

STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026-2027

The Roanoke Valley Governor's School for Science and Technology

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CONTENTS

Absences	7
Advanced Placement/Dual Enrollment.....	4
Auxiliary Electives	5
Calculators	13
Cell Phones	12
Cooperative and Collaborative Learning	4
Course Adjustment	5
Course Information	4
Credit Information	4
Discipline	11
Dress Code	11
Early Check-out	8
Electives and Projects.....	5
Faculty Recommendations.....	12
Grading and Grading Periods.....	5
Honor Code.....	9
Lab Rules	11
Medication	6
Parking.....	6
Re-evaluation Procedure.....	12
School Counseling	4
Semester Assessments.....	5
SOL Testing	6
Strategic Plan Mission Statement	3
Student Lounge.....	13
Tardiness	8
Technology.....	13
Transcripts.....	6
Use of AI & Software Assistance	10
What Is Expected of Students	10p

STRATEGIC PLAN MISSION STATEMENT

The Roanoke Valley Governor's School, dedicated to leadership in innovative instructional practices, will provide a unique environment in which students and teachers explore the interconnections between STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and society. Through their educational experiences, students will develop the necessary skills and perspectives to impact our increasingly global society.

Belief Statements

We believe that:

1. Math, science, and technology provide tools for dealing with the problems and opportunities of the global community.
2. A supportive nurturing environment enables teaching and learning.
3. Individual differences exist and should be used as a resource for instruction.
4. The process of education is more than the accumulation of facts.
5. Teaching and learning involve the establishment of interconnections between and among disciplines.
6. Students and teachers must be open to innovative instructional practices that are essential for growth and learning and will be supported by the administration.
7. Given sufficient time, experience, and motivation, all students can achieve the expected competency in the curriculum.
8. The application of knowledge motivates and enhances learning and is an essential part of the educational process.
9. Every person is accountable for his/her own choices and actions.
10. Effective teaching stimulates creativity, imagination, and excitement for lifelong learning.

Strategic Policies

ALL MEMBERS OF THE RVGS SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

1. Will function as partners and will serve as resources for solving problems, accomplishing goals, and providing for the needs of the program.
2. Will nurture the quality and uniqueness of the RVGS program through the action of its participants.
3. Will support sharing ideas, considering alternatives, and reflecting on benefits to the community prior to passing judgment on the validity of an opinion or argument of another individual.
4. Will not tolerate degrading comments or opinions reflecting the appearance, behavior, or character of any individual in a negative manner.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Roanoke Valley Governor's School is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in relation to race, color, gender, age, religion, disability, national origin, or marital status.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

COURSE INFORMATION

Each Governor's School teacher maintains a Canvas page that includes an up-to-date calendar, syllabus, competency list, and other important class materials.

COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

The ability to work productively in small learning groups is important, and students at RVGS are expected to participate actively in collaborative discussions and activities. The group problem-solving skills that students learn at RVGS are the same kind of skills used every day by scientists, engineers, physicians, and other professionals. Students are responsible for active contributions to learning groups and for following expectations of collaborative learning.

SCHOOL COUNSELING

The Governor's School has a school counselor to work with you. Areas of assistance include college exploration and applications, career assessment, personal issues, time management and study skills, and stress management. Numerous programs of special interest to RVGS students will be scheduled during the year. If the counselor is not available to speak with you when you visit, please leave a note on the door or ask the school secretary to contact the counselor for you.

CREDIT INFORMATION

All science courses carry two units of credit per year with the exception of the RVGS Physics course and the RVGS Chemistry course which carry one credit. All math courses carry one unit of credit per year. Each student takes a research elective course each year. Elective course credits carry 0.5 credits. Math, science, and most elective courses are eligible for weighted credit. Weighting of credit is the decision of the student's home school system.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT

Roanoke Valley Governor's School has both Advanced Placement and Dual Enrolled courses. The Advanced Placement (AP) Program involves college-level courses and exams. Students are expected to take the AP exam at their home school in the spring. Some home schools require the student to take the AP exam in order to receive weighted credit.

