WELCOME RUDY RIDGERUNNERS!

-Your Guide to Becoming a Student Hero-

This handbook is your special guide to being a student at Rudy Elementary School! It's filled with important information to help you have a fantastic year of learning, making friends, and growing. At Rudy Elementary, all the grown-ups are here to help you do your best in school and learn all sorts of exciting things. We want you to love learning and feel happy and safe here. Think of this handbook as your map to success at our amazing school!

Section 1: Being Here Matters! Why Coming to School Every Day is Super Important

Did you know that being at school every single day is like giving your brain a superpower for learning? Every day you're in class, you get to discover new things, share ideas, and learn with your friends and teachers. When you miss school, you miss out on these fun learning adventures, and it can make it tricky to catch up. Let's learn why being present is so important for you!

It doesn't matter if the absence is excused (like being sick) or unexcused; if you're not in class, you're missing out on learning.[3]

Missing just 2 days a month when you're young can make it harder to keep up with your learning all through elementary school.[2]

How Missing School Affects Your Learning – Now and Later!

Scientists and teachers have learned that missing school really does make learning harder. It's not just about that day, but it can affect you as you get older too! Think of learning like building with blocks – each day you learn something new that helps you build the next part of your knowledge tower.[4] When you miss a day, you miss a block, and it's hard to build your tower as tall and strong.

Kids who miss a lot of school in kindergarten and first grade often find it harder to read as well as their friends by third grade.

What Happens Later if You Miss Too Much School Now?

- **School Can Get Harder:** Kids who miss a lot of school in elementary and middle school sometimes don't go to college as much.[9] Missing just 10 days in 9th grade can make it less likely you'll finish high school and go to college.[9]

Coming to school regularly is even more important than test scores for making sure kids finish high school.

It's so important for you and your family to know that every school day is a chance to learn something amazing! Your teachers and everyone at Rudy Elementary want you to be here every day, ready to learn.[2] If you're having trouble coming to school, please talk to your teacher or another trusted adult. We can help!

Section 2: Our Classroom: A Great Place to Learn!

Ridgerunners, your classroom is a special place where you and your friends get to learn and grow. To make sure everyone can do their best learning, we need to keep our classroom a safe, respectful, and focused place. When there are too many interruptions or distractions, it's like trying to read a book at a loud party – it's really hard to concentrate! These interruptions take away learning time from you and your classmates.

Why Interruptions Make Learning Hard

When someone is disruptive in class, it means they are doing something that stops the teacher from teaching or makes it hard for other students to learn.[11]

Did you know? When there are a lot of disruptions, classrooms can lose almost HALF of their learning time!

That's a lot of lost time for learning cool new things! When your teacher has to stop teaching to ask someone to be quiet or to follow directions, it breaks the flow of the lesson. This makes it harder for everyone to learn, not just the student who was being disruptive.[11] It can also make other students feel less excited about learning.[11] Even if you're trying your best to learn, if there are lots of interruptions, your teacher might have to teach things over and over, which slows everyone down.[12]

Staying on Task: Your Job as a Learner

Being "off-task" means you're not focused on what your teacher has asked you to do.[13] It's okay to lose focus for a tiny bit sometimes, but if you're off-task a lot, it makes it harder for you to learn.[13] When you're off-task, you're not listening, not talking about ideas, and not practicing new skills. All those things are super important for making your brain stronger!

Blurting: Why It's Not Okay

Have you ever been so excited to share an answer that you just shouted it out? That's called "blurting." Even if you have a great idea, blurting out without raising your hand and waiting to be called on can actually make learning harder for everyone.[14]

Here's why blurting isn't helpful:

1. **It Stops Others From Thinking:** When someone blurts out an answer, it doesn't give other students a chance to think about the question and come up with their own ideas. That thinking time is super important for learning!
2. **It Makes it Harder for Others to Focus:** When there are unexpected shout-outs, it's like a surprise noise that makes everyone else's brain have to work extra hard to get back to learning.[15]
3. **It Can Confuse Others:** Lots of blurting can make it hard for everyone to pay attention and understand what the teacher is saying.[15]
4. **Not Everyone Gets a Turn:** If some students are always blurting, other students who are waiting patiently might not get a chance to share their smart ideas.

