



Student & Parent Handbook

2023-2024

School Mission: **Rams LEAD:**

Love Learning

Excel In All We Do

Achieve Goals Together

Do What Is Right

School Vision: **Win the Day; Every Student-Every
Day!**

Welcome, Rams!

At Rusheon Middle School, we are Rams, and **Rams LEAD** by being **Respectful, Accountable, Motivated, and Successful = R.A.M.S.**

Respectful. Be **polite** at all times.

Accountable. Be **responsible** at all times.

Motivated. **Participate** in class and school activities.

Successful. Do your **best** at all times.

Each day we will help empower our Rams to “LEAD” academically, behaviorally, and culturally by knowing and living the **R.A.M.S. code** and by using teamwork to ensure that every student reaches higher ground.

Mitch Maxwell
Principal

T. O. RUSHEON MIDDLE SCHOOL PHONE DIRECTORY

| | |
|--|----------|
| Mitch Maxwell - Principal | 549-6615 |
| Zaraka Lopez - Assistant Principal | 549-6616 |
| Nichole Nuccio - Assistant Principal | 549-6617 |
| Natalie Pope - Assistant Principal | 549-6618 |
| Annie McCulloch - Instructional Coach | 549-6624 |
| Marco Reyes - Instructional Coach | 549-6624 |
| Roslyn Stumon- Counselor (6th Grade and 7th Last Names A - J) | 549-6621 |
| Ashley Anderson - Counselor (8th Grade and 7th Last Names K - Z) | 549-6620 |
| Shannon Mitchell- Secretary | 549-6611 |
| Samantha Mueller - Attendance Clerk | 549-6612 |
| School Resource Officer (SRO) | |
| 549-6619 | |
| Tokera Goodson School Nurse | 549-6622 |

Rusheon Middle School
 2401 Old Minden Road
 Bossier City, LA 71112
 318-549-6610

Rusheon Middle School Policies

ARRIVAL

All Students may enter the building between 7:35 and 7:55 through the bus ramp entrance. There is no supervision available to monitor students prior to 7:35 on the bus ramp. Students who wish to eat will proceed to the appropriate hallway, receive a “grab-and-go” meal, and report to their homerooms. Students who do not desire to eat breakfast will proceed directly to their homeroom classes. **The parent of record must accompany and check-in any student (non-bus rider) who arrives after 8:00 AM.**

TRANSITIONS

Students will transition to and from core academic classes in teams and from elective and PE classes individually. Teachers and other school personnel will facilitate this movement. Students will have 3 minutes for transition between classes.

DEPARTURE

Students may depart school following the final bell at 3:05 or at the time designated by the administration.

- Bus riding students will exit their 5th block wing. Students should know their bus number and bus driver.
 - Band - C-Wing
 - GASP - C-Wing
 - ISS - C-Wing students will
 - GYM - B-Wing
 - STEM - A-Wing
- Car riders and walkers will exit the front of the school. They **DO NOT** go to the bus ramp.

Any student departing for home in a manner that deviates from her/his normal routine must present a signed parent note to the office secretary for verification. Following verification, the office secretary will stamp the note and return it to the student.

If afternoon transportation changes, then please call the office secretary before 2:00.

CHECK-OUT

Students may check-out of school between 8:30 and **2:00** with verified permission from the parent or guardian of record. Students remain responsible for completing any work missed upon returning to school. We encourage parents to avoid checking out students unless special circumstances (i.e., emergencies) arise.

CAFETERIA

The school cafeteria provides a well-balanced breakfast and lunch for all students. We encourage all students to participate in both to enhance their health and preparedness to learn.

Since Bossier Parish Schools must abide by the “Competitive Clause”, **students may not bring commercial food items to school** (i.e., McDonald’s or Wendy’s containers).

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS.

For details on school attendance requirements, please review the District Student Handbook on the Bossier Parish Schools website. (www.bossierschools.org).

TRANSFERS AND WITHDRAWALS

To withdraw students from school, parents or guardians must complete and submit a withdrawal/transfer form to the office. The school secretary maintains the forms.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Backpacks are optional. Students will be supplied paper and pencils/pens in classes. If students need additional supplies for specific classes, then teachers will notify parents in writing. Students should wear athletic shoes daily to school, **NO CROCS or SLIDES** are allowed.

ACADEMICS AND LEARNING RESOURCES

COURSES

Rusheon Middle School offers a variety of core **academic and elective classes** to meet the learning needs of all students. Among these include the following:

- English Language Arts (APP and Grade Level)
- Mathematics (APP, Algebra I, Essentials of Algebra, and Grade Level)
- Science (Inquiry-based courses)
- Social Studies (World History, American Studies, Louisiana Studies. Inquiry-Based Courses)
- Foreign Language (Spanish)
- Music (Choir, Band, Violin)
- Business (Quest-for-Success, Keyboarding)
- Physical Education (Health and Physical Fitness)
- Cyber Fundamentals/Robotics, Cyber Literacy
- Art, Theater
- Success Strategies

For more information on core academic elective classes, please contact the school counselors.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students should complete all assigned work during the designated grading period on or before the due date.

