

Middle School Made Simple

Welcome to the Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy MS/HS 141!

We are excited about the new school year and to meet and greet our returning and our new families! Please be sure you are signed up to our parent email list and registered on your grade-level Remind app. This booklet will be updated as necessary; please refer to it to answer some of your *Frequently-Asked Questions.*

I have so many questions; where do I start?

You will find important paperwork in the Welcome Packet your child brings home after the first day of school. This includes a welcome letter from the Principal, a school year calendar, an email form, blue emergency cards, a staff email list, Phys Ed information, RNH information, a code of conduct contract, a lunch form, a school planner, and much more. Reading everything and completing and returning all the forms in a timely fashion is a good place to start. Find even more information at **www.rka141.org**. You may contact teachers via phone message or email (please allow a 24-48 hour turnaround time). If you're not sure who to contact, you can always contact the Parent Coordinator for assistance at **JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov**.

What should I do if I need to talk to my child during the school day?

If you need to get a message to your child, you may call the main office or Ms. Prince, and she will relay the message to your child. **Please reserve this for true emergencies.** Please do not call or text your child on their cell phone during the school day! School policy requires that **all electronic devices are turned off and kept out of sight**, unless specifically allowed by the teacher for use in class or the lunchroom. If a staff member sees a student with a phone out or hears it ring, it will be collected, and the parent will be required to come into the school to pick it up. If your child needs to call home, they may request a pass from the teacher, and use the designated phone in the Assistant Principal, Dean, or Guidance office.

How do I pick up my child early?

If your child becomes ill in school or has an appointment, you will need to report to the Main Office with a photo **ID** to pick him/her up. Students under the age of 18 will not be allowed to leave on their own before the end of the school day. **Only persons listed on your child's emergency cards are permitted to pick up your child.** You cannot call the school to "authorize" a person not on the card to pick up your child. *There are no exceptions to these rules.*

What if my child is absent?

Included among "explained" absences are: illness, religious observance, visits to other schools, or a death in the family. Family trips are **NOT** considered excused absences and are highly discouraged. Students should return to school with a doctor's note or a parent note, explaining the absence. If you know your child will be absent for more than three days, please call the attendance office at ext. 1413/1415. Remember, **NYCPS regulations suggest at least a 90% attendance rate for a successful school year.** Students whose attendance falls below 90% are considered "consistently absent." Students are responsible for making up work missed during an absence. It is the *student's responsibility* to arrange this with the teacher, or to get missed assignments from Google Classroom. Work must be made up within three days of return.

Are there after-school activities?

RKA is always expanding its range of after-school options, with tutoring opportunities and a wide-variety of exciting clubs, like Key Club, *Write to Roar*, Science Olympiad and the Model UN Club. Our community-based partner, the Riverdale Neighborhood House (RNH) is located in the school building and offers a free after-school program for middle school students beginning at 2:40 PM. Students who take part in the RNH program are given a meal, after which they proceed to a mandatory small-group “Homework Help” period. After this, they proceed to different activities. At any given time, the selection may include classes such as sports, film, dance, cooking, art, and more. RNH also teams with RKA for intramural basketball and other sports. Families participating in the afterschool program are responsible for their child’s transportation home. **You must contact RCC directly for programming and registration information: www.riverdaleonline.org or 718-796-4724.**

Is my child eligible for transportation?

Sixth graders are eligible for yellow bus service if they live at least a mile from the school. The Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT), *not the school*, determines the distance. Parents may opt for a Metrocard instead of the yellow bus. A student may not switch back-and-forth between the yellow bus and a Metrocard. During the first few days of school, you may find an extended waiting period for the bus, as the drivers “settle in” to their new schedules and routes. We strongly suggest you bring your child yourself—or have a backup plan—the first few days, if possible. **The OPT hotline is 718-392-8855. All busing problems should be reported to OPT.**

How does breakfast and lunch work?

All parents are required to complete a NYC Family Income Verification form—AKA school lunch form—as quickly as possible every year. We anticipate that all students will receive free meals, but the final determination will be made by NYCPS. The Lunch Form is also important for those high school students in Grades 10-12 as it may allow students to receive fee waivers or reduced fees for college applications and College Board exams. There will be a hard copy of the Family Income Verification Form in the Welcome Packet, although it can be done more quickly and efficiently at **www.applyforlunch.com**. Students will need to have their school ID to facilitate quick lunch service. Please refer to the bell schedule to determine your child’s grade level lunch period. Breakfast will be offered in the cafeteria from 7:45-8:15 A.M. Students arriving late to school can pick up a “grab and go” breakfast in the lobby.

