

**Richardson Middle School  
Handbook  
2023-2024**

**VISION STATEMENT**

Richardson Middle School is a neighborhood school striving to support ALL students on the pathway to college and career readiness. We aim to inspire and enable students to excel both academically and socially in a safe and nurturing environment.

**PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE**

Greetings and welcome to Richardson Middle School, home of the Raging Rhinos! As principal of Richardson Middle School, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2023-2024 school year.

It is our goal at Richardson Middle School to provide a middle school experience that prepares students for the next level, both academically and socially in an environment that nurtures and supports young people at this grade level. We provide a quality education through shared responsibility in a safe and supportive environment. We want all Richardson Middle School students and families to be aware of our School's Mission Statement that is printed above-this is the "why" we do what we do. Please take a few moments to read it over.

This handbook has been prepared to explain and clarify the procedures, policies, and regulations at RMS. Students and Families should read it together to familiarize yourselves with the information.

This student planner is more than a homework planner. It is designed to set students up for a successful school year in which students will plan their work and assignments, manage their time, record their achievements, review their progress and set goals for improvement. But, the planner will only be of benefit if students use it daily and keep all the sections up to date. Parents, please review your student's planner periodically to check on their progress with keeping up with their classes and work.

I look forward to having a great year together!  
Gooooooo Rhinos-

Marie A. Clouston Principal

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Richardson Middle School community will work as a unified team to empower and inspire all students to apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become creative problem solvers, to achieve personal success and to contribute responsibly to our diverse and dynamic world. We will accomplish this through providing a safe and nurturing environment for all students, curricula aligned to the State Standards, daily instruction meeting individual student needs, programs and activities enhancing each student's academic, social and emotional growth and achievement.

**SCHOOL HOURS**

- Richardson's school hours are 8:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.
- The lineup/entry bell rings at 8:22 A.M.
- Classes begin promptly at 8:30 A.M.

**SCHOOL WEBSITE**

Richardson Middle School's website contains valuable information about school news, contact information, upcoming school events, and a variety of useful information from the District that can be accessed on the school's website. We recommend checking the website frequently as a primary source for timely information:

[www.richardson.cps.edu](http://www.richardson.cps.edu)

**PARENT PORTAL**

Parent Portal, CPS online student information system, provides a quick and easy way for parents and students to access student grades and attendance information. Parents will need to provide their email address to create an account and ensure access to Parent Portal. The email address will be entered into the system and an account will be created for you. You will receive an email from ASPEN with your account information. You can access parent portal at: <https://aspen.cps.edu>.

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**ATTENDANCE**

If your child must miss school, you are required to report the absence to the school using one of the following methods:

- Call the school before 9:00 am at (773) 535-8640
- Leave a voicemail message on the school's "Absence Reporting line" (773) 535-8640
- Send an absent note the day your child returns to class
- E-Absence note via Aspen Parent Portal (aspen.cps.edu)

In the interest of your child's safety, Richardson Middle School will contact all homes where there is an unexplained student absence.

All absences require the parent or guardian to notify the school explaining the reason for the absence. This note should be given to the homeroom teacher the day the child returns to class. The Attendance Office will review all reported absences. The following are valid reasons for an absence to be considered "Excused":

- Death in the Immediate Family
- Family Emergency
- Other. Other situation beyond the control of the student
- Religious observance
- Student illness

A letter of notification will be sent to the parents/guardians of those students who accumulate five (5) and ten (10) unexcused absences. If attendance does not show improvement, an appointment with the Principal will be required.

**TARDIES**

Whenever a student is tardy (after 8:40 A.M.), he or she must receive a Tardy Slip from the Security Desk before reporting to their Homeroom teacher. Students will have a one hour detention after five (5) tardies. Students arriving after 9:30 A.M. will be marked ½ day absent. Parents are asked to **please assist us** in reinforcing punctuality as an important habit for students to acquire.

**EARLY DISMISSALS**

Early dismissals affect your child's attendance record and cause **significant interruptions** to the educational process in the classroom. **Therefore, we strongly discourage signing students out for early dismissal unless absolutely necessary.** Children who leave more than 60 minutes early will be marked ½ day absent. To avoid the need for an early dismissal, please try to schedule doctor/dental appointments well after dismissal time. However, if you need to take your child home early, you will need to check in at the Security Desk, request your child, and sign your child out. **A photo ID is required.** The student will be called from class when the parent/guardian arrives at the Security Desk to check them out. **There will be no phone requests for early dismissal accepted by the School Office personnel and no requests accepted to have students dismissed between 3:15 and 3:30 PM.**

**EMERGENCY SCHOOL  
CLOSINGS/WEATHER CONDITIONS**

In the event of extreme weather conditions or any other reason that would require school to be closed CPS (District 299) will officially post that information on the School District website [www.cps.edu](http://www.cps.edu), notifications will be sent by phone and email and through major news media outlets, such as WGN, WBBM, WMAQ, WLS, WFLD and Univision. You may also check online at [www.EmergencyClosingCenter.com](http://www.EmergencyClosingCenter.com) under the listing of Public School to find Chicago Public Schools (District 299).

