



# **READING PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2024-2025 STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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## Reading Public Schools

# Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook

### RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

Students have rights by virtue of guarantees offered under the federal and state constitutions and statutes. As a student, you have the right to know the standards of behavior that are expected of you, and the consequences of misbehavior.

In connection with rights, there are responsibilities that must be assumed by students.

Among these rights and responsibilities are the following:

1. Civil rights--including the right to equal educational opportunity and freedom from discrimination; the responsibility not to discriminate against others.
2. The right to attend free public schools; the responsibility to attend school regularly and to observe school rules essential for permitting others to learn at school.
3. The right to due process of law with respect to suspension, expulsion, and decisions the student believes injure his rights.
4. The right to free inquiry and expression; responsibility to observe reasonable rules regarding these rights.
5. The right to privacy, which includes privacy with respect to the student's school records. Exceptions to the right to privacy are included in this handbook.

### RIGHT TO AN EQUAL EDUCATION

Every person shall have a right to attend the public schools of the town where she/he actually resides, subject to the following section. No school committee is required to enroll a person who does not actually reside in the town unless said enrollment is authorized by law or by the school committee.

*“Any person who violates or assists in the violation of this provision may be required to remit full restitution to the town of the improperly attended public schools. No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 76, Section 5](#)

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT**

The Reading Public Schools does not tolerate discrimination against students, parents, employees or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or parenting status, disability, homelessness, religion, age, immigration status, or any other legally protected class status as applicable pursuant to federal and state laws and regulations. The Reading Public Schools are also committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status, age, disability, or any other legally protected class status as applicable pursuant to federal and state laws and regulations. In addition, the district provides equal access to all designated youth groups. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness. Every student will be given equal opportunity in school admission, admissions to courses, course content, support services, and extracurricular and athletic activities. The Reading Public Schools is also an equal opportunity employer.

A complete copy of the District's Civil Rights Grievance Procedures and a complete copy of the District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures are [available here](#).

To file a complaint alleging discrimination or harassment by Reading Public Schools on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, homelessness, religion, age or immigration status or to make inquiry concerning the application of Title II, Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, the ADA, the Age Discrimination Act, Age Discrimination in Employment Act or applicable state laws and their respective implementing regulations, please contact:

Civil Rights Grievances for Student Issues: Dr. Jennifer Stys

Email: [Jennifer.Stys@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:Jennifer.Stys@reading.k12.ma.us).

Phone: 781-942-9129

Address: 82 Oakland Road, Reading, MA 01867

Civil Rights Grievances for Staff Issues: Michelle Roach

Email: [Michelle.Roach@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:Michelle.Roach@reading.k12.ma.us).

Phone: 781-670-2882

Address: 82 Oakland Road, Reading, MA 01867

## **RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

*The schools of Reading are open to those students who qualify as residents under the laws of the State of Massachusetts and in accordance with the prevailing common rule. A pupil who lives within the system permanently, or with no present intention of removal, whether with a guardian, one who stands in loco parentis, or an emancipated minor is entitled to all school privileges as a resident of the system. Reading also participates in the School Choice program, authorized by the School Committee annually. Please see the following School Committee Policies <sup>2</sup>:*

- *Sections JF (School Admissions),*
- *JFA-E (Residency)*
- *JFBB (School Choice)*
- *JIE (Pregnant Students)*
- *JFABC (Admission of Transfer Students from charter Schools)*
- *JFABD (Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services)*
- *JFABE (Educational Opportunities for Military Children)*
- *JFABF (Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care)*
- *JFHD (Exclusions and Exemptions from School Attendance – Denial of Admission)*

*The Reading Public Schools complies with all requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act <sup>3</sup>*

## **EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD (AGE OF MAJORITY)**

Students who have reached the age of 18 have full legal capacity, pursuant to M.G.L c. 231, § 85P<sup>4</sup>, to make educational decisions and access rights relative to any transactions and decisions with the Reading Public Schools. This means that each student who is 18 or older is an adult with the independent rights and privileges to make educational decisions. Adult students will be solely responsible for all school-related matters, including but not limited to, educational decisions, compliance with attendance policies, and disciplinary actions. Under Massachusetts state regulations, parents/guardians of a student who has reached the age of 18 continue to maintain rights related to student records, unless expressly limited in writing, by the adult student. Even if the adult student expressly limits the parent/guardian's rights in writing, the parents/guardians still maintain the authority to inspect the student's record upon request. Unless the school district receives written notice of a limitation of parent/guardian rights, parents/guardians will also continue to receive school-related correspondence and notifications regarding the adult student.

## **STUDENTS PERMANENTLY LEAVING SCHOOL (MGL c.76, §18<sup>5</sup>)**

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<sup>2</sup> [School Committee Policies](#)

<sup>3</sup> [McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act](#)

<sup>4</sup> [M.G.L c. 231, § 85P](#)

<sup>5</sup> [MGL c.76, §18](#)

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered to have permanently left public school unless an administrator of the school which the student last attended has sent notice within a period of five (5) days from the student's tenth (10th) consecutive absence to the student and the parent/guardian of that student in both the primary language of the parent/guardian, to the extent practicable, and English. The notice shall initially offer at least two (2) dates and times for an exit interview between the superintendent, or a designee, and the student and the parent/guardian of the student to occur prior to the student permanently leaving school and shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview. The notice shall indicate that the parties shall agree upon a date and time for the exit interview, and that interview shall occur within ten (10) days after the sending of the notice. The time for the exit interview may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall be for longer than fourteen (14) days. The superintendent, or a designee, may proceed with any such interview without a parent/guardian if the superintendent, or a designee, makes a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian. The exit interview shall be for the purpose of discussing the reasons for the student permanently leaving school and to consider alternative education or other placements.

The superintendent or a designee shall convene a team of school personnel, such as the principal, guidance counselor, teachers, attendance officer and other relevant school staff, to participate in the exit interview with the student and the parent/guardian of the student. During the exit interview, the student shall be given information about the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school, the benefits of earning a high school diploma and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

## **TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972**

The Reading Public Schools does not tolerate discrimination against students, parents/guardians, employees or the general public on the basis of sex. The Reading Public Schools is also committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment based on sex, including harassment based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status. The Reading Public Schools' policy of nondiscrimination extends to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business; no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in employment, admission to a public school of Reading or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of sex.

How to Report Sexual Harassment: Individuals are encouraged to report allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator(s) identified below or the Principal. Any report of sexual harassment, as defined under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, will be responded to promptly in accordance with the District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures, available at: <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/district-information/title-ix-information/>.

Reports of discriminatory harassment not constituting sexual harassment as defined under Title

IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, will be initially addressed through the District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure and may, if dismissed under that procedure, be investigated in accordance with the [District's Civil Rights Grievance Procedures](#).

Upon receipt of a report of sexual harassment, the Title IX Coordinator will: (1) promptly and confidentially contact the complainant to discuss the availability of supportive measures; (2) inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a Title IX Formal Complaint; (3) consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures; (4) if the school district does not provide the complainant with supportive measures, document the reasons why such response was reasonable; and (5) explain to the complainant the process for filing a Title IX Formal Complaint.

Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be directed to the District's Title IX Coordinator and/or the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights<sup>6</sup>.

<p>The District's Title IX Coordinator is: Dr. Jennifer A. Stys Phone: 781-942-9129 Email: <a href="mailto:jennifer.stys@reading.k12.ma.us">jennifer.stys@reading.k12.ma.us</a> Address: 82 Oakland Road, Reading, MA 01867</p>
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## **BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN**

The Reading Public Schools are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying or harassment. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We understand that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, students of varying races and ethnic backgrounds, and homeless students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The school and/or district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, harassment, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, harassment or retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula,

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<sup>6</sup> [U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights](#)



instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and harassment, and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, harassment, and retaliation.

The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee. Reports may be made through the RPS online form, available [here](#) or by making a report verbally or in writing to the student's principal or designee. The full text of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is [here](#) and can be found in the [Reading School Committee Policy Manual](#), Section JICFB.

## **CHEMICAL HEALTH POLICY**

Concern for the health and well-being of students of the Reading Public Schools has led to the prohibition of illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco/nicotine/vape (hereinafter referred to as 'banned substances'). In addition to the fact that the possession and use of drugs and alcohol is illegal, research shows that students who use banned substances are less successful in the classroom and the likelihood of addiction is increased. Through these guidelines, we hope to assist students in making decisions that will enhance their ability to grow and thrive in both the academic and extracurricular realms of their school experience. [Reading School Committee Policy Manual](#), Section JICH and JICH-R.

