



**www.RKA141.org**

# Middle School Made Simple

Welcome to the Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy!

We are excited about the new school year and to meet and greet our returning and our new families! The transition back will be challenging, and things will undoubtedly evolve and change as we move forward and receive continued direction from the Department of Education. We appreciate everyone's patience, and we promise to keep everyone up-to-date through all our communication channels. 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 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, RCC 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-hour turnaround time). If you're not sure who to contact, you can always contact the Parent Coordinator for assistance. **JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov**.

## How do arrival and dismissal work?

The school day starts at 8:30 and concludes at 2:50. 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. The process is 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.**

## 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.

## Are there after-school activities?

RKA is always expanding its range of after-school options, creating more clubs and tutoring opportunities. Our community-based partner, the Riverdale Community Center of Riverdale Neighborhood House (RCC of RNH) is housed in the school building and offers a free afterschool program for middle school students from 2:50 to 6:00 PM. Students who take part in the RCC 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 intra-mural 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](http://www.riverdaleonline.org) or 718-796-4724.**

## 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. 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. 1414/1415. Remember, **DOE regulations suggest 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 Google Classroom.

## What should I do if I need to talk to 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 do not call or text 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, 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.

## School Supply List

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



## 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 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 you bring your child yourself—or have a backup plan—the first few days, if possible. **The OPT hotline is 877-392-8855.**

## Do students have lockers?

Currently, only high school students are given the opportunity to have a school hallway locker. Students may register for a locker on a first-come, first-served basis. The number of available lockers will be limited in order to maintain social distancing protocols. This will be subject to change as COVID-19 protocols are updated by the DOE. Information on gym lockers TBA.

## How will Physical Education class work?

We are awaiting guidance from the DOE as to how safety protocols will affect the management of Phys Ed classes. We may find classes conducted in individual "stations," rather than in the traditional fashion. We will keep families updated on this and on requirements for the gym "uniform."

## 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](http://www.applyforlunch.com) (if you know you qualify for full-price lunch, it is not necessary to fill in your income). The current plan is to have students alternate lunch periods on a weekly basis, one week in the cafeteria and one week in the auditorium in order to maintain social distancing. Students may bring their own lunch, or receive a school lunch. Students will need to have their school ID to facilitate quick lunch service. Breakfast will be "grab & go" daily at school entrances starting at 8:25.

## 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) 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 are COVID-19 protocols addressed?

All COVID-19 protocols are strictly followed as they are issued to schools by the NYC Department of Education. This includes current directives on face covering, social distancing, and testing/screening. Details are printed in full in the school planner. If an individual has a positive test and/or has been advised to quarantine, they should contact Principal O'Mara at [LOMara@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:LOMara@schools.nyc.gov) immediately. We will keep families updated on all protocols as we continue to be advised by the Chancellor's office.

## 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 should be a device with a larger screen (laptop or tablet) rather than a phone. If a student does not have a device of their own, the DOE will be making devices available to borrow. We will advise families on how to register for a device as we are advised by the DOE.

## 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, library and restroom to maintain contact tracing. 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.

## 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](http://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.

### "Did You Know?"

RKA offers "grab & go" breakfast at all entrances at 8:25 AM?

## 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](http://www.RKA141.org).** 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. The middle school deans handle all disciplinary issues.



## When will I get to meet my child's teachers?

RKA hosts a "Back to School" event every year in mid-September. Information will be forthcoming on the format in which this will take place (remote or in-person). It is an opportunity for parents to "meet" each teacher, 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 (4 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 the online "TEESO 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](http://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.

## 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. **And don't forget to check those Pupil Path updates!** At the same time, students will need to begin to take responsibility for their own assignments. They're growing up!

*Keep  
up-to-date with  
periodic  
curriculum  
newsletters  
and our  
EYE OF THE TIGER  
specials!*

## 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](http://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 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 **Pupil Path**.

## Pupil Path?

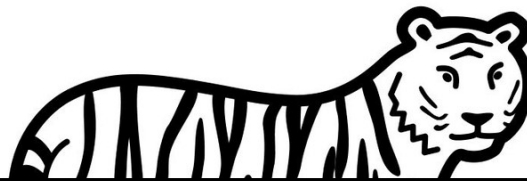
**Pupil Path is an online grading system used by most RKA teachers.** Participating teachers provide students and their parents (you both have access) with periodic updates on homework completion, test grades, and more. Your child's subject-area teachers will give you log-in information for Pupil Path.