Because blurting makes learning tricky for everyone, we need to practice raising our hands and waiting for our turn to speak. Your teachers will help you learn how to do this so everyone gets a chance to share and learn.[14]

Toys Stay Home, Learning Stays at School!

To help everyone focus on learning and to keep your special things safe, please leave your toys, electronic games, trading cards, sports equipment, balls, and other fun things at home. Sometimes these items can:

- **Be Distracting:** It's hard to think about math when your favorite toy is in your desk!
- **Cause Arguments:** Sometimes toys can lead to disagreements with friends.
- **Get Lost or Stolen:** We don't want you to be sad if something special gets lost.
- **Be Unsafe:** Some toys aren't safe for school.

If there's a special day where your teacher says it's okay to bring something, they will let you and your family know. Otherwise, let's keep our classroom a toy-free zone for learning!

The "T" Sign: Our School Signal for Quiet

You'll see teachers and other grown-ups at Rudy Elementary sometimes make a "T" shape with their hands (one hand flat on top, and the other hand straight up and down under it). This is our school's special signal for everyone to be quiet. When you see the "T" sign, it means it's time to stop talking, listen, and get ready for what's next. This helps us in the classroom, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and everywhere in the school! Using the "T" sign helps us all have a calm and quiet place to learn.

Keeping our classroom a great place to learn is a team effort! When everyone follows these rules, we all get to learn more and have more fun.

Section 3: You ARE in Charge of Your Learning! (Student Agency)

Hey Ridgerunners! Did you know that YOU have a super important job at school? It's called taking charge of your own learning! This means you get to be an active part of your education, set goals, and see how much you grow. When you take ownership of your learning, school becomes even more exciting, and you'll be amazed at what you can achieve!

Why Taking Responsibility for Your Learning is Cool

Being responsible for your learning means you understand that what you do in class really matters.[17] It's not just about finishing your work; it's about trying your best, asking questions, and being proud of what you learn.[17] When you're a responsible learner, you're more likely to keep trying even when things are tricky, ask for help when you need it, and think hard about new ideas. This starts when you're young, by doing your best on your schoolwork because YOU want to, not just because someone tells you to.[19]

How We Learn Together: Talking and Teamwork!

Your classroom at Rudy Elementary is set up so YOU get to do a lot of the talking and working together, not just listening to the teacher talk all day.[20] We believe that you learn best when you're actively involved!

Here's what that looks like:

- **Learning is Active and Fun:** You won't just sit and listen. You'll work with partners or in small groups to explore ideas, solve problems, and do projects.[20]
- **Your Voice Matters:** We want to hear your ideas! You'll get to share what you think, ask questions, and talk about different ways to solve problems.[11] This helps you understand things better and makes you feel more confident.
- **Thinking Hard and Solving Problems:** You'll get to work on interesting questions and activities that make you think hard and work with your classmates to find answers.[21]
- **Teachers are Your Guides:** Your teachers are here to help you! They plan fun activities, ask questions to help you think even deeper, give you feedback, and make sure everyone gets a chance to share.[20] They help create a classroom where you feel safe to try new things and share your thoughts.[21]

This way of learning helps you take charge because you see how your ideas and efforts make a difference! For example, sometimes you might become an "expert" on one part of a lesson and then teach it to your group. This shows how important everyone's part is for the whole group to learn.[17]

Setting Goals, Tracking Your Progress, and Sharing Your Success!

