2026-27

RSAR Student Handbook



Renaissance Staff and Administration

Lake Washington School District

Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning

2026-27 Student Handbook

Home of the Ravens!

Vision

Renaissance School of Art & Reasoning cultivates community focused leaders and lifelong learners who are well prepared for high school.

Mission Statement

At Renaissance School of Art & Reasoning, we nurture a creative community grounded in empathy, self-advocacy, and rigor. Through rich academic and artistic experiences, students develop the skills and confidence to express themselves, collaborate effectively, and engage with the world as prepared and purposeful citizens.

History

Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning is a Lake Washington School District "Choice School" serving students in grades 6 – 8. The school was founded the fall of 2006 by teachers who envisioned an engaging, challenging academic environment that would meet the needs of middle school students. At Renaissance, students develop in an environment that honors the value of artistic expression, artistry, rigor, and warmth. They learn to think and act using multiple approaches and perspectives. They are known and nurtured as important individuals who have an active concern for their community and society.

Enrollment Policy

Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning is open to any student in the Lake Washington School District attendance areas. Families who value a challenging academic environment, an integrated curriculum, an emphasis on contributing positively to school community, extensive parent involvement, project-based learning, community stewardship, and the arts, mathematics, and science choose Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning for their middle schooler's experience. Students enroll through an application and lottery process run by the district resource center. The application process begins in November and decisions are made by the end of January. An information night is hosted by the Renaissance teaching and representatives of the administration staff in November to allow parents and prospective students to hear from the staff, current parents and students and alum parents and students to get an in-depth picture of our school and community to determine if it is a good fit for your student and family.

Arts and the Curriculum

A foundational part of our philosophy at Renaissance is that the close study of visual and performing arts, specifically for middle school students, provides them with opportunities to express themselves in authentic ways as they are beginning the process of self-discovery, deepen their understanding of other content as they use their developing artistic skills to represent their understanding of a particular concept, and that visual and performing arts are part of the CORE subjects. All students, even if they have never done it before, will be expected to work and improve in both visual and performing arts. It is also important to the staff philosophically that we have no expectation that students will come to us with any predeveloped expertise in these areas. We will teach them. Ultimately, students need to be willing to take risks and try new things they have never done which results in some of the most powerful learning they will experience in middle school.

How to Communicate Effectively with Teachers

Our students' well-being is at the heart of all that we do as staff. As a community, working with your students and you, we always assume positive intent and a desire to understand and collaborate. Therefore, the Renaissance Staff expect the same mindset to be adopted families as well. Our preferred mode of communication is **Parent Square**, as directed by district, which is where we send our weekly communications about what is going on in classes, important dates that are coming up, important information, and community opportunities. Emails are okay as well, but through Parent Square you can opt to be emailed when a message is sent. Also remember that when you are communicating with staff you are communicating with professionals who care for your student and want to collaborate with you in a productive way to support your/your student's success. Due to the amount of work that teachers have daily, teachers are committed to responding to emails in 48 hours following receipt of the initial email. In-person communication is often the most effective way of resolving questions or conflicts. Therefore, do not be surprised if you and your student are invited in to have a meeting with the particular teacher you reach out to regarding your concern or question. This is purely to ensure that communication is most effective and efficient. If you would like to meet one-on-one with a staff member, please make sure to pre-arrange that in advance. Drop-ins put the teacher in a difficult position seeing as how we will often have students that we need to work with after school, possible club meetings, or meetings with other colleagues that you may not be aware of unless you pre-arrange a meeting.

Decision-Making Model

The Renaissance staff, with input from students and parents, takes responsibility for the major decisions affecting the school. The staff includes the office manager, teachers, administration, and school counselor. Such decisions are brought to students for input and explanation. Communication with parents will be through Parent Square. There may also be surveys sent out to parents/guardians and students to collect data. Our decision-making model is consensus based. The consensus model does take more time, but everyone is provided an opportunity to have a voice, to listen to others, and weigh in their perspective. When alternatives or compromises are needed, we have an opportunity as a community to make those proposals and find an effective compromise. Problem solving belongs to everyone and everyone shares ownership in the outcome.

