



COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

2024-2025

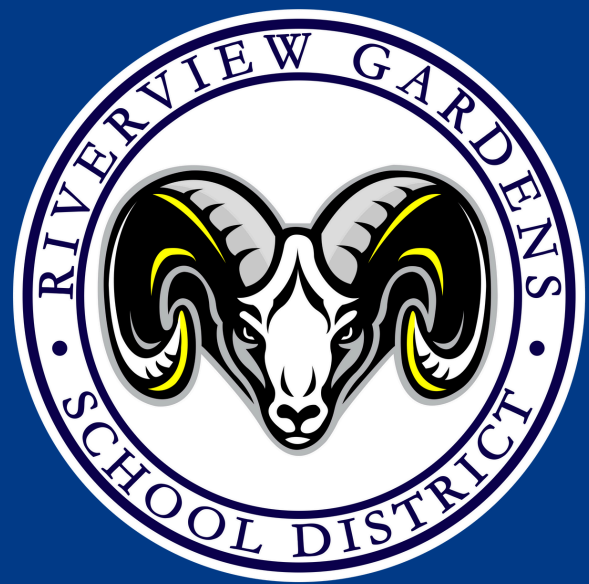


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Introduction

The Riverview Gardens School District communication guidelines rely on longstanding traditions, proven strategies and compliance with the KB Public Information Program Special Administrative Board policy. This document is meant to be helpful in two ways: to orient new staff members and to give returning staff members an easy way to find communication guidelines.

Philosophy

The primary purpose of the Communications Department is to shape RGSD's internal and external reputation through: staff engagement, parent communication, public relations and media relations. The Communications Department is committed to providing consistent, accurate and timely information to all stakeholders.

Communications Team

Team Email: communications@rgsd.k12.mo.us

Ishmael Sistrunk
Executive Director of Communications
Riverview Gardens School District
Cell: 314-397-7793
isistrunk@rgsd.k12.mo.us

Ayanna Flowers
Communications Specialist I
Riverview Gardens School District
Office: 314-869-2505 x 28129
ayanna.flowers@rgsd.k12.mo.us

Ebony Hartfield
Administrative Assistant, Communications
Riverview Gardens School District
Office: 314-869-2505 ext. 20145
ebony.hartfield@rgsd.k12.mo.us

Communications Requests

In order to maintain an efficient Communications request process, the Communications Department asks that all RGSD staff members and partners complete the online Communications Support Request Form to request support in all non-emergency situations. If the Communications Request Form cannot be completed, please email communications@rgsd.k12.mo.us with your request to ensure that it reaches all members of the department.

Last-minute requests, phone calls or emails may result in the inability to fulfill your request. Requests for communications support for all events and activities should be completed in advance of the event/activity. Please see the timeline below to ensure that your communications request receives the proper support:

- Design Requests - 2 weeks before the design is needed
- Add Events - 2 weeks before the event
- Photo Coverage - 2 weeks before the event
- Live Streaming - 3 weeks before the event
- Video recordings (event)- 2 weeks before the event
- Video announcements - 2 weeks before the date of the announcement
- Ready-Made Emails - 1 week before the date the email should be sent
- Publication requests (The Inside View/Five Things) - 2 weeks before publication
- Proofreading Requests - 3 days before the item is due
- Ready-Made Social media/flyer posts - 3 days before the date of posting

Communication Protocols

News Media Interviews

- All communication with the media regarding RGSD, including broadcast and print interviews, must be approved by the Communications Department.

News Media Photographs/Videos

- Any photographs or videos taken by the media on school property must be approved by the Communications Department.

Promotions

- Any production on school property of promotional videos or radio advertisements regarding RGSD must be approved by the Communications Department.

