



Richard Yoakley School 2025-2026

"Knowing my True North gives me the courage to focus my energy where I believe it should be, not according to what is popular or pleasing to others."

~ Jennifer Cummings

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WELCOME

Richard Yoakley School is committed to fostering a community built on mutual respect.

All members of our school community—teachers, administrators, support staff, students, parents, and guests—are expected to follow the school-wide expectations to be safe, respectful, and responsible, treating others as they would like to be treated.

Everyone on campus is expected to act in a way that promotes a safe and supportive environment, ensuring all individuals feel secure both physically and emotionally.

This handbook is intended to inform students and guardians of the policies and procedures at Richard Yoakley School.

It is each student's responsibility to understand and follow the guidelines outlined in this handbook, as well as all policies set forth by the Knox County Board of Education.

We Believe ... in students and each other.

The Vision of Richard Yoakley School:

To provide a safe, supportive, and restorative learning community where every student develops the skills and confidence to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

The Mission of Richard Yoakley School:

To partner with students, families, and base school staff to reaffirm a student's strong educational foundation rooted in integrity, self-esteem, and a belief in the importance of lifelong learning. Our mission is

to restore students and to help them become healthy, productive, and responsible citizens who return to base school focused on success.

General Information

Communication

ParentSquare - Knox County Schools will continue to use ParentSquare for all our communication with families. This platform will provide additional features and flexibility, including an easy-to-use dashboard to create posts and send direct messages, social media capabilities, newsletters, secure student-specific document delivery, automated attendance notices, integrated language translation, and more. If prompted, choose "Sign in with Google" to [log in](#) to the ParentSquare site.

Dates to Remember

September 11, 2025 (4:00-6:00 pm)	Title I Annual Meeting and Parent/Teacher Conferences
August 7, 2025	First Half Day
September 17, 2025	Student Half Day
October 6-October 10, 2025	Fall Break
November 4, 2025	Student Holiday
November 19, 2025	Student Half Day
November 26-November 28, 2025	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 19, 2025	Student Half Day
December 22-January 2, 2026	Winter Break

[2025-2026 KCS Calendar](#)

Richard Yoakley Standard Operation Guidelines

Dress Code Policy

All students are expected to follow the Richard Yoakley School dress code policy. The guidelines are as follows:

Tops:

- Solid black polo, t-shirt, sweater, or sweatshirt
- No hoods, pockets, or zippers

Bottoms:

- Solid blue or black denim or khaki pants
- No leggings, jeggings, joggers, or shorts
- No holes in pants
- No shorts or leggings are to be worn under jeans or pants
- Pants must be worn at the waist (no sagging)

Footwear:

- Tennis shoes only
- No sandals, slides, Crocs, house shoes, or boots

Accessories:

- Belts (if worn) must not have studs or oversized buckles

Additional Notes:

- Any clothing or item that does not meet the RYS dress code or violates other school policies will be confiscated and held until picked up by a parent or guardian.
- Final decisions regarding dress code compliance are at the discretion of school administration.
- If a t-shirt or sweatshirt is needed, the student will be provided with one (pending availability); however, if another is needed, there will be a \$5.00 charge

Refer to the KCS dress code policy for all other prohibited items. [KCS Dress Code Policy](#)

Arrival and Check-in Procedures

Students may enter the building through Door 6 at the back of the school starting at 8:00 a.m. No student will be allowed to enter the building before 8:00 a.m.

Upon entry, students will report directly to Room 25A, where the check-in process will take place. The following procedures will be completed:

- Jackets will be removed then searched and may be retrieved at the end of the day
- Shoes will be removed and shaken
- Pockets will be emptied (Students do not need to bring in any items to school)
- Pant waistband will be checked
- Undershirt will be checked

After completing the classroom check-in, students will proceed through a hallway metal detector. If the metal detector is activated, security staff will conduct an additional screening using a handheld metal detector. Once cleared, students will proceed to breakfast.

