

Roots & Wings Community School
Student & Parent Handbook
2022-2023
(Revised August 2022)

Approved by the RWCS Governing Council

Aline Robertson - President

Erica Lannon - Vice-President

Scotney Blackburn - Secretary

Robin Mayo - Member

Jerrold Rowlison-Elliot - Member

Note to Students and Parents: Students and parents/guardians are responsible for reading and following the rules in this handbook. Additional Policies are available in the office. If you have any questions about this handbook, please call RWCS.

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A free and Public Expeditionary Learning inspired Charter School located in a farm & wilderness setting in
Lama, NM

Copies of the handbook are available at www.rootsandwingscommunityschool.org

Welcome to Roots and Wings Community School!

Welcome back for our 23rd year! We are still practicing COVID safe procedures that have been introduced over the past several years, we will be fully open and have a full slate of trips planned for the start of the school year. Now is not the time to leave our guard down and it is my continued hope and goal are that by taking the necessary precautions and with our community working together, we will be able to remain fully open and serving all of our students in person for the full year again.

If a decision is made to move into a different model, or if the PED COVID Toolkit and/or guidance changes, we will give parents and students as much notice as possible. All of our decisions will be based on the best possible information and guidance that we are getting from PED, the State of New Mexico, CDC, State, and Local Health Departs, and other governing agencies. Ultimately we want to do what is best for the health and safety of our community. We do have contingency plans available in the event they are needed. Thank you for your continued support and patience as we continue our journey together through this new COVID world.

A few exciting events took place in the past year. We were able to remain open for in-person learning for the full year and celebrated with a great gathering for our graduation ceremony. We are continuing our plan for adding two classroom buildings to the campus and we were awarded a direct appropriation from the State Legislature toward the purchase of our current school site. We are currently in negotiations for that sale.

You are a student in an Expeditionary Learning-inspired school. Building on the principles of Outward Bound, Expeditionary Learning is a comprehensive plan to provide you with the instruction and support you need to strive for excellence. You will participate in rigorous, engaging, real-world projects and experience active teaching practices designed to make school exciting, rigorous, and an adventure--both in the classroom and in the field.

In our workshop models, all students revise their work and give and receive feedback to make drafts stronger. You will become a writer, a scientist, and a mathematician--using processes similar to professionals. At RWCS you will look at events from many perspectives, think critically about controversial issues, and master both the basics and the ability to apply your three R's--reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic--to real-world situations.

We will support you as you take responsibility for key aspects of your learning-- developing a portfolio, defending your progress in student-led conferences, and highlighting the fruits of your labor at Celebrations of Learning.

The community here is a bit different. We expect that students learn to work within diverse groups. We expect a community of kindness, respect, and caring. You will learn to express yourself, to see another person's side of the story, to solve problems, and set goals. Service and leadership are the norms here, not the exception. We care about your academic progress, but we also care that during these upcoming years you learn more about who you are and who you want to be.

The staff and I are looking forward to meeting our new families and continuing our relationships with returning families. I know you will have a wonderful year.

Sincerely,

Jon Orris

Jon Orris
Director, RWCS

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Non-discriminatory policy

ROOTS & WINGS COMMUNITY SCHOOL (RWCS) IS A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZED BY NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION (NMPEC). RWCS HIRES PERSONNEL AND ADMITS STUDENTS IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR DISABILITY. ALL STUDENTS AND PERSONNEL ARE AFFORDED THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES GENERALLY ACCORDED OR MADE AVAILABLE AT RWCS. RWCS DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR DISABILITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF ITS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, ADMISSION OF STUDENTS, FINANCES, OR OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES. ADDITIONALLY, RWCS SHALL NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A STUDENT, DISCIPLINE A STUDENT, OR IMPOSE DISPARATE TREATMENT OF A STUDENT, BECAUSE OF A STUDENT'S RACE, RELIGION OR CULTURE OR BECAUSE OF A STUDENT'S USE OF PROTECTIVE HAIRSTYLES OR CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS HEADDRESSES, AS DEFINED IN NEW MEXICO STATUTE, NMSA 1978 §22-8B-4(U).

Mission

Our mission is to inspire our students to academic and personal excellence. Our innovative learning community creates classroom, farm, and wilderness adventure engaging the head, hands, and heart enabling students to achieve more than they think possible and to take an active role in our ever-changing world.

School Overview

Roots & Wings Community School (RWCS) opened its doors in Fall 2001 and now enrolls up to 60 students in grades K-8. RWCS is an innovative public charter school authorized in August 2000 by the NM Public Education Department and the local Questa Independent School District Governing Board. In 2016 we became exclusively authorized by the New Mexico Public Education Commission (NMPEC) and are governed by the Roots and Wings Governing Council. Our school site is located at 8000' elevation on the flanks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Lama Canyon, approximately 15 miles north of Taos and 5 miles south of Questa, NM.

RWCS is based upon the concept of a small community schoolhouse or “learning family.” It is designed to be an intimate, inter-age learning community ranging in age and ability. The school emphasizes "hands-on" project-based learning, the workshop model, and a culture of revision and adventurous farm and wilderness exploration as methods to motivate and engage students in the educational process.

RWCS has an ideal location for our educational purposes. Thanks to the Wilson Family Foundation, the school has nearby access to vast expanses of mountain wilderness, the wild and scenic Rio Grande gorge, and over 700 acres of privately owned camp land.

Roots & Wings Community School aims to make education relevant, experiential, compelling, and engaging. Because of this, RWCS has chosen to be an Expeditionary Learning inspired School (ELS), a nationally acclaimed school reform program with an emphasis upon adventurous learning and a proven record of significant student academic improvement. At the heart of Expeditionary Learning is the concept of the "Learning Expedition", an engaging interdisciplinary, academically rigorous thematic unit which lasts for many weeks. Each Learning Expedition at RWCS is aligned with the New Mexico State Content Standards and therefore meets all state requirements. The EL model has been shown to be particularly effective with students who find themselves bored or dissatisfied in traditional school settings.

COVID-19 RESPONSE: SUPPLEMENTAL SCHOOL POLICIES/PROCEDURES SCHOOL YEAR 2022-23

Due to the declared health emergency in New Mexico related to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), until further notice the following supplemental policies and procedures will be in place at School, in addition to the policies and procedures contained in the School's Student/Family and/or Employee Handbooks, and other School policies/procedures. To the extent that a policy or procedure set forth in this Guidebook conflicts with a policy or procedure contained in the School's Student/Family Handbook, Employee Handbook, or other School policy/procedure, the policy in this Guidebook shall control.

Violation of these policies/procedures may subject students/staff to disciplinary action. Parents/guardians, visitors, and other persons who refuse to adhere to School policies and procedures shall be required to immediately leave School premises.

The school will abide by all current federal and state public health orders and regulations applicable to public schools and school-related activities. See <https://cv.nmhealth.org/public-health-orders-and-executive-orders/>. To the extent anything herein conflicts with applicable public health or executive order or adopted regulation, the public health/executive order/regulation shall control. Likewise, this Guidebook endeavors to comply with Public Education Department (PED) guidance relating to operations during the public health emergency, which guidance may change from time to time. To the extent that anything herein conflicts with PED guidance, as amended, the PED's most recent guidance shall control.

RWCS is required to follow all the procedures and protocols outlined in the [COVID-19 RESPONSE TOOLKIT FOR NEW MEXICO'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS](#) (Currently dated July 20, 2022). This Toolkit is updated regularly and a link to the newest version will be included in the school's Weekly Update email that will be sent on each Friday.

VACCINATION

Vaccination against COVID-19 remains the most important COVID-safe practice for those eligible to receive the vaccine, and the School strongly encourages the School's community members to get the vaccine(s) as soon as eligible, for the overall health of the individual and the School community. If you need help in obtaining a vaccine, contact the New Mexico Department of Health at 1-855-600-3453, or see <https://goodtimes.vaccinenm.org/good-times/> for information.

FULLY VACINATED

PED will follow the CDC recommendations and consider vaccines "up to date" when an individual has received all appropriate doses of a COVID-19 vaccine including boosters, when eligible

MASKING

We will start the school year with MASKS OPTIONAL and fully supportive of any students and staff that are masking. We will encourage students and staff to mask if they believe they have been exposed, or have any symptoms, but are testing negative.

At the direction of the School Administrator a MASK Mandate may be initiated if conditions warrant as well as enacting additional enhanced health protocols. The school community

Request a mask. Students who cannot bring their own face coverings for use at School should notify Veronica Garcia, Office Manager, who will arrange for face coverings to be provided. The School will have a sufficient quantity of masks, as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

ATTENDANCE FOR SUCCESS

In-person Attendance. Students are expected to attend in-person or remote instructional programs (if provided by the School), each day. If the School provides a remote option as well as in-person instruction, students opting for one mode of instruction will not be allowed to switch to the other without advance permission of and discussion with the School's Head Administrator. Students who must quarantine or self-isolate pursuant to COVID-related requirements may ask to attend school remotely (if School provides a remote option) during quarantine/self-isolation, to the extent feasible; arrangements should be made through the School's Head Administrator. Attendance will be officially recorded and reported to PED. The school further will track online participation, if offered, as well as attendance. The New Mexico Attendance for Success Act requires that districts and charter schools provide interventions to students based on the percentage of absences students have accrued.

Attendance During School-Closures. If a campus is closed, and a remote-only instructional model is implemented due to an emergency, attendance shall continue to be taken and reported to the PED, pursuant to this policy and the Attendance for Success Act. Students will be expected to participate in remote learning during any campus closure period(s) as scheduled.

Unexcused Absences. Failure to attend and/or participate in instructional classes and school programs shall result in processes being implemented pursuant to the School's Attendance Policy and the Attendance for Success Act (see student/parent handbook). Meetings that need to be held with parents/guardians pursuant regarding attendance may be held via videoconference or teleconference in lieu of in-person.

Medical and other excused absences. Absences due to medical conditions, including COVID-related quarantine/isolation, maybe excused absences if the status of the student is disclosed to appropriate school personnel and if relevant documentation is provided as per the existing School attendance policies. Students will be allowed to make up schoolwork missed due to excused medical absences as provided in the School's or classroom teacher's assignment make-up policy. Excused medical absences, including medical absences for students on 504 plans and students who are expectant or parenting, are included when determining students' attendance intervention tiers. However, for students who are excessively absent (students missing 20 percent or more of

class periods or school days), additional excused medical absences need not be considered when determining whether a student must be referred to the probation services office.

School Issued Email Accounts to Students (required) and Parents (optional)

This school year we are creating school (ex: name@rwcs.org) email accounts for all students and for parents/guardians who request one to allow better access to school materials and provide easier access to online learning materials (if needed). These accounts are school-owned and should only be used for school-related business, may be monitored, and may be closed with or without notice if the account is used inappropriately.

The following practices during electronic mail and Internet access shall be prohibited:

- Any use for political or commercial purposes
- The use of electronic mail in any matter that is contrary to school policy
- Any use of profanity or inappropriate language on electronic mail
- Any use that disrupts the educational and administrative goals of the school
- Any use of the account by anyone but the authorized owner of the account
- Any reproduction of copyrighted material without explicit permission
- Access of material that has been deemed inappropriate for school use
- Using obscene language
- Sending or receiving offensive messages or pictures
- Harassing, insulting, or attacking others
- Damaging computers, computer systems, or computer networks
- Using another's password
- Trespassing on another's folders, work, or files

Violations may result in loss of access as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

About Expeditionary Learning

Formed in 1992, Expeditionary Learning (EL) is based on the principles of educator Kurt Hahn. There are over 165 EL schools in over 14 states at this time.

Expeditionary Learning focuses teaching and learning toward enabling all students to meet rigorous academic standards and character goals. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, school culture, and school structures are organized around producing high-quality student work in learning expeditions--long-term, in-depth investigations of themes or topics that engage students in the classroom and the wider world through authentic projects, fieldwork, and service. Learning expeditions are designed with clear learning goals that are aligned with district and state standards. On-going assessment is woven throughout each learning expedition, pushing students to high levels of performance.

In Expeditionary Learning schools, and expeditionary learning inspired schools, teachers, students, and school leaders to build a culture of high expectations for all students. At RWCS, our core teaching team works collaboratively, with a regular common planning time to plan interdisciplinary expeditions, critique each other's expedition plans, and reflect on student work and each other's practices to improve curriculum and instruction

Design Principles

The design principles express the philosophy of education and core values of Expeditionary Learning. Drawn from the work of Outward Bound's founder, Kurt Hahn, and other educational leaders, they shape school culture and provide a foundation for the purpose of Roots and wings.

At RWCS, we seek to educate not only the mind but the hand and heart as well. More than anything else, we intend our graduates to be engaged and capable citizens of their communities; as Kurt Hahn has said, "We are crew, not passengers." Roots & Wings Community School is based upon the eleven foundational principles listed on the following page

1. Adventure and self-discovery.

People discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. When learning is an adventure, the entire student is engaged—mind, body, heart, and spirit. RWCS integrates learning and doing, bringing together traditional academic subjects with field expeditions, independent study, and “hands-on” experiential projects. Learning experiences include the local community, a working farm and ranch, and the bounty of the wilderness... In Expeditionary Learning schools, students undertake tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A teacher's primary task is to help students overcome their fears and discover they can do more than they think they can.