- Students may complete missing assignments for **full credit** if they have an excused absence. All students are allotted **one day for each day absent** to complete missing assignments.
- Teachers, in collaboration with team members and instructional leaders, will adjust time frames and pacing as necessary **if** large numbers of students are quarantined for extended periods (i.e., 10-24 days).
- **Students are responsible** for **seeking assistance** and **scheduling** times with teachers to complete the missing assignments.
- **Teachers are responsible** for **providing opportunities** for students to **receive tutoring** and **complete** missing **assignments** outside of regular instructional time and an intervention time will be offered for students needing extra assistance.:
- **Students** and the **parents** are responsible for students **completing assignments** on **Google Classroom** of Oncourse Classroom during **absences** or **communicating** with teachers if issues arise.
- **Teachers** are **responsible** for **posting all assignments for the week** on **Google Classroom** by **Monday at 7:30 AM** and for **grading/providing feedback** on assignments in a **timely manner (1-3 business days)**.
- All grades will be updated weekly.
 - **Class Assignments (50%). Assessments (50%)**
 - All grades will be based on the **essential standards (knowledge, skills, or attitudes)** and used to **guide instruction** that facilitates **learning at high levels** for **all students**.

LIBRARY

Students may use the library during regularly scheduled library time (ELA class), and during special occasions with written teacher permission. All students may check out library books for two-week intervals and renew them once. Reference books and magazines must remain in the library. For more information on the library/media center, please contact the librarian.

FIELD TRIPS

To support and enhance classroom instruction, T. O. Rusheon Middle School sponsors regular field trips. Students are encouraged to maintain eligibility for field trips by consistently meeting expectations: R.A.M.S. = **Respectful. Accountable. Motivated. Successful.** For more details, please contact the sponsoring teacher. (Note that students must meet academic and behavioral prerequisites to attend field trips and must comply with all directions from all chaperones, including parents and school officials. Students who fail to meet expectations will be subject to disciplinary action and may forfeit the privilege of completing and/or attending field trips. Also, anyone interested in serving as a chaperone may contact the field trip sponsor.)

STUDENT LIFE: CLUBS, ATHLETICS, AND EVENTS

Rusheon Middle School offers a variety of clubs, organizations, and activities to enhance students academically, behaviorally, and culturally. Some of these clubs are offered during school hours so all can participate. Clubs vary each year based on student interest and participation, but some of the major clubs include the following.

RAM Pride Pep Squad

Ram Pride serves as a school-wide spirit organization. Boys and girls participate in the pep squad and attend RMS functions and athletic events. Ram Pride members love to cheer their team to victory!

Cheerleaders:

Cheerleaders serve as leaders on-and-off campus and promote school spirit throughout the day and during school events. All cheerleaders must maintain a grade point average of 2.0 or higher, with no grade below a “D”, and attend summer camp, after-school practices, football and basketball games, pep rallies, and other school activities. They must also receive no office behavior referrals, and maintain a high standard of conduct. For more information about cheerleaders, please see the club sponsor.

Danceline

Dance line members participate in all football games, home basketball games and pep rallies. Members must maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA throughout the current school year, receive no office behavior referrals, and maintain a high standard of conduct.

Mathcounts

Sixth, seventh and eighth grade students who show strong math skills may participate in a competition involving problem solving and calculations. For more information, please see the club sponsor.

Athletics

Students in all grades may participate in football, basketball, softball, archery, soccer, cross-country, and track. A sixth or seventh grade student may not turn 14 years-of-age before September 1, and an eighth grade student may not turn 15 before September 1 to play sports per the state guidelines. To participate, students must present verification of age (an official birth certificate), maintain at least a 1.5 grade point average, and pass the majority of her/his subjects each nine weeks.

Band

Rusheon Middle School offers a complete band instrumental program. The band performs during home football games and pep rallies and may participate in summer band camp. The eighth grade band plays for the Christmas Concert, District Large Ensemble Festival, and the Spring Concert. They also audition for Honor Band and participate in the Solo and Ensemble Festival. The seventh grade band serves as a training band and performs at the Spring Concert. Choir, violin, and cello students also participate in the Christmas Concert and Spring Concert.

PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN (Summary)

RMS takes several deliberate steps to collaborate with and engage parents/guardians and the community in our efforts to mold students into lifelong learners. Our efforts to obtain and maintain engagement include the following:

- **Social Media.** We encourage parents to join and respond to (“like” or “comment”) school activities posted on Facebook as part of school wide goals.
- **Parent Teacher Organization.** We encourage parents to join and participate in PTO activities.
- **Parent/Guardian Day Activities.** We encourage parents to participate in special activities such as Grandparent’s Day, STEM Night, Band and Choir Christmas Program, Black History Month Wax Museum, and RMS Meet the Teacher.
- **School Athletic Events.** We encourage parents/guardians to attend and participate in school athletic events as volunteers (i.e., concessions).
- **School-Sponsored Media.** We encourage parents to interact with students, teachers, and other school faculty and staff and to track student growth via school-sponsored media such as **Google Classroom, On Course,** and the **Rusheon Middle School Website.**
- **Positive Parent/Guardian Communication.** We encourage teachers, counselors, and administrators to make positive parent phone calls regularly and to update parents/guardians on student progress academically, behaviorally, and culturally.
- **School Fundraiser and Charity Events.** We encourage parents and guardians to participate in school fundraising/charity events such as school dances, canned-food drives, and health walks.
- **Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences.** We encourage parents and guardians to schedule and participate in conferences with teachers, counselors, and administrators to assess and enhance student growth.
- **Parent-Supported Learning Activities.** We encourage parents to participate in parent-sponsored learning activities such as the Rams Reading Club (students read to parents or guardians for 15 minutes per day).
- **Parish-Approved Counseling Services.** We encourage parents/guardians to participate in parish-approved counseling services.

We invite all parents, family members, and community stakeholders to join our efforts to help all students climb to the top academically, behaviorally, and culturally.

For more information on parent/guardian engagement activities, please see the full “Rusheon Middle School Family, and Community Engagement Plan” on the school website and the “Rusheon Middle School Family-School Compact” at the end of the handbook. .

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students maintain the right to learn in a safe environment and to report incidents of verbal or physical harassment or mistreatment (academically or personally) immediately to any school official. Students and/or parents and guardians should notify an administrator in a timely manner if initial efforts to resolve an incident and/or conflict fall short of success.

Students experiencing personal problems---whether school related or not---that affect their safety, well-being, and/or learning maintain the right and responsibility to consult with the school counselor or an administrator for advice and assistance.

For more information on preventing and responding to harassment (i.e., bullying), please go to the government website www.stopbullying.gov or speak with any administrator.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

In cases of emergency, students and teachers receive notification via the bell system or intercom:

Fire or Fire Drill. Long continuous bell. Teachers direct students out of the building per the emergency exit plan.

Hazardous Weather or Weather Drill. Short, intermittent bell. Teachers direct students into the halls. Students sit and face the wall with their heads down and covered.

Intruder. School officials announce “INITIATE LOCKDOWN” over the intercom system, or the SRO directs other action as necessary.

Other Emergencies. (Not intruder-related but for security.) School officials announce “INITIATE RESTRICTED MOVEMENT.” Teachers continue their normal classroom activities with restricted movements in hallways.

MEDICATION

If students require prescribed medication during school hours, then parents must complete the necessary documents and deliver the medication to the office secretary. Unless the student possesses a current health care plan, then parents must administer all medications, including those considered “over-the-counter” (such as Advil, Aspirin, Nyquil, Dayquil, or Benadryl, etc.) School officials will confiscate any medicines that students bring to school and notify the parents. No school official may give a student medication to return home under any circumstances.

PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Any student eligible to ride a bicycle to school must dismount the bicycle upon entering campus. Students may lock and store bicycles in the designated area. The bike shall not be ridden on campus.

For the safety of all students and staff, the following items also are prohibited from school grounds: skateboards, roller blades, scooters, and/or any other mode of transportation that is deemed a safety hazard.

Students must obtain written permission from the parent or guardian of record to change routes and/or modes of transportation from school to home. School personnel must verify and endorse all parent/guardian notes.

Students who walk to school must use the crosswalk and comply with all safety directions from school personnel.

VISITORS

For the safety of all students and staff, we ask that visitors report to the office for registration.

ELECTRONICS

To avoid distractions and enhance safety, **we strongly encourage students to leave electronic devices (cell phones and earbuds) at home, and we strongly encourage parents to call the office if they need to communicate with students. All cell phones and smart watches brought to school, MUST be placed in the cell phone holder classroom storage pocket chart upon arrival in each classroom. Note: Should a student fail to follow the school/classroom procedures for cell phones and other electronic devices during school hours, their phone will be held by a member of the administration and returned to a parent or parental designee. Students are not allowed to wear headphones or earbuds without permission or it will be held by administration.**

In rare instances, students may use cell phones during **times or occasions approved by both the supervising teacher and the administration for educational purposes.** Students who utilize cell phones or other electronic devices during unapproved times will be subject to behavioral interventions and disciplinary action in accordance with the school and parish policies. Administration may put additional rules in place permitting student use of a personal technology devices during the school day.

