



Faculty Handbook

2017-18

South Texas Independent School District

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Rising Scholars Academy of South Texas

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Angel Macias, Attendance/PEIMS

Nora Garcia, Counselor's Secretary

Pamela Merla, Receptionist

Melyssa Jalamo, Diagnostician Secretary

STISD Mission Statement

The mission of South Texas Independent School District, a proven educational leader that values academic success and high expectations for all, is to inspire and develop each student to achieve at the highest level, lead in a chosen field and contribute to a changing world, by nurturing each student's aspirations through a supportive environment that engages our entire community in challenging learning experiences.

STISD Vision Statement

The vision of South Texas Independent School District is to engage students in a focused, challenging curriculum within a small, caring community of learners.

Rising Scholars Academy Mission Statement

Rising Scholars Academy will cultivate a powerful learning environment that will inspire our students to impact their communities through stewardship and leadership.

Rising Scholars Academy Vision

Rising Scholars Academy paves the foundation for academic excellence and leadership via a rigorous and innovative curriculum enhanced by a nurturing system of support, community, and opportunity for all.

Rising Scholars Academy Core Values

Stewardship	We are entrusted and responsible for carrying out our school's mission and ensuring that student learning is our priority.
Teamwork	We work hand in hand to support one another and achieve our goals.
Results	We hold ourselves accountable for overcoming obstacles and achieving excellent results for all students.
Integrity	We act with honesty, respect, and responsibility
Community	We are unified by our shared vision, mission, commitments and culture.
Perseverance	We work hard and give 100% effort, never giving up on our goals.

Faculty Handbook 2017-2018

Purpose

This handbook has been compiled to communicate policies and procedures that will be in place during the 2017-18 school year at Rising Scholars Academy of South Texas. Clear communication and expectations are essential to the success of our organization.

Limitations

This manual does not cover all of the campus procedures, and many new situations will arise that will require revision and addition to the handbook. Each staff member is urged to read the handbook carefully. Questions and concerns that are not addressed in the handbook will be answered by the administrative staff. Read through the information and become acquainted with its contents. Use the manual during the school year for reference. Any suggestions for improvement of the contents or organization of the handbook will be greatly appreciated. Our goal is to meet your needs.

Organization

A table of contents is provided at the beginning of the manual for quick reference.

Have a great school year!

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Accident/Injury Reports

Accident or injury reports must be filed in the event of any accident or injury to any employee of the South Texas Independent School District or to any student of our school. Accident reports are available with the receptionist or in the nurse's office.

Activity Account

All club sponsors must follow proper procedures in dealing with club money and student activity accounts. Club funds should be submitted to the office on a regular basis. No monetary funds should stay in the possession of students or sponsors overnight. Activity account transactions should be dealt directly with the campus secretary and bookkeeper. For specific procedures, please see the Forms and Procedures Appendix.

Admission Slip

When a student has been absent from your class, do not admit the student without an admit slip from the attendance office. Each teacher should require a student to present an excuse slip when returning to class after having been absent. The last teacher to sign the excuse slip should allow the student to return the slip back to the Attendance office for filing purposes.

Announcements

School information will be shared through announcements made at the beginning of the school day, through our school website, Facebook page and Twitter. If you would like to make an announcement, please complete an announcement form, which is available with the receptionist. All announcements are subject to the approval of administration.

Attendance Incentive

Employee attendance is vital to the success of our students and campus. Our district rewards excellent attendance through an employee attendance incentive program. Employees with perfect attendance July 1 through August 31 will receive \$750 in December of the following school year. Employees with 3 or less state and local days used during a school year, July 1 through August 31, will receive a \$500 stipend in December of the following school year.

Attendance Procedures

Attendance is taken every day, every period on the Infinite Campus system. All teachers must post attendance during the first five minutes of class.

Board Policies

The board policies are located on the district website at www.stisd.net. If you have any questions regarding these policies, ask the principal.

