



River Heights
elementary school

Parent / Student

Handbook

2017-2018

Phone: (403) 527-3730
Website: www.riverheightsschool.ca
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Explore

Create

Reflect



September 1, 2017

Dear Parents:

RE: Fair Notice and Process (Student Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA))

In Medicine Hat School District No. 76, the safety of our children is a top priority. Along with our community partners, we are committed to keeping our schools safe for students and staff. The District has developed a plan for responding to all situations in which students may be posing a threat to themselves or others, which includes all staff must report all threat related behaviours.

What is the purpose of a Student Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)?

The Violence Threat/Risk Assessment (V-TRA) is designed to be proactive in developing intervention plans that address the emotional and physical safety of those involved; to ensure a full understanding of the context of the threat; and to begin to understand the factors that contribute to the threat-maker's behaviour.

What behaviours warrant a Student Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) to be initiated?

A threat is an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be verbal, written, drawn, posted on the Internet, or made by gesture. Every threat must be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated and a response and follow through completed.

What is a Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Team?

Each school has a multi-disciplinary V-TRA team that includes the school administration, school based counsellors and support staff, and may also include district resource staff and community partners (i.e. police, mental health practitioners). It is important for all parties to engage in the Student V-TRA process. If for some reason there is reluctance to participate in the process, by the threat-maker or parent/guardian, the threat assessment will still continue to ensure a safe and caring learning environment for all.

What happens in a Student Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)?

The process of a Student V-TRA begins when threat making behaviors are reported. The V-TRA protocol is then activated. Interviews will be held with the student(s), the threat-maker, parents, and staff to determine the level of risk and develop an appropriate response to the incident. An intervention plan will be developed and follow-up meetings will occur, as deemed necessary, to ensure that interventions are supporting all those involved.

This letter is intended to serve our community with fair notice that we, as a school district, will not accept "no response" to a threat in our schools. We are proud to be able to provide this level of support to our school communities and we are fortunate to have the commitment of our community partners. If there are any questions, please feel free to call your school administrator or further information can be found on the district website.

Sincerely,

Mark Davidson
Superintendent

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. School Mission Statement

River Heights Elementary School provides an instructional program that enhances the delivery of the Alberta Education Curriculum; aligned with Alberta Education's Inspiring Education. We emphasize **critical and creative thinking skills** within a **safe and caring environment**, promote the **integration of learning** with technology as a vehicle, and **student independence/interdependence**. Our motto incorporates the three words; "explore", "create" and "reflect".

B. Principles, Values and Beliefs

As a school that is part of Medicine Hat School District #76, we support the Principles, Values and Beliefs as outlined in the District's Educational Plan.

In addition, our school values:

- Student Centered Integrated Learning with meaningful integration of technology
 - Core to our program, students are encouraged to make connections and build mental bridges between subject areas. Technology is used as a timely tool rather than an activity. Technology often serves as the vehicle for many of our integrated activities.
- Student independence and interdependence
 - Students are encouraged to make clear plans, organize ideas and resources, investigate topics, share their learning with others and reflect on their progress, to become more responsible for their learning and to grow in independence.
 - Students are guided to develop the necessary skills required to collaborate with each other.
- Critical and creative thinking skills
 - Students are immersed in the use of thinking skills that are then used to investigate curriculum.
- Respect, safety, vigilance and praise to build a safe and caring community.
 - Students demonstrate the River Heights Code of Conduct by demonstrating the Tribes Agreements:
 - DEMONSTRATE MUTUAL RESPECT
 - DEMONSTRATE ATTENTIVE LISTENING
 - SHOW APPRECIATIONS (using kind words)
 - RIGHT TO PASS, RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

II. OUR INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

A. Recent History of River Heights School

River Heights Elementary School has been the site of an integrated approach to learning since the fall of 1996. We offer instruction to children from the city of Medicine Hat, Redcliff and the surrounding area. Our school includes students from ELP (Early Learning Program) to Grade Six.

