

STUDENT-PARENT HANDBOOK



ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

2015 – 2016

WWW.RIDGEFIELD.ORG



Elementary and Middle School Student Handbook 2015-2016

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Ridgefield Public Schools. Whether you are joining us for one year or for many years, we greet you as members of our extended family. We hope your experience with us provides you and your children with many happy memories for years to come.

This handbook outlines much of the information about the guidelines, policies, and procedures that govern the daily operation of our elementary and middle schools. We respectfully request that you become familiar with the contents of this handbook so that together, we are able to provide a safe and warm school environment within which your children can learn. **Following the review of this handbook, it is expected and required that families “sign off” electronically indicating understanding of its contents.**

While we have made every effort to be thorough, please feel free to call us about any additional questions you may have. Where appropriate, your child’s school will discuss this handbook with students in order to review the rules and expectations of our district. For access to the Ridgefield Public Schools Board of Education Policies, please click [here](#). Reference numbers for specific policies are provided throughout the handbook. Please review these policies in full as they relate to your child(ren).

We wish you a most gratifying year and look forward to creating a partnership with you centered on the growth and development of your child(ren).

Sincerely,

The Elementary and Middle School Principals
Ridgefield Public Schools

PREFACE

The material covered within this student handbook is intended as a method of communicating to students and parents regarding general district information, rules and procedures and is not intended to either enlarge or diminish any Board policy, administrative regulation or negotiated agreement. Material contained herein may therefore be superseded by such Board policy, administrative regulation or negotiated agreement. Any information contained in this handbook is subject to unilateral revision or elimination from time-to-time without notice.

This booklet is written for our students and their parents. It contains required and useful information. Because it cannot be as personal a communication as we would like, we address students not directly as “you” but rather as “the student,” “students,” or “children.” Likewise, the term “the student’s parent” may refer to the parent, legal guardian, or other person who has agreed to assume responsibility for the student. Both students and parents need to be familiar with the District’s Student Code of Conduct, as it is intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere conducive for learning.

The Student Handbook is designed to be in harmony with Board policy. Please be aware that the handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Changes in policy that affect portions of this Handbook will be made available to students and parents through newsletters, web pages, and other communications.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The Ridgefield Public Schools are committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The District does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws.

Title IX: Mrs. Karen Dewing

Title VI, Section 504: Kathy Murphy

Both can be reached at Central Office: 203-894-5550
70 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

The public schools shall be open to all children five years of age and over who reach age five on or before the first day of January of any school year, and each such child shall have, and shall be so advised by the appropriate school authorities, an equal opportunity to participate in the activities, programs, and courses of study offered in such public schools, at such time as the child becomes eligible to participate in such activities, programs, and courses of study, without discrimination on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation; provided boards of education may, by vote at a meeting duly called, admit to any school children under five years of age. (Section 10-15c of the Connecticut General Statutes)

The school district will not tolerate behavior by students or staff which insults, degrades or stereotypes any race, religion, gender, handicap, physical or mental conditions, or ethnic group.

The Office for Civil Rights enforces several Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; sex discrimination is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and age discrimination is prohibited by the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. OCR enforces the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act (Section 9525 of the Elementary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Please email any questions to OCR.Boston@ed.gov or contact the Department of Education's Civil Rights Office at:

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
33 Arch Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02110-1491
Phone (617) 289-0111

RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAIN TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

Central Office

Main Number: (203) 894-5550
Registration: (203) 894-5551

Ridgefield High School

Main Number: (203) 894-5750
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5757
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5776
Guidance: (203) 894-5756

East Ridge Middle School

Main Number: (203) 894-5500
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5505
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5510
Guidance: (203) 894-5504

Scotts Ridge Middle School

Main Number: (203) 894-5725
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5729
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5728
Guidance: (203) 894-5735

Barlow Mountain Elementary School

Main Number: (203) 894-5800
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5802
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5803

Branchville Elementary School

Main Number: (203) 894-5850
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5852
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5853



Farmingville Elementary School

Main Number: (203) 894-5570
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5572
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5573

Ridgebury Elementary School

Main Number: (203) 894-5875
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5877
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5878

Scotland Elementary School

Main Number: (203) 894-5825
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5827
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5828

Veterans Park Elementary School

Main Number: (203) 894-5525
Nurse's Number: (203) 894-5527
Attendance Hotline: (203) 894-5528

GENERAL INFORMATION

COMMUNICATION AND WEBSITE

The **district website** contains information for families, faculty and community members and can be accessed at: www.ridgefield.org (link)

Each school has a website containing specific information about the individual school. School websites can be accessed from the district website.

