

Middle School Made Simple



Welcome to the Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy! We are as excited at the beginning of a new school year as we know you and your children are. Middle school is a big transition for students...and also for parents. Please keep this booklet handy; it should answer some of your Frequently-Asked Questions.

I have so many questions; where do I start?

You are finding this booklet inside the Welcome Packet your child has brought home after the first day of school. In the packet, you will find a welcome letter from the Principal, Ms. O'Mara, a school year calendar, an email form, blue emergency cards, a staff email list, a letter with physical education information, a Parents' Association direct appeal letter, RCC information, school picture information, the electronics policy, a code of conduct contract, a lunch form, and a school planner. Reading all of these thoroughly and completing and returning all the forms in a timely fashion is a good place to start. The school website, www.RKA141.org, is also a veritable font of information. You may contact teachers via phone message or email (please allow a 24 hour turnaround time). If you are not sure to whom to direct your question, you can always contact the Parent Coordinator, Ms. Prince, for assistance.

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 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 blue 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 "excused" absences are: illness, religious observance, visits to other schools, or a death in the family. Family trips are NOT considered excused absences. 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 3 days, please call the attendance office at ext. 1414/1415. Remember, DOE regulations mandate at least a 90% attendance rate for promotion to the next grade. 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 a fellow student.

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

If you need to speak with your child, you may call the Main Office, and your child will be called down from class. Please reserve this for true emergencies. Please refrain from calling or texting your child on his/her 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/vibrate, it will be confiscated, and the parent will be required to come into the school to pick it up. If your child needs to call home, he/she may request a pass from the teacher, and use the designated phone in the Main Office.

Are there after-school activities?

RKA is currently expanding the range of after-school options, creating more clubs and tutoring opportunities. Our community-based partner, the Riverdale Community Center (RCC) is housed in the school building and offers a free afterschool program for middle school students from 2:40 to 6:00 PM. Students who take part in the 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. RCC also teams with RKA for intramural basketball and other sports. RCC funds the school library during this period, enabling it to be open after school for students to work independently. Families participating in the RCC afterschool program are responsible for their child's transportation home.



How do arrival and dismissal work?

The school day starts at 8:25 (doors open at 8:15) 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 6th grade ONLY. All 6th 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. The processes are carefully supervised by deans and school safety agents. 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.

Is there a Dress Code?

Yes. Some guidelines to remember: no hats, 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 carry ID cards?

Yes. All students are issued school ID cards, and are expected to carry them at all times. The cards are used in lunch, to borrow books from the school library, to attend school functions, and to enter the rest room. If your child loses his/her ID card, the replacement cost is \$2.00.

School Supply List

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

Is my child eligible for transportation?

6th graders are eligible for yellow bus service if they live at least a mile from the school. The distance is determined by the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT), not the school. Parents may opt for a Metrocard instead of the yellow bus. The Metrocard fare (for all grades) will be half- or full-fare, depending upon the distance. 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, that, if possible, you bring your child yourself the first few days. The OPT hotline is 877-392-8855.

How do Lunch and Recess work?

All parents are required to complete a NYC school lunch form as quickly as possible every year. There will be a hard copy in the Welcome Packet, though it can be done more quickly and efficiently at www.applyforlunch.com (if you know you qualify for full-price lunch, it is not necessary to fill in your income). RKA has recently enrolled in a new POS (Point of Service) payment system, designed to streamline the purchase of lunch, and enable parents to load their child’s lunch account from home, using a credit or debit card. New families can obtain their child’s 6-digit PIN by contacting parent coordinator Ms. Prince at JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov. They may then set up an account at Myschoolbucks.com. There are 3 middle school lunch periods, one for each grade. Weather permitting, students may go outside to the recess yard. Both the yard and the cafeteria are fully supervised by deans, school aides, and school safety agents. Students are also given the option on certain days of using the school library during lunch. There are a limited number of passes available, which are distributed in the cafeteria by the school librarian.

“Did You Know?”