2. The having of wonderful ideas.

Wonderful ideas happen when creativity is nourished, facts are synthesized, dialogue is encouraged, and interesting questions are passionately pursued. At an EL school subject matter is focused around "essential questions," that encourage inquiry, critical thinking, and curiosity.

3. The responsibility for learning.

RWCS encourages students to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning. Evidence of learning is shared in student-led conferences.

4. Empathy and caring

Learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust. Learning groups are small in Expeditionary Learning schools, with a caring adult looking after the progress and acting as an advocate for each child. Older students mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe. RWCS is committed to sustaining an interconnected, intimate, and positive community atmosphere of teachers and learners.

5. Success and failure

Most of us know that scraped knees, missed shots, and botched deadlines are not just events to be avoided in the future, but also experiences to be learned from in the here and now. This is why RWCS stresses a culture of revision. By encouraging perseverance, we prepare students to be confident in meeting increasingly difficult challenges and have the capacity to see “failure” as an opportunity for growth.

6. Collaboration and competition

Optimal Learning occurs when students collaborate with others to share strengths and insights. Students are encouraged to compete not against each other, but with their own personal best. Educational activities alternate between collaborative projects and individual work, both requiring multiple drafts to reach a clear standard of proficiency.

7. Diversity and Inclusion

Both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students investigate and value their different histories and talents as well as those of other communities and cultures. In pursuing understanding, we seek multiple perspectives, diversity of opinion, and the value of various viewpoints. By learning to value and listen to different voices, students emerge better prepared to engage in the global and pluralistic world.

8. The natural world.

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations. We at RWCS believe that the best learning takes place when education is integrated with the rhythms of life in the local community. RWCS follows a variable calendar non-traditional daily schedule to take advantage of the learning opportunities inherent in the cycles of agriculture, nature, and rural community living.

9. Solitude and reflection.

Students and teachers need time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections, and create their own ideas at RWCS solo time into our school life. We emphasize reflection upon work through journal writing, self-assessment, and peer critique.

10. Service and the practice of compassion.

Academic work divorced from the real world falls far short of what school can be. Knowledge without action can become simply trivia. This is why we focus upon educational themes that impact the world around us and give students opportunities to go beyond the classroom with their knowledge and skills in order to make the world a better place. We are crew, not passengers. We are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others, and one of an Expeditionary Learning school's primary functions is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

11. A shared code of conduct.

Shared ideals, individual responsibility, and commonly respected codes of behavior are hallmarks of a truly great society. This is what we expect Roots & Wings Community School to be--a truly great society. We expect all members of the RWCS community to craft and adhere to a community code based on the design principles and the questions: Is it safe? Is it appropriate? Is it respectful?

What is Expeditionary Learning?

Our Mission: Is to inspire our students to academic and personal excellence. Our innovative learning community creates classroom, farm, and wilderness adventure engaging the head, hands, and heart enabling students to achieve more than they think possible and to take an active role in our ever-changing world.

We believe children learn best through personal, direct experience. Expeditionary Learning begins with children's curiosity about the world. It harnesses children's natural passion to learn and helps them develop the curiosity, knowledge, skills, and personal qualities they need for successful adulthood. Learning expeditions - journeys into the unknown for a definite purpose - are the heart of this methodology. Students acquire knowledge and skills primarily through learning expeditions that cut across and make connections among disciplines. Instruction is individualized, with our focus on meeting the needs of every student.

The goals for the RWCS School, as set forth in our charter school contract with the State of New Mexico, are:

1. To support the academic growth of each student.
2. To enhance students' character development and social responsibility.
3. To provide a rich, inclusive, learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds and with a range of abilities, affinities, and strengths.
4. To increase student ownership of their learning process and outcome.
5. To involve parents and other community members as partners in the learning process.
6. To use developmentally appropriate practices to enhance social development, leadership, and academic growth.
7. To create a school community based on the core practices and principles of Expeditionary Learning.

Gone are the ringing bells, rows of desks, and fill-in-the-blank worksheets. For most of the day, students and teachers are engaged in challenging learning expeditions that explore a topic or theme in depth. Their studies call for intellectual inquiry, physical exploration, and community service. On a given day, their explorations may take them outside the school building to do environmental research, feed farm animals, conduct interviews in local businesses, or carry out other fieldwork assignments. Each day provides opportunities for quiet reflection -- time for students to write in their journals, gather their thoughts and reflect on what they have learned. Students work individually, in small groups, as a member of their "crew", or class. Together they learn to draw on the strengths of a whole community.

Within project-based learning expeditions, RWCS's focuses on:

- A focus on developing reading and writing skills in alignment with State Standards, implemented in a reader's and writer's workshop model.
- Development of critical thinking skills through consideration of challenging guiding questions and real-world content that demands multiple perspectives and analysis rather than offering easy answers.

- A math program emphasizing hands-on STEM explorations (Science, math, engineering, and technology), pre-algebra and algebra, and the development of mathematically powerful reasoning and communities.
- The use of computers to develop research, presentation, and processing skills.
- Fieldwork and service-learning that encourages students to learn about and provide service to their community.
- Adventure and environmental education to challenge students, foster teamwork, and nurture students' understanding of nature and self.
- Fine arts to develop critical thinking and creativity in every learning expedition.
- Offering extra-curricular and curricular opportunities to enrich students' experiences throughout the year.

RWCS is committed to providing a rich learning environment for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Our curriculum supports looking at the world from multiple perspectives, including diversity of voices, and preparing our students to be part of a pluralistic and diverse global society.

Core Practices

The Core Practice Benchmarks describe Expeditionary Learning in practice: what teachers, students, school leaders, families, and other partners do in fully implemented Expeditionary Learning schools. Expeditionary Learning has five Core Practices:

LEARNING EXPEDITIONS

Project-based thematic studies or learning expeditions are the primary units of the curriculum in Expeditionary Learning schools.

ACTIVE PEDAGOGY

Active Pedagogy describes school-wide use of effective and engaging instructional practices.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CHARACTER

Expeditionary Learning builds and sustains a strong school culture that fosters character growth, high expectations, and equity.

LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Expeditionary Learning helps school leaders and staff to support high achievement and continuous improvement.

SCHOOL STRUCTURES

At Expeditionary Learning schools, school leaders organize time, the faculty, and students in a way that supports learning expeditions, active pedagogy, and an Expeditionary Learning school culture.

Find out more about each of these at: <http://www.elschools.org/aboutus/practices.html>

Attending RWCS is a Choice

No school can promise a fit for every student. The EL model isn't for everyone, though it has a proven record of serving talented students, struggling students, students of diverse backgrounds, and "at-promise" students. Even with this data, the reality is that every child is unique and learns in their unique way. As a public charter school, we are committed to expanding the choice families have within the public school setting. RWCS works to individualize education while staying true to the interactive, project-based model. We cannot be "everything to everyone"; we can only become a flagship EL-inspired school by focusing on our mission and the Expeditionary Learning Model. Our chartered mission is to support student achievement through an engaging, project-based EL environment based on the core benchmark practices. Staff will help address students who are not flourishing with the model to provide academic and social support, creating individual plans to build on strengths and set goals around areas of struggle. The Director will have frank discussions with families whose student does not respond to intervention and support, families who are unable to bring their student regularly to school, or whose child does not meet the basic cultural courtesies of the school. We successfully serve a diverse group of students by maintaining academic rigor and a positive learning environment, and by upholding the specific mission for which we are chartered.

CREW

Each student at our school is a member of a crew. Our primary focus in Crew is to ensure that each student: (1) is known well by at least one adult within the school and (2) is an active member of a consistent and ongoing small-scale peer community. Crew is a dynamic vehicle for students to explore the three Crew Guiding Questions:

Who am I?

What am I going to do to become more aware of who I am as an individual, a learner, and a contributor to the school and broader community?

What are my plans for the future?

What steps am I going to take to get there?

How am I doing?

How am I doing relative to the EL Design Principle expectations? In relation to the RWCS and NM Standards? In the context of my own academic, personal, and character goals?

Over four years, these three guiding questions will be explored through the seven **Crew Elements**:

Crew Elements

RELATIONSHIPS

- Crew provides each student a one-to-one relationship with an adult advisor provides a consistent and ongoing small-scale peer community.
- Crew advisors monitor and support student progress and serve as the student's advocate in difficult academic and social situations.
- Crew advisors act as the primary contact point between parents and the school.
- Crew meetings are frequently used for teambuilding exercises.

LITERACY

- Crew includes regular required reading, with the goal of developing life-long readers.
- Crew leaders confer with students as they read, encourage them to read new types of books and keep track of their progress in meeting the independent reading requirement.

SERVICE

- Crews identify needs in the school and outside communities and propose and develop projects to address those needs.

PORTFOLIO AND PASSAGE

- Students use regularly designated crew sessions to assemble and organize portfolios.
- Advisors monitor portfolio progress and assess student readiness for presentation.

ADVENTURE AND FITNESS

- Crew offers opportunities for adventure, guided first by the crew leader and then gradually led by students.
- Fitness and nutrition plans are developed and revisited by students during crew meetings.

LIFESKILLS

- Crew advisors support and coach students in developing key life skills such as organization, goal setting, time management, healthy decision making.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Student administrative business is generally accomplished during crew meetings under the guidance of the crew advisor (choosing electives, etc.)

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The RWCS Governing Board

The permanent Governing Board is composed of members of the RWCS community who serve staggered two and three-year terms. The Business Manager serves on the board in an ex-officio capacity. The Governing Board will elect a president, a vice-president, and a secretary, each of whom will serve for two to three-year terms or until the Board votes to change the terms. The Board may amend or add any of its policies or directives according to the procedures articulated in the New Mexico Charter School legislation.

The Board has the ultimate authority to approve all school budgets and budget adjustment requests. The Governing Board will have policy-making authority when acting as a board in regular or special meetings. The Board will make decisions by majority. No statement by an individual board member shall bind the board. No board member shall speak on behalf of the whole board unless specifically authorized by a majority of the board. Minutes are taken at all Board meetings, and approved minutes are available to the public at the school office.

OPERATIONS

Liability and Insurance Coverage

RWCS has property and school liability insurance through the umbrella of the New Mexico Public School Insurance Authority (NMPSIA). Each student attending RWCS is covered by accident insurance and catastrophic accident insurance when participating in school-sponsored activities of any kind. Further personal insurance for students is available for individual purchase through NMPSIA. RWCS also offers personal health insurance for school employees through NMPSIA.

Transportation Services

Our charter states that RWCS will not provide daily to-and-from transportation service. The State Department of Education has not provided any means for RWCS to offer bus transportation. Rather, parents are expected to arrange for the transportation of their children to and from the school location.

Food Services

Our charter states that RWCS will provide no food services to students. Rather, students are expected to bring their own sack lunches. We have a “pack it in, pack it out” policy that encourages students to reflect on and take ownership of their own waste creation--similar to the “leave no trace” philosophy we follow on our outdoor trips. We encourage families to invest in reusable containers and carriers for lunches--reducing waste and saving money in the long term. There are no candy, soda pops, coffee, or energy drinks allowed for student consumption (except for celebrations, parties, and special events). We ask that students bring 100% juice, tea, or water to drink--nothing that contains high fructose corn syrup. The consumption of caffeine and

sugar has a direct impact on student focus and learning and is best reserved for after school or special occasions.

We are a Rural School

From being on a dirt road to having our water supplied by LLMDWA, this means that we occasionally experience challenges with facilities that one would not experience in an urban setting. When issues occur, the staff works to resolve them as quickly as possible. We have an action plan on file if there are water issues, and the county plows the dirt road in case of snow. Cell phones coverage can be limited. We appreciate in advance your working with the school when these issues arise.

PERSONNEL OVERVIEW

Teaching and Administration

RWCS teachers teach individually and also as a team. Educational Assistants and part-time staff join the faculty to provide educational and behavioral support during the majority of the school year. Classes are planned, organized, and taught in thematic and integrated blocks by the teaching staff and other members of the RWCS team. The Director reports to the Board and oversees all curriculum development and the hiring and firing of personnel.

At Roots and Wings, we strive to hire Highly Qualified Teachers. This passage serves to notify families that teacher's professional qualifications are available by request--the office will provide you with the information in a timely manner once the request form is completed. On the occasion that a non-highly qualified teacher is instructing your child for more than four weeks, the school will notify families according to the NM code. (Meets No Child Left Behind Act, Title I, Part

A, Section 1111 and New Mexico Public School Code 22-10A-16)

Business Management and Financial Accountability

RWCS retains the services of an independent contractor to manage financial and business affairs. In addition to a required annual audit, our school has established procedures designed to maintain internal controls and accountability overall assets, including a financial oversight committee as part of the governing board. The purpose of establishing internal controls is to provide a reasonable assurance that the school will accomplish its objectives of safeguarding assets, providing reliable financial information, promoting operational efficiency, and ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, and established school policies and procedures. To develop internal controls and encourage financial accountability, certain fiduciary duties are performed by the Board President and others by the Director

RISKS INHERENT IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

RWCS is a school located in a farm and wilderness setting. Our school calendar may include days in outdoor settings or the community. The school maintains a Risk Management Handbook for all of its field and wilderness trips, reviewed by and in line with outdoor wilderness professionals and current industry standards. This is in the office for review by any interested party.

What risks are inherent in RWCS outdoor expeditions?