The **district calendar** is available on the district website under the “Parents & Students” tab.

Parents may change their demographic information and emergency contact information using the online PowerSchool Portal.

Parents requesting support in accessing the PowerSchool Portal are asked to email helpdesk@ridgefield.org

THE SCHOOL DAY

<i>School</i>	<i>Start Time</i>	<i>Dismissal</i>	<i>Dismissal Time for Planned Early Release Days</i>
RHS	7:25	2:15	10:30
ERMS, SRMS	8:00	2:50	11:05
BES, RES, SES	8:35	3:25	11:40
BMES, FES, VPES	9:10	4:00	12:15

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

An opportunity will be provided, at the beginning of each school day, for students to observe an appropriate period of silent meditation and to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Participation in these activities is voluntary. Nonparticipants are expected to maintain order and decorum appropriate to the school environment.

VISITORS

We welcome parents to be a part of our school community in many capacities. For security reasons, we require all parents or other visitors to first sign in at the security desk and wear a visitor’s badge while in the school or on school grounds (i.e. the playground).

Visitors do affect the classroom environment. Only authorized persons are permitted to come into our classrooms. Parents are authorized to be in classrooms when teachers invite them to visit or volunteer. **Parents may not go to classroom or therapy rooms, to the health room, the cafeteria, or to our playground without prior authorization from the principal and without a reason to do so that is acceptable to the teacher or principal.**

CONTACTING TEACHERS

You can contact your child's teacher/s through voicemail or by email. A teacher's email address consists of the first initial of the first name, followed by the last name @ridgefield.org. **For example:** rtigers@ridgefield.org.

Please allow teachers 24 hours (during the school week) to respond to your email/voicemail.

Note: If a teacher is absent, substitutes cannot and will not access the teachers' email/voicemail.

Please be aware that it is district policy that email is not to be used to discuss confidential information. Consequently, the teacher will request that you arrange for a meeting rather than engage in a lengthy email exchange.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Education succeeds best when there is a strong partnership between home and school based on communications and interactions. Parents/guardians are urged to encourage their children to put a high priority on education and to make the most of their educational opportunities available. Parents/guardians should become familiar with all of the child's school activities and with the District's academic programs, including special programs. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in campus parent organizations, attendance at board of education meetings and being a school volunteer are strongly encouraged.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher conferences are held once a year in November/December. Conferences allow parents an opportunity to meet with their child's teacher to discuss progress. Please refer to the district schedule of conference days. Do know that parents do not need to wait until conference time to request a meeting with a teacher. Call, email, or write the teacher to arrange a meeting **at any time**.

Parents are asked to contact the teacher to seek early solutions to school related problems. The administration is available to assist after efforts to resolve concerns have already been discussed with the teacher. **While we encourage your communication at any time, we also ask that you make an appointment rather than dropping in.** In this way, we can ensure that your child's teacher will be available to spend the necessary time with you.

REPORTING TO PARENTS (5124)

Each school shall regularly report to parents on student progress in school. When the need arises, the teacher or other school personnel shall make additional written or oral reports.

REPORT CARDS are posted three times a year for grades K-5 and quarterly for grades 6-8. Parents may access report cards via the Parent Portal.

HOMEWORK

Teachers give homework that is worthwhile and necessary for the educational program. The academic purpose of homework is to reinforce or enrich the student's understanding of skills and concepts taught in school. The behavioral purpose of homework is to reinforce the student's study skills and work habits. It augments the classroom lesson, helps students to develop responsibility, prepares them to accomplish tasks, develops study habits,

builds skills and offers parents an opportunity to express support and recognition of what is going on within the school day.

ATTENDANCE (5113.2)

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control of the child. To assist parents and other persons in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures to implement this policy.