RKA opens its cafeteria doors every day for free breakfast at 7:45? (Students must remain in the cafeteria until the start of the school day.)

Do students have lockers?

6th grade students do not have hallway lockers; they will store their coats in the closet of their first-period class, and pick them up from the classroom after period 8. To help alleviate the weight of book bags, we give students two sets of textbooks—one for home, and one for the classroom. Students in grades 7 through 12 will be given the opportunity to sign up for a hallway locker through the school’s Google email form during the second week of school. We do provide gym lockers for students in every grade, where they will keep their gym uniform, which consists of an RKA t-shirt, and shorts or sweat pants. Students will purchase shirts and locks through the Physical Education department; you will find the information in the Welcome Packets. The RKA Parents’ Association also sells “School Spirit” wear at selected school events; shirts from their selection are also acceptable for Physical Education class.

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. Teachers may also contact you through Pupil Path. 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 hours during the school week. You may also expect a teacher to contact you if there are issues he/she feels need to be discussed.

“Pupil Path?”

Pupil Path is an online grading system used by most RKA teachers. Participating teachers provide students and their parents (you both have access) with periodic updates on homework completion, test grades, and more. Your child’s subject-area teachers will give you log-in information for Jupiter Grades.

The NYC Schools Account

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, 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 in mid-September. On this evening, parents are invited into the school; they receive a copy of their child’s class schedule and travel from class to class in an abbreviated version of their child’s school day. Teachers in each class will speak briefly to parents about what is expected in their class, and make sure that parents have a copy of the syllabus, grading rubric, contact information, etc. Not only is it an informative evening, it’s also lots of fun!

Is this the same as Parent/Teacher Conferences?

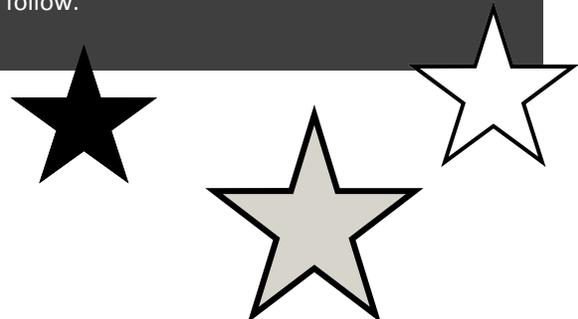
No. Parent/Teacher Conferences give the parent the opportunity to meet with each teacher for a brief (4 minute) meeting. P/T Conferences are held in November and March, and “Student-Led Conferences” are held in May. Parents will have the opportunity to sign up for appointment times in advance using the online “PTC Scheduler.” The advance sign-up period will open a couple of weeks before the conference dates, and the link will be provided on the school website, www.RKA141.org. While brief, the 4-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.

How are classes created?

Selection for the 6th grade Honors program is conducted by a committee of RKA administrators, led by Principal Lori O’Mara. The committee reviews the applications, considering our in-house test results, New York State 4th grade exam scores, and attendance and disciplinary records. Qualified students are placed into ELA/Social Studies Honors, Math/Science Honors, or both. While the curriculum follows the same course in the Honors as in our Standard program, you can expect your child to have a higher degree of rigor in the Honors classroom. A student needs to maintain an 85% average, 95% attendance, and good behavior to remain in the Honors program. All parents and students are asked to sign a contract which states they are aware of, and understand, this policy. If a child falls below any of these standards, there will be a probationary period to give him/her the opportunity to raise performance. A child in the Standard program may be considered for Honors if he/she achieves a 95% or above average, and teachers see an exceptional degree of ability. Programming for 7th and 8th grade Honors classes (ELA, Socials Studies, Science, and Math—excepting 8th grade Integrated Algebra) is dependent on the student maintaining a class average of 85% or higher. Regents-level Integrated Algebra placements are dependent upon class test grades in 7th grade Math. In each class (both Honors and Standard programs) you will see approximately 30 students, a roughly 50/50 ratio of boys to girls, and a proportional number of students from each of our feeder schools.