Outdoor travel comes complete with the potential for immense joy and profound failure, just as life in general does. We cannot plan for every contingency, but we are committed to maintaining the health and safety of all RWCS students. We must accept that a defining characteristic of adventure is that risks are present, but to deny students the opportunity to engage in some well-planned adventure would also deny them the learning that comes from engaging in something much bigger than they are. Our risk management manual addresses the outdoor activities in which the school participates, to address risk in a pro-active manner.

All activities have some degree of associated risk, even walking, sleeping, sitting in a classroom, or driving to and from school. Because we anticipate that families may have concerns about the emphasis upon outdoor education at RWCS within the required curriculum, we want to invite parents to review the risk management manual and attend parent information meetings to have questions answered.

SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

The school maintains a School Safety Plan, a Wellness plan, and a Field Manual for risk management, and to promote student health and safety. These are available for community review in the office.

DIRECTIONS TO RWCS

From Taos: travel north on Highway 522 toward Questa (That's north from the old blinking light.) A few miles past San Cristobal you will see highway mile marker 15, and a few hundred feet after that you'll see small green highway signs reading "Lama" and "Roots and Wings Community School" on the right side of the highway. Take the next right (B-014), a gravel road marked by a hand-painted "Lama Foundation" sign. Drive this straight, graded gravel road bearing straight east toward the mountains, and the green-roofed RWCS schoolhouse can be found at the fourth driveway on the left (approximately 1/2 mile from the main highway). Our address is #35.

From Questa: travel south approximately 5 miles on 522 toward Taos and turn east at the Lama turnoff (B-014). Proceed from there as stated above.

DAILY LIFE

The School Calendar

The school calendar is based on a modified four-day structure, with blocks of both traditional and non-traditional instruction time. Although our total days are less than many schools in New Mexico, our annual instructional hours will exceed the prescribed state requirement for high school of 1088 hours per year. Our daily schedule will not always follow the routine of a typical school day. Rather, the school experience may also include learning opportunities and instructional hours during the early morning, later evening, on overnight expeditions, on "project days" and on weekends in addition to time slots during the traditional school day. The school often provides opportunities for community involvement, field exploration, project-based learning, and outdoor adventure which may result in schedule changes, overnights, or extended days. RWCS makes use of the nearby mountains, meadows, and local community as an "extended classroom" to take advantage of the learning opportunities inherent in the cycles of agriculture and nature. Advance notification is given for these experiences in the weekly newsletter and the online newsletter.

Several snow days are built into our calendar. School days that are canceled beyond those days (due to weather, unforeseen circumstances, etc.) will be made up by adding days to the end of the school year, as is required by the NMPED. Please read the school delay and closure packet in the parent packet given at orientation.

Daily Schedules at RWCS

Unless otherwise noted, the school day will be from 8:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The daily schedules at RWCS are developed by the teaching team and will vary according to what stage we have reached in each Learning Expedition. For students who are behind in work, have had significant absences, or need to serve restitution (detention), they will attend school during monthly staff development days or during electives.

Family Involvement at a Community Charter School

Roots and Wings Community School is exactly that--a Community School. The phrase "We are Crew, not passengers" applies to families as well students and staff. Coming to Roots and Wings is a choice that carries with it responsibilities of active participation and involvement. Family and community involvement are critical to RWCS's. We encourage all families to commit 12 hours of volunteer effort over the school year--an average of an hour a month to support their child's education.

As a community school, RWCS expects high levels of family involvement. Parents play essential roles in sustaining the school's mission, supporting the work of their students, and assisting with tasks and work to make the school successful. There are significant opportunities for involvement: helping with classroom instruction and fieldwork, serving on committees, supporting the office, serving as volunteers, staffing field trips, running fundraisers, etc. Our goal is 100% participation. Involvement is defined in very broad terms with ample opportunity for

families to participate: at school, in the field, from home. Attendance at RWCS carries with it an obligation for family involvement. Please do your share!

ACADEMICS

Content Standards and the Curricular Cycle

RWCS academic requirements and our Learning Expeditions are designed to satisfy or exceed the elementary and middle school content standards and benchmarks established by the NM State Board of Education in the core subjects: mathematics; science; communication and language arts; history, culture and geography, and visual and performing arts. At RWCS, we conduct Learning Expeditions with a multi-age and multi-ability student population in combined grades of K-2nd, 3rd-5th, and 6th-8th. Because of this, we cover the state-required school content curriculum in an ongoing three-year curricular cycle.

Learning Expeditions: Rigor and Relevance

Learning Expeditions are long-term, in-depth studies of a single topic that explore guiding questions; incorporate standards; involve fieldwork, service, and adventure; and culminate in a project, product, or performance. Expeditions incorporate the core knowledge and skills essential to each academic discipline. Expeditions cultivate habits of work, thinking, and judgment that comes through the daily rituals of reading, writing, problem-solving, and discussion. Students solve real-world problems and put their knowledge to the test in an authentic context.

Special Education

We mainstream and integrate students with special education needs as much as possible, according to our charter and our model. The school follows the state RTI guidelines and uses the state-produced documents to guide our SPED program, policies, and practice. Please see the NMPED website (<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/SEB/index.html>) to download these manuals if more information is sought.

Physical Education

We offer a half-hour PE class three times a week where all students play big field games, such as Capture the Flag, and have an opportunity to run and play together. This class is very popular with students.

Character Education

EL includes a focus on character education in its 10 Design Principals. In addition to academics, RWCS is concerned with moral and character development as well as academic growth. Emphasis is placed on critical thinking and decision making, developing the habits of reflection and discipline, and considering the effect of their actions upon the world around them.

Sex Education

Working with community partners, RWCS offers a mini-course in sexuality education to all students that include such topics as biological processes and parts of the human body, dating, love and sexuality, teen pregnancy, and healthy decision making. For more information, please contact the Director.

Sports

Due to the outdoor nature and small size of our school, RWCS does not currently offer an athletic program. Students have the legal right to participate in their neighborhood school's sport, or can participate with the Questa district.

Student-Led Conferences

Student/parent conferences are scheduled twice during the school year. Because these conferences are such an important part of your child's learning at RWCS, student and parent attendance are required.

Conferences not only tell you how your child is doing in school, but they help your child take responsibility for her/his own learning. Conferences provide an occasion for students to reflect on their progress, set goals for future work, and make a public presentation to the most important people in their lives. Your child will lead her/his own conference and present her/his own learning to you. Students prepare for these conferences by choosing their best work, revising work, writing reflections on their learning, and practicing presentation skills. We expect parents to come with their children for both conferences in the school year.

Homework Guidelines

Due to long school days and that we want to encourage family time and participation in personal interest after-school activities, RWCS does not mandate homework for our students. However, students may have homework if they do not use their classroom time wisely and need to get caught up. Additionally, students who are absent for an extended period of time may also use homework to catch back up with their class.

ASSESSMENT

Portfolio Assessment

Teachers distinguish between two kinds of portfolios at RWCS: Classroom/subject portfolios that happen in Kindergarten through eighth grade, and a graduation portfolio, which is produced at the end of eighth grade.

Classroom/subject portfolios store works in progress and tends to highlight student work in its formative stages. The graduation portfolio stands as a permanent record of student achievement. Graduation portfolios are the property of the school and students who wish to keep their portfolios upon completing eighth grade must provide a copy to the school at the student's expense.

Academic Portfolios

At RWCS, academic portfolios are the place where students house evidence of intellectual achievement. Students use these portfolios to present their learning at student-led conferences throughout the year. Teachers analyze those portfolios and other classroom assessments to determine progress toward academic targets and “Habits of a Learner” targets. Portfolios are a crucial tool for revealing what your child has learned. They help teachers and students notice missing links in a child’s learning and also acknowledge and celebrate student accomplishments.

Embedded Assessment Practices

Below are several specific classroom practices used by RWCS that support formative and summative assessment:

Models and exemplars. Students will frequently study and discuss exemplars of quality work, from both professional and student sources as well as reflect on the elements of successful projects. From these discussions, students will generate, along with their teacher's guidance, standards of excellence against which they will measure their own and other's work.

Criteria and rubrics. Criteria established during class discussions will be combined with the New Mexico State Standards to define high expectations for student work of all types. Rubrics developed by the teacher and/or the class make those expectations explicit for specific projects.

Expectations for revision. Each classroom will nurture a culture of revision and continuous improvement in which students are expected to work hard until they have achieved their best work. Crafting several drafts is the norm, not the exception.

Exhibitions and Performances. Performances and exhibitions of final products will culminate in Learning Expeditions. Public displays of student work allow families and community members opportunities to review and assess student work and to provide valuable feedback to RWCS students and teachers.

On-Going Assessment

As a complement to portfolio assessment at RWCS, teachers use several forms of ongoing assessment to engage students in thinking about their work and to help them to achieve high standards. There will be standards-based assessments written in place of grade-cards each semester (see below), demonstrations of learning through projects at the culmination of each Learning Expedition, student-teacher and student-peer conferences, the use of rubrics to evaluate individual projects (see below), as well as formative standardized testing (Required NM State Testing). Additionally, teachers monitor student progress and keep records of students' understanding, achievements, difficulties, skills, and behaviors as demonstrated in group and individual activities.

Standards-Based Assessments

In place of numerical grades and effort ratings, RWCS teachers prepare reports of each student's performance and attitude based on a set of specific, standards-based learning targets. Student performance will be evaluated as developing, proficient, or accomplished/exceeding for each learning target. These are issued each semester and will be used in conjunction with student-led conferences which are held in the spring and fall. Special education students will receive progress reports regarding the goals on their Individual Education Plans (IEP's) on these dates as well.

Transcripts

Transcripts can be requested from the RWCS office. A records release form will need to be filled out to send records to new institutions.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Academic Support Program at RWCS is our way to improve a students' performance or growth when teachers are concerned about them meeting passing requirements. The Academic Support Program involves three mandatory meetings, an academic contract, and a regular evaluation of progress.

The process of the Academic Support Program is as follows:

- 1) An initial meeting is arranged with parents, teachers (including Special Ed if needed), and the student.
- 2) At the initial meeting, a contract is developed to improve performance and growth. Clear guidelines are developed so everyone knows what will need to happen for the student to get off academic probation. The contract will last approximately 6 weeks.
- 3) At the initial meeting, follow-up meetings will be scheduled – the first to be held in three weeks and the other at the end of the contract. These meetings will serve to assess progress on the contract and the student's probationary status.
- 4) At the three-week follow-up meeting:
 - a. If the student is making progress, that progress will be celebrated. The contract will be discussed and revised, if necessary.
 - b. If insufficient progress is being made, the director will join the meeting. The contract will be discussed and updated. An additional meeting may be set in two weeks to track progress if deemed necessary.
- 5) At the end of the contract meeting:
 - a. If the student is making progress and all parties agree that contract requirements have been fulfilled, the student may be removed from probationary status.
 - b. If insufficient progress has been made during the contract period, the probationary status will continue.

The student will be referred to the Student Intervention Team. Other outcomes could be a referral to the MLSS team, retention, tutoring, discussion of a better academic match, summer school.

How Students Are Referred to the Academic Support Program:

The following are reasons that a student might be referred to the Academic Support Program. When any of these concerns arise, you will be notified with an Academic Referral. After 3 Referrals, your child will be placed on academic probation (see description above).

- Missing or incomplete classwork.
- Missing or incomplete homework.
- Work is consistently turned in late.
- Work does not reflect the quality expected.
- Independent/group work time is consistently used unproductively.
- The student does not show the habits of a learner (e.g. attendance, focus, participation).

Grade level expectations will vary. If your child holds an IEP or 504, then that document will be used as a reference and taken into consideration in class/work modifications and the academic contract. The goal is to support your student, or, if the support does not succeed, assist the student in finding an academic placement better matched to his/her learning needs. RWCS is not an academic fit for all students and our goal is success for each student, even if that means recommending a different academic environment.

Supporting Success

We look forward to partnering with parents and families to help our students to achieve their best. Here are some recommendations for how you can help:

- Create an effective learning environment at home
- Set a schedule and structure to support your child's study, completion of homework, and meeting of standards.
- Limit TV time and engage your child in other educational activities. Keep books and other reading material in your home.
- Set aside a reading time each day.
- Let your child see that you are committed to lifelong learning by letting him or her see you read.
- Learn About and Supporting Our School's Values and Programs
- Commit to allowing your child to participate in fieldwork and extended trips.
- Be familiar with and discuss with your child the content of this handbook.
- Attend school events and parent evenings as you are able.
- Participate in the Adventure Campaign--Plan ahead and do your share!
- Stay informed about your child's progress
- Attend your child's student-parent-teacher conferences. Attend events where your child's work is publicly exhibited.

- Be aware of the expedition being taught and its requirements.
- Read school & teacher communications and promptly return permission slips and other communications asking for parent response or input.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Parent volunteers both enrich the lives of our school and provide vital support for our programming. We appreciate any time you might be able to spend supporting our school. Please note that all classroom volunteers must complete the RWCS volunteer agreement and screening process. Contact the RWCS office for more information.

School Projects

Parents at our school may lead or help with volunteer projects ranging from classroom help to participation in the governance of the school. Their contribution is key to our school's success. Please contact the Director if you are interested in learning more.

CLASSROOM HELP - If you would like to help out in the classroom, please contact your child's liaison or the office.

YEARLY FUNDRAISERS – We typically do two fundraisers each year and need support to plan and run the events.