Regular attendance is an important factor in your child's academic success. **To report your child's absence from school, please call before the start of school or within thirty minutes of the school's opening, the day of absence. When calling, dial the main office and follow the prompts to reach the attendance mailbox.** If we do not hear from you by the start of the school day, the school will call home or you may receive an automated phone call. If you call the main office during school hours, you will be transferred to the attendance line. Please notify the nurse in advance of planned absences.

Absences Due to Communicable Diseases: If your child contracts a communicable disease such as chicken pox, strep throat or pink eye, please notify the school nurse as soon as possible. When your child returns to school after a long illness or communicable disease, please remind him/her to report to the school nurse immediately. Please keep sick children home.

Absences Due to Family Vacations While Schools Are in Session: In accordance with Connecticut statutes, requests for vacation on days when schools are in session will not be authorized or endorsed by the school system. Loss of instruction caused by such absences is primarily the responsibility of parents and students. Teachers will not provide lesson and assignment topics for work that will be covered while the student is absent. Students are expected to make up missed work. If a child is absent from school, they are not allowed to attend school during the day for special events/activities.

TRUANCY (5113.2)

“For purposes of this section, “**truant**” refers to any student five (5) to eighteen (18) years of age, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.

Students that are considered truant and their families will be invited to a truancy meeting with school administrators; **MUST** be referred to State agencies as a family with service needs and if parents are not responsive, truancy forms are completed and students are to be reported to the Superior Court.

PROMOTION, RETENTION AND PLACEMENT (5123)

It is expected that most students in the Ridgefield Public Schools will progress from grade to grade each year based upon academic achievement. The Principal, however, upon the recommendation of the teacher, may retain a student in the same grade. In making this decision, the Principal shall consult with the parent/guardian, the child's teacher and other staff specialists as needed. In making a decision, the Principal shall consider such factors as academic achievement and social maturity. In the final analysis, the decision must be based upon what is in the best interest of the student. The Board does not generally approve of permitting students to skip grades. Nevertheless, in very unusual cases, the Principal may permit such acceleration.

TECHNOLOGY - ACCEPTABLE USE (6141.321)

The following is a summary of important sections of the district Acceptable Use Policies. To review the full set of Acceptable Use Policies please visit the district website.

The Ridgefield Public Schools provides students access to technology at appropriate levels. Students may bring their own technology devices to school and are expected to use the district's technology and any network access on school grounds or at a school sponsored event to further educational goals consistent with the mission of the school and its policies.

Elementary school students are permitted to use personal technology devices at the discretion of the instructional staff and such use may change based on instructional needs, curriculum, and assessment. Use of personal devices are not permitted during emergency situations, evacuations, lockdowns, or drills. Personal devices may be used for audio and video recordings at the discretion of the instructional staff and are never to record classroom audio without notification and permission by the teacher.

The school reserves the right to restrict student use of district owned technology and personal devices on school property or at school-sponsored events. The school also reserves the right to inspect a student's personal device, software file, or online account if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the inspection will turn up evidence that the student has violated Board policies, school rules, or has engaged in other misconduct involving either personal or school owned technology.

Students who wish to bring their personal technology devices to school are personally responsible for them and the district is not liable for any loss, damage, misuse, or theft. The district is also not responsible for any damage to the device or software that is caused by connecting to the school network or internet resources.

Misuse of the computer systems or violations of the acceptable use policy and related technology Board policies may result in school disciplinary action or loss of access to such computer systems as well as other disciplinary action, including suspension, termination and/or expulsion, depending on the specific conduct.

Unacceptable network use by the Ridgefield Public School's students and staff includes but is not limited to:

1. Personal gain, unauthorized fundraising, commercial solicitation and compensation of any kind;
2. Liability or cost incurred by Ridgefield Public Schools;
3. Downloading, installation and use of games, audio files, video files or other applications (including shareware or freeware) without permission or approval from the Curriculum Committee as governed by policy 6141 of the Ridgefield Board of Education;
4. Support or opposition for ballot measures, candidates and any other political activity;
5. Hacking, cracking, vandalizing, the introduction of viruses, worms, trojan horses, time bombs and changes to hardware, software and monitoring tools;
6. Unauthorized access to other Ridgefield Public School computers, networks and information systems;
7. Cyberbullying, hate mail, defamation, threats, harassment of any kind, and discriminatory language (such communications may also be a crime);
8. Information posted, sent or stored online that could endanger others (e.g., bomb construction, drug manufacturing);
9. Accessing, uploading, downloading, storage and/or distribution of obscene, pornographic or sexually explicit material.