Guild and the Guild Teacher Role

Guild is what we call our academic advisory program that all of our students take advantage of. Once students are enrolled, they are assigned to a guild. We call them guilds because of our connection to the Renaissance movement in Europe. For the most part, students remain in the same guild for the entire three years they attend school at Renaissance. Our advisory guild program is multi-age with a mixture of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Teachers in guild provide opportunities for students to learn leadership skills, interdisciplinary skills and attributes (work ethic, personal responsibility, and communication and collaboration skills), goal setting, decision making, social skills, health education, high school and beyond work, celebrations and making friends. Guild plays a vital role at Renaissance by providing multi-aged peer interaction, time for getting to know each other well, and connecting with a teacher as an advocate for them for the three years they attend Renaissance. In addition, the guild teacher is the liaison between home and school for each student that is assigned to their guild. Therefore, questions about school can either be directed to the guild teacher or to the classroom teacher of a particular class. For example, if you have a question about something your student says about an interaction they had with another student or you have a question about an upcoming long absence, these types of questions would go to the guild teacher. However, if you have a question about why students need to have specific clothing for Performing Arts, or if there is a way for a student to get an audio version of a novel being read in English class, these types of questions should go to the classroom teacher who teaches that content. If you have general questions about schedules, school functions, volunteering, field trips, etc., those questions can go to the guild teacher or our office manager.

Parent Involvement

The role of parents at Renaissance is a core part of what makes our learning community so strong. Family involvement is a cornerstone of our philosophy and highly valued. As such, families are asked to contribute 25 volunteer hours each year that they are part of the Renaissance community. Volunteer options are vast. Some examples of ways to volunteer is to be a lunch supervisor, chaperone field trips, chaperone at community-building outdoor ed camp in the fall, chaperone at quarterly dance/socials, help support students in mathematics or science classes, help to orchestrate the annual talent show with the Performing Arts teacher(s), supervise a club after school, etc. Parents can watch our communications from Renaissance School PTSA and from RSAR via Parent Square for opportunities that come up during the school year for volunteering. Families who are unable to fulfill their 25 volunteer hours have the option to “buy-out” their hours at $15.00 per hour.

Family Financial Contribution

As part of our focus on visual and performing arts, Renaissance provides students with a number of different enrichment opportunities throughout the school year. This includes field trips throughout the year, both all school and by individual grade, the opportunity to work with published authors in their English classes for ten weeks each semester, opportunities to perform on stage up to four times during the school year, the opportunity to be selected to publish their creative writing, and opportunities to put on art shows in the community. All these additional activities are not possible if we relied purely on the general budget provided us by the state and district. Consequently, each family who has the means is asked to contribute an annual fee per student to the general PTSA fund. This funding is necessary to provide your students with the amazing, enriching experiences that will stay with them for a lifetime. If you lack the resources to make this family contribution, reach out to the PTSA for guidance.

School Fees

There are some school fees associated with secondary school. Here at Renaissance, we have the following fees that are issued at the start of the school year and can be paid all at once, on a payment plan set up with our office manager, or with needs-based support. There is a student ASB fee, which is for activities we organize as a community such as school dances (socials). Your student will receive an ASB card when they get their school picture taken on the first day of school. An ASB card is required if your student would like to participate in clubs, student leadership, etc. In addition, there is a performing arts fee, which covers the cost for purchasing supplies during the year for various productions. There is also a visual art class fee, to support the replenishment of consumable supplies needed in this class as well as your student's sketchbook which we purchase from the school and handout to the students in their art classes during the first week of school. A fee for Language Arts/Social Studies for supplies and to support extra programs. A science class fee, to support replenishment of consumable materials that classes must use in experiments, etc. Lastly, a fee for our annual outdoor camp. Fees can be paid by card online. If your family requires financial assistance, please contact the school counselor.