FIELDWORK - We are often in special need of help on fieldwork days. Again, if you can volunteer, please contact your child's crew leader.

HOSPITALITY - There are numerous times when parents are asked to support events by providing food, drink, or related supplies. Please consider helping out if you are able.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES & EXPERTISE - On many occasions, a parent's special skill, expertise, experience, collection, etc., can be brought into the classroom or contribute to a school-wide project. Examples of classroom contributions include a hearing-impaired parent teaching sign language, a nurse's aide discussing care for the elderly, a carpenter teaching building skills, or a war veteran discussing his or her war experience. Please contact the office if you have a service or expertise that you would be willing to share.

PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) holds monthly meetings with the Director and is open to any interested parent. Please contact the office if you would like more information.

GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

Come to board meetings! Every board meeting starts with an opportunity for public input.

If you are interested in joining the Governing Council, please contact the Board President or School Director.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Each student has the opportunity and the right to use school as a means for self-improvement and individual growth. In so doing, s/he is expected to conduct him/herself in a manner compatible with the school's function as an educational facility and our three school courtesies:

1. Is it respectful?
2. Is it safe?
3. Is it appropriate?

At RWCS we work to support the developmental needs of our students by providing clear boundaries and logical consequences, opportunities to develop problem-solving skills, and the habits of self-reflection.

Conduct which disrupts or threatens to disrupt the operation of the school; which interferes with the public or private rights of other students or citizens; which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person; or which damages property, is not acceptable.

Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs)

Expeditionary Learning schools focus on cultivating habits of work and learning (called "HOWLs" or "habits") that serve students in their k-12 education and beyond. Separated from their academic grades, the HOWLs are taught--and assessed-- in a transparent manner that allows students to set goals, reflect, assess strengths and build skills. At RWCS we are focusing on the following HOWLs:

- **Professionalism**
- **Character**
- **Craftsmanship**

Professionalism exists in every path a young person might take. Whether an actor in alternative theater, a defense lawyer, or an urban social worker, professionalism is expected in most walks of life. This habit of work and learning will focus on the P's: being prepared and prompt, active participation and the production of work, and knowing and following procedures that help the classroom and community run smoothly. Developing the skills of professionalism will help students thrive in whatever path they choose.

Craftsmanship is developing the perspective of the artisan as it applies to one's work--whether academic or artistic. Revising one's work, pride, and care in craft, giving, and receiving feedback is part of craftsmanship. Having an ethic of excellence is what creates a craftsman, and provides a passion for one's work. As part of this HOWL, students will also cultivate their participation

in a community: whether in a workshop for writers, an elective in baking, or in building a quality fence, this common focus can provide feedback and support for high-quality work.

The final HOWL is central to Expeditionary Learning: developing one's strength of **character**. While each student will reflect on their values, elements of character that will be under focus will be developing integrity, taking ownership and responsibility for one's actions and decisions, developing resilience and the ability to persevere, learning to communicate with empathy, caring, and respect, and developing one's creativity and unique gifts.

Cultivating a positive and empowered attitude can help students meet the challenges the world holds for them. Roots and Wings feel that having students who have strong character--unique, reflective, and compassionate--is a vital part of a young person's education.

HOWLs will be part of academic classes, as well as a key element of our daily advisory model, crew. You will see some of the more tangible HOWLs on semester assessments; the less tangible HOWLs will become visible in years to come.

Community Caretaking Responsibilities

As part of our desire to create a stronger school culture, students will share responsibility for keeping our school clean and presentable. Students will clean tables, chairs, and floors to help caretake their space and school.

Every crew will also be responsible for keeping an area of the building or grounds free of trash.

RWCS Student Dress Code

Roots & Wings Community School (RWCS) believes that student dress codes should support equitable educational access and should not reinforce gender stereotypes. Student dress codes and administrative enforcement should not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, household income, gender identity, or cultural observance. Dress codes should be responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student and that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student.

RWCS shall not discriminate against a student, discipline a student, or impose disparate treatment of a student, because of a student's race, religion or culture or because of a student's use of protective hairstyles or cultural or religious headdresses, as defined in New Mexico statute, NMSA 1978 §22-8B-4(U).

The following values influence the RWCS dress code:

- All students should be able to dress comfortably for school without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
- All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal “distractions” without regulating individual students’ clothing/self-expression.

- Students should not face unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
- Reasons for conflict and inconsistent discipline should be minimized whenever possible.
- Teachers should be able to focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement.

RWCS believes a student dress code should accomplish several goals:

- Maintain a safe learning environment in classes where protective or supportive clothing is needed, such as appropriate shoes for outdoor activities or protective eyewear for science labs.
- Allow students to wear clothing of their choice that is comfortable.
- Allow students to wear clothing that expresses their self-identified gender.
- Allow students to wear religious attire without fear of discipline or discrimination.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing with offensive images or language, or clothing advocating violence or the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Ensure that all students are treated equitably regardless of gender/gender identification, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, body type/size, religion, and personal style.

RWCS Dress Code Policy

1. Basic Principle: Certain body parts must be covered for *all* students.

Clothes must be worn in a way such that genitals, buttocks, and nipples are covered with an opaque material (material that is not see-through). *All items listed in the “must wear” category below must meet this basic principle.*

2. Students Must Wear:

- Shirt
- Bottom (pants/sweatpants/shorts/skirt/dress/leggings)
- Shoes
- Attire (shirt, bottom, and shoes) that is seasonally appropriate and allows students to participate fully, without restriction, in physical outdoor activities such as PE, hiking, etc.

3. Students May Not Wear:

- Violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity) or the use of the same
- Hate speech, profanity, or pornography
- Images or language that create a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class

- Visible underwear (visible waistbands or straps on undergarments worn under other clothing are not a violation)
- Hood, helmet, or headgear that obscures the face (except as a religious observance)

RWCS Attendance and Truancy Policy

At RWCS, we want your kids here! In the EL model, students are an active part of creating the learning environment. When students miss school, not only do they miss the simulation, discussion, workshop, or experiment for the day, their peers miss their unique contributions and presence. Plus, we miss them.

A strong correlation exists between academic success and regular school attendance. Please keep your students out of school only when absolutely necessary. Much of our daily endeavor at RWCS cannot be replicated; the benefits of discussion and/or participation in activities are lost to those who are absent. It must be emphasized that regular attendance is the key to much of the success a student may gain from the RWCS Experience.

The following policy is taken from and in alignment with the current state statute and the state compulsory attendance law. Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child is in school. Attendance will be taken in every class and each day. Appropriate legal procedures will be followed for ten or more unexcused absences during the school year, which is considered habitual truancy, as specified and required by the Public School Code. A student who has accumulated five unexcused absences within a twenty-day period is considered truant. However, it is expected that school staff are aware of repeated unexcused absences before the point of truancy and will intervene both informally by conferring with the student and more formally through parent contact and conferences to determine the cause of the student's absenteeism. Students will not be punished for truancy by suspension and/or expulsion.

Regular attendance is essential to a student's success in school. Persistent absenteeism creates a genuine hardship for a student academically and socially and is regarded as a very serious problem.

Excused Absences

For an absence to be valid the student must bring a written excuse signed by the parent the day he/she returns to school. A valid excuse is considered an illness, death in the family, prearranged (one week's written notice), family event, documented medical appointment, or religious holiday. For illnesses, over three days or more, a doctor's excuse may be requested by the school and a medical absence form may be requested.

CONSEQUENCES FOR ABSENCES

STEP I: Initial Meeting

After three incidents of absences (excused or unexcused), the student is contacted and counseled by the director, liaison, or other school staff member. In the meeting, the student and director decide what kind of support is needed for the student. Parent/Guardian(s) is notified by a phone

call, email, and/or letter, and a conference is held discussing what was decided in the initial meeting between student and director. Tutoring may be required as support for students to make up missed assignments.

Step 2: Parent/Guardian Conference

If a student has five cumulative (excused or unexcused), absences in a quarter, he/she will again be counseled by the director. Parent/ Guardian(s) will be notified of continued truancy by a phone call, email, and/or a letter. An in-person conference will be held between parent/guardian, student, director, and teachers. A truancy prevention plan and contract will be developed and signed to support the student. After-school tutoring may be required as support for students to make up missed assignments.

Step 3: Meeting with juvenile probation and parole services in Taos County

If the student has ten unexcused absences in a school year, the student's parent/guardian will be notified by certified mail and a phone call that their student is withdrawn. The student, parent/guardian(s), and the director will meet with juvenile probation and parole services in Taos County.

Tardies

School begins promptly at 9:00 AM. Students need to arrive at school on time ready to learn. If a student has three tardies, a conference will be scheduled.

Consecutive or Accumulated Absences

After five days of consecutive non-attendance, if there has been no contact with the school, the student will be withdrawn.

After ten days of consecutive non-attendance, by state law, the student will be withdrawn. To request a medical or educational absence, please see the handbook for proper procedures.

After four days of accumulated absences in a semester, your student will be required to attend school on Mondays to make up for academic time missed. In case of medical or educational absences, other plans will be made.

First Day of School

Students who do not attend the first day of school may not be enrolled unless a prior arrangement for the absence has been made with the school. Email director@rwcs.org or call the school if your child will not be able to attend the first day.

RWCS respects the Sovereignty of Native Tribes.

While Native students are still subject to the same attendance laws as other students, RWCS is committed to working with families and tribes to understand specific tribal customs, practices, and laws as well as any specific communication needs of tribe or family. RWCS would like to encourage the inclusion of tribal representatives/suggestions in any attendance contract to ensure the inclusion of culturally relevant support, additional resources, and to deepen the

understanding of needs specific to the tribe, family, and/or student. Tribes or Native Families are encouraged to request this in the implementation of the attendance policy. RWCS is open to establishing an MOU with tribal governments to support student success in this matter.

CULTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

Maintaining Positive School Culture

Part of maintaining a culture of quality is taking the time as a school community (staff, families, students, greater community) to build and sustain structures, traditions, and rituals to make sure various realms of the school are positive. There are no shortcuts to building and maintaining a school community of courtesy and kindness, of integrity and responsibility. Being strict about issues of character and physical environment is essential. But strict rules alone are not the answer: they maintain order but do not guarantee that youth will treat each other well when adult eyes are not watching or develop the ability to take ownership of their actions to develop integrity. What is necessary is a school community that not only demands the best of its students in terms of character but that models that character through school tone, routines, and practices. It is a school that helps students cultivate the skills for citizenship and leadership by devoting time to social skills development. It allows for students to problem solve, take on leadership roles and make the occasional mistake--as well as to own the consequences of those errors. This work cannot be attended to with little effort, in the margins of the school day. At The RWCS these efforts are viewed as a key priority.

Defining the Ideal

At The RWCS we strive to create an **environment that honors the following elements:**

- the physical appearance of the school building, outside and in
- the levels of physical safety and emotional safety that children and adults in the building feel
- a flow of routines that supports learning (arrival, class transitions, lunchtimes, and dismissal)
- respect for all community members and modeling of appropriate registers
- the tone of courtesy, kindness, and acceptance in peer culture
- student achievements that are shared within the school community and beyond
- promoting the school and civic role of the students in the larger community

Actions and class agreements are guided by three simple questions:

IS IT SAFE? IS IT RESPECTFUL? IS IT APPROPRIATE?

Teaching and modeling positive behavior is the proactive approaches to discipline at RWCS. Focusing on these three questions helps students self-evaluate their actions: Is it safe? Is it respectful? Is it appropriate? In turn, these questions help provide the background for individual classrooms to develop their own set of classroom norms. Classroom norms must support the belief that all students have the right to learn in an atmosphere that is safe, conducive

to learning, and free from disruptions, as well as support the school-wide goal of academic excellence.

At RWCS, staff roles are to model behavior and to provide limits in a caring way. Consistency in expectations, clarity of language, and the focus on appropriate and natural consequences help to support students in decision making and owning outcomes, positive or negative, of their choices.

How Conflict is Handled

Conflicts and issues arise within any community. Conflict resolution is an area of the school environment that is crucial to the ongoing character development aspect of our program. As a general rule, members of our community will attempt to use conflicts and issues as a springboard to teach new and behaviors and develop communication and leadership skills, even as students learn logical consequences. In dealing with conflicts, a toolbox of strategies is used at RWCS including (but not limited to):

- The Social Conference
- Mediation
- Independent Behavior Plan (developed with student)
- Crew Discussions
- All School Meetings
- Logical and Restorative Consequences

At the beginning of the school year, all lead teachers lead their crews in establishing a set of concrete Crew Courtesies or Operating Agreements for the year which “bring alive” the three school courtesies. Students are involved in describing what is appropriate behavior in the classroom as well as what is appropriate throughout the school day. When the crew reaches an agreement, the teacher and students together establish their contract for the year, which they all sign, along with the School Director, as an indication of their support of their Crew Courtesies or Operating Agreements.

DISCIPLINE POLICY for RWCS

An effective discipline policy consists of Rules, Procedures, and Consequences (including celebrations).

RULES: There are school-wide rules that are to be followed whenever a student is on school grounds or at a school activity. School-wide rules will be posted and reviewed with students on an ongoing basis so students know exactly what behaviors are expected.