10. Attaching unauthorized equipment to the Ridgefield Public School's network. Any such equipment may be confiscated
11. Participating in blogs, wikis, bulletin boards, social networking sites and groups and the creation of content for podcasts, email and web pages that do not support student instruction, research and staff development or promote cyberbullying and harassment of any kind

In addition, if a particular behavior or activity is generally prohibited by law, by Board policy or by school rules or regulations, use of District computer systems for the purpose of carrying out such behavior is also prohibited.

It is important that students not share their passwords and remember to logoff the computer they are using when they are done to prevent unauthorized access to their files and unauthorized activity under their login. Students should not reveal any personal data over the internet, such as name address, telephone number, e-mail address, or social security number.

Media Release

The Ridgefield Public Schools may feature students or student work on the school or school district website, and in District Publications or programs when appropriate. Last names will not be used without parental consent. Parents have the right to indicate their desire to not have their child's photograph or work WITHHELD from being published on the RPS Website. *The opt-out request is completed using the PowerSchool Parent Portal.*

Directory Information

Directory information includes: a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, awards received in school, and most recent previous school attended. Directory information may be released by the District to anyone who requests it unless a parent/guardian objects in writing to the release of any or all of this information. *The opt-out request for distribution of Directory Information is completed using the PowerSchool Parent Portal.*

HEALTH SERVICES

CARE OF STUDENTS

Health services are provided for students that require daily medical/nursing assistance and interim and/or emergency care by registered nurses. School nurses coordinate the State of Connecticut mandated school health screenings; maintain health and immunization records; and handle related public health concerns. They are also members of Planning and Placement Teams, Section 504 Teams and School Crisis Teams.

**ALL health forms can be downloaded from the district website
under the "Parents and Students" tab.**

SPECIAL HEALTH SERVICES

A student with a special health need (e.g., allergies, asthma, ADHD, diabetes, migraines, perceptual defects, personal problems, seizure disorders, or daily medication use) should be known to the school Health Services *prior* to the student entering school. To provide for safe daily care and emergency procedures, such health information gathered from the family and health records will be sensitively shared with faculty and staff members with whom the student has contact.

MEDICATION (5141.21)

The school nurse, upon written authorization of a health care provider, may administer over the counter and prescription medication. New physician's orders are required at the beginning of each school year for any medication. There are exceptions for acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) which may be administered with parental authorization in the PowerSchool Portal.

It is the Board of Education's policy to allow students to self-administer medication and/or school personnel to administer medication to students in accordance with Connecticut General Statute § 10-212a and Connecticut Regulations of State Agencies 10-212a-1 to 10-212a-10.

ILL OR INJURED STUDENTS

Students exhibiting signs of illness or contagious disease (e.g., fever, vomiting, suspicious rash) are best cared for at home to enhance their own recovery and to prevent the spread of illness to other students. Students who become ill or injured at school will not be sent home without prior contact with a family member or authorized adult. While Health Services provides interim care, the responsibility for the treatment and care of the student rests with the family. When deemed necessary by school authorities, local paramedics will be called in case of a medical emergency. All accidents and injuries in school must be reported to the school nurse.

HEALTH ASSESSMENTS/PHYSICALS (5141.3)

According to Connecticut State Law (Conn. Gen. State Statute, Sec. 10-206 P.A. 80-440) all students new to the school system are required to have a current physical examination and up-to-date immunizations before they begin school. The results of this exam must be recorded on the blue State of Connecticut Health Assessment Record (HAR-3) and returned to the school nurse. A physical exam is considered current if it has been completed within 12 months of the date the student enters the school.

New students must provide proof of immunization before entering the Ridgefield Public Schools.

[Click here](#) for a complete list of required immunizations or visit the district website under "Health Forms."

EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL (5141.22)

Board of Education Policy requires that a record of immunizations and Health Assessment Physical be provided prior to the student's first day of school to assure that all students are adequately protected from preventable communicable diseases. Connecticut law states that students who are not in compliance with these health requirements must be excluded from school until the immunizations and health records are presented and/or updated.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION (5141.33)

Emergency contacts and contact phone numbers are important when a student is injured or becomes ill. It is the family's responsibility to provide up-to-date medical information, emergency contacts and telephone numbers. Parents may change their demographic information and emergency contact information using the online PowerSchool Portal. Parents requesting support in accessing the PowerSchool Portal are asked to email helpdesk@ridgefield.org

HEALTH SCREENINGS

Vision: Grades K- 5 Hearing: Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 5

Scoliosis is usually done in the spring of Grades 5, 7, 8, 9

If a referral needs to be made, results are sent home to be reviewed by the primary care physician.

CHRONIC HEALTH ISSUES

Severe Food Allergy. The physician needs to complete the Emergency Care Plan form and sign it. Also, if student needs Epi-pen and or Benadryl a medication form for each medication needs to be completed by the physician with his signature as well as Parent signature. You can get this form on the district website under the "Parents and Students" tab in the "Health Forms" section.

The nurse will advise the District Manager of Food Services and the data can be entered into PowerSchool. The nurse will then invite you to a 504 meeting to determine if your student needs further accommodations. If an Anaphylactic episode occurs during school hours, the nurse will follow the care plan and will then notify EMS.

Asthma: If a student has asthma and needs to keep an inhaler at school, the medication form needs to be completed and signed by the physician along with parent signature. The nurse will send home an Asthma Information sheet for parent to fill out.

Concussions: Parents should inform the school nurse as well as the Athletic Department if student sustains a concussion in school and out of school.

Diabetes: Parents should meet the school nurse and discuss student's medical need for during school hours. This form is also on the district website.

Seizures: Parents need to alert the nurse concerning the student's seizure activity. A Seizure Action Plan will be filled out by student's physician and parent. If any medication is needed during school hours, a medication form is also needed; physician and parent needs to complete and sign form and return it the nurses' office.

INJURY or ILLNESS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

If a child has experienced a severe illness or injury after school it must be reported to the school nurse when the student returns to school. If the injury involves a physician or emergency room visit, *a report indicating reason for visit and any physical education and/or recess restrictions should be presented to the school nurse.*

INSURANCE

Is your child protected by health insurance? If not, click [here](#) for information about Connecticut's HUSKY Health Program or apply online at www.accesshealthct.com.

CODE of CONDUCT, SAFETY and WELLNESS

A positive learning environment in school and at school related activities is essential for all students, faculty and families. There are responsibilities that each member of the learning community must uphold to ensure the safety and well being for all.

All Ridgefield Elementary Schools are *Responsive Classroom*™ communities. All of our behavioral practices are grounded in our **CARES** values and norms:

Cooperation • Assertion • Responsibility • Empathy • Self-Control

All Ridgefield Middle Schools are grounded in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) protocols. Each middle school has a framework that guides expectations for conduct and behavior.

East Ridge Middle School **PRIDE**:

Personal Responsibility
Respect
Integrity
Determination
Excellence

Scotts Ridge Middle School **STAR**:

Safety
Trust
Accountability
Respect

STUDENT DISCIPLINE (5114)

Students are responsible for conducting themselves properly in a responsible manner appropriate to their age and level of maturity. The district has authority over students during the regular school day and while going to and from school on district transportation. This jurisdiction includes any school-related activity, regardless of time or location, and any off campus school-related misconduct, regardless of time or location.

In accordance with Board Policy #5114 conduct on school grounds, or at a school sponsored activity that violates a published policy of the Board, a policy in the Student-Parent Handbook, is seriously disruptive of the educational process, or endangers persons or property, shall be considered cause for suspension and/or expulsion. Conduct off school grounds that violates a publicized policy of the Board, and is seriously disruptive of the educational process, shall be considered cause for suspension and/or expulsion.

BUS CONDUCT AND TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMPLAINTS/PROCEDURES (3541)

Good bus conduct is important for safety reasons. From time to time it is necessary for us to deal with behavior problems. Drivers know our expectations and guidelines for reporting unsatisfactory conduct. We appreciate your support and cooperation in disciplinary issues that arise. In the Fall 2010, cameras were installed on all school buses to assist with orderly conduct and discipline issues. All complaints concerning school transportation safety are to be made to the Transportation Coordinator/District Business Manager. A written record of all complaints will be maintained and an investigation of the allegations will take place.

