (parents, guardians and caregivers), volunteers and visitors in the learning process and education community is directly correlated to academic success. Understanding this vital connection, Richmond Public Schools (RPS) prioritizes strategies to build community engagement that welcomes all. Without meaningful parent and school partnerships, efforts in isolation to increase academic achievement will be futile. The Code of Responsible Ethics is not intended to be punitive. Rather, it is intended to serve as a guide for families, volunteers and visitors working with schools to ensure the success of all students. Positive relationships between home and schools are mutually beneficial for students, families and the school community, and can be inclusive of:

### Benefits for Students

- Improved student achievement, including math and reading scores.
- Higher motivation to excel in school.
- Improved school attendance and engagement.
- Improved social, emotional and behavioral skills.

### Rewards for Families

- The opportunity to closely monitor student performance and share challenges presented in school.
- Improved relationships and communication with teachers.
- Providing a voice in decisions that enhance the academic environment of the school and improve the educational experience.

### Advantages for the School Community

- Immediate access to engage family support on school initiatives.
- Improved School Culture and Climate.
- Improved parent teacher relationships.
- Community support for educational excellence in all neighborhood schools.

The Code of Responsible Ethics (SCORE) applies to all parents, caregivers, volunteers and visitors who interact with schools and offices within Richmond City Schools (RPS). It also applies to:

- Persons who are present at school, in person or virtually, and at bus stops or serving as chaperons.
- Persons attending school-sponsored activities, meetings, and functions during and outside of school hours.

- In order to create a culture and climate of support for students, there is an expectation for all stakeholders to work together to ensure that:
- Every student achieves academically,
- Develops positive social, emotional and coping tools.
- Gains readiness for college, vocations and post secondary careers.

The overarching expectation is that we work collaboratively to address challenges related to conflicts, disagreements, programs and services before they become a source of discord. Any interaction between school personnel and families, volunteers and visitors should start with assuming good intentions in others. We should all commit to making a sincere effort to appreciate each other's perspective as we work together to support our students. Our commitment to positive and effective interactions should include:

- Respecting each other's time and responsibilities;
- Agreeing on a mutual time and location to meet and/or discuss an issue;
- Listening carefully with a respectful exchange of opinions and suggestions;
- Approaching disagreements in a manner that treats others as essential parts of the decision making process and encourages mutual problem solving;
- Providing the opportunity for either party to seek the support from a member of the Central Office Leadership team (Principal Director or Manager) or Executive Leadership (Chief) when there are unresolved disagreements or when an answer to a difficult situation can't be reached.

## Guidelines

In an effort to maintain an orderly, respectful and secure educational environment for all students and staff, it is important that families and visitors are aware of their responsibilities and understand that adherence to these guidelines is essential for each school and office within RPS. Penalties for lack of adherence to this Code of Responsible Ethics are enforceable by RPS School Leaders, RPS Department of Care & Safety and/or the Richmond Police Department (RPD).

## Responsibilities

1. Recognize that the education of children is a joint responsibility of families and the school community.
2. Convey a supportive attitude toward education and Richmond Public Schools.
3. Build mutually respectful and productive relationships with administrators, teachers, school staff, bus drivers, other families and their children's friends.
4. Review the Student Code of Responsible Ethics with their child and sign it.
5. Model appropriate behavior and adherence to policies and procedures.
6. Discuss with students expectations for adhering to classroom rules and the overall purpose while eliminating potential consequences associated with noncompliance.
7. Ensure that students bring only items appropriate and related to the instructional program at school.
8. Request support from appropriate school system staff to help their children to deal effectively with bullying and peer pressure.
9. Seek assistance for handling concerns:
  - Always allowing for the opportunity for school leadership to address concerns.
  - Start at the school level with the classroom teacher.
  - Alert school leaders when you have concerns with a teacher or other school-related issues.
10. Inform school officials of changes in the home situation that might affect student conduct, attendance or performance.

## Public Conduct on School Property

Schools are a place of work and learning. All persons on school property or attending a school function shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner. School Leaders or their designee is responsible for all persons in the building and on the grounds. Anyone who is not a regular staff member or student of the school is considered a "visitor." All visitors are required to abide by the rules for public conduct on school property contained in the RPS visitors policies, procedures, and state of Virginia law. All visitors must comply with providing a copy of their government-issued identification, which includes the visitor's name, date of birth and photo, to the school office to be scanned into the Visitor Management System (RAPTOR). Persons who do not provide required identification will not be permitted on premises. Visitors must be escorted and/or accompanied by a RPS staff member at all times throughout their visit. Visitors are required to wear the RPS Visitors badge while at RPS schools or office buildings.