There are five main school-wide rules at Roots & Wings Community School:

- Be respectful
- Be responsible
- Be safe

- Follow all policies and procedures
- Practice “Leave No Trace” principles

Other school-wide, procedural rules are:

- Directions that are given by any school employee are to be followed the first time.
- Walk in the building at all times.
- Appropriate and welcome touch only (people and their belongings).
- Keep unkind words to yourself.
- Look and Listen immediately when you see the “Look and Listen” signal.
- No whining, back-talking, or unproductive arguing.
- In common areas, all conversations should be rated V-G (“Very G”).

There may also be specific rules/consequences/celebrations for each classroom, work pull-out area, outdoor play space, and during P.E. Relevant rules and procedures will be posted in each place and reviewed on an ongoing basis. School-wide rules also apply in all on-campus spaces.

PROCEDURES: Procedures are different from rules. Procedures tell students how to perform specific tasks within the school. When all students understand and follow procedures, discipline problems are reduced.

CONSEQUENCES: Consequences are what happens when a student *chooses* to break a rule.

Consequences for breaking school-wide and other specific rules will vary depending on the offense, how often the child has been breaking the rules, and what the staff feels will most help the child to understand how his/her behavior is affecting himself/herself, his or her peers, and the staff’s ability to serve everyone.

While consequences will be determined on a case-by-case basis, the following procedure will be followed in most cases:

- The first office referral will result in a warning.
- The second office referral will result in a phone call or note home.
- The third office referral will result in a phone call home and the parents picking up the child from school immediately.
- The fourth office referral will result in in- or out-of-school suspension, as determined by the director.
- Any subsequent office referrals may result in expulsion, as determined by the director according to policy.

Below is a partial list of potential, common solutions to student misbehavior:

- Verbal warning
- Correct/repeat properly a behavior or procedure
- Allowed to experience natural consequences of actions
- “Strong sitting” or meditation
- Restitution
- Peer mediation
- Separation from other students

- Teacher or student contact parent/guardian (call, email, in-person conference, etc.)
- “Problem” object removed from student’s possession
- Specific privileges removed (such as free time, computer time, etc.)
- Extra classwork or physical work assigned (if relevant)
- Writing assigned (apology letter, explanation, self-reflection, etc.)
- Push-ups, jumping jacks, running, etc. (to help work off student’s anger)
- After-school work or detention

NOTES:

- Consequences will be designed to impact the child and help him/her own their behavior and *learn* from his/her mistakes. If a child chooses to break the rules, he/she also choose to accept the consequences.
- Consequences *will not* be provided at the convenience of the student or parent/guardians. If the assigned consequence happens to interfere with previous plans, for instance, this will help the child learn from his/her mistakes, and to make better choices next time. Rather, when possible, consequences will be chosen that do not inconvenience the staff or cause the staff extra work.
- For severe infractions or repeated infractions in which the student is not learning from mistakes, the student may be suspended or expelled according to school policy.
- For school and state data recording purposes, teachers must document student discipline and turn documentation into the office monthly.

Consequences for breaking classroom rules:

Each classroom will have its own set of rules, consequences, and rewards. Please refer to your child’s classroom information. All school-wide rules also apply in the classroom.

Suspension Types:

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION (ISS)

- In-school suspensions may be held during regular school days or assigned during student days off. ISS becomes part of the student’s cumulative record. Three suspensions may result in a recommendation for expulsion.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION (OSS)

- Students who are suspended from RWCS are prohibited from being on the campus or in attendance at any school activity or event for the duration of their suspension. A parent meeting to develop or review a behavior plan/contract must occur before the student returning to school. OSS becomes part of the student’s cumulative record. Three suspensions may result in a recommendation for expulsion.

OSS WITH HEARING (OSSH)

- Please see the section on Hearings.
- It is the Director’s discretion to recommend a hearing for student habitual behavior.

The Director retains the right to determine corrective and restorative action depending on the circumstances.

Weapons

For the purposes of school board policy, a "weapon" is any firearm, knife, explosive, or other objects, even if manufactured for a nonviolent purpose that has a potential violent use.

Additionally, defined as a "weapon" is any "look-a-like" object that resembles an object that has a potentially violent use, if, under the surrounding circumstances the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.

For outdoor trips **ONLY**, camp knives with blades under 4” will be allowed after students pass a safety tutorial. They will be removed for any unsafe behavior.

Searches

For the protection and security of individuals and property on the RWCS campus, the search of individuals, including students, their personal effects, desks, and vehicles on school property, as permitted under federal and state law. Such searches may be conducted without prior parental consent or the presence of a parent. In certain circumstances random searches of personal effects, district property (such as lockers and desks), and vehicles on campus may occur, including random searches with the assistance of canines. Any illegal or unauthorized objects found in any search are subject to seizure. Anything found in the course of a search can be used as evidence.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students commit plagiarism when they use someone else’s words, ideas, or creative productions as if they were their own. In publications, plagiarism is illegal, and in scholarly work it is unethical. Assignments are plagiarized if they are completed in whole or part by anyone other than the student who claims credit. Copying homework, computer work, test answers, or creative productions of any kind is plagiarism. Submitting a paper or signing a name to a creative project that has been originated in any way by another is plagiarism. Students should correct or edit their own work. Plagiarism can occur from printed material, the internet, as well as from people, but students can avoid plagiarism by precisely quoting borrowed material and carefully crediting the source. Students must submit their own work for credit. Any student who allows someone else to copy his or her work will receive the same consequences.

Interventions with Entire Crews

Occasionally discipline and behavior issues interfere with the educational process for an entire crew to the point that it becomes difficult for students to focus on learning and the teachers to teach. In those instances, especially at the beginning of the school year, administrative and instructional staff will intervene with all the students and their families to discuss concerns and develop solutions. The Director will meet with teachers at least monthly for the specific purpose of determining how well their crews are working together.

Use of Tobacco Products, Alcohol, and Drugs

RWCS is a smoke-free environment. Smoking is not allowed in any area of campus. This policy shall be enforced according to RWCS' Student Search and Seizure Policy. **Any student as a minor who possesses or uses tobacco at school, on a school trip, or within a school zone shall, in addition to penalties imposed under RWCS policy, will be referred to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

Electronic Devices

RWCS is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive learning and working environment. The use of Electronic Devices increases disruptions and results in an increased possibility of inappropriate communications. The term "Electronic Devices" shall mean any and all devices which accomplish their purposes electronically and include, without limitation, cell phones, pagers, smartphone, iPad, video cameras, iPods or other MP3 players, laser pointers, portable video game players, personal laptop computers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), cameras, and any device that provides a wireless, unfiltered connection to the Internet.

Consequently, the use of any and all Electronic Devices by students during the school day, whether on-campus or during a school-sponsored event must have prior approval. The "school day" shall mean the normal hours of operation of the school. While students are not prohibited from possessing Electronic Devices unless otherwise prohibited by law or policies, rules, or procedures, the Electronic Devices must be turned "off" and stored in a student's backpack or purse, or vehicle--out of sight. This Policy does not apply to the sanctioned use of Electronic Devices by teachers, or students under the direct supervision of their teacher, for educational purposes (medical contact to parent).

Use of Electronic Devices in violation of this policy shall result in the confiscation of the electronic device. After the first violation, the student's parent may recover the Electronic Device from RWCS administrative office at the end of the school day. After the second offense, the student's parent/guardian shall be notified that the student has twice violated this policy and that the Electronic Device may be recovered from the RWCS administrative office after two weeks. After the third offense, the Electronic Device will be confiscated for the remainder of the school year. Electronic Devices that are not recovered at the end of the school year may be disposed of by RWCS. A student who violates this policy more than two (2) times during the school year also may be subject to discipline for engaging in willfully disruptive conduct. **All property brought to school is brought at the owner's risk. RWCS cannot assume responsibility for any property belonging to students. RWCS shall not be liable or responsible for the loss of or damage to any Electronic Device confiscated from a student according to this policy.**

Destruction of School-owned Property

The current replacement price is imposed on any lost or excessively damaged equipment or educational materials. Grades and Transcripts may be withheld for any delinquent accounts.

Divisive Language

Some language has the power to disrupt our community more than others. Divisive language is the language that targets a person due to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. At RWCS we work to both educate youth about the power of their words while creating a place where all students can feel safe and respected. Divisive language is not acceptable at RWCS. For chronic violations, divisive language will be classified as chronically disruptive behavior.

Bullying

The school takes bullying seriously. If you feel your child is being bullied, please contact your liaison & the director immediately (director@rwcs.org). Our detailed Bullying Prevention & Response Policy is available in the office.

Sexual Harassment/Misconduct

Sexual harassment regarding student-to-student, adult-to-student, and student-to-adult conduct means unwelcome or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (verbal, nonverbal, or physical). Any sexual harassment should be reported to a staff member immediately. If you feel like your child has been sexually harassed, please contact the director.

Habitually Disruptive Behavior

Habitually disruptive behavior is defined as a student who fails to comply with crew agreements or is a disruption in the classroom, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school activities or events at least five times during the school year for behavior that is willful and overt and which requires the attention of school personnel to deal with the disruption.

Discipline of Habitually Disruptive Students

Any student who is suspended for disruptive behavior, as defined by this above, for a third time during any school year may be declared habitually disruptive and a recommendation for expulsion can be made to the Taos or Questa school district, at the discretion of the Director. A remedial discipline plan will be developed after the first suspension. The plan will be reviewed and modified after the second suspension. In such cases, the student and his/her parent/guardian will be notified in writing.

A student may be recommended for expulsion from school based on grounds outlined in the RWCS School Policies, in addition to any laws or regulations for the State of New Mexico. Additionally, a student may be recommended for expulsion if he/she has been suspended three times in one school year.

Expulsion, after an official hearing, is mandatory under state law for:

1. Carrying, bringing, using, or possessing a deadly weapon without authorization of the school or the district. A deadly weapon includes, but is not limited to, a loaded or unloaded firearm, a knife, a bludgeon, or any other weapon/instrument which,

in the manner in which it is used or intended to be used, is capable of producing death or serious bodily injury.

2. The selling of, including the exchange, distribution, or gift of, drugs or controlled substances, as defined by state law, including anabolic steroids and prescription drugs.

Corporal Punishment / Physical Restraint

Corporal punishment is defined as action taken by school employees to spank or otherwise physically handle a student in any way to purposely inflict punishment. No corporal punishment will be administered to students by anyone in the school. Physical restraint is reasonable and appropriate physical intervention or force by staff as necessary for the following purposes:

1. To restrain a student from an act of wrongdoing.
2. To quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to others.
3. To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects upon a student or within the control of a student.
4. For the purpose of self-defense.
5. For the protection of persons or property.
6. For the preservation of order.
7. To keep the student from self-harm or danger.

Any such acts are not in conflict with the legal definition of child abuse and will not be construed to constitute corporal punishment within the meaning and intention of this policy. In general, RWCS will not use physical restraint except in issues of student or staff safety. For students who are emotionally escalated, non-compliant to reasonable staff requests, or disruptive of the learning environment--parents will be contacted for student pick-up. If parents cannot be contacted, or the student will not comply with calm, respectful staff requests, the police may be brought to the scene to ensure the safety of student and staff, and to minimize disruption of the educational environment.

Gang-related behavior and dress

This policy has been adopted according to the requirements of state law, in recognition of the fact that gang activities at school impose a threat to the welfare and safety of students and others in the school community and cause substantial disruption to the educational process.

The term “gang” as used in this policy refers to all groups of three or more individuals who share a common interest, bond, or activity characterized by criminal, delinquent, or otherwise disruptive conduct engaged in collectively or individually.

Gang activity in schools is often marked by the prominent display of certain colors or other indicators: graffiti with distinctive symbols; and the use of signals and gestures known to denote gang membership. Students, who adopt a dress style suggestive of such displays, even when unassociated with gang activity, may become targets of antisocial behavior.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of those in the school community and to prevent the initiation or continuation of gang membership and gang activity in our school.

1. Any manner of grooming or apparel, including clothing, jewelry, hats, emblems, and badges which by virtue of color, arrangement, trademark, or other attribute is associated with or denotes membership in or affiliation with any gang will not be allowed in school buildings or on school grounds, at school-sanctioned activities and events and while being transported in school-approved vehicles. The prohibition on gang-related apparel will be applied at the discretion of the Director in consultation with the school's board as the need arises.
2. Gestures, signals, or graffiti that denote gang membership or activities are prohibited in the school building and on school grounds, at school-sanctioned activities and events, and while being transported in school-approved vehicles. This prohibition on gang-related gestures, signals, and graffiti will be applied at the discretion of the Director after consultation with the school's board as the need arises.
3. Gang graffiti on school premises will be quietly removed, washed down, or painted over as soon as discovered and photographed. The photographs will be shared with local law enforcement authorities and used in future disciplinary or criminal actions against the offenders.
4. Any student wearing or carrying overt gang paraphernalia or making gestures that symbolize gang membership will be referred to the Director for disciplinary action.
5. Disciplinary action for violation of these standards will include notification of the violation, where applicable; the requirement that the apparel is changed before reentering class; and, at the discretion of the Director, a parental conference. More severe disciplinary consequences, including suspension or recommendation for expulsion, will result from the repeated or serious violation.
6. The Director will establish open lines of communication with local law enforcement regarding this policy to further its purposes.