LOST-AND-FOUND

The “Lost and Found” is located in the closet by the GASP room. The school will store lost items and prohibited items taken up by administrators for a reasonable amount of time and then donate any unclaimed items to local charities. Note: **The school is not responsible for the maintenance or recovery of items reported as lost or missing.**

SCHOOL BUS CONDUCT

Please note the Bossier Schools bus policy.

School Bus Conduct

School bus guidelines have been adopted by the Bossier Parish School Board in order to provide safe transportation to and from school. It is a privilege, not a right, to ride Bossier Parish school buses. All Board policies are strictly enforced on school buses. The bus operator, together with the principal, assumes full responsibility for the discipline of students who ride the bus. Should an infraction occur, the bus operator will notify the principal in writing. The principal has the sole authority to determine punishment, if warranted.

The responsibility for supervision of students begins at the bus stop in the morning and ends when students exit buses at the end of the day. On-time delivery and student safety are the primary goals of each bus operator.

When riding the school bus, every student will

1. Follow the Bus Transportation rules as directed by the bus operator and the student's principal.
2. Report to the assigned bus stop at least 5 minutes before the scheduled arrival time; the bus stops will be assigned by your student's bus operator.
3. Not bring on the bus objects that are too large to be held in the student's lap or to fit under the seat (including large band instruments, projects, and other large objects).
4. Assist the bus operator in maintaining a clean and sanitary bus; students who damage/destroy buses are appropriately disciplined/assessed for damages.
5. Not exit the bus at a different stop from their assigned stop without written authorization from the principal. The note must be presented to the operator at the start of the afternoon run.
6. Remain seated with backs against the seat, backpacks in lap, facing forward in the student's permanently assigned seat, while the bus is in motion and during stops for other students. The bus operator is responsible for seat assignments.
7. Only talk quietly to your neighbor. Vulgar language and bullying of other students will not be tolerated.
8. Adhere to the dress code for each school.
9. Not eat on the bus. (Students may carry water on the bus in plastic bottles)
10. Not extend arms out of windows or doors; not throw objects out of windows.

NOTE: A violation of bus rules may result in loss of bus privileges and or disciplinary action. All buses are equipped with video cameras that constantly monitor student passengers. Bus operators are permitted to make reasonable rules for the safe transportation of students.

See Transportation website for additional bus safety tips.

Note from RMS: Students should report any problems experienced on the bus (harassment, safety violations, etc.) immediately to the bus driver and/or a school administrator.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS & SUPPORT (PBIS)

Students who meet or exceed expectations will receive **positive points (Ram points) or merits** under the schoolwide **Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports or PBIS** program. Schoolwide expectations are embedded in the **RAMS code**:

“Rams **LEAD** by being **Respectful, Accountable, Motivated, and Successful.**”

Respectful. Be **polite** at all times.

Accountable. Be **responsible** at all times.

Motivated. **Participate** in class and school activities.

Successful. Do your **best** at all times.

Specific expected behaviors based on the RAMS code include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Walk to the right in the hallways;
- Maintain a clean, organized environment;
- Use an “indoor” voice when indoors;
- Comply with reasonable requests in a timely manner;
- Help others in a positive way.

Incentives available to students who follow the RAMS code regularly include the following:

- RAM Points/Merits
- School Store Privileges
- Field Trips
- Recreational Activities
- Positive Parent/Guardian Contact

Students who fall short of meeting the RAMS code will receive interventions and support that may include the following:

- Restorative Practices;
- Student Conference;
- Parent Conference;
- Counseling;
- School Community Service.
- Loss of Student Privileges;
- Response-to-Intervention (RTI)
- Guided Alternative To Suspension Program (GASP);
- Saturday School
- Check in/check out with a chosen mentor

Behaviors are tracked and monitored through our PBIS Rewards App. Parents are able to download the app to monitor their student’s behavior, both positive and negative.

Minor Infractions

Minor infractions that may require **classroom-level behavior interventions and supports** include the following:

- Defiance/ Non-Compliance including cell phone issues
- Talking
- Eating/ Gum
- Dress Code
- Refusal to Work
- Sleeping/ Head Down
- Minor Disruptive Behavior
- Horseplay (ex. Slap Boxing, pushing, shoving)
- Electronic Devices
- Minor Disrespectful Behavior
- Dishonesty
- Inappropriate Language

Major Infractions

Major infractions that may require **school or parish level behavior interventions & supports** include the following:

- Willful Disobedience
- Excessive Inappropriate Language
- Possession of a Weapon
- Striking a Teacher
- Threatening School Personnel
- Group/ Individual Fighting
- Instigating/ Initiating a Fight
- Possession of or using any controlled substance or alcohol
- Bullying, Threatening, or Hazing Students
- Defacing, Stealing, or Destroying School Property
- Sexual Harassment
- Skipping Class
- Extreme/ Extensive Disrespect

RMS Family - School Compact

The RMS Family-School compact outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the way in which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the state's high standards.

