

# RYSS

RAUL YZAGUIRRE SCHOOLS FOR SUCCESS

## 2025 - 2026



# STUDENT HANDBOOK



## Mission

We are committed to providing and obtaining the highest standard of education in a culturally relevant setting. The pursuit of excellence is aimed at developing self-respect and pride among our students. Our goal is for students to become critical thinkers and lifelong learners.

## Vision

RYSS will be the gold standard for excellence in community-based education by graduating college-bound, civic-oriented leaders.

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Houston, Texas 77017  
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Houston, Texas 77009  
713-640-3740  
**Principal:** Axinia Zepeda

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Houston, Texas 77093  
713-640-3720  
**Principal:** Auden Sarabia

RYSS STEM Academy at Pasadena  
1062 Fairmont Parkway  
Pasadena, Texas 77504  
832-482-9583  
**Principal:** Yesenia Cervantes

It is the policy of the Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Charter District not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, handicap or disability, ancestry, national origin, marital status, race, religion, sex, veteran status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, and gender identify and/or gender expression in its educational or employment programs and activities.

If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of disability, please contact the district at [susan.pansmith@tejanocenter.org](mailto:susan.pansmith@tejanocenter.org) 713-640-3700

*A Message from the Superintendent of Schools*

Dear RYSS Students and Parents,

On behalf of the RYSS Board of Education, administration, faculty, and staff, *welcome to the 2025-26 school year!* Thank you for making RYSS your family's district of choice.

Our commitment is to ensure that every student can excel and thrive, to discover new and exciting ways to learn and grow as a person. We believe this can best take place in an environment that is safe and healthy. We know we can accomplish it when we all work together.

The 2025-26 District Student-Parent Handbook is designed to guide our district's orderly operation. The district handbook addresses topics that apply to all students, Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Each campus also has a handbook that addresses topics that specifically apply to the campus. In all areas of dispute, the district handbook will take precedence.

Please refer to the district and campus handbooks whenever you have questions regarding district and school programs, policies, and expectations. If your question persists, please contact your campus principal.

We all want the best for our students. *Making It Happen Together!*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adriana Tamez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adriana Tamez, Ed.D.

CEO, Tejano Center for Community Concerns

Superintendent of Schools, Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

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# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

## Preface – Families and Students

We are excited to welcome you to a new school year at Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success (RYSS)! At RYSS, we believe that strong partnerships between families, students, and educators are essential to student success. Whether this is your first year with us or you have been part of the RYSS family for years, we are honored to serve your child and support your family.

This Student Handbook is a resource to help you understand your rights as a parent or guardian, as well as the expectations, policies, and support that guide daily life in our schools. It is organized into two main sections:

- **Section One: Parental Rights** describes certain parental rights as specified in state or federal law.
- **Section Two: Other Important Information for Parents and Students** is organized alphabetically by topic. Where applicable, the topics are further organized by grade level.

For clarity, the term “parent” refers to a parent, legal guardian, or another adult who has legally assumed responsibility for a student’s education.

We encourage you to read this handbook and refer to it throughout the school year. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your child’s school or our district office if you have any questions. Our goal is to make sure you feel informed, empowered, and supported every step of the way. Thank you for your partnership in making this school year successful!

The handbook is aligned with board-adopted policy and the RYSS Student Code of Conduct, which promotes student safety, academic integrity, and a positive learning environment. In cases where a conflict exists between this handbook and official board policy (including the Student Code of Conduct), the board policy and Code of Conduct will take precedence.

To ensure you have access to the most current policies, the district’s official policy manual is available for review in the district administration office, and an unofficial electronic version can be found at [www.ryss.org](http://www.ryss.org). The policy manual includes:

- Legally referenced legal policies that contain provisions from federal and state laws, case law, and other legal authorities.
- Board-adopted local policies that articulate the board’s values and expectations regarding district practices.

We encourage all families to review the RYSS Student Code of Conduct, available on our website [www.ryss.org](http://www.ryss.org) or in hard copy upon request at any campus. State law requires that the Code of Conduct be prominently displayed or made available for review at each campus.

Although the Student Handbook includes references to legal rights and district policies, it is not a contract and does not create new or additional legal rights. It is meant to serve as a helpful, accessible resource to guide our shared commitment to student success.

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

We regularly revise this handbook to reflect current law and policy. We will keep families informed of any important updates and welcome your feedback during campus meetings or districtwide engagement sessions.

If you have any questions about the content in this handbook, please contact your campus leadership or:

**Justin Fuentes, Chief of Schools**  
**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**  
[Justin.Fuentes@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Justin.Fuentes@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

Complete and return to the student's campus the following forms (provided in the forms packet distributed at the beginning of the year or upon enrollment):

- Acknowledgment of Electronic Distribution of Student Handbook
- Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information
- Parents' Objection to the Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education (if you choose to restrict the release of information to these entities)
- Consent/Opt-Out Form for participation in third-party surveys

## Accessibility

If you have difficulty accessing this handbook because of a disability, please contact:

**Susan Pansmith, Special Education Director**  
**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**  
[Susan.Pansmith@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Susan.Pansmith@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

## Section One: Parental Rights

This section describes certain parental rights as specified in state or federal law.

As a parent or guardian, you have the right to:

- Request access to your child's academic records
- Be informed of instructional materials and assessments
- Participate in 504 and special education decisions
- File grievances or appeal campus-level decisions
- Opt out of surveys, certain health screenings, and human sexuality instruction in accordance with state law (SB 12).
- Receive communication in a language you understand

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## Consent, Opt-Out, and Refusal Rights

### Consent to Conduct a Psychological Evaluation

Unless required under state or federal law, a district employee will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without obtaining prior written parental consent.

**Note:** An evaluation may be legally required under special education rules or by the Texas Education Agency for child abuse investigations and reports.

### Consent to Human Sexuality Instruction

#### Annual Notification

As a part of the district's curriculum, students receive instruction related to human sexuality. The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) makes recommendations for curriculum materials, and the school board adopts the materials and determines the specific content of the instruction.

In accordance with state law, a parent may:

- Review, receive a copy of, or purchase a copy of curriculum materials depending on the copyright of the materials.
- Remove their child from any part of the human sexuality instruction without academic, disciplinary, or other penalties.
- Become involved in the development of this curriculum by becoming a member of the district's SHAC or attending SHAC meetings. See the campus principal for details.
- Use the district's grievance procedure concerning a complaint. [See Complaints and Concerns (All Grade Levels) and PG-3.509: Student and Parent Complaints and Grievances.]

State law also requires that instruction related to human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS):

- Present abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried persons of school age
- Devote more attention to abstinence from sexual activity than to any other behavior
- Emphasize that abstinence, if used consistently and correctly, is the only method that is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and the emotional trauma associated with adolescent sexual activity
- Direct adolescents to abstain from sexual activity before marriage as the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases
- If included in the content of the curriculum, teach contraception and condom use in terms of human use reality rates instead of theoretical laboratory rates

[See Consent to Instruction on Prevention of Child Abuse, Family Violence, Dating Violence, and Sex Trafficking]

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## **Consent Before Human Sexuality Instruction**

Before a student receives human sexuality instruction, the parent must give written consent. Parents will be sent a request for written consent at least 14 days before the instruction will begin.

## **Consent to Instruction on Prevention of Child Abuse, Family Violence, Dating Violence, and Sex Trafficking**

### **Annual Notification**

Students receive instruction related to the prevention of child abuse, family violence, dating violence, and sex trafficking. The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) makes recommendations for curriculum materials, and the school board adopts the materials and determines the specific content of the instruction.

In accordance with state law, a parent may:

- Review, receive a copy of, or purchase a copy of curriculum materials depending on the copyright of the materials. As required by law, any curriculum materials in the public domain used in this instruction will be posted on the district's website at the location indicated above.
- Remove their child from any part of this instruction without academic, disciplinary, or other penalties.
- Become involved in the development of this curriculum by becoming a member of the district's SHAC or attending SHAC meetings. See the campus principal for details.
- Use the district's grievance procedure concerning a complaint. [See Complaints and Concerns (All Grade Levels) and policy FNG for information on the grievance and appeals process.]

[See Consent Before Human Sexuality Instruction, Dating Violence, and Child Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children (All Grade Levels)]

## **Consent to Provide a Mental Health Care Service**

The district will not provide a mental health care service to a student or conduct a medical screening of a student as part of the district's intervention procedures except as permitted by law.

The district has established procedures for recommending to a parent an intervention for a student with early warning signs of mental health concerns, substance abuse, or suicide risk. The district's mental health liaison will notify the student's parents within a reasonable amount of time after the liaison learns that a student has displayed early warning signs and provide information about available counseling options.

[Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success / Homepage \(ryss.org\)](http://ryss.org)

The district has also established procedures for staff to notify the mental health liaison regarding a student who may need intervention. The mental health liaison can be reached at:

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**Michelle Bracho, District Nurse**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Michelle.Bracho@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Michelle.Bracho@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

The mental health liaison can provide further information about these procedures as well as curriculum materials on identifying risk factors, accessing resources for treatment or support on and off campus, and accessing available student accommodations provided on campus.

## **Consent to Display a Student’s Original Works and Personal Information**

Teachers may display a student’s work in classrooms or elsewhere on campus as recognition of student achievement without seeking prior parental consent. These displays may include personally identifiable student information. Student work includes:

- Artwork
- Special projects
- Photographs
- Original videos or voice recordings
- Other original works

However, the district will seek parental consent before displaying a student’s work on the district’s website, a website affiliated with or sponsored by the district (such as a campus or classroom website), or in district publications, which may include printed materials, videos, or other methods of mass communication.

## **Consent to Receive Parenting and Paternity Awareness Instruction if a Student if Under Age 14**

A student under age 14 must have parental permission to participate in the district’s Parenting and Paternity Awareness Program (<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/child-support/programs-and-initiatives/parenting-and-paternity-awareness-papa/papa-educators/papa-curriculum>). This program was developed by the Office of the Texas Attorney General and the State Board of Education (SBOE) to be incorporated into health education classes.

## **Consent to Video or Audio Record a student when Not Already Permitted by Law**

State law permits the school to make a video or voice recording without parental permission when the recording is to be used for:

- School safety
- Classroom instruction or a cocurricular or extracurricular activity
- Media coverage of the school
- Promotion of student safety, as provided by law for a student receiving special education services in certain settings

In other circumstances, the district will seek written parental consent before making a video or voice recording of a student.

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Please note that parents and visitors to a classroom, both virtual and in person, may not record video or audio or take photographs or other still images without permission from the teacher or other school officials.

## Advanced Mathematics in Grades 6-8

RYSS provides an Advanced Math Program for middle school students to enable successful enrollment in Algebra I in 8th grade and advanced math coursework in high school.

Students entering Grade 6 will be automatically enrolled in the advanced math sequence if they meet at least one of the following: 60th percentile or higher on the Grade 5 STAAR Math or top 40% in a local measure (class ranking or demonstrated proficiency in 5th-grade coursework).

Students enrolled in above-grade-level math instruction must take the STAAR test that aligns with the highest level of math instruction received that year

Grade Level	Corresponding Assessment
6th graders taking the majority of 6th-grade TEKS with some 7th-grade TEKS	6th Grade Math STAAR
7th graders taking 8th-grade math (Accelerated Math 7)	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math STAAR
8th graders taking Algebra I	Algebra I EOC

Parents have the right to opt their student out of automatic enrollment.

## Limiting Electronic Communications between Students and District Employees

The district permits teachers and other authorized staff to communicate electronically with students only within the scope of their professional responsibilities and in accordance with district guidelines.

For example, a teacher may create a class webpage or social networking page to share updates about assignments, homework, or class announcements. Parents are welcome to access these platforms.

Text messaging with an individual student is permitted only when a district employee is responsible for an extracurricular activity involving that student. In such cases, the employee must include both their direct supervisor and the student’s parent or guardian in all text messages.

If a parent does not want their child to receive one-on-one electronic communications from a district employee, they should notify the campus principal.

## Objecting to the Release of Directory Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, permits the district to disclose appropriately designated “directory information” from a student’s education records without written consent.

## Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

“Directory information” is information that, if released, is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy. Examples include:

- A student’s photograph (for publication in the school yearbook)
- A student’s name and grade level (for communicating class and teacher assignments)
- The name, weight, and height of an athlete (for publication in a school athletic program)
- A list of student birthdays (for generating schoolwide or classroom recognition)
- A student’s name and photograph (posted on a district-approved and-managed social media platform)
- The names and grade levels of students submitted by the district to a local newspaper or other community publication (to recognize the A/B honor roll for a specific grading period)

Directory information may be released to individuals or organizations following proper request procedures. However, a parent or eligible student may opt out of the release of this information by submitting a written objection to the campus principal within ten (10) school days from the student’s first day of instruction for the school year.

Families who are living in shelters for survivors of family violence or human trafficking are strongly encouraged to notify district personnel. This allows the district to protect student privacy and withhold directory information that could reveal a student’s location. Parents in these situations may also choose to opt out of directory information release to further safeguard their child’s safety.

If a parent objects to the release of the student’s information included on the directory information response form, this objection also applies to the use of that information for school-sponsored purposes, such as:

- Honor roll
- School newspaper
- Yearbook
- Recognition activities
- News releases
- Athletic programs

### **Objecting to the Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

Unless a parent has advised the district not to release their student’s information, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the district to comply with requests from military recruiters or institutions of higher education to provide the following information about students:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone listing

Military recruiters may also have access to a student’s district-provided email address, unless a parent has advised the district not to release this information.

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

## Participation in Third-Party Surveys

### ***Consent Required Before Student Participation in a Federally Funded Survey***

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) provides parents with certain rights regarding participation in surveys, the collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams.

A parent has the right to consent before a student is required to submit to a survey funded by the U.S. Department of Education that concerns any of the following protected areas:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family
- Sex behavior or attitudes
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship
- Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, and ministers
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parent
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student’s eligibility for a program

A parent may inspect the survey or other instrument, and any corresponding instructional materials used in connection with such a survey.

### ***“Opting Out” of Participation in Other Types of Surveys or Screenings and the Disclosure of Personal Information***

The PPRA gives parents the right to receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of:

- Activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from the child for the purpose of marketing, selling, or otherwise disclosing that information to others
- Any nonemergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student

Exceptions are hearing, vision, spinal screenings, or any physical examination or screening permitted or required under state law. [See policy PG-3.310: Health Screenings and Physical Examinations.]

A parent may inspect:

- Protected information surveys of students and surveys created by a third party
- Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes
- Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

The ED provides extensive information about the [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment \(https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/protection-pupil-rights-amendment-ppra-general-guidance\)](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/protection-pupil-rights-amendment-ppra-general-guidance), including a [PPRA Complaint Form \(https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint\)](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint).

## **Removing a Student from Instruction or Excusing a Student from a Required Component of Instruction**

See **Consent to Instruction on Prevention of Child Abuse, Family Violence, Dating Violence, and Sex Trafficking** for information on a parent's right to remove a student from such instruction.

## **Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence in Grades 3-12**

State law designates the week of September 17 as Celebrate Freedom Week and requires all social studies classes to provide the following:

- Instruction concerning the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution
- A specific recitation from the Declaration of Independence for students in grades 3-12

Per state law, a student may be excused from reciting a portion of the Declaration of Independence if any of the following apply:

- A parent provides a written statement requesting that their child be excused
- The district determines that the student has a conscientious objection to the recitation
- A parent is a representative of a foreign government to whom the U.S. government extends diplomatic immunity

[See 19 TAC 74.33(b).]

## **Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags**

A parent may request that their child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. The request must be made in writing.

State law, however, requires that all students participate in one minute of silence following recitation of the pledges.

## **Religious or Moral Beliefs**

A parent may remove their child temporarily from the classroom if a scheduled instructional activity conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs.

The removal may not be used to avoid a test and may not extend for an entire semester. The student must also satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by state law.

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## Tutoring or Test Preparation

A teacher may determine that a student needs additional targeted assistance for the student to achieve mastery in state-developed essential knowledge and skills based on:

- Informal observations
- Evaluative data such as grades earned on assignments or tests
- Results from diagnostic assessments

The school will always attempt to provide tutoring and strategies for test-taking in ways that prevent removal from other instruction as much as possible.

In accordance with state law and policy PG-2.107: Compensatory Instruction, districts must obtain parental permission before removing a student from a regularly scheduled class for remedial tutoring or test preparation for more than ten percent (10%) of the days the class is offered.

If a district offers tutorial services to students, state law requires a student with a grade below seventy (70) for a reporting period to attend.

[For questions about school-provided tutoring programs, contact the student's teacher and see policy PG-2.107: Compensatory Instruction. See **Standardized Testing** for information regarding required accelerated instruction after a student fails to perform satisfactorily on certain state-mandated tests.]

## Right of Access to Student Records, Instructional Materials, and District Records/Policies

### Parent Review of Instructional Materials

A parent has the right to review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum, and to examine tests that have been administered, whether instruction is delivered in-person, virtually, or remotely.

The district will make instructional materials available for parent review no later than 30 days before the school year begins and for at least 30 days after the school year ends. However, tests that have not yet been administered will not be made available for parent examination.

The district will provide login credentials to each student's parent for any learning management system or online learning portal used in instruction to facilitate parent access and review.

A parent is also entitled to request that the school allow the student to take home instructional materials the student uses. The school may ask the student to return the materials at the beginning of the next school day.

A school must provide printed versions of electronic instructional materials to a student if the student does not have reliable access to technology at home.

# **Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook**

## **District Review of Instructional Materials**

A parent may request that the district conduct an instructional material review in a math, English Language Arts, science, or social studies class in which the parent's student is enrolled to determine alignment with state standards and the level of rigor for the grade level.

The district is not required to conduct an instructional material review for a specific subject area or grade level at a specific campus more than once per school year.

For more information about requesting an instructional material review, contact the campus principal.

## **Notices of Certain Student Misconduct to Noncustodial Parent**

Noncustodial parents may submit a written request to receive notices related to student discipline or placement, i.e. disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP), for the remainder of the school year. [See the Student Code of Conduct and policy PG-3.402: Student Discipline for more information.]

## **Participation in Federally Required, State-Mandated, and District Assessments**

In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a parent may request information regarding any federal, state, or district policy related to their child's participation in required assessments.

## **Student Records**

### ***Accessing Student Records***

A parent may review their child's records, including:

- Attendance records
- Test scores
- Grades
- Disciplinary records
- Counseling records
- Psychological records
- Applications for admission
- Health and immunization information
- Other medical records
- Teacher and school counselor evaluations
- Reports on behavioral patterns
- Records relating to assistance provided for learning difficulties, including information collected regarding any intervention strategies used with the child, as the term "intervention strategy" is defined by law
- State assessment instruments that have been administered to the child
- Teaching materials and tests used in the child's classroom

### ***Authorized Inspection and Use of Student Records***

## Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and eligible students certain rights regarding student education records.

For purposes of student records, an “eligible” student is anyone age 18 or older or who attends a postsecondary educational institution. These rights, as discussed here and at **Objecting to the Release of Directory Information**, are the right to:

- Inspect and review student records within 45 days after the day the school receives a request for access
- Request an amendment to a student record the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of FERPA
- Provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information from the student’s records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent
- [File a complaint](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint) (<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint>) with the U.S. Department of Education concerning failures by the school to comply with FERPA requirements

Both FERPA and state laws safeguard student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and eligible students with certain rights of privacy. Before disclosing personally identifiable information from a student’s records, the district must verify the identity of the person, including a parent or the student, requesting the information.

All information about student performance, including grades, test results, and disciplinary records, is considered confidential educational records.

Only eligible students or their parents may access student records, unless a court order states otherwise. A parent’s rights regarding access to student records are not affected by the parent’s marital status.

Federal law requires that control of the records goes to the student as soon as the student meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Reaches the age of 18
- Is emancipated by a court
- Enrolls in a postsecondary educational institution

However, the parent may continue to have access to the records if the student is dependent for tax purposes and, under limited circumstances, when there is a threat to the health and safety of the student or other individuals.

FERPA permits the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student’s education records without written consent of the parent or eligible student when school officials have what federal law refers to as a “legitimate educational interest” in a student’s records.

Legitimate educational interest may include:

- Working with the student

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- Considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's case, or an individualized education program for a student with disabilities
- Compiling statistical data
- Reviewing an educational record to fulfill the official's professional responsibility
- Investigating or evaluating programs

School officials may include:

- Board members and employees, such as the superintendent, administrators, and principals
- Teachers, school counselors, diagnosticians, and support staff (including district health or medical staff)
- A person or company with whom the district has contracted or allowed to provide a specific institutional service or function (such as an attorney, consultant, third-party vendor that offers online programs or software, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, school resource officer, or volunteer)
- A person appointed to serve on a team to support the district's safe and supportive school program
- A parent or student serving on a school committee
- A parent or student assisting a school official perform their duties

FERPA also permits the disclosure of personally identifiable information without written consent:

- To authorized representatives of various governmental agencies, including juvenile service providers, the U.S. Comptroller General's office, the U.S. Attorney General's office, the U.S. Secretary of Education, the Texas Education Agency, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's office, and Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers or, in certain cases, other child welfare representatives
- To individuals or entities granted access in response to a subpoena or court order
- To another school, district/system, or postsecondary educational institution to which a student seeks or intends to enroll or in which the student already is enrolled
- In connection with financial aid for which a student has applied or has received
- To accrediting organizations to conduct accrediting functions
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school to develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; administer student aid programs; or improve instruction
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency
- When the district discloses directory information-designated details.