Dual Enrollment courses give students an opportunity to receive college credit through Virginia Western Community College. Students must meet the VWCC prerequisites. These courses meet the same academic requirements as the college courses offered on campus.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

GRADING AND GRADING PERIODS

There are two semesters each year. Three times during the semester, students will receive Interim Reports which they are expected to give to their parent(s). Parents and students may also monitor course grades online throughout the year by using ParentVue. Semester grades include a letter and number grade. Grades will be reported to your home school as both a letter grade, an “A” through “F” and a numerical grade.

COURSE ADJUSTMENT

Any changes from one course to another must be made within the first two weeks of school. Such a change will rarely be approved and may not be possible due to scheduling restrictions. Any changes must be approved by the RVGS Director. Schedule changes will not be made to accommodate a request for a particular teacher.

SEMESTER ASSESSMENTS

The first-semester assessment may be a regular test or a comprehensive exam, at the discretion of the teacher. The format of the second-semester assessment is the teacher's decision and may vary for AP courses. The semester assessment will be an exam grade and will be averaged according to the class syllabus. There will not be a separate assessment grade listed on your report card.

ELECTIVES AND PROJECTS

Students will choose electives for their next school year during the second semester. New elective classes will begin in the second semester. Students can anticipate completing assignments and pursuing research interests during the summer months. Students are required to complete a project each year. The project should be rigorous, emphasize scientific method, and have clearly delineated intermediate products at regular intervals throughout the year. Students are required to participate in the annual RVGS Project Forum. ***Project Forum will be on a Saturday at the end of Intersession. All students are required to attend Project Forum.***

AUXILIARY ELECTIVES

RVGS may offer a limited set of electives outside of the basic schedule. These are considered to take place during an ‘auxiliary period’, though the actual timing of the coursework can vary. These courses typically have a 3-5 hr per week time commitment, and count as a 0.5 credit weighted A-F course. They require synchronous work that must be completed weekly according to established deadlines. Availability and course offerings may vary year to year and a course may be removed or added at any time prior to the first class meeting each fall.



SOL TEST STATEMENT

Governor's School students enrolled in RVGS Chemistry, College Biology, and Algebra II will take the appropriate state-mandated SOL tests through their home school district.

TRANSCRIPTS

A transcript is a record of your grades for your entire period of attendance at the Governor's School. Students will find that they need such a record for college admissions, scholarship applications, job applications, or similar reasons. A transcript is an official document, signed by the school counseling coordinator. Official RVGS transcripts are produced for all non-Roanoke City students and are either mailed directly to the institution or company as requested or given to students to return to their home school. Students must request transcripts at least one week in advance by contacting the RVGS Counselor. It is not practical to expect that a transcript can be sent on short notice. All transcripts leaving the school for any reason will be accompanied by a standard school profile that describes the school, its program of studies, grading policies, and an overview of the nature and mission of the school. This description is to the advantage of every student and attempts to convey the special nature, level of challenge, and unique focus of the school. Roanoke City Students' official transcript will come from their home school and includes RVGS coursework. An RVGS profile should still be sent along with each college application and can be picked up from the guidance office.

PARKING

Due to limited parking space availability students who are provided bus transportation from their home school are not generally entitled to drive to and park at RVGS. Students wishing to drive themselves to RVGS may request permission to obtain a parking pass. Students who drive to RVGS will be required to purchase and appropriately display a parking sticker. Students must park in designated parking areas. All other areas are subject to towing at the owner's expense and without further warning. RVGS/PHHS students are not eligible for an RVGS parking sticker and must park in a PHHS parking lot. Students who need to drive to Governor's School for occasional special circumstances will need prior approval from RVGS. These students will be issued a temporary parking permit. Failure to adhere to these policies could result in the RVGS parking sticker being revoked.

MEDICATION

Parents must notify the office in writing of the need for their child to take medication. Such prescription and over-the-counter medication will be dispensed in the office except for certain named self-administered prescription medications (also refer to the RCPS Parent Handbook). Students are generally not permitted to carry prescription medication and can carry only a single, labeled dose of over-the-counter medication. Please consult the RVGS office for additional information.

☒ ATTENDANCE ☒

ABSENCES

RVGS follows the RCPS policies for excused and unexcused absences. Regulations from the Virginia Department of Education define chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of the school year, regardless of the reason, whether the absences are excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism is now an indicator for school accreditation. Therefore, we are asking that you be conscientious about sending your child to school each and every day. State guidelines designate only absences with a doctor's note or court note as excused.