BULLYING (5131.911)

Hazing, bullying, menacing and abuse of students, in any form or format, is not acceptable behavior and is prohibited in Ridgefield Public Schools.

Any student in the Ridgefield school district who engages in a repeated act against another student in the district that causes physical or emotional harm to a student or such student's property, places a student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property, creates a hostile environment at school for such student, infringes on the rights of such student at school, or substantially disrupts the educational process shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, at any school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional Board of Education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional Board of Education.

Bullying occurring outside of the school setting is also prohibited and will not be tolerated if such bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student, infringes on the targeted student's rights at school, or substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of school.

Appropriate disciplinary action in response to bullying may include suspension or expulsion. In addition, it is the policy of the Ridgefield Board of Education that school principals or a principal's designee will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when the principal or designee believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct.

Definitions

Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district, or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that:

- a. causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;
- b. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
- c. creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
- d. infringes on the rights of such student at school;
- e. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but is not limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Bullying may take many forms, such as but not limited to:

- a) physical violence and attacks;
- b) taunts, name-calling or put-downs or discriminatory slurs;
- c) targeting of a student based upon that person's actual or perceived "differentiating characteristics" such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, national or ethnic background, disability, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, or a student's association with a person or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics;
- d) threats and intimidation;
- e) extortion or stealing of money and possessions;
- f) cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

Other Applicable Definitions

"Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

"Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

"Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

"Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional Board of Education.

"School employee" means a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school Superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional Board of Education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional Board of Education.

"School climate" means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults.

“Gender identity or expression” means a person’s gender related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s physiology or assigned sex at birth.

Reporting and Responding to Bullying

The Board expects prompt and reasonable investigation and response to alleged acts of bullying. Reports of alleged acts of bullying will be addressed and responded to according to this policy and in accordance with Ridgefield Public School’s Safe School Climate Plan and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program.

Discrimination and retaliation are prohibited against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.

Immunity will be granted against damage claims in accordance with state law to the Board and school employees acting within the scope of their duties, students, parents and others who, in good faith, report, investigate, or respond to bullying in accordance with the Ridgefield Public School’s Safe School Climate Plan. The immunity does not extend to gross, wanton, reckless, or willful misconduct.

Regulations

The Superintendent of Ridgefield Public Schools will develop regulations to aid in the implementation of this policy. Such regulations shall be designed to improve overall school climate and to address the existence of bullying in the Ridgefield Public Schools and shall provide for a Safe School Climate Plan and a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program as required by law.

Safe School Climate Plan

It is the shared responsibility of the Ridgefield Board of Education, in consultation with the Superintendent of the Ridgefield Public Schools, the District Safe School Climate Coordinator, Safe School Climate Specialists and Safe School Climate Committees to develop, approve and adopt a Safe School Climate Plan in accordance with state law. The plan is currently being reviewed and revised and will be posted on the district and individual schools’ websites on or around October 1, 2015.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program

A bullying prevention and intervention program shall be implemented in the Ridgefield Public Schools that strives to develop a school environment:

- a) which limits unacceptable behavior;
- b) where consequences are consistently applied in cases of violations of rules and other unacceptable behaviors;
- c) where adults act as authorities and positive role models;
- d) and where students are included in efforts to improve the school climate.

In addition, the Superintendent shall develop rules and procedures to carry out the provisions of this policy and to comply with applicable law. The Superintendent shall be responsible for developing a prevention and intervention strategy for school staff to deal with bullying. Such a “prevention and intervention strategy” may include, but is not limited to:

- a) implementation of a positive behavioral intervention and support process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying identified by the Department of Education;
- b) school rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;
- c) adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
- d) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school;
- e) individual interventions with the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school employees;
- f) school-wide training related to a safe school climate;
- g) student peer training, education and support;
- h) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions.
- i) school climate assessments using instruments including surveys approved and disseminated by the Connecticut Department of Education in collaboration with the Connecticut Association of Schools.

ANNUAL NOTIFICATIONS

STUDENT RECORDS AND DIRECTORY INFORMATION

Confidentiality and Access To Education Records

Policy 5125

The Board of Education ("Board") complies with the state and federal regulations regarding confidentiality, access to and amendment of education records. The Board shall implement procedures that protect the privacy of parents and students while providing proper access to records. Please [click here](#) for policy definitions and procedures as they relate to this annual notification.