Rusheon Middle School faculty and staff will take the following action:

- Provide a high-quality effective learning environment that is safe and that enables students to meet the Louisiana Student Standards;
- Facilitate ongoing communication among students, teachers and parents through parent-teacher-student conferences and frequent collaboration with all stakeholders;
- Provide reasonable access to faculty and staff members through an "open door" policy;
- Provide opportunities for parents to volunteer and participate in their children's classes and observe classroom activities;
- Facilitate a respectful relationship between all parties (students, parents, teachers, and volunteers).

Rusheon Middle School parents and guardians will take the following action:

- Support my child's learning by ensuring that he/she receives proper rest and nutrition and attends school promptly and regularly;
- Support my child's learning by reading with her/him;
- Help set a positive tone for learning with my child;
- Strive to make positive use of my time with my child ("quality" one-on-one time);
- Participate in decisions relating to the education of my child through a mutually respectful relationship with school faculty and staff members;
- Support a respectful relationship among all parties (students, parents, teachers, and volunteers);
- Provide time for homework completion;
- Support my child's classes/school in multiple ways (i.e., volunteering to assist in my child's classroom/school, communicating with my child's teachers, attending school events when possible, etc.)

Rusheon Middle School students will take the following action:

- Proudly follow the behavioral expectations taught at our school;
- Ask questions when I am not sure about a lesson or an assignment;
- Make good choices like paying attention in class, staying on task, doing my best, and working hard to learn in all classes;
- Be the best "RAM" that I can be: **R**espectful. **A**ccountable. **M**otivated. **S**uccessful.

Parent Name: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name _____ Phone Number: _____

Teacher's Name _____

Parent Engagement: Economic Issues & Action

RMS provides the following support for families facing short-term or long-term economic issues.

1. **Outerwear:** Parents & guardians may email their child's counselor if they cannot purchase approved outerwear (solid black, gray or navy blue) and/or the outerwear that the child currently has is inadequate (i.e, too small, too light, damaged, etc.)
2. **Hygiene:** Students may communicate (privately) with their PE coach or counselor if they need to use the shower in the gym before or after school and/or have laundry needs. The school will ensure proper sanitization and collaborate with parents and guardians as necessary.
3. **Uniforms & Supplies.** Students who need uniforms, school supplies, or personal hygiene items may see the GASP facilitator (Ms. Bell in GASP/Band building) before or after school. If an emergency arises, then students may collaborate with Ms. Bell during class (teacher note or call needed).
4. **Weekend Food.** Students in need of food for the weekend may email the counselor and/or pick up a weekend food pack after school on Fridays (front entrance and at the end of hallways at 3:00).

RMS Student Dress Code

Uniform Shirts: Spirit or polo shirts (**green, black, navy, or white**). Short or long-sleeved shirts with collars are acceptable.

Uniform Bottoms: **Black, khaki, or navy blue** pants, shorts, or skirts. Uniform bottoms must be a reasonable length and be worn at the waist, underwear cannot be showing above pants. **No sweatpants, jeggings, or leggings are allowed.**

Outerwear/Jackets: Hoodies and sweatshirts will be allowed with the following restrictions: they **MUST** be solid black, solid navy, solid gray, or be the Rusheon spirit hoodie. Hoodies should be free of all logos and graphics. **Hoodies of non-uniform colors MAY NOT be worn underneath school approved hoodies.** Hoods are not allowed to be pulled up inside the building. Denim (jean) jackets and blankets are **NOT** allowed at school.

Shoes: Closed-toed with a back. Athletic shoes are recommended. (Note: Houseshoes, slides, and “croc” are not allowed. These shoes pose a hazard for students in PE and as they move around the campus.)

Socks: Students may choose their style of socks. Socks may not contain inappropriate symbols.

Belts: The belt must fit into the belt loops of uniform bottoms designed to have belt loops and remain buckled at all times. No part of the belt may be hanging. Belts should not possess inappropriate designs or sharp rivets.

Headwear: Students may wear knit caps outside the building and appropriate headbands inside or outside. Unless approved by the administration, all other head coverings (i.e., caps, hats, stocking caps, bandanas, scarves, etc.,) are prohibited.

Jewelry: Students may wear appropriate **earrings** that do not pose a danger if pulled. Nose rings are tolerated but they must not dangle and must be confined to one side of the nose. Other forms of **body piercings** (lip, tongue, eyebrow) **are NOT allowed.** (Note: Students may not cover body piercings with bandages.)

Hair: Hairstyle must not be a distraction to learning nor contain any vulgar or inappropriate symbols. All hair or styles may not be worn longer than knee length. If you are unsure please ask the administration.