Dismissal Procedures

- At 3:30 p.m., staff will begin calling bus numbers as they arrive.
- Students will exit the building through the downstairs doors.
- A designated staff member will stand at the classroom door to monitor and enforce hallway expectations.
- Additional staff will be stationed throughout the building to assist with dismissal supervision.
- At 3:45 pm, all students will be called to room 25A

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is essential for academic success. Students must attend school daily to stay current with instruction and maintain progress. School attendance is required by law, and Knox County Schools (KCS) is obligated to record all absences as either excused or unexcused. The principal has the discretion to determine whether an absence is excused based on the documentation and circumstances provided.

Excused absences may include:

- Student illness
- Death in the immediate family
- Recognized religious holidays
- Verifiable family emergencies

Documentation Requirements

To excuse an absence, students must return with official documentation (e.g., a doctor's note, obituary) within five (5) school days of their return. Notes may also be submitted via ParentSquare.

- A maximum of ten (10) parent-written notes will be accepted per school year.
- Parent notes must be turned in to the office within five (5) school days of the student's return.

Make-Up Work

If a student is out for an extended period and a parent/guardian wishes to pick up assignments:

- Call the school office at (865) 594-3790 by 9:00 a.m.
- This allows teachers time to prepare assignments for pickup at 3:00 p.m.
- Calls made after 9:00 a.m. may result in materials not being ready the same day

Early Dismissal Policy

- To be considered present for the school day, a student must attend for at least three (3) hours and sixteen (16) minutes.
- Early checkouts between 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. are strongly discouraged due to bus arrival and dismissal procedures.

Dismissal Requirements

- Students will only be released to parents, legal guardians, or individuals listed on the student's emergency card.
- Valid photo identification is required for anyone picking up a student.
- These procedures are in place for the safety and protection of all students.

Transportation

All students at Richard Yoakley are eligible for special transportation services. However, parents/guardians may choose to transport their child independently if preferred.

Transportation Changes

- If a student will be going home in a way that differs from their regular transportation method, a written and signed note from the parent/guardian is required.
- The note must be submitted at the time of arrival and is subject to principal approval.
- For safety reasons, transportation changes will not be accepted via phone call or text message.

These procedures are in place to ensure the protection and safety of all students.

Student Driver Policy

Driving to Richard Yoakley School is a privilege, not a right. To be eligible, students must have earned Gold Status.

Driver Expectations

- Upon arrival, student drivers must report directly to the building and turn in their car keys at check-in. Keys will be returned at dismissal.
- Student drivers are not permitted to transport other students to or from school.
- The school reserves the right to inspect any vehicle on campus at any time.
- This privilege may be suspended or revoked if the student loses Gold Status or commits any driving-related violations.

These rules are in place to ensure the safety and security of all students and staff.

Illness at School

If a student becomes ill during the school day, a parent, or guardian will be contacted to pick up the student and sign them out of school. In accordance with state law, students with contagious or infectious conditions may not remain at school. This includes, but is not limited to: pinkeye, nausea or vomiting, elevated temperature (100.6°F or higher), and diarrhea.

Return-to-School Guidelines

- Students must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning.
- Students must also be free from vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours before returning.

If your child has a significant medical condition such as diabetes, epilepsy, or severe allergies, please ensure the classroom teacher is informed so that appropriate care and precautions can be provided.

Technology

Electronic Device Policy

At Richard Yoakley, our top priority is to provide a safe, focused learning environment where students can be successful every day. It is our responsibility to address anything that may interfere with your child's academic progress.

To support this goal, the use of cell phones, smartwatches, iPads, or other electronic devices is strictly prohibited during the instructional day—both on school property and while riding the bus or shuttle.

Important Notes

- Any device that is seen or found during school hours will be confiscated.
- Confiscated items will be held in the principal's office until a parent or guardian is available to pick them up.

These guidelines are in place to minimize distractions and ensure a safe, respectful, and responsible learning environment for all students.

Chromebooks

- Students will have access to a Chromebook for instructional purposes, as determined by the classroom teacher.
- Chromebooks are not to be used for social communication or non-instructional activities.
- Any misuse of the device may result in loss of Chromebook privileges.

Pictures, Videos, and Recordings

Students are prohibited from taking unauthorized photographs or making unauthorized audio/video recordings of others while at school, on school transportation, or during school-sponsored events.