Is there a dress code?

Yes. Some guidelines to remember: no hats, no t-shirts with inappropriate language, and nothing overly tight, baggy, or skimpy. **The school dress code and other regulations are posted on the school website, www.RKA141.org.** If a child comes to school dressed inappropriately, we will either call the parent to bring a change of clothes or ask the student to change into clothes that the school will provide.

Do students have lockers?

Students in grades 7-12 are eligible for lockers. Students that would like a locker will have an opportunity to get one on the second week of school.

Do students carry ID cards?

Yes. All students are issued school ID cards, and **are expected to carry them at all times**. The cards are used to enter the building if they are late, in lunch and in the library. If your child loses their ID card, the

replacement cost is \$2.00. IDs will be issued to new students during the first two weeks of school.

There are so many teachers; how can I keep in touch with them?

Every New York City public school teacher has a **DOE email address**. This is an excellent way to keep in touch, especially for “quick” questions. The teachers will print their email addresses on their syllabi; they can also be found in the Welcome Packet and on the school website, www.RKA141.org. You may also leave a phone message for a teacher through the Main Office at 718-796-8516. **You should expect a response within 24-48 hours during the school week.** You may also expect a teacher to call or email you if there are issues he/she feels need to be discussed. Teachers may also contact you through **DOE Grades, Attendance, and Messaging (GAMA)**.

What is Jupiter Ed?

Jupiter Ed is the online grading system we use. Teachers provide students and their parents/guardians (you both have access!) with periodic updates on homework completion, test grades, and more. Grades from Google Classroom will transition seamlessly to this platform. Attendance and punctuality are also recorded in Jupiter so parents can check at any time.

The NYC Schools Account (NYCSA)

This is an online tool available to all New York City public school parents. It provides you access to your child’s academic information, attendance records, transcripts, and more. If you do not already have an account from your elementary school you can **email JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov in order to set one up.**

When will I get to meet my child’s teachers?

RKA hosts a “**Back to School**” event every year at the end of September. It will be taking place in a virtual format this year. It is an opportunity for parents to “meet” each teacher, learn about what is expected in their classes, and learn about the syllabi and grading rubrics. Not only is it an informative evening, it’s also lots of fun!

Is this the same as Parent/Teacher Conferences?

No. Parent/Teacher Conferences give the parent the opportunity to meet with each teacher for a brief (four-minute) meeting. **P/T Conferences are held in November and March. This school year, conferences will be held remotely.** Parents will still have the opportunity to sign up for appointment times in advance using an online tool. The advance sign-up period will open a couple of weeks before the conference dates (check the RKA Family Calendar for dates), and the link will be provided on the school website, www.RKA141.org. While brief, the four-minute slots are sufficient time for the teacher to inform a parent of the child’s progress, projected grade, etc. This is not the time for an in-depth meeting, though teachers are always receptive to making a longer appointment at another time if requested.

What are “Arts” Classes?

Our arts classes are Visual Art, Vocal, and Band. You might hear your child refer to them as “**specials.**” All sixth graders are assigned an arts class for the entirety of the school year. At the end of sixth grade, students will receive a preference sheet and be asked to choose which arts class they would like to continue with through the seventh and eighth grades.

What services are available for students with disabilities?

RKA provides a **wide variety of Special Education** services. Self-contained classes, ICT (Integrated Co-Teaching) classes, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), Speech, Counseling and

Occupational Therapy are all offered, and are administered as directed by a student's IEP (Individualized Education Plan). The School Assessment Team (SAT) works with students, parents, and school staff to evaluate students to determine special needs. Contact information for the SAT and Related Services are listed at the end of this booklet.

School Supply List

A general school supply list can be found on the school website: www.RKA141.org/publications (You should expect some teachers might have other specific items they will ask for during the school year).

How do arrival and dismissal work?

The school day starts at 8:20 and concludes at 2:40. Different grades report to and dismiss from different entrances. One entrance—the gym/auditorium entrance on 237th Street—is designated for the sixth grade ONLY. All sixth graders—whether they walk to school, are dropped off by a parent, or ride the yellow bus—will use these doors. At the end of the day, they all dismiss through these doors and either walk home or are directed onto waiting buses. Deans and school safety agents carefully supervise dismissal. **If you are picking up your child by car, PLEASE refrain from double-and-triple parking. This blocks sight lines and can create a very hazardous situation for children attempting to maneuver through.**

How do I know which classes my child has every day?