Religious Expression and Activities on Campus and at School Events (BPSB)

Bossier Parish schools educate students from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds, and it is the intent of this policy to respect the Constitutional rights of all students. In order to do so, the following guidelines are established:

Definition

The following definitions shall apply to this policy. In construing these definitions, the singular shall include the plural and the plural shall include the singular:

- a) "Club" means a non-curricular student group that is recognized by the Board and that qualifies for protection under the safe-haven provisions of the Equal Access Act (20 U.S.C. §4071(c)).
- b) "Prayer" means a communication (written or audible) with a deity, including, but not limited to, a benediction, an invocation, the Lord's Prayer, or otherwise calling upon a deity to offer guidance, assistance, or a blessing. Accordingly, "Prayer" does not include customary, polite expressions and greetings, including "God Bless You" or "Thank Heavens," or a student's religious expression responsive to a legitimate academic class assignment.
- c) "Religious Service" means a convocation for a religious purpose, including, but not limited to, baccalaureate, religious youth group meeting or event, church service, and Bible study.
- d) "Religious Title" means Benediction, Invocation, Prayer, Blessing, Inspirational Message, Sermon, Devotional Pledge, Bible Reading, Devotion or any other title that in any way relates to Prayer.
- e) "Religious Venue" means a property, facility, building, or place that is maintained and controlled by or for a religious body that is organized, in whole or in part, to sustain public worship.
- f) "School District" or "District" means the Bossier Parish School District.
- g) "School Event" means any activity or happening (i) at a School Board facility or (ii) sponsored, conducted, or supervised by a School Official acting in his or her Official Capacity. It includes, but is not limited to, a graduation, grade-promotion ceremony, award program, induction ceremony, pep rally, competition, practice, performance, class instructional time, and a club meeting or event. However, the following activities are not a school Event:
 - (1) A student religious Club meeting or event, if School employees and agents are only present at the meeting or event in a "non-participatory capacity," as specified in the Equal Access Act;
 - (2) An activity at a School Board facility, if (i) it is outside the presence of School District students and (ii) no School Official acts in his or her Official Capacity; and
 - (3) An activity at a School Board facility that is used by a third-party pursuant to a standard facility use agreement.

h) "School Official" or "Official" means any member of the Board, its officers, agents, and employees but only to the extent such a person acts in his or her Official Capacity. Outside organizations that receive no support from the Board, do not receive remuneration of any kind from the Board, are not controlled by the Board, and are not given preferential treatment or access by the Board are not School Officials, (*e.g.* booster clubs when they satisfy these requirements).

i) "Official Capacity" means only that conduct of employees in the performance of their official duties with the school district. A person acts in his or her "Official Capacity" when (1) performing official duties or furthering the work of the School Board or (2) acting under or with a power or authority granted by virtue of employment by or association with the School Board. However, where the only power or authority the School Official exercises is the authority to be present at a School Board facility and the School Official is not interacting with or in the presence of a student, then the School Official is not in his or her Official Capacity by virtue of subsection (i)(2).

Speech, Literature Distribution, and Clothing

Students in Bossier Parish schools shall have the right to express their ideas verbally and through the distribution of literature so long as their speech does not disrupt the ordinary operation of the school. The following policies shall govern student expression:

1. Students may verbally express their ideas during class so long as their verbal expressions are consistent with the subject matter being taught.
2. Students may verbally express their ideas to other students during non- instructional time so long as their speech is not disruptive to the ordinary operation of the school and does not infringe on the rights of other students.
3. Students may distribute literature during non-instructional time so long as the distribution is not disruptive to the ordinary operation of the school and does not infringe on the rights of other students.
4. Students may wear symbols or articles of clothing which contain written or symbolic expressions so long as such symbols or clothing are not obscene and do not infringe on the rights of other students.
5. Students may Pray, discuss their faith, read the Bible or other religious texts, and invite others to participate in such student-led activities during non-instructional time.
6. As used in this section, the term "non-instructional time" means before or after school hours, between classes, during lunch or recess times, or during such times as may be set aside for student club meetings.
7. As used in this section, the phrase "does not disrupt the ordinary operation of the school" means that the speaker is the initiator and cause of disruption. This does not mean that other students must agree with the speaker. Disruption by other students in response to the student's expressions should not be construed to mean that the speaker is causing disruption. "Disruptive to the ordinary operation of the school" includes littering, forcing other students to listen by shouting or preventing passage, or engaging in speech activities during

instructional time which are not consistent with the subject matter being taught.

8. As used in this section, the phrase “infringe on the rights of other students” means defamatory expressions against another student.

While students are free to share and promote their personal religious beliefs pursuant to federal and state law, the School District and its Officials may not endorse or sponsor religious activities in schools. For example, School Officials are not permitted to promote or endorse religion, may not participate in or cause Prayers to be offered during school or in conjunction with School Events, and may not arrange to include Prayer, whether or not such is noted in a printed program, during or in conjunction with a School Event.