The past nineteen years have seen the development of a school community characterized by enthusiastic students, energetic and supportive parents working

together with teachers and staff to create a positive learning environment. We look forward to a school year full of opportunities for growth!

Our beliefs and learning is student-centered and aligns with the Ministerial Order; where our integrated learning is connected with the **8 Competencies and the 3 E's**.

A cross-curricular competency is an interrelated set of attitudes, skills and knowledge that are drawn upon and applied to a particular context for successful learning and living. The 8 Competencies are developed by every student, in every grade and across every subject/discipline area:

- A. Critical Thinking
- B. Problem Solving
- C. Managing Information
- D. Creativity and Innovation
- E. Communication
- F. Collaboration
- G. Cultural and Global Citizenship
- H. Personal Growth and Well-Being

Through our classroom and school programs we strive to develop students who are “**E**ngaged Thinkers” and “**E**thical Citizens” with “**E**ntrepreneurial Spirits”.

B. Overview of the Guiding Principles of our School

Critical and creative thinking skills are central to our program. Students are immersed in the use of thinking skills that are then used to investigate curriculum topics mandated by the Alberta Education Curriculum. Critical and creative thinking skills are taught from ELP (Early Learning Program) to Grade Six. These thinking skills are valuable tools that encourage students to grow in creative and critical thought patterns.

Students at River Heights are encouraged to make connections and build mental bridges between subject areas. This **integrated approach** to learning **facilitates student independence** as they develop ownership in projects and activities involving more than one curriculum subject. We believe that activities encouraging children to make clear plans, organize ideas and resources, investigate topics, share their learning with others and reflect on their progress, challenge students to become more responsible for their learning and to grow in independence. Meaningful Integrated Technology serves as a vehicle for many of our integrated activities.

River Heights Elementary provides parents with one option to consider as they make a selection best suited to meet the needs of their child and his/her learning style. ***By making this deliberate choice, parents and children are demonstrating a commitment to the educational philosophy and goals of our school.***



C. River Heights and “Kagan” Cooperative Learning

The River Heights' staff is trained in Kagan Cooperative Learning. Kagan Cooperative Learning structures are designed to increase cooperative learning skills and student engagement. The Kagan structures (over 200) are based on brain research and allow students to process information, develop thinking and social skills.

The basic principles of Kagan structures can be remembered by the acronym PIES:

P = Positive Interdependence (students working together in a positive manner)

I = Individual Accountability (each student is accountable for his or her own achievement/contribution)

E = Equal Participation (everyone participates, everyone learns)

S = Simultaneous Interaction (many students participate in the structures at once)

D. Explore, Create, Reflect Program

Throughout the year students have the opportunity to participate in a school-wide program, where students will be involved in multi-age projects. This program aligns with our school motto of Explore, Create, Reflect and enhances our school community as students develop relationships with other teachers and students in various grade levels.

III. MAINTAINING A SAFE AND CARING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A. Code of Conduct

We believe the goal of discipline is to work toward self-discipline. This is achieved by learning to follow guidelines, living up to established expectations, and reaching reasonable resolutions using problem-solving strategies. These skills assist students throughout their schooling years and adult life.

The goal of our Code of Conduct is to create a harmonious and effective school climate. In order for a school to run smoothly, effectively and pleasantly for all concerned, we are all expected to follow certain guidelines. Consideration and respect for each other are of prime importance in the classroom, the hallways, on the playground, on the school bus and during school sponsored activities.

B. River Heights and “TRIBES”

Thousands of schools throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries have become Tribes Learning Communities, safe and caring environments in which kids can do well! Each of our staff members are “TRIBES trained” meaning we’ve developed a proactive plan for creating a positive school or classroom environment as we know this is the most effective way to improve behaviour and learning.

Students achieve because they:

- feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers
- are respected for their different abilities, cultures, gender, interests and dreams
- are actively involved in their own learning
- have positive expectations from others that they will succeed.

The clear purpose of the Tribes process is to assure the healthy development of every child so that each one has the knowledge, skills and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world. This proactive approach to learning environments blends nicely

with our school's code of conduct as presented below. For more information on TRIBES please check out our website.

C. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Expectations will be communicated to students at the start of the school year and will be reinforced throughout the year. These expectations include:

- DEMONSTRATE MUTUAL RESPECT
- DEMONSTRATE ATTENTIVE LISTENING
- SHOW APPRECIATIONS
- RIGHT TO PASS, RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

What this looks like:

- students will show kindness, courtesy and respect for both students and adults
- students will demonstrate respect for other students and the learning environment by not being disruptive
- students will respect their property, the school's and others'
- students will attend regularly and parents will notify the school in the event of absence or appointments
- students will be punctual for class
- movement and noise levels in the hallways must be at an acceptable level
- students produce quality work at all times
- Conforming to the guidelines found in MHSD#76 Policy 601

D. THE ROLE OF THE PARENT

Incorporating student expectations into student behaviours requires effort and support from the students, staff, and parents. It is a process, which will have successes and "failures" over the school year, but which will ultimately lead to student behaviour that promotes learning. Parents will approach this topic in a variety of ways. Here are some suggestions.

1. Talk to your child about the Code of Conduct and what behaviour is expected at school. Discuss the consequences your child will face, both at home and at school, for inappropriate behaviour.
2. Ensure that you and your child fully understand the classroom expectations specific to your child's class. Expectations are drawn up by the teacher and students of every grade at the beginning of the school year.
3. Many things affect a student's ability to function at their best (lack of sleep, hunger, too many extra-curricular activities). Please inform your child's teacher of any issues at home that may possibly affect student performance at school.
4. Take the time to provide feedback to the teachers and staff relating to your experiences while volunteering in the school. Teachers value your input on the students' strengths and weaknesses related to expected behaviour.
5. If you have concerns, please begin by addressing these with your child's teacher.

E. RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS

From time to time, students will have difficulty exhibiting responsible behavior and meeting school expectations. This will require interventions such as:

1. Problem solving with staff, principal, or other appropriate school personnel and may include conferences with student and/or student and parent to establish logical consequences such as:

- withdrawal of privileges
- written assignment of a related nature
- community service in the school
- time-outs

Serious problems and/or continued misdemeanors may result in:

- the issuing of an incident report which will be entered into events tracking
- withdrawal of a student from classroom, playground, school or extra-curricular programs in-school suspension
- a behaviour plan being developed with the consultation of parents, teachers, admin and support personnel
- suspension of up to five days
- expulsion from school

The end goal of resolution will be for all students, staff and parents to:

- Enjoy the benefits of a safe, friendly and productive work space
- Grow as learners and as people
- Appreciate the differences in approaches and individuals
- Grow in how we deal with these differences
- Understand we have roles in our learning, behaviour, and attitudes
- Accept that there will be constructive consequences and that these consequences are designed to help us grow as learners and as people
- Understand the guidelines found in MHSD#76 Policy 660 will be followed

IV. INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

A. STAFF

Professional Staff

Natosha Mastel – **Principal**
David Ridgedale – **Vice Principal**

Tiffany Arnold	Early Learning Program
Laura Gale	Kindergarten
Renee Dowling	Grade 1
Elaine Willock	Grade 1
Mercy Smith	Grade 2
Dawn Hunt	Grade 2
Michelle Warmink	Grade 3
Karen Olechowski	Grade 3
Cortney Pahl	Grade 4 (am)
Elizabeth Kruger	Grade 4 (pm)
Sherry Avinou	Grade 4
Paul Savard	Grade 5
Carlene Keetley	Grade 5
Jan Reiniger	Grade 6
Lindsay Barron	Grade 6
Elizabeth Kruger	Music
Kristen Bowal	Classroom Support

Teachers on leave:
Allison Jeal

Support Staff

Educational Assistants
Alice Theofan
Dawn Flint
Clara Chernezky
Janet Janosch
Bohy Wintoniak
Stephanie Kakuk
Dawn Maser
Jaylene Pierce
Danica Janzen