## Conduct Prohibited on School Property

No person shall:

1. Act in a threatening manner (i.e., gross disrespect, threatening, using loud or offensive or profane language, swearing, or displaying temper, or causing disruption to professional or academic climate) toward any staff member or student.
2. Approach someone else's child in order to discuss an issue or chastise them. (Such an approach to a child may be seen as an assault on that child and may have legal consequences); 3. Injure any other person or threaten to do so.
3. Damage or destroy school property or the property of a teacher, administrator, other district employee or any other person lawfully on school property, including graffiti or arson.
4. Disrupt classes, school programs or other school activities.
5. Send abusive, harassing, or threatening emails or text/voicemail/ phone messages or other inappropriate written communication.
6. Record or videotape any interactions within the school building where there is an expectation of privacy (classroom instruction, conversations with teachers, students, staff), unless all participants to the conversation have given their permission for the recording or videotaping.
8. Misuse social media to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, school staff, and/or other parents/ students through social networking and websites.
9. Misuse social media for cyberbullying and/or to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry.
10. Disrupt school transportation or confront transportation staff on the bus, the road, in neighborhoods, or on school system grounds.
11. Distribute or wear materials on school grounds or at school functions that are suggestive and inappropriate, obscene, advocate illegal action, promote alcohol or illegal substances, appear libelous, obstruct the rights of others, or are disruptive to the school program.
12. Intimidate, harass or discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age.
13. Enter any portion of the school premises without authorization or remain in any building or facility after it is normally closed.
14. Obstruct the free movement of any person in any place to which this code applies.
15. Violate the traffic laws, parking regulations or other restrictions of vehicles while on school property.

16. Possess, consume, sell, distribute or exchange alcoholic beverages, tobacco, controlled substances, or be under the influence of either on school property or at school functions.
17. Possess or use weapons in or on school property or at any school function, except in the case of law enforcement officers.
18. Loiter on school property or at school functions.
19. Gamble on school property or at school functions.
20. Refuse to comply with any reasonable order of identifiable school district officials performing their duties;
21. Willfully incite others to commit any of the acts prohibited by this code.
22. Violate any federal or state statute, local ordinance, or Board policy while on school property or while at a school function.

## Tips for Families, Volunteers & Visitors

On occasion, there may be strong disagreement over a RPS school leaders or school division's decision, policy or procedure. Individuals may refer to RPS administrative policies or inquire from a school leader or Central Office Department if there is an appeal process for the issue.

Below you will find recommendations for how to effectively approach and address concerns:

### Organize Your Thoughts

Clearly state the issue or the problem you are experiencing. Make a list of questions you would like to ask. Identify several possible solutions you think would resolve your concern.

### Stay Calm – Maintain a Civil Tone

Focus on the facts, not on the person with whom you are discussing the issue. Avoid blaming, demanding, and saying "you should" or "you better" Say "I believe...", "I feel...", "I encourage."

### Clarify, Rather Than Assume

If you are not sure about something or what you heard, ask for an explanation or clarification. Try to understand the other person's view of the situation and the solutions that are being offered.

### Be Flexible

Recognize that problems can be solved in more than one way. Be open to alternative solutions.

### Keep Records

Make notes of meeting dates and times, who you talked to, and what was discussed. Save copies of letters, forms and other material related to your concern.

## Outcomes for Violations of the Code of Responsible Ethics (CORE)

The following ramifications have been established in accordance with state law and RPS administrative policies and procedures. School Leaders or their designees and school security inclusive of Care & Safety Associates have the authority to enforce the Code of Responsible Ethics for Families, Volunteers and Visitors, and are authorized to determine the appropriate offense level outlined below. Depending upon the severity of the incident, parents/caregivers, volunteers and/or visitors may be ejected from or otherwise banned from RPS Schools and participation in school-sponsored activities. Incidents where remediation is viable, a verbal warning will be provided. Should a parent/caregiver, volunteer and/or visitor fail to heed the direction issued in the verbal warning, a ban or other restrictions designed to deter inappropriate conduct will be enforced. No restriction, however, will prevent the parent/guardian from working collaboratively with the school to meet the child's educational needs, nor will a parent/guardian be excluded from a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

### Level 1 Infractions

Level 1 infractions are those that do not jeopardize the safety or welfare of students or staff. Outcomes are geared to deter and correct the actions of parents/caregivers, visitors and volunteers. Failure to act accordingly will result in the escalation to a Level 2 Response.