If School Officials select persons to make an address during or in conjunction with a School Event, they shall do so by that selection process set forth hereinbelow.

Student Speakers at School Events

Certain students who have attained special positions of honor or distinction in Bossier schools have traditionally addressed school audiences from time to time as a tangential component of their achieved positions, such as captains of various sports teams, student council officers, class officers, homecoming kings and queens, prom king and queens, valedictorians and salutatorians, and the like. Such students have attained their respective positions based on neutral criteria. Nothing in this policy eliminates the continuation of the practice of having these students, irrespective of the grade level, address school audiences in the normal course of their respective positions.

The School District hereby creates a limited public forum for student speakers at all school events at which a student is allowed to speak publicly. For each speaker, the District shall set a maximum time limit reasonable and appropriate to the occasion. Student speakers may introduce:

(a) Football games; (b) Any other athletic events designated by the district; and (c) Any additional events designated by the district, which may include, without limitation, assemblies and pep rallies.

The forum shall be limited in the manner described below:

Only those students who hold one of the following positions of distinction based on neutral criteria are eligible to speak at the limited public forum: student council officers, class officers, captains of school athletic teams, homecoming/prom kings and queens, valedictorians, salutatorians, presidents of student clubs, and other students holding positions of honor as the school district may designate. Any serious disciplinary violations by a student will result in the student becoming immediately ineligible to participate in the limited public forum.

A student who wishes to participate as an introductory speaker shall submit to the principal’s office during an announced period of not less than five (5) days, the student’s name and proof of eligibility as described above. The announced period may be at the beginning of the school year, at the end of the preceding school year so student speakers are in place for the new year, or, if the selection process will be repeated each semester, at the beginning of each semester or at the end of the preceding semester so speakers are in place for the next semester. The names of

the volunteering student speakers shall be randomly drawn until all names have been selected, and the names shall be listed in the order drawn. Each selected student will be matched chronologically to the event for which the student will be giving the introduction. Each student may speak for one (1) week at a time for all introductions of events that week, or rotate after each speaking event, or otherwise as determined by the district. The list of student speakers shall be chronologically repeated as needed, in the same order. The district may repeat the announcement selection process each semester rather than once-per-year.

When a student is afforded the opportunity to provide an introduction to an event, the subject of the student introductions must be related to the purpose of the event and to the purpose of marking the opening of the event, honoring the occasion, the participants, and those in attendance, bringing the audience to order, and focusing the audience on the purpose of the event. School Officials shall present this criteria to student speakers in advance but shall not engage in prior review or approval of the content of a student's speech unless requested to do so.

The student may not include obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd or indecent speech in his or her remarks. Beyond this limitation, School Officials shall not censor the student expression and shall respect the First Amendment rights of the student speaker. If and when a student voluntarily chooses to reference or include religious viewpoints in his or her remarks, the school district shall not discriminate against the student's viewpoint and shall allow such speech on the same basis as any other viewpoint.

If the school district believes there is a need to dispel confusion over the non-sponsorship of student speech at each event in which a student will deliver an introduction, a disclaimer may be given in written or oral form such as, "The student giving the introduction for this event is a volunteering student selected on neutral criteria to introduce the event. The content of the introduction is the private expression of the student and does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position or expression of the School District."

Off-Site School Events

School Events within the District may be held at off site venues when an alternative venue is available and reasonably suitable. All provisions of this Policy shall apply to School Events conducted off site. When it is reasonably necessary for a School Event to be held at a Religious Venue, the secular justification for the use of the religious venue shall be documented by the school principal as follows:

(1) the Religious Venue's physical address; (2) the Religious Venue's affiliation with a house of worship or congregation, if any; (3) the nature of the School Event and the expected number of attendees; (4) why the school site is inadequate for the event; (5) the amount that will be paid to use this Religious Venue; (6) the amount typically paid to use this Religious Venue, if known; (7) the distance between the applicable school and the Religious Venue; (8) the identity of the School Officials involved in selecting the Religious Venue; and (9) a certification that no other, available venue that is not a Religious Venue would be reasonably suitable for this School Event.

Such information shall be documented on the applicable district facility form, verified by the signature of at least one School Official and a copy shall be transmitted to the superintendent's office or his designee for approval, maintenance and review by the public.

Should a student or employee choose not to participate in an activity at a Religious Venue, an alternative

assignment shall be offered.