Rather than organizing classes on a Monday through Friday schedule, the school is organized around a 4-day cycle. Each day that school is in session is assigned a number: 1, 2, 3, 4. These numbers are indicated on the RKA family calendar (in your Welcome Packet) in the lower right hand corner of each date. Some classes, like ELA and Math, meet every day. Other classes, like Physical Education and Health, meet every other day. The cycle days on which a class meets are indicated on your child's program. Announcements will be made in school every day, reminding students which cycle day to follow.

How are disciplinary issues handled?

RKA has a “zero tolerance” policy toward any student misbehavior. We are proud that any student incidents are usually minor. All students are expected to follow the rules of the school, which are based on the Citywide Behavioral Expectations. **The Discipline Code is found at www.RKA141.org/publications.** All families must read and sign the *Code of Conduct* contract found in the Welcome Packet. Regulations include forbiddance of: fighting, inappropriate language, drugs, bullying/cyberbullying, vandalism, false alarms, and smoking/vaping. The middle school deans handle all disciplinary issues.

How does middle school grading policy compare with elementary school?

In elementary school, you were probably used to seeing number grades from 1 to 4 on your child's report card. In middle school, students receive a **grade percentage** (e.g: 85%, 95%) in each subject, which is an average of tests, quizzes, homework, and class participation. Each subject-area teacher will hand out a **syllabus** at the beginning of the year, outlining the curriculum, classroom expectations, and how much quizzes, tests, projects, etc, count toward the final grade. **There are six marking periods during the school year, (each six to eight weeks long) and your child will receive six report cards.** The final report card will reflect the grades for the entire school year. If your child is failing one or more classes they will receive a “Promotion in Doubt” letter from the school in February. A parent is expected to sign and return this letter.

How do students manage so many different assignments and responsibilities?

During the first week of school, students will receive a free **weekly planner**, courtesy of RKA and the RKA Parents' Association. Students are given time at the end of each class period to copy homework assignments into their planners. It will be helpful to them—and you—to review the planner every evening. Students will also be given their own **@NYCStudents.net account** to take care of their academic business. Learning to budget time is one of the biggest challenges new middle school students face. Our sixth grade team is well aware of this, and is happy to work with you to help keep your child on track. At the same time, students will need to begin to take responsibility for their own assignments. They're growing up! You can also keep up-to-date with periodic curriculum newsletters and on Instagram!

How will Physical Education class work?

All students must wear a gym "uniform" with an RKA t-shirt, sweatpants, or other athletic bottoms, and sneakers. Students are required to purchase a t-shirt and a gym lock through their PE classes- letter is in thai packet. The RKA PA also sells "Spiritwear," which is acceptable for use in class. Classes are often held outside in the warmer months and inside when it is cold.

Will my child need a remote device in school?

Each student is expected to have a remote device to use in school every day, this can be a tablet or laptop. All sixth grade students joining RKA will receive a device during their scheduled classes. For all other students in grades 7-12 that do not have a device of their own, RKA will provide devices that are available to borrow. Families will register for devices on our [Tech Help Desk link](#). This link can also be found on the school website, RKA141.org.

How does RKA handle student cell phones?

Students may bring their cell phones to school; however they must be turned off throughout the day. Phones are only permitted to be used during lunch periods. As students arrive to each class, they will find a small plastic pouch adhered to their desk. Students place their "off" device in the pouch for the duration of the class. If a student needs to visit the restroom or another school location, they will "trade" the device for the teacher's hall pass by placing their device in the designated area on the teacher's desk. Our goal is to reduce distractions from cell phones which we understand are very tempting to adolescents. This will allow them to focus on their studies. If you need to speak to your child during school hours, please call the main office and we will locate your child. All students must bring their Chromebook or laptop or iPad daily to complete classwork, and teachers will be equipped with a few "loaners" so that if a student does forget their device at home they will not miss out on completing their assignments. No students need to complete any classwork on their cell phone.

How We Help Your Child Adjust

Homework Policy

You may expect your child to have homework every night, Some will be due the next day; others are bigger projects to be completed over a longer period of time. A student will be doing about thirty minutes of homework a night in each subject.