These guidelines are general in nature, and the principal and/or their designee may impose disciplinary consequences appropriate in scope to the merit and nature of the infraction, including short-term suspension, long-term suspension, and expulsion in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H<sup>7</sup>, 37H1/2<sup>8</sup>, and 37H3/4<sup>9</sup>.

## **HELP FOR DEPENDENCY**

Students who feel they have a dependency on banned substances are encouraged to seek help by communicating with a member of the Reading Public Schools community. This may include, but is not limited to, teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, the school nurse, staff,

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<sup>7</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H](#)

<sup>8</sup> [37H1/2](#)

<sup>9</sup> [37H3/4](#)

or administrators. All arrangements made on this basis are confidential, except in situations where a staff member is required to notify the student's parent/guardian or maintain their obligations as a mandated reporter under M.G.L. c. 119 § 51A<sup>10</sup>.

When a student voluntarily confides in a staff member, the staff member will encourage the student to seek assistance through community-based counseling services or school support services and refer the student to Guidance Counselor or School Administration for follow-up services.

All 10th graders will be screened in accordance with Chapter 52 of the Acts of 2016<sup>11</sup> for substance abuse prevention purposes, commonly referred to as SBIRT training. Parents/guardians may choose to have their student not participate in this mandated, verbal screening process by written notice to the Principal at the start of the student's 10<sup>th</sup> grade school year.

### **CONSEQUENCES FOR BEHAVIORS INVOLVING BANNED SUBSTANCES/CHEMICAL HEALTH ON SCHOOL GROUNDS OR AT SCHOOL SPONSORED OR SCHOOL RELATED EVENTS**

Students are prohibited from the possession, use or distribution, or the attempted possession, use or distribution of banned substances. Any student who is found to have assisted or conspired with one or more others in the possession, use, or distribution of banned substances may be deemed guilty of such possession, use, or distribution.

Any student removed from a school-sponsored activity or school grounds because of banned substance-related behavior may be excluded from all other school activities for the remainder of that school year. There will be no refund of user fees or ticket purchases to students removed for these reasons.

Representing Reading Public Schools, through team, club, or other extra-curricular association, is a privilege that carries with it a high standard of behavioral choices. The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA)<sup>12</sup> has set standards and guidelines for penalties for student athletes during the season of practice and play. Reading applies this standard to all extra-curricular participants.

The Reading Public Schools standard for the application of consequences for extracurricular activities and athletics related to this policy covers the full calendar year from July 1 to June 30.

### **SPECIFIC PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF ILLEGAL DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO POLICY ON SCHOOL GROUNDS OR AT SCHOOL SPONSORED OR SCHOOL RELATED EVENTS**

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<sup>10</sup> [M.G.L. c. 119 § 51A](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Chapter 52 of the Acts of 2016](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association](#)

If a student is found to be in possession of or using banned substances or is attempting or conspiring with others to possess or use banned substances:

## FIRST OFFENSE

### Faculty/Staff member will:

- refer student to administrator

### Administrator will:

- refer student to nurse
- notify student's parent/guardian
- conduct search which may include possessions, clothing, locker, and/or automobile
- confiscate all contraband
- notify police
- follow the disciplinary due process procedures in this handbook, and at their discretion based on the individual circumstances and nature of the offense impose a short-term suspension, long term suspension, or expulsion, as applicable in accordance with in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H<sup>13</sup>, 37H1/2<sup>14</sup>, and 37H3/4<sup>15</sup> and/or contract with student for Alcohol & Substance Use Diversion Program
- release to parent, guardian, or make other arrangements with parental input
- refer to police for protective custody when appropriate
- direct student to submit to a Breathalyzer if there is reasonable suspicion of alcohol use. Refusal to submit to the use of the breathalyzer will result in consequences which may include a five-day out-of-school suspension, short-term suspension, or long-term suspension after disciplinary due process in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71 37H3/4<sup>16</sup>.

### School Nurse will:

- assess impairment
- refer for medical follow up, as needed

### Students enrolled in extracurricular activities will:

- be ineligible for interscholastic competition for 25% of the season, in accordance with MIAA guidelines
- be ineligible for all extra-curricular competition and performance activities for 25% of the club year as determined by the administration
- be relieved from all leadership positions for the school year in which the violation occurred.

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<sup>13</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H](#)

<sup>14</sup> [37H1/2](#)

<sup>15</sup> [37H3/4](#)

<sup>16</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71 37H3/4](#)

- abide by requirements of the Diversion Program contract which refers to the building leader's ability to develop a plan that works best for the student and family which support from local resources.

If the student agrees to attend an Alcohol and Use Diversion program, the disciplinary consequences may be reduced. Failure to complete the program will result in the original consequence(s) being instituted.

## SECOND OFFENSE AND SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES

### Faculty/Staff member will:

- refer student to administrator

### Administrator will:

- refer student to nurse
- notify student's parent/guardian
- conduct search which may include possessions, clothing, locker and/or automobile
- confiscate all contraband
- notify police
- follow the disciplinary due process procedures in this handbook, and at their discretion based on the individual circumstances and nature of the offense impose a short-term suspension, long term suspension, or expulsion, as applicable in accordance with in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H<sup>17</sup>, 37H1/2<sup>18</sup>, and 37H3/4<sup>19</sup> and/or contract with student for Alcohol & Substance Use Diversion Program
- release to parent, guardian or make other arrangements with parental input
- refer to police for protective custody when appropriate
- direct student to submit to a Breathalyzer if there is reasonable suspicion of alcohol use. Refusal to submit to the use of the breathalyzer will result in consequences which may include a five-day out-of-school suspension, short-term suspension, or long-term suspension after disciplinary due process in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71 37H3/4<sup>20</sup>.

### School Nurse will:

- assess impairment
- refer for medical follow up, as needed

### Student will:

<sup>17</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H](#)

<sup>18</sup> [37H1/2](#)

<sup>19</sup> [37H3/4](#)

<sup>20</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71 37H3/4](#)

- be ineligible for all athletic or extra-curricular competition and performance activities for 60% of the season or club year, in accordance with MIAA guidelines (The district follows MIAA guidelines Plus. This means that the guidelines are applied to all extracurricular activities)
- be relieved from all leadership positions for the school year in which the violation occurred. Leadership positions include, but are not limited to any position elected, appointed, or selected.

## **POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE BANNED SUBSTANCES:**

### **FIRST OFFENSE AND SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES**

#### **Faculty/Staff member will:**

- refer student to administrator

#### **Administrator will:**

- notify student's parent/guardian
- conduct search which may include possessions, clothing, locker, and/or automobile
- confiscate all contraband
- notify police
- follow the disciplinary due process procedures in this handbook, and at their discretion based on the individual circumstances and nature of offense impose a short-term suspension, long term suspension, or expulsion as applicable in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H<sup>21</sup>, 37H1/2<sup>22</sup>, and 37H3/4<sup>23</sup> and/or contract with student for Alcohol & Substance Use Diversion Program
- Refer to police for protective custody when appropriate

#### **Student will:**

- serve the imposed consequence (e.g. suspension, expulsion, participation in Diversion Program, etc.)
- be ineligible for all athletic or extra-curricular activities including competitions and performances for up to one (1) calendar year and relieved from all leadership positions for the school year in which the violation occurred. Leadership positions include, but are not limited to any position elected, appointed, or selected.

<sup>21</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H](#)

<sup>22</sup> [37H1/2](#)

<sup>23</sup> [37H3/4](#)

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENT ATHLETES AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR PARTICIPANTS UNDER ILLEGAL DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO/NICOTINE POLICY IN THE COMMUNITY**

Student actions in the community reported to the school by the Reading Police Department, may be subject to the following consequences. In all cases, parents/guardians will be informed of such a report and have the opportunity to be present prior to the application of disciplinary consequences by the school administration.

Students suspended from participation may request the opportunity to continue to practice through the principal and the Director of Athletics and Student Activities.

School administrators may also contact parents to conference about concerns relative to student safety based upon reports to the school by the police of students being in the presence of illegal drug, alcohol, or tobacco activity.

The district follows MIAA guidelines Plus. This means that the guidelines are applied to all extracurricular activities.