**SICK OR INJURED CHILD**

ALL injured and sick students will be assessed by the school nurse. Students will be sent back to class or placed in the Care Room based on the nurse's assessment. Parents will be called and informed of their child's status by the school.

\*The school must have a phone number, on file, where parents/guardians can be reached at all times.

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

It is important that an emergency form is on file in the classroom for each child. These forms are issued during the first week of school and should be returned immediately to the teacher. Please list contact information of the closest relatives and friends to be used, in case of an emergency. **It is imperative that the teacher be notified immediately of a change of home or work telephone number, email address, home address, or emergency information during the academic school year.** The parents or guardians must notify the teacher in writing, so that the office may keep student records updated.

## SECURITY

In an effort to provide a safe environment for students, the school is equipped with security cameras and metal detectors. The security cameras are located outside around the perimeter of the school building and inside throughout the building. These cameras operate 24 hours a day and will assist security and the administrative staff in maintaining a safe and secure learning community. The primary goal of the metal detectors is to ensure a safe environment so teachers and students can focus on what matters most in school, teaching and learning. In order to accomplish that goal Richardson's Security will conduct random metal detector searches of students throughout the school year.

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- A 90 – 100%  
*Substantially exceeding the standard*
- B 80 - 89%  
*Exceeding the standard*
- C 70 - 79%  
*Meeting the standard*
- D 60 - 69%  
*Less than acceptable performance on the standard*
- F 59% or below  
*Does not meet the standard*

## HONOR AWARDS

Students will be recognized by their classroom teacher each quarter for honor awards. The school will recognize students who have achieved honors for all 4 quarters in each of the categories at an end of the school year assembly.

## PROGRESS REPORTS

The progress report is designed to assess how a child is doing at the midway point of the quarter. Progress reports will be distributed during the sixth week of each marking period:

- September 21, 2023 (Thursday) 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter
- November 17, 2023 (Friday) 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter
- February 8, 2024 (Thursday) 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter
- May 3, 2024 (Friday) 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

Progress reports give parents the ability to monitor their student's academic progress in meeting the Common Core State Standards.

## REPORT CARD PICK-UP

Report Cards are issued every 10 weeks. Parents/Guardians are responsible for picking up the report card from their child's teacher at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> marking periods. Parent-Teacher conference days are non-attendance days for students.

Thursday –October 26, 2023 Report  
Card Pick-Up & Parent Conference  
For 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

Thursday– December 21, 2023 Report  
Cards Sent Home with Students  
For 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Wednesday – April 10, 2024 Report  
Card Pick-Up & Parent Conference  
For 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

Thursday – June 6, 2024 Report  
Cards Sent Home with Students  
For 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

## SCHOOL PROPERTY

Textbooks and Chromebooks are furnished to your child by the school on a loan basis and should be treated as borrowed property. Students must pay for the loss or abuse of textbooks, library books or Chromebooks. Please encourage your child to take good care of both school and personal property.

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## PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Students who bring personal possessions to school do so at their own risk. Richardson Middle School is not responsible for the replacement of personal property brought to school that is lost or stolen. This includes clothing, electronic devices, money and other valuable items. There is a lost and found box for clothing located at the Security Desk.

## BICYCLES

Students attending Richardson Middle School may ride bicycles to and from school. All bicycles must be properly parked in the racks during the school day by the main entrance, door #1. **FOR MAXIMUM SECURITY, STUDENTS MUST ATTACH A LOCK TO THEIR BICYCLE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY.** Students who ride their bicycles to school do so at their own risk, and must comply with the following rules: 1. Bicycle "rules of the road" must be followed. 2. Once the student arrives at school the bicycle must be parked in the designated rack. 3. Students may not ride their bicycles on the school grounds. 4. No bicycles will be allowed in the building.

## SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY

To ensure that all students will be safe in their school building in the fall, CPS will continue to implement evidence-based health and safety protocols. The District has stated that the wearing of masks or cloth face coverings is encouraged but optional. Students, staff or visitors experiencing cold or flu-like symptoms should remain home until they have been symptom free for at least 24 hours. Richardson Middle School supports lifelong healthy eating habits for all students and staff. We encourage the entire Richardson Middle School community, from staff to parents to students—to engage in a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating behaviors.