Office Secretary – Bailey Stuber
Library Clerk – Laura Richardson
Custodians– Gary Getz (day)
Lim Kokyun
Cynthia Senini

Out of School Care Program
Christina Mcatamney, Newella Gazdag, Shannon Stewart, Jaylene Peirce, Dawn Flint

School Year 2017-2018

PLEASE NOTE: these dates are subject to change

(All dates will be posted on our school website "General Calendar" and in our school newsletter)

August 31	District PD Day
September 1	First Day for Teachers
September 4	Labour Day – No School
September 5	First Day for Student – begin @ 8:48 am
September 6	Parent Council Meeting – 7:30 PM
September 14	Goal Setting 5pm/Welcome Back BBQ
September 18	Picture Day
September 19	T/TH Kindergarten pictures
September 29	River Flats Run
October 4	Student/Parent Convention 5:30-7:30
October 4	Parent Council 7:30 pm
October 6	Staff Development Day – no school for students
October 9	Thanksgiving Holiday – no school
October 30	Halloween Activities in afternoon
November 1	WE DAY - Calgary
November 1	Parent Council 7:30 pm
November 9	Remembrance Day Assembly
November 10	Staff Development Day – no school for students
November 17	Report Cards sent home
November 22	Student Led Conferences (5:00 – 7:00)
November 23	Student Led Conferences (3:30 – 6:30)
December 6	Parent Council Meeting 7:30 pm
December 8	Staff Development Day – no school for students
TBA	Winter Village
December 22	Last day of classes – noon dismissal
January 8	Return to classes – full day
February 7	Parent Council 7:30 pm
February 16	Staff Development Day – no school for students
February 19	Family Day – no school
February 20	Day in Lieu – no school
February 21	Day in Lieu – no school
February 22	Teacher's Convention – no school
February 23	Teacher's Convention – no school

March 7	Parent Council 7:30 p.m.
March 16	Staff Development Day – no school for students
March 23	Report Cards go home
March 27	Student Led Conferences (5:00 - 7:00)
March 28	Student Led Conferences (3:30 – 6:30)
March 30	Good Friday – no school – Easter holidays begin
April 9	Back to Classes
April 11	Parent Council 7:30 pm
April 20	Staff Development Day – no school
April 30-May 4	Education Week
May 2	Parent Council 8:00pm
May 7-11	Achievement Test – Gr. 6 ELA Part A
May 18	Staff Development Day – no school
May 21	Victoria Day – no school
May 22	No School – Day in lieu
TBA	Spring Fling
June 6	Parent Council 8:00 p.m.
June 11-28	Achievement Test – Gr. 6 ELA Part B
June 11-28	Achievement Test – Gr. 6 Math
June 11-28	Achievement Test – Gr. 6 Science
June 11-28	Achievement Test – Gr. 6 Social Studies
June 22	Games Day
June 27	Year End Assembly (11:00 am) – report cards go home
June 28	Last day (noon dismissal)
June 29	Teacher’s last day

C. Communication

Communication may be the most important element in our educational community. To help facilitate this we utilize the following:

1. **Phone:** Parents are encouraged to contact the school, the staff directly, or set up an appointment. Staff will not be called out of class except for emergencies. Please leave a message with the office and your call will be returned.
2. **Newsletter:** An electronic newsletter will be distributed at the beginning of each month. It will contain information about what is happening and what will be happening at the school in that particular month. A copy of the newsletter may be accessed from our school’s homepage at www.riverheightsschool.ca. Some hard copies will be available in the office. Please be sure to sign up for the newsletter on our website.
3. **Special Communication:** From time to time special memos will be sent home providing additional information. Please take the time to read them and respond when necessary. Extra notes will be kept just outside of the office door.

4. **Reporting Periods:** Four formal reporting periods are planned throughout the year (October, November, March, and June). Two of these will include Student-Led Conferences.
5. **Web Page:** Our school web page can be found at www.riverheightsschool.ca. Our site includes weekly event calendars, classroom activities, school highlights and information about our school.
6. **Social Media:** You can follow us on Twitter at @RiverHeightsES and our school Facebook page can be found by searching for River Heights Elementary School or at <https://www.facebook.com/RiverHeightsES?ref=hl>.