Tobacco/ Alcohol / Drug Use

Student use, possession, distribution, or sale of alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs is prohibited at RWCS, on school grounds, at any school-sanctioned activities, when students are being transported in school-sponsored vehicles, or at any time or in any place where the student's conduct interferes with or obstructs the educational program or operations of RWCS or the health, safety or welfare of students or employees. This policy shall be enforced according to RWCS' Student Search and Seizure Policy. Illicit drug use is the use of illegal drugs and the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, including anabolic steroids. For the purpose of this policy, illicit drugs include, but are not limited to, opiates, narcotics, marijuana, and intoxicants of any kind, in addition to counterfeit drugs, and drug-containing paraphernalia. A violation will subject a student to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including a recommendation for expulsion and referral for prosecution. Recommendation for expulsion will be mandatory for

any distribution, trade, exchange, or sale of a drug or other controlled substance in a school building or in or on school property.

If it is determined by the director or other RWCS authority that a student is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the appropriate law enforcement agency will be called and the student will be subject to the following provisions.

1. First Offense

Authorities will be contacted and a police report will be filed

- A. The student will be suspended according to the school policy regarding suspensions and expulsions.
- B. The director will attempt to develop with the parents and the student a procedure that will outline the responsibilities of the parent, the student, and the school in an effort to keep any further offenses from occurring.
- C. Information on available drug or alcohol counseling and rehabilitation programs and recommendations for chemical dependency assessment, diagnosis, and possible treatment will be given to students and parents. The costs of these programs are to be incurred by the parent/guardian.
- D. When appropriate, students and parents will be asked to follow up with assessment, diagnosis, or treatment as a condition to readmission to school. Evaluation of any such participation will be made at the parent conference at the time the suspension is reviewed and the student is considered for readmission to school. The cost of the programs is borne by the family, though the school will provide a list of community resources upon request.

2. Second Offense

Withdrawal from RWCS and a recommendation for expulsion will be made

- A. If the student participates in an appropriate rehabilitation program and receives significant treatment, the school will consider such factors in determining if readmittance to RWCS will follow the rehabilitation/restitution program.

FACTS AND INFORMATION

Adventure Campaign

To support the Adventure Program at RWCS, all families are expected to participate in the Adventure Campaign. This campaign raises funds for trips (transportation, food, insurance, medical staff, etc.), gear, and other Adventure opportunities. RWCS has several required trips a year that are part of our social and academic curriculum. Attending RWCS is a choice--parents choosing RWCS should be prepared to support their children's participation in the Adventure Program. This support includes allowing students to attend trips, assisting with fundraising

and/or donations, and contributing time to support the Adventure Campaign with skills and volunteer time. As the Adventure Program is a key part of our mission, please evaluate if your family will make this a priority. Encourage your children to find sponsors, plan on making donations to the Adventure Campaign, or volunteer to help this unique program be a success. Trips can be canceled or altered if funding to support them is not raised!

Calendar for the School year

The RWCS calendar for this school year will be handed out during orientation, placed on the school website, and is included in Director Updates. We suggest that you place the calendar in a visible location in your home for your information (refrigerator door?). Changes to the calendar will be published in the weekly school newsletter or on the school website www.rootsandwingscommunityschool.org.

Cancellation of School

Cancellation of school takes place only during circumstances such as extreme weather, extended utility failure, or safety crisis. The Governing Council and administrator are aware of the hardship, which can be caused by an abrupt cancellation. Therefore, school will not be canceled unless a significant safety risk has been created by unusual circumstances. In terms of inclement weather, the RWCS will follow the delay or closure decision of EITHER (the school straddles both districts) the Taos Municipal School District or the Questa District (WHICHEVER IS THE MOST CONSERVATIVE, i.e. if one is a 2-hour delay and the other cancels we will cancel). Due to location, on rare occasions, RWCS cancels school when Taos or Questa does not. Listen to KOB (television or computer) for specific closure.

Conduct During Lunch Period

Students must stay on campus while eating lunch unless set up in advance with the Director and a parent.

Emergency Information

In case of emergency each student is required to have on file at the school office the following information:

- Parent(s) or guardian(s) name(s).
- Complete and up-to-date address.
- Home phone, parent(s) work phone, and mobile phone if available.
- Emergency phone number of three (3) friends or relatives.
- Physician's name and phone.
- Medical alert information.

Failure to Follow Test-taking Procedures

Although a variety of assessment techniques will be used at RWCS, student tests/assignments may be disqualified without the right of make-up when plagiarism or cheating is evident, or the

teacher's test-taking procedures have not been followed. The student may also be subject to further discipline.

Financial Responsibility and Borrowed Equipment

Any student participating in a school activity is fully responsible for equipment, outdoor gear, tools, computers, and other school gear entrusted to him or her. If the equipment used by a given student is not accounted for in a satisfactory manner--for example, in the case of theft, loss, or damage-- participation and clearance to participate in other activities will be withheld until restoration satisfactory to the school is achieved. When a student is issued equipment, the student as caretaker has both the freedom and responsibility to use and take care of the items. Expected wear and tear due to normal use are expected; abuse, damage, loss, or defacement will require the student to replace or repair the item in question.

Fundraising Activities

Fundraising plans must be presented to the Director and Fundraising Committee a minimum of two weeks in advance. These plans must include the appropriate provisions for safety in the implementation of all activities and must be in line with the overall fundraising strategies and activities of the school. Teachers' crew budgets should be sufficient to support all crew activities.

Good Neighbor Policy

All policies and policies regarding student conduct are in effect from the time a student leaves home in the morning until the student arrives home after school. This includes lunch hours, bus transportation, and field time. Students participating in or attending any school function at any time, on or off-campus, will be held accountable for all policies and procedures regarding student conduct.

Leaving campus due to illness

Any student needing to leave campus due to illness must sign out. If a student returns to campus that day, s/he should sign back in at the office returning to RWCS. Leaving campus without checking with RWCS faculty is considered truancy.

Lost and Found

The school's lost and found is located outside the art room in a wooden box. Parents are urged to label children's clothing for easy return. Items will be donated to charity or kept in the school's loan closet at the end of each semester.

Lunches

On most days, students eat lunch outside. We have a "pack it in, pack it out" policy, to encourage students to take ownership of trash created. In this, students are encouraged to bring reusable containers to reduce waste. All students are asked to "bring home" any waste and packaging leftover from their lunches. This is congruent to the "leave no trace" policy that we follow in the wilderness. We encourage healthy eating. Please pack accordingly.

Protocol for After School & Evening Events Organized by RWCS Crews

Students may organize after-school and evening events. To do so, they must proceed according to the following protocol:

At least four weeks before the event, students must:

- Discuss plans with their lead teacher – set a date far enough in advance to assure that the students can properly plan the event. They must have approval from the lead teacher before proceeding.
- Before requesting permission from the RWCS office, students must be certain that they have at least one RWCS staff person who will supervise the event and enough parents to serve as chaperones.

Three weeks before the event:

- Request permission from the School Coordinator in the RWCS office. S/he will check with the custodial staff to see if the event can be scheduled on the date requested.

Two weeks before the event:

- Give the custodial staff directions as to how the room is to be set up.
- Finalize staff member(s) and chaperones for the event
- Plan for decorations and clean up

Chaperones are responsible for supervising and disciplining students at these events. After the event, students and chaperones are responsible for cleaning up and returning the spaces used to their original state.

Public Displays of Affection

Because it is hard to determine the fine line between what is or is not an appropriate public embrace, the school rule will be that holding hands is the limit of affection shown on the campus by students.

Recess and Break Rules

Students must be outside during lunch recess and break may only be in the building if they have a pass from a teacher or to use the bathroom or get a drink. Students may not be in their classroom during lunch unless it is the designated lunch area that day. Students should come to lunch in warm clothes.

Responsibility for Children at All-School Events for Families

Parents and guardians are responsible for monitoring and supervising their children at all school events such as the Fall Picnic, Back to School Night, Harvest Festival, Celebration of Learning, etc. Children who are not behaving appropriately will be brought to parents by school staff. Students may be removed from events due to disruptive behavior.

Responsibility for Personal Property

All personal property brought to school is brought at the owner's risk. **RWCS cannot assume responsibility for any property belonging to students.** Distracting or inappropriate objects will be taken from a student and returned at the end of the day. Repeated violations will require a parent conference. Students should not bring large sums of money to school.

School Supplies

It is the responsibility of students to come to school with appropriate materials. A yearly list of supplies will be provided to parents. Please contact your classroom teacher if your family needs support in obtaining these supplies.

Skateboards/Rollerblades/Scooters/Roller-shoes/Bicycles

Because of concerns for safety and security, skateboards and rollerblades are not to be used at any time on campus. Bicycles shall be dismounted once on campus. RWCS is not responsible for any loss, theft, or damage of skateboards, rollerblades, bicycles, etc. brought onto campus. Bicycle and skateboard use to and from school requires the use of a helmet (effective July 1, 2007). Parents can be cited by DPS for failure to have their students comply with this statute.

Solicitation

Students are not to be solicited for money unless a project has been approved by the director. No sale of items is to be conducted at the school by students for community drives.

Sports

Due to the outdoor nature of our school, RWCS does not currently offer an athletic program. Students have the legal right to participate in their neighborhood school's sport, or can participate with the Questa district.

Student Medications

Because of liability issues, **we need written parental/guardian consent to administer over-the-counter medication including aspirin, acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol), or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil, Motrin).** In the case of outdoor trips, leaders are prepared and trained to administer necessary emergency and non-emergency medication and will do so unless specifically instructed not to do so by parents/guardians in writing. To protect all students, we ask that students provide trip leaders and/or teachers with duplicate student medication, in school and out in the field. During on-campus school time, teachers will make the medication available at prescribed times. However, parents are encouraged to arrange with the physician to give medications either before or after school hours. **All medication must be in the original prescription containers only.**

Student Use of Staff Lounge

The Staff Lounge is for the sole use of teachers, staff, and parents/guardians working on school-related projects. Students are not allowed in the Staff Lounge unless they are under the direct supervision of an adult.

Telephone Policies

To limit the disruption to the classroom, students will not be called to the telephone except in cases of emergency. Messages may be left. Students may not use the telephone in the office without permission from the school coordinator, nor may they use the classroom phones without permission. Personal cell phones are never allowed in class.

Telephone Directory

RWCS will publish an annual student directory that contains a listing of students, parents/guardians, home addresses, and phone numbers who have released their information to the community.

Textbook Policy

Each classroom of the school must have a sufficient number of textbooks so that every student will have a textbook for each class that conforms to PED curriculum requirements and students wishing to take a textbook home may do so. The RWCS headteacher shall be responsible for implementing a practice that complies with this policy (Compliant with SB1019, NMSA § 22-15-9 (D) (1978).

Visitors

While RWCS welcomes visitors, it is important to plan ahead--visitations should be set up a week in advance. Staff reserves the right to deny requests, depending upon the academic needs of the classroom. Parents are always welcome on our campus, but for the safety of students, please check-in at the office.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

RWCS enrolls students by lottery. There are no admissions requirements. Interested students are selected by randomly choosing names from among all of those registered on our list until the limit of enrollment is reached. Once the available slots have been filled, waiting lists will be maintained. When a space becomes available, the next student on the list and his or her family will be notified and invited to enroll in the school. Current students and children living in the same household as current students are given priority over the lottery system when RWCS makes enrollment decisions for the following school year.

Each new student interested in enrolling will have the option to visit while RWCS is in session as long as arrangements have been made ahead of time.

The RWCS Board reserves the right to enroll students in a manner that best serves the interests of RWCS, as shall be determined solely by the Board, with input from the director.

Number of Students

- The Director determines the number of students in each class, cohort, or grade and when a grade has “openings” based on the current needs of the school community throughout the year.
- The RWCS Board, following the terms of their charter, shall determine the total enrollment of RWCS.

Enrollment Priority

- Returning students
- Siblings of currently enrolled students
- Lottery participants who will be entering K-8th grades
- Siblings of newly selected students will be moved to the top of the waiting list of their grades at the time of his/her sibling’s enrollment provided they have an application already on file.

Definition of a Sibling

- Must share at least one biological parent AND a household at least 50% of the time.
- If siblings are not biological siblings, proof of guardianship must be provided.
- Foster children may be considered as a sibling with legal proof of guardianship.

Step-siblings may qualify if they meet these requirements:

- They must share a household with the enrolled sibling at least 50% of the time, and proof must be provided (court/custody order). AND
- Parents are legally married OR
- The biological parent of the enrolled sibling must adopt or take legal guardianship over the applicant with proof (court documents).

Acceptable forms of proof (RWCS may request notarization):

- Court/custody orders
- Affidavit/acknowledgment of paternity
- Copies of Birth Certificates
- Marriage licenses

Sibling Policy

- It is the parent’s responsibility to notify the school and fill out an enrollment application for siblings applying for the lottery by the deadline announced.

- When two siblings are in the lottery and one wins a spot, the other goes to the top of the waiting list for his/her grade, as mandated by state law.
- If there is a mid-year vacancy, and a new student is enrolled who has a sibling on the waiting list, that sibling goes to the top of the waiting list for his/her grade, as mandated by state law.
- Siblings do not have automatic entry into the school until there is an opening in their grade, provided they have an application already on file.

Enrollment

- The parent or legal guardian of the child or children who is applying for enrollment must make all applications for enrollment.
- Applications will be accepted for one grade only. Students must reapply every year unless the child is already enrolled.
- Current students must submit a re-enrollment form by a specified date to maintain a space.
- The lottery for enrollment will be held in mid-April. The exact date will be announced on the radio and in the newspaper each year.
- Selected students will be notified with an acceptance letter and a registration confirmation form that must be returned by the deadline stated. Students will be considered enrolled if RWCS receives the signed registration confirmation within the stated timeframe. If the form is late, the student will be placed on the waiting list for his/her grade.
- If there are more siblings interested in enrolling than the total room allowed, there will be a separate lottery among them.