## The NYC Schools Account

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](mailto:JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov) in order to set one up.

## 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, test, 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, 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.



**Students and their parents can receive grade-level reminders right to their cellphones! Never miss another deadline! Download the "REMIND" app. All Remind codes are listed and linked at [www.RKA141.org/Families/Remind\\_codes](http://www.RKA141.org/Families/Remind_codes)**



## 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, 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 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.



## What are "Talent Classes?"

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

## 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 he/she returns to school in order to receive full credit. The student will receive partial credit for up to three days, and after that, it will not be accepted. Make sure your child has some "Homework Buddies" to call for assignments when absent!

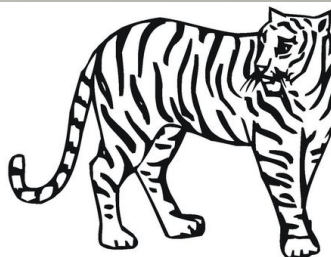
## Testing Policy

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

*Foreign 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).

## How We Help Your Child Adjust



This will be a unique school year, and we will face unique challenges as we all transition back into what we hope will eventually be a more "normal" school year. We want you to know that our entire school staff is ready and eager to welcome back all our families and to help our students reacquaint themselves to school life.

Our guidance counselors, now more than ever, 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 an extensive roster of community organizations tasked with providing many 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 attributes. Tiger Tokens are redeemed periodically for fun school-day initiatives! We want to be sure our students feel safe, and are learning, and growing socially and emotionally in a secure environment.

**Let's work together to achieve that!**

# Our 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](mailto:LOMara@schools.nyc.gov).

Twitter:

@OmaraRKA141

Instagram:

@RKAmshs141

## Assistant Principals

**Stacy Miller** is the AP for middle school administration and operations, and Special Education Supervisor. [SMiller43@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:SMiller43@schools.nyc.gov).

**Sheilagh Lustig** is the AP for high school administration and operations, and Testing and 504 Coordinator. [Slustig2@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:Slustig2@schools.nyc.gov).

**Eric Scholz** is the AP for curriculum (Math, Science, Physical Education, and Technology.)  
[EScholz@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:EScholz@schools.nyc.gov).

**Thomas Sullivan** is the AP for curriculum (ELA, Social Studies, Foreign Language, and Arts.)

## Guidance/School Assessment Team

**Johanna Cuello Gutierrez** is the Guidance Counselor for all of the sixth grade, and seventh grade A-L, helping students with social and emotional issues. [JCuellogutierr@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:JCuellogutierr@schools.nyc.gov)

**Jennifer Aponte-Acosta** is the Guidance Counselor for seventh grade M-Z and all of the eighth grade, helping students with social and emotional issues. [JAponte-Acosta@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:JAponte-Acosta@schools.nyc.gov).

**Catherine Benitez and Mark Siracusa** are the Counselors for Related Services. [CBenitez@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:CBenitez@schools.nyc.gov) and [MSiracu@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:MSiracu@schools.nyc.gov)

**Helen Lee** is the School Psychologist, handling student evaluations and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).  
[HLee34@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:HLee34@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](mailto:JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov).

## Attendance Office

...for questions or documentation regarding your child's attendance.  
718-796-8516  
ext 1414/1415

## Riverdale Community Center of Riverdale Neighborhood House

RCC of 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](mailto:Info@riverdalecommunitycenter.org).

## Deans

**Jon Reingold** is the Dean for all of the sixth grade, and seventh grade A-L, supervising the lunch room and handling disciplinary issues.  
[JReingo@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:JReingo@schools.nyc.gov).

**Deana Ferreira** is the Dean for seventh grade M-Z and all of the eighth grade, supervising the lunch room and handling disciplinary issues.  
[DFerreira@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:DFerreira@schools.nyc.gov).

## Meet some of our other CBOs!

College Access for All (HS and MS)  
Counseling in Schools  
Mosaic Mental Health  
Lehman College  
College of Mount St. Vincent  
Thrive Collective  
One Goal  
MSQI

NYU College Advising Corp

Please join and support

*the*  
**RKA Parents' Association!**

First meeting: September 20th  
(then the first Monday of the month).

[PA@RKA141.org](mailto:PA@RKA141.org)