RSAR Working Social Contract – Principles of Behavior

For healthy development and successful learning to occur, students, staff and parent volunteers must feel safe. Real safety only comes through building an inclusive school community in which diversity is honored and all students are welcomed. Basic district expectations for maintaining a safe environment follow this section. We believe the most important step in creating a safe school is to empower students to develop and uphold their own agreements and behavior expectations. Parents and school staff have a joint responsibility to communicate, encourage, support and follow the agreements and ground rules we establish as a community. It is the students' responsibility to respect the rights of others to learn in a safe and caring environment. It is through collaboration between all parts of our community that students will have a safe learning environment and staff will have a safe working environment that allows everyone to belong, grow, learn, and have fun. In order to do this we ask everyone to read the following and commit to upholding these principles of our school community.

1. Take Care of Yourself: Be Prepared

Coming to class prepared includes, but is not limited to:

- Being prepared and punctual for each class.
- Bringing all required materials including a charged laptop and charger cord.
- Make sure class materials are labeled.
- Checking Canvas and email daily.
- Turning in completed assignments to the expectations set by the teacher.
- Following teacher directions, classroom procedures, and school policies.

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2. Take Care of Others: Be Empathetic and Respectful

Being empathetic and respectful includes, but is not limited to:

- Working quietly so all can concentrate on their work.
- Being mindful of your surroundings and how you may be impacting others.
- Being kind, helpful, and friendly to others.
- Stopping your speech and/or behavior when asked.
- Listening actively and considering others' perspectives when someone is talking

3. Take Care of Our School: Show Stewardship

Being responsible includes, but it is not limited to:

- Showing the pride you have in our school by the way you care for it.
- Treating our classrooms and materials respectfully so that all may use them.
- Maintaining community spaces (bathrooms, cubbies, deck, etc.).
- Following procedures and managing materials as directed by your teacher.
- Managing your own materials, and not "helping yourself" to materials that are not part of your project.

4. Take Ownership of Your Learning: Be Responsible & Persistent

Being persistent includes, but is not limited to:

- Taking advantage of opportunities to improve your work.
- Asking for help and advocating for what you need.
- Doing work that you can have pride in.
- Demonstrating a growth mindset by persisting through challenges.
- Taking risks; mistakes are part of the learning process.

Renaissance Values

As a learning community made up of students, staff and parents, it is also important to make clear what our community values are. We are an inclusive space that invites and celebrates the contributions and expertise of everyone who makes our community wonderful. Therefore, we have five values that were identified when the inaugural staff created our program that captured the kind of community we strive to be. The Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning Values are:

1) **Be persistent.**

   Working hard especially when the work is challenging is the mark of a strong learner. Being willing to sit in the challenge makes it possible for you to demonstrate to yourself how much you are capable of, which makes it possible for you to achieve more next time.

2) **Be prepared.**
   Come to class ready to learn with a charged laptop, your work supplies, and your completed homework if applicable. If something comes up for you as you are finishing up work at home, make note of those challenges and bring them to your teacher the next time you have that class. Make sure you are also taking care of yourself by getting a solid night's sleep, eating something in the morning and bringing snacks to carry you through the day, and taking time for yourself outside of school to do those things that help you to process stress. Also be ready to communicate with your teachers and classmates when things are not going well on a given day so we can adjust and respond accordingly.

3) **Be empathetic.**
   Remember that everyone is dealing with their own struggles at various times. We are all in the same boat and being willing to put yourself in someone else's shoes goes a long way to help people feel heard and valued. Use your active listening skills regularly to be able to support and foster healthy relationships with your classmates and teachers. This is especially important when interactions are not always positive. Consider, "What might be going on for this person that I am not currently aware of?"

4) **Be respectful.**
   As a member of our RSAR community, everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and value of our universal humanity. Showing respect to one another means that you will listen actively, you will ask questions for clarification, you will agree to disagree when compromise continues to be challenging, when a boundary is established attention will be given to follow it, and when someone communicates that something is bothering them, effort will be made to stop the troubling behavior.