WARNING: The taking, disseminating, transferring, or sharing of obscene, pornographic, lewd, or otherwise, illegal images or photographs, whether by electronic transfer or otherwise (commonly called texting, sexting, emailing, etc.), may constitute a crime under state and/or federal law. Any person taking, disseminating, transferring, or sharing obscene, pornographic, lewd, or otherwise illegal images or photographs will be reported to law enforcement and/or other appropriate state or federal agencies, which may result in arrest, criminal prosecution, and lifetime inclusion on sexual offender registries.

These measures are in place to protect the privacy and safety of all students and staff.

Use of School Phones

- Students will not be allowed to use the classroom phone for any reason.
- If a student becomes ill, they may use the school phone located in Room 12 to contact a parent or guardian.
- For any other phone call reason, admin approval must be obtained prior to staff allowing the student to use the phone.
- Any time that a school phone is used, a staff member will dial the number to ensure that the parent or guardian is the person being contacted.

Instruction

Richard Yoakley School is committed to providing rigorous, high-quality instruction while implementing trauma-informed practices to support the whole child.

All courses follow the Knox County Schools Curriculum and Pacing Guides, ensuring alignment with district standards and expectations. **Students benefit from:**

- Smaller class sizes
- Academic support and individualized attention

This structure allows for a more personalized learning environment where students can thrive academically and emotionally.

Educators at Richard Yoakley School encourage students to become lifelong learners, a goal achieved through student ownership and pride in their academic success. To support this, students and guardians are encouraged to actively monitor academic progress using the KCS Aspen and Canvas platforms. Regularly checking these resources helps families stay informed and engaged in the student's learning journey.

Schedules

Middle School

8:30-9:00	1st Period: SEL and Planning Group
9:00-10:10	2nd Period
10:10-10:45	1st Half of 3rd Period
10:45-11:05	Lunch
11:10-11:20	2nd Half of 3rd Period
11:20-12:00	4th Period
12:00-1:10	5th Period
1:10-1:35	Lunch
1:35-2:30	6th Period
2:30-3:10	Group/Remediation
3:10-3:30	Evaluation Group

High School

8:30-9:00	Advisory: SEL and Planning Group
9:00-10:10	1st Period
10:10-11:20	2nd Period
11:20-12:50	3rd Period and Lunch
12:50-2:00	4th Period
2:00-3:10	5th Period
3:10-3:30	Evaluation Group

Grading Policy

Richard Yoakley adheres to the approved Knox County Schools grading scale:

★ 90 - 100	A
★ 80 - 89	B
★ 70 - 79	C
★ 60 - 69	D
★ Below 60	F

Incoming Grades

Richard Yoakley's goal will always be to support student academic success. All students will have incoming grades from base schools. During their time at RYS, students will receive grades for the work that has been completed during their placement. At the conclusion of the student's placement, cumulative grades will be calculated and sent to the base school to ensure a smooth academic transition. This process ensures that student progress is accurately reflected and recognized across all learning environments.

Student Supports

Counseling Office

A School Counselor, Ms. Whaley, is available for students and parents. These services include assistance with educational planning, interpretation of test results, occupational information, study help and assistance with daily life issues. You can reach Ms. Whaley at 865-594-3790 ext. 52421.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

To maintain the positive and productive learning environment at Richard Yoakley School, the administration, and faculty are committed to upholding high standards for student behavior.

We believe that a safe, respectful, and responsible atmosphere is essential for both academic success and personal growth. All students are expected to follow school-wide behavioral expectations and actively contribute to a supportive and inclusive school community.

The school staff collaborates closely to provide optimal support for all students. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive, school-wide framework designed to prevent inappropriate behaviors and consistently recognize and reinforce positive behaviors.

At Richard Yoakley, part of our mission is to help students develop positive behaviors that prepare them for success in a comprehensive school setting, in the community, and beyond graduation. Our behavioral model is built around students earning points for demonstrating behaviors that are safe, respectful, and responsible. Once earned, these points are permanent and cannot be removed or reassigned. Positive behaviors are reinforced through incentives, while a system of tiered interventions is in place to support students who struggle to meet school expectations.

Richard Yoakley uses a three-level PBIS system, designed to promote and reward positive behavior. Each day, all students begin with a clean slate and the opportunity to earn up to 100 points to work towards reaching the next status level. Students are expected to meet school-wide expectations (Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible) throughout the entire day, and their actions directly determine their program level. Based on the points they earn, students can qualify for one of three status levels.