A big part of being in charge of your learning is knowing how to set goals, see how you're doing, and share all the great things you've learned. At Rudy Elementary, your teachers will help you with this in reading and math:

1. **Setting Your Goals:** You'll look at how you're doing in class (maybe using scores from tests like MAP Growth) and think about what you want to get better at. With your teacher's help, you'll set goals that are just right for you.[18] Your teachers will talk with you about what's important to you and what you already know, so your goals make sense for YOU.[18]
2. **Tracking Your Journey:** You'll get to use cool tools like data notebooks or charts to see how you're moving towards your goals.[18] Maybe you'll make a graph of your scores or keep a list of all the new skills you've learned! You'll also talk with your teacher regularly to see how it's going and if you need to change anything.[18]
3. **Sharing Your Learning Story:** One of the most exciting parts is when you get to lead a conference and share your learning with your family and teacher![22] You'll show them your work, talk about your goals, explain how you've grown in reading and math, and discuss what you're proud of and what you want to work on next.[22] This helps you think about not just *what* you learned, but *how* you learned it![25]

This whole process of setting goals, tracking them, and sharing your progress helps you become a super learner because you get to see your own successes and plan your next steps![23]

Growing AND Knowing: Why Both Are Important for YOU!

At Rudy Elementary, we think it's important to see two things: how much you **know** (like knowing your grade-level skills) and how much you **grow** (how much progress you make over time, no matter where you started). Focusing on your growth is super important because everyone starts in a different place and learns at their own speed.[26]

When we look at your growth, it means that even if you started needing a little extra help, we can celebrate all the amazing progress you make! [26] It helps your teachers see exactly what you need so they can help you even better.[26]

This idea of focusing on growth helps everyone feel like they can always get better, which makes learning more exciting and helps all students succeed.[26] It means we don't just think you're either "good" at something or "not good," but that everyone can improve with effort![26]

We believe this so much, and we want you to believe it too:

Whether you find school easy or a bit tricky, you deserve to learn and grow as much as possible every single day!

This means we want to help our students who are already doing great to learn even more and reach for new challenges too! By focusing on "getting better every day" instead of "being perfect," we know every Rudy Ridgerunner will keep learning and succeeding.[26]

Section 4: Being a Rudy Ridgerunner: Our Promises to Each Other

Being a Rudy Ridgerunner is special! This handbook has talked about many important things – like coming to school every day, keeping our classrooms great for learning, and you taking charge of your own learning journey. To make all of this happen, we all have a part to play. This section is about what it means to be part of our Rudy Elementary community and how we can all work together.

Our Ridgerunner Values: What We Believe In

As Rudy Ridgerunners, we all agree to:

- **Know That Being Here is Important:** We understand that coming to school helps us learn and grow. We will try our best to be here every day, and if we need help, we'll talk to our families and teachers.
- **Help Make Our Classrooms Great for Learning:** We will do our part to keep our classrooms focused and respectful so everyone can learn without too many interruptions.
- **Take Charge of Our Own Learning and Growth:** We will try our best to be responsible for our learning, set goals with our teachers, and be proud of how much we grow and learn.
- **Be Fair and Kind to Everyone:** We believe every student deserves to learn and feel good at school, no matter what. We will support each other.

These aren't just words; these are actions we will all try to live by every day at Rudy Elementary!

Teamwork Makes Your Mind Work!

For our school to be the best it can be, we all need to work together like a team – students, teachers, and families! This handbook gives us some good ideas, but it works best when we all try to follow them together. As students, you can help by:

- **Talking and Listening:** Share your ideas in class, and listen when others are sharing. If you have a problem, talk to a grown-up you trust.
- **Following School Rules:** When everyone follows the rules, our school is safer and more fun for everyone.
- **Always Learning and Trying Your Best:** Be curious, ask questions, and always try your best in everything you do.

This handbook is here to help us all be part of a school where everyone feels supported and ready to learn.

A Final Thought: You Are Important to Us!

Everything we do here at Rudy Elementary is for YOU, our amazing students! It's a privilege for the adults here to be part of your learning adventure, and we are so excited to help you learn and grow. We promise to make Rudy Elementary a place where you feel safe, happy, challenged, and excited to learn every day.

Let's all work together, using the ideas in this handbook, to make this school year your best one yet! Go Ridgerunners!

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