Release of personally identifiable information to any other person or agency — such as a prospective employer or for a scholarship application — will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate.

The principal is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The **District Records Clerk** is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

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A parent or eligible student who wants to inspect the student's records should submit a written request to the custodian of records identifying the records they want to inspect.

Records may be reviewed in person during regular school hours. The custodian of records or designee will be available to explain the record and to answer questions.

A parent or eligible student who submits a written request and pays copying costs of 10 cents (\$0.10) per page may obtain copies. If circumstances prevent inspection during regular school hours and the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, the district will either provide a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review the records.

You may contact the custodian of records for currently enrolled students from the campus registrar or administrative assistant.

You may contact the custodian of records for students who have withdrawn or graduated at:

**Lisa Chacon, District Records Clerk**

[Lisa.Chacon@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Lisa.Chacon@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

A parent or eligible student may inspect the student's records and request a correction or amendment if the records are considered inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights.

A request to correct a student's record should be submitted to the appropriate custodian of records. The request must clearly identify the part of the record that should be corrected and include an explanation of how the information is inaccurate. If the district denies the request to amend the records, the parent or eligible student has the right to request a hearing. If after the hearing the records are not amended, the parent or eligible student has 30 school days to place a statement in the student's record.

Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course or on an examination is handled through the complaint process found in policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process. A grade issued by a teacher can be changed only if the board of trustees determines that the grade is arbitrary, erroneous, or inconsistent with the district's grading guidelines.

The district's student records policy is found at policy PG-3.502: Electronic Records System and is available at the principal's or superintendent's office or on the district's website.

**Note:** The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records — such as a teacher's personal notes about a student shared only with a substitute teacher — do not have to be made available.

### Teacher and Staff Professional Qualifications

A parent may request information about the professional qualifications of their child's teachers, including whether the teacher:

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- Has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction
- Has an emergency permit or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waived
- Is currently teaching in the field or discipline of their certification

The parent also has the right to request information about the qualifications of any paraprofessional who may provide services to the child.

### A Student with Exceptionalities or Special Circumstances

#### Children of Military Families

[The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children \(https://www.dodea.edu/education/partnership-and-resources/military-interstate-compact\)](https://www.dodea.edu/education/partnership-and-resources/military-interstate-compact)

entitles children of military families to flexibility regarding certain district and state requirements, including:

- Immunization requirements
- Grade level, course, or educational program placement
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities
- Enrollment in the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN)
- Graduation requirements

The district will excuse absences related to a student visiting a parent, including a stepparent or legal guardian, who is:

- Called to active duty
- On leave
- Returning from a deployment of at least four months

The district will permit **no more than five** excused absences per year for this purpose. For the absence to be excused, the absence must occur no earlier than the 60th day before deployment or no later than the 30th day after the parent's return from deployment.

Additional information may be found at [Military Family Resources at the Texas Education Agency \(https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/military-family-resources\)](https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/military-family-resources).

### Parental Role in Certain Classroom and School Assignments

#### *Multiple-Birth Siblings*

State law permits a parent of multiple-birth siblings (for example, twins, triplets) assigned to the same grade and campus to request in writing that the children be placed in either the same classroom or separate classrooms.

Written requests must be submitted by the 14th day after the students' enrollment. [See policy PG-3.201: Admissions and Enrollment for more information.]

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## ***Safety Transfers/Assignments***

The board or its designee will honor a parent's request to transfer their child to another classroom or campus if the district has determined that the child has been a victim of bullying, including cyberbullying, as defined by Education Code 37.0832.

The board may transfer a student who has engaged in bullying to another classroom. The board will consult with the parent of a child who has engaged in bullying before deciding to transfer the child to another campus.

Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. See the principal or Chief of Schools for more information.

The district will honor a parent's request for the transfer of their child to a safe public school in the district if the child attends a school identified by the Texas Education Agency as persistently dangerous or if the child has been a victim of a violent criminal offense while at school or on school grounds.

The board will honor a parent's request for the transfer of their child to a neighboring district if the child has been the victim of sexual assault by another student assigned to the same campus, whether the assault occurred on or off campus, and that student has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for the assault. In accordance with policy PG-3.312: School Safety Transfers, if the victim does not wish to transfer, the board will transfer the assailant.

## **Student Use of a Service/Assistance Animal**

A parent of a student who uses a service/assistance animal because of the student's disability must submit a written request to the principal before bringing the service/assistance animal to campus. The district will try to accommodate a request as soon as possible but will do so within ten (10) district business days.

## **A Student in the Conservatorship of the State (Foster Care)**

To provide educational stability, the district will provide enrollment and registration assistance, as well as other educational services throughout the student's enrollment, to any student who is currently placed or newly placed in foster care (temporary or permanent custody of the state, sometimes referred to as substitute care).

A student in the state's conservatorship (custody) who enrolls in the district after the school year will be allowed credit-by-examination opportunities at any point during the year.

The district will assess the student's available records to determine transfer of credit for subjects and courses taken before the student's enrollment in the district.

The district will award partial course credit when the student only passes one half of a two-half course.

A student in the conservatorship of the state who is moved outside the district or school's attendance boundaries — or who is initially placed in the conservatorship of the state and moved outside the district's or school's boundaries — is entitled to remain at the school the student was

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attending before the placement or move until the student reaches the highest grade level at that particular school.

If a student in grade 11 or 12 transfers to another district but does not meet the graduation requirements of the receiving district, the student can request a diploma from the previous district if the student meets its graduation criteria.

For a student in the conservatorship of the state who is eligible for tuition and fee exemption under state law and likely to be in care on the day preceding the student's 18th birthday, the district will:

- Assist the student with the completion of applications for admission or financial aid
- Arrange for and accompany the student on campus visits
- Assist in researching and applying for private or institution-sponsored scholarships
- Identify whether the student is a candidate for appointment to a military academy
- Assist the student in registering and preparing for college entrance examinations, including (subject to the availability of funds) arranging for the payment of examination fees by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
- Coordinate contact between the student and a liaison officer for students formerly in the conservatorship of the state

If you have questions, please contact the district's foster care liaison:

**Brenda Navarrete, Director of Foster Care**

[Brenda.Navarrete@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Brenda.Navarrete@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3766

### Student Who Is Homeless

A parent is encouraged to inform the district if their child is experiencing homelessness. District staff can share resources that may be able to assist families.

Please also check the campus website for information related to services available in the area that can help families who are homeless.

A student who is homeless will be provided with flexibility regarding certain district provisions, including:

- Proof of residency requirements
- Immunization requirements
- Educational program placement (if the student is unable to provide previous academic records or misses an application deadline during a period of homelessness)
- Credit-by-examination opportunities at any point during the year (if the student enrolled in the district after the beginning of the school year), per State Board of Education (SBOE) rules
- Assessment of the student's available records to determine transfer of credit for subjects and courses taken before the student's enrollment in the district
- Awarding partial credit when a student passes only one half of a two-half course
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities
- Graduation requirements

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Federal law allows a student who is homeless to remain enrolled in the “school of origin” or to enroll in a new school in the attendance area where the student is currently residing.

If a student who is homeless in grade 11 or 12 transfers to another district but does not meet the graduation requirements of the receiving district, state law allows the student to request a diploma from the previous district if the student meets the criteria to graduate from the previous district.

A student or parent who is dissatisfied by the district’s eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision may appeal through policy F PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process. The district will expedite local timelines, when possible, for prompt dispute resolution.

For more information on services for students who are homeless, contact the district’s homeless education liaison:

**Angie Miranda, Executive Director of Federal and State Compliance**

**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**

[Angie.Miranda@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Angie.Miranda@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

### **A Student Who Has Learning Difficulties or Who Needs Special Education or Section 504 Services**

For students who are having difficulty in the general education classroom, all school districts and open enrollment charter schools must consider tutorial, compensatory, and other intervention and support services that are available to all students, through the district or school’s multi-tiered system of academic and behavioral supports (MTSS). The provision of these intervention and support services, which might include a response to intervention (RTI) process, can have a positive impact on the ability of districts and charter schools to meet the needs of all students.

If a student is experiencing learning difficulties, which could include academic or non-academic difficulties, his or her parent may contact the individual(s) listed below to learn about the school’s MTSS. This system links students to a variety of support options, including making a referral for a special education evaluation or for a Section 504 evaluation, when appropriate, to determine if the student needs specific aids, accommodations, or specialized services. A parent may request an evaluation for special education or Section 504 services at any time.

#### ***Special Education Referrals***

If a parent makes a written request for an initial evaluation for special education services to the director of special education services or to a district administrative employee of the school district, the district must respond no later than 15 school days after receiving the request. At that time, the district must give the parent prior written notice of whether it agrees or refuses to evaluate the student, along with a copy of the [Notice of Procedural Safeguards \(https://fw.escapps.net/Display Portal/publications\)](https://fw.escapps.net/Display Portal/publications). If the district agrees to evaluate the student, it must also give the parent the opportunity to give written consent for the evaluation.

**Note:** A request for a special education evaluation may be made verbally; it does not need to be made in writing. Districts must still comply with all federal prior-written notices and procedural

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safeguard requirements as well as the requirements for identifying, locating, and evaluating children who are suspected of having a disability and in need of special education. However, a verbal request does not require the district to respond within the 15 school-day timeline.

If the district decides to evaluate the student, it must complete the student's initial evaluation and evaluation report no later than 45 school days from the day it receives a parent's written consent. However, if the student is absent from school during the evaluation period for three or more school days, the evaluation period will be extended by the number of school days equal to the number of school days that the student is absent.

There is an exception to the 45-school-day timeline. If the district receives a parent's consent for the initial evaluation at least 35 but less than 45 school days before the last instructional day of the school year, it must complete the written report and provide a copy of the report to the parent by June 30 of that year. However, if the student is absent from school for three or more days during the evaluation period, the June 30 due date no longer applies. Instead, the general timeline of 45 school days plus extensions for absences of three or more days will apply.

Upon completing the evaluation, the district must give the parent a copy of the evaluation report at no cost.

Additional information about special education is available from the school district in a companion document titled [Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process \(https://fw.escapps.net/Display\\_Portal/publications\)](https://fw.escapps.net/Display_Portal/publications).

### **Contact Person for Special Education Referrals**

The designated contact person regarding options for a student experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for special education services is:

**Susan Pansmith, Special Education Director**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Susan.Pansmith@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Susan.Pansmith@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

For questions about post-secondary transitions, including the transition from education to employment, for students receiving special education services, contact the district's transition and employment designee:

**Maria Salinas, Special Education Department Chairperson**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Maria.Salinas@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Maria.Salinas@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

### **Section 504 Referrals**

Each school district must have standards and procedures in place for the evaluation and placement of students in the district's Section 504 program. Districts must also implement a system of procedural safeguards that includes:

- Notice
- An opportunity for a parent or guardian to examine relevant records

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- An impartial hearing with an opportunity for participation by the parent or guardian and representation by counsel
- A review procedure

### **Contact Person for Section 504 Referrals**

The person designated to contact regarding options for a student experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for Section 504 services is:

**Susan Pansmith, Special Education Director**

**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**

**[Susan.Pansmith@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Susan.Pansmith@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700**

Visit these websites for information regarding students with disabilities and the family:

- [Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process](https://fw.escapps.net/Display_Portal?destination=/) ([https://fw.escapps.net/Display\\_Portal?destination=/](https://fw.escapps.net/Display_Portal?destination=/))
- [Partner Resource Network](http://prntexas.org/) (<http://prntexas.org/>)
- [SPEDTEX: Special Education Information Center](https://www.spedtex.org/) (<https://www.spedtex.org/>)
- [Texas First Project](http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/) (<http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/>)
- [TEA Special Education Parent and Family Resources](https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/parent-and-family-resources) (<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/parent-and-family-resources>)

### **Notification to Parents of Intervention Strategies for Learning Difficulties Provided to Students in General Education**

In accordance with state law, the district will annually notify parents if their child receives assistance for learning difficulties. Details of such assistance can include intervention strategies. This notice is not intended for those students already enrolled in a special education program.

### **Texas Driving with Disability Program**

In accordance with state law, the district will provide notification of the Texas Driving with Disability Program to students who have a health condition or disability that may impede effective communication with a peace officer and receive special education or are covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This notification will be provided annually to an eligible student aged 16 years or older until the student's graduation or 21st birthday and to the student's parents.

The Texas Driving with Disability Program focuses on improving the interaction between law enforcement and drivers with disabilities that have unique communication needs.

### **A Student Who Receives Special Education Services with Other School-Aged Children in the Home**

If a student is receiving special education services at a campus outside their attendance zone, state law permits the parent or guardian to request that other students residing in the household

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be transferred to the same campus if the grade level for the transferring student is offered on that campus.

The student receiving special education services is entitled to transportation; however, the district is not required to provide transportation to other children in the household.

The parent or guardian should contact the school principal regarding transportation needs before requesting a transfer for other children in the home. [See policy PG-3.201: Admissions and Enrollment for more information.]

### **A Student Who Speaks a Primary Language Other than English**

A student may be eligible to receive specialized support if their primary language is not English and the student has difficulty performing ordinary class work in English.

If the student qualifies for these services, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) will determine the types of services the student needs, including accommodations or modifications related to classroom instruction, local assessments, and state-mandated assessments.

### **A Student with Physical or Mental Impairments Protected under Section 504**

A student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined by law — and who does not otherwise qualify for special education services — may qualify for protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Section 504 is a federal law designed to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

When an evaluation is requested, a committee will be formed to determine whether the student needs services and support under Section 504 to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), as defined in federal law.

## **Section Two: Other Important Information for Parents and Students**

This section contains essential information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. It is organized alphabetically to serve as a quick-reference guide. Where applicable, the topics are further organized by grade level.

Parents and students should take a moment together to become familiar with the issues addressed in this section. For guidance on a particular topic, please contact the campus administration.

### **Absences/Attendance**

Research shows that consistent attendance helps students succeed both academically and socially. Our goal is to collaborate with families to identify barriers to attendance early and provide support that keeps students engaged and on track.

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Two important state laws are discussed below, one dealing with compulsory attendance and the other with how attendance affects the award of a student's final grade or course credit.

## **Compulsory Attendance**

Students enrolled in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten must attend school and are subject to compulsory attendance requirements if they remain enrolled.

### ***Ages 6-18***

State law requires that a student who is at least six years of age, or who is younger than six years of age and has previously been enrolled in first grade, and who has not yet reached their 19th birthday, shall attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended-year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

State law requires a student in kindergarten-grade 2 to attend any assigned accelerated reading instruction program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program based on a diagnostic reading instrument.

A student must attend any assigned accelerated instruction program before or after school or during the summer if they do not meet the passing standards on an applicable subject area state assessment.

### ***Age 19 and Older***

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after their 19th birthday must attend each school day until the end of the school year. If the student incurs more than five (5) unexcused absences in a semester, the district may revoke the student's enrollment. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See policy PG-3.202 Compulsory Attendance for more information.]

## **Compulsory Attendance — Exemptions**

### ***All Grade Levels***

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements, as long as the student makes up all work, for the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days
- Required court appearances
- Appearing at a governmental office to obtain U.S. citizenship
- Taking part in a US naturalization oath ceremony
- Serving as an election clerk
- Health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences related to mental health, behavioral health, and autism services
- Absences resulting from a serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment that make a student's attendance infeasible, with certification by a physician
- For students in the conservatorship of the state:

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- An activity required under a court-ordered service plan
- Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours

For children of military families, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian going to, on leave from, or returning from certain deployments.

Absences for mental or behavioral health appointments with a licensed professional will be excused, provided the student returns to campus the same day and submits documentation from the provider.

Note that documented health-care appointments may include telehealth appointments. Students who are physically on campus will not be allowed to participate in telehealth or other online appointments without specific authorization from an appropriate administrator. Students should not use district-issued technology, including Wi-Fi or internet, for telehealth appointments because use of district-owned equipment and its network systems is not private and may be monitored by the district.

### ***Secondary Grade Levels***

The district will allow a student who is 15 years of age or older to be absent for one day to obtain a learner license and one day to obtain a driver's license, provided that the board has authorized such excused absences under policy PG-3.202 Compulsory Attendance. The student will be required to provide documentation of the visit to the driver's license office for each absence and must make up any work missed.

The district will allow junior and senior students to be absent for up to two days per year to visit a college or university if the following conditions are met:

- The board has authorized such excused absences under the policy PG-3.202 Compulsory Attendance
- The principal has approved the student's absence.
- The student follows campus procedures to verify the visit and makes up any work missed.

The district will allow a student 17 years old or older to be absent for up to four days during the period the student is enrolled in high school to pursue enlistment in the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the student verifies these activities to the district.

The district will allow a student to be absent for up to two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year for a career investigation day to visit a professional at that individual's workplace to determine the student's interest in pursuing a career in the professional's field, provided the student verifies these activities to the district.

The district will allow a student to be absent for up to two days per school year to serve as:

- An early voting clerk, if the district's board has authorized this in policy PG-3.202 Compulsory Attendance, the student notifies their teachers, and the student receives approval from the principal prior to the absences.

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- An election clerk if the student makes up any work missed.

The district will allow a student in grades 6-12 to be absent for the purpose of sounding “Taps” at a military honors funeral for a deceased veteran.

### **Compulsory Attendance — Failure to Comply**

#### ***All Grade Levels***

School employees must investigate and report violations of the compulsory attendance law.

A student who is absent without permission from school, any class, any required special program, or any required tutorial will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

#### ***Students with Disabilities***

If a student with a disability is experiencing attendance issues, the student’s ARD or Section 504 committee will determine whether the attendance issues warrant an evaluation, a reevaluation, and/or modifications to the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan, as appropriate.

#### ***Ages 6-18***

When a student between the ages 6-18 has three or more unexcused absences within a four-week period, the law requires the school to send notice to the parent.

The notice will:

- Remind the parent of their duty to monitor the student’s attendance and require the student to attend school
- Request a conference between school administrators and the parent
- Inform the parent that the district will initiate truancy prevention measures, including a behavior improvement plan, school-based community service, referrals to counseling or other social services, or other appropriate measures

The truancy prevention facilitator for the district is:

**Damon Jasso, Assistant Principal**  
**RYSS Early College T-STEM Academy**  
**2950 Broadway St.**  
**Houston, TX 77017**  
[Damon.Jasso@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Damon.Jasso@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3761

For any questions about student absences, parents should contact the facilitator or any other campus administrator.

A court of law may impose penalties against the parent if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. The district may file a complaint against the parent if the student incurs ten (10) or more unexcused absences within a six-month period in the same school year.

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If a student between ages 12-18 incurs ten (10) or more unexcused absences within a six-month period in the same school year, the district, in most circumstances, will refer the student to truancy court.

### ***Age 19 and Older***

After a student age 19 or older incurs a third unexcused absence, the district is required by law to send the student a letter explaining that the district may revoke the student's enrollment for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five (5) unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking a student's enrollment, the district may implement a behavior improvement plan.

### **Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (All Grade Levels)**

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student must attend the class at least 90 percent of the days it is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days may receive credit or a final grade if they complete a plan, approved by the principal, that allows the student to fulfill the class's instructional requirements. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the judge presiding over the case must also approve the plan before the student receives credit or a final grade.

If a student attends fewer than 75 percent of the class days or does not complete the principal-approved plan, then the attendance review committee will determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or a final grade. [See policy PG-3.205: Attendance for Credit for more information.]

Except for absences due to serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment, all absences, excused or unexcused, may be held against a student's attendance requirement. To determine whether there were extenuating circumstances for any absences, the ***principal or*** attendance committee will consider:

- Whether the student has completed makeup work satisfactorily. If the student completes makeup work, absences listed under Compulsory Attendance and absences for extracurricular activities will be considered extenuating circumstances.
- Whether the student or the student's parents had any control over the absences.
- Any information presented by the student or parent to the committee about the absences.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board by following policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process.

### **Official Attendance-Taking Time (All Grade Levels)**

The district will take official attendance every day at ***9:30 a.m.***

A student absent for any portion of the day should follow the procedures below to provide documentation of the absence.

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## **Documentation after an Absence (All Grade Levels)**

A parent must provide an explanation for any absence upon the student's arrival or return to school. The student must submit a note signed by the parent. The campus may accept a phone call from the parent but reserves the right to require a written note.

A note signed by the student will not be accepted unless the student is age 18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law.

The campus will document in its attendance records whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

**Note:** The district is not required to excuse any absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence, unless the absence is an exemption under compulsory attendance laws.

## **Doctor's Note after an Absence for Illness (All Grade Levels)**

Within **3** days of returning to school, a student who is absent for more than **3** consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the absence. Otherwise, the absence may be considered unexcused and in violation of compulsory attendance laws.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the absence to determine whether an absence will be excused or unexcused.