D. Library

Our library program is more than an addition to the classroom curriculum. Our library houses all the resources used in the classrooms. Since we rarely use textbooks, the literature and information materials become the basis of the students' research. In each classroom you will find hundreds of library books being used as the vehicle for learning their core curriculum. The goal of each student is to learn how to find these books, make wise choices as to which materials are better, and then how to locate them within our library. You can even locate our materials from your home computer through the Shortgrass library site.

Since our resources are well used and frequently returned, we invite your help in keeping our library collection ready for use. If you would like to spend an hour or more putting books away that children have returned, your help would be really valued. Judy Anderson is our Library Clerk, but her time is limited to one and a half days per week at our school.

Another way your family can share in the library program is to encourage your own students to become habitual readers. When they come home with library books, check out their choices. Communicate with your classroom teacher or myself about their personal favorites, desires and reading needs. Read with your students. Form a consistent time and place for their daily reading. We'd love to share new titles and book series that you may enjoy as a family read-a-loud.

Books do get damaged or lost. We expect students to be responsible for these situations and repay the replacement costs of these materials. As a family, your help is appreciated in forming habits that will build respect and responsibility for our library materials. We have a one week due date for primary books and a two week due date for elementary resources. This means the readers can bring them back earlier (which is often the case for picture book readers) or if the novel is rather long, the students can renew them for several more weeks.

“The most important twenty minutes of the day... Read with your child.”

V. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

A. **School Hours**

Monday to Friday	Mornings: 8:48-12:15
	Lunch: 12:15-1:00
	Afternoons: 1:00- 3:10

B. **Supervision of Students**

Staff supervisors are on duty every day at these times. If students are at school before 8:25am, they must be registered in the Before School Program.

8:25 – 8:48	10:30-10:45 (recess)
12:15 – 1:00	3:10 – 3:25 (bus)

C. **Instructional Materials/Text Rental Fees**

For the 2017-2018 school year parents of students in Grade 1-6 will not be required to pay school fees. Kindergarten fees are \$60 per child. This is due no later than Sept. 30, 2017. Fees can be paid by cash or cheque in the office (Payable to River Heights School) or online at <https://sd76.schoolcashionline.com>. Student agendas have been purchased by our Parent Council and we thank them for their financial support. Optional fees throughout the year will be for the Gr 4-6 ski trip and for the Gr. 6 Outdoor Education Camp.

D. **Pupil Enrollment Information**

Please make sure that you keep the office informed of any changes to enrollment information (i.e. address/phone/cell phone). This information is required in the daily operation of the school and will assist a great deal in keeping our school records current.

E. **Student Absentees**

Parents – we would greatly appreciate it if you would call the school at 527-3730 between 8 and 9 a.m. when your child(ren) will not be in attendance.

F. **Lost and Found**

Lost and found articles will be placed in a box near the front entrance. Students and parents are welcome to check the box for missing items. Students are not always sure of their belongings. You can help them by labeling everything your child brings to school.

G. Staff Meetings

Throughout the school year Professional Development days are designated as school or district staff development days. Students will not have classes on those days. Teachers will work on collaborative projects and have their staff development meeting.

H. Transportation

School of Choice

The Board continues to support the ability of parents and students to attend the school of their choice, subject to space and resources available at the receiving school.

Restructuring of Transportation Fees

The Board approved a “restructuring” of the current *Transportation Fee for Service Policy*. Effective September 1, 2001, the restructuring of the *Transportation Fee for Service Policy* allows for the elimination of the current transportation fees.

Grades K-3 students

The Board has agreed to provide transportation services for Grades K-3 students residing beyond 1.2 kilometers from their designated school.

Present and Past Practices

The District Administration will continue to:

- Provide transportation service to students residing within 2.4 kilometers from their designated school or school of choice if space is available on bus routes already accommodating students residing beyond 2.4 kilometers;
- Give consideration, along with the bus contractor, to students’ physical size when determining maximum bus loading; and
- Give consideration to transportation services for students residing within the approved walk distance when impacted by geographic factors.