News Media Contact

If a member of the news media contacts you about a potential story:

- **Do**
 - Tell them to contact Executive Director of Communications Ishmael Sistrunk by phone at 314-397-7793 (cell) or email at isistrunk@rgsd.k12.mo.us.
 - Understand that you may need to repeat the sentence above to the same member of the news media multiple times.
 - Notify your direct supervisor and the executive director of communications via phone or email.
 - Treat members of the news media with respect and kindness.
 - Return to your regular job duties after following guidelines above. The executive director of communications will handle the situation.

- **Do Not**
 - Confirm or deny any information regarding emergency situations, RGSD students, policy or announcements.
 - Panic.

School District Incidents

- The details of any incidents that result in news media attention or staff members believe may result in news media attention should be shared with the executive director of communications immediately. Additionally, if first responders are called to a school, the executive director of communications should be notified immediately.

Reporting Emergencies

If you encounter an emergency that presents an **immediate threat**:

- **Do**
 - Call 911 **immediately**.
 - Contact the Safety & Security Director Warren Newton at 314- 575-0525 or use a district radio to contact the command center on channel #1 **after** calling 911.
 - Locate your building leader for additional instruction.
 - Allow building and district leaders to communicate the details of the situation to staff.

- **Do Not**
 - Hesitate to call 911.
 - Share assumptions/speculation about the situation with anyone.
 - Share details about the incident on social media.

Parent Communication

- Throughout the school year, staff members at individual schools will need to communicate with parents, students and staff. Any such communications do not need to be approved by the Communications Department.

School Closures

- School closure announcements due to various circumstances, including severe weather, are shared through the following communication channels:
 - Robocalls and emails to staff (Keep your contact information up-to-date).
 - Local television stations (2, 4 and 5) and KMOX radio station.
 - RGSD social media pages.
 - RGSD websites.

Branding/Slogans

- The Ram is the mascot for the district, high school and Central Middle School.
- “A New View on the Horizon, Where Learning is Required” is the slogan for the district.

School Names

- Riverview Gardens School District on first reference. RGSD thereafter.
- Riverview Gardens High School on first reference. RGHS thereafter.
- Central Middle School on first reference. Central thereafter.
- Westview Middle School on first reference. Westview thereafter.
- Danforth Elementary School on first reference. Danforth thereafter.
- Gibson Elementary School on first reference. Gibson thereafter.
- Glasgow Elementary School on first reference. Glasgow thereafter.
- Highland Elementary School on first reference. Highland thereafter.
- Koch Elementary School on first reference. Koch thereafter.
- Lemasters Elementary School on first reference. Lemasters thereafter.
- Lewis & Clark Elementary School on first reference. Lewis & Clark thereafter.
- Meadows Elementary School on first reference. Meadows thereafter.
- Moline Elementary School on first reference. Moline thereafter.
- Michelle Obama Early Childhood Academic Center on first reference. MO-ECAC thereafter.

District-Wide Emails

- There are several District administrators who may send important district-wide emails. Here are their names, titles, email addresses and the topics their emails will typically cover:
 - Tanya E. Patton, Ed.D, Superintendent of Schools, tapatton@rgsd.k12.mo.us, announcements, statements, critical updates
 - Travis Ford, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, tford@rgsd.k12.mo.us, benefits, work calendars, school closures and other staff-related issues.
 - Lavon Singleton, Chief Financial Officer, lsingleton@rgsd.k12.mo.us, budget details.
 - Ishmael Sistrunk, Executive Director of Communications, isistrunk@rgsd.k12.mo.us, communication guidelines, informational/event announcements and school closures.
 - Tina Adams-Turnipseed, MIS Coordinator/Systems Administrator, tturnipseed@rgsd.k12.mo.us, technology updates, professional development information, informational announcements and school closures.
 - J. F. Larry, Ph.D., Technology/MIS Director, jlarry@rgsd.k12.mo.us, technology updates and informational announcements.
 - Warren Newton, Director of Safety & Security, wnewton@rgsd.k12.mo.us safety and emergency information.

Sending & Receiving Emails

- Staff members must use their official work email accounts when conducting district business.