5) **Be responsible.**
   Being responsible includes a number of different behaviors. A person who is responsible follows through on commitments made to themselves and other classmates when working in groups. Doing your part of the group work and not taken over or doing very little is not taking responsibility for yourself. Admitting when you have done something to bother, hurt or impede someone else's success is part of responsibility. Make sure you follow through on communicating information to your parents when asked or to your teachers. Getting work done on time and asking questions when work or concepts do not make sense right away is also part of being responsible. Use class time that teachers provide you to get started on your work well so that questions can get answered before you go home. Honesty is also part of being responsible.

We recognize that everyone comes in at different places along the continuum of mastery of these various skills. As part of the motivation for students to work on developing these skills we award monthly school-wide recognition of students' successes in embodying these values on a day-to-day basis. We call these our Raven of the Month Awards. The last Friday of every month at the end of the day we recognize everyone who has had a birthday during that month and the students who have demonstrated mastery of one of the state values above. This is a fun celebration for everyone and the students look forward to this time as well.

Daily Schedule

School begins this year at 8:35 AM and dismisses at 3:15 PM Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Wednesdays, starting the second week of school, will be early dismissal at 1:30 PM. Early release provides staff with dedicated time to plan as a team, discuss challenges, and arrange enrichment experiences for our students and community.

Transportation

Families are responsible for transporting students to and from Renaissance. However, there is a long-standing tradition of families who live in similar neighborhoods or attendance areas creating carpools. We strongly encourage families to set up carpools as early as possible not only so that it becomes routine, but also because it significantly cuts down on our carbon footprint as a community which is an issue that our students and community are vested in making a positive impact on. In addition, it is an opportunity to develop a deeper sense of community with your carpool friends. Students who live in the Eastlake High School attendance area are welcomed to take the school bus that comes to their neighborhood, if that works for the student and family. Families may also elect to have their students ride the metro bus if they can find a route that will get the students to and from school on time.

District/RSAR Policies and Procedures

LWSD Human Dignity Policy

Here at Renaissance, we have a wonderfully diverse student body and community. It is part of our mission to provide a positive and safe environment in which diversity is respected and honored.

Our entire school district is committed to the core values of a democratic society. Therefore, we will emphasize the core value of mutual human respect for each person regardless of individual differences or characteristics. This includes things like race, gender identity/expression, creed, religion, color, national origin, military status, sexual orientation, marital status, age, physical disability, neurodivergence, or the use of a service animal. This will be reflected in the daily behaviors of students, staff, and parent volunteers.

Anyone who violates this policy will be subject to the consequences described in our community's code of conduct, as well as state and federal laws.

Medications

If a student needs to take any prescription or over-the-counter medications during school hours, a staff member must administer the medications, or the parent is welcome to come to school to give the medication to their student themselves. If a staff member needs to administer medication, the school must have a completed authorization form on file with the prescribing doctor's signature in the office. A parent may not call in or send a note authorizing the administration of medication to their child at any time; the parent must come in to administer the medication themselves. An additional form is required if students are going to self-carry and administer their medication which is generally limited to epi-pens or asthma inhalers. These forms are available on the Renaissance School website and must be filled out at the beginning of each school year.

Medications are kept in a locked cabinet in the school health room. The medication must be in the original pharmacy or manufacturer's container and labeled with the following information:

Name of student

Name of medication

Dosage, mode, and time of administration

Name of physician prescribing the medication

Please connect with our school nurse if you have any questions regarding medications and school.

Health Room

Our school nurse works at both Renaissance and Eastlake High School, and is therefore only in the Renaissance health room *as needed*. Students requiring medical attention will either be helped by the office manager (e.g. for taking routine medications) or the school nurse (e.g. for an unexpected illness or medical event). When students are ill at school, they must be picked up by a parent/guardian. A student must be picked up immediately if they have a fever or is vomiting. Please make sure your child's emergency contacts are up to date in the event they need to go home and you are not available.