## ***Certification of Absence Due to Severe Illness or Treatment***

If a student is absent because of a serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment that makes a student's attendance infeasible, a parent must provide certification from a physician licensed to practice in Texas specifying the student's illness and the anticipated period of absence related to the illness or treatment.

## **Driver License Attendance Verification (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

A currently enrolled student seeking a driver's license shall submit the Texas Department of Public Safety Verification of Enrollment and Attendance Form (VOE), signed by the parent, to the campus central office at least ten (10) days before it is needed. The district will issue a VOE only if the student meets class credit or attendance requirements. The [VOE form \(https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/driver/forms/VOE.pdf\)](https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/driver/forms/VOE.pdf) is available online.

More information is available on the [Texas Department of Public Safety website \(https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license/how-apply-texas-driver-license-teen\)](https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license/how-apply-texas-driver-license-teen).

## **Accountability under State and Federal Law (All Grade Levels)**

**Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success and each of its campuses are held to certain standards of accountability** under state and federal law. A key component of accountability is the dissemination and publication of certain reports and information, including:

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- The Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for the district, compiled by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), based on academic factors and ratings
- A School Report Card (SRC) for each campus in the district, compiled by TEA
- The district's fiscal management report, which includes the financial accountability rating assigned to the district by TEA
- Information compiled by TEA for the submission of a federal report card that is required by federal law

Accountability information can be found on the district's website at [Federal and State Compliance / Home \(ryss.org\)](#). Hard copies of any reports are available upon request to the district's administration office.

TEA maintains additional accountability and accreditation information at [TEA Performance Reporting Division](#) (<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting>).

### Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test (ASVAB) (Grades 10-12)

A student in grades 10-12 will be offered an opportunity to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test and consult with a military recruiter. The test shall be offered in Spring 2026. Contact campus administrator for further information.

### Awards and Honors (All Grade Levels)

Throughout the school year, students may be recognized for academic excellence, attendance, character, and other achievements at the end of each grading cycle and during special campus events. Awards may include:

- Grading Cycle Awards: Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, Most Improved, and subject-area recognition.
- End-of-Year Awards: Student of the Year, Most Outstanding Student (by subject or program), Leadership Awards, Citizenship, and special campus recognitions such as athletics, fine arts, or STEM achievement.

Each RYSS campus may tailor award categories to align with its unique programming and culture. For more information on campus-specific awards, please contact the school directly.

### Bullying (All Grade Levels)

**RYSS believes every student deserves a safe and respectful learning environment.** Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and discrimination are prohibited and will be investigated and addressed in accordance with school policy and state law. Students and parents are encouraged to report concerns to a teacher, administrator, or counselor. Reports can be made anonymously through the school's reporting system.

#### What is Bullying?

Bullying is defined in Texas law as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another that exploits an imbalance of power and results in:

- Physical harm, emotional distress, or damage to property

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- Fear of harm or threats that create an intimidating or abusive environment
- Disruption to the educational process
- Infringement on the rights of the victim

Bullying includes verbal, physical, and written expressions, including cyberbullying, through:

- Text messages, emails, and instant messages
- Social media or gaming apps
- Internet websites or other digital tools

Examples include name-calling, rumor-spreading, exclusion, threats, assault, hazing, and demands for money.

### Prevention and Education

RYSS teaches all students to recognize, prevent, and report bullying through research-based programming.

Students in elementary grades will participate in:

- Instruction designed so that students can recognize bullying behaviors and how to report them
- Age-appropriate discussions that encourage peers to intervene when they observe bullying occur
- Instruction that characterizes bullying as a behavior that results from the student's need to acquire more mature social or coping skills, not an unchangeable trait

Students in secondary grades will participate in:

- Instruction on the brain's ability to change and grow so the student recognizes bullying behavior can come from a developmental need to acquire more social skills, can change when the brain matures and learns better ways of coping, and is not an unchangeable trait
- Discussions that portray bullying as undesirable behavior and a means for attaining or maintaining social status at school, and that discourage students from using bullying as a tool for social status
- Instruction designed so that students recognize the role that reporting bullying behaviors plays in promoting a safe school community

### How to Report Bullying

If a student believes they have been bullied or have witnessed another student being bullied, they should inform a trusted adult at school—such as a teacher, counselor, principal, or any staff member—as soon as possible.

- All school staff are required to report suspected bullying to a campus administrator.
- Reports may be made in person, via email, or through the RYSS anonymous reporting system: RYSS Hotlines / IWATCH.
- Anonymous reports are investigated in the same manner as named reports, though the ability to follow up may be limited if contact information is not provided.

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## What Happens After a Report is Made

Upon receiving a report of bullying, the administration will:

- Promptly investigate the claim by gathering information from all involved parties (students, staff, witnesses).
- Notify the parents/guardians of both the alleged victim and the alleged aggressor.
- Determine if the reported behavior meets the definition of bullying under Texas Education Code §37.0832.
- Regardless of the outcome, ensure that supportive measures are put in place to protect the reporting student and prevent retaliation.

Investigations are typically completed within ten school days, though the timeline may be extended for complex cases with notification to families.

## Support and Interventions

If bullying is confirmed:

- Disciplinary consequences will be issued in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.
- Supportive interventions such as counseling, restorative practices, behavior plans, or peer mediation may be implemented for both the student who was bullied and the student who engaged in bullying.
- The school may also involve law enforcement in situations involving threats, assault, or other criminal behavior.

All actions will comply with federal protections for students with disabilities and students in protected classes.

## Student Transfers

To ensure the continued safety and well-being of all students:

- The parent of a student who has been determined to be a victim of bullying may request a transfer to another classroom or campus within the district.
- Upon recommendation of the administration, the board may transfer a student found to have engaged in bullying to another classroom at the same campus. In consultation with the student's parents, the board may also transfer the student to another RYSS campus.

## Anti-Retaliation and Confidentiality

RYSS prohibits retaliation against any student who reports bullying in good faith. Retaliatory actions will be investigated and addressed as separate disciplinary issues.

The identity of the reporting party is kept confidential to the greatest extent possible, consistent with legal obligations and due process rights.

## Appeals and Further Review

If a student or parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of a bullying investigation:

- They may request a meeting with the campus principal to review the findings.
- If concerns remain unresolved, the parent may file a formal grievance through Board Policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process.

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A copy of the district's bullying policy is available:

- In the principal's office
- In the superintendent's office
- On the RYSS website (under "Policies and Student Resources")
- As an appendix to this handbook

## **Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Other Work-Based Programs (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

The district offers career and technical education programs in the following areas:

- STEM Academy offered PLTW classes such as Science of Technology Classes and T-STEM Academy offers Introduction of Engineering Design, Civil Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, and Engineering and Design Problems classes for T-STEM Academy
- Microsoft Certification
- Anatomy & Physiology

Admission to these programs is based on ***student interest and course sequence***.

District policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap in its vocational programs, services, or activities, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

District policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its employment practices as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The district will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission or participation in all educational and vocational programs.

For information about your rights or grievance procedures, contact the Title IX coordinator and the ADA/Section 504 coordinator.

## **Celebrations (All Grade Levels)**

Parents may provide food to share for school-designated events or student birthdays; however, please be mindful that some students may have severe food allergies. Always discuss any classroom allergies with the teacher before bringing food to school.

From time to time, schools or individual classes may hold celebrations or curriculum-based events that include food. In such cases, teachers or staff will notify families about any known food allergies and provide guidance for volunteers.

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Please note: Each campus may have its own specific procedures for classroom and school celebrations. For questions or to confirm expectations, please contact your child's campus directly.

## **Child Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children (All Grade Levels)**

The district has established a plan for addressing child abuse, neglect, trafficking, and other maltreatment of children. The plan is currently under review and will be posted in September 2024 available at [Health Services / Wellness & Mental Health \(ryss.org\)](https://www.ryss.org/Health-Services-Wellness-Mental-Health). Abuse includes physical abuse, including sexual abuse, and psychological and emotional abuse. Trafficking includes both sex and labor trafficking. Any case of suspected or known human trafficking will be assessed and reported to the authorities.

### **Duty to Report**

Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, to report the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to Child Protective Services (CPS). See below for information about how to report and respond to allegations of child abuse or neglect.

## **Possible Warning Signs of Child Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children**

### ***Physical abuse***

Possible warning signs of physical abuse include:

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without apparent injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Extreme fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child have not been seen for several days
- Unseasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

### ***Sexual Abuse***

Possible warning signs of sexual abuse include:

- Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- Sexual comments, behaviors, or play beyond what is considered age-appropriate behavior

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- Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

Children and adolescents who have experienced dating violence may show similar physical, behavioral, and emotional warning signs.

### ***Emotional Abuse***

Possible warning signs of emotional abuse include:

- Over-compliance or low self-esteem caused by scapegoating or verbal abuse by caregivers
- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Lag in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- Indicators of a caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems
- Significant changes to behavior, such as withdrawal or over-aggression
- Significant changes to weight, such as substantial weight gain or weight loss

### ***Neglect***

Possible warning signs of neglect include:

- Obvious malnourishment
- Consistent lack of personal hygiene that poses a health risk
- Stealing or begging for food
- Child unattended for extended periods of time
- Unaddressed need for dental care or other medical attention

### **Description and Warning Signs of Trafficking**

Child trafficking of any sort is prohibited by the Penal Code. Sex trafficking involves forcing a person, including a child, into sexual abuse, assault, indecency, prostitution, or pornography. Labor trafficking involves forcing a person, including a child, to engage in forced labor or services.

Traffickers are often trusted members of a child's community, such as friends, romantic partners, family members, mentors, and coaches. Some traffickers contact victims online.

Possible warning signs of sexual trafficking in children include:

- Changes in school attendance, habits, friend groups, vocabulary, demeanor, and attitude
- Sudden appearance of expensive items (for example, manicures, designer clothes, purses, technology)
- Tattoos or branding
- Refillable gift cards
- Frequent runaway episodes
- Multiple phones or social media accounts
- Provocative pictures posted online or stored on the phone
- Unexplained injuries
- Isolation from family, friends, and community
- Older romantic partners

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Additional warning signs for labor trafficking in children include:

- Being unpaid, paid little, or paid only through tips
- Being employed but not having a school-authorized work permit
- Being employed and having a work permit but clearly working outside the permitted hours for students
- Owing a large debt and being unable to pay it off
- Not being allowed breaks at work or being subjected to excessively long work hours
- Being overly concerned with pleasing an employer and/or deferring personal or educational decisions to a boss
- Not being in control of their own money
- Living with an employer or having an employer listed as a student's caregiver
- A desire to quit a job but not being allowed to do so

### Reporting and Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children

A child who has experienced any type of abuse or neglect should be encouraged to seek out a parent or trusted adult. Children may be reluctant to disclose abuse and may only disclose sexual abuse indirectly. As a parent or trusted adult, it is important to be calm and comforting if your child or another child confides in you. Reassure the child that they did the right thing by telling you.

If your child is a victim of abuse, neglect, trafficking, or other maltreatment, the school counselor or principal will provide information on counseling options for you and your child available in your area. DFPS also manages early intervention counseling programs.

To find out what services may be available in your county, see [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Programs Available in Your County](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention%20and%20Early%20Intervention/Programs%20Available%20In%20Your%20County/default.asp) (<http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention and Early Intervention/Programs Available In Your County/default.asp>).

Reports of abuse, trafficking, or neglect may be made to the CPS division of the DFPS at 1 800-252-5400 or on the web at [Texas Abuse Hotline Website](http://www.txabusehotline.org) ([www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)).

### Further Resources on Sexual Abuse, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children

The following websites include resources to help increase awareness of child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, trafficking, and other maltreatment of children:

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/whatiscan.pdf) (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/whatiscan.pdf>)
- [KidsHealth, For Parents, Child Abuse](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/child-abuse.html) (<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/child-abuse.html>)
- [Office of the Texas Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team](https://gov.texas.gov/organization/cjd/childsextrafficking) (<https://gov.texas.gov/organization/cjd/childsextrafficking>)
- [Human Trafficking of School-aged Children](https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/human-trafficking-of-school-aged-children) (<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/human-trafficking-of-school-aged-children>)

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- [Child Sexual Abuse: A Parental Guide from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault \(https://taasa.org/product/child-sexual-abuse-parental-guide/\)](https://taasa.org/product/child-sexual-abuse-parental-guide/)
- [National Center of Safe Supportive Learning Environments: Human Trafficking in America's Schools \(https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools\)](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools)

### **Class Rank/Highest-Ranking Student (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

- Courses that are included in class rank calculations
- Any course exclusions
- Whether courses taken in middle/junior high school are included in the calculation
- Whether grades earned by alternative means (summer school, distance learning, credit by examination, dual credit off campus vs. on campus, and the like) are counted
- The weighted grade system used in the district to calculate class rank [for example, weighted numerical average or weighted grade point average (GPA)]
- Whether and when transferred grades will be weighted

[See policy PG-2.103: Academic Achievement for more information.]

### **Class Schedules (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

All students are expected to attend school for the entire school day and maintain a full class schedule. Exceptions may be made occasionally by the campus principal for students in grades 9-12 who meet specific criteria and receive parental consent to enroll in less than a full-day schedule.

### **College and University Admissions and Financial Aid (All Grade Levels)**

For two school years following graduation, a district student who graduates as valedictorian or in the top 10 percent of their class is eligible for automatic admission into four-year public universities and colleges in Texas if the student meets one of the following requirements:

- Completes the **distinguished level** of achievement under the foundation graduation program
- Satisfies the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks or earns at least a 1500 out of 2400 on the SAT

The student is responsible for meeting the admission requirements of the university or college, including timely submission of a completed application.

If a college or university adopts an admissions policy that automatically accepts the top 25 percent of a graduating class, the provisions above will also apply to a student ranked in the top 25 percent of their class.

The University of Texas at Austin may limit the number of automatically admitted students to 75 percent of the University's enrollment capacity for incoming resident freshmen. From the summer/fall 2026 term through the spring 2027 term, the University will admit the top five percent of a high school's graduating class who meet the above requirements. Additional applicants will be considered by the University through a holistic review process.

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As required by law, the district will provide written notice about the following:

- Automatic college admission
- Curriculum requirements for financial aid
- Benefits of completing the requirements for automatic admission and financial aid
- The Texas First Early High School Completion Program, which requires a student to provide an official copy of assessment results and transcripts, as applicable, to receive credit for the assessments and credits required for early graduation under the program
- The Texas First Scholarship Program
- The Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program

Parents and students will be asked to sign an acknowledgment that they received this information.

Students and parents should contact the school counselor for further information about automatic admissions, the application process, and deadlines.

## College Credit Courses (Secondary Grade Levels Only)

Students in grades 9-12 may earn college credit through the following opportunities:

- Certain courses taught at the high school campus, which may include courses termed dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or college preparatory
- Enrollment in AP or dual credit courses through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN)
- Enrollment in courses taught in conjunction with Houston Community College Southeast for RYSS Early College T-STEM Academy and BRYSS- Texas Southmost College-Dual Credit-Course Completion, which may be offered on or off campus
- Enrollment in courses taught at other colleges or universities
- Enrollment in these programs is based on TSI and TSI Attempt for RYSS Early College T-STEM Academy and BRYSS: TSI and TSI Attempt.

Under the Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program, a student may be eligible to enroll at no cost in dual credit courses at a participating institution of higher education. The FAST program allows students who are or have been educationally disadvantaged at any time during the four years preceding the student's enrollment in a dual credit course to enroll at no cost to the student. The district will determine eligibility upon the student's enrollment in the dual credit course. See the high school counselor for more information.

A student may be eligible for subsidies based on financial need for AP or IB exam fees.

A student may also earn college credit for certain Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses.

For dual credit purposes, all these methods have eligibility requirements and must be approved before enrollment in the course. Please see the school counselor for more information. Depending on the student's grade level and the course, a state-mandated end-of-course assessment may be required for graduation.

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Not all colleges and universities accept credit earned in all dual credit or AP courses taken in high school for college credit. Students and parents should check with the prospective college or university to determine if a particular course will count toward the student's desired degree plan.

## **Communications (All Grade Levels)**

### **Parent Contact Information**

A parent is legally required to provide in writing the parent's contact information, including address, phone number, and email address.

A parent must provide the contact information to the district upon enrollment and again within two weeks after the beginning of each following school year while the student is enrolled in the district.

If the parent's contact information changes during the school year, the parent must update the information in writing no more than two weeks after the date the information changes.

A parent may update contact information by contacting the campus registrar or using the Parent Portal to communicate these changes.

### **Automated Emergency Communications**

The district will rely on contact information on file to communicate with parents in an emergency, which may include real-time or automated messages. An emergency may include early dismissal, delayed opening, or restricted access to the campus due to severe weather, another emergency, or a security threat. It is crucial to notify your child's school when a phone number changes.

### **Automated Nonemergency Communications**

Your child's school periodically sends information by automated or pre-recorded messages, text messages, or real-time phone or email communications that are closely related to the school's mission and specific to your child, your child's school, or the district.

Standard messaging rates of your wireless phone carrier may apply.

If you do not wish to receive such communications, please contact your child's principal.

## **Complaints and Concerns (All Grade Levels)**

At RYSS, we value our families as essential partners in ensuring a safe, respectful, and thriving learning environment. We are committed to transparent communication and welcome feedback as an opportunity to grow and better serve our students.

Effective September 1, 2025, parent and student grievances related to Chapter 26 (Parental Rights), board policy, or Title 2 of the Texas Education Code must follow a structured, multi-level grievance procedure as mandated by Senate Bill 12 and detailed in Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code.

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The district encourages families to first seek informal resolution by contacting the appropriate teacher, administrator, or campus leader. If the concern remains unresolved, families may file a formal grievance.

Structured Grievance Review Process:

1. Initial review by the principal or relevant central office administrator.
2. Optional appeal to another central office administrator.
3. Appeal to the Superintendent.
4. Final appeal to the Board of Trustees (which may delegate to a committee of 3 members).

Timelines:

- File within 60 days of becoming aware of the issue
- 90 days if informal resolution was attempted
- 30 days after receiving filing instructions
- 20 days to appeal after a decision

Hearings & Decisions:

- Non-board hearings: held within 10 days and decided within 20 days
- Board hearings: held within 60 days of the previous decision and decided within 30 days of the hearing

Recordkeeping Requirements:

- Documentation from grievant and district
- Written rationale and reference to supporting documentation
- Opportunity for grievant to supplement the record
- A record made available to grievant at least 5 days before a board hearing

Transparency & Access: The district shall:

- Publish grievance procedures and forms online and in the Student Handbook
- Accept grievance filings electronically through the designated webpage
- Submit grievance reporting to TEA annually

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation may appeal through Policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process. Please refer to the RYSS website for updated grievance forms and submission portals.

This policy can be viewed in the district's policy manual, available online at [Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies \(tejanocenter.org\)](#). The complaint forms can be accessed in the principal's office and must be submitted to campus administration in a timely manner.

If a parent believes the school is not following a required law or policy, they may file a written complaint with the principal. The school will provide a written response or resolution. If the parent is not satisfied, they can appeal to the Superintendent/designee and ultimately to the

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school’s Board of Directors. In certain cases involving state law (for example, an alleged violation of curriculum or club-related rules), if the issue remains unresolved, parents may escalate the complaint to the Texas Education Agency for review.

## Conduct (All Grade Levels)

**RYSS promotes student growth through fair and consistent discipline.** Our approach is rooted in teaching responsibility, encouraging reflection, and supporting positive behavior choices. When students make mistakes, we address the issue with progressive interventions while maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment.

## Applicability of School Rules

The board has adopted a Student Code of Conduct that defines standards of acceptable behavior — on and off campus, during remote and in-person instruction, and on district vehicles — and outlines consequences for violation of these standards. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Students and parents should be familiar with the standards set out in the Student Code of Conduct, as well as campus and classroom rules.

During summer instruction, the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct in place for the school year immediately before the summer period apply, unless the district amends either or both documents for summer instruction.