Email Response Time

- Staff members are expected to respond to emails, voicemails and text messages within 48 hours while the district is open (the district is not open on weekends). Exceptions include sick, personal, vacation and professional development days.

Email Replies

- **Do not use the “Reply to All” option** for emails sent to multiple staff members unless everyone who received the initial email needs to receive your response.
- Senders, to help prevent respondents from replying to all when sending messages to multiple recipients, place the recipients’ email addresses in the BCC (Blind

Carbon Copy) field whenever possible. You can place your own email address in the To: field.

Free Pickles in the Break Room

To  Ishmael Sistrunk X

Bcc  Ayanna Flowers X  Dr. Tanya Patton X  Ebony Hartfield X  Deirdre Liddell X

Add: [Joylynn Pruitt-Adams](#) [LaJuana Maclin](#) [Diane Mitchell](#)

Free Pickles in the Break Room



Regards,

Ishmael H. Sistrunk
Executive Director of Communications
Riverview Gardens School District
Office: (314) 869-2505 x 22242
Mobile: (314) 397-7793



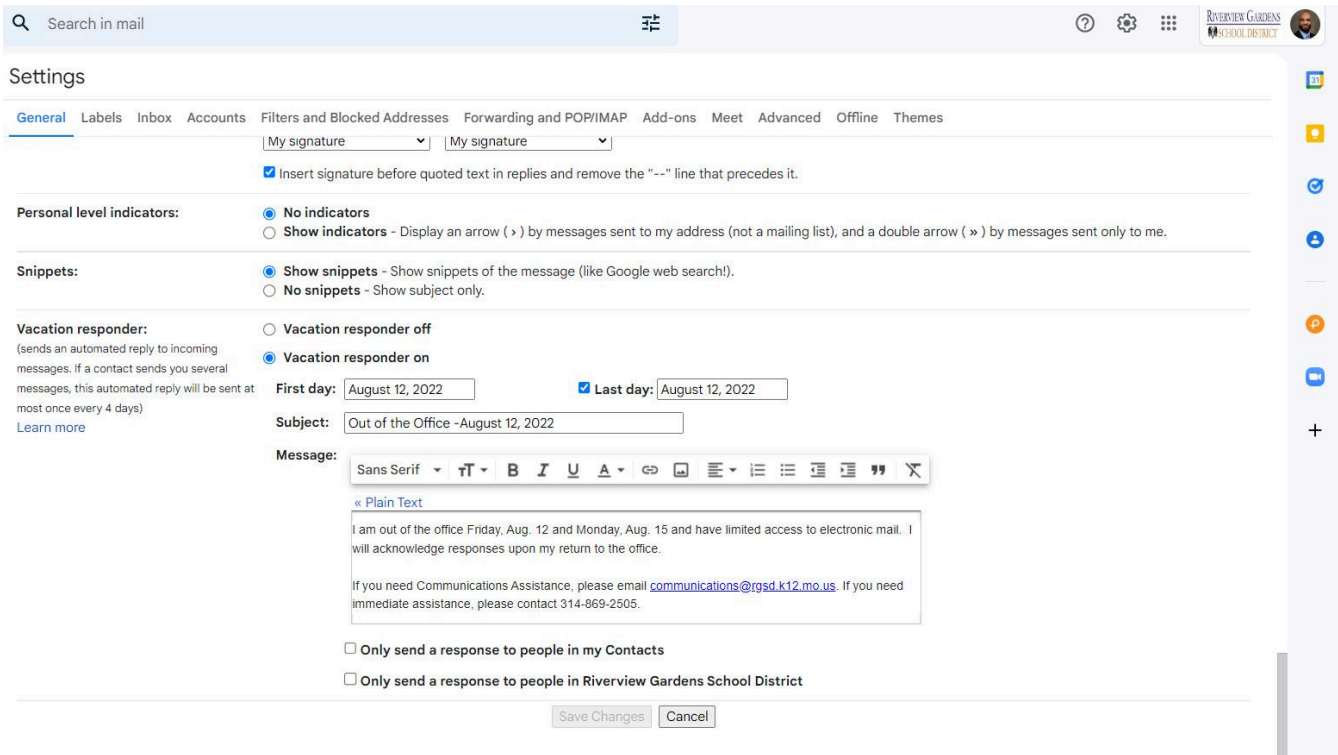
A New View on the Horizon

Automatic Vacation Responder Email Replies

- Staff members are expected to set up automatic “vacation responder” email replies when you will be unable to respond to emails for extended periods of time. Those replies should include contact information for another staff member who can respond to any urgent requests.
- To set up an automatic “Vacation Responder,” follow the instructions and diagrams below:
 - Access your Gmail account.
 - Click on the tool wheel in the upper right corner.
 - Click on settings.
 - Scroll down to the “vacation responder.”
 - Click “vacation responder on.”
 - Enter the “first day” and “last day” of your vacation in the date section.
 - Type your desired “Vacation Responder” subject line

- o Type your desired “Vacation Responder” message, using one of the preferred district fonts, in the empty box.
- o Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click “save changes.”

- Vacation responder diagram



Fonts

The following fonts are the preferred fonts for Riverview Gardens School District and should be used for emails:

- Arial, Georgia, Roboto, Sans Serif, Times New Roman and Verdana

The above fonts should be used at 12pt size for all other written and printed communications. Exceptions include classroom materials, document headlines, websites, postcards, banners, flyers and other creative materials.

Email Signatures