**First Infraction:** Verbal Warning.

**Second Infraction:** Written letter of concern.

**Third Infraction:** Mediation w/ parent and school leader when appropriate.

Sample Level 1 Infractions:

- Disruptive behavior at school or school events: This includes yelling, arguing with staff, using profanity or otherwise disrupting the learning environment.
- Threatening behavior towards staff: This includes making threats of violence or harm to any students, staff member or other persons on school property
- Failure to follow school policies and procedures: This includes failing to pick up a child on time, failing to provide required documentation, or failing to comply with dress code requirements.
- Failure to communicate with school staff: This includes failing to return phone calls or emails from school staff, or failing to attend scheduled meetings.
- Interfering with the educational process: This includes disrupting classes, interfering with school staff, or otherwise interfering with the learning of students.

## • Level 2 Infractions

A parent/caregiver, volunteer or visitor in violation of any portion of the CORE is subject to being banned from school property for a specified period of time and will be subject to legal action both civil and criminal if warranted. Level 1 offenses, if repeated multiple times, will be subject to a level 2 response. When individual actions jeopardizes the academic environment and/or the safety and welfare of students and staff a ban letter will be issued.

**First Infraction:** Issuance of a formal “Ban Letter” from singular or multiple RPS schools and offices. This formal notice can be instituted for a quarter, semester or a full year. Although the duration of the ban will be at the school leaders discretion, the ban can be appealed.

**Second Infraction:** May involve law enforcement

### Sample Level 2 Infractions:

- Physical assault or battery: This includes hitting, shoving, or otherwise physically harming any student, staff member, or other person on school property.
- Verbal abuse: This includes making insults, threats, or other derogatory comments to any student, staff member, or other person on school property.
- Harassment: This includes engaging in a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, annoy, or alarm any student, staff member, or other person on school property.
- Possession or use of weapons, alcohol, or drugs on school property: This includes bringing any type of weapon, alcohol, or drugs onto school property, or using any type of weapon, alcohol, or drugs on school property.
- Indecent exposure: This includes exposing oneself in a lewd or indecent manner on school property.

## Right to Appeal

Level 1 infractions are not appealable. If a parent/caregiver, volunteer or visitor would like to appeal a Level 2 infraction, a written request with supporting evidence must be submitted to the Principal Directors for Elementary or Secondary Schools within five calendar days of receiving the Ban Letter. Email requests are acceptable.

Upon receipt of a request to appeal, the Principal Director has five calendar days to issue a written finding to either uphold, amend or abolish the ban as written. If the Principal Director upholds the decision of the principal, a second level of appeal is available through the RPS Chief Academic Officers for Elementary and Secondary Schools or the Superintendent's designee.

Richmond City Schools has five Principal Directors and two Chief Academic Officers.

### Shayla Holman

- Pre-K Principal Director
- sholeman@rvaschools.net
- (804) 780-7757

### Lucy Michelle Jones

- Elementary Principal Director Cluster 1
- ljones12@rvaschools.net
- (804) 215-2959

### Indira Lipscomb-Quarles

- Elementary Principal Director Cluster 2
- iqarles@rvaschools.net
- (804) 215-2959

### Latonya Waller

- Middle School Principal Director Cluster 3
- lwaller@rvaschools.net
- (804) 215-2959

A written request for review of the appeal denial must be sent to the appropriate Chief Academic Officer within five calendar days of the Principal Directors written decision. After receipt of the written request, the Chief Academic Officer has five calendar days to issue a written finding. The third and final level of appeal available is to the Richmond City School Board. The appeals must be filed within 30 calendar days of the decision issued by the Chief Academic Officer or Superintendent's designee. Appeal request must be sent to:

### Patrece S. Richardson

Clerk of the School Board, Richmond Public Schools  
301 North 9th Street, Richmond, VA 23219  
prichard@rvaschools.net | (804) 780-7716

## Resources

### Offices

- [Academic Office \(Parent Portal\)](#)
- [Hearing Office](#)
- [Culture Climate & Student Services](#)
- [Care & Safety](#)

### Administrative Procedures

- [Student Caregiver Bill of Rights](#)
- [RPS Visitors Policy](#)
- [RPS Attendance Policy](#)

### Dr. Willie Bell

- High School Principal Director Cluster 4
- wbell@rvaschools.net
- (804) 215-2959

### Dr. Leslie Wiggins

- Chief Academic Officer Elementary Clusters 1 & 2
- lwiggins@rvaschools.net
- (804) 780-7709

### Solomon Jefferson

- Chief Academic Officer Secondary Cluster 3 & 4
- sjefferson@rvaschools.net
- (804) 780-7709

- [FOIA RPS Procedure](#)

- [Relations with Law Enforcement](#)
- [Student Suspension & Expulsion](#)
- [Student Records](#)

### Legal Authority

- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
- [VA Compulsory School Attendance](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act](#)
- [Trespass on School Property](#)