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, or 4. These numbers are indicated on the RKA family calendar (in your Welcome Packet) and look like this: ① ② ③ ④. 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 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 6 marking periods during the school year, (each 6 to 8 weeks long) and your child will receive 6 report cards. The final report card will reflect the grades for the entire school year. If you child is failing one or more classes, or falls below 90% in attendance, he/she will receive a “Promotion in Doubt” letter from the school in February. A parent is expected to sign and return this letter.

Testing Policy

ELA — ① and ③

Math—② and ④

Science—① and ③

Social Studies—② and ④

Foreign Language—may be given on any instructional 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).

What are Talent Classes?

Our talent classes are Visual Art, Vocal, and Band. You might hear your child refer to them as “specials.” All 6th graders take one talent class the first half of the year, then switch over to another class in February for the remainder of the year. At the end of 6th grade, students will select which talent class they would like to continue with through the 7th and 8th grades.

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What services are available for students with disabilities?

RKA provides a wide variety of Special Education services. Self-contained classes, CTT (Collaborative Team Teaching), classes, counseling services, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), and Speech and Occupational Therapy are all offered, and are administered as directed by a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The School Assessment Team (SAT) works with students, parents, and school staff to evaluate students to determine special needs. Relevant contact information for the SAT and Related Services are listed at the end of this booklet.

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. Learning to budget time is one of the biggest challenges new middle school students face. Our 6th grade team is well aware of this, and is happy to work with you to help keep your child on track. And don’t forget to check those Jupiter Grades updates! At the same time, students will need to begin to take responsibility for their own assignments; they’re growing up!

How are disciplinary issues handled?

RKA has a “zero tolerance” policy toward student misbehavior, no matter what it may be. 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. All families are expected to read it, and to sign the Code of Conduct contract, to be found in the Welcome Packet. Regulations include forbiddance of: fighting, inappropriate language, drugs, bullying/cyberbullying, vandalism, false alarms, and smoking. The middle school deans handle all disciplinary issues.

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 30 minutes of homework a night in each subject.

If a child is absent, homework must be submitted the day he/she returns to school in order to receive full credit. The student will receive partial credit for up to 3 days, and after that, it will not be accepted. Make sure you child has some “Homework Buddies” to call for assignments when absent!

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Please join and support

the

★ *RKA Parents’* ★

Association! ★

The PA generally meets the first Monday of every month at 7 PM

First meeting September 27th!

Hey, I almost forgot! When does the school day start?!

The doors to the school will open at 8:15 (though students may, you'll remember, be able to enter the cafeteria for breakfast at 7:45). This will give students time to access their lockers, hand in necessary permission forms for trips, activities, etc, before heading to class. A student MUST be in his/her first period class by 8:25. After 8:25, they will be marked late. The regular school day concludes at 2:38.

Trips? Activities? Tell me more!

At RKA, our students not only get a good education, they get to do a lot of fun things, as well! You will get to know our Activities Director, Ms. Roberts, very soon. She cooks up all sort of trips, events, dances, and parties for the middle school, and also supervises the Student Organization! Ms. Roberts' office is located right next to the student cafeteria, to facilitate the collection of paperwork, permission forms, checks, etc, and all the duties her job entails. Please be aware that deadlines are very important when all these things are being coordinated. It is imperative that forms for trips, etc, are turned in BY the deadline, and no later. We certainly don't want anyone to miss out on the fun!



How We Help Your Child Adjust



RKA has an extensive transition program with our feeder schools, beginning with parent group tours and tours for 5th grade students, and following through to our 6th grade orientation for new families in late August/early September. We want to help everyone feel prepared and "ready to go" on the first day of school! Our guidance counselors are always available to talk to kids and to parents to help anyone through a "bumpy" transition. They also visit classrooms and hold assemblies to explain how at RKA we all treat each other with kindness and respect. We have a successful positive-behavior program called "Tiger PRIDE." PRIDE stands for Punctuality, Respect, Independence, Determination, and Enthusiasm. RKA teachers and staff hand out "Tiger Tokens" to students when they see them demonstrating these, and other positive attributes. Tiger Tokens are redeemed periodically for fun school-day parties! We want to be sure that our students feel safe, and are learning and having fun in a secure environment. Let's work together to achieve that!