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4605

TEACHER AND PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Parents have the right to request information about the professional qualifications of their child's teacher(s). The response will indicate whether the teacher is certified for the subject matter and grade taught; the teacher's undergraduate major and any graduate degrees or certifications a teacher may have. Parents will also be advised, if requested as to whether the child is provided service by paraprofessionals and their qualifications.

TITLE I COMPARABILITY OF SERVICES

All district schools, regardless of whether they receive Federal Title I funds, provide services that, taken as a whole, are substantially comparable. Staff, curriculum materials and instructional supplies are provided in a manner to ensure equivalency among district schools.

TITLE I PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents of a child in a Title I funded program will receive a copy of the school's parental involvement policy, including provisions of an annual meeting and involvement of parents in the planning, review and implementation of Title I programs.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS

Parents of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students participating in a language instructional program will be notified within 30 days of their child's placement in the program. The notification will include an explanation of why, a description of the program, and the parent's rights to remove their child from the LEP program. In addition, the notification will explain how the program will help the child to develop academically, learn English and achieve the standards necessary for promotion.

Students not meeting the English mastery standard or demonstrating limited progress will be provided with additional language support services which may include, but are not limited to, English as a Second Language program, sheltered English programs, English Immersion programs, summer school, after-school assistance, homework assistance and tutoring. Students after 30 months in a bilingual program will not be offered additional bilingual education.

MIGRANT STUDENTS

The district has a program to address the needs of migrant students. A full range of services will be provided to migrant students, including applicable Title I programs, special education, gifted education, vocational education, language programs, counseling programs and elective classes. Parents/guardians of migrant students will be involved in and regularly consulted about the development, implementation, operation and evaluation of the migrant program.

HOMELESS STUDENTS (5118.1)

Homeless students, as defined by federal and state legislation, will have all programs, services, and transportation that other students enjoy and may continue to attend the school of origin. The local liaison for homeless children is Joe Kowalczyk at (203)894-5550.

As part of the **Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010** we are providing notice to parents, students, and the community of the existence of the local wellness policy.

SMOKING, ALCOHOL AND DRUG (5131.6)

The Ridgefield Public Schools expect and encourage students to respect themselves and others. We also expect and encourage students to help us achieve a safe school environment. Accordingly, and in compliance with federal and state laws, we are writing to inform you of Board of Education policy regarding smoking, drugs and alcohol. This policy in part affirms that no alcoholic beverages or controlled drugs, as defined by Connecticut law, are permitted on school property. Any student found in possession or under the influence of such substances are subject to disciplinary actions (5114) and/or referred to the police and/or an appropriate agency. (For students taking prescribed medication, arrangements may be made with the school nurse who will administer that medication during school hours.) Students shall not smoke or use tobacco products on school property or at any school-related or school-sanctioned activity, on or off school property as provided by state and federal law.

The **Pro Children's Act of 2001** requires notification that smoking is prohibited in all district facilities.

SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT (5144.1)

It is the policy of the Board of Education that no district staff member shall use involuntary physical restraint on a person at risk or involuntarily place a person at risk in seclusion, unless such restraint or seclusion conforms to Connecticut state law and regulations.

PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG USE (5141.231)

The Ridgefield Board of Education believes that the use of psychotropic drugs by students is a personal decision to be made by the parents/guardians of students and health care providers of students. In conformity with state statute, the Ridgefield Board of Education prohibits all school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any student enrolled within the school system. For the purposes of this policy, the term "recommend" shall mean to directly or indirectly suggest that a child use psychotropic drugs.

Psychotropic drugs are defined as prescription medications for behavioral or social-emotional concerns, such as attention deficits, impulsivity, anxiety, depression and thought disorders and include, but are not limited to, stimulant medications and antidepressants.

However, school health or mental health personnel, including school nurses or nurse practitioners, the District's Medical Advisor, school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors or the District's Director of Special Services/Special Education may recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner.