BYOD Policy

Rising Scholars Academy is committed to creating a 21st century learning environment that provides equitable access to technology that will help our students become self-directed learners, collaborative team players and information producers as well as information consumers. For this reason, our students are allowed to bring their own technology devices (laptops, ipads, tablets, phones, etc.) to school. **Use of these devices in the classroom is at the discretion of the teacher.** Unless the teacher specifically authorizes the utilization of these devices, they must remain off and put away. Students may use their devices before school, after school and during their lunch break.

Campus Duty

The safety of our students is an important responsibility that we share as a campus team. All staff members are expected to supervise students. A duty schedule will be shared with staff at the beginning of the school year. All teachers and staff members will supervise students during transitions by standing at their doors, and monitoring students as they walk from one classroom to the next, monitoring the flow of traffic. In addition, teachers are legally responsible for the students assigned to their classrooms. It is imperative that the teacher supervises all classroom activities. **Do not leave students unsupervised.** If you must leave the classroom, please arrange for another staff member to watch your students while you step out of the classroom.

Classroom Care

Lock your room and turn out the lights when you are not using your room. A clean, uncluttered room is the foundation for a positive learning environment. Help custodians by arranging materials in the classroom in a manner that will make it easier for them to clean and maintain. Food items should not be stored within the classroom.

Classroom Maintenance/Repairs

If you need maintenance work done in your classroom, complete a Maintenance Request Order online. The online request is required when you need repairs/maintenance in the classroom, such as a broken desk that needs to be replaced, air conditioning, water leaks, gas leaks, lab work, moving furniture, etc. The online request is available on the STISD website.

Common Board Configuration

Each classroom will utilize a common board configuration that includes the date, objective, opening activity (Do Now, Warm-up, Bell-ringer), and homework assignment. The purpose of the common board configuration is to provide students with consistency and structure in their classroom instruction.

Common Formative Assessments

Departments will meet weekly to design and disaggregate data from common formative assessments. The data from these assessments will be used to help teachers plan instruction, identify struggling students, diagnose objectives needing to be re-taught, provide students with timely feedback and deliberately align instruction and promote ongoing collaboration.

Communication

Open, consistent communication and information sharing is vital to a positive school climate. Teachers will receive weekly newsletters by Monday morning to inform them about campus news. Another means of communication is via school e-mail. **Please check your e-mail daily for important updates and notices. Please respond to emails within 24 hours.**

Conferences/Planning Period

The conference and/or planning period(s) are designed for departmental meetings, instructional preparation, lesson planning, team meetings, and review of student records. It is also time reserved for parent-teacher conferences. **The conference and/or planning period is not a time to leave campus.** If an emergency arises or personal business requires a need to leave the campus, please check out with the assistant principal or principal. It is the responsibility of the individual to sign the Sign Out Form, which is located on the counter in the administration office. It is imperative this form be signed by RSA teachers and office staff. Failure to follow instructions may result in a conference with the principal.

Course Syllabus

Each teacher shall submit to the campus principal in writing a course syllabus for each course taught for the year or semester. The course syllabus shall contain the following elements:

1. The teacher's name, work telephone number, and conference time
2. A brief statement including the purpose of the course and its intended importance to the student
3. A brief overview of major goals & objectives of the course
4. A description of how formative assessment (informal and formal) is incorporated into the class
5. An overview of the projects to be assigned during the course
6. Grading procedures, including the weights for grade book categories. Late work grade penalties shall also be standardized by course and agreed upon by the campus department for inclusion in the course syllabus.
7. Procedures for retesting
8. Homework procedures

Discipline

At Rising Scholars Academy, discipline is communicated and accomplished through our mission, vision, core values, strong culture, and our powerful learning environments. Teachers will maintain safe, orderly classrooms where students are engaged in learning activities 100% of the time. Classroom discipline is the teacher's responsibility. Teams will decide on common classroom expectations, rules and consequences. Regulations and policies can be of little value if there is not complete and uniform enforcement of such regulations and policies by the entire faculty. Therefore, each faculty member should take it upon him/herself to see that no incident of misbehavior is allowed to pass uncorrected.