- All staff members must use one of the following email signature formats:
 - o Standard Signature

Dr. Cedric Gerald
 Principal
 Westview Middle School
 Office: 314-867-0410 ext. 40101

cedric.gerald@rgsd.k12.mo.us

- o Extended Signature with the District slogan or your building slogan

Barbara Sharp

Executive Director of Continuous Improvement/Title IX Coordinator

Riverview Gardens School District

1370 Northumberland Drive

St. Louis, MO 63137

Office: 314-869-2505 ext. 20126

Fax: 314-869-6354

bsharp@rgsd.k12.mo.us

A New View on the Horizon

- To set your default text style for emails and create your email signature follow the instructions and diagrams below:
 - o Access your Gmail account.
 - o Click on the tool wheel in the upper right corner.
 - o Click on settings.
 - o Scroll down to “default text style” and select one of the preferred District fonts.
 - o Scroll down to “signature.”
 - o Enter your signature in standard or extended form and check the box below that reads “insert this signature before quoted text...”
 - o Be sure to highlight your email signature in the signature box to make sure that the correct font is selected.
 - o Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click “save changes.”
- Default text style diagram

Social Media, Storytelling & Bereavement

Social Media Pages

- Staff members, who are not part of the Communications Department, are prohibited from managing any social media pages that include the name of the District or any of its schools without the expressed permission and guidance of the Communications Department. The exception is the Riverview Gardens National Education Association.
- The Communications Department manages the following social media pages:
 - Facebook @RGSDSchools
 - Twitter @RGSDSchools
 - Instagram @RGSDSchools
 - YouTube – @RGSDSchools
 - TikTok - @RGSDSchools
 - LinkedIn – Riverview Gardens School District

Posting Pictures/Video on Social Media

While working, RGSD staff members may photograph/film students and other staff members and share the product on **personal** social media pages by following a two-step process.

Step One: Check the photo/video opt-out lists. Students and staff on the lists should not be photographed or filmed under any circumstances. Lead secretaries, building principals and the Communications Department have copies of the lists.

Step Two: The photo/video and any caption staff members plan to share must be emailed to the **building** principal or executive director of Communications for written approval.