Waiting List

- Waiting lists do not transfer from year to year. RWCS will not maintain a waiting list for a student who wishes to be admitted in future years. Applicants must reapply every year.
- Students who are not initially selected for enrollment will be placed on the RWCS waiting list according to grade. Separate waiting lists will be maintained for each grade.
- If necessary, separate waiting lists will be maintained for each grade for siblings of enrolled students.
- All children who apply for enrollment after the lottery are added to the waiting list in the order in which their applications are received.
- If an applicant from the waiting list is offered a position and does not accept it within the allotted time, s/he will be placed at the bottom of the waiting list for his/her grade, or if requested, dropped from the waiting list.

Lottery and Enrollment Practice

The lottery will take place in April of each school year to draw students for the following year. It is a public drawing and all community members are welcome. The lottery will take an equal number of students from each cohort (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) to make the cohorts as even as possible--or a number established by the board and/or Director to meet the needs of the school as a whole. If the total number of students does not equal 50 students, the Director will take from available applicants to fill the school.

Students learn best when they enroll in RWCS early in their school careers. Previous years have taught us that older students take a long time to understand and apply the teaching methods used school-wide, and don't often do well when entering our school late in their school career.

If a parent/student refuses their spot but wants to remain on the waiting list, their name automatically goes to the bottom of the list for their grade.

Confirmation of Enrollment

- Parents or legal guardians must confirm their child's enrollment by returning the completed registration form by the date and time indicated.
- When moving from the waiting list to admittance, applicants must verbally confirm enrollment within three (3) school days from initial contact from the school at which time non-confirmed students will be dropped from the admissions or waiting list.
- The parents or legal guardians who do not properly confirm their child's enrollment will be dropped from the admission list and placed at the end of the waiting list.

- If the school cannot make positive verbal contact with an applicant after three attempts within two weeks to confirm enrollment or notify them of an opening, the applicant will be dropped from the admission list or the waiting list.
- Parents or guardians of the applicant are responsible for maintaining the information on the enrollment application and must notify RWCS, in writing, of any change of address, telephone number, or other information necessary
- for RWCS to contact the applicant. RWCS is not responsible for maintaining information or continuing any search.

Information Required for Enrollment

- Upon acceptance of enrollment, the parent or guardian will be required to provide the following information before admission:
- Original birth certificate, legal copy of the birth certificate, or other legal proof of birth.
- Current immunization and health records
 - Note: No child will be admitted without current immunization records and legal proof of birth.
- Information release form authorizing the RWCS to share or request any and all records, information, or data determined by RWCS to be relevant to the student's attending RWCS.

- Individual Education Plan (IEP) or other special education requirements.
- Parent Packet forms signed and returned.
- Meeting with RWCS representative to discuss the handbook, EL model, and other information to help set up the new students for a positive RWCS experience.

OTHER KEY POLICIES

Policy for Communication with School Personnel

Your child's education is a cooperative effort between parents and school personnel. At times, you may wish to seek additional support, information, or resources. From time to time, situations may arise which you will need to address with your child's teacher. Here are some key points to remember when you are communicating with school personnel about your child's educational needs:

- Please schedule meetings with your child's teacher in advance. Please understand that a teacher's responsibilities may prevent the accommodation of a request for an immediate meeting. Please request the meeting within one week of the concern, issue, or incident, so that the discussion may be timely.
- It would be helpful to be prepared for the meeting by writing down your issues, what you want to say, and questions you would like answered. Write down your solutions and recommendations as well.
- Your child's educational needs are best met when you and your child's teacher work together, and acknowledge each other's efforts toward your mutual goals.
- Stay positive and calm throughout the conversation. Avoid blaming or becoming defensive. All parties are expected to be respectful and courteous. Any teacher or school employee reserves the right to terminate a meeting in the event of inappropriate or abusive behavior.
- Listen to the staff's point of view and suggestions with an open mind.
- Ask the teacher to clarify any school "lingo" – language used by educators that you might not understand.
- Agree together on an appropriate, informal intervention plan or resolution. Share responsibility for the success of the plan. Make a note of this plan. Be clear about commitments and next steps – yours and the teachers.
- If you feel a follow-up meeting or phone call is necessary, and this has not already been scheduled as part of the plan you and the teacher created, you are welcome to initiate the meeting or call.
- The parent, teacher, or Director may request a Student Assistance Team (SAT evaluation – child study for educational, emotional, social, behavioral needs) if it's felt that a more formal plan is necessary.

- If the situation is not resolved through meeting with the teacher or SAT process, please use a Parent/Guardian dispute Resolution Request Form available in the school office to provide information regarding the issue and to request a meeting with the Director.
- The Director is available to mediate issues between the parent/guardian and teacher. Any party may request mediation as part of the process. In case of the need for a parent/guardian Director mediation, another mediator will be made available.
- If the situation is still not resolved through an in-person meeting with the Director, then and only then, request in writing to be placed on the Governing Council agenda. Individual personnel issues will be addressed in executive sessions only, rather than an open session. Any Governing Council member approached by a parent will respectfully redirect the parent to this process.
- After the Governing Council has addressed the issue--and their recommendation has been followed by the school, director, or staff member--the issue will be considered resolved by the school. While the goal is to identify and execute a positive solution, if the parent/guardian is still in disagreement, reflection on school placement is the family's prerogative and responsibility (see: RWCS is a Choice).

Civility Policy

The RWCS is committed to treating all persons including parents, employees, students, and other members of the public with respect and expects the same in return; and maintaining orderly educational and administrative processes in keeping schools and administrative offices free from disruptions and preventing unauthorized persons from entering school/district grounds and facilities. All members of RWCS will treat all persons including parents, teachers, students, and other members of the public with respect and expects the same in return.

This policy promotes mutual respect, civility, and orderly conduct among employees, parents, and the public. This policy is not intended to deprive any person of his/her rights to freedom of expression, but only to maintain, to the extent possible and reasonable, safe, harassment-free schools and workplaces for students, staff, and parents. In the interest of presenting district employees as positive role models to the students of the District as well as the community the Board encourages positive communication and discourages volatile, hostile, or aggressive actions. The District seeks public cooperation with this endeavor and reserves the right to restrict access to school facilities or activities to any and all individuals who disregard this requirement for civil behavior on school property.

Disruptions:

1. Any individual who disrupts or threatens to disrupt school/office operations threatens the health and safety of students or staff, willfully causes property damage; uses loud, disrespectful, and/or offensive written or oral language (including email) which could provoke a violent reaction; or who has otherwise established a continued pattern of unauthorized entry on school district property, will be directed to leave school or district property promptly by the Director or his or her designee.

2. If any member of the public uses obscenities or speaks in an overly loud, rude, and/or insulting manner, the administrator or employee to whom the remarks are directed will calmly and politely request the speaker to communicate civilly. If corrective action is not taken by the abusive party, the district employee will verbally notify the abusing party that his/her participation in the meeting, conference, or telephone conversation is terminated and, if the meeting or conference is on school premises, the offending person will be directed to leave the property promptly.
3. When an individual is directed to leave under circumstances outlined in paragraphs 1 and the Director, or his or her designee, may:
 - a. Report the offender to law enforcement and/or
 - b. Follow-up with a letter denying future access to school facilities and/or
 - c. if, in the case of an employee, whose person or property is damaged by the willful misconduct of a student, parent, or another person (s), inform the employee of his or her right to pursue personal legal action.

Safety and Security:

1. The Director or designee will ensure that a safety and/or crisis intervention techniques program is provided to raise awareness on how to deal with these situations if and when they occur.
2. When violence is directed against an employee, or theft against property occurs, employees shall promptly report the occurrence to the Director or supervisor and complete an incident report.

Retention and Acceleration of Students

Grade retention or acceleration may increase the likelihood that students will succeed in meeting challenging academic expectations at the next grade level. Retention provides a second opportunity to master skills, while acceleration increases the likelihood that academic expectations will be challenging.

Grade retention or acceleration of students will depend on several factors, including all of the following:

1. Academic skills
2. Maturity
3. Satisfactory completion of work
4. Likely success in completing the academic work at the next grade level
5. State standardized test scores
6. Parental input

Grade retention or acceleration will be based on the best interests of the student and his/her educational success. A student will be retained or accelerated if the Director and the student's

teacher agree that grade retention or acceleration is in the best interests of the student based on the general considerations above.

Procedural guidelines for retention or acceleration of a student are as follows:

1. The teacher and or Director of Education will confer with the parents at least four months before the end of the school year about the reasons that grade retention or acceleration may be recommended.
2. The parents, Director, teacher, and other appropriate staff will confer about the student's educational needs at least three months before the end of the school year. If retention or acceleration is to be a consideration, academic interventions to address the student's needs will be developed and implemented.
3. The Director, teacher, and parents will confer before the end of the school year about the student's progress. Based on this, the student will be retained or accelerated if the Director decides that it is in the best interests of the student. Strong consideration will be given to the parental concerns; however, the Director will make the final decision.

In such instances, an academic plan will be prepared that includes the following:

- A summary of the school's interventions during the current year to meet the student's academic needs.
- The interventions to be implemented during the next school year to meet the student's academic needs.

Rights Under Title IX

RWCS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap in its educational program or activities as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, respectively.

NOTICE OF ROOTS & WINGS COMMUNITY SCHOOL TITLE IX POLICY AND GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES PROHIBITING SEX-BASED DISCRIMINATION

TO: Students, employees, families, others who volunteer, or work with Roots & Wings Community School

WHAT IS TITLE IX?

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") is a federal law that prohibits sexual discrimination in all educational programs and activities, such as athletic programs and extra-curricular activities. The law's intent is to ensure that people are not sexually harassed or discriminated against based on gender in any educational program or activity operated by the School. Title IX protects all participants in the School's educational programs and activities including students, employees, and job applicants.

THE SCHOOL'S POLICIES PROHIBIT AND PROVIDE FOR GRIEVANCE COMPLAINT PROCEDURES.

- The School does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits discrimination, which includes sexual harassment and sexual violence in all of the programs or activities that it operates. The School's governing body has adopted a formal policy addressing the requirements of Title IX (Title IX Sexual Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Policy) as well as a Title IX Grievance Complaint Procedure that can be found on our website. These policies procedures apply to students as well as employees.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT TO FILE A COMPLAINT OR TO KNOW MORE ABOUT MY RIGHTS?

- Employees or students who believe they have been discriminated against or sexually harassed should contact the School's Title IX Coordinator who can be reached at:
 - Jon Orris
 - School Director, Title IX Coordinator
 - director@rwcs.org
 - (575) 586-2076
 - 35 Old Lama Rd, HC 81 Box 22, Questa, NM 87556
 - [Title IX Complaint Form](#)
- Student Complaints may also be filed with the United States Department – Office for Civil Rights:
 - Office for Civil Rights
 - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html> .
 - Denver Office
 - Office for Civil Rights
 - U.S. Department of Education
 - Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building
 - 1244 Speer Boulevard, Suite 310
 - Denver, CO 80204-3582
- Employees Complaints may also be filed with the New Mexico Human Rights Bureau or the United States Equal Opportunity Commission:
 - New Mexico Human Rights Division
 - 1595 Pacheco St., Suite 103
 - Santa Fe, NM 87505
 - <https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Filing-a-Charge-of-Discrimination>
 - U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
 - 505 Marquette Avenue, NW
 - Albuquerque, NM 87102

<https://www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination>

HOW TO FILE A TITLE IX SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION OR SEXUAL HARASSMENT COMPLAINT?

- First, contact the Title IX Coordinator, see above.
- The Title IX Coordinator will provide you with the information you need to file a written complaint or will be available for you to talk about your concerns even if you only want to make a report about yourself or someone else.
- Your report or complaint will be written down and if you want to proceed in a formal manner you will be asked to sign and file a Formal Complaint and to follow the School's Title IX Grievance and Complaint Procedure.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL DO WITH YOUR COMPLAINT?

- The School will process the Formal Complaint according to its School's Title IX Grievance Complaint Procedures.
- You will be kept informed by the Title IX Coordinator of the progress of the Investigation.
- You will be contacted by the Investigator to discuss your complaint and to discuss Supportive Measures to help you continue your school programs and/or activities without further sexual discrimination or sexual harassment.
- Once the Investigator has finished collecting the evidence another person will review that evidence and decide whether a violation of the Title IX Policy occurred.
- If there has been a violation, consequences for the behaviors will be imposed and that information will be made known to you and the other person or people found in violation of the Title IX policy.
- Either you or the person who was found in violation of the School's Title IX Policy does not agree with the decision, an appeal may be filed.

CAN I REPORT CONDUCT THAT OCCURRED DURING A SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY TO LAW ENFORCEMENT?

- Yes. If you believe you have been a victim of criminal conduct, you should **immediately** contact law enforcement and not wait to speak to School officials.
- You can and should report any such incident to School Officials, even if you do not intend to file a Title IX complaint.