Guidance/School Assessment Team

Mark Siracusa is the Guidance Counselor for 6th and 7th grades, helping students with social and emotional issues.
MSiracu@schools.nyc.gov.

Jennifer Aponte-Acosta is the Guidance Counselor for 7th and 8th grade, helping students with social and emotional issues, and coordinating the 8th grade high school application process.
JAponte-Acosta@schools.nyc.gov.

Catherine Benitez is the Guidance Counselor for Related Services. CBenitez@schools.nyc.gov.

Robert Stein is the School Psychologist, handling student evaluations and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
RStein9@schools.nyc.gov.

Our Administrative Team

Lori O'Mara is the Principal, and oversees the operation of the entire school. LOMara@schools.nyc.gov

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

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

Thomas Sullivan is the Assistant Principal for curriculum (ELA, Social Studies, Foreign Language, and Arts. TSulliv@schools.nyc.gov.

Sheilagh Lustig is the Assistant Principal for high school administration and operations, and Testing Coordinator for the entire school.
SLustig2@schools.nyc.gov.

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 absences. 718-796-8516 ext 1414/1415

The Riverdale Community Center (RCC) is RKA's community-based partner. Contact them for info on the afterschool program and other programs. 718-796-4724.
Info@riverdalecommunitycenter.org.

Deans

Jon Reingold is the Dean for 6th and 7th grades, supervising the lunchroom and handling disciplinary issues. JReingo@schools.nyc.gov.

Deana Ferreira is the Dean for 7th and 8th grades, supervising the lunchroom and handling disciplinary issues.
DFerreira@schools.nyc.gov.



WHAT DO OUR STUDENTS SAY?

"Middle school is a time to find out who you are, what you like, and a time to have friendship and fun!" -Sara

"Among the many things RKA has to offer is the amazing library. You can go during lunch, and there is a great selection of books. Ms. Loving, the librarian, has read almost everything, so she can help you select the ones that would most interest you." -Sal

"Teachers hand out Tiger Tokens to students when they display good behavior and helpfulness. They even have Tiger Token parties for students who get 20 or more!" -Giles

"The RCC afterschool program is great! There are classes like cooking, sports, knitting, and much more." -William

"RKA can offer you so much to get you to the path you want to follow. Always be brave and try new things...you might like it!" -Angelina

"You're not going to know everything, but your teachers don't expect you to. That's why trying your best is one of the most important things." -Musaka

"Middle school can be challenging, but it's definitely possible to get through if you try your hardest and keep a positive attitude." -Timothy

"The teachers are very helpful and are always ready to teach you something new. Every one of them is willing to help you." -Alyssa

"You'll like changing classes!" -Adin

"A good tip is to always be organized and prepared. Keep your binder neat at all times; it helps you to get better grades." -Anna

"The teachers have tutoring on Tuesday afternoons. They are always willing to help you with difficult things in any subject." -Noel

"It's important to stay focused to do your best work. Always try your best and complete your assignments. Keep up the good attendance. Be brave, and try new things. Most of all, have fun!" -Gentian

"My favorite thing at RKA is gym. This year, I got to learn how to play volleyball, soccer handball, football, and even Frisbee!" -Grace

"It's all right if you aren't the most popular person in the school. As long as you have a few good friends, and you encourage each other, you'll do just fine!" -Frankie

"Always be confident. Don't be afraid to make mistakes; that's what the teachers are there for. Embrace your mistakes, because it only makes you better." -Jadia

The teachers care about you, and you can make amazing friends." -Jocelyn

"Your teacher will give you a journal to write your homework in called a planner. Be sure not to lose it!" -Jacqueline

