

STUDENT HANDBOOK 2010-2011

**The Roanoke Valley Governor's School
for Science and Technology**

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STRATEGIC PLAN MISSION STATEMENT

The Roanoke Valley Governor's School, dedicated to leadership in innovative instructional practices, will provide a unique environment in which students and teachers explore the interconnections between STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and society. Through their educational experiences, students will develop the necessary skills and perspectives to impact our increasingly global society.

Belief Statements

We believe that:

1. Math, science, and technology provide tools for dealing with the problems and opportunities of the global community.
2. A supportive nurturing environment enables teaching and learning.
3. Individual differences exist and should be used as a resource for instruction.
4. The process of education is more than the accumulation of facts.
5. Teaching and learning involve the establishment of interconnections between and among disciplines.
6. Students and teachers must be open to innovative instructional practices that are essential for growth and learning, and will be supported by administration.
7. Given sufficient time, experience, and motivation, all students can achieve expected competency in the curriculum.
8. The application of knowledge motivates and enhances learning and is an essential part of the educational process.
9. Every person is accountable for his/her own choices and actions.
10. Effective teaching stimulates creativity, imagination, and excitement for lifelong learning.

Strategic Policies

ALL MEMBERS OF THE RVGS SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

1. Will function as partners and will serve as resources for solving problems, accomplishing goals, and providing for the needs of the program.
2. Will nurture the quality and uniqueness of the RVGS program through the action of its participants.
3. Will support sharing ideas, considering alternatives, and reflecting on benefits to the community prior to passing judgment on the validity of an opinion or argument of another individual.
4. Will discourage degrading comments or opinions reflecting the appearance, behavior, or character of any individual in a negative manner.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Roanoke Valley Governor's School is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in relation to race, color, gender, age, religion, disability, national origin, or marital status.

COURSE INFORMATION

Each Governor's School teacher maintains a Moodle web site that includes an up-to-date calendar, syllabus, competency list, and other important class materials.

DISCIPLINE

You have already demonstrated that you have a great deal of self-discipline and maturity. Otherwise, you would not be in the Governor's School. You are part of a unique learning community dedicated to a seriousness of purpose. All of us, faculty and students alike, share the same goal of becoming the best that we can be, academically and socially. Your time in the Governor's School is meant to be a time of excitement, growth, and pride. Many of you have already shared the feeling that there is "so much to do, and so little time." In order to maximize that use of time, some good common sense is in order. Each faculty member is committed to treating students as young adults until such time as he/she is given a reason to do otherwise.

This is not meant to be an all-inclusive statement on student discipline. The positive attitudes, motivation, self-discipline, and mutual respect already demonstrated by our student body will guarantee a setting in which each of us can pursue our goals.

Students who demonstrate a disregard for the following principles will be subject to prompt suspension (in-school or out-of-school) or other disciplinary measures including relinquishing their right to a position in the Governor's School student body. The following principles of conduct should provide you with direction:

1. The Governor's School participates in the student behavior code which is published by the Roanoke City School Board for its students. A summarized version of the code will be distributed to each Governor's School student. All Governor's School students are subject to its provisions and agree to follow them as a stipulation to enrollment in the Governor's School.
2. Students should be free to pursue legitimate academic pursuits free from actual or perceived threats of physical or emotional harm.
3. Mutual respect and concern creates a climate conducive to learning and growth. Students are to be attentive and listening when the instructor is talking and/or when students are asking questions. Students are always encouraged to ask appropriate questions and to make comments in an appropriate fashion. Each student should conduct himself/herself so that all students have the opportunity to learn.
4. High standards of ethical behavior are expected of all Governor's School students and will extend to areas such as: computer usage, cheating, theft, plagiarism, copyright laws, and research projects.
5. For reasons of safety and accountability, students are expected to be supervised by a faculty member and have a faculty member's permission when working in a classroom.
6. Students are to remain on the Governor's School grounds during school hours unless authorization to leave the premises is granted by the director or his designee. RVGS grounds include the RVGS building, the patio, sidewalks, and related areas. Students must check in/out through the office.
7. Attendance and full participation in classes and activities during school hours is required.
8. The possession of alcohol and tobacco on school grounds is prohibited.