Section 504 Accommodations

Under the provisions of Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, public schools must make sure that all students, regardless of disability, have equivalent opportunities to participate in a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This provision applies to qualifying disabled students whose disabilities are not so severe as to create IDEA eligibility. The 504 compliance with the provisions of Section 504 and for investigating complaints may be attended to by the director. For further information, contact the Director.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a Federal law that governs the maintenance of student education records. Under that law, parents of students or students who are at least 18 years of age (“eligible students”) have both the right to inspect education records kept by the school about the student and the right to correct inaccuracies in the record. Access to these records by persons other than the parents or the student is limited and generally requires prior consent by the parent or the student. The school has adopted a written policy governing all the rights of parents and students under FERPA.

The RWCS Charter Governing Council hereby gives its annual public notice to all parents and eligible students that:

- RWCS maintains the following education records directly related to students and is subject to the limitations on the disclosure provided in FERPA: Academic records, personal information records, disciplinary records, attendance records, health records, progress reports, and standardized testing records.
- Access to education records is limited to: parents of students under 18 and parents of students over 18, if such student is dependent as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, the student, officials of this school who have a legitimate education interest, federal, state, and local officials to whom information is required to be reported, certain test organizations, accrediting organizations, appropriate persons in connection with an emergency, pursuant to subpoena or court order, to any person, with the written consent of the parent or eligible student.
- RWCS policy requires that education records be kept to an essential or relevant minimum. Records are reviewed at the end of each school year and non-essential and irrelevant material is deleted.
- RWCS policy limits the right of access to education records to the persons and circumstances indicated in the second paragraph above. RWCS requires that copies be made available to persons entitled to receive copies. RWCS policy provides that explanations and interpretations of records are available upon reasonable advance notice. Some records, such as standardized test scores and other material of a technical nature, may only be reviewed with a person qualified to interpret and explain such material and records. RWCS policy provides the right to request in writing an amendment of the student’s educational records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. If records contain information on more than one student, the right to inspect relates only to that portion of the records concerning the particular student in question.

- FERPA classifies certain types of information that generally would not be considered to be an invasion of privacy or harmful if released as “student directory information.” Unless the parent or eligible student objects in writing as described below, school officials may release directory information, as defined under RWCS policy, to any person, including but not limited to colleges, and the media, without the consent of the parents or the eligible student. Parents/students who object to the release of any or all of this information without consent must notify, in writing, to the director within fifteen (15) days following the date of the publication of this notice (or the enrollment of the student, if after the beginning of the school year). The objection must state what information the parent or student does not wish released. A form for filing an objection is available at the RWCS office. In the absence of timely notice objecting to its release, the listed information will be classified as directory information until the beginning of the next school year. “Directory information” as defined includes: the student's name; grade in school; the name of the school; eligibility and participation in officially recognized activities, including but not limited to fine arts exhibits, performing arts programs, other performances, graduation programs, and sports events; weight and height of members of athletic teams; honors and awards received; yearbooks; and identification in visual media, including photographs, videotapes, and video images, depicting school programs or activities.
- Questions regarding education records shall be directed to the school’s director, the custodian of records. Complaints about the failure of RWCS to comply with FERPA may be made in writing, to the FERPA Office, Department of Health and Human Services, 330 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20201.

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) 20 U.S.C. § 1232h, requires schools to notify you and obtain consent or allow you to opt your child out of participating in certain school activities. These activities include a student survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns any of the following eight specific areas (“protected information surveys”): Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent, mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family, sexual behavior or attitudes, illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior, critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships, legally-recognized privileged relationships, such as with doctors, lawyers, or ministers, religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents, and income, other as required by law to determine program eligibility.

This requirement also applies to the collection, disclosure, or use of student information for marketing purposes (“marketing surveys”) and certain physical examinations and screenings (“activities”).

RWCS does not currently plan to administer surveys that seek any of the “protected information” detailed above. Should a situation arise where such a survey needs to be administered, the school will provide notification to parents within a reasonable period of time before the

administration of the surveys and activities. Parents will be provided with an explanation of the activity and will have an opportunity to review the surveys and any instructional materials used in connection therewith. Parents will have the opportunity to consent to or opt their child out of participation. The rights granted by PPRA, as well as the opportunity to consent/opt-out, transfer from parents to any student who is 18 years old or is an emancipated minor under State law. Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with Family Policy Compliance Office, U. S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-5901.

Special Education Procedures

RWCS will provide special education services in accordance with mandates of law, the Public Education Department, and the RWCS Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual.

Before enrollment, we will meet with parents to discuss the needs of individual students. EL encourages differential instruction within the mainstream classroom, a model which can support many students with special needs. However, it is important to meet with the Special Education teacher or IEP team to determine how RWCS can be a supportive environment for the student. Incoming students with IEPs will have a transition meeting so specific services can be provided in the least restrictive environment. Services include but are not limited to:

- Support to educators to make accommodations in the general classroom environment.
- Direct consultation and direct services with a student (e.g. reading or math support, reminders, behavior support, and checking on progress).
- Effective support to help students adjust to learning difficulties and become an advocate for their learning styles.
- Monitoring of the IEP and annual reviews.
- Communication with school administration, teachers, school personnel, and a parent/guardian.
- Working with community partners to provide support (Team builders, Community Wellness Center, etc.)

The referral process for special education begins with the general education teacher providing and documenting interventions and completing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). If a student does not respond to interventions the case is escalated to the Student Assistance Team (SAT) where intervention specialists are involved who may suggest additional interventions. The SAT team will follow the New Mexican RTI process. For details on this process and your rights, visit the PED website: For details on this process and your rights visit <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/SEB/index>.

For more information re: Special Education at RWCS, please see the RWCS SPED handbook.

Student Emergencies

If a student becomes seriously ill or injured at school, parent/guardian contact will be made as specified on the school emergency card. A parent/guardian must keep the school informed of any changes in work, home, or emergency phone numbers. Every effort will be made to inform a parent/guardian quickly. A parent/guardian must notify the school regarding child custody information that affects the release of health and academic records, or the release of the child from school. Students will be released only to their parent/guardian unless the school has received written notification of changes.

Student Records/Paperwork

Mandatory paperwork is sent to students each year and must be on file by the first week of school. Failure to turn in paperwork may prevent your child from participating in fieldwork and other activities. In accordance with state law, the RWCS cannot allow students who do not have the proper immunization records on file to attend school.

Withdrawal from School / Transfer of Records

If a parent/guardian and student move to another school district during the school year or summer months, the student's records will be sent to the appropriate school at the request of that school. Parents must submit a withdrawal form before departure. This form is available in the school office. On the last day of withdrawal, students should have in their possession all books and materials to return those items. A parent/guardian should be certain that there are no fees due to the school at the time of withdrawal. Forwarding of transcripts and records may be delayed pending the payment of such fees.

Students Staying with Another Family

If a student is staying with another family in the absence of the parent/guardian for a short term, the office must be notified with a note stating the dates the parent/guardian will be away and the name and number of the designated responsible person. This information will be used in case of an illness or an emergency.

All student handbook policies are abbreviated from RWCS Approved Policy. For more detail on a particular process or policy please refer to RWCS Policy and Procedures available in the office.

PROCEDURES FOR HEARINGS

In compliance with Title Six, Chapter Eleven, Part Two of the Public School Administrative Code for Primary and Secondary Education in New Mexico, a particular process must be followed in severe disciplinary cases such as long-term suspension or expulsion. Until this process is followed, a student can only be suspended due to alleged misconduct for less than 10

school days. The process below comes from 6.11.2.12 of the New Mexico Administrative Code, "Procedures for Detentions, Suspensions, and Expulsions."

Parental Notification of a Hearing

A letter must be mailed or hand-delivered to the parents of the student in question, and a formal hearing must be scheduled 5-10 days after the parents receive the letter. The letter must include the following.

- I. A description of the disruptive behavior, a concise statement of the alleged act on which charges are based, and a statement of possible penalty:
- II. Hearing Date and Time: Both the student and the parents are encouraged to attend.
- III. Delays/Waivers/Failure to Appear: The hearing will take place as scheduled unless the hearing authority grants a delay, or the student and parents agree to waive the hearing and comply voluntarily with the proposed disciplinary action or with a negotiated penalty. Warning: A failure to appear will not delay the hearing and may lead to the imposition of the imposed penalty by default.
- IV. Right to Representation: The student has the right to be represented at the hearing by legal counsel, a parent, or some other representative. This representative must be designated in a written notice, filed at least 72 hours before the hearing, with RWCS Head Teacher.
- V. Description of the procedures of the hearing: The formal hearing is not a trial. It is an administrative hearing designed to ensure a calm, orderly determination by an impartial hearing authority of the facts of a case of alleged serious misconduct. Technical rules of evidence and procedure do not apply. For further information regarding the procedure of the hearing, please see attached.
- VI. Contact Person: Head Teacher, RWCS, HC 81, Box 22 Questa, NM 87556. Student and family may request a delay, assign a representative to speak, discuss the evidence to be presented, or seek further information from this contact person.

Specifics of the Hearing Process

Waiver of Hearing: Voluntary Compliance or Negotiated Penalty: A student and his or her parent(s) may elect to waive the formal hearing and review procedures and comply voluntarily with the proposed penalty, or may waive the hearing and review and negotiate a mutually acceptable penalty with the designated disciplinarian. Such a waiver and compliance agreement shall be made voluntarily, with knowledge of the rights being relinquished, and shall be evidenced by a written document signed by the student, the parent(s), and the appropriate school official.

Right of Review: A student or parent aggrieved by the Hearing Authority's decision after a formal hearing shall have the right to have the decision reviewed by the RWCS school board if the penalty imposed was at least as severe as long-term suspension or expulsion, an in-school suspension exceeding one school semester, or a denial or restriction of student privileges for one semester or longer.

Conduct of Review: The school board shall be bound by the Hearing Authority's factual determination unless the student persuades the Review Authority (RWCS Board) that a finding of fact was arbitrary, capricious, or unsupported by substantial evidence or that new evidence which has come to light since the hearing and which could not with reasonable diligence have been discovered in time for the hearing would manifestly change the factual determination. Upon such finding, the Review Authority shall have the discretion to receive new evidence or conduct a new hearing.

Effect of Review Authority's Decision: The RWCS school board's decision shall be the final administrative action to which the student is entitled.

Rules Governing the Conduct of the Hearing:

- i. The school shall have the burden of proof of misconduct. The school's representative shall be an RWCS teacher or an appropriate individual enlisted by the RWCS Board.
- ii. The student and his or her parent shall have the following rights: The right to be represented by legal counsel or other designated representative, however, the school is not required to provide representation; the right to present evidence, subject to reasonable requirements of substantiation at the discretion of the hearing authority and subject to exclusion of evidence deemed irrelevant or redundant; the right to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, subject to reasonable limitation by the hearing authority; the right to have a decision based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and the applicable legal rules, including the governing rules of student conduct.
- iii. The hearing authority shall determine whether the alleged act(s) of misconduct have been proved by a preponderance of the evidence presented at a hearing at which the student and/or a designated representative have appeared. The hearing authority will be designated by the chief administrator of RWCS and maybe one or more persons. Persons qualified to serve in the position of hearing authority include the chief administrator of RWCS, individual RWCS Board Members, or appropriate third parties enlisted by the RWCS Board. Any individual Board Member serving as hearing authority in a hearing cannot serve with the rest of the Board as a hearing authority in a subsequent review of that same case.
- iv. If no one has appeared on the student's behalf within a reasonable time after the announced time for the hearing, the hearing authority shall determine whether the

student, through the parent, received notice of the hearing. If so, the hearing authority shall review the schools' evidence to determine whether it is sufficient to support the charges(s) of misconduct.

- v. The disciplinarian shall be the RWCS Head Teacher or another RWCS teacher. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian shall impose an appropriate sanction if (s)he finds that the allegations of misconduct have been proved under the standards of either Subsection G, Paragraph (4), Subparagraph (1), Sub-subparagraph (iii), or Sub-subparagraph (iv) of Section 6.11.2.12 NMAC. A hearing authority who is not a disciplinarian shall report its findings, together with any recommended sanction, to the disciplinarian promptly after the hearing.
- vi. Arrangements to make a tape recording or keep minutes of the proceedings shall be made by the administrative authority who scheduled the hearing and prepared the written notice. A verbatim written transcript is not required, but any minutes or other written record shall fairly reflect the substance of the evidence presented.
- vii. The hearing authority may announce a decision on the question of whether the allegation(s) of misconduct have been proved at the close of the hearing. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian may also impose a penalty at the close of the hearing.
- viii. In any event, the hearing authority shall prepare and mail or deliver to the student, through the parent, a written decision within five (5) working days after the hearing. The decision shall include a concise summary of the evidence upon which the hearing authority based its factual determinations. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian shall include in the report a statement of the penalty, if any, to be imposed, and shall state reasons for the chosen penalty. A hearing authority who is not a disciplinarian shall forward a copy of his or her written decision to the disciplinarian forthwith. The disciplinarian shall prepare a written decision, including reasons for choosing any penalty imposed, and mail or deliver it to the student, through the parent, within five (5) working days of receipt of the hearing authority's report.
- ix. The hearing authority's decision shall take effect immediately upon notification to the parent, either at the close of the hearing or upon receipt of the written decision. If notification is by mail, the parent shall be presumed to have received the notice on the fifth calendar day after the date of mailing.

Thanks for Reading the Handbook!

Please keep this on file for future questions or concerns!

Print additional copies at www.rootsandwingscommunityschool.org