### **SPECIFIC PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OCCURRING IN THE COMMUNITY**

Using or assisting or conspiring with one or more others in the possession, use, or distribution of banned substances:

#### *FIRST OFFENSE*

- Following an opportunity for the student to be heard, students determined by the high school administration to be using, in possession of, or selling drugs or alcohol in the community may be immediately ineligible to participate in athletics or any extra-curricular activity for 25% of an activity season in accordance with MIAA guidelines. Students will lose all leadership positions for the school year in which violation occurred. Leadership positions include, but are not limited to any position elected, appointed, or selected.

#### *SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES*

- For each subsequent offense, the student may be ineligible for all extracurricular activities, clubs, athletics for 60% of the next consecutive interscholastic events in accordance with MIAA guidelines. The penalty shall carry over to the student's next season of participation. The student may not hold leadership positions during the school year in which violation occurred from the date of the determination. Leadership positions include, but are not limited to any position elected, appointed, or selected.

#### *Possession with intent to distribute and/or being in possession of banned substances in the community*

- Following an opportunity for the student to be heard, a student determined by the school administration to be in possession of with intent to distribute any banned substance in the community may be ineligible for all athletics and extra-curricular activities including

competitions and performances for the school year, and be relieved from all leadership positions for the school year in which violation occurred. Leadership positions include, but are not limited to any position elected, appointed, or selected. In addition to the application of immediate disciplinary consequences as set forth in this Handbook, the student may be subject to discipline, including short term suspension, long term suspension, and/or expulsion, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71 §37H1/2.

## **SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

- Students are hereby given notice that they have no expectation of privacy in their school issued accounts, technology, Internet services and/or school lockers, desks and other school issued tools and storage. School issued technology, accounts, services and physical items may be searched by school administration at any time with or without reasonable grounds. Students and families are advised that school administrators may engage in periodic searches of student issued accounts, technology, services and physical items without notice or cause.
- For search of student's personal items not issued or controlled by school, searches may be conducted by authorized school personnel when, under ordinary circumstances, there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a search will turn up evidence that a student has violated either the rules of the school or the law. All measures adopted in conducting searches of students, their possessions, their vehicles on school property, while under school supervision or in attendance at a school function will be limited in scope by the objectives of the search in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction being investigated. As required by law, authorized personnel will adhere to the protection of the 4th Amendment of the United States Constitution.
- The principal, assistant principals, and faculty chaperones are the only persons authorized to conduct searches of students, their possessions (including backpacks, gym bags, handbags, etc.), or their vehicles parked on school property or at school functions. In the case of physical search of students, a teacher, administrator, or the school nurse of the same gender identity will conduct the search when possible.
- "Reasonable grounds" for search is defined as inferences drawn from circumstances, patterns of behavior, suspicious acts, moving around and about the school without proper authority, unauthorized absence from class or school, being present where unauthorized or illegal activities are known to occur with some regularity, any number of events which suggest violations of school rules or illegal activities; third party information which identifies a student(s) as participant(s) in rule violations or illegal activity; and violation of rules listed in the student handbook.
- Contraband is defined as any material of an unauthorized or illegal nature (such as tobacco products, vaping products and paraphernalia; drug paraphernalia; drugs, illicit and prescribed; alcohol; weapons; explosives and such similar items) not authorized to be brought to or kept in school on a person, in a locker, or vehicle or any other place on school grounds.

- Personal possessions such as fireworks, stink bombs, disguises, water pistols, or dangerous items of attire, which could cause potential disruption or injury to students, faculty or school staff, their possessions, or the school facility or grounds, are contraband. As a condition of entry into any school event, for student safety, all belongings and vehicles are subject to search for contraband.
- Contraband seized as a result of routine locker or backpack/bag inspection will be turned over to the police if the material seized is of an illegal or dangerous nature. Parents will be notified of the seizure as soon as possible after the seizure. **VEHICLES PARKED ON SCHOOL GROUNDS OR AT SCHOOL FUNCTIONS ARE SUBJECT TO SEARCH.**

## **ARTICLES PROHIBITED FOR POSSESSION/USE BY STUDENTS-CONTRABAND**

- At no time and under no circumstances may students have weapons, dangerous instruments, laser pointers, fireworks, explosives, stink bombs, water pistols, tools, disguises, or wear dangerous items of attire to school or school-sponsored events except as authorized by the administration.
- Contraband materials, which may potentially cause injury to students, faculty or staff, are prohibited in the building or school grounds and at school-sponsored or supervised events.
- All contraband will be removed from students. Illegal material will be turned over to the police.
- Any unauthorized use of cell phones will result in the cell phone being confiscated. Students are forbidden to use their phones as cameras or recording devices during the school day without permission from school staff for educational purposes. Any use during the school day that has not been approved will result in confiscation by any faculty/staff member and given to the administration. The confiscated articles will be returned to the student or the parent/legal guardian at administrator's discretion.
- Use of any vehicles in the school building is prohibited. Skateboards, roller skates and roller blades, bicycles, mopeds, scooters, motor vehicles and other such equipment will be confiscated.
- Items not listed here which are not normally utilized specifically for school purposes are subject to confiscation until a determination has been made by the school administration that the items are appropriate for a specific school purpose.

## **DISCIPLINARY DUE PROCESS**

### **Due Process Under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾**

For ALL offenses except for possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, assault on staff, and felony offenses. For due process for offenses under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H1/2, see the appropriate section below.

### **Definitions Under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4**

**Superintendent** – the superintendent or designee for disciplinary purposes.



Expulsion: the removal of a student from the school premises, regular classroom activities, and school activities for more than ninety (90) consecutive school days. Expulsion is prohibited for M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4 offenses.

In-School Suspension: the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days.

Short-Term Suspension: the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive school days or less. A principal may, in their discretion, allow a student to serve a short-term suspension in school. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days.

Long-Term Suspension: the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days. Except for students who are charged with a disciplinary offense set forth in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H(a) or (b), or M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 1/2 no student may be placed on long-term suspension for one or more disciplinary offenses for more than 90 school days in a school year beginning with the first day that the student is removed from school. No long-term suspension shall extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed.

Principal: the primary administrator of the school or the principal's designee for disciplinary purposes.

Written Notice: Written correspondence sent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, or email to an address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent.

*Please note: these due process procedures apply to M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4 only. For due process procedures for offenses under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H 1/2 please see the appropriate sections below.*

In every case of student misconduct under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4 for which suspension may be imposed, a principal shall exercise discretion in deciding the consequence for the offense; consider ways to re-engage the student in learning; and shall not use long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried shall not suspend or expel a student until alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented and, following and in direct response to a specific incident or incidents, unless specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies are unsuitable or counter-productive, and in

cases where the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive behavioral interventions and supports. The principal, headmaster, superintendent or person acting as a decision-maker shall also implement school- or district-wide models to re-engage students in the learning process which shall include but not be limited to: (i) positive behavioral interventions and supports models and (ii) trauma sensitive learning models; provided, however, that school- or district-wide models shall not be considered a direct response to a specific incident.

Emergency Removals; M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾ - A principal may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. In such a case, the principal shall immediately notify the superintendent in writing of the removal, the reason for it, and describe the danger presented by the student. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the principal shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent of: (1) the emergency removal; (2) the reason for the need for emergency removal; (3) the disciplinary offense; (4) the basis for the charge; (5) the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension; (6) the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges, present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent to attend the hearing; (7) the date, time, and location of the hearing; and (8) the right of the student and the student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate. Before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent, the principal must provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the principal that complies with either the short-term due process or long-term due process set forth below, as applicable, and the parent an opportunity to attend the hearing. Additionally, the principal is required to render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets the requirements of notice of the decision for short-term suspension or long-term suspension as set forth below, whichever is applicable. A principal may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

Due Process for In-School Suspension; M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾: Prior to the imposition of an In-School Suspension, the student will be informed of the disciplinary offense and provided with an opportunity to respond. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal will provide oral notice to the student and parent of the length of the In-School Suspension and will make reasonable efforts to meet with the parent.

Principal's Decision – In-School Suspension; M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾: – On or before the day of suspension, the principal shall send written notice to the student and parent about the In-School

Suspension, including the reason and the length of the In-School Suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth in 603 C.M.R. 53.10(4)<sup>24</sup>, if such a meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, or email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent. Students have the right to appeal an In-School Suspension that will result in their In-School Suspension for more than ten (10) school days in a school year.