## Campus Behavior Coordinator

Each campus has a campus behavior coordinator to apply discipline management techniques and administer consequences for certain student misconduct, as well as provide a point of contact for student misconduct. The contact information for each campus behavior coordinator is available on the district’s website at [Welcome Parents and Family / Welcome Parents and Family \(ryss.org\)](#) and the coordinator for this campus is listed below:

<p>Andrea Bernes, Assistant Principal          BRYSS Academy and BRYSS HS          2255 N Coria St.          Brownsville, TX 78520  <a href="mailto:Andrea.Bernes@tejanocenter.org">Andrea.Bernes@tejanocenter.org</a>   956-574-7103</p>	<p>Axinia Zepeda, Principal          RYSS Early Childhood Academy at Leonel Castillo          201 South St.          Houston, TX 77009  <a href="mailto:Axinia.Zepeda@tejanocenter.org">Axinia.Zepeda@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3740</p>
<p>Yesenia Cervantes, Principal          RYSS STEM Academy at Pasadena          1062 Fairmont Parkway          Pasadena, TX 77504  <a href="mailto:Yesenia.Cervantes@tejanocenter.org">Yesenia.Cervantes@tejanocenter.org</a>   832-482-9583</p>	<p>Diana Chavez, Principal          RYSS PSTEM Academy          2950 Broadway St.          Houston, TX 77017  <a href="mailto:Diana.Chavez@tejanocenter.org">Diana.Chavez@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3763</p>
<p>Auden Sarabia, Principal          RYSS North East STEM          10918 ½ Bentley St.          Houston, TX 77093  <a href="mailto:Auden.Sarabia@tejanocenter.org">Auden.Sarabia@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3720</p>	<p>Damon Jasso, Assistant Principal          RYSS Early College STEM &amp; T-STEM Academy          2950 Broadway St.          Houston, TX 77017  <a href="mailto:Damon.Jasso@tejanocenter.org">Damon.Jasso@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3761</p>

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## Deliveries

Except in emergencies, delivery of messages or packages to students will not be allowed during instructional time. A parent may leave a message or a package, such as a forgotten lunch, for the student to pick up from the front office during a passing period or lunch.

## Disruption of School Operations

Disruption of school operations is not tolerated and may constitute a misdemeanor offense. As identified by state law, disruptions include the following:

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a district building without authorization from an administrator
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to district property
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving district property without authorization from an administrator

Disruption of classes or other school activities while on or within 500 feet of district property includes:

- Making loud noises
- Trying to entice a student away from, or to prevent a student from attending, a required class or activity
- Entering a classroom without authorization and disrupting the activity with loud or profane language or any misconduct

Interference with the transportation of students in vehicles owned or operated by the district is also considered a disruption.

## Social Events

School rules apply to all school social events. Guests attending these events are expected to observe the same rules as students, and a student inviting a guest will share responsibility for the conduct of the guest.

A student attending a social event will be asked to sign out when leaving before the end of the event and will not be readmitted.

A parent interested in serving as a chaperone for any school social events should contact the campus principal.

## Conduct Before and After School (All Grade Levels)

Teachers and administrators have full authority over student conduct at before- or after-school activities. Whether a school activity is on or off district premises, students must follow the same

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rules of conduct that apply during the instructional day. Misbehavior will be subject to consequences established by the Student Code of Conduct, or any stricter standards of behavior established by the sponsor for extracurricular participants.

## **Use of Hallways during Class Time (All Grade Levels)**

During class times, loitering or standing in the halls is not permitted, and a student must have a hall pass to be outside the classroom for any purpose. Failure to obtain a pass will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Use by Students Before and After School (All Grade Levels)**

Certain school areas will be open to students before and after school for designated activities. Students are expected to remain in the area where their activity is taking place.

The following areas are open to students before or after school:

- PSTEM Gym 7:15-7:45 and PSTEM Front Office 4:00-4:30
- BRYSS Campus Opens at 7:00 and closes at 5:45 daily. (Cafeteria/ Pavilion/Computer Labs, etc.)
- RYSS Early College STEM & T-STEM Academy opens at 7:15 a.m. and closes at 4:30 p.m. daily. (Courtyard, Cafeteria, and assigned Tutorials)

Students must leave campus promptly after dismissal unless they are participating in a supervised school activity. Students may only move to other parts of the campus with supervision and permission from a teacher or activity sponsor.

## **Meetings of Non-Curriculum Related Groups (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

Student-organized, student-led non-curriculum-related groups are permitted to meet during the hours designated by the principal before and after school. These groups must comply with the requirements of policy PG-7.108: Student Expression: Use of School Facilities for Non-school Purposes. A list of these groups is available in the principal's office.

Parental consent is required before a student may participate in a student club that is authorized or sponsored by the district. [See Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations (All Grade Levels)]

## **Counseling**

The district has a comprehensive school counseling program that includes:

- A guidance curriculum to help students develop their full educational potential, including the student's interests and career objectives
- A responsive services component to intervene on behalf of any student whose immediate personal concerns or problems put the student's continued educational, career, personal, or social development at risk
- An individual planning system to guide a student as the student plans, monitors, and manages the student's own educational, career, personal, and social development

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- Systems to support the efforts of teachers, staff, parents, and other members of the community in promoting the educational, career, personal, and social development of students

The district will make a preview of the program, including all materials and curriculum, available to parents to review during school hours.

## Academic Counseling

### *Elementary and Middle/Junior High School Grade Levels*

The school counselor will provide information to students and parents about college and university admissions and the importance of planning for postsecondary education, including appropriate coursework and financial aid availability and requirements.

In either grade 7 or 8, each student will receive instruction on how best to prepare for high school, college, and a career.

### *High School Grade Levels*

High school students and their parents are encouraged to talk with a school counselor, teacher, or principal to learn more about course offerings, graduation requirements, and early graduation procedures.

Each year, high school students will be provided with information on anticipated course offerings for the next school year, how to make the most of academic and career and technical education (CTE) opportunities, and the importance of postsecondary education.

The school counselor will also provide information annually to high school students:

- The importance of postsecondary education
- The advantages of earning an endorsement and completing the foundation program with the distinguished level of achievement
- The disadvantages of pursuing a high school equivalency exam (GED) as opposed to earning a high school diploma
- Financial aid eligibility and how to apply for financial aid
- Automatic admission to state-funded Texas colleges and universities
- Eligibility requirements for the TEXAS Grant
- Availability of district programs that allow students to earn college credit
- Availability of tuition and fee assistance for postsecondary education for students in foster care
- Availability of college credit awarded by institutions of higher education to veterans and military service members for military experience, education, and training

Additionally, the school counselor can provide information about workforce opportunities after graduation or technical and trade school opportunities, including opportunities to earn industry-recognized certificates and licenses.

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## **Personal Counseling (All Grade Levels)**

The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal, social, and family concerns, including emotional or mental health issues and substance abuse. A student who wishes to meet with the school counselor should request a meeting with the school counselor's office or with campus personnel. As a parent, if you are concerned about your child's mental or emotional health, please speak with the school counselor for a list of resources that may be of assistance.

If your child has experienced trauma, contact the school counselor for more information.

## **Course Credit (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

Students enrolled in high school credit courses, regardless of grade level, will earn credit only if the final grade is 70 or above. For a full-year course (two semesters totaling one credit), the student's semester grades will be averaged. If the combined average is 70 or higher, full credit will be awarded. If the average is below 70, credit will be granted only for the semester with a passing grade, if applicable.

## **Credit by Examination — If a Student Has Taken the Course/Subject (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

A student who has previously taken a course or subject but did not earn credit or a final grade may be eligible to regain credit through a credit-by-exam process, as determined by the campus principal or attendance committee. This applies in cases such as:

- Incomplete coursework due to failing grades or excessive absences
- Homeschooling without prior credit recognition
- Transfer from a nonaccredited school

This process is commonly known as "credit recovery."

The attendance review committee may also offer this option to students with significant absences who need an alternative pathway to earning credit.

To receive credit through this method, a student must score at least 70 on the designated credit-by-exam aligned to the course's essential knowledge and skills, as approved by the district's board of trustees.

## **Credit by Examination for Advancement/Acceleration — If a Student Has Not Taken the Course**

A student will be permitted to earn credit by examination for an academic course or subject area for which the student had no prior instruction for advancement or to accelerate to the next grade level.

The examinations offered by the district are approved by the district's board of trustees. Testing windows for these examinations will be published in district publications and on the district's website. A student may take a specific examination only once per testing window.

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The only exceptions to the published testing windows will be for examinations administered by another entity or to accommodate a student experiencing homelessness or a student involved in the foster care system.

When another entity administers an examination, the student and the district must comply with the testing schedule of the other entity.

If a student plans to take an examination, the student or parent must register with the school counselor no later than 30 days before the scheduled testing date. [See policy PG-2.108: Credit by Examination for more information.]

## Students in Grades 1-5

A student in elementary school is eligible to accelerate to the next grade level if the student meets all the following requirements:

- The student scores at least an eighty (80) on each examination in the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies
- A district administrator recommends that the student be accelerated
- The student's parent gives written approval of the grade advancement

## Students in Grades 6-12

A student in grade 6 or above is eligible to earn course credit if the student meets one of the following requirements:

- A passing score of at least eighty (80) on an examination approved by the board
- A scale score of fifty (50) or higher on an examination administered through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- A score of 3 or higher on an AP examination, as applicable

A student may take an examination to earn high school course credits no more than twice. If a student fails to achieve the designated score on the applicable exam before the beginning of the school year in which the student would need to enroll in the course according to the school's high school course sequence, the student must complete the course.

## Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (All Grade Levels)

At RYSS, we are committed to maintaining a safe, respectful learning environment that is free from dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

All students and staff are expected to treat each other with kindness and respect. Inappropriate, harmful, or disrespectful behaviors are not tolerated. RYSS employees are also expected to always model respectful behavior.

The district has clear policies in place to prevent and address behavior that targets someone based on race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status under the law. These policies are available in the principal's office, the superintendent's office, and on our website at [Non-Discrimination Policy / Home \(tejanocenter.org\)](https://www.tejanocenter.org/Non-Discrimination-Policy)

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## Dating Violence

Dating violence will not be tolerated at school. To report dating violence, see the counselor or campus principal.

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the relationship or any of the person's past or subsequent partners. This type of conduct is considered harassment if it is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of dating violence against a student may include, but are not limited to:

- Physical or sexual assault
- Name-calling or put-downs
- Threats to hurt the student or their family
- Destroying property belonging to the student
- Threats to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship
- Threats to harm a student's past or current dating partner
- Attempts to isolate the student from friends and family
- Stalking
- Encouraging others to engage in these behaviors

In accordance with law, when the district receives a report of dating violence, a district official will immediately notify the parent of the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.

The counselor's office has information about the dangers of dating violence and resources for seeking help.

For more information on dating violence, see:

- Texas Attorney General's office [recognizing and responding to dating violence flier](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/child-support/papa/session%2010/recognizing-relationship-violence-en.pdf) (<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/child-support/papa/session%2010/recognizing-relationship-violence-en.pdf>)
- The CDC's [Preventing Teen Dating Violence](https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/about-teen-dating-violence.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/about-teen-dating-violence.html>)

## Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as any conduct directed at a student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law that negatively affects the student.

## Harassment

Harassment, in general terms, is conduct so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an

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intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive or derogatory language directed at a person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation
- Threatening, intimidating, or humiliating conduct
- Offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors
- Physical aggression or assault
- Graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes
- Other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property

### **Sexual Harassment and Sex-Based Harassment**

Sexual harassment and sex-based harassment of a student by an employee, volunteer, or another student are prohibited.

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- Touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature
- Sexual advances
- Jokes or conversations of a sexual nature
- Other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer does not include necessary or permissible physical contact that a reasonable person would not construe as sexual in nature, such as comforting a child with a hug or taking the child's hand. However, romantic, sexual, and other inappropriate social relationships between students and district employees are prohibited, even if consensual.

### **Pregnancy or Related Conditions**

The district does not discriminate on the basis of pregnancy or a related condition.

Please contact the campus counselor or nurse for pregnancy-related accommodations.

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against a person who makes a report or participates in an investigation of discrimination, harassment, or dating violence is prohibited.

### **Reporting Procedures**

Any student who believes they have experienced dating violence, discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should immediately report the problem to a teacher, school counselor, principal, or other district employee. The report may be made by the student's parent. [See policy PG-3.102: Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation for other appropriate district officials to whom to make a report.]

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Upon receiving a report, the district will determine whether the allegations, if proven, constitute prohibited conduct as defined by policy PG-3.102: Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation. If not, the district will refer to policy PG-3.103: Prohibited Bullying to determine whether the allegations, if proven, constitute bullying, as defined by law and policy PG-3.103: Prohibited Bullying. If the alleged prohibited conduct also meets the statutory and policy definitions for bullying, an investigation of bullying will also be conducted.

The district will promptly notify the parent of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct involving an adult associated with the district. In the event alleged prohibited conduct involves another student, the district will notify the parent of the student alleged to have experienced the prohibited conduct when the allegations, if proven, would constitute a violation as defined by policy PG-3.102: Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation.

### **Investigation of Report**

Allegations of prohibited conduct, which includes dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, will be promptly investigated.

To the extent possible, the district will respect the privacy of the student. However, limited disclosures may be necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and comply with the law.

If a law enforcement or other regulatory agency notifies the district that it is investigating the matter and requests that the district delay its investigation, the district will resume its investigation at the conclusion of the agency's investigation.

During an investigation and when appropriate, the district will take interim action to address the alleged prohibited conduct.

If the district's investigation indicates that prohibited conduct occurred, appropriate disciplinary action and, in some cases, corrective action will be taken to address the conduct. The district may take disciplinary and corrective action even if the conduct was not unlawful.

All parties involved will be notified of the outcome of the district investigation within the parameters and limits allowed under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal in accordance with policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process.

### **Distance Learning (All Grade Levels)**

Distance learning and correspondence courses include courses that encompass the state-required essential knowledge and skills but are taught through multiple technologies and alternative methodologies such as mail, satellite, internet, video-conferencing, and instructional television.

If a student wishes to enroll in a correspondence course or a distance learning course that is not provided through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN), as described below, to earn credit in a course or subject, the student must receive permission from the principal before enrolling in

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the course or subject. If the student does not receive prior approval, the district may not recognize and apply the course or subject toward graduation requirements or subject mastery.

### **Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) (Secondary Grade Levels)**

The Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) has been established by the state as one method of distance learning. A student has the option, with certain limitations, to enroll in a course offered through the TXVSN to earn course credit for graduation.

Depending on the TXVSN course in which a student enrolls, the course may be subject to the “no pass, no play” rules. In addition, a student who enrolls in a TXVSN course for which an end-of-course (EOC) assessment is required must still take the corresponding EOC assessment.

A parent may ask questions or request that their child be enrolled in a TXVSN course by contacting the school counselor. Unless an exception is made by the **school administration** and school counselor and principal a student will not be allowed to enroll in a TXVSN course if the school offers the same or a similar course.

A copy of the policy PG-2.111: State Virtual School Network addressing distance learning will be distributed to parents of secondary students at least once each year. If you do not receive a copy or have questions about this policy, please contact campus administration.

### **Distribution of Literature, Published Materials, or Other Documents (All Grade Levels)**

#### **School Materials**

Publications prepared by and for the school may be posted or distributed, with the prior approval of the principal, sponsor, or teacher. Such items may include school posters, newspapers, yearbooks, brochures, flyers, and the like.

All school publications are under the supervision of a teacher, sponsor, and the principal.

#### **Non-school Materials**

##### ***From Students***

Students must obtain prior approval from the principal before selling, posting, circulating, or distributing any copy of written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials that were not developed under the oversight of the school. To be considered, any non-school material must include the name of the sponsoring person or organization. Approval will be granted or denied within two school days.

The principal has designated appropriate areas at the principal's discretion as the location for approved non-school materials to be placed for voluntary viewing or collection by students.

A student may appeal a decision in accordance with policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process. Any student who sells, posts, circulates, or distributes non-school material

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without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Materials displayed without approval will be removed.

## ***From Others***

No person or group will sell, circulate, distribute, or post on any district premises written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials that is not sponsored by the district or by a district-affiliated school-support organization, except as permitted by policy PG-7.107: Non-school Use of Facilities: Distribution of Non-school Literature.

To be considered for distribution, any non-school material must meet the limitations on content established in the policy, include the name of the sponsoring person or organization, and be submitted to the principal for prior review. The principal will approve or reject the materials within two school days of the time the materials are received. The requestor may appeal a rejection in accordance with the appropriate district complaint policy. [See policies PG-4:208 Employee Complaints and Grievances (General) or PG-1.205: Public Complaints for more information.]

The principal will designate the location for approved non-school materials to be placed for voluntary viewing or collection.

Prior review will not be required for:

- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a school-sponsored meeting intended for adults and held after school hours
- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a community group meeting held after school hours in accordance with policy PG-1.301: School Property or a non-curriculum-related student group meeting held in accordance with policy PG-7.108: Student Expression: Use of School Facilities for Non-school Purposes
- Distribution for electioneering purposes during the time a school facility is being used as a polling place, in accordance with state law

All non-school materials distributed under these circumstances must be removed from district property immediately following the event at which the materials are distributed.

## **Dress and Grooming (All Grade Levels)**

Our student dress guidelines promote a safe and distraction-free learning environment. We recognize the importance of student expression while also maintaining a standard that supports respect and focus. Families are our partners in helping students come to school prepared to learn in attire that aligns with these expectations.

<b>BRYSS Academy</b>	<b>BRYSS HS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PreK 3 through 5th Grade: Royal Blue or Yellow Polo</li><li>• 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Black Polo</li><li>• Khaki pants</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Navy Blue or Black Polo</li><li>• Dark-colored pants</li><li>• Blue jeans</li><li>• Zipper or button-down sweater or jacket</li></ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue jeans</li> <li>• Zipper or button-down sweater or jacket</li> </ul>	
<p><b>RYSS Early Childhood Academy Leonel Castillo</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White, Navy Blue, or Orange Polo</li> <li>• Khaki or Navy Blue pants, shorts, skorts, or jumpers</li> <li>• Fridays only: Spirit shirts and jeans</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RYSS PSTEM Academy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Polo</li> <li>• Khaki/Dark pants</li> <li>• Fridays only: Spirit shirts and jeans</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RYSS North East STEM Academy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NESTEM spirit shirts</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Blue Polo</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> Grade: Green Polo</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Gray Polo</li> <li>• Khaki, navy blue, or black pants</li> <li>• Blue or black jeans</li> <li>• Fridays only: College spirit shirts</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RYSS STEM Academy at Pasadena</b></p> <p>PreK 3, PreK 4, &amp; Kindergarten</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kelly Green Polo</li> <li>• Khaki, navy blue, or black pants</li> <li>• Fridays only: Spirit shirts and jeans</li> </ul> <p>Grades 1-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Polo</li> <li>• Khaki, navy blue, or black pants</li> <li>• Fridays only: Spirit shirts and jeans</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Early College STEM Academy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navy Blue Polo</li> <li>• Khaki/Dark pants</li> <li>• Fridays only: Spirit shirts and jeans</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Early College T-STEM Academy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black Polo</li> <li>• Khaki/Dark pants</li> <li>• Fridays only: Spirit shirts and jeans</li> </ul>

If the principal determines that a student’s grooming or clothing violates the school’s dress code, the student will be given an opportunity to correct the problem at school and return to the classroom. If the problem cannot be corrected at school, the principal will work with the student and parent to obtain an acceptable change of clothing for the student in a way that minimizes loss of instructional time.

Repeated or severe offenses may result in more serious disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

### Electronic Devices and Technology Resources (All Grade Levels)

#### Safe Use of Technology

The district is committed to ensuring that students use technology safely and will follow all federal and state requirements to protect students from excessive data collection or materials that are considered harmful to minors. The district considers parents as partners in cybersecurity and online safety.

In accordance with state and federal law, the district will:

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- Install a filter that blocks and prohibits pornographic or obscene materials or applications, including from unsolicited pop-ups, installations, and downloads, before transferring an electronic device to a student to be used for an educational purpose
- Block or filter students' internet access to pictures that are obscene, contain child pornography, or have been determined to be harmful to minors in accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Require direct and informed parental consent for a student's use of software, other than software excluded from the consent requirement by law
- Require direct and informed parental consent for a student's use of software that conducts mental health assessments or other assessments unrelated to education curricula that are intended to collect information about students

If you want to know more about partnering with the district regarding cybersecurity and online safety, or if you have complaints or concerns about student use of electronic devices, please contact the campus technology staff member or principal.

### **Possession and Use of Personal Telecommunications Devices, Including Cell Phones, and Other Electronic Devices**

To support a focused learning environment, RYSS follows state law restricting the use of electronic personal devices during the school day. Per House Bill 1481, students may not use personal communication devices—including cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, and wireless earbuds—during school hours.

All devices must be powered off and stored away unless explicit permission is given by a staff member for educational or emergency use.

### **Violations & Consequences**

Unauthorized use of personal communication devices during the instructional day may result in disciplinary action. Depending on the severity and frequency of the behavior, consequences may include but are not limited to:

- Verbal warnings
- Device confiscation (held until end of day or retrieved by parent/guardian)
- Detention or In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Progressive disciplinary action in alignment with the RYSS Student Code of Conduct

### **Exceptions to the Rule**

The district may authorize the use of a personal communication device for the following reasons:

- To implement an individualized education program (IEP) or for a plan created under [Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 \(29 U.S.C Section 794\)](#) or a similar program or plan;
- With documented need based on a directive from a qualified physician; or

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- To comply with a health or safety requirement imposed by law or as part of the district's safety protocols.

Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

The district is not responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen personal devices. In limited circumstances and in accordance with law, a student's personal communications device may be searched by authorized personnel. [See Searches and Investigations and policy PG-3.404: Student Conduct Personal Telecommunications Electronic Devices for more information.]