RVGS requires a written note from a parent or guardian any time a student is absent. Students are responsible for making up all missed work. The faculty and staff strongly recommend that absences be kept to a minimum and parents are asked to evaluate the need for any absence from RVGS. Family/student vacations taken during school days are strongly discouraged because they place an undue burden on teachers and the student, and these absences will be considered unexcused. It is not practical to believe that students can miss an extended number of classes and be able to keep up with the work. **All pre-planned absences of three or more days must be discussed directly with the director. A written note also must be provided a week prior to the absence for the teachers to be able to provide work.** The teachers are willing to work with students, however, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements to complete all missed work in a timely manner. Teachers may require that students come in outside of class time to make up quizzes, tests or labs.

In the case of absences due to home school activities, RVGS will accept a written note or email from a school official in lieu of a parent's note as long as the student's name appears on the note or email. These students must still get a slip from the front office.

Unexcused absences of three days or longer will result in a 10% grade penalty; additional penalties may occur if the work is not submitted in a timely manner. If no note is received from the parent within 5 days, the absence will be considered skipping and no work will be accepted.

Unexcused absences

Extended absences will be considered unexcused if they last three or more days and are not validated by a medical excuse, documentation of school-related activity, or court documentation. Exceptions will be made for extreme emergencies such as death or a health crisis in the family.

Planned absence

- Bring a signed note or parent email at least one day in advance.
- Bring a signed note or parent email at least **one week in advance** if the absence will be three or more days.
- Bring note to the office and obtain absence slip to give to the teachers.
- Arrange with the teachers the details of making up missed work.

Unanticipated absence

- Bring a signed note or parent email on the first day back at school
- Notes will be accepted for up to 5 days after the absence. After that time, the absence will remain unexcused and the student will receive zeros for any graded work that occurred during the absence.
- Bring note to the office and obtain absence slip to give to the teachers.
- Arrange with the teachers the details of making up missed work

ATTENDANCE

Per the Code of Conduct and School Board policies, the school may choose not to excuse an absence, even in the case of a parent note, if the reason for an absence is not considered acceptable.

TARDINESS

Student should be sure to arrive on time to class. Some of the most important information is given in the first few minutes of class. Not only will students miss this information if they arrive late, but they will also be a distraction to fellow classmates. Being tardy can become a habit that students must not start.

Upon a student's third unexcused tardy in a semester, the student may be penalized by losing break time from Wednesday/Thursday classes and/or being required to make up time before the school day. Each subsequent tardy after the third will result in the same or increased level of consequence, including parent contact.

- If a student is tardy to school:
 - ***Go to the office and sign in before going to class.***
 - Bring a note from home or parent email to the office explaining the tardiness.
 - You will receive a tardy pass to show your teacher.

EARLY CHECK-OUT

Checking out of school early for any reason requires written parental consent or a notice from the coach/home school. This note should include the exact time the student needs to leave early. In case of illness that necessitates early departure from school, parent verification by phone will be accepted in lieu of a note. The student will receive a note from the office to show their teacher. *The student will not be permitted to leave the class early without a note from the office.* **All students leaving early must sign out in the office before leaving the building. Any student who does not sign out before leaving will be considered truant and will be subject to appropriate penalties.**



RULES AND EXPECTATIONS



HONOR CODE

The students at the Governor's School hold high standards for themselves, their teachers, and their friends. Honest, ethical behavior is expected of all RVGS students. **Those who violate common standards of truth, honesty, and ethical behavior through cheating or plagiarism may lose their right to remain a member of the Governor's School community.**

In order to promote an environment of honesty, to reduce the temptations of cheating, and to create a safe, distraction-free classroom environment, the following practices will be employed during assessments:

- Students will turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and smart watches when entering the classroom and place them in the designated cellphone caddy
- Use of multiple versions of the assessment
- Changing of seating assignments or desk arrangement to allow spacing

Violating our community standard for integrity and ethical behavior will result in each of the following:

- A student-director conference
- Notification of parents
- A grade of zero on the assignment

Further consequences of violations may include:

- **Transfer back to the home school.**
- Loss or limitation of privileges, such as technology use or participation in school activities.
- Communication about honor code violations to home school (may be barred from certain honor societies or activities).
- Loss of positive college recommendations from RVGS faculty.