Due Process for Short-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: In the case of disciplinary offenses not involving: a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, the student and parents will be given oral and written notice of the disciplinary offense with which the student is charged and the opportunity to participate in a hearing prior to the imposition of an out-of-school suspension.

Notice – Short-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: Except as provided in cases of In-School Suspension or Emergency Removal, a principal may not impose a suspension as a consequence for a disciplinary offense without first providing the student and the parent oral and written notice, and providing the student an opportunity for a hearing on the charge and the parent an opportunity to participate in such hearing. The principal shall provide oral and written notice to the student and the parent in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall set forth in plain language: the disciplinary offense; the basis for the charge; the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension; the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent to attend the hearing; the date, time, and location of the hearing; the right of the student and the student's parent to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate.

The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. To conduct a hearing without the parent present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent. The principal is presumed to have made reasonable efforts if the principal has sent written notice and has documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the parent in the manner specified by the parent for emergency notification.

Principal's Hearing - Short-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: At the principal's hearing, the student and parents (if participating) may dispute the charge(s) against the student and present information, including mitigating facts, for the principal's consideration in determining consequences for the student.

Principal's Decision – Short-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: The principal shall notify the student and parent of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended,

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<sup>24</sup> [603 C.M.R. 53.10\(4\)](#)

the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as provided in M.G.L. c. 76, 21. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice. The principal's decision shall be final with no opportunity for appeal. If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

Due Process for Long-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: In the case of disciplinary offenses not involving: a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, the student and parents will be given oral and written notice of the disciplinary offense with which the student is charged and the opportunity to participate in a hearing prior to the imposition of an out-of-school suspension.

Notice - Long-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: Written notice of the date and time for the hearing will be provided in English and in the primary language of the Student's home and will identify the disciplinary offense with which the student has been charged, the basis for the charge, the potential length of the student's suspension, and inform the parent and student of the right to interpreter services if necessary to participate in the hearing.

Where a student may be subject to a Long-Term Suspension, the principal will also notify the student and parent of the following rights: (1) in advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not; (2) the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's/parent's expense; (3) the right to produce witnesses on their behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; (4) the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school; and (5) the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal, and to receive a copy of the audio recording upon request. If the student or parent requests an audio recording, the principal shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made, and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request.

Principal's Hearing - Long-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: The student will have the rights identified in the written notice and the principal shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.

Principal's Decision – Long-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: Based on the evidence, the principal shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a Long-Term Suspension. The principal shall send the written determination to the student and parent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, or email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any

other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent. If the principal decides to suspend the student, the written determination shall: (1) identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing; (2) set out the key facts and conclusions reached by the principal; (3) identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school; (4) include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school as provided in M.G.L. c. 76, § 21; (5) inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or designee, but only if the principal has imposed a long-term suspension. Notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate, and shall include the following information stated in plain language: (a) the process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent must file a written notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the Long-Term Suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that (b) the Long-Term Suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal.

Superintendent Appeals – Long-Term Suspension; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: A student who is placed on a Short-Term suspension under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾ following a hearing with the principal does not have appeal rights. The principal's decision is final. A student who is placed on Long-Term Suspension under M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾ following a hearing with the principal shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent. The student or parent shall file a notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the Long-Term Suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar. If the appeal is not timely filed, the superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in their discretion, for good cause.

Superintendent Appeal Hearing; M.G.L c. 71, § 37H 3/4: The superintendent shall hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or parent requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, in which case the superintendent shall grant the extension. The superintendent shall make a good faith effort to include the parent in the hearing. The superintendent shall be presumed to have made a good faith effort if he or she has made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent and superintendent to participate. The superintendent shall send written notice to the parent of the date, time, and location of the hearing. The superintendent shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence shall be. The superintendent shall arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which shall be provided to the student or parent upon request. The superintendent shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request. The student shall have all the rights afforded the student at the principal's hearing for long-term suspension as identified above.

Superintendent's Decision; M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4: The superintendent shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which: (1) identifies the disciplinary offense and the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing; (2) sets out the key facts and conclusions reached by the superintendent; (3) identifies the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school; (4) includes notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school as provided in M.G.L. c. 76, § 21; and (5) notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. If the superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the principal but shall not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the principal's decision. The decision of the superintendent shall be the final decision of the Reading Public Schools with regard to the long-term suspension.

### **Due Process Under M.G.L. 71, §§ 37H and 37H1/2 Offenses**

*(For offenses involving dangerous weapons, drugs, assaults on staff, and felony offenses)*

Removal Pending HearingM.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H 1/2-- For disciplinary offenses involving: a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, the Principal may remove the student pending a hearing scheduled within ten (10) school days, if the Principal determines that due to the nature of the offense and information available, the student poses a continuing danger to persons or property or is an ongoing threat to disrupt the academic process. The student will be given oral notice of the violation with which the student is charged and an opportunity to respond thereto, prior to the principal's imposition of any removal pending hearing. Upon imposition of a removal pending hearing of (10) consecutive days or less pending further disciplinary proceedings, the student and parents will be provided with written notice of the removal pending hearing, rationale for the interim removal pending hearing and the date and time of the formal disciplinary hearing scheduled within ten (10) school days of the removal as well as all other due process rights relative to the hearing as outlined below.

Long-Term Suspension/Expulsion; M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H 1/2 - Unlike M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4, for offenses that fall within M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H 1/2, a principal may long-term suspend a student for more than ninety (90) days or permanently expel a student. Long term suspension/expulsion means the removal of a student from the school premises, regular classroom activities, and school activities for (1) possession of a dangerous weapon; (2) possession of a controlled substance; (3) assault on a member of the educational staff; or (4) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint (suspension only) or conviction (suspension or expulsion), or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such felony, if a principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school, as provided in G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½. The

principal's Hearing and appeals process identified below apply to suspensions under M.G.L. c. 71 §§ 37H and 37H 1/2.

### **Dangerous Weapons, Drugs and Assaults on Staff - M.G.L. c. 71, §37H**

1. Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the Reading Public Schools by the principal.
2. Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide, or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the Reading Public Schools by the principal.

Principal's Hearing, Long-Term Exclusion – M.G.L. c. 71, §37H - Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraphs 1 or 2 shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation at their own expense, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, the principal may, in their discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraphs 1 or 2 above.

Appeal to the Superintendent – Long-Term Exclusion – M.G.L. c. 71, §37H - A Principal's decision to suspend rather than expel a student pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H is final and not appealable. Any student who has been expelled from the Reading Public Schools pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of their appeal. The student has the right to counsel (at their own expense) at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

Suspensions or expulsions are decisions that must consider a student's due process rights. The principal or their designees are required to report to the police department the presence of any weapon on school premises.

### **Felony Complaints - M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ½**

#### Issuance of a Felony Criminal Complaint

Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal if said principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Notice of Principal's Hearing/Decision – Long-Term Exclusion – M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 - The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the opportunity for a hearing;

provided, however, that the student may have representation (at their own expense), along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After the hearing, the principal shall issue a written decision. The student shall also receive written notification of their right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

Appeal to the Superintendent- Long-Term Exclusion - M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 - The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent in writing and must notify the superintendent of their request for an appeal no later than five (5) calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three (3) calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on their behalf and shall have the right to be represented by counsel at student's own expense. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the Reading Public Schools with regard to the suspension.

Adjudication of Delinquency, Admission of Guilt or Conviction

Upon a student being convicted of a felony or felony delinquency charge or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Notice of Principal's Hearing/Decision – Long-Term Exclusion/Expulsion - M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 - The student shall receive written notification of the charges and be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation (at their own expense), along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After the hearing, the principal shall issue a written decision, which will include reasons for the expulsion. The student shall also receive written notification of their right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

Superintendent's Appeal/Decision – Long-Term Exclusion/Expulsion - M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 1/2 - The student shall have the right to appeal the long-term suspension/expulsion to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent, in writing, of their request for an appeal no later than five (5) calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three (3) calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on their behalf and shall have the right to be represented by counsel at student's own expense. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The



superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the Reading Public Schools with regard to the long-term suspension/expulsion.