STUDENTS

1. Successful students typically spend more time preparing for classes, labs, and projects than is the case in the regular high school.
2. Attention to deadlines and a willingness to learn how to manage their time effectively.
3. Persistence in going back to material not mastered the first time.
4. Regular attendance and a minimum number of absences.
5. Maintenance of an overall B average or better in Governor's School classes. See Re-evaluation/Probation Policy.
6. Presence for an entire day on the Saturday required for the RVGS Annual Project Forum. All students are required to be present for the entire day at the annual Saturday Student Project Forum.
7. Conduct, within an elective class, a research project suitable for presentation at science fairs.
8. Productive participation and contributions to learning teams and collaborative groups.
9. Ethical observance of computer and telecommunications policies for acceptable use.
10. Responsible use of technology (computers, TI-84+ graphing calculators, Internet, and lab equipment).
11. Proficiency in keyboarding.
12. Attention to the Student Handbook.
13. Compliance with behavioral standards and guidelines.
14. Use of a daily planner throughout the school year.

ABSENCES

RVGS classifies an absence as excused if the school receives a written note (no emails) from a parent or guardian. The parent note excuses the absence but the student is still responsible for making up all missed work. The faculty and staff strongly recommend however, that absences be kept to a minimum and parents are asked to evaluate the need for any absence from RVGS. Family/student vacations taken during school days are strongly discouraged. Regardless of the circumstances, it is not practical to believe that students can miss an extended number of classes and be able to keep up with the work. The teachers are willing to work with students, however, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements to complete all missed work in a timely manner. Teachers may require that students come in outside of class time to make up quizzes, tests or labs.

In the case of absences due to home school activities, RVGS will accept a written note or email from a school official in lieu of a parent note as long as the student's name appears on the note or email. These students must still get a slip from the front office.

No make up work will be accepted for a grade until a note is received.

Planned absence

- Bring a note at least one day in advance of the absence.
- Bring a note at least one week in advance if you will be out an extended time.
- Take the note to the office and obtain an absence slip to give to the teachers
- Arrange with the teachers the details of making up missed work

Unanticipated absence

- Bring a note on the first day back at school
- Take the note to the office and obtain an absence slip to give to the teachers
- Arrange with the teachers the details of making up missed work

TARDINESS

Please be sure to arrive on time to class. Some of the most important information is given in the first few minutes of class. Not only will you miss this information if you arrive late, but you will also be a distraction to your fellow classmates. Being tardy can become a habit that you must not start.

If you are tardy often, it will affect your grade due to missed information or graded work given the first few minutes of class. Students are reminded that teachers will follow the RVGS policy for reporting tardies. Excessive tardiness will be remedied through conferences involving the teacher and (in order corresponding to increasing number of offenses), student, guidance counselor, parent, and director. If these efforts are not successful, the director will take appropriate disciplinary action.

1. If you are tardy to school, ***go to the office and sign in before going to class.*** Bring a note from home to the office explaining the tardiness. If this is not possible that very day, a note *must* be brought the following class day.
2. You will receive either an “excused tardy” pass (*if you have a note from your parent*) or an “unexcused tardy” pass to show your teacher.

EARLY CHECK-OUT

Checking out of school early for any reason requires written parental consent, or a notice from your coach/home school. This note should include the exact time you need to leave early. In case of illness that necessitates early departure from school, parent verification by phone will be accepted in lieu of a note. You will receive a note from the office to show your teacher. *You will not be permitted to leave the class early without a note from the office.* All students leaving early must sign out in the office before leaving the building.

MEDICATION POLICY

Parents must notify the office in writing of the need for their child to take medication. Such prescription and over-the-counter medication will be dispensed in the office except for certain named self-administered prescription medications (also refer to the RCPS Parent Handbook).

LAB RULE POLICY

Students are expected to abide by the lab rules posted in each classroom to ensure a safe learning environment. The rules may vary across classes due to the use of different equipment, chemicals, and biological specimens. Consequently, students must read the lab policies posted in each classroom, and ask questions about any rule they do not understand *prior* to their participation in lab activities. Students may lose lab privileges if they do not read or disregard the lab policies.