If a child is absent, homework must be submitted the day they return to school to receive full credit. The student will receive partial credit for up to three days, and after that, it will not be accepted. Most work is posted on Google Classroom or students can reach out to the teacher for missed work. We also suggest that students have a “Homework Buddy” in each class so they can check in with a peer.

Testing Policy

ELA — ①,③ ; *Math*—②,④ ; *Science*—①,③ ; *Social Studies*—②,④

World Language—may be given on any instructional cycle day.

This helps to ensure that students will have no more than two exams on any given day. (This does not include quizzes, which are generally only a few questions, and don't take up an entire class period).

Guidance

Our guidance counselors are always available to talk to kids and to parents to help anyone through a “bumpy” transition. In addition to our core guidance staff, we also have a partnership with community organizations tasked with providing mental health services to our families.

As always, we hold classroom visits and assemblies to explain to students how we always treat one another with kindness and respect. In addition to this, we have a successful positive-behavior program called “**Tiger PRIDE.**” “PRIDE” stands for *Punctuality, Respect, Independence, Determination, and Enthusiasm*. RKA teachers and staff issue “Tiger Tokens” to students when they see them demonstrating these, and other positive traits. **Tiger Tokens** are redeemed periodically for fun school-day initiatives and tangible items! We want to be sure our students feel safe, are learning, and growing socially and emotionally in a secure environment.

Let's work together to achieve that!

Administrative Team

Principal

Lori O'Mara oversees the operation of the entire school. For most concerns, you can go directly to members of our middle school staff, who all have an open-door policy, and are happy to talk to you at any time. LOMara@schools.nyc.gov

Assistant Principals

Sheilagh Lustig is the AP for high school administration and operations, and Testing and 504 Coordinator. Slustig2@schools.nyc.gov.

Stacy Miller is the AP for middle school administration and operations, and Special Education Supervisor. SMiller43@schools.nyc.gov.

Eric Scholz is the AP for curriculum (Math, Science, World Languages, Physical Education, and Technology.) EScholz@schools.nyc.gov.

Ruth Orozco is the coach for Humanities (ELA, Social Studies, and Arts.)

ROrozco@schools.nyc.gov

Guidance & School Assessment Team

Johanna Cuello Gutierrez is the Guidance Counselor for all of the sixth grade, and seventh grade M-Z, helping students with social and emotional issues. JCuellogutierr@schools.nyc.gov.

Jennifer Aponte-Acosta is the Guidance Counselor for seventh grade A-L and all of the eighth grade, helping students with social and emotional issues. JAponte-Acosta@schools.nyc.gov.

Catherine Benitez and **Andrew Oguagha** are the Counselors for Related Services.

CBenitez@schools.nyc.gov and Aoguagha4@schools.nyc.gov.

Nicole Callan-Grima is the School Psychologist, handling student evaluations and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). NCallanGrima@schools.nyc.gov.

Deans

Jon Reingold is the Dean for all of the sixth grade, and seventh grade M-Z supervising the lunch room and handling disciplinary issues. JReingo@schools.nyc.gov.

Deana Ferreira is the Dean for seventh grade A-L and all of the eighth grade, supervising the lunch room and handling disciplinary issues. DFerreira@schools.nyc.gov.

Parent Coordinator

Julie Prince is the Parent Coordinator, maintaining the parent email list, providing regular communications to families, and coordinating tours for prospective parents and students.

JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov.

Attendance Office

For questions or documentation regarding your child's attendance. Please email

RVrettos@schools.nyc.gov or call 718-796-8516 x1413

Parents' Association

Please join and support **the RKA Parents' Association**

First meeting: September 9th (then the first Monday of the month).

Riverdale Neighborhood House

RNH is one of RKA's community-based partners, housed here in the school building. Contact them for info on the afterschool program and other programs. **718-796-4724 or Info@riverdalecommunitycenter.org.**

Remind App

Students and their parents can receive grade-level reminders right to their cellphones! Never miss another deadline! Download the "REMIND" app.

Class of 2030 go to: www.remind.com/join/rkafut to register or [JOIN HERE](#)

Meet some of our other CBOs!

College Access for All (HS and MS)
Mosaic Mental Health
College of Mount St. Vincent
Urban Debate League
MSQI

Counseling in Schools
Lehman College
Museum of Tolerance
One Goal

Twitter: @OmaraRKA141

Instagram: @RKAmshs141

Website: www.RKA141.org