### **Instructional Use of Personal Electronic Devices**

Students must obtain prior approval to use personal electronic devices allowed by law for instructional purposes while on campus. The district may not permit use of a prohibited personal communication device except as required by law. [See Possession and Use of Personal Communications Devices, Including Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices] Students must also sign a user agreement that contains applicable rules for use (separate from this handbook).

### **Acceptable Use of District Technology Resources**

District-owned technology resources may be issued to individual students for instructional purposes. Use of the district's network systems and equipment is restricted to approved purposes only. Students and parents will be asked to sign a user agreement (separate from this handbook) regarding use of these district resources. Violations of the user agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

### **Unacceptable and Inappropriate Use of Technology Resources**

Students are prohibited from possessing, sending, forwarding, posting, accessing, or displaying electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal. This prohibition also applies to conduct off school property, whether on district-owned or personally owned equipment, if it results in a substantial disruption to the educational environment.

Any person taking, disseminating, transferring, possessing, or sharing obscene, sexually oriented, lewd, or otherwise illegal images or other content — commonly referred to as "sexting" — will be disciplined in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, may be required to complete an educational program related to the dangers of this type of behavior, and, in certain circumstances, may be reported to law enforcement.

This type of behavior may constitute bullying or harassment, as well as impede future endeavors of a student. We encourage parents to review with their child the ["Before You Text" Bullying and Sexting Course](https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/courses/before-you-text/) (<https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/courses/before-you-text/>), a state-developed program that addresses the consequences of sexting.

Any student who engages in conduct that results in a breach of the district's computer security will be disciplined in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. In some cases, the consequence may be expulsion.

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## Emergent Bilingual Students (All Grade Levels)

A student who is an emergent bilingual student is entitled to receive specialized services from the district. A Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC), consisting of both district personnel and at least one parent representative, will determine whether the student qualifies for services. The student's parent must consent to any services recommended by the LPAC. However, pending the receipt of parental consent or denial of services, an eligible student will receive the services to which the student is entitled and eligible.

To determine a student's level of proficiency in English, the LPAC will use information from a variety of assessments. If the student qualifies for services, and once a level of proficiency has been established, the LPAC will designate instructional accommodations or additional special programs that the student will require to eventually become proficient at grade level work in English. Ongoing assessments will be conducted to determine a student's continued eligibility for the program.

The LPAC will also determine whether certain accommodations are necessary for any state-mandated assessments. The STAAR Spanish, as mentioned at **Standardized Testing**, may be administered to an emergent bilingual student up to grade 5. In limited circumstances, a student's LPAC may exempt the student from an otherwise required state-mandated assessment or may waive certain graduation requirements related to the English I end-of-course (EOC) assessment. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) will also be administered to emergent bilingual students who qualify for services.

If a student is considered an emergent bilingual student and receives special education services because of a qualifying disability, the student's ARD committee will make instructional and assessment decisions in conjunction with the LPAC.

## Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations (All Grade Levels)

Participation in school-sponsored activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and build strong friendships.

Per state law (SB 12), before a student may participate in any campus club, extracurricular group, or student organization, a parent or guardian must provide written permission. This applies to all non-instructional clubs, including interest-based, cultural, and recreational groups.

Some extracurricular activities may include off-campus events. Students are required to use transportation provided by the district to and from the events. Exceptions may only be made with the approval of the activity's coach or sponsor.

Eligibility for many of these activities is governed by state law and the rules of the University Interscholastic League (UIL), a statewide association overseeing interdistrict competition. If a student engages in an academic, athletic, or music activity governed by UIL, the student and parent are expected to know and follow all rules of the UIL organization. Students and parents can access the [UIL Parent Information Manual](https://www.uil texas.org/athletics/manuals) (<https://www.uil texas.org/athletics/manuals>) online. A hard copy can be provided by the coach or sponsor of the activity on request.

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To report alleged noncompliance with required safety training or an alleged violation of safety rules required by law and the UIL, please contact the curriculum division of TEA at (512) 463-9581 or [curriculum@tea.texas.gov](mailto:curriculum@tea.texas.gov).

[See [UIL Texas \(https://www.uiltexas.org/\)](https://www.uiltexas.org/) for additional information on all UIL-governed activities.]

Generally, a student who receives a grade below 70 at the end of a grading period in any academic class may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three school weeks.

However, if a student receives a grade below 70 at the end of a grading period in an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB), honors, or dual credit course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, or languages other than English, the student remains eligible for participation in all extracurricular activities.

If a student is enrolled in a state-approved music course that participates in UIL Concert and Sight-reading Evaluation, and the student receives a grade below 70 in any course at the end of a grading period, the student may perform with the ensemble during the UIL evaluation performance but is ineligible for other extracurricular activities for at least three weeks.

In addition, the following applies to all extracurricular activities:

- A student who receives special education services and who fails to meet the standards in the individualized education program (IEP) may not participate for at least three school weeks.
- An ineligible student may practice or rehearse but may not participate in any competitive activity.
- A student is allowed in a school year up to ten (10) absences not related to post-district competition, a maximum of ten (10) absences for post-district competition prior to state, and a maximum of ten (10) absences for state competition. All extracurricular activities and public performances, whether UIL activities or other activities approved by the board, are subject to these restrictions.
- An absence for participation in an activity that has not been approved will be considered an unexcused absence.

Per state law (SB 401), RYSS permits non-enrolled students residing within its boundaries to participate in UIL activities, provided they meet all eligibility requirements. Parents should contact the campus administration to complete registration paperwork for extracurricular access.

### Standards of Behavior

Sponsors of student clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, and drill and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior — including consequences for misbehavior — that are stricter than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the Student Code of Conduct or by board policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization's standards of behavior.

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

## Offices and Elections

Certain clubs, organizations, and performing groups will hold elections for student officers. These groups include:

- Early College T-STEM Academy: Student Council, Senior Class Officers, and various Clubs and Organizations
- BRYSS Academy: Student Council

## Fees (All Grade Levels)

Basic educational program materials are provided at no charge to a student. However, a student is expected to provide their own supplies, such as pencils, paper, erasers, and notebooks. A student may also be required to pay certain other costs, fees, or deposits, including:

- Materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations.
- Admission fees to extracurricular activities.
- Security deposits.
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased pictures, publications, class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements, and the like.
- Voluntarily purchased student health and accident insurance.
- Musical instrument rental and uniform maintenance when uniforms are provided by the district.
- Personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that becomes the property of the student.
- Parking fees and student identification cards.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- In some cases, a fee for a course taken through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN).

Any required fee or deposit may be waived if the student and parent are unable to pay. Application for such a waiver may be made to the principal.

## Fundraising (All Grade Levels)

Student groups or classes and/or parent groups may be permitted to conduct fundraising drives for approved school purposes in accordance with administrative regulations. The Chief of Schools shall approve all fundraising activities.

## Gang-Free Zones (All Grade Levels)

Certain criminal offenses, including gang-related crimes, will be enhanced to the next-highest category of offense if they are committed in a gang-free zone. Gang-free zones include a school bus and any location in, on, or within 1,000 feet of any district-owned or leased property or campus playground.

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

## Grade-Level Classification (Grades 9-12 Only)

After grade 9, students are classified according to the number of credits earned toward graduation.

Credits Earned	Classification
0 – 5.5	Grade 9 (Freshman)
6 – 11.5	Grade 10 (Sophomore)
12 – 17.5	Grade 11 (Junior)
18 or more	Grade 12 (Senior)

## Grading Guidelines (All Grade Levels)

Our grading practices are designed to reflect what students know and can do, based on academic standards. Grades serve as feedback to students and families on progress toward mastery. If you have concerns about your child's understanding or academic progress, we encourage you to reach out to the teacher directly to discuss ways we can support their learning.

Approved grading guidelines for each grade level or course will be communicated to students and their parents by the classroom teacher. These guidelines establish the following:

- The minimum number of assignments, projects, and examinations required for each grading period
- How the student's mastery of concepts and achievement will be communicated (for example, letter grades, numerical averages, checklist of required skills, and the like)
- Circumstances under which a student will be allowed to redo an assignment or retake an examination the student originally failed
- Procedures for a student to follow after an absence
- Grading consequences for academic dishonesty, including cheating or copying the work of another student, plagiarism (including the unauthorized use of artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT), and unauthorized communication between students during an examination

## Graduation (Secondary Grade Levels Only)

### Requirements for a Diploma

A student must meet the following requirements to receive a high school diploma from the district:

- Achieve passing scores on certain end-of-course (EOC) assessments or approved substitute assessments, unless specifically waived as permitted by state law
- Complete the required number of credits established by the state and any additional credits required by the district

## Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

- Complete any locally required courses in addition to the courses mandated by the state
- Demonstrate proficiency, as determined by the district, in the specific communication skills required by the State Board of Education (SBOE)
- Complete and submit a free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) or a Texas application for state financial aid (TASFA)

### Testing Requirements for Graduation

Students are required, with limited exceptions and regardless of graduation program, to perform satisfactorily on the following EOC assessments:

- English I
- English II
- Algebra I
- Biology
- U.S. History

A student who does not achieve a sufficient score will have opportunities to retake an assessment.

State law allows a student to meet EOC requirements by substituting satisfactory performance on approved national standardized assessments or on the state-developed assessment used for entrance into Texas public universities.

If a student fails to perform satisfactorily on an EOC assessment, the district will provide remediation in the applicable content area. This may require the student's participation outside normal school operating times.

In limited circumstances, a student who fails to demonstrate proficiency on up to two of the required assessments may still be eligible to graduate if an individual graduation committee, formed in accordance with state law, unanimously determines that the student is eligible to graduate.

### ***Foundation Graduation Program***

Every Texas public school student will graduate under the foundation graduation program. The foundation graduation program features endorsements, which are paths of interest that include:

- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Business and Industry
- Public Service
- Arts and Humanities
- Multidisciplinary Studies

Endorsements earned by a student will be noted on the student's transcript.

A student can complete the foundation graduation program with a "distinguished level of achievement," which reflects the completion of at least one endorsement and Algebra II as one of the required advanced mathematics credits.

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**Personal Graduation Plans** will be completed for each high school student.

State law generally prohibits a student from graduating solely under the foundation graduation program without an endorsement. However, after the student's sophomore year, the student and student's parent may request that the student graduate without an endorsement. The district will advise the student and the student's parent of the specific benefits of graduating with an endorsement. The student and the student's parent must then submit written permission to the school counselor for the student to graduate without an endorsement.

A student who wishes to attend a four-year university or college after graduation must carefully consider whether graduation under the foundation program without an endorsement will satisfy the admission requirements of the student's desired college or university.

A student graduating under the foundation graduation program can also earn performance acknowledgments on their transcript. Performance acknowledgments are available for outstanding performance in bilingualism and biliteracy, in a dual credit course, on an AP or IB examination, on certain national college preparatory and readiness or college entrance examinations, or for earning a license or certificate recognized at the state, national, or international level. The school counselor can provide more information about these acknowledgments.

A student is not required to complete an Algebra II course to graduate under the foundation graduation program, and the district will annually notify a student's parent of this fact. However, not taking Algebra II will make a student ineligible for automatic admission to four-year public universities and colleges in Texas and for certain financial aid and grants while attending those institutions.

A school district will permit a student to satisfy the curriculum requirements for graduation under the foundation program with the distinguished level of achievement, including an endorsement, by successfully completing courses in the core curriculum of a public Texas institution of higher education. Please see your counselor for more information.

## Credits Required

The foundation graduation program requires completion of the following credits:

<b>Course Area</b>	<b>Number of Credits: Foundation Graduation Program</b>	<b>Number of Credits: Foundation Graduation Program with an Endorsement</b>
English/Language Arts	4	4
Mathematics	3	4
Science	3	4
Social Studies	3	3
Physical Education	1	1

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Course Area	Number of Credits: Foundation Graduation Program	Number of Credits: Foundation Graduation Program with an Endorsement
Languages other than English	2	2
Fine Arts	1	1
Physical Education	1	1
Electives	5	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>22 credits</b>	<b>26 credits</b>

Additional considerations apply in some course areas, including:

- **Mathematics:** To obtain the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation graduation program, a student must complete an endorsement and take Algebra II as one of the 4 mathematics credits. A student’s completion of the distinguished level of achievement is a requirement to be considered for automatic admission to a Texas four-year college or university and will be included on a student’s transcript.
- **Physical education:** A student who is unable to participate in physical activity due to a disability or illness may be able to substitute a course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, or another locally determined credit-bearing course for the required credit of physical education. This determination will be made by the student’s ARD committee, Section 504 committee, or other campus committee, as applicable.
- **Languages other than English:** Students are required to earn 2 credits in the same language other than English to graduate.
  - A student may substitute computer programming languages for these credits.
  - A student may satisfy one of the 2 required credits by successfully completing in elementary school a dual language immersion program or a course in American Sign Language.
  - In limited circumstances, a student may be able to substitute this requirement with other courses, as determined by a district committee authorized by law to make these decisions for the student.

### ***Available Endorsements***

A student must specify which endorsement to pursue upon entering grade 9.

### ***Financial Aid Application Requirement***

Before graduating from high school, each student must complete and apply for financial aid for post-secondary education. Students must complete and submit either a free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) or a Texas application for state financial aid (TASFA).

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Students receive assistance from the School Counselor and Grad Cafe personnel to complete and submit their FAFSA or TASFA applications.

A student is not required to complete and submit a FAFSA or TASFA if:

- The student's parent submits a form provided by the district indicating that the parent authorizes the student to opt out
- A student who is 18 years of age or older or a legally independent minor submits a form provided by the district indicating that the student opts out
- A school counselor authorizes the student to opt out for good cause

Please contact the school counselor for more information.

To confirm that a student has completed and submitted a FAFSA or TASFA, the student must submit one of the following:

- A screenshot that includes the processed date field of the FAFSA ApplyTexas Counselor Suite
- Notification, such as a copy of an email, from the United States Department of Education verifying completion of the FAFSA
- A copy or screenshot of the FAFSA acknowledgment page
- A screenshot of the TASFA submission acknowledgment page (from those institutions that offer an electronic form)
- An acknowledgment receipt from an institution of higher education (IHE)
- A copy of a financial aid award letter from an IHE

### ***Personal Graduation Plans***

A personal graduation plan will be developed for each high school student.

The district encourages all students to pursue a personal graduation plan that includes the completion of at least one endorsement and to graduate with the distinguished level of achievement. Attainment of the distinguished level of achievement is a requirement for a student to be considered for automatic admission to a public four-year college or university in Texas, depending on their rank in class.

The school will review personal graduation plan options with each student entering grade 9 and the student's parent. Before the end of grade 9, a student and their parent will be required to sign off on a personal graduation plan that promotes college and workforce readiness, promotes career placement and advancement, and facilitates the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

The student's personal graduation plan will outline an appropriate course sequence based on the student's choice of endorsement.

Please review [TEA's Graduation Toolkit](https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/brochures/tea-brochures) (<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/brochures/tea-brochures>).

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***The district will allow a student to amend their personal graduation plan without obtaining parental permission first:*** A student may amend their personal graduation plan after this initial confirmation. The school will send written notice of any such amendment to the student's parent.

## **Available Course Options for All Graduation Programs**

Each spring, the district will update students on the courses required or offered in each curriculum area so students can enroll for the upcoming school year.

**Note:** The district may require the completion of certain courses for graduation even if these courses are not required by the state for graduation.

Not all courses are offered at every secondary campus in the district. A student who wants to take a course not offered at their regular campus should contact the school counselor about a transfer or other alternatives. If the parents of at least 22 students request a transfer for a course in the required curriculum other than fine arts or career and technical education (CTE), the district will offer the course the following year either by teleconference or at the school from which the transfers were requested.

## **Certificates of Coursework Completion**

A certificate of coursework completion will be issued to a student who has successfully completed state and local credit requirements for graduation but has not yet demonstrated satisfactory performance on the state-mandated tests required for graduation.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees will make instructional and assessment decisions for students with disabilities who receive special education services in accordance with state law.

Upon the recommendation of the ARD committee, a student with a disability who receives special education services may be permitted to graduate under the provisions of their individualized education program (IEP) and in accordance with state rules.

A student who receives special education services may earn the distinguished level of achievement or an endorsement under the foundation program. If the student's curriculum requirements for the endorsement were modified, the student's ARD committee will determine whether the modified curriculum is sufficiently rigorous to earn the distinguished level of achievement or endorsement. The ARD committee must also determine whether the student must perform satisfactorily on any end-of-course assessment to earn an endorsement.

A student who receives special education services and has completed four years of high school but has not met the requirements of their IEP may participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a certificate of attendance. The student may then remain enrolled to complete the IEP and earn a high school diploma but will only be allowed to participate in one graduation ceremony.

[See policy PG-7.105: Student Activities: Commencement for more information.]

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## Graduation Activities

Graduation activities will include:

- **Graduation Ceremony**
- **Senior Awards Ceremony**
- **Rose Ceremony**
- **Senior Field Trip**
- **Senior Prom**
- **Senior Breakfast**

***The district allows students who are not truly graduating to participate in commencement exercises:*** Students who have met coursework requirements for graduation but have not yet demonstrated satisfactory performance on end-of-course assessments or been declared eligible to graduate by an individual graduation committee, if applicable, will be allowed to participate in graduation activities. Keep in mind that participating in the ceremonies is not the same as graduating. Ultimately, the final awarding of a diploma will be contingent upon the student's completion of all applicable requirements for graduation.

The decision to determine if students who are eligible to graduate but are assigned to a disciplinary alternative education program at the end of the school year will be considered on a case-by-case basis to participate in the graduation ceremony and related graduation activities.

The following students and student groups shall be recognized at graduation ceremonies:

- Valedictorian
- Salutatorian
- Top 10 Percent Class Rank
- Honorary Academic & Organizational Awards

## Graduation Speakers

Certain graduating students are given an opportunity to speak at graduation ceremonies.

A student must meet local eligibility criteria, which may include requirements related to student conduct, to have a speaking role. Students eligible for speaking roles will be notified by the principal and given an opportunity to volunteer.

## Graduation Expenses

Because students and parents will incur expenses to participate in the traditions of graduation — such as the purchase of invitations, senior ring, cap and gown, and senior picture — both the student and parent should monitor progress toward completion of all requirements for graduation. The expenses often are incurred in the junior year or first semester of the senior year.

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## **Scholarships and Grants**

Students who have a financial need according to federal criteria and who complete the foundation graduation program may be eligible under the TEXAS Grant Program, Teach for Texas Grant Program, and Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program for scholarships and grants toward tuition and fees to Texas public universities, community colleges, and technical schools, as well as to private institutions. Certain students who graduate early may also be eligible for the Texas First Scholarship Program.

Contact the school counselor for information about other scholarships and grants available to students.

## **Harassment**

RYSS prohibits any form of hate-based conduct, including harassment, threats, or discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, or perceived characteristics, including antisemitism. Such behavior will result in serious disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Hazing (All Grade Levels)**

Hazing is defined as an intentional, knowing, or reckless act, on or off campus, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student for the purpose of pledging, initiation into, affiliation with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in a student organization if the act meets the elements in Education Code 37.151, including:

- Any type of physical brutality
- An activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the student's mental or physical health, such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement to small spaces, calisthenics, or consumption of food, liquids, drugs, or other substances.
- An activity that induces, causes, or requires the student to perform a duty or task that violates the Penal Code
- Coercing a student to consume a drug or alcoholic beverage in an amount that would lead a reasonable person to believe the student is intoxicated.

The district will not tolerate hazing. Disciplinary consequences for hazing will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. It is a criminal offense if a person engages in hazing; solicits, encourages, directs, aids, or attempts to aid another in hazing; or has firsthand knowledge of an incident of hazing being planned or having occurred and fails to report this to the principal, superintendent, or law enforcement official.

## **Health — Physical and Mental**

### **Illness (All Grade Levels)**

When your child is ill, please contact the school to let us know they will not be attending that day.

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State rules require schools to exclude students with certain illnesses from school for certain periods of time. For example, a child with a fever over 100 degrees must stay out of school until fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications. Students with diarrheal illnesses must stay home until they are diarrhea-free without the use of diarrhea-suppressing medications for 24 hours.

A full list of conditions for which the school must exclude children can be obtained from the school nurse.

If a student becomes ill during the school day and the school nurse determines that the child should go home, the nurse will contact the parent.

The district is required to report certain contagious (communicable) diseases or illnesses to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) or our local/regional health authority. The school nurse can provide information from DSHS on these notifiable conditions.

The school nurse is available to answer any questions for parents who are concerned about whether their child should stay home.

### **Immunization (All Grade Levels)**

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present a certificate or statement that, for medical reasons or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, the student will not be immunized.

For exemptions based on reasons of conscience, only official forms issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Immunization Branch, can be honored by the district. You may access the [DSHS exemption form \(https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunization-unit/texas-school-child-care-facility-immunization/texas-immunization-exemptions\)](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunization-unit/texas-school-child-care-facility-immunization/texas-immunization-exemptions) online or by writing to this address:

**Texas Department of State Health Services  
Immunization Section, Mail Code 1946  
P.O. Box 149347  
Austin, Texas 78714-9347**

The form must be notarized and submitted to the principal or school nurse within 90 days of notarization. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student. <https://co-request.dshs.texas.gov/>

The immunizations required are:

- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis
- Polio
- Measles, mumps, and rubella
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- Meningococcal

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

- Hepatitis A

The school nurse can provide information on immunization requirements. Proof of immunization may be established by personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a U.S. registered and licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or a member of the student's family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a lifelong condition.