Promotion of Personal Religious Beliefs

Pursuant to federal and state law, school employees are not permitted to promote their personal religious beliefs to students in class or during or in conjunction with a School Event. In this regard, the following guidelines shall be in effect:

- a) School employees shall not participate in any way in a Prayer with students during or in conjunction with instructional periods or any School Event. School Officials shall not offer a Prayer, recite a Prayer alongside or with students, bow their heads, kneel, join hands or otherwise posture in a manner that is likely to be perceived as an endorsement of the Prayer. If, during a prayer, a School Official chooses to remain still and silent with hands folded, as a sign of respect, such action shall not alone constitute an endorsement.
- b) School Officials during or in conjunction with a School Event shall not solicit, encourage, or discourage students to engage in religious activity or attend a Religious Service.
- c) School Officials shall not express personal religious beliefs to students during or in conjunction with instructional time or any School Event, either through oral, written or symbolic means. Nothing herein shall prohibit a teacher from using or referencing religious literature, quotations, articles, or symbols in class, if appropriate to the course or subject and if presented objectively, as part of a secular program of education.
- d) Pursuant to prevailing court precedent, a School official is permitted to wear items of jewelry that may include symbols associated with religion.
- e) School Officials shall not solicit or invite any person to deliver or offer a Prayer during or in conjunction with any School Event.

Teaching About Religion

The inclusion of religion in the study of history, culture, literature, music, drama, and art may be essential to a full and fair presentation of the curriculum. The inclusion of religious elements is appropriate as long as the material included is intrinsic to the field of study in which it is presented and is presented objectively.

The Board's approach to teaching about religion shall be academic and not devotional. Emphasis on religious themes in the arts, music, literature, and history shall be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and thorough study of these areas. Such studies shall not foster any particular religious tenet nor demean any religious beliefs but shall attempt to develop mutual respect among students and advance their knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historic development of civilization.

Music, art, drama, and literature having religious themes or bases are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs, if presented objectively and as part of the tradition of the cultural and religious heritage of a particular holiday. For instance, a music curriculum may expose students to a full array of music culture, and an instructor may select such pieces as would be useful to teach a variety of music skills. Accordingly, the selection of a piece of sacred choral music useful to teach

a particular music skill such as intonation, expression, harmonization or sight reading does not offend this Policy.

Pursuant to prevailing court precedent, the School Board allows for student courses and instruction in the study of comparative religion and/or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of various aspects of civilization. For instance, the presentation and study of the Bible for its literary and historic qualities, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, is permitted by law and this Policy.

A parent or person standing in parental relation may remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs, if the parent presents or delivers to the teacher a written statement authorizing the removal of the child from the class or other school activity. At the same time, a parent or person standing in parental relation is not entitled to remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test or to prevent the child from taking a required subject for an entire semester. This policy does not exempt a child from satisfying grade level or graduation requirements.

Student Clubs

Student clubs are a traditional and vital part of a student's educational process. These nondiscriminatory guidelines shall govern the continued operation of student- initiated clubs.

1. No school shall not deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or the content of the speech at such meetings.
2. A school is a limited open forum whenever such a school grants an opportunity for one or more non-curriculum-related student groups to meet on school premises during non-instructional time.
3. Schools shall be deemed to offer a fair opportunity to students who wish to conduct a meeting within its limited open forum, if such school uniformly provides that—
 - a. the meeting is voluntary and student-initiated;
 - b. there is no sponsorship of the meeting by the school, the Board, or its agents or employees;
 - c. employees or agents of the school or Board are present at religious meetings only in a non-participatory capacity;
 - d. the meeting does not materially and substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of educational activities within the school; and
 - e. nonschool persons may not direct, conduct, or control the activities of student groups.
4. School Officials shall be present at student religious clubs only in a non-participatory capacity. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the authority of the school or school employees to maintain order and discipline on school premises, to protect the well-being of students and faculty, and to assure that attendance of students at

meetings is voluntary.

5. The assignment of a teacher, administrator, or other school employee to a meeting for custodial purposes does not constitute sponsorship of the meeting or the participation in the same.

6. This Policy shall in no way lessen or alter the rights afforded student clubs by the Equal Access Act. School Officials shall comply with said law at all times.

7. The term “non-instructional time” means time set aside by the school for club meetings or time before actual classroom instruction begins or after actual classroom instruction ends.

Complaint Resolution

Any student, parent of a student, or any employee who believes this Policy has been violated is encouraged to immediately report the alleged acts of violation in accordance with the following procedure: 1. Such complaints shall be submitted in writing to the school principal who shall investigate, review and discuss the concern with the complaining party within five calendar days. 2. If, following an investigation, it is determined that a violation has occurred, the principal shall undertake necessary corrective action to preclude reoccurrence and shall provide the complaining party with written notification of his/her findings. 3. If the complaining party is not satisfied by the actions taken by the principal, he/she may, within five (5) calendar days of his/her receipt of the written notification from the principal, request in writing an appeal before the Administrative Committee of the Board for reconsideration of the principal’s decision. Such appeal will be informal and shall be heard within fifteen (15) days of the filing of such appeal. 4. The Board prohibits retaliation against any individuals who file complaints or who participate in the investigation of complaints.