More than one violation of academic integrity will result in removal from RVGS. Particularly serious breaches of integrity and/or continued attempts at deception may result in loss of enrollment at RVGS, even on a first offense.

STUDENT HONOR CODE:

"I understand that academic honesty is absolutely necessary for my teachers to be able to evaluate my learning and help me learn better. I pledge that all of the work I hand in will be my own, completed without unauthorized help, except in the case of group projects or assignments on which my teacher allows collaboration. When using other people's words or ideas in my papers, I will give credit to the source by citing the author. I also pledge not to assist others in violating this honor code, and to do all I can to promote and uphold academic honesty and integrity at the Roanoke Valley Governor's School."

Important: Review the "Use of AI & Software Assistance" section of this handbook, which is also considered part of the honor code requirements of RVGS.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF STUDENTS

1. Honorable conduct and a commitment to integrity in school work and interactions with adults and peers.
2. Successful students typically spend more time preparing for classes, labs, and projects than is the case in their regular high school.
3. Attention to deadlines and a willingness to learn how to manage their time effectively
4. Persistence in going back to material not mastered the first time
5. Regular attendance and a minimum number of absences
6. Maintenance of an overall B average or better in Governor's School classes (See Re-evaluation/Probation Policy)
7. All students are required to be present for the entire day at the annual Saturday Student Project Forum.
8. Conduct a research project suitable for presentation at science fairs, within their research elective class.
9. Productive participation and contributions to learning teams and collaborative groups
10. Ethical observance of the RCPS acceptable use, computer and technology policies
11. Responsible use of technology (computers, graphing calculators, Internet, and lab equipment)
12. Attention to the Student Handbook
13. Compliance with behavioral standards and guidelines
14. Use of a daily planner throughout the school year

USE OF AI & SOFTWARE ASSISTANCE

All assignments submitted by a student should represent their own authentic intellectual work. In addition to plagiarism or copying work from a peer, students shall not use inappropriate software, such as generative AI or 'homework helper' software, to generate all or part of their work for an assignment, or to modify their work. Students can expect that submitted papers may be run through one or more AI detection systems. Papers flagged as likely AI-generated by more than one detection system are subject to consequences under the honor code and a grade of zero for the assignment.

Software assistance on an assignment is considered inappropriate if the resource is not explicitly indicated as an appropriate option by the teacher. If students are unsure, they should ask the teacher. Students will not use software tools that recommend large-scale revisions to text for RVGS assignments (such as some features of Grammarly and similar programs). Simple spelling and grammar checks are encouraged, but programs that recommend revisions of whole sentences or more shall not be used.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

DISCIPLINE

You are part of a unique learning community dedicated to a seriousness of purpose. All of us, faculty and students alike, share the same goal of becoming the best that we can be, academically and socially. RVGS is a community that relies on each individual living up to the ideals of determination and excellence and each student has a responsibility to maintain the culture. The positive attitudes, motivation, self-discipline, and mutual respect already demonstrated by our student body will guarantee a setting in which each of us can pursue our goals.

Students who demonstrate a disregard for the following principles will be subject to prompt suspension (in-school or out-of-school) or other disciplinary measures including relinquishing their right to a position in the Governor's School student body. The following principles of conduct should provide you with direction:

1. The Governor's School participates in the student behavior code which is published by the Roanoke City School Board for its students. A summarized version of the code will be distributed to each Governor's School student. All Governor's School students are subject to its provisions and agree to follow them as a stipulation to enrollment at RVGS.
2. Students should be free to pursue legitimate academic pursuits free from actual or perceived threats of physical or emotional harm.
3. Each student should conduct himself/herself so that all students have the opportunity to learn. Mutual respect and concern create a climate conducive to learning and growth. Students are to be attentive and listening when the instructor is talking and when peers ask questions.
4. High standards of ethical behavior are expected of all Governor's School students and will extend to areas such as: computer usage, cheating, theft, plagiarism, copyright laws, and research projects.
5. Students are to remain on the Governor's School grounds during school hours unless authorization to leave the premises is granted by the director or his designee. RVGS grounds include the RVGS building, the patio, and sidewalks. Students must check in/out through the office.
6. Attendance and full participation in classes and activities during school hours is required.
7. The possession of alcohol and tobacco on school grounds is prohibited.