Discipline Referral

Effective classroom management techniques and instructional preparedness are excellent tools for good classroom control. On very rare occasions, it may be necessary to complete a student discipline referral form. Prior to submitting a discipline referral, document what actions you have taken prior to sending the student to the office. When writing the student discipline referral, indicate specifically the behavior that is inappropriate. Parents will receive notice of the violation of code of conduct within 24 hours.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

Policies DH, DIA

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment, of other employees or students. While acting in the course of their employment, employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment of other persons including board members, vendors, contractors, volunteers, or parents. A substantiated charge of harassment will result in disciplinary action.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated or retaliated against or harassed are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the campus principal, supervisor, or appropriate district official. If the campus principal, supervisor, or district official is the subject of a complaint, the employee should report the complaint directly to the superintendent. A complaint against the superintendent may be made directly to the board.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating discrimination, harassment, and retaliation is reprinted below:

Policy DIA (LOCAL)

An employee who believes that he or she has experienced prohibited conduct or believes that another employee has experienced prohibited conduct should immediately report the alleged acts. The employee

may report the alleged acts to his or her supervisor or campus principal. For the purposes of this policy, District officials are the Title IX coordinator, the ADA/Section 504 coordinator, and the Superintendent. Reports of discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment, may be directed to the Title IX coordinator.

Dress Code

All employees at RSA will be well groomed and will dress professionally. The appearance of all personnel reflects the professionalism, expectations, and high standards of our school and community. We must be role models for our students and exemplify the concept of dressing for success.

- Male staff members should be clean-shaven, with the exception of a neatly trimmed moustache and/or beard.
- Flip flops may not be worn during instructional hours.
- Shorts may not be worn during instructional hours.
- Short skirts are not allowed (must be 2 inches above knee).
- Tank tops are not allowed.
- Tattoos must be covered.
- **Blue jeans, denim pants, and denim capris, may only be worn on Fridays, or designated days.**

Emergency School Closing

In the event that there is an emergency school closing, teachers will be notified via email, school website or local news.

Equipment

Teachers will be issued a computer and other types of equipment such as document cameras, ipads, and computer carts. It is the teacher's responsibility to take care of the equipment issued to them. If equipment is lost, stolen or damaged, teachers must notify the principal immediately so that arrangements can be made to replace the missing or damaged equipment.

Evaluation of Teachers

An appraiser will evaluate each teacher. Evaluations will be consistent with Texas Education Agency guidelines and South Texas Independent School District policies. Anytime a teacher has a particular activity that he or she would like to have observed, they may invite the observer to the classroom.

Extra-curricular Activities

RSA students lead balanced, active lives. In addition to providing students with engaging academic activities, we will also provide students with opportunities to explore their interests. As a new school, we are challenged to offer extra-curricular activities that will develop students' natural talents and interests. If you are interested in sponsoring an activity, please meet with the principal with your proposal, which should include name of club, purpose, and bylaws. All clubs must be approved by the principal before any meetings or activities are to take place. Participation in clubs and activities will depend on students' grades and behavior.

Faculty Meetings

Faculty meetings will be held as necessary. Meetings will be scheduled in advance with clear agendas to avoid inconveniences. Professional staff members are required to attend all faculty meetings. As a

professional learning community, we will follow our norms for communication and collaboration during meetings.

Field Trips

All field trips must be approved by the principal. For specific procedures, please see the Forms and Procedures Appendix.

Fire Drills

Practice fire drills will be conducted once per month. When the signal is sounded, everyone is to evacuate the building in an orderly manner at the designated exit. All books and backpacks should be left in rooms and teachers must leave doors closed but unlocked. The last person to leave room will turn off the lights to signal that the room has been emptied. Fire drill exit maps should be posted near the door in all classrooms. Teachers must stay with their class to supervise students during evacuation.