## **OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

The Reading Public Schools shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion in a manner consistent with M.G.L. c. 76, § 21<sup>25</sup>. If the student moves to another school district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new school district shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student in an education service plan under M.G.L. c. 76, § 21.

For all suspensions, students will be entitled to the following in terms of the opportunity to make academic progress:

**Less Than 10 Consecutive Days** - Any student who is serving an in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion shall have the opportunity to earn credits, as applicable, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the classroom or school.

**More than 10 Consecutive Days** - Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services, earn credits, as applicable, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, in accordance with the school's education service plan.

The school-wide education service plan will be provided to the parent and student at the time the student is expelled or placed on long-term suspension.

## **Discipline and students with disabilities**

All students are expected to meet the Reading Public Schools' requirements for behavior in school and abide by the rules set forth in this handbook, the handbook of the student's school, and the policies and procedures of the Reading Public Schools. In addition to the due process protections afforded to all students in disciplinary matters, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the regulations promulgated pursuant to these statutes provide additional procedural protections for students with disabilities. These procedural protections also apply for students who do not currently have an IEP or Section 504 Plan, but whom the district knows, or has reason to know, that the student may have a disability, prior to the conduct for which the student is subject to discipline.

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<sup>25</sup> [M.G.L. c. 76, § 21](#)

Students with disabilities may be excluded from their programs for up to ten (10) school days to the extent that such sanctions would be applied to all students. Before a student with a disability can be excluded from their program for more than ten (10) consecutive days in a given school year, or is subjected to a series of short-term removals that constitute a pattern of removal that exceeds ten (10) school days, and are considered to constitute a disciplinary change in placement, building administrators, relevant members of the Student's IEP or 504 Team, and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will meet to conduct a Manifestation Determination Review. At the Manifestation Determination Review, the Team will consider whether the violation for which the student is subject to discipline is directly and substantially related to the student's disability or was the direct result of a failure to implement the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.

If the Team determines that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the student's disability, the student may be disciplined in accordance with the policies and procedures applicable to all students, except that students eligible for special education services shall be entitled to a free appropriate public education as of the eleventh (11th) day of disciplinary exclusion in the school year. Such services are not available to students under Section 504. The student's IEP Team will identify the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion, and may, as appropriate, review any existing behavior intervention plan, or, where appropriate, conduct a functional behavioral assessment.

If the Team determines that the behavior giving rise to disciplinary action IS a manifestation of the student's disability, then the district will conduct a functional behavior assessment or review any existing behavior intervention plan and takes steps (with the consent of the parent(s)/guardian(s)) to modify the IEP/504 Plan, the placement, or the behavior intervention plan as appropriate and the student will not be suspended for more than 10 days (either consecutive or constituting a pattern of removal) for the violation found to be a manifestation of their disability.

Regardless of the result of the Manifestation Determination, if a student possesses, uses, sells or solicits illegal drugs or a controlled substance on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event; possesses a weapon on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event; or inflicts serious bodily injury upon another person at school or a school-sponsored event, the school district may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to forty-five (45) school days. The interim alternative setting must enable the student to participate in the general curriculum and progress toward the goals in the IEP. The interim alternative educational setting must also provide services and modifications designed to address the behavior giving rise to the removal and to prevent the behavior from reoccurring. If a student has been placed in an interim alternative education setting because of disciplinary action, the student may remain in the interim setting for a period not to exceed forty-five (45) school days. Thereafter, the student will return to the previously agreed-upon educational placement unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) (or student if 18+) consents to an extension of the IAES, or the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school agree to another placement, or the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the district has initiated a hearing on the disciplinary action that the district took and a hearing officer orders another placement.

The parent(s)/guardian(s) shall have the right to appeal the Team's manifestation determination, the imposition of a disciplinary change in placement, and the student's placement in an interim alternative educational setting to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals. The student will remain in the disciplinary placement imposed by school authorities pending a decision on the appeal or until the expiration of the disciplinary sanction, whichever comes first.

## **STUDENT RECORDS**

The Reading Public Schools complies with applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to Student Records. Those laws and regulations are designed to ensure a parent's or guardian's and eligible student's rights to access, inspect, and to request amendment of the child's student record.

The Massachusetts Student Record regulations and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) apply to educational records maintained by a school on a student in a manner such that he or she may be individually identified. The regulations divide the record into the transcript and the temporary record. The transcript includes only the minimum information necessary to reflect the student's educational progress. This information includes name, address, course titles, grades, credits, and grade level completed. The transcript is kept by the school system for at least sixty (60) years after the student leaves the system.

The temporary record contains the majority of the information maintained by the school system about the student. This may include such things as standardized test results, class rank, school sponsored extracurricular activities, and evaluations and comments by teachers, counselors, and other persons. The temporary record is destroyed no later than seven (7) years after the student leaves the school system.

The following is a summary of major parent and student rights regarding their student records:

Inspection of Record - A parent/guardian, or a student who has entered the ninth grade or is at least fourteen (14) years old, has the right to inspect all portions of the student record upon request. The record must be made available to the parent/guardian or eligible student within ten (10) days of the request, unless the parent/guardian or student consents to a delay. In the event the parent/guardian or student requests copies of a student record, the district may charge the parent/guardian or student for said copies at the district rate. The eligible student or parent/guardian shall have the right upon request to meet with professional qualified school personnel to have any of the contents of the student record interpreted.

Confidentiality of Record - With a few exceptions, no individuals or organizations but the parent/guardian, student, and authorized school personnel are allowed to have access to information in the student record without specific, informed, written consent of the parent/guardian or the student.

Amendment of Record - The parent/guardian and student have the right to add relevant comments, information, or other written materials to the student record. In addition, with limited exceptions under state and federal law, the parent/guardian and student have the right to request that information of the record be amended or deleted. The parent/guardian and student have a right to a conference with the school principal to make their objections known. Within a week after the conference, the principal must render a decision in writing. If the parent/guardian and student are not satisfied with the decision, the regulations contain provisions through which the decision may be appealed to higher authorities in the school system.

Directory Information - Federal law requires that the district release the names, addresses and telephone listings of students to military recruiters and institutions of higher education upon request for recruitment and scholarship purposes without prior consent. In addition, the District may release the following directory information about a student without prior consent: a student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major fields of study, dates of attendance, weight and height of members of athletic teams, class participation in officially recognized activities and sports, degrees, honors and awards, post-high school plans and directory information such as homeroom assignments. However, in all instances, parents/guardians may request that such directory information not be released without prior consent by notifying their school building office in writing by the end of September of each school year.

Destruction of Records - The regulations require that certain parts of the student record, such as the temporary record, be destroyed a certain period of time after the student leaves the school system. School authorities are also allowed to destroy misleading, outdated, or irrelevant information in the record from time to time while the student is enrolled in the school system. Before any such information may be destroyed, the parent/guardian and student must be notified, and have an opportunity to receive a copy of any of the information before its destruction.

Transfer of Records – In accordance with 603 CMR 23.07(4)(g)<sup>26</sup>, it is the practice of the Reading Public Schools to forward the student record of any student who seeks or intends to enroll, or already has enrolled in another public school district, if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. The parent/guardian or eligible student has the right to receive a copy of the school record that is forwarded to the new school.

Non-Custodial Parents - Unless there is a court order to the contrary, a non-custodial parent (parent without physical custody of the student) of any public-school student has the right, subject to certain procedures, to receive information regarding the student's achievements, involvement, behavior, etc. A non-custodial parent who wishes to have this information shall submit a written request annually to the child's school principal. Upon receipt of such a request, the principal shall send written notification to the custodial parent by certified and first-class mail that the records and information will be provided to the non-custodial parent in twenty-one (21) calendar days unless the custodial parent provides documentation of the non-custodial parent's

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<sup>26</sup> [603 CMR 23.07\(4\)\(g\)](#)

ineligibility to access such information. In all cases where school records are provided to a non-custodial parent, the electronic and postal address and other contact information for the custodial parent shall be removed from the records provided. Any such records provided to the non-custodial parent shall be marked to indicate that they may not be used to enroll the student in another school. Upon receipt of a court order that prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §34H<sup>27</sup>, the school will notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent. M.G.L. c.71, §34H, 603 CMR 23.07<sup>28</sup>.