LAB RULES

Students are expected to abide by the lab rules posted in each classroom to ensure a safe learning environment. The rules may vary across classes due to the use of different equipment, chemicals, and biological specimens. Consequently, students must read the lab policies posted in each classroom and ask questions about any rule they do not understand *prior* to their participation in lab activities. Students may lose lab privileges if they do not read or disregard the lab policies.

DRESS CODE

The Roanoke Valley Governor's School follows the Roanoke City School's Dress Code. Students' attire should not be distracting to other students, teachers, or administrators. Students will be asked to put on alternative clothing if their clothing interferes with teaching, learning, or communication between participants of the Governor's School environment.



RULES AND EXPECTATIONS



RE-EVALUATION PROCEDURE

If a student has a “C” average or lower by an interim-grade report, immediate proactive action needs to be taken. The student and teacher will be expected to establish a written plan of action in an effort to strategically improve the student’s grade. At the end of a year in which the combined first and second-semester grade average for any single mathematics or science course is below a “B,” the student will be placed on probation the following year. If the math and science course are both below a “B” at the end of a single semester, the student will be placed on a one semester probationary period.

At the beginning of the probation period, the counselor will arrange a meeting with the student and his/her parents and current teachers in order to write a plan of action for the year. The counselor will periodically monitor the student’s progress.

Only ONE probation period is allowed during the student’s tenure at RVGS. If, at the end of the probationary period, or during any year after probation, the student acquires a “C” average or lower for a combined two semesters of any mathematics or science course, that student may not return to RVGS for the following year.

If a student demonstrates a pattern of extreme social or academic difficulty throughout a grading period, the director reserves the right to recommend the return of that student to their home school on a full-time basis for the next school year without having a probationary period.

Note: The director and/or re-evaluation committee has the discretion and flexibility to take into account extenuating circumstances.

FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS

Governor’s School faculty members write recommendations as a courtesy to students. To allow a faculty member time to adequately reflect on your accomplishments and attributes, please request a recommendation at least 2 weeks in advance. Copies of resumés are very helpful to faculty members who write recommendations. Also, remember to give the faculty member feedback on the outcome of the recommendation(s).

CELL PHONES & SMART WATCHES

Students are not permitted to use cell phones or other personal technology during instructional time. Students will turn off all electronic devices including cell phones or smart watches when entering the classroom and place them in the designated cellphone caddy. If parents need to contact a student during class, they should call the front office.



RULES AND EXPECTATIONS



TECHNOLOGY

Governor's School students and staff are fortunate to have available a variety of high-quality computer-related equipment including computers, printers, scanners, extensive software holdings, graphing-calculator connections, interfacing equipment, and network access. Since this equipment is shared by a large number of individuals, it is important for each person to be respectful of each other's needs.

A student's technical ability to alter or misuse a Governor's School computer in any way does not give the student the right to do so. RVGS students are expected to abide by all stated RVGS and RCPS acceptable use policies.

In order to use any technology at RVGS, students must sign the RCPS acceptable use policy.

Unacceptable use includes actions such as:

- logging in on an account other than the student's personal account
- accessing or attempting to access sites that are blocked by the filter
- altering RVGS software or hardware in any way
- downloading or installing programs onto RVGS computers
- making copies of licensed software
- using personal devices as "hotspots" at RVGS

These rules include the use of RVGS-owned computers as well as the use of other computers the student brings into RVGS. The misuse of computers or other technology may result in a student being denied access to the RVGS network, being denied use of all computers at RVGS, and/or recommendation for removal from RVGS.

Students are expected to proactively ask before doing anything with an RVGS computer or other piece of technology if there is any question about a possible violation of the policy.

CALCULATORS

All students will need a graphing calculator in all of their RVGS classes. Calculator guidelines:

1. *Label* your graphing calculator and cover with your preferred first and last name (and home telephone number, if desired).
2. Bring your graphing calculator to all RVGS classes *each* day. The availability of a working calculator is critical to your success in all assignments.
3. *Your calculator must be in good working order for all classes.* Students are responsible for ensuring the calculator is charged for class.

STUDENT LOUNGE

The student lounge is a privilege extended to all RVGS students. It includes the use of a refrigerator, microwave, sink, drink machine, and snack machine. Students are expected to keep the area clean, and free of trash, and are honor-bound to ensure that the machines are kept free from damage or tampering.