Grading Procedures

Grades communicate information about students' achievement to parents, as well as provide information to students for self-evaluation. It is essential that our grading practices are fair, clear, efficient and a reflection of student understanding, work and effort. The academic year is divided into four quarters, or 9-week periods. The weight for each nine-week period will be 37.5 percent and the semester exam will weigh 25 percent. Teachers are expected to have fifteen or more grades per quarter. Progress reports go out every three weeks, so teachers are expected to have at least five grades per progress report grading period. All grade books are set up and maintained via Infinite Campus. Grade book categories and weights will be consistent for each course and must be approved by the principal. It is essential that teachers update and save student grades on a weekly basis so that students and parents can monitor their progress. All incomplete grades must be cleared prior to check out at the end of the school year.

Grade Changes

Changes made to permanent grades (quarter grades) require a grade change form. This form may be obtained in the front office and should be submitted to the PEIMS clerk who will then submit the form to the principal or assistant principal. Keep in mind that a student is not to carry an incomplete grade for longer than a six weeks period, unless there are extenuating circumstances the principal will review all grade changes made by the teachers during the school year.

Hall Passes

Each student will receive a student planner that includes a hallway passport, which will serve as a hall pass. A hall pass (the Planner) must be used each time a student is out of the classroom. The teacher should sign and document the time on the pass. The use of the hall pass (the planner) will be expected. Any student in the area without a hall pass will be sent back to class to get the required pass. If a student feels ill while in the classroom and wants to visit the nurse, please use the Nurse's pass to send the student to see the school nurse. If you received a student request form initiated by someone in the office, that student request form will serve the purpose of a hall pass.

Keys

Teachers will be issued a room key, a desk key, and a file cabinet key. Other keys as required by the teaching assignment may be requested. The Principal must approve these key requests. All keys will be turned in at the end of the school year or termination of service. Any lost keys will be replaced at the teacher's expense.

Leaves and Absences

Teacher attendance is vital to the success of our students. State law entitles all employees to five days of paid personal leave per year. State personal leave accumulates without limit and is transferable to other Texas school districts. All employees shall **earn** five workdays of paid local leave per school year, at a rate of one-half workday for each month of employment. Local leave shall accumulate without limit, but cannot be transferred. In the event that an illness or some other incident should prevent you from coming to school, please notify us immediately. For every absence, teachers must complete the appropriate paper work with the campus secretary. In addition, all leaves and absences must be registered through Region One's Substitute Management System, Aesop. Additional information about absences and sick leave may be obtained from the campus secretary or through the district employee handbook:

http://www.stisd.net/staff_resources

Lesson Plans

Teachers will follow the board approved STISD scope and sequences for their subjects. The scope and sequence provides teachers with a guide for teaching their subject's TEKS as well as our district's Essential Learning Outcomes. Teachers will create weekly, at-a-glance lesson plans that contain the targeted TEKS, ELO's, student objectives, instructional methods, and assessments used. Weekly lesson plans must be submitted by Monday at 8:00 a.m. for that week. Teachers will keep one copy of their lesson plan in their classroom, and submit one copy of their lesson plans to their evaluator. The at-a-glance template will be provided to teachers.

Observations and Snapshots

Helping students reach their academic goals is a big part of our mission. For this reason, monitoring students and observing instruction is the most important use of an administrators' time. Teachers can expect weekly observations and snapshots from their administrative team as well as teacher leaders. The purpose of these visits is to support teacher development and student learning.

Parent Communication

Parents are our partners in students' education. Communication from the school to the home is essential. Telephone calls, emails, notes, and conferences are a few ways we can let parents what kind of progress the student is making. The communication should also include words of praise or encouragement. Teams will document parent communication as part of their weekly team meetings.