DRESS CODE POLICY

The Roanoke Valley Governor's School follows the Roanoke City School's Dress Code. Students' attire should not be distracting to other students, teachers, or administrators.

Students will be asked to put on alternative clothing if their clothing interferes with teaching, learning, or communication between participants of the Governor's School environment.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Governor's School students and staff are fortunate to have available a variety of high quality computer-related equipment including computers, printers, scanners, extensive software holdings, graphing-calculator connections, interfacing equipment, and network access. Since this equipment is shared by a large number of individuals, it is important for each person to be respectful of each other's needs. If everyone follows a few simple guidelines, each person will have maximum access to the computers and related equipment. Use common sense and be courteous. If some action on your part would interfere with another individual's use of the computer equipment, do not do it. A student's technical ability to alter or misuse a Governor's School computer in any way does not give the student the right to do so. Strict adherence to a code of ethical standards relating to all aspects of technology use is required of all students. RVGS students are expected to abide by all stated RVGS and RCPS acceptable use policies.

Teachers are accountable for the responsible use of technology throughout the school. Students enjoy the flexibility of using technology in any classroom and may continue to do so provided that permission has been granted in *each* situation. Failure to do so may result in loss of Internet or other access privileges. Do not download large sound, movies, or pictures without the permission of a teacher.

Unacceptable use includes actions such as logging in on an account other than the student's personal account, accessing or attempting to access sites which are

blocked by the filter, altering RVGS software or hardware in any way, downloading or installing programs onto RVGS computers, and making copies of licensed software. This policy includes the use of RVGS owned computers as well as the use of other computers the student brings into RVGS.

The misuse of computers or other technology may result in a student being denied access to the RVGS network, being denied use of all computers at RVGS and/or recommendation for removal from RVGS.

Be sure to talk to an RVGS staff member about any point in the RVGS Technology Policy which is not clear to you. And always remember: **ask before you do anything with an RVGS computer or other piece of technology if there is any question about a possible violation of the policy.**

RE-EVALUATION PROCEDURE

If a student has compiled a "C" average or lower by an interim-grade evaluation report, or if at any time a steady decline in grades persists, cause for some concern exists and immediate proactive action is strongly encouraged. In such cases during the year, the student and teacher will be expected to establish a written plan-of-action in effort to strategically improve the student's grade. At the end of the scholastic year, if the combined first and second semester grade average for any single mathematics or science course is below a "B", prior to the beginning of the subsequent year the student will either be placed on probation or will be released from RVGS.

At the beginning of the probation year, the counselor will arrange a meeting with the student and his/her parents and current teachers for the purpose of establishing a written plan-of-action for the year. The counselor will periodically monitor the student's progress.

Only ONE probation period is allowed during the student's tenure at RVGS. If, at the end of the probationary year, or during any year after probation, the student acquires a "C" average or lower for a combined two semesters of any mathematics or science course, that student may not return to RVGS for the following year.

In the best interest of the student, if a student demonstrates a pattern of extreme social or academic difficulty throughout the year, the director reserves the right to recommend the return of that student to their home school on a full-time basis for the next school year without having a probationary period.

Note: The director and/or re-evaluation committee has the discretion and flexibility to determine student outcomes in regard to borderline student progress whereby extenuating circumstances may exist and be considered.

COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Your ability to work productively in small learning groups is important. The group problem-solving skills that you learn at RVGS are the same kind of skills used every day by scientists, engineers, physicians, and other professionals. You are responsible for your contribution to the group.

THE STUDENT CENTER

The student center is a privilege extended to all RVGS students. It includes the use of a refrigerator, 8 microwave, sink, drink machine, and snack machine. Students are expected to keep the area clean, free of trash, and are honor-bound to insure that the machines are kept free from damage or tampering. The condition of this area is a reflection on the maturity and

"class" of our student body. Help us show the public how students can respect their privileges. Please recycle all aluminum cans and plastic bottles in the receptacles provided.