Students may bring a bag lunch from home or obtain lunch at school. All students can have breakfast and lunch at no cost, everyday.

All meals served as part of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs meet federal, state and local nutrition requirements, as well as CPS Food Service Guidelines. With the goal of displaying healthy eating behaviors, **we are designating the following items as being prohibited from being brought into the school for breakfast and lunch: soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks or coffee.**

No open beverage containers can be brought into school. All water bottles must be unopened coming into the school building. RMS reserves the right to confiscate or prohibit water bottles if they interfere with student learning.

Gum chewing is NOT ALLOWED. Careless disposal of gum in drinking fountains, on furniture and floors present sanitation, and cleaning problems.

The CPS Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy prohibits the use of unhealthy foods for student celebrations or rewards. We are requesting that no sweet treats, such as cupcakes, be brought into school for distribution on a child's birthday or other celebrations. Raisins, banana chips, popcorn, goldfish, snack bars and animal crackers are just a few alternative suggestions that are store purchased items with ingredients listed. Additional ideas can be found at [www.cps.edu/OSHW](http://www.cps.edu/OSHW) Other ways to celebrate special occasions can include exchanging non-food items such as pencils or stickers.

### FOOD ALLERGIES:

If your child suffers from food allergies, please provide the school nurse a copy of the diagnosis from your child's pediatrician. Alert your child's teacher of the food allergies as well as the cafeteria. If your child requires juice rather than milk, a doctor's note must be provided for this substitution.

Due to a concern with latex allergies, latex and all other types of balloons are not allowed in school during the school day

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## POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS and SUPPORTS (PBIS)

**What is PBIS?** It is a school-wide evidence-based approach for developing positive behavior that is used in schools nationwide. Richardson students are expected to model the **B.E.S.T. Expectations** (Behave Appropriately, Excel In All You Do, Show Respect, and Treat Others With Kindness). When they do, a staff member may reward their positive behavior with a “Rhino Buck!” “Rhino Bucks” are meant to acknowledge the hard work, commitment, and progress of students as they exhibit positive behavior and responsibility.

Once a month the students are allowed to cash in their “Rhino Bucks” at the Rhino School Store: September/28&29, October/19&20, November/16&17, December/14&15, January/18&19, February/15&16, March/14&15, April/18&19 and May/16&17. Also, at the end of each quarter the students are allowed the opportunity to trade in their “Rhino Bucks” to participate in the “Rhino Rewards Day:” November 3, January 12, April 5, and May 31.

## A.V.I.D.

### Advancement Via Individual Determination

**What is AVID Elementary?** The AVID program will teach students to develop the academic habits they will need to be successful in middle school, high school, and college, in an age-appropriate and challenging way. Children learn about organization, study skills, communication, and self-advocacy. AVID students take structured notes and answer and ask high-level questions that go beyond routine answers. The strong college-focused culture on an AVID campus encourages students to think about their college and career plans.

For more information on AVID see their website <http://www.avid.org/elementary.ashx>

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Richardson Middle School values the home-school partnership as an essential contributor to student success. There is a full range of ways that parents are involved in their children’s school success:

- Making sure children are at school each day on time prepared for learning
- Staying informed about the school and your child’s learning by checking your email regularly for emails from the District (CPS) and from Richardson Middle School and checking out the school’s website for updated information  
[www.richardson.cps.edu](http://www.richardson.cps.edu)
- Supporting learning at home
- Providing feedback to the school
- Volunteering when possible

Richardson has an elected Local School Council (LSC) that is made up of 6 parents, 2 community residents, 3 school staff, and the principal. The LSC serves as the policy-making body of the school. They meet bi-monthly. The meeting dates are listed in the activities calendar in this planner.

Another opportunity for contributing to the school on a volunteer basis is to become active in our Bilingual Advisory Committee and/or Parent Advisory Council (BAC/PAC). Richardson is very fortunate to be supported by these well-organized, active committees. They serve as a strong, positive link between our school, our parents, and our community. Please visit the school’s website at [Richardson.cps.edu](http://Richardson.cps.edu) and click on the parents tab at the top to log into the BAC/PAC information. We encourage all parents to take an active part in these organizations by supporting their activities and functions.

## VISITORS

Parents/Guardians are always welcome at school. If you would like to talk to your child’s teacher, you are asked to please check with your child’s teacher to schedule an appointment. **CLASS TIME CANNOT BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE.** If you would like to speak with an Administrator, please call the School Office at (773)535-8640 to schedule an appointment. This is the only way to ensure that an Administrator is available to meet with you in order to properly address your concern. All visitors must report to the Security Desk, present a photo ID and sign the visitor’s log to obtain a pass. The pass must be worn at all times while in the school or on school grounds.