Parties

Classroom parties are not permitted. A social function conducted during class time must have an academic focus and must be approved by the Principal.

Payroll Checks

All South Texas Independent School District employees are paid on a monthly basis except for transportation, maintenance, and cafeteria employees. These individuals are paid on a biweekly basis. Monthly paychecks are issued on the 25th of each month. If this date happens to fall on a weekend, then you will be paid on the Friday before. If you would like to have direct deposit, the campus secretary can provide you with the correct form to complete.

Pledge of Allegiance

As per Texas Education Code Section 25.082:

- The board of trustees of each school district shall require students, once during each school day at each school in the district, to recite:
- the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag in accordance with 4 U.S.C. Section 4, and its subsequent amendments; and
- the pledge of allegiance to the state flag in accordance with Subchapter C, Chapter 3100, Government Code.
- On written request from a student's parent or guardian, a school district shall excuse the student from reciting a pledge of allegiance under Subsection
- The board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the observance of one minute of silence at each school in the district following the recitation of the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags under Subsection
- During the one-minute period, each student may, as the student chooses, reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity that is not likely to interfere with or distract another student. Each teacher or other school employee in charge of students during that period shall ensure that each of those students remains silent and does not act in a manner that is likely to interfere with or distract another student.

Professional Development

Professional Development is essential to our teachers' growth and improvement. Anyone requesting to attend a conference or workshop for professional development must follow district and campus procedures. Please see the Forms and Procedures Appendix for specific information.

Professional Learning Communities

Rising Scholars Academy is a professional learning community dedicated to ensuring that all our students learn, grow and achieve. As a PLC, every professional in the building must engage with colleagues in the ongoing exploration of three crucial questions that drive the work of those within a professional learning community:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

In order to collaborate and address these critical questions, we are assigned to academic teams as well as departments, and our master schedule is designed to provide common time for this work to take place during the school day.

Progress Reports

The progress reports will be sent out every three weeks. A minimum of four grades must be recorded within the three-week period.

Purchasing Procedures

The purchasing process begins when the department/campus determines a need for goods or services and ends when that need is met. The purchasing department provides support to the schools and departments

by monitoring or handling purchases in order to ensure compliance with all applicable statutory and legal requirements, STISD Board Policy, best practices, and adherence to the ethical standards advocated by the Texas Association of School Business Officials. For specific purchasing procedures, please see the Forms and Procedures Appendix.

Pyramid of Interventions

STISD has researched and developed a systemic intervention plan. The Pyramid of Interventions was developed to increase the opportunities students have to find success. The purpose of this approach is to find ways to help students solve cyclical issues, increase communication, and increase students' learning and achievement. Staff will be trained and will directly participate in adding, modifying and adjusting the strategies and interventions. This Pyramid is malleable and will change over time as new needs emerge and the process evolves.

Goals of the Pyramid of Intervention:

- To provide a structure for students who may need interventions in his/her daily education
- To empower the staff with the tools necessary to help all children succeed
- Practice and employ measurable interventions that increase student learning and achievement.

Purpose of the Pyramid of Interventions:

- Provide a clear framework for staff
- Supply empowering tools that include interventions, steps, and measures
- Implement a systemic approach for addressing the needs of all students
- Create a clear path for all students
- Increase accountability for staff and students
- Improve levels of achievement
- Furnish documentation for future use to ensure continued success
- Improve the special education referral process
- Increase interventions for all children
- Increase parental communication
- Provide transitions for students

Report Cards

Report Cards are sent home to parents every quarter (nine-weeks). Teachers will finalize grades through Infinite Campus and the PEIMS clerk will print out the report cards. Teachers must carefully verify that report card grades are correct since these grades become part of students' permanent records. A grade change form must be submitted to and approved by the principal before a report card grade is modified.