I. Lunch

Students are responsible for their own forks and spoons. Three microwaves are available but as they must serve over 150 students per lunch session we encourage you to limit your use of this service. You can appreciate the time and labor it takes to heat up a large number of items.

Hot Lunch is served most Fridays. The food comes from various outlets in the city. We have moved to our online system. Please refer to the website <https://sd76.schoolcashonline.com> to register and create your profile. Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate late orders

J. School Council

The School Council executive has been organized for the 2014/2015 school year.

Co - Chairperson	- Vanessa Bonneville
Co - Chairperson	- Katie Albers
Secretary	- Tenille Selinger
Treasurer	- Kristen Cassell

K. Choir

Traditionally we have two choirs – Primary and Upper Elementary. Choir practices will be held during the lunch hour. Regular attendance is very important. This is an excellent group activity in which your child may be involved. Please watch for further notice regarding times, days, and registration.

L. Student Leadership Group

Student Council consists of representatives of Grades 5 – 6 students in the school. They plan and organize various activities to provide students with leadership experience, and to increase school spirit.

M. First Aid

If a child is injured at school First Aid will be administered by staff members to the best of their abilities. If a more serious accident occurs, the parent, and if necessary, the Ambulance Response Team will be called. Please make sure you have completed the “emergency information” on the registration form.

VI. CHILD CARE

The registration fee is \$10.00 per child per program. This will help offset the costs of craft supplies etc. throughout the year. This is a one-time payment and is over and above the hourly “costs” of the program. These fees will be added to the September billing.

BEFORE SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM

We offer a Before School Care program which will run from 7:00 a.m. until 8:30 a.m.

Fee Structure - \$2.50 per ½ hour, billed on the ½ hour.

Drop off between 7:00 am & 8:30 am = \$7.50

Drop off between 7:30 am & 8:30 am = \$5.00

Drop off between 8:00 am & 8:30 am = \$2.50

Registration fee of \$10 per student.

If your child is at the school before 8:30 a.m. they will be required to check in to the program and you will be billed accordingly.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM

We offer an After School Care program at the school from **3:10 – 5:30 p.m.** All children must be picked up **by 5:30 pm.**

Fee Structure

The following is the proposed fee structure for families wishing to take advantage of this program. The cost of the program is \$5.00 per hour, billed on the ½ hour.

Pick up between 3:10 pm & 3:45 pm = \$2.50

Pick up between 3:10 pm & 4:15 pm = \$5.00

Pick up between 3:10 pm & 4:45 pm = \$7.50

Pick up between 3:10 pm & 5:30 pm = \$10.00

Registration fee of \$10 per student.

**students repeatedly picked up after 5:30 pm will not be able to access the program.*

BOTH PROGRAMS

1. Fee Payment

Parents will be billed on the first of each month for the previous month's service. We need to have, and expect, payments made by the 10th of each month.

Note: The program must be self-supporting (financially), as we do not have a budget to cover costs. Hopefully, we will have enough parents taking advantage of this service so that we can reduce the actual costs in some way. Prices are subject to change.

2. Student Activities

Students will be supervised and provided with the opportunity to participate in such activities as centers (Lego, K'NEX), gymnasium free time, board games, arts and crafts, etc.

3. Student Expectations

We hold the same expectations of the students as if they were attending regular classes. They will:

- act in a reasonable and respectful manner.
- remain on the school property at all times unless they are given permission otherwise.
- remain in the designated areas unless given permission by the supervisor.
- report their leaving (at pick up time) to the supervisor. Parents will be expected to come into the school to pick up their child(ren).

Student pick-up / drop off

Parents are requested to observe **handicapped parking** and **bus zones** when picking up or dropping off their children. ***For the safety of YOUR children, please do not pick up or drop off in the staff parking lot.***

Please remember that there is a 2 hour parking zone in front of the school.

Parents are responsible for signing their child(ren) in and out of the programs.