Attendance

Excused Absences

The school will determine whether absences or tardies (being late to school) are excused. Excused absences (based on Washington State Compulsory School Attendance and Admission Law, RCW 28A.225, also called the "Becca Bill" and LWSD board policy) include the following: illness, medical appointments, family emergency, religious holidays, school-related field trip, suspension, court proceedings, or other pre-arranged absence. It is a parent/guardian responsibility to report any absences by calling the 24/7 attendance line 425-936-1591 or by emailing RSARAttendance@lwsd.org. If insufficient reason for an absence is provided, the absence will be considered unexcused. If a parent does not call or email RSAR within 48 hours, the absence will be remain unexcused.

In the case of serious illness or emergency, please notify the school at 425-936-1591 by 8:00 AM. Absence from school or class without knowledge and consent of either parents or school staff is truancy. An email, phone call, or Parent Square message from a parent/guardian is needed for any student who has to leave campus during the school day. Parent/guardian must sign the student out and back in at the Renaissance main office.

Please try to schedule all personal appointments (doctor, dentist, orthodontist, therapy, etc.) on Wednesday afternoons or at the end of the school day. Most of the work of students is directly related to class discussions, peer and teacher feedback during class, and material presented in class. It is difficult to replicate this learning well.

If you are planning an extended vacation and your student will miss more than a week of school, it is important first that you communicate this with your student's guild teacher who will share with the rest of the staff. In addition, it needs to be communicated to the office manager so they can get the student a form that the student and parent/guardian can complete to demonstrate what the student is going to do while on vacation to keep up with what is going on at school. The sooner communication can start with the guild teacher the more meaningful this preparation will be for the student.

Unexcused Absences and the Becca Bill

Any absence that has not been deemed excused by the school will remain unexcused. Examples would include, but are not limited to: oversleeping, missed the bus, traffic, homework, shopping, babysitting, planned trips without pre-arranging, or other absences that could be planned outside of the school day. As mandated by the Becca Bill, students who accumulate seven unexcused absences in 30 days or 10 unexcused absences in a school year will be referred to the King County Juvenile Court System. The Court may impose sanctions on the student and/or parent or guardian. This is done in our district through the Becca Bill Coordinator who manages both EHS students and Renaissance students who are having challenges with attending regularly.

Tardiness

Students arriving late must check in with the school office manager before going to class. If there is a legitimate reason for being late to school, the parent must call or send a written explanation within 24 hours. If a student arrives more than 20 minutes late and is not excused, it is considered an absence from the class. Chronic tardiness, whether excused or unexcused, is a disruption to the learning and working environment of all students and staff.

Picking Up Early

Students leaving before normal dismissal time should bring a note to the school office or a parent should email RSARAttendance@lwsd.org prior to 8:00 AM that day. The student will receive an early dismissal slip to show their teacher. The slip will say the student's name and the time and date of the early dismissal. The student will hold on to the early dismissal slip so that if they get questioned as they are leaving, they have proof that they have permission to leave campus. Please make sure to inform your student of any plans that may require a release form and remind your child to pick up the early release slip from the office outside of class times: before school, during passing breaks, or at lunch.

Homework Philosophy

Teachers at Renaissance do not assign homework for homework's sake. We do not believe that the mere doing of homework helps students. In fact, many educators have done research and published articles that demonstrate that homework itself does not have a positive impact on student learning and can actually have a negative impact on student learning. However, that does *not* mean our students don't have homework. If your student consistently is working for more than an hour on homework each afternoon, please connect with the student's guild teacher to start a conversation around why this might be the case. Homework comes from students not finishing work started in class, reviewing the work that they did that day in class, working on learning vocabulary, working on a long-range project, daily practice for mathematics, revising writing, a reading assignment for a class novel that is being studied, independent reading, and studying for summative assessments. Students may also need to arrange work time with small groups for various projects that they will be doing in their classes.