CALCULATORS

It is recommended that all new students purchase a TI-84+ calculator. All students will need a graphing calculator in all of their RVGS classes. Calculator policy:

1. *Label* your graphing calculator and cover with your preferred and last name (and home telephone number, if desired).
2. Bring your graphing calculator to all RVGS classes *each* day. Availability of a working calculator is critical to your success in all assignments.
3. Never leave it unattended in a backpack or car, etc. Leaving a calculator in a car on a hot or cold day can cause the composition of the graphics screen to be ruined.
4. Lost or stolen calculators must be reported promptly to your math teacher.
5. *Your calculator must be in good working order for all classes, tests and quizzes.* Replace the batteries when the screen on your calculator starts to fade.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

The Governor's School has a guidance counselor to work with you. Areas of assistance include: college exploration and applications, career assessment, personal issues, time management and study skills, and stress management. Numerous guidance programs of special interest to RVGS students will be scheduled during the year. If the counselor is not available to speak with you when you visit, please leave a note on the door or ask the school secretary to contact her for you.

CREDIT INFORMATION

All science courses carry two units of credit per year with the exception of the RVGS Physics course and the RVGS Chemistry course which carry one credit. All math courses carry one unit of credit per year. Each student takes an elective each year. Elective credits vary by course. Math, science, and dual enrollment elective courses are eligible for weighted credit. Weighting of credit is the decision of the student's home school system.

Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment

Roanoke Valley Governor's School has both Advanced Placement and Dual Enrolled courses. The Advanced Placement (AP) Program involves college-level courses and exams. These courses are challenging and require more work than an average high school course. Students are expected to take the AP exam in the spring. Some home schools require the student to take the AP exam in order to receive the weighted credit.

Dual Enrollment courses give students an on opportunity to receive college credit through Virginia Western Community College. Students are required to register with Virginia Western and to pay a reduced tuition. These courses meet the same academic requirements as the college courses offered on campus. Some RVGS courses may be both AP and dual enrolled.

GRADING AND GRADING PERIODS

There will be two semesters each year. Three times during the semester you will receive Interim Reports which you are expected to give to your parent(s). Semester grades include a letter and number grade. Grades will be reported to your home school as both a letter grade, an "A" through "F" and a numerical grade. At no time will your grades be based on a normalized, or "bell-shaped," curve. Students will not compete against each other for grades, but against an explicit standard of competency.

COURSE ADJUSTMENT POLICY

Any changes from one course to another must be made within the first four weeks of school. Such a change will rarely be approved and may not be possible due to scheduling restrictions. Any changes must be approved by the RVGS Director.

SEMESTER ASSESSMENTS

The first semester assessment will be a written assessment. It may be a regular test or comprehensive exam. The format of the second semester assessment is the teacher's decision. The semester assessment will be an exam grade and will be averaged according to the class syllabus. There will not be a separate assesment grade listed on your report card.

ELECTIVES AND PROJECTS

Students will choose electives for 10 their next school year during the second semester. If a student desires to continue his/her research and/or work under the same elective title as previously taken, the student must seek written permission—and complete the required forms—in

advance from the elective teacher to be entered into a "Directed Study". New elective classes will begin in the second semester. Students can anticipate completing assignments and pursuing research interests during the summer months. Students are required to complete a project each year. The project should be rigorous, emphasize scientific method, and have clearly delineated intermediate products at regular intervals throughout the year. Students are required to participate in the annual RVGS Project Forum. ***It will be on a Saturday in January and will be considered as a regular school day.***

SOL TEST STATEMENT

All Governor's School students enrolled in RVGS Chemistry, College Biology, and Pre-Calculus, who have not already done so, will take the state mandated SOL tests in Chemistry, Biology, and Algebra 2, respectively.