Third Party Access - Authorized school personnel to include: (a) school administrators, teachers, counselors and other professionals who are employed by the school committee or who are providing services to the student under an agreement between the school committee and a service provider, and who are working directly with the student in an administrative, teaching, counseling, and/or diagnostic capacity; (b) administrative office staff and clerical personnel, employed by the school committee or under a school committee service contract, and whose duties require them to have access to student records for purposes of processing information for the student record; and (c) the evaluation team which evaluates a student, shall have access to the student record of students to whom they are providing services, when such access is required in the performance of their official duties. The consent of the parent or eligible student shall not be necessary.

Complaints - A parent or eligible student has a right to file a complaint with the Student Privacy Policy Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-5901, (202) 260-3887 or with the Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, (781) 338-3300. If you have any questions regarding this notice or would like more information and/or a copy of the Massachusetts Department of Education Student Record Regulations, please contact the building principal.

## **NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)**

PPRA affords parents/guardians certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas ("protected information survey") if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE): political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent/guardian; Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family; sex behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of others with whom

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<sup>27</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71, §34H](#)

<sup>28</sup> [603 CMR 23.07](#)

respondents have close family relationships; legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers; religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents/guardians; or income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

- Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of the following: any other protected information survey, regardless of funding; any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.
- Inspect, upon request and before administration or use: protected information surveys of students; instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.
- These rights transfer from the parents/guardians to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law. Specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement include: the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales or other distribution; the administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by DOE; and any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

The district will provide parents/guardians, within a reasonable period of time prior to the administration of the surveys and activities, a notification of the surveys and activities and provide an opportunity to opt their child out, as well as an opportunity to review the surveys.

Parents/guardians who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with: Student Privacy Policy Office<sup>29</sup>, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-5901

## **DRESS CODE**

We support the importance of the expression of identity through various forms, including clothing. The Reading Public Schools does not seek to abridge that expression, provided that it does not cause any disruption or disorder within the school. The school district and individual schools are 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.

- Clothing should be school appropriate by covering undergarments and private parts of the body fully for health and safety purposes and should reflect our core values by not

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<sup>29</sup> [Student Privacy Policy Office](#)

contributing to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student or cause any disruption or disorder in school.

- No wearing of clothing or other articles that advertise/depict illegal, offensive, or obscene language, messages, or symbols (i.e., drugs, alcohol, tobacco).
- While hats and head coverings are allowed, a staff member may expect removal in certain circumstances, such as (but not limited to): during an assessment, if the student's face is obscured, or if the head covering is being used to obscure earbuds or other items. Head coverings are permitted for religious observance or medical purposes.
- Specialized clothing may be required for specialized courses (e.g., safety glasses, closed toe shoes in laboratories, physical education uniforms).

We understand that there may be unique exceptions to these guidelines and will work with students and families to accommodate personal circumstances.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Whenever a child is going to be absent or late to school, parents/guardians are required to call the students' school to report the absence or tardiness. The absentee line is available 24 hours a day. This is an important way to assure school personnel that parents/guardians are aware of their child's absence or tardiness. If we do not hear from a parent/guardian, an automatic phone call will be sent home. For more information about Attendance Policies, please refer to the [School Committee Policy Manual](#) Section J.

Parents/guardians must notify the school of an absence, tardy or dismissal by phone, or email.

- RISE (781)-942-9179 or [RISEabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:RISEabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Barrows (781)-942-9166 or [AMBabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:AMBabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Joshua Eaton (781)-942-9161 or [JEEabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:JEEabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Birch (781) 944-2335 or [BMeabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:BMeabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Killam (781)-944-7831 or [JWKabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:JWKabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Wood End (781)-942-5420 or [WEEabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:WEEabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Coolidge (781)-942-9158 or [AWCabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:AWCabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- Parker (781)-944-1236 or [WSPabsences@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:WSPabsences@reading.k12.ma.us)
- RMHS (781)-670-2819 or [RMHSattendance@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:RMHSattendance@reading.k12.ma.us)

The Reading Public Schools, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 76, § 1B<sup>30</sup>, will notify the parent or guardian of a student who has at least 5 days in which the student has missed 2 or more periods unexcused in a school year or who has missed 5 or more school days unexcused in a school year. This policy requires that the school principal, or a designee, make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent or guardian of a student who has 5 or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attendance. The action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal, or a designee, the student and the student's parent or guardian and with input

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<sup>30</sup> [M.G.L. c. 76, § 1B](#)

from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies.

Here is a link to our [Reading Public Schools' attendance policy and quick guide](#).

Here is a link to our district [attendance guidance and monitoring plan](#).

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Both our State and Federal governments have passed important legislation affecting students, parents, and schools. This legislation is designed to provide equal educational opportunities and to inform parents and students of their rights. Each act of legislation is quite lengthy, so only brief summaries are included in this Handbook. Anyone wishing additional information may contact the Special Education Office.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Pursuant to Section 504, any qualified student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Section 504 FAPE is the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet a student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") and M.G.L. c. 71B<sup>31</sup>, some students with disabilities may be eligible for services if they require specialized instruction and/or supportive services to help them make effective progress in school. These services can include, but are not limited to speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, specialized instruction, or placement in a special classroom. Students may be referred to the Special Education Department for an evaluation of eligibility for special education services. Within five (5) school days of such a referral, a consent form authorizing an evaluation of the student will be forwarded to the parent(s)/guardian(s)). Within forty-five (45) school days of receipt of the parent(s)/guardian(s)' consent, an evaluation will be conducted, and a Team meeting will be held to determine if the student is eligible for special education services. If the student is found eligible for special education services, the Team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) identifying the necessary services.

*Be sure to visit the SEPAC Website [LINK](#) for information regarding the Special Education Parent Advisory Council.*

For more information regarding the services available to students with disabilities, please contact the principal or special education administrator at your child's school or the Office of the Director of Special Education and Student Services. Please also see [*insert link to Civil Rights Grievance Procedures*], which the district follows for complaints of discrimination, harassment or retaliation

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<sup>31</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71B](#)



on the basis of a person’s real or perceived disability status in compliance with state and federal law.

The 504 Compliance Officer is:  
 Dr. Jennifer A. Stys  
 Phone: 781-942-9129  
 Email: [jennifer.stys@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.stys@reading.k12.ma.us)  
 Address: 82 Oakland Road, Reading, MA 01867

<b>School 504 Coordinators</b>		
<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Email</b>
Barrows Elementary	Anne Marie Ring	<a href="mailto:annemarie.ring@reading.k12.ma.us">annemarie.ring@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Birch Meadow Elementary	Lisa Azzarito	<a href="mailto:lisa.azzarito@reading.k12.ma.us">lisa.azzarito@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Joshua Eaton Elementary	Jessica Swindell	<a href="mailto:jessica.swindell@reading.k12.ma.us">jessica.swindell@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Killam Elementary	Talia Hallett	<a href="mailto:talia.hallett@reading.k12.ma.us">talia.hallett@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Wood End Elementary	Jessica Hester	<a href="mailto:jessica.hester@reading.k12.ma.us">jessica.hester@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Coolidge Middle School	Brienne Karow	<a href="mailto:brienne.karow@reading.k12.ma.us">brienne.karow@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Parker Middle School	Beth Simpson	<a href="mailto:Beth.Simpson@reading.k12.ma.us">Beth.Simpson@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
Reading Memorial High School	Meredith Flanagan	<a href="mailto:meredith.flanagan@reading.k12.ma.us">meredith.flanagan@reading.k12.ma.us</a>
R.I.S.E Preschool	Alanna Shone	<a href="mailto:Alanna.Shone@reading.k12.ma.us">Alanna.Shone@reading.k12.ma.us</a>

## **OBSERVATIONS OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Observations of a student’s current and/or proposed special education program may be conducted by a parent/guardian or his/her designee in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71B § 3<sup>32</sup>. Parents/guardians must request an observation five (5) days in advance and can submit the request to the building Special Education Administrator and building principal. Observers may be required to sign a non-disclosure form to protect student confidentiality.

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<sup>32</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71B § 3](#)

## **STUDENTS WHO ARE MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS (MLL)**

All students, as they enroll in Reading Public Schools, are required to submit a Home Language Survey. If a language in addition to English is spoken at home, or if a student's first language is not English, the student will be assessed for English language proficiency. Students who are not proficient in English will be recommended for MLL services. MLL services include pull-out English as Second Language (ESL) instruction and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) in all content classes. If parents elect to exclude their child from MLL services, they must contact the district contact person listed on the Notification of Services form or the principal in person, via telephone or email. Students receiving MLL support are required to participate in state-wide assessments. Students will exit the MLL Program after passing statewide MLL testing, and based on the results of standardized testing, classroom performance and teacher recommendation.