Missing Assignments Due to Absence

Most of us will get some kind of illness at some point during this school year, so it is important to know what to do if your student is sick. Should students miss a day or more of class, students are expected consult Canvas for missed classwork. This is the only place where all work will be posted for students to complete. In addition, if students are confused about where to look or what the instructions are, they can reach out to classmates who were in class to ask them for assistance. We want to foster independence in our students during their time at Renaissance. Once they know they will be returning to school, they need to reach out to their teachers ahead of time and arrange time to meet before school, during Raven Time, or after school to go over what was missed. If the student makes an attempt complete any work they missed and gets stuck, they can bring those questions to the appropriate teacher when checking in after the absence. Students will have the same number of days to make-up work that they were absent for; however, in the case of extended, pre-planned absences it is the expectation that students are doing what they can to stay up-to-date on their work while they are gone. Students with individual education plans (IEPs) or 504 plans may have different stipulations around making up work. The key, when a student misses school, is for them to communicate with their teachers proactively to avoid falling behind. Guild teachers can also help advocate for students when needed, too.

Backpacks

Student backpacks can be a challenge. When they get too heavy they are not good for students' physical development; when they are too packed they take up too much space in our classrooms; overstuffed backpacks also are more susceptible to being stuffed with important papers and assignment documents. Consequently, a number of years ago a committee of our PTSA took on the job of building us some cubbies to use to store school materials that they don't need all the time every day. Please make sure that students' backpacks can be folded up into their cubbies during the school day. In Guild we teach students the expectation that they should bring what they need for each class only. Then, when they are getting ready for the end of the day, they will know what work they need to finish at home that night and can put into their backpacks only those things they need for home that night. Roller backpacks are not realistic to fit into their cubbies easily. If you have further questions about this, please reach out to your student's guild teacher.

Lunchroom Procedures and Expectations

There will be separate document that will be handed out in guild during the first day of school with this information in it.

Cafeteria Theft Policy

A student who takes or attempts to take food or drink from the cafeteria without purchasing it is stealing. Eating food in line and not paying for it is also stealing. In the event that a student is caught stealing from the cafeteria, the kitchen manager will message the guild teacher of that student and the guild teacher will follow up with their student. Consequences will follow the steps in our discipline procedures spelled out in the Basic Steps of Discipline.

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic integrity is vital to learning. For this reason, there are serious consequences for students who plagiarize, copy all or part of an assignment, or allow someone else to copy their work. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to sharing test/quiz answers or questions, copying or allowing another to copy your answers on your paper, or copying directly form sources and not citing them. The penalty for a first offense in cheating is a warning and an opportunity to redo the assignment yourself with no loss of credit. The second offense the student will receive zero on the assignment and will need to have a conversation with their guild teacher, classroom teacher and a parent or guardian. If a 3rd offense is made the student will receive a zero, a new assignment will be assigned by the teacher and completed by the student, and a meeting with an administrator, teachers and parents will happen scheduled by the guild teacher.

Cell Phones, Personal Devices, and Toys

Any item that can create disruption or detract from the learning environment should not be brought to school. Cell phones will be collected by first period teachers and held in a locked cell phone box during the day. Students will then be expected to return to their first period teacher to collect their cell phones at the end of the day. To maintain our focus on the work at school, students should not be expected by parents to respond to text messages during the school day. Other items that should remain home include but are not limited to rubber bands, action figures, balloons, darts, laser pointers, Switches and flashlights. If any of these items are seen by staff, staff will confiscate the items and an email will be sent home requesting parents to pick up the item.

Behavior Correction Procedure

The Renaissance Community Principles and Values are taught, discussed, modeled, and practiced during the first week of school are also reviewed quarterly throughout the year in order to make sure everyone is confident and on the same page about expectations at Renaissance. In their individual classrooms as well, teachers will work with students to create their classroom norms which will also guide their behaviors from class to class. Students in violation of school rules, norms, and routines will be subject to tiered consequences, beginning with a conversation including parents/guardians.

Zero Tolerance for Violence Policy (LWSD Dictated)

All LWSD schools, including Renaissance and Eastlake High School, have no tolerance of any act of violence. Fighting or physical assault of any kind is prohibited at school and school events. A student involved in a violent altercation will be removed from class for the remainder of the day and picked up by parents. A meeting will be scheduled with parents by the students' guild teachers. Students involved will be expected to create a letter of apology to the other person or persons involved in the situation.

Failure is only the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.
– Henry Ford

Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.
– Pele