Exceptions:

- Staff can avoid **step two** by simply sending the photo/video and caption to the communications director and asking for it to be shared through RGSD social media pages.
- Under certain circumstances, a staff member may receive “blanket” approval to post photos/videos of students and staff without completing **step two**. An example of a staff member who may be given “blanket” approval would be an athletic coach who wants to share pictures from competitions. A “blanket” approval must come from the executive director of communications in writing (email).
- All principals (building, associate and assistant), department directors and the superintendent automatically have “blanket” approval.

- Staff members who have received approval to operate social media pages for individual RGSD schools, sports teams or clubs/activity groups also have “blanket” approval.

General Social Media Activity

When posting on social media:

- **Do**
 - o Share positive news about RGSD.
 - o Contact the executive director of Communications if you are unsure about whether you should post something. He can be reached by phone at 314-397-7793 (cell) or email at isistrunk@rgsd.k12.mo.us
- **Do Not**
 - o Assume that your social media posts are private. It is very easy for media members, RGSD staff members, Special Administrative Board members and community members to gain access to the information you post on social media.
 - o Share negative pictures or videos about RGSD.
 - o Share sensitive information about students or staff. All RGSD staff members are required to comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). *Learn more about FERPA on pages 14 and 15.

Parent Communication Apps/ClassDojo

- Make sure your settings are configured to only share sensitive information (grades, behavior, etc.) about a specific student with the parents of that student.
- Follow the photo/video two-step process to share photos or videos with parents through parent communication apps.

Bereavement Letters & Services

- If the Communications Department is notified in a timely fashion about the death of a student, staff member or relative of a staff member, the office will take the following actions:
 - o A member of the communications team will write a letter of condolence and attempt to have it mailed/delivered to the family of the deceased.
 - o The Communications Department will attempt to arrange for a district staff member to attend any services.
 - o If the family of the deceased approves, service details will be shared with relevant staff and/or students.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/?src=fpc>

The Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO) at the U.S. Department of Education (Department) provides annual notification to State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) regarding the educational agencies' obligations under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232h; 34 CFR Part 98). The annual notification, which is required by 20 U.S.C. § 1232h(c)(5)(C), has not substantively changed since it was last issued. The notification may be accessed via our website at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/annual-notices>.

FERPA and PPRA

FERPA is a Federal law that protects the privacy rights of parents and students in education records maintained by educational agencies and institutions or by persons acting for such agencies or institutions. PPRA affords parents and students with rights concerning certain SEA and LEA marketing activities, the administration or distribution of certain surveys to students, the administration of certain physical examinations or screenings to students, and parental access to certain instructional materials. Resources on FERPA and PPRA, including SPPO's online FERPA training modules, our technical assistance request process, and our complaint process, can be accessed on our website at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>.

We also recommend that you sign up for our periodic student privacy newsletter by visiting <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/join-student-privacy-listserv>.

SPPO Resources

In addition to SPPO's general resources, we want to highlight the following specific resources that may be helpful.

Resources on FERPA, COVID-19, and virtual learning:

- FERPA and Virtual Learning During COVID-19; FERPA and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) FAQs; and May Schools Disclose Information about Cases of COVID-19? – provide information on the applicability of FERPA to COVID-19 related disclosures.

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/covid-19>

- FERPA and Virtual Learning Related Resources – identifies resources that may be helpful in supporting virtual learning.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/ferpa-and-virtual-learning>

General guidance for parents on FERPA and PPRA:

- Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) General Guidance – provides plain-language guidance on PPRA for parents and students.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/protection-pupil-rights-amendment-ppra-general-guidance>

- A Parent’s Guide to FERPA – provides plain-language guidance on FERPA for parents and eligible students.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/ferpa-general-guidance-parents>
- Videos: FERPA’s Complaint Process Explained and What Happens When I File A Complaint? – provide a succinct overview of the SPPO complaint process.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint>
- Video: What is the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment or PPRA? – provides a succinct description of PPRA.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/training/what-protection-pupil-rights-amendment>

Transparency Best Practices

Although not specifically required by FERPA, SPPO encourages LEAs to post on their websites their FERPA and PPRA notifications and policies to improve the transparency of information on student privacy. As SEAs and LEAs continue to leverage digital technology in classrooms, whether students are learning in-person or remotely, we encourage as much transparency as possible with the school community about the use of such technology, the information you share with online service providers, and the providers’ responsibilities regarding the information they receive about students. For more information about transparency best practices, please refer to SPPO’s LEA website privacy review, which may be accessed at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/lea-website-privacy-review>.