## **HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES**

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable preschool programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs. A child who is homeless or an unaccompanied youth and attending any school served by the local educational agency is eligible for Title I services and the Free and Reduced Lunch program.

The goal of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act is: (1) To ensure that each child or youth experiencing homelessness has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths; (2) In any State that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the State's compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths, the State will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that homeless children and youths are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths; (3) Homelessness alone is not sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment; (4) Homeless children and youths should have access to the education and other services that such children and youths need to ensure that such children and youths have an opportunity to meet the same challenging student academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

### **Definition of Homeless Children and Youth**

The term "unaccompanied youth" includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed,

regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth living in the following situations:

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals.

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans.

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

### **Homeless Education Liaison**

Reading provides various types of support for students and their families experiencing homelessness in order to help them attend school consistently. Eligible families may be living in shelters or may not have their own lease because they are temporarily staying with family members or acquaintances due to economic hardship or similar reasons. Contact the district's Homeless Education Coordinator, Jennifer Stys, Homeless Education Coordinator at 781-942-9129 for more details.

### **Enrollment and Dispute Resolution**

Students identified as experiencing homelessness have a right to remain in their school of origin or to attend the school where they are temporarily residing. Students who choose to remain in their school of origin have the right to remain there until the end of the school year in which they become permanently housed, with transportation if needed through the end of the school year (June).

The Reading Public Schools will immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment – such as school records, medical records or proof of residency. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. The district's liaison for homelessness will assist students who arrive without records by contacting the previously attended school system to obtain the required records.

Should a parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth disagree with the school placement decision of the liaison for homelessness, the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth has the right to appeal. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth will be provided with written notification in the language of the home of the placement decision and the paperwork to complete the appeal process. While the placement decision is under appeal, the student will be allowed to attend the school of the parent/guardian's or unaccompanied youth's choice and receive transportation, according to the District transportation policy, [School Committee Policy Manual](#) Section EEA Student Transportation Policy, while the dispute is under review by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## **STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE**

The district will ensure the educational stability of students in foster care. Educational stability has a lasting impact on students' academic achievement and wellbeing, and the School Committee is committed to supporting district and community efforts to ensure that students in foster care have access to high-quality, stable educational experiences from preschool (if offered) through high school graduation.

Irrespective of the location of a foster care placement, students in foster care will continue to attend their school of origin, unless after a collaborative decision-making process it is determined to be in the student's best interest to enroll in and attend school in the district in which the student resides in foster care. Enrollment of students in the district where they reside in foster care will take place immediately upon such a determination.

The district has designated a point of contact for students in foster care. The district and the point of contact will collaborate with DCF to ensure that students can access transportation and the other services to which they may be entitled.

### **Best Interest Determination**

Decisions about whether a student in foster care should continue to attend the school of origin should be made collaboratively by DCF, the student (as appropriate), the student's family and/or foster family (and if different, the person authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of the student), the school and district of origin, and (when different) the local district where the student is placed. Best interest determinations should focus on the needs of each individual student and take into account a variety of factors. Every effort should be made to reach agreement regarding the appropriate school placement of a student in foster care. However, if there is disagreement regarding school placement for a student in foster care, DCF will finalize the best interest determination.

The district can seek review of DCF's decision by utilizing a Foster Care School Selection Dispute Resolution Process established by DESE and DCF. Decisions made through this process are not subject to review. To the extent feasible and appropriate, the district will ensure that a child

remains in his or her school of origin while the disputes are being resolved to minimize disruptions and reduce the number of moves between schools.

## **Transportation**

The district of origin must collaborate with DCF on how transportation will be provided and arranged to ensure that students in foster care who need transportation to remain in their school of origin will receive such transportation while they are in foster care.

Transportation options may include using Title I funds, establishing regional collaborations among districts, coordinating with existing routes for transportation, seeking help from foster parent(s), etc. Absent other agreements between the district and DCF, the district of origin is responsible for providing transportation to and from the school of origin.

## **Immediate Enrollment**

If it is in the best interest of a student in foster care to leave the school of origin, the student must be immediately enrolled in the district in which he or she resides in foster care. During enrollment of students in foster care, DCF representatives will present the district with a form that indicates that the student is in foster care, along with their state-agency identification badge.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be permitted to enroll under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. After enrollment, the district will immediately request available records from the student's previous school.

## **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITARY CHILDREN**

To facilitate the placement, enrollment, graduation, data collection, and provision of special services for students transferring into or out of the district because of their parents or guardians being on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, the District supports and will implement its responsibilities as outlined in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The district believes it is appropriate to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families resulting from frequent moves required by parents' or guardians' military deployment.

## **VEHICLES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS**

Prolonged idling of motor vehicles is prohibited by Massachusetts law on school grounds or within 100 feet of school property. M.G.L. c. 90, § 16B<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> [M.G.L. c. 90, § 16B](#)

## **SCHOOL MEDICAL POLICIES**

Students are not permitted to carry medication in school except with authorization from the school nurse in accordance with 105 C.M.R. 210.000<sup>34</sup>. All other medications needed during school hours, including any prescription and over the counter medication and supplements must be administered under the supervision of the school nurse. Please find here a link to the [School Medical Guidelines](#).

First Aid/Dismissal - Treatment will be administered for minor injuries during the school day. When a student becomes ill or is seriously injured the parent/guardian is notified immediately. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached in an emergency, the child will be transported by emergency personnel to the appropriate medical facility. The nurse will dismiss any child who is considered to be contagious and/or is not fully immunized or exempted by law from required vaccines.

[Medications](#) - Whenever possible, medication administration should be scheduled at times other than during the school day. If it is necessary that your child receive medicine during the school day, the school nurse is responsible for the administration of all medications. All medication must be delivered to the nurse by a parent, guardian or another designated adult. Medication must be in a pharmacy-labeled container and be accompanied by a doctor's order and written parental approval prior to administration. Students are not allowed to carry medicine on their person, with the exception of inhalers and EpiPens in accordance with the requirements of 105 CMR 210.000<sup>35</sup>. Students found in possession of unauthorized medications on school grounds or at school sponsored events may be subject to discipline. The entire medication policy is available in the Nurse's Office and on the Reading Public Schools website [here](#).

**IMPORTANT – If it is necessary that your child receive medicine during the day, the school nurse will dispense that medication. Students found in possession of unauthorized medications on school grounds or at school sponsored events may be subject to discipline.**

Special Medical Considerations - Parents of a student with any medical condition which might require special attention or planning should contact the school nurse as soon as possible. This includes, but is not limited to, conditions such as asthma, severe allergies, seizure disorder or diabetes.

## **MANDATORY REPORTING**

All professional staff are informed annually of their obligations to report cases of suspected child abuse and neglect as specified in M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A-51F<sup>36</sup> and M.G.L. c. 71, § 37L<sup>37</sup>.

## **PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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<sup>34</sup> [105 C.M.R. 210.000](#)

<sup>35</sup> [105 CMR 210.000](#)

<sup>36</sup> [M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A-51F](#)

<sup>37</sup> [M.G.L. c. 71, § 37L](#)

The Reading Public Schools recognizes that on occasion physical restraint is required to protect the safety of school community members from serious, imminent physical harm. Physical restraint may be used only as an emergency procedure of last resort and shall be prohibited in public education programs except when a student's behavior poses a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm to self or others and the student is not responsive to verbal directives or other lawful and less intrusive behavior interventions, or such interventions are deemed appropriate under the circumstances. Physical restraint shall mean direct physical contact that prevents or significantly restricts a student's freedom of movement. Physical restraint does not include brief physical contact to promote student safety, providing physical guidance or prompting when teaching a skill, redirecting attention, providing comfort, or a physical escort.

Physical restraint shall not be used: (a) as a means of discipline or punishment; (b) when the student cannot be safely restrained because it is medically contraindicated for reasons including, but not limited to, asthma, seizures, a cardiac condition, obesity, bronchitis, communication-related disabilities, or risk of vomiting; (c) as a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with a public education program rule or staff directive, or verbal threats when those actions do not constitute a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm; or (d) as a standard response for any individual student.