CHILD ABUSE (5141.4)

The Board of Education recognizes its legal and ethical obligations in the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Any person applying for employment with the Board shall submit to a record check of the Department of Children and Families child abuse and neglect registry before the person may be hired. Mandated reporters include all school employees, specifically the superintendent, administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, guid-

ance counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, physicians, paraprofessionals and coaches either employed by the Board or working in one of the Board's schools, or any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in the Board's schools.

When there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18) years has been abused or neglected, has had non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of such injury, or is placed at imminent risk of serious harm, mandated reporters are required to report in accordance with the law and this policy.

SUICIDE PREVENTION/INTERVENTION (5141.5)

It is the policy of the Ridgefield Board of Education that staff shall respond to any situation in which school staff become aware that a student has indicated intent to attempt suicide or to physically harm himself/herself.

The Board recognizes that suicide is a complex issue and that, while school may recognize a potentially suicidal youth, it cannot make clinical assessment of risk or provide in-depth counseling but must refer the youth to an appropriate setting for such assessment or counseling.

Therefore, any school employee who has knowledge of a suicide threat or intent shall report this information to the school Principal or his/her designee. Immediate contact shall be made with a parent or guardian. A conference shall be held and/or an appropriate referral shall be made as soon as feasible and staff will work to provide for the student's safety while at school.

As prescribed by state law, the Board's program of instruction shall include teaching on mental and emotional health, including youth suicide prevention

ASBESTOS (3516.11)

Legislation requires all school buildings to be reevaluated to determine if asbestos is present and if it poses a significant health hazard to the building's occupants. The district has on file plans showing the location of asbestos in each building and measures undertaken to comply with regulations to maintain a safe school environment. Request to review these plans should be made to the Business Manager and/or Director of Facilities.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION (3524.1)

It is the policy of the Ridgefield Board of Education to implement an integrated pest management plan to reduce the amounts of pesticides applied in any building, or the grounds of any Ridgefield public school, by using all available pest control techniques including judicious use of pesticides, when warranted, to maintain a pest population at or below an acceptable level, while decreasing the use of pesticides.

Only certified pesticide applicators shall be used in schools for any non-emergency pesticide use in school buildings or on school grounds. Pesticide applications are limited to non-school hours and when activities are not taking place. Areas to receive pesticide application will be posted and a written record of all pesticide applications will be maintained for five years. Parents/guardians and staff who want to receive advance notice of all pesticide use will be listed on a registry and such notice will be provided as required by law. Parents/guardians who want to be notified prior to pesticide applications inside their child(ren)'s school assignment area may contact the Business Manager and/or Director of Facilities.

<p style="text-align: center;">AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT & SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT</p>
--

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensures support for individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate education (FAPE), and are accommodated and employed without discrimination related to their disabilities.

Section 504 prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities (both students and staff members) by school districts receiving federal assistance of any kind for any program or activity. Districts may not discriminate against any person with a disability, regardless of whether the program or activity in which that person is involved receives federal funding directly.

All individuals who are disabled or “handicapped” are protected under Section 504. However, individuals who have been determined to be “handicapped” under Section 504 may not be considered disabled under IDEA. IDEA, which can be viewed as a subcategory of Section 504, provides for special programming or placement, while Section 504 protects the rights of individuals with handicaps. Under IDEA, students are qualified for services under 13 IDEA disabling conditions; specially designed individual education programs are planned for each student by Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. Under Section 504, students with “handicaps” are entitled to special accommodations to ensure that they can participate in and benefit from public education and programs, and a 504 accommodation plan is designed for each student according to individual needs.

Section 504 is not an aspect of special education, but is, rather, a responsibility of the comprehensive general public education system. Unlike an eligibility system based on clinic categories of disabilities, Section 504 works on a more functional premise. Under 504 [29 U.S.C. & § 706(8)] a person is considered to have a disability if that person:

1. Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person’s major life activities.
2. Has a record of such an impairment, or
3. Is regarded as having such impairment.

While Section 504 provides a means for preventing discrimination against students with disabilities, this does not mean that 504 plans must focus on the disabling condition or on addressing the disability directly. Rather, 504 plans offer a means for focusing on students’ strengths, for capitalizing on what students bring to the instruction process - not on what they lack.

Should you have any questions regarding Section 504, please contact the district’s Title VI, Section 504 Coordinator, Kathy Murphy at (203)894-5550.