Data Security Best Practices

Finally, we recognize the growing number of LEAs affected by data breaches, cyber incidents, and ransomware attacks. If an LEA is affected by such incidents, we strongly encourage you to work with the relevant law enforcement and regulatory entities to respond in an appropriate and timely manner. In addition, we encourage you to take advantage of the resources and best practices available on our website:

- Data Breach Response Training Kits – provides customizable exercises designed around a series of scenarios to use for in-house trainings and data breach response exercises.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/data-breach-response-training-kit>
- A Parent’s Guide for Understanding K-12 School Data Breaches – provides parents of K-12 students information to help understand what a data breach means and provides tools and best practices to help navigate the sometimes confusing process of protecting children’s data in the event of a breach.
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/parent%E2%80%99s-guide-understanding-k-12-school-data-breaches>.

Photos & Videos of Staff Members

Photo/Video Opt-Out

Throughout the school year, the district may take pictures or videos of staff for the purpose of highlighting positive news. The pictures and videos may be shared through the various communication channels, including news media, social media and district websites. Examples of how photos and videos may be used include the following:

- The district may use a photo of a staff member for a billboard advertisement.
- A news station may film in a building.
- The district may use a photo of a staff member on its social media pages.

ALL Riverview Gardens School District staff are automatically **APPROVED** to be photographed and filmed at the beginning of each school year.

If you **DO NOT** want to be photographed or filmed by the district, you **MUST** submit a letter with the following information:

- Photo/Video Opt-Out as the headline.
- Your name.
- The building you work in each day.
- Your job title.
- Your district email address.

The letter **MUST** be delivered/mailed to the district administration office, 1370 Northumberland, St. Louis 63137, attention Ishmael Sistrunk, or emailed to communications@rgsd.k12.mo.us by Dec. 1, 2024. **PLEASE NOTE**, letters that are late and/or do not correctly list the aforementioned information will not be accepted.

What Opting-Out Means:

- The Communications Department will do its best to honor the opt-out request.
- Opting-out does not dictate whether students can photograph or film staff members. District policy dictates student use of cameras.
- It is the obligation of the staff member to make sure they do not actively pose for photos or videos.
- It is also the obligation of the staff member to be cautious while attending district events, such as the Back to School Bash, which are often photographed. To avoid any issues, staff members who have opted-out should consider skipping these events. If it is mandatory event, contact the executive director of Communications.

Departments & Offices

Titles & Leadership

- Superintendent's Office
 - Dr. Tanya Patton, Superintendent
- Assessment
 - Dr. Tiffany Hunter, Director of Assessment
- Continuous Improvement
 - Barbara Sharp, Executive Director of Continuous Improvement/Title IX Coordinator
- Communications
 - Ishmael Sistrunk, Executive Director of Communications
- Curriculum & Instruction
 - Tiffany Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction
- Facilities & Food Service
 - Karl Scheidt, Executive Director of Facilities & Food Service
- Federal Programs
 - LaKena Curtis, Director of Federal Programs
- Finance Department
 - Dr. Lavon Singleton, Chief Financial Officer
- Human Resources
 - Travis Ford, Sr., Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
- Leadership & Accountability
 - Traci Nave, Assistant Superintendent of Leadership & Accountability
- Safety & Security
 - Warren Newton, Director of Safety & Security
- Student & Community Support
 - Deirdre Liddell, Executive Director of Student & Community Support
- Technology/Management Information Systems
 - Dr. Jesolyn Larry, Director of Technology