For information on immunization against bacterial meningitis and college enrollment and at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/meningitis/bacterial-meningitis-unspecified>

[See the DSHS's [School and Childcare Vaccine Requirements](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/school-and-childcare-vaccine-requirements) (<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunizations/school>) and policy PG-3.303: Immunization Requirements for more information.]

## Lice (All Grade Levels)

Head lice are a common issue among school-aged children and are not considered a disease or illness. While they do not carry disease, lice can spread through close head-to-head contact or by sharing items such as brushes, hats, headphones, or bedding.

RYSS is committed to addressing these situations with care, privacy, and practical solutions that keep students learning. In accordance with guidance from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), students will not be excluded from school solely due to head lice or nits. There is no state statute that permits removal from school for head lice.

If school staff or the nurse observes signs of lice, the school nurse will notify the student's parent or guardian to discuss a treatment plan. Treatment typically includes an FDA-approved medicated shampoo or cream rinse, available over the counter. After completing the first treatment, families are encouraged to contact the nurse to report the treatment used and discuss any necessary follow-up care or prevention strategies. The nurse may also offer additional support to help prevent re-infestation.

As a courtesy and in accordance with best practices, the school will notify parents of elementary students in an affected classroom if lice are detected—without identifying the student involved.

For more information, parents can visit:

- [Managing Head Lice in School Settings and at Home \(DSHS\)](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-school-health/skilled-procedures-texas-school-health/managing-head-lice-school) | [www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-school-health/skilled-procedures-texas-school-health/managing-head-lice-school](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-school-health/skilled-procedures-texas-school-health/managing-head-lice-school)
- [About Head Lice \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/lice/about/head-lice.html) | [www.cdc.gov/lice/about/head-lice.html](https://www.cdc.gov/lice/about/head-lice.html)

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## Medicine at School (All Grade Levels)

If a student requires medication during school hours, the student's parents must adhere to the District Policy of Medications while at school.

- *The policy states that all medication, whether prescription or nonprescription, must be kept in the nurse's office and be administered by the School Nurse or authorized trained district employee. Assigned personnel must be trained and it must be documented that they have received the proper training. \*It is recommended that an Administrator assign a staff member at each campus for safety purposes.*
- Prescription medication during school hours; All prescribed medication must be brought to the School Nurse in its original RX packaging. Along with the original Physicians order and a School Medication Form completed and signed by parent. The parental medication forms can be accessed on the school website under School Nurse>forms.
- Prescription medication must be in its original labeled container. The label must match the medication order and include the student's name, medication, dosage as well as the prescribing physician's name or other qualified prescriber.
- Nonprescription medication (OTC) over the counter medication must be in its original container. Parents may request to have over the counter medication given to their child during school hours. However, for safety purposes the parents must also provide a "doctor's order" for the School Nurse to administer OTC medication while at school.
- **Note:** Insect repellent is considered nonprescription medication. (Must have parental consent before applying to any student)
- Herbal or dietary supplements provided by the parent only if required by the student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan for a student with disabilities. \*It is not encouraged but will be considered should the parent provide the School Nurse with a Physicians order.

An elementary or secondary student may possess and self-apply sunscreen to avoid overexposure to the sun. An elementary student's teacher or other district personnel will apply sunscreen to the student's exposed skin if the student brings the sunscreen to school and asks for help applying it. If a secondary student needs assistance with sunscreen application, please address the need with the school nurse.

Whether a student is at the elementary or secondary level, if sunscreen needs to be administered to treat any type of medical condition, this should be overseen through communication with the school nurse so that the district is made aware of any safety and medical issues.

## Asthma and Severe Allergic Reactions

A student with asthma or severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may possess and use prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school or school-related events only if they have written authorization from a parent and a physician or other licensed health-care provider. The student must also demonstrate to their health-care provider and the school nurse the ability to use the prescribed medication, including any device required to administer the medication.

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**\*\* Dietary Managers and personnel must be made aware of all Students with food allergies, especially if it involves anaphylaxis/Epi pens. Special dietary accommodation may need to be provided and parents should be provided with school menus.**

If the student has been prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication for use during the school day, the student and parents should discuss this with the teacher, school nurse or principal and any other staff that are a part of the student's daily schedule. e.g., P.E. Coach or recess teacher.

## **Unassigned Medication for Respiratory Distress**

In accordance with Chapter 38, Subchapter E of the Education Code, the board has adopted a policy to allow authorized and trained [align with policy at PG-3.306: Administration of Medication: school personnel and/or school volunteers] to administer a medication for respiratory distress on a school campus or at a school-related activity to a person reasonably believed to be experiencing symptoms of respiratory distress.

The district will provide at each campus [align with policy at PG-3.306: Administration of Medication: school personnel and/or school volunteers] who are trained to administer prescription medication for respiratory distress during regular school hours.

“Unassigned medication for respiratory distress” means albuterol, levalbuterol, or another medication designated by the executive commission of the Health and Human Services Commission for treatment of respiratory distress, prescribed by an authorized health-care provider in the name of the district with a non-patient-specific standing delegation order for the administration of a medication for respiratory distress, and issued by an authorized health-care provider.

For additional information, see FFAC(LOCAL).

## **Unassigned Opioid Antagonists**

In accordance with Chapter 38, Subchapter E of the Education Code, the board has adopted a policy to allow authorized and trained [align with policy at PG-3.306: Administration of Medication: school personnel and/or school volunteers] at each campus that serves students in grades 6-12 to administer an opioid antagonist, such as Narcan or Naloxone, to an individual who is reasonably believed to be experiencing an opioid-related drug overdose.

## **Steroids (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

State law prohibits students from possessing, dispensing, delivering, or administering anabolic steroids. Anabolic steroids are for physician-prescribed medical use only.

Body building, muscle enhancement, or the increase of muscle bulk or strength using an anabolic steroid or human growth hormone by a healthy student is not a valid medical use and is a criminal offense.

## **Mental Health Support (All Grade Levels)**

The district has implemented programs to address the following mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse concerns:

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- Mental health promotion and early intervention
- Building skills to manage emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships, and engage in responsible decision-making
- Substance abuse prevention and intervention
- Suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (interventions after a suicide in a community)
- Grief, trauma, and trauma-informed care
- Positive behavior interventions and supports
- Positive youth development
- Safe, supportive, and positive school climates

If a student has been hospitalized or placed in residential treatment for a mental health condition or substance abuse, the district has procedures to support the student's return to school. Please contact the district's mental health liaison for further information.

Teachers and other district employees may discuss a student's academic progress or behavior with the student's parents or another employee as appropriate; however, they are not permitted to recommend use of psychotropic drugs. A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication that is intended to alter perception, emotion, mood, or behavior.

A district employee who is a registered nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner, a physician, or a certified or credentialed mental health professional can recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, if appropriate. [See policy PG-7.106: Counseling and Mental Health for more information.]

For related information, see:

- **Consent to Conduct a Psychological Evaluation and Consent to Provide a Mental Health Care Service** for the district's procedures for recommending a mental health intervention and the mental health liaison's contact information
- **Counseling** for the district's comprehensive school counseling program
- **Physical and Mental Health Resources (All Grade Levels)** for campus and community mental and physical health resources
- **Policies and Procedures that Promote Student Physical and Mental Health (All Grade Levels)** for board-adopted policies and administrative procedures that promote student health

### Physical Activity Requirements

#### *Elementary School*

The district will ensure that students in full-day kindergarten-grade 5 engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day or 135 minutes per week, in accordance with policies at PG-2.102: General Education Program and PG-3.309: Wellness Policy.

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For additional information on the district's elementary school student physical activity programs and requirements, please see the principal.

## ***Junior High/Middle School***

***RYSS Early College STEM Academy*** will ensure that students will engage in least 225 minutes (about 4 hours) of moderate or vigorous physical activity within each two-week period for at least four semesters in grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> that take Physical Education classes, (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 45 minutes of daily Physical Education) in accordance with policies at PG-2.102: General Education Program and PG-3.309: Wellness Policy.

For additional information on the district's junior high and middle school student physical activity programs and requirements, please see the principal.

## ***Temporary Restriction from Participation in Physical Education***

Students who are temporarily restricted from participation in physical education will not actively participate in skill demonstration but will remain in class to learn the concepts of the lessons.

## **Physical Fitness Assessment (Grades 3-12)**

Annually, the district will conduct a physical fitness assessment of students in grades 3-12 who are enrolled in a physical education course or a course for which physical education credit is awarded. At the end of the school year, a parent may submit a written request to obtain the results of their child's physical fitness assessment conducted during the school year by contacting the physical education teacher and/or principal.

## ***Athletics Participation (Secondary Grade Levels Only)***

For certain extracurricular activities, a student must submit certification from an authorized health-care provider. The certification must state that the student has been examined and is physically able to participate in the relevant program, including:

- A district athletics program
- District marching band
- Any district extracurricular program identified by the superintendent

***The district follows the UIL guidelines and physicals*** are required to be submitted annually to the district.

Students should be aware of the rare possibility of sudden cardiac arrest, which in athletes is usually caused by a previously unsuspected heart disease or disorder. A student may request an electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) to screen for such disorders, in addition to the required physical examination.

See the UIL's explanation of [sudden cardiac arrest](https://www.uil texas.org/health/info/sudden-cardiac-death) (<https://www.uil texas.org/health/info/sudden-cardiac-death>) for more information.

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## ***Spinal Screening Program***

School-based spinal screening helps identify adolescents with abnormal spinal curvature at an early stage when the curve is mild and may go unnoticed. Early detection is key to controlling spinal deformities. Spinal screening is non-invasive and conducted in accordance with the most recent nationally accepted and peer-reviewed standards.

All students who meet the Texas Department of State Health Services criteria will be screened for abnormal spinal curvature before the end of the school year. As appropriate, students will be referred for follow-up with their physician.

For information on spinal screening by an outside professional or exemption from spinal screening based on religious beliefs, please contact the School Nurse and or School Administrator or see policy PG-3.310: Health Screenings and Physical Examinations.

## ***Other Examinations and Screenings (All Grade Levels)***

Students are required to undergo a risk assessment for Type 2 diabetes at the same time the district screens students for hearing and vision issues or for abnormal spinal curvatures. Students enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades are assessed for high insulin levels. School Nurses and trained school personal screen students and utilize the TRAT2DC, Texas Risk Assessment to screen students who may be at risk for Type 2 Diabetes.

## **Special Health Concerns (All Grade Levels)**

### ***Bacterial Meningitis (All Grade Levels)***

Please see the district's website at [Health Services / Wellness & Mental Health \(ryss.org\)](http://ryss.org/Health_Services_Wellness_Mental_Health) or information regarding meningitis.

**Note:** Entering college students must show, with limited exception, evidence of receiving a bacterial meningitis vaccination within the five-year period prior to enrolling in and taking courses at an institution of higher education. Please see the school nurse for more information, as this may affect a student who wishes to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus.

[See **Immunization (All Grade Levels)**.]

### ***Diabetes***

In accordance with a student's individual health plan for management of diabetes, a student with diabetes will be permitted to possess and use monitoring and treatment supplies and equipment while at school or at a school-related activity. See the school nurse or principal for information. [See policy PG-3.307: Students at Risk for Anaphylaxis and Seizure and Diabetes Management Plans for more information.]

### ***Food Allergies (All Grade Levels)***

Parents should notify the district when a student has been diagnosed with a food allergy, especially an allergy that could result in dangerous or life-threatening reactions either by breathing, eating, or touching the particular food. It is important to disclose the food to which

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the student is allergic as well as the nature of the allergic reaction. Please contact the school nurse or campus principal if your child has a known food allergy or as soon as possible after any diagnosis of a food allergy.

The district has developed and annually reviews a food allergy management plan, based on the Texas Department of State Health Services' (DSHS) Guidelines for the Care of Students with Food Allergies at Risk for Anaphylaxis found on the DSHS [Allergies and Anaphylaxis](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-school-health/allergies-anaphylaxis) website (<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-school-health/allergies-anaphylaxis>).

When the district receives information that a student has a food allergy that puts the student at risk for anaphylaxis, an individual care plan will be developed to assist the student in safely accessing the school environment. The district's food allergy management plan can be accessed at <https://www.foodallergy.org>

### ***Seizures (All Grade Levels)***

To address the care of a student with a seizure disorder while at school or participating in a school activity, a parent may submit a seizure management and treatment plan to the district before the beginning of the school year, upon enrollment of the student, or as soon as practicable following diagnosis of a seizure disorder. A parent who submits a plan must use the [Seizure Management and Treatment Plan Form](https://tea.texas.gov/academics/tea-seizure-management-form.pdf) (<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/tea-seizure-management-form.pdf>) developed by the Texas Education Agency.

[See **A Student with Physical or Mental Impairments Protected under Section 504** and contact the school nurse for more information.]

### **Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, and Nicotine Products Prohibited (All Grade Levels)**

Students are prohibited from possessing or using any type of tobacco product, electronic cigarette (e-cigarette), or any other electronic vaporizing device while on school property or while attending an off-campus school-related activity. With limited exceptions for medication, [see **Medicine at School (All Grade Levels)**] students are also prohibited from possessing or using any type of nicotine product, including nicotine pouches, regardless of whether the product contains tobacco, while on school property or while attending an off-campus school-related activity.

The district and its staff strictly enforce prohibitions against the use of all tobacco products, e-cigarettes, or any other electronic vaporizing device by students and all others on school property and at school-sponsored and school-related activities. [See the Student Code of Conduct and policies PG-3.302: Tobacco Use and Possession and PG-4.302: Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco-Free Workplace for more information.]

## **Health-Related Resources, Policies, and Procedures**

### **Physical and Mental Health Resources (All Grade Levels)**

Parents and students in need of assistance with physical and mental health concerns may contact the following campus and community resources:

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The district full time nurse:

**Michelle Bracho, District Nurse**  
**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**  
[Michelle.Bracho@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Michelle.Bracho@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

## Campus Personnel

<p>Susan Escamilla, Counselor                  BRYSS Academy and BRYSS HS                  2255 N Coria St.                  Brownsville, TX 78520  <a href="mailto:Susana.Escamilla@tejanocenter.org">Susana.Escamilla@tejanocenter.org</a>   956-574-7104</p>	<p>Axinia Zepeda, Principal                  RYSS Early Childhood Academy at Leonel Castillo                  201 South St.                  Houston, TX 77009  <a href="mailto:Axinia.Zepeda@tejanocenter.org">Axinia.Zepeda@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3740</p>
<p>Yesenia Cervantes, Principal                  RYSS STEM Academy at Pasadena                  1062 Fairmont Parkway                  Pasadena, TX 77504  <a href="mailto:Yesenia.Cervantes@tejanocenter.org">Yesenia.Cervantes@tejanocenter.org</a>  </p>	<p>Daniela Botella, Counselor                  RYSS Early College STEM Academy &amp; T-STEM Academy                  2950 Broadway St.                  Houston, TX 77017  <a href="mailto:Daniela.Botello@tejanocenter.org">Daniela.Botello@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3700</p>
<p>Diana Chavez, Principal                  RYSS PSTEM Academy                  2950 Broadway St.                  Houston, TX 77017  <a href="mailto:Diana.Chavez@tejanocenter.org">Diana.Chavez@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3763</p>	<p>Damon Jasso, Assistant Principal                  RYSS Early College T-STEM Academy                  2950 Broadway St.                  Houston, TX 77017  <a href="mailto:Damon.Jasso@tejanocenter.org">Damon.Jasso@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3761</p>
<p>Dakota Burch, SEL Coordinator                  RYSS North East STEM                  10918 ½ Bentley St.                  Houston, TX 77093  <a href="mailto:Dakota.Burch@tejanocenter.org">Dakota.Burch@tejanocenter.org</a>   713-640-3720</p>	

- The local public health authority, Houston Health Department, which may be contacted at 832-393-4220 or [Home | Houston Health Department](#).
- The local mental health authority, Harris Health System, which may be contacted at [Search \(harrishealth.org\)](http://Search(harrishealth.org))

## Policies and Procedures that Promote Student Physical and Mental Health (All Grade Levels)

The district has adopted board policies that promote student physical and mental health. Local policies on the topics below can be found in the district’s policy manual, available at the central administration office and online at [Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies \(tejanocenter.org\)](#)

- Food and nutrition management: CO, COA, COB
- Wellness and Health Services: PG-3.309
- Physical Examinations: PG-3.310
- Immunizations: PG-3.303

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- Medical Treatment: PG-3.305
- Communicable Diseases: PG-3.304
- School-Based Health Centers: FFAE
- Care Plans: PG-3.307
- Crisis Intervention: FFB
- Trauma-informed Care: FFBA
- Student Support Services: FFC
- Student Safety: FFF
- Child Abuse and Neglect: PG-3.316
- Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation: PG-3.102
- Freedom from Bullying: PG-3.103
- 

The district has developed administrative procedures as necessary to implement the above policies and plans.

For more information about these procedures and access to the District Improvement Plan, please contact:

**Angie Miranda, Executive Director of Federal and State Compliance**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Angie.Miranda@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Angie.Miranda@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

### **School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) (All Grade Levels)**

During the 24-25 school year, the district's School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) will hold quarterly meetings. Additional information about the district's SHAC is available from the district nurse and principals.

Notification of upcoming SHAC meetings will be posted at each campus administrative office at least 72 hours before the meeting. Notification of upcoming SHAC meetings, meeting minutes, and a recording of each meeting will be posted on the district website at [Health Services / Wellness & Mental Health \(ryss.org\)](#).

### **Student Wellness Policy/Wellness Plan (All Grade Levels)**

To encourage healthy habits in our students, the district has developed a board-adopted wellness policy at PG-3.309: Wellness Policy and corresponding plans and procedures to implement it. For questions about the content or implementation of the district's wellness policy and plan, please contact:

**Michelle Bracho, District Nurse**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Michelle.Bracho@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Michelle.Bracho@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

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## Law Enforcement Agencies (All Grade Levels)

### Questioning of Students

When law enforcement officers or other lawful authorities wish to question or interview a student at school, the principal will cooperate fully regarding the conditions of the interview, including without parental consent, if necessary, if it is part of a child abuse investigation. In other circumstances, the principal will:

- Verify and record the identity of the officer or other authority and ask for an explanation of the need to question the student at school
- Ordinarily make reasonable efforts to notify the parents, unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection
- Ordinarily be present for the questioning or interview, unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection

### Students Taken into Custody

State law requires the district to permit a student to be taken into legal custody:

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court
- To comply with the laws of arrest
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision
- By a law enforcement officer to obtain fingerprints or photographs for comparison in an investigation
- By a law enforcement officer to obtain fingerprints or photographs to establish a student's identity where the child may have engaged in conduct indicating a need for supervision, such as running away
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court
- By an authorized representative of Child Protective Services (CPS), Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in the Family Code relating to the student's physical health or safety
- To comply with a properly issued directive from a juvenile court to take a student into custody

Before a student is released to a legally authorized person, the principal will verify the person's identity and, to the best of their ability, will verify the person's authority to take custody of the student.

The principal will immediately notify the superintendent and will attempt to notify the parent, unless the legally authorized person raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the principal does not have the authority to prevent or delay a student's release to a legally authorized person, any notification will most likely be after the fact.

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## Notification of Law Violations

The district is required by state law to notify:

- All instructional and support personnel who have responsibility for supervising a student who has been taken into custody, arrested, or referred to the juvenile court for any felony offense or for certain misdemeanors.
- All instructional and support personnel who have regular contact with a student who has been convicted, received deferred prosecution, received deferred adjudication, or was adjudicated for delinquent conduct for any felony offense or certain misdemeanors that occur in school, on school property, or at a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property. These personnel will also be notified if the principal has reasonable grounds to believe the student has engaged in certain conduct.
- All appropriate district personnel regarding a student who is required to register as a sex offender.

[See policy PG-7:109: Law Enforcement Agencies for more information.]

## Leaving Campus (All Grade Levels)

Student attendance is crucial. Appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours if possible. Except for extenuating circumstances, students will not regularly be released before the end of the school day.

Parental consent is required before any student leaves campus for any part of the school day.

For students in elementary and middle school, a parent or authorized adult must come to the office and show identification to sign the student out. A campus representative will ask the student to report to the office. For safety purposes and stability of the learning environment, we cannot allow any unescorted adult to go to the classroom or other area to pick up the student. If the student returns to campus the same day, the parent or authorized adult must sign the student back in through the main office upon the student's return. Documentation regarding the reason for the absence will also be required.

The same process applies to students in high school if a parent picks the student up from campus. If the student's parent authorizes the student to leave campus unaccompanied, the parent must submit a note to the main office at least two hours before the student needs to leave campus. A phone call from the parent may be accepted, but the school may ultimately require a note for documentation purposes. The student must sign out through the main office and sign in upon return if the student returns the same day.