Semester Exams

Students will take semester exams at the end of each semester. During exam week, students will take two exams each day, and the school day for students will end at 2:00 p.m. An exam schedule will be sent out prior to exam week. Teachers will stay until 4:00 to grade exams and enter grades. Teachers will submit their semester exams to their evaluator the week prior to semester exam week. During the week prior to exam week, teachers will review material and help students prepare for exams and recover missing assignments. No homework may be assigned during exam week.

Smoking

The South Texas Independent School District Board of Trustees has elected to make this district smoke free. Smoking on campus, including the parking lot will not be allowed.

Substitutes

STISD uses the Region One's Substitute Management System, Aesop. Training on Aesop will take place at the beginning of the year. A teacher who knows in advance that he/she will be absent the next school day(s) should notify the assistant principal or principal before leaving school and then request their substitute through Aesop. A teacher who unexpectedly must be absent from school should notify the Principal **(956) 564-3519** or Assistant Principal **(956) 532-2463** by 6:00 A.M. the day of the absence and then request their substitute through Aesop.

Teachers must provide the substitute with the necessary materials and instructions in order for learning to take place. Some of the things that a teacher should provide for the substitute are:

- Detailed lesson plan and instructions
- Seating chart
- Classroom rosters
- Lesson materials and resources
- Instructions regarding student use of computers or other electronic devices

Student Academic Contracts

Students who receive a quarter grade below 70 in any of their courses (including electives) are eligible to receive an academic contract for grade recovery. Teachers will provide students with a contract that details the work and assignments needed to recover the grade. Upon successful completion of the contract, teachers will fill out a grade change form with the student's new grade and submit it to the PEIMS clerk. If you have any questions about contracts, please contact your team leader, principal or assistant principal.

Supplies

The school will provide some basic supplies for the operation of the classroom. Supplies are purchased in bulk form in a manner that is in compliance with district guidelines. Faculty/staff will be notified at the beginning of the school year of their allotted supply budget. All purchases must be approved prior to ordering. Any deviation from purchasing procedures could result in a financial responsibility for the teacher. Teachers are expected to spend their allotted money by January 31. Please spend your money wisely on items that are needed for instruction. Supply request forms and requisition forms are available from the bookkeeper.

Tardies

An efficient student is responsible and disciplined, and therefore, never tardy. Students who are tardy to school in the morning must obtain a tardy pass from the tardy station kiosk. A student who is habitually tardy will face disciplinary consequences. Rising Scholars Academy will document and address all tardies through our Tardy Station.

Teacher Workday

Teachers' workday begins at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 4:15 p.m. It is essential that teachers report to work on time every day. Teachers who have duty, must report to duty on time and stay the designated time. If there is a faculty meeting or training after school, teachers will be expected to stay as well. Please note, work

hours may vary in cases where special school activities and/or staff development are scheduled. Employees will be notified ahead of time.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

Teachers should also have a thorough understanding of their TEKS. While the TEKS are used to develop the district scope and sequences, teachers should have a thorough understanding of their subject's TEKS. The TEKS are available for download from the TEA website. Feel free to contact your assigned appraiser if you have any immediate concerns. Also, teachers will need to document mastery of the essential knowledge skills for each student enrolled in their class.

Textbooks

The Assistant Principal is in charge of textbooks. As a growing campus, we will be ordering new textbooks each year. Teachers are responsible for assigning, collecting and managing their textbook inventory. Teachers are responsible for the accurate accounting of any lost textbooks by students. If textbooks are assigned to teachers, the teacher is responsible for cost of lost or misplaced text as per STISD contract agreement.

Use of phones

The telephones in the office, the classroom and the teacher's lounge are for school business only. Personal cell phones are not to be used during class time unless an emergency arises as this sets a bad precedence for students.

Work Hours

Administrators	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. 1-hour lunch
Teachers	8:15 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. 30-minute lunch
Teacher Assistants	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. 30-minute lunch
Campus Secretary, Bookkeeper, PEIMS clerk, Counselor's Secretary	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. 1-hour lunch
Receptionist	7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. 1-hour lunch