No written individual behavior plan or individualized education program (IEP) may include the use of physical restraint as a standard response to any behavior. Physical restraint is an emergency procedure of last resort. Physical restraint in a public education program shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or another member of the school community from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

Nothing in Reading Public Schools policy, or the applicable regulations, prohibits: (a) the right of any individual to report to appropriate authorities a crime committed by a student or other individual; (b) law enforcement, judicial authorities or school security personnel from exercising their responsibilities, including the physical detainment of a student or other person alleged to have committed a crime or posing a security risk; or (c) the exercise of an individual's responsibilities as a mandated reporter pursuant to M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A<sup>38</sup>. The Reading Public Schools complies with the requirements of Massachusetts regulations governing the use and reporting of physical restraint in schools, 603 CMR 46.00<sup>39</sup>.

## **TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE AND INTERNET SAFETY POLICIES**

The Reading Public Schools Technology Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy, [linked here](#) outline acceptable use of the Reading Public Schools network, technology devices, digital resources, and network infrastructure, including email and online class resources. All students and staff must agree to abide by the Technology Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy.

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<sup>38</sup> [M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A](#)

<sup>39</sup> [603 CMR 46.00](#)

The Reading Public Schools monitors the use of the school District's network. There is no expectation of privacy related to information stored and transmitted over the Reading Public Schools network. Search of particular files of a user shall be conducted if there is a reasonable suspicion that a user has violated the law, school rules of the code of conduct, or Reading School Committee policies. The investigation will be reasonable and in the context of the nature of the alleged policy violation.

Use of the computer network and Internet is an integral part of research and class work, but abuse of this technology can result in loss of privileges. Students who use technology devices, digital resources, and network infrastructure, along with information technology inappropriately may lose their access privileges and may face additional disciplinary or legal action in accordance with the disciplinary due process procedures in this handbook.

### **Unacceptable Uses of Technology Resources**

Inappropriate technology use includes but is not limited to the following:

- Interfering with the normal functioning of devices, computer systems, or computer networks.
- Illegal or criminal activities.
- Damaging or theft of devices, computer systems, or computer networks.
- Accessing, modifying, or deleting files/data that do not belong to you.
- Sending or publishing offensive, bullying or harassing messages and content.
- Accessing dangerous information that, if acted upon, could cause damage or danger to others.
- Giving your username or password to any other student or using the username or password of someone else to access any part of the system.
- Sharing and/or distribution of passwords or using another student or faculty member's password.
- Intentional viewing, downloading or distribution of inappropriate and/or offensive materials.
- Gaining unauthorized access to computer and or telecommunications networks and resources.
- Viewing, transmitting or downloading pornographic, obscene, vulgar and/or indecent materials.
- Using obscene language, harassing, insulting or bullying others, posting of private or personal information about another person, spamming of the school email system, violating any federal or state law, local regulation or school committee policy.
- Cyber-bullying (bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication) which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by: wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant message, text message or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates



another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation is a violation under law. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting is a violation under law. Cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When cyber-bullying is alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families is expected.

- Violating copyright laws and/or the district policy on plagiarism.
- Copying software or applications from Reading Public School devices through any electronic means unless the particular licensing agreement in place for the software allows user distribution.
- Intentionally wasting limited network or bandwidth resources.
- Destruction/vandalism of system software, applications, files, or other network resources.
- Employing the network for commercial or political purposes. Using the network internet to buy or sell products.
- “Hacking” and other illegal activities in an attempt to gain unauthorized access to restricted files, other devices, or computer systems.
- Uploading any harmful form of programming, bypassing filters; installing any type of server, aliasing / spoofing, peer-to-peer networking or remote-control software.
- Possession of and/or distribution of any software tools designed to facilitate any of the above actions will also be considered an offense.
- Saving inappropriate files to any part of the system, including but not limited to:
  - Music files
  - Movies
  - Video games of all types, including ROMs and emulators
  - Offensive images or files
  - Programs which can be used for malicious purposes
  - Any files for which you do not have a legal license
  - Any file which is not needed for school purposes or a class assignment
- Uses that contribute to the violation of any other student conduct code including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, hazing or harassment, theft, falsification of records, possession of banned substances/items, etc.

NOTE: If a student needs a file for a class project that you think may be considered inappropriate, then he/she needs to have teacher and school administration permission prior to the class project.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS**

The Reading Public Schools provides nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in such a manner as is necessary to afford students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation. Reading is, however, generally permitted to establish and utilize skill-based eligibility criteria for participation in extracurricular programs and activities (e.g., school-sponsored athletics) so long as the criteria are rationally related to the purposes and goals

of the specific program or activity. Reading administrators, in their discretion, may deny or limit a student's access to co-curricular activities as a disciplinary sanction.

Participation in extracurricular activities and athletics is a privilege, not a right. Administrators may, in their discretion, limit student participation in extracurricular activities or athletics as a disciplinary consequence. All student athletes are expected to follow the MIAA rules and guidelines for athletics eligibility and participation.

## **HAZING<sup>40</sup>**

Massachusetts law requires that all secondary students be provided a copy of the state laws concerning hazing.

M.G.L. c. 269 § 17<sup>41</sup>: Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

M.G.L. c. 269 § 18<sup>42</sup>: Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

M.G.L. c. 269 § 19<sup>43</sup>: Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post-secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an

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<sup>40</sup> [M.G.L. c. 269 §§ 17-19](#)

<sup>41</sup> [M.G.L. c. 269 § 17](#)

<sup>42</sup> [M.G.L. c. 269 § 18](#)

<sup>43</sup> [M.G.L. c. 269 § 19](#)

unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full-time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the board of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students.

The board of higher education and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

Please refer to the [Reading School Committee Policy Manual](#), Section JICFA and JICFA-E.

## **READING METCO PROGRAM**

In 1966, Massachusetts General Law Chapter section 12A gave cities, towns, school committees and districts the right to "alleviate racial isolation and "racial imbalance."

The METCO program (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity) is a grant funded program by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is a voluntary program intended to expand educational opportunities, increase diversity, and reduce racial isolation, by permitting students from Boston and Springfield to attend public schools in other communities that have agreed to participate.

The METCO Program has been part of the Reading Public Schools since 1972. We are a proud METCO district, and all students and staff in our district are considered to be METCO students and staff as all benefit from this rich, cultural diversity program.

### Placement of students

The METCO Program is a marginal seating program. This means students from Boston are placed in open seats in the district. Boston resident students cannot take any seats that would require the district to create new programs, hire more teachers, or build new buildings. Each year, seats are filled in the district by the Reading Public Schools METCO Director based on available open seats in the district.

### Rights and Responsibilities

Boston resident students and parents are subject to the same rights and responsibilities as Reading resident students and parents. All participating METCO school districts are expected to provide all of the ordinary services and benefits to its Boston and Springfield resident students that are provided to town resident students and parents.

### Reading METCO Found Family Program

The Found Family Program seeks to create friendships and forge relationships between families from Boston and Reading. The Found Family program will feature scheduled social events that include families from Boston and Reading. The goal is also to ensure that our Boston resident students and their families genuinely feel connected to Reading Public Schools and the town of Reading.

Found Family - A group of people who find themselves united in a family-bond based on shared experiences, mutual understanding, and interpersonal connection. Found Family is not biological but found when placed in a new place.

For more information on the Found Family program please click the link - [Reading METCO Found Family Program](#).

For more information on Found Family and how to sign up please reach out to your school principal.

### Afternoon Transportation

The afternoon bus departs Parker Monday-Thursday at 3:15 p.m. and on Fridays at 2:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday students participate in afterschool programs. The METCO program provides late buses Monday-Thursday for all middle school and high school students with a pick-up time of 6:10 p.m. at Parker, 6:20 p.m. at Coolidge, and 6:30 p.m. pick up time at RMHS.

### FORMETCO (Friends of Reading METCO)

Friends of Reading METCO (FORMETCO) is an independent organization dedicated to bringing together Boston and Reading families from all 8 schools in the Reading Public School District. It is a diverse, all-volunteer group of parents/guardians and educators from the Reading and Boston communities. FORMETCO is committed to making connections and fostering authentic lifelong relationships between Boston and Reading families. We are one community! To learn more, Email Theresa Wiggins at [villageparent@gmail.com](mailto:villageparent@gmail.com).

If you would like more information about the Reading METCO Program, please email the METCO Director at [kurtis.martin@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:kurtis.martin@reading.k12.ma.us).