If a student becomes ill during the school day and the school nurse or other district personnel determines that the student should go home, the nurse will contact the student's parent and document the parent's wishes regarding release from school.

Unless the parent directs district personnel to release the student unaccompanied, the parent or other authorized adult must follow the sign-out procedures listed above. If a student is permitted by their parent to leave campus unaccompanied, the nurse will document the time of day the

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student was released. Under no circumstances will a student in elementary or middle school be released unaccompanied.

If a student is 18 years of age or is an emancipated minor, the student may sign out of school. Documentation regarding the reason for the absence will be required.

## **During Lunch**

Students are not allowed to leave the campus during lunch.

## **At Any Other Time During the School Day**

Students are not authorized to leave campus during regular school hours for any other reason, except with the principal's permission.

Students who leave campus in violation of these rules will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Library (All Grade Levels)**

RYSS provides a wide range of library materials for students and staff that support student achievement and present varying levels of difficulty, appeal to various audiences, and a variety of points of view. The district follows the Texas State Library and Archive Commission's standards for school library collection development.

### **Parent Involvement**

Parents are the primary decision makers regarding their student's access to library materials. We encourage parents to take an active role in their child's reading journey by participating in library acquisition, maintenance, and campus events. Please feel free to reach out to your child's teacher or campus librarian with any questions or feedback about the books your child is reading.

### **Requesting a Review of Library Materials**

Per state law (SB 13), parents and guardians have the right to review the school's library collection and may request reconsideration of any materials they feel are not appropriate. Requests must be submitted in writing and will be reviewed by the designated campus review committee. Families may contact the campus librarian or principal for support in this process or to access the necessary forms.

### **Library Book Return and Checkout Policies**

- Students may check out library books for up to ten (10) school days, not including the day of checkout.
- Books should be returned by the 10<sup>th</sup> school day to avoid limited borrowing privileges.
- Students may renew books if they need additional time, if no other student has requested the same title.
- If a student finishes a book before the return date, they may return it early and check out a new one.

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## **Lost or Damaged Library Books**

If a book is lost or returned in damaged condition:

- The student and parent/guardian will be notified.
- A replacement fee may be requested based on the cost of the book.
- If payment is not possible, the librarian will work with families to determine alternate solutions such as volunteering or book donations.

Our goal is to cultivate a lifelong love for reading and ensure students have equitable access to quality materials. We appreciate your partnership in nurturing a strong reading culture across our schools.

## **Lost and Found (All Grade Levels)**

A lost and found collection box is in the campus office. A student who loses an item should check the lost and found box. The district discourages bringing personal items of high monetary value to school, as the district is not responsible for lost or stolen items. The campus will dispose of lost and found items at the end of each semester.

## **Makeup Work**

### **Makeup Work Because of Absence (All Grade Levels)**

A teacher may assign makeup work to a student who misses class based on instructional objectives and the needs of the student in mastering the essential knowledge and skills or meeting subject or course requirements.

The student will be responsible for obtaining and completing the makeup work within the time specified by the teacher. A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted by the teacher will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

The student is encouraged to speak with the teacher if the student knows of an absence ahead of time so that the teacher and student may plan any makeup work. Please remember the importance of student attendance at school. With limited exceptions, all absences count for the 90 percent threshold set in state law regarding attendance for credit or final grade.

A student involved in an extracurricular activity must notify teachers ahead of time about any absences.

A student will be permitted to make up tests and turn in projects due in any class missed because of absence. Teachers may assign a late penalty to any long-term project in accordance with timelines approved by the principal and previously communicated to students.

## **DAEP Makeup Work**

### ***Elementary and Middle/Junior High School Grade Levels***

#### ***Grades 9-12***

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If a high school student is enrolled in a foundation curriculum course at the time of removal to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP), the student will have an opportunity to complete the course before the beginning of the next school year. The district may provide the opportunity to complete the course through an alternative method, including a correspondence course, another distance learning option, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy PG-7.101: Placement in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Setting for more information.]

### **In-School Suspension (ISS) and Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) Makeup Work (All Grade Levels)**

#### ***Alternative Means to Receive Coursework***

While a student is in ISS or OSS, the district will provide the student with all course work for the student's foundation curriculum classes that the student misses as a result of the suspension.

#### ***Opportunity to Complete Courses***

A student removed from the regular classroom to ISS or another setting, other than a DAEP, will have an opportunity to complete before the beginning of the next school year each course the student was enrolled in at the time of removal from the regular classroom. The district may provide the opportunity by any method available, including a correspondence course, another distance learning option, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy PG-3.402: Student Discipline for more information.]

### **Nondiscrimination Statement (All Grade Levels)**

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, the district does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law in providing education services, activities, and programs, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. The district provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

In accordance with Title IX, the district does not and is required not to discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination in its educational programs or activities. The requirement not to discriminate extends to employment. Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the district's Title IX Coordinator (see below), to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, or both.

Other federal laws that prohibit discrimination include Title VI, Section 504, the Age Discrimination Act, the Boy Scouts Act, and Title II.

The district's nondiscrimination policy and grievance procedures are in the PG-3.102: Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation in the district's policy manual, available at [Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies \(tejanocenter.org\)](http://tejanocenter.org)

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The district has designated and authorized the following employee as the Title IX Coordinator to address concerns or inquiries regarding discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, or gender-based harassment:

**Audrey Gomez, Human Resources Consultant**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Audrey.Gomez@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Audrey.Gomez@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

Reports can be made at any time and by any person, including during non-business hours, by mail, phone, or email. During district business hours, reports may also be made in person. Upon the district receiving notice or an allegation of sex-based harassment, the Title IX Coordinator will promptly respond in accordance with the process described PG-3.102: Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation.

The following district representatives have been designated to address concerns or inquiries about other kinds of discrimination:

For concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability, see the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator:

**Audrey Gomez, Human Resources Consultant**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Audrey.Gomez@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Audrey.Gomez@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

For all other concerns regarding discrimination, see:

**Audrey Gomez, Human Resources Consultant**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Audrey.Gomez@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Audrey.Gomez@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

### **Nontraditional Academic Programs (All Grade Levels)**

*Early College, P-TECH, Dual Credit*

### **Parent and Family Engagement (All Grade Levels)**

#### **Parental Rights and Options**

State law provides that a parent has the right to direct the moral and religious training of the parent's child, make decisions concerning the child's education, and consent to medical, psychiatric, and psychological treatment of the child without obstruction or interference from a governmental entity of Texas, including a school district.

In addition to referring to the rights of parents, including the right to withhold consent for or exempt the parent's child from certain activities and instruction specified throughout this handbook, parents may access additional information regarding parental rights at the district's website at [Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies \(tejanocenter.org\)](#)

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## Working Together

Experience and research tell us that a child succeeds in education with effective communication and a strong partnership between home and school. A parent's involvement and engagement in this partnership may include:

- Encouraging your child to put a high priority on education and working with your child every day to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Ensuring that your child completes all homework assignments and special projects and comes to school each day prepared, rested, and ready to learn.
- Becoming familiar with all your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the district.
- Discussing with the school counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Reviewing the requirements and options for graduation with your child in middle school and again while your child is enrolled in high school.
- Monitoring your child's academic progress and contacting teachers as needed.
- Attending scheduled conferences and requesting additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, school counselor, or principal, please call the school office for an appointment. The teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during their conference period or before or after school.
- Becoming a school volunteer.
- Participating in campus parent organizations. Parent organizations include:
  - PSTEM Academy PTA and VIPS (Volunteers in Public Schools)
  - RYSS STEM Academy Pasadena VIPS
  - RYSS Early College T-STEM & STEM Academy VIPS.
  - Leonel Castillo Early Childhood Academy PTO
  - BRYSS Academy & BRYSS HS PTO and VIPS
- Serving as a parent representative on the district-level or campus-level planning committees that develop educational goals and plans to improve student achievement. For more information, see policies BQA and BQB and contact:

**Angie Miranda, Executive Director of Federal and State Compliance**

**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**

**[Angie.Miranda@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Angie.Miranda@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700**

- Serving on the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) and assisting the district in aligning local community values with health education instruction, human sexuality instruction, instruction on prevention of child abuse, family violence, dating violence, and sex trafficking, and other wellness issues.
- Being aware of the school's ongoing bullying and harassment prevention efforts.
- Contacting school officials if you are concerned with your child's emotional or mental well-being.
- Attending board meetings to learn more about district operations. Regular board meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month at 5:30 PM at the District Office located at 2950 Broadway, Texas 77017. An agenda for a regular or special meeting is

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posted no later than 72 hours before each meeting at the entrance of the district building and online at [Additional Information / Public Documents & Notices \(tejanocenter.org\)](http://tejanocenter.org)

## **Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence (All Grade Levels)**

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the principal to excuse their child from reciting a pledge.

State law requires that one minute of silence follow recitation of the pledges. Each student may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others.

In addition, state law requires that each campus provide for the observance of one minute of silence in remembrance of those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, at the beginning of the first class period when September 11 falls on a regular school day.

## **Prayer (All Grade Levels)**

Each student has a right to pray individually, voluntarily, and silently or to meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt school activities. The school will not encourage, require, or coerce a student to engage in or refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

## **Promotion and Retention**

A student will be promoted only based on academic achievement or proficiency. In making promotion decisions, the district will consider the following:

- Teacher recommendation
- Grades
- Scores on criterion-referenced or state-mandated assessments
- Any other necessary academic information as determined by the district

## **Elementary and Middle/Junior High Grade Levels**

In grades 1-12, promotion is based on:

- Students in grades 1-8 must achieve an overall average of 70 or above in reading and mathematics to be eligible for promotion.
- A student who fails both reading and math will not be eligible for promotion.
- Students must pass all sections of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) to be eligible for promotion.
- Students who have failed reading or mathematics and/or a STAAR exam(s) must successfully complete accelerated instruction during extended year to meet promotion requirements. Successful completion requires 100% attendance and mastery of the objectives for that grade level. e.

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- Students who fail reading or mathematics and/or a STAAR exam(s), and who do not successfully complete accelerated instruction during extended year may only advance to the next grade by a decision made by the Grade Placement Committee (GPC).

### Repeating kindergarten to Grade 8 at Parent Request

A parent may request in writing that a student repeat kindergarten, or any grade in grade 1-8. Before granting the request, the district may convene a retention committee to meet and discuss the request and will invite the parent to participate. The final determination will be made by the campus retention committee including the parent request.

### High School Grade Levels

To earn credit in a course, a student must receive a grade of at least 70 based on course-level standards.

A student in grades 9-12 will be advanced a grade level based on the number of course credits earned.

### Repeating a High-School Credit Course

A parent may request in writing that a student repeat a high-school credit course in which the student was enrolled during the previous school year unless the district determines that the student has met all requirements for graduation.

Before granting the request, the district may convene a retention committee to meet and discuss the request and will invite the parent to participate.

Upon successful completion of the course, a passing grade of a 70 will be included in the calculation of class ranking.

### Remote Instruction

The district may offer remote instruction in accordance with TEA guidelines.

All district policies, procedures, guidelines, rules, and other expectations of student behavior will be enforced as applicable in a remote or virtual learning environment.

### Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences (All Grade Levels)

Report cards with each student's performance and absences in each class or subject are issued at least once every 6<sup>th</sup> weeks. Pre-kindergarten receives Report Cards every 12 weeks.

At the end of the first three weeks of a grading period **OR** during the fourth week of a nine-week grading period, parents will receive a progress report if their child's performance **in** any course/subject area **OR** in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies is near or below 70 or is below the expected level of performance. If a student receives a grade lower than 70 in any class or subject at the end of a grading period, the parent will be asked to schedule a conference with the teacher. [See **Working Together** for how to schedule a conference.]

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Teachers follow grading guidelines that have been approved by the superintendent pursuant to the board-adopted policy. Grading guidelines are designed to reflect each student's relative mastery of each assignment. State law provides that a test or course grade issued by a teacher cannot be changed unless the board determines that the grade was arbitrary or contains an error, or that the teacher did not follow the district's grading policy. [See **Grading Guidelines (All Grade Levels)** and policy PG-2.101: Instructional Program Overview for more information.]

Questions about grade calculation should first be discussed with the teacher. If the question is not resolved, the student or parent may request a conference with the principal in accordance with PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process.

The report card or unsatisfactory progress report will state whether tutorials are required for a student who receives a grade lower than 70.

Report cards and unsatisfactory progress reports must be signed by the parent and returned to the school within **2** days. The district may communicate academic information about a student electronically, including for progress reporting purposes. An electronic signature will be accepted by the district, but parents are entitled to request a handwritten signature of acknowledgment instead.

## Required State Assessments

### STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) for Grades 3-8

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, students at certain grade levels are required to take the state assessment, called STAAR, in the following subjects:

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3-8
- Reading, annually in grades 3-8
- Science in grades 5 and 8
- Social Studies in grade 8

### Standardized Testing for a Student Enrolled Above Grade Level

If a student in grades 3-8 is enrolled in a class or course intended for students above the current grade level in which the student will be administered a state-mandated assessment, the student will be required to take an applicable state-mandated assessment only for the course in which they are enrolled, unless otherwise required to do so by federal law.

A student in grades 3-8 shall be assessed at least once in high school with the ACT or the SAT if the student completes the high school end-of-course assessments in mathematics, reading/language arts, or science before high school.

### High School Courses End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments

STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments are administered for the following courses:

- Algebra I
- English I and English II

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- Biology
- U.S. History

Satisfactory performance on the applicable assessments is required for graduation, unless waived or substituted as allowed by state law and rules.

There are three testing windows during the year in which a student may take an EOC assessment. The testing windows occur in the fall, spring, and summer months. If a student does not meet satisfactory performance, the student will have opportunities to retake the assessment.

### **Requesting Administration of STAAR/EOC in Paper Format (All Grade Levels)**

STAAR and EOC assessments are administered electronically.

A parent or teacher may request that a STAAR or EOC be administered to a student in paper format. The district may grant this request for any single administration for up to three percent of the number of students enrolled in the district. Requests will be granted in the order in which they are received.

Requests for paper format for a fall administration of a STAAR or EOC must be submitted no later than September 15th each school year. The Campus Testing Coordinator (CTC) will communicate with the District Testing Coordinator (DTC) and the proper review and documentation will be completed per statute.

Requests for paper format for a spring administration of a STAAR or EOC must be submitted no later than December 1st each school year.

### **Standardized Testing for a Student in Special Programs**

Certain students — some with disabilities and some classified as emergent bilingual students — may be eligible for exemptions, accommodations, or deferred testing.

STAAR Alternate 2 is available for eligible students receiving special education services who meet certain state-established criteria as determined by the student's ARD committee.

An admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee for a student in grades 9-12 receiving special education services will determine whether successful performance on the EOC assessments will be required for graduation within the parameters identified in state rules and the student's personal graduation plan (PGP).

STAAR Spanish is available for eligible students for whom a Spanish version of STAAR is the most appropriate measure of their academic progress.

For more information, see the principal, school counselor, or special education director.

### **Failure to Perform Satisfactorily on a STAAR or EOC Assessment**

If a student does not perform satisfactorily on a required state assessment in any subject, the district will provide accelerated instruction for the student in the next school year through one of the following:

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- Assigning the student to a teacher who is certified as a master, exemplary, or recognized teacher if one is available in the grade and subject matter of the state assessment on which the student did not perform satisfactorily
- Providing supplemental instruction

A student may be required to attend any assigned supplemental instruction program before or after school or during the summer.

When a student fails to perform satisfactorily on a required state assessment in the same subject area for two or more years, the district shall develop an accelerated education plan. Parents are encouraged to participate in developing this plan.

### **Personal Graduation Plan (PGP)**

#### **Middle School Students**

A middle-school student who does not perform satisfactorily on a state-mandated examination, a school official will prepare a personal graduation plan (PGP).

School officials will also develop a PGP for a middle-school student who is determined by the district to be unlikely to earn a high school diploma within five years of high school enrollment.

The plan will, among other items:

- Identify the student's educational goals
- Address the parent's educational expectations for the student
- Outline an intensive instruction program for the student

For a student receiving special education services, the student's IEP may serve as the student's PGP and would therefore be developed by the student's ARD committee.

#### **High School Students**

A Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) is a student's individualized roadmap to high school success and beyond. In accordance with House Bill 5, which was passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature, all Texas students who entered high school in the 2014–15 school year and beyond follow the Foundation High School Program (FHSP) — a flexible graduation plan designed to support students in pursuing higher education, workforce readiness, or both.

In addition to meeting the FHSP requirements, students have the opportunity to earn:

- Endorsements in areas such as STEM, Business & Industry, Public Services, Arts & Humanities, and Multidisciplinary Studies
- Performance Acknowledgments for outstanding achievement
- A Distinguished Level of Achievement, which is required for automatic admission to Texas public universities under the Top 10% rule

Each high school student at RYSS collaborates with their academic advisor to create and refine a PGP beginning in 9th grade (with early exploration often starting in 8th grade). The PGP includes:

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- Selected endorsement(s)
- Graduation requirements
- Career and postsecondary goals
- Course sequences aligned to the student’s interests, strengths, and aspirations

The PGP is updated annually in partnership with the student, parent or guardian, and school staff to reflect progress, any needed changes, and to ensure students remain on track for graduation. A parent or guardian must sign the PGP to affirm their involvement in the student’s pathway planning.

We encourage families to stay involved and participate in PGP meetings to better understand their student’s academic journey and help chart a course that prepares them for college, career, or military readiness. For more information or support, please contact your campus administration.

### **Safety (All Grade Levels)**

Student safety on campus, at school-related events, and in district vehicles is a high priority of the district. The cooperation of students is essential to ensuring school safety. A student is expected to:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or others at risk.
- Follow all behavioral standards in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct or set by district employees.
- Help secure the campus by keeping all exterior doors closed, latched, and locked unless a district employee actively monitors the door.
- Follow instructions from teachers and other district employees regarding classroom doors.
- Remain alert to any safety hazards, such as intruders on campus or threats made by any person toward a student or staff member and promptly report any incidents to a district employee. A student may make anonymous reports about safety concerns by submitting an online report at [RYSS Hotlines / IWATCH](#) .
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers, bus drivers, and other district employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

### **Preparedness Drills: Evacuation, Severe Weather, and Other Emergencies**

Periodically, the school will conduct preparedness drills of emergency procedures. When the command is given or alarm is sounded, students need to follow the direction of teachers or others in charge quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner.

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## Preparedness Training: CPR and Stop the Bleed

The district will offer instruction in CPR and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) at least once to students enrolled in grades 7-12. The instruction can be provided as part of any course and is not required to result in CPR or AED certification.

The district will annually offer students in grades 7-12 instruction on the use of bleeding control stations to respond to traumatic injury. For more information, see [Stop the Bleed Texas \(https://stopthebleedtexas.org/\)](https://stopthebleedtexas.org/).

## Emergency Medical Treatment and Information

All parents are asked each year to complete a medical care authorization form, providing written parental consent to obtain emergency treatment and information about allergies to medications or drugs. Parents should contact the school nurse to update emergency care information (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, and the like).

The district may consent to medical treatment, including dental treatment, if necessary, for a student if all the following requirements are met:

- The district has received written authorization from a person having the right to consent
- That person cannot be contacted
- That person has not given the district actual notice to the contrary

The emergency care authorization form will be used by the district when a student's parent or authorized designee cannot be contacted. A student may provide consent if authorized by law or court order.

Regardless of parental authorization for the district to consent to medical treatment, district employees will contact emergency medical services to provide emergency care when required by law or when deemed necessary, such as to avoid a life-threatening situation.

## Emergency School Closing Information

Each year, parents are asked to complete an emergency release form to provide contact information if the district needs to notify parents of early dismissal, delayed opening, or restricted access to a campus because of severe weather, a security threat, or another emergency cause.

The district will rely on contact information on file with the district to communicate with parents in an emergency, which may include real-time or automated messages. It is crucial to notify your child's school when a phone number changes. State law requires parents to update contact information within two weeks after the date the information changes.

If the campus must close, delay opening, or restrict access to the building because of an emergency, the district will also alert the community in the following ways: send alerts on district website, texts, and calls.

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## Schedule Changes (Middle/Junior High and High School Grade Levels)

A student may request a review of their class schedule with counselors during the first ten (10) days of the semester.

## School Facilities

### Asbestos Management Plan (All Grade Levels)

The district works diligently to maintain compliance with federal and state law governing asbestos in school buildings. A copy of the district's asbestos management plan is available in the central administrative office. If you have any questions or would like to examine the district's plan in more detail, please contact the district's designated asbestos coordinator:

**Ricardo Rodriguez, Director of District Facilities**

**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**

[Ricardo.Rodriguez@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Ricardo.Rodriguez@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

### Food and Nutrition Services (All Grade Levels)

The district participates in the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program and offers students nutritionally balanced meals daily in accordance with standards set forth in state and federal law.

Some students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals based on financial need. Information about a student's participation is confidential. The district may share information such as a student's name and eligibility status to help enroll eligible children in Medicaid or the state children's health insurance program (CHIP) unless the student's parent requests the student's information not be disclosed.