Throughout the school year, a variety of student events are planned as incentives that will be awarded based on behavior and/or academics.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

At Richard Yoakley, students' social and emotional needs are supported daily through a comprehensive, school-wide approach. All staff play an active role in meeting these needs throughout the day.

Each morning begins with a planning meeting where students are encouraged to reflect on their feelings, set personal goals, and discuss strategies for achieving them. Following this, classrooms engage in dedicated Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum before transitioning to academic instruction. Throughout the day, students are given multiple opportunities to practice and apply the skills they are learning.

The day concludes with an evaluation meeting to review progress toward individual goals. Through these consistent supports, students develop and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to form healthy identities, manage emotions, work toward personal and collective goals, show empathy, build supportive relationships, and make responsible, caring decisions.

Knox County Schools Policies

Child Abuse and Neglect (Policy J-400)

[Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

State law and Board policy require employees to report cases of verified or immediately suspected child abuse or neglect. If a student reports an issue to a staff member or a staff member questions an injury or neglect issue, they are responsible for reporting it. Parents often become upset when a staff member calls DCS, but the school employee has no choice in the matter as they are required by law to call. Calling DCS does not necessarily imply the staff has judged the situation; rather, they are following their obligation as a KCS employee. In the same way, if a student reports that they were injured by a Richard Yoakley staff member, the principal, or the staff involved will call DCS and "self-report" to prompt an investigation.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying or Cyber-Bullying

[Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying or Cyber-Bullying](#)

Knox County Schools prohibits harassment, intimidation, bullying, and cyberbullying. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying disrupts both the student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate students in a safe and orderly environment. All Knox County School staff are responsible for ensuring this is faithfully implemented in all areas under their purview or direct supervision. "Cyberbullying" means bullying undertaken through the use of electronic devices. "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any act substantially interfering with a student's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance. If the act takes place on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided equipment or transportation, or at any official school bus stop, the act has the effect of:

- physically harming a child or damaging a student's property;
- knowingly placing a student or students in a reasonable fear of physical harm to the student or damage to the student's property;
- causing emotional distress to a student or students; or
- creating a hostile educational environment; OR

If the act takes place off school property or outside a school-sponsored activity, it is directed specifically to a student or students and has the effect of creating a hostile educational environment or otherwise creating a substantial disruption to the education environment or learning process.

Students who feel harassed, bullied, or intimidated may report this concern to any staff member, school administrator, or the office of the Superintendent using any communication they feel comfortable with. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit harassment, intimidation, or bullying may range from behavioral interventions to and including suspension or expulsion. The appropriate action will be consistent with established School Board policy, case law, and Federal and State statutes.

Emergency Drills

Richard Yoakley will conduct safety drills throughout the school year per Knox County policy. These drills include, but are not limited to, fire drills, disaster drills, lock-downs, and evacuations. Students will follow all Richard Yoakley and KCS policies during these drills and will listen to adult instructions. Parents will be notified of a true emergency according to KCS policies and procedures via ParentSquare.

Zero Tolerance Policy

[Zero Tolerance Policy](#)

To ensure a safe and secure learning environment free of drugs, violence, and dangerous weapons, any student who engages in the following behaviors shall be removed from the base school for not less than one calendar year. The Director of Schools has the authority to modify this suspension requirement on a case-by-case basis. Zero tolerance acts are as follows: any student who, while on a school bus, on school property, or while attending any school event or activity:

1. unlawfully possesses a legend drug or any other controlled substance;
2. knowingly possess a firearm;
3. commits aggravated assault or commits assault and intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causes bodily injury to a teacher, principal, School Security Officer (SSO), a teaching assistant, or any other employee of the school system, or a School Resource Officer (SRO); or
4. possess explosive or incendiary devices.

The Board intends that the Director of Schools exercises his power to modify and ensure that no student shall be out of school for more than two semesters for a zero-tolerance offense.

By signing below, I agree that I have reviewed and understand the policies and procedures within the Richard Yoakley School Handbook.

Student Name (print): _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

RYS Staff Name (print): _____

RYS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____