TRANSCRIPTS

A transcript is a record of your grades for your entire period of attendance at the Governor's School. Students will find that they need such a record for college admissions, scholarship applications, job applications, or similar reasons. A transcript is an official document, signed by the school director of guidance and stamped with the raised seal of the Governor's School for Science and Technology. Official RVGS transcripts are produced for all non-Roanoke City students and are mailed directly to the institution or company as requested. Students must request transcripts at least one week in advance by contacting the RVGS Counselor. It is not practical to expect that a transcript can be sent on short notice. All transcripts leaving the school for any reason will be accompanied by a standard school profile which describes the school, its program of studies, grading policies, and an overview of the nature and mission of the school. This description is to the advantage of every student and attempts to convey the special nature, level of challenge, and unique focus of the school. Roanoke City Students's official transcript will come from their home school and includes RVGS course work. An RVGS profile should still be sent along with each college application and can be picked up from the guidance office.

FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS

Governor's School faculty members write recommendations as a courtesy to students but are not required to do so. In fact, if they do not feel they can write a strong recommendation, they may decline or refer you to someone else.

To allow a faculty member time to adequately reflect on your accomplishments and attributes, please request a recommendation at least 2 weeks in advance. Copies of resumés are very helpful to faculty members who write recommendations. Also, remember to give the faculty member feedback on the outcome of the recommendation(s).

INTEGRITY

The students at the Governor's School hold high standards for themselves, their teachers, and their friends. Honest, ethical behavior is a benchmark for all RVGS students. Those who violate common standards of truth, honesty, and ethical behavior may lose their right to remain a member of the Governor's School community. Examples of inappropriate behavior include but are not limited to plagiarism, falsification, stealing, unauthorized use of technology, cheating, or attempts to do so.

Violating our community standard for integrity and ethical behavior will result in:

- A student-teacher conference.
- Notification of parents and notice of offense in disciplinary record.
- Letter of explanation from the student to the teacher.

Further consequences of violations may include:

- Loss or limitation of privileges, such as technology use or barring from school activities.
- Automatic failure for assignment or test.
- Information being transmitted to home school (may be barred from certain honor societies or activities).
- Loss of positive college recommendations from RVGS faculty.
- Transfer back to the home school.

STUDENT HONOR CODE:

"I understand that academic honesty is absolutely necessary for my teachers to be able to evaluate my learning and help me learn better. I pledge that all of the work I hand in will be my own, completed without unauthorized help, except in the case of group projects or assignments on which my teacher allows collaboration. When using other people's words or ideas in my papers, I will give credit to the source by citing the author. I also pledge not to assist others in violating this honor code, and to do all I can to promote and uphold academic honesty and integrity at the Roanoke Valley Governor's School."

PARKING

Due to limited parking space availability students who are provided bus transportation from their home school are not entitled to drive to and park at RVGS. Students from Craig County, Roanoke County, and Salem City Schools who are not provided bus transportation and who drive to RVGS will be required to purchase and appropriately display a parking sticker. Students must park in designated parking areas. All other areas are subject to towing at owner's expense and without further warning. Students who need to drive to Governor's School for occasional special circumstances will need prior approval from RVGS and their home school and written permission from a parent. These students will be issued a temporary parking permit.

LIBRARY PRIVILEGES

You will be allowed to check out books at the Virginia Tech or VWCC libraries by showing your driver's license. However, it is your responsibility to return the books and to pay all fines. Hollins University and Roanoke College will allow you to use their libraries, however, you may not check out books.

USE OF LASER PRINTERS

Students are encouraged to help with the conservation of paper and toner for the laser printers. Multiple copies are not allowed. Students must receive teacher approval prior to printing documents. It is suggested that you check the length of Internet documents prior to printing. Students may not print documents for home school assignments.

LOCKERS

Lockers will be assigned by student request only. Priority will be given by seniority according to grade. Requests will be taken prior to the opening of school.

An RVGS locker assignment carries certain responsibilities. They include:

- NOT altering or removing any part of your locker or lock
- Displaying pictures, cartoons, cards, decorations, etc. only on the inside of your locker using scotch tape. NO self-adhesive stickers
- Not pasting things on the outside of your locker door
- Not leaving food or drinks in your locker for more than one day

To open your locker using your combination:

1. Turn right two or more whole turns and stop at the 1st number in your combination.
2. Then turn left one whole turn past the above number and stop at the 2nd number in your combination.
3. Now turn right to the 3rd number in your combination.
4. Lift the handle to open