Participating students will be offered the same meal options as their peers and will not be treated differently from their peers.

To apply for free or reduced-price meal services, contact:

**Teresa Mendoza, Food Services Manager**

[Teresa.Mendoza@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Teresa.Mendoza@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

Parents should continually monitor their child's meal account balance. When a student's meal account is depleted, the district will notify the parent. The student may continue to purchase meals according to the grace period set by the school board. The district will present the parent with a schedule of repayment for any outstanding account balance and an application for free or reduced meals.

If the district is unable to work out an agreement with the student's parent on replenishment of the meal account and payment of any outstanding balance, the student will receive a meal. The district will make every effort to avoid bringing attention to the student.

The following information is published as required by the USDA for participation in the National School Lunch Program:

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“In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

“Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.”

“To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf> from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant’s name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

**1. Mail:**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

**2. Fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

**3. Email:** [Program.Intake@usda.gov](mailto:Program.Intake@usda.gov)

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider.”

The responsible state agency that administers the program is the [Texas Department of Agriculture](https://www.texasagriculture.gov/Home/Contact-Us) (<https://www.texasagriculture.gov/Home/Contact-Us>), which can be reached at (800) TELL-TDA (835-5832) or (800) 735-2989 (TTY).

The local agency that administers the program is the district. [See **Nondiscrimination Statement (All Grade Levels)** for the name and contact information for the Title IX coordinator, ADA/Section 504 coordinator, and superintendent for other concerns about discrimination.]

### **Vending Machines (All Grade Levels)**

The district has adopted and implemented the state and federal policies for food service, including guidelines to restrict student access to vending machines. For more information about these policies and guidelines, see the principal.

### **Pest Management Plan (All Grade Levels)**

The district is required to follow integrated pest management (IPM) procedures to control pests on school grounds. Although the district strives to use the safest and most effective methods to

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manage pests, including a variety of non-chemical control measures, periodic indoor and outdoor pesticide use is sometimes necessary to ensure a safe, pest-free school environment.

All pesticides used are registered for their intended use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and are applied only by certified pesticide applicators. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 48 hours before indoor application. All outdoor applications will be posted at the time of treatment, and signs will remain until it is safe to enter the area.

Parents who have questions or who want to be notified of the times and types of applications prior to pesticide application inside their child's school assignment area may contact the district's IPM coordinator:

**Ricardo Rodriguez, Director of District Facilities**

**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**

[Ricardo.Rodriguez@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Ricardo.Rodriguez@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

### **School-Sponsored Field Trips (All Grade Levels)**

The district periodically takes students on field trips for educational purposes.

A parent must provide permission for a student to participate in a field trip.

The district may ask the parent to provide information about a student's medical provider and insurance coverage and may also ask the parent to sign a waiver allowing for emergency medical treatment in the case of a student accident or illness during the field trip.

The district may require a fee for student participation in a field trip that is not required as part of a basic educational program or course to cover expenses such as transportation, admission, and meals; however, a student will not be denied participation because of financial need. [See **Fees (All Grade Levels)** for more information.]

The district is not responsible for refunding fees paid directly to a third-party vendor.

### **Searches and Investigations**

#### **Searches in General (All Grade Levels)**

To ensure a safe and orderly environment, RYSS staff may conduct reasonable searches of students, their belongings, and their vehicles when there is reasonable suspicion of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

These searches are conducted with discretion, in accordance with federal and state law, and with respect for students' rights and dignity. Prohibited items found during a search may be confiscated and may lead to disciplinary action.

District officials may:

- question students regarding a student's own conduct or the conduct of others
- search students, their belongings, and their vehicles, consistent with law and district policy

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District officials may search students, their belongings, and their vehicles in accordance with law and district policy. Searches of students will be conducted without discrimination, based on, for example, reasonable suspicion or voluntary consent or pursuant to district policy providing for suspicionless security procedures, including the use of metal detectors.

In accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, students are responsible for prohibited items found in their possession, including items in their personal belongings or in vehicles parked on district property.

If there is reasonable suspicion to believe that searching a student's person, belongings, or vehicle will reveal evidence of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct, a district official may conduct a search in accordance with law and district regulations.

### **District Property (All Grade Levels)**

Desks, lockers, district-provided technology, and related items are the property of the district and are provided for student use as a matter of convenience. District property is subject to search or inspection at any time without notice. Students have no expectation of privacy in district property.

Students are responsible for any item found in district property provided to the student that is prohibited by law, district policy, or the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Metal Detectors (All Grade Levels)**

To maintain a safe and disciplined learning environment, the district reserves the right to subject students to metal detector searches when entering a district campus and at off-campus, school-sponsored activities.

### **Personal Communications and Other Electronic Devices (All Grade Levels)**

Use of district-owned equipment and its network systems is not private and will be monitored by the district. [See policy PG-7.104: Technology Resources for more information.]

Any searches of personal electronic devices will be conducted in accordance with law, and the device may be confiscated to perform a lawful search. A confiscated device may be turned over to law enforcement to determine whether a crime has been committed.

### **Trained Dogs (All Grade Levels)**

The district may use trained dogs to screen for concealed, prohibited items, including drugs and alcohol. Screenings conducted by trained dogs will not be announced in advance. The dogs will not be used with students, but students may be asked to leave personal belongings in an area that is going to be screened, such as a classroom, a locker, or a vehicle. If a dog alerts to an item or an area, it may be searched by district officials.

### **Vehicles on Campus (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

If a vehicle subject to search is locked, the student will be asked to unlock the vehicle. If the student refuses, the district will contact the student's parents. If the parents also refuse to permit

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the vehicle to be searched, the district may turn the matter over to law enforcement. The district may contact law enforcement even if permission to search is granted.

### Sexual Harassment

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (All Grade Levels)**.]

### Special Programs (All Grade Levels)

The district provides special programs for gifted and talented students, students who are homeless, students in foster care, bilingual students, migrant students, emergent bilingual students, students diagnosed with dyslexia, and students with disabilities. The coordinator of each program can answer questions about eligibility requirements, as well as programs and services offered in the district or by other organizations. A student or parent with questions about these programs should contact:

**Justin Fuentes, Chief of Schools**

**2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017**

[Justin.Fuentes@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Justin.Fuentes@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3700

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission's [Talking Book Program](https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/index.html) (<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/index.html>) provides audiobooks free of charge to qualifying Texans, including students with visual, physical, or reading disabilities such as dyslexia.

### Standardized Testing

#### SAT/ACT (Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Test)

Many colleges require either the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for admission. These assessments are usually taken at the end of the junior year. Students are encouraged to talk with the school counselor early during their junior year to learn about these assessments and determine the appropriate examination to take. The Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and ACT-Aspire are the corresponding preparatory and readiness assessments for the SAT and ACT.

**Note:** These assessments may qualify a student to receive a performance acknowledgment on the student's transcript under the foundation graduation program and may qualify as a substitute for an end-of-course testing requirement in certain circumstances. A student's performance at a certain level on the SAT or ACT also makes the student eligible for automatic admission to a Texas public institution of higher education.

#### TSI (Texas Success Initiative) Assessment

Prior to enrolling in a Texas public college or university, most students must take a standardized test called the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment. The TSI assesses the reading, mathematics, and writing skills that first-year students need to perform effectively as undergraduates in Texas public colleges and universities. This assessment may also be required before a student enrolls in a dual credit course offered through the district. Achieving certain

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benchmark scores on this assessment may also waive certain end-of-course assessment requirements in limited circumstances.

### **Summer School (All Grade Levels)**

Summer School programs information will be communicated by campus principals.

### **Tardies (All Grade Levels)**

A student who is more than 5 *minutes tardy to class may be assigned to detention hall or given another* appropriate consequence after 5 consequence tardies.

### **Textbooks, Electronic Textbooks, Technological Equipment, and Other Instructional Materials (All Grade Levels)**

Instructional materials are any resources used in classroom instruction as part of the required curriculum, such as textbooks, workbooks, computer software, or online services.

The district selects instructional materials in accordance with state law and policy PG-2.301: Selection and Adoption of Instructional Materials.

The district provides approved instructional materials to students free of charge for each subject or class. Students must treat instructional materials with care, as directed by the teacher.

If a student needs a graphing calculator for a course and the district does not provide one, the student may use a calculator application with graphing capabilities on a laptop, tablet, or other computing device.

A student who is issued a damaged item should report the damage to the teacher.

Any student who does not return an item or returns an item in an unacceptable condition loses the right to free textbooks and technological equipment until the item is returned or the damage is paid for by the parent. However, the student will be provided with the necessary instructional resources and equipment for use at school during the school day.

### **Transfers (All Grade Levels)**

The principal is authorized to transfer a student from one classroom to another.

The superintendent is authorized to investigate and approve transfers between schools.

### **Transportation (All Grade Levels)**

#### **School-Sponsored Trips**

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use school-provided transportation to and from the event. However, in accordance with campus procedures, a parent may provide written consent for their child to ride with or be released after the event to the parent or another adult designated by the parent.

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A parent may designate a child-care facility or grandparent's residence as the regular pickup and drop-off location for their child. The designated location must be an approved stop on an approved route. For information on bus routes and stops or to designate an alternate pickup or drop-off location, contact the campus principal or sponsor.

Students are expected to assist district staff in ensuring that buses and other district vehicles are clean and safe. When riding in district vehicles, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Students must:

- Observe all the usual classroom rules
- Follow the driver's directions at all times
- Enter and leave the vehicle in an orderly manner at the designated stop
- Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle
- Not deface the vehicle or its equipment
- Not put head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window, hold any object out of the window, or throw objects within or out of the vehicle
- Not possess or use any form of tobacco or e-cigarettes in any district vehicle
- Be seated while the vehicle is moving
- Fasten their seat belts, if available
- Wait for the driver's signal upon leaving the vehicle and before crossing in front of the vehicle
- Follow any other rules established by the operator of the vehicle

Misconduct will be punished in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, including loss of the privilege to ride in a district vehicle.

[See the Student Code of Conduct for provisions regarding transportation to the DAEP.]

### **Vandalism (All Grade Levels)**

Littering, defacing, or damaging school property is not tolerated. Students will be required to pay for damages they cause and will be subject to criminal proceedings as well as disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Video Cameras (All Grade Levels)**

For safety purposes, the district uses video and audio recording equipment to monitor student behavior, including on buses and in common areas on campus. Students will not be told when the equipment is being used.

The principal will review the video and audio recordings as needed and document student misconduct. Discipline will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

In accordance with state law, a parent of a student who receives special education services, a staff member (as this term is defined by law), a principal or assistant principal, or the board may make a written request for the district to place video and audio recording equipment in certain self-contained special education classrooms. The district will provide notice before placing a video camera in a classroom or other setting in which a child receives special education services.

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For more information or to request the installation and operation of this equipment, contact the principal or the Special Education Director that the district has designated to coordinate the implementation of and compliance with this law.

## Visitors to the School (All Grade Levels)

### General Visitors

Parents and others are welcome to visit district schools. For the safety of those within the school and to avoid disruption of instructional time, all visitors must:

- Request entry to the school at the primary entrance unless otherwise directed by a district employee
- Report to the main office
- Be prepared to show identification
- Exit the school at the primary entrance and leave all exterior doors closed, latched, and locked unless actively monitored by a district employee
- Comply with all applicable district policies and procedures

If requested by a district employee, a visitor must provide identification such as a driver's license, other picture identification issued by a government entity, or employee or student identification issued by the district. A person who refuses to provide identification and who reasonably appears to have no legitimate reason to be on district property may be ejected from district property.

Individuals may visit classrooms or observe virtual instruction during instructional time only with approval of the principal and teacher. Visitors may not interfere with instruction or disrupt the normal school environment.

All visitors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of courtesy and conduct. Disruptive behavior or violations of student privacy will not be permitted. [See **Consent to Video or Audio Record a student when Not Already Permitted by Law** for video and other recording by parents or visitors to virtual or in-person classrooms.]

### Unauthorized Persons

In accordance with Education Code 37.105, a school administrator, school resource officer (SRO), or district police officer has the authority to refuse entry to or eject a person from district property if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and either of the following applies:

- The person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person
- The person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and persists in the behavior after being given a verbal warning that the behavior is inappropriate and may result in refusal of entry or ejection

Appeals regarding refusal of entry or ejection from district property may be filed in accordance with policies PG-3.509: Student and Parent Grievance Process) or PG-2.105: Public Complaints. [See the Student Code of Conduct.]

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## Visitors Participating in Special Programs for Students

### *Business, Civic, and Youth Groups*

The district may invite representatives from patriotic societies listed in Title 36 of the United States Code to present information to interested students about membership in the society.

### *Career Day*

On Career Day, the district invites representatives from colleges and universities and other higher education institutions, prospective employers, and military recruiters to present information to interested students.

## Volunteers (All Grade Levels)

The district invites and appreciates the efforts of volunteers who are willing to serve our district and students.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact:

**Ramiro Fonseca, Director of Outreach and Engagement**  
2950 Broadway St., Houston, TX 77017  
[Ramiro.Fonseca@tejanocenter.org](mailto:Ramiro.Fonseca@tejanocenter.org) | 713-640-3796

Subject to exceptions in accordance with state law and district procedures, the district requires a state criminal history background check for each volunteer, including parents, guardians, or grandparents of a child enrolled in the district. The volunteer must pay all costs for the background check.

## Voter Registration (Secondary Grade Levels Only)

A student who is eligible to vote in any local, state, or federal election may obtain a voter registration application at the main campus office.

## Withdrawing from School (All Grade Levels)

We understand that families may need to withdraw a student from school for various reasons. To ensure a smooth transition, please follow the procedures below:

### Who Can Withdraw a Student

- For students under 18:
  - A parent or legal guardian must submit a written withdrawal request to the campus principal. This request must include:
    - The reason for withdrawal
    - The student's last day of attendance
- For students who are age 18 or older, legally married, or emancipated by court order: These students may initiate and sign their own withdrawal request without a parent's signature.

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## Withdrawal Procedures

To officially withdraw your student from RYSS:

- **Submit the Withdrawal Request:**  
Email or deliver a written request to the campus front office. Withdrawal forms are also available at the principal's office.
- **Provide Advance Notice:**  
Please notify the school at least three school days in advance so that staff have time to gather academic records, finalize grades, and prepare necessary documentation.
- **Return School Property:**  
Before withdrawal is complete, students must return all:
  - Textbooks
  - Technology devices (e.g., Chromebook, hotspot)
  - Library books
  - Athletic/ROTC uniforms, instruments, or other borrowed materials
- **Clear Outstanding Obligations:**  
All fees, fines, or outstanding balances must be resolved before records can be released.

## Enrollment Confirmation for Transfer:

Families are encouraged to notify RYSS once the student has enrolled at the new school so that records may be sent promptly.

For questions about the withdrawal process, contact the campus's main office.

# Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Student Handbook

## Glossary

**Accelerated instruction, including supplemental instruction**, is an intensive educational program designed to help an individual student acquire the knowledge and skills required at their grade level. It is required when a student does not meet the passing standard on a state-mandated assessment. Accelerated instruction may be provided by assigning a student to a classroom teacher who is certified as a master, exemplary, or recognized teacher or by providing supplemental instruction in addition to regular instruction.

**ACT**, or the American College Test, is one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions examinations. The test may be required for admission to certain colleges or universities.

**ACT-Aspire** is designed as a preparatory and readiness assessment for the ACT. This is usually taken by students in grade 10.

**ARD** stands for admission, review, and dismissal. The ARD committee convenes for each student who is identified as needing a full and individual evaluation for special education services. The eligible student and their parents are members of the committee.

**Attendance review committee** is responsible for reviewing a student's absences when the student's attendance drops below 90 percent, or in certain cases 75 percent, of the days the class is offered. Under guidelines adopted by the board, the committee will determine whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences and whether the student needs to complete certain conditions to master the course and regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences.

**CPS** stands for Child Protective Services.

**DAEP** stands for a disciplinary alternative education program, a placement for students who have violated certain provisions of the Student Code of Conduct.

**DMAC** stands for Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum. It is the platform used for most formative and summative in-class assessments at RYSS.

**DFPS** stands for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

**DPS** stands for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

**DSHS** stands for the Texas Department of State Health Services.

**ED** stands for the U.S. Department of Education.

**Emergent bilingual student** refers to a student of limited English proficiency. Other related terms include English learner, English language learner, and limited English proficient student.

**EOC (end-of-course) assessments** are state-mandated and are part of the STAAR program. Successful performance on EOC assessments is required for graduation. These examinations will be given in English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History.

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**ESSA** is the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

**FERPA** refers to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which grants specific privacy protections to student records. The law contains certain exceptions, such as for directory information, unless a student's parent or a student 18 years of age or older directs the school not to release directory information.

**IEP** stands for individualized education program and is the written record prepared by the ARD committee for a student with disabilities who is eligible for special education services.

**IGC** is the individual graduation committee, formed in accordance with state law, to determine a student's eligibility to graduate when the student has failed to demonstrate satisfactory performance on no more than two of the required state assessments.

**ISS** refers to in-school suspension, a disciplinary technique for misconduct found in the Student Code of Conduct. Although different from out-of-school suspension and placement in a DAEP, ISS removes the student from the regular classroom.

**PGP** stands for personal graduation plan, which is required for high school students and for any student in middle school who fails a section on a state-mandated test or is identified by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year after beginning grade 9.

**PSAT** is the preparatory and readiness assessment for the SAT. It also serves as the basis for the awarding of National Merit Scholarships.

**Safe and Supportive School Team** is a team established at each campus that is responsible for conducting a threat assessment regarding individuals who make threats of violence or exhibit harmful, threatening, or violent behavior and determining appropriate intervention, and providing guidance to students and school employees on recognizing harmful, threatening, or violent behavior that may pose a threat to the community, school, or individual.

**SAT** refers to the Scholastic Aptitude Test, one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions examinations. The test may be required for admissions to certain colleges or universities.

**SHAC** stands for School Health Advisory Council, a group of at least five members, a majority of whom must be parents, appointed by the school board to help ensure that local community values and health issues are reflected in the district's health education instruction, as well as assist with other student and employee wellness issues.

**Section 504** is the federal law that prohibits discrimination against a student with a disability, requiring schools to provide opportunities for equal services, programs, and participation in activities. Unless the student is determined to be eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), general education with appropriate instructional accommodations will be provided.

**STAAR** is the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, the state's system of standardized academic achievement assessments.

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**STAAR Alternate 2** is an alternative state-mandated assessment designed for students with severe cognitive disabilities receiving special education services who meet the participation requirements, as determined by the student's ARD committee.

**STAAR Spanish** is an alternative state-mandated assessment administered to eligible students for whom a Spanish version of STAAR is the most appropriate measure of their academic progress.

**State-mandated assessments** are required of students at certain grade levels and in specified subjects. Except under limited circumstances, students must pass the STAAR EOC assessments to graduate. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests, if necessary, for graduation.

**Student Code of Conduct** is developed with the advice of the district-level committee and adopted by the board and identifies the circumstances, consistent with law, when a student may be removed from a classroom, campus, or district vehicle; sets out the conditions that authorize or require the principal or another administrator to place the student in a DAEP; and outlines conditions for out-of-school suspension and for expulsion. The Student Code of Conduct also addresses notice to the parent regarding a student's violation of one of its provisions.

**TAC** stands for the Texas Administrative Code.

**TEA** stands for the Texas Education Agency, which oversees primary and secondary public education in Texas.

**TELPAS** stands for the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System, which assesses the progress that emergent bilingual students make in learning the English language and is administered for those who meet the participation requirements in kindergarten-grade 12.

**TSI** stands for the Texas Success Initiative, an assessment designed to measure the reading, mathematics, and writing skills that entering college-level freshmen students should have if they are to be successful in undergraduate programs in Texas public colleges and universities.

**TXVSN** stands for the Texas Virtual School Network, which provides online courses for Texas students to supplement the instructional programs of public-school districts. Courses are taught by qualified instructors and are equivalent in rigor and scope to a course taught in a traditional classroom setting.

**UIL** refers to the University Interscholastic League, the statewide, voluntary nonprofit organization that oversees educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests.

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## **Appendix: Freedom from Bullying Policy**

**Note:** School board policies may be revised at any time. For legal context and the most current copy of the local policy, visit [Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies \(tejanocenter.org\)](http://Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies (tejanocenter.org)). Below is the text of Raul Yzaguirre's policy PG-3.103 as of the date this handbook was finalized for this school year.

### **Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying**

Policy PG-3.103 adopted on 3/26/2015 (Updated Online Policy in Progress).

## **Appendix: Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy**

**Note:** School board policies may be revised at any time. For legal context and the most current copy of the local policy, visit [Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies \(tejanocenter.org\)](http://Our Leadership & Team / Board Policies (tejanocenter.org)). Below is the text of Raul Yzaguirre's policy PG-3.103 as of the date this handbook was finalized for this school year.

### **Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student and Parent Complaints/Grievances**

Policy PG-3.509: Student and Parent Complaints and Grievances adopted