



# Parent Handbook

Fall 2016

## DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF THIS HANDBOOK

Dear Parents,

This parent handbook has been developed to help parents understand the policies and procedures of our school. It includes important information about health and safety, parent-staff communication, scheduling, and our school philosophy and standards. Please read it before the school year starts and refer to it as needed throughout the year.

Please note that this handbook is not intended as the comprehensive text of all RTA school policies; it is focused on the most common and important aspects of daily student life. For further information and to clarify any issues of school policy, please contact the school office anytime.

*The Sages debated - "Which  
is greater - study or deeds?"  
Their conclusion: "Study is  
greater, for it leads to good  
deeds!"*

*(Babylonian Talmud - Kiddushin 40b)*

*"...if you ask what is the  
good of education in general,  
the answer is easy; education  
makes good men, and good men  
act nobly."*

*Plato (428 - 348 B.C.E.)*

## **PROFILE OF THE RUDLIN TORAH ACADEMY**

Throughout history, education has been an important concern of the Jewish people. In the early 1960's, a dedicated group of founders worked to make Jewish day school education a reality in Richmond. In 1966, the Richmond Hebrew Day School opened its doors for the purpose of combining excellence in general studies with an innovative Judaic studies program from kindergarten through eighth grade. For half a century, RTA has consistently maintained the highest standards in academic excellence and imbued generations of the Jewish youth in Richmond with knowledge that is intellectual, moral, and spiritual.

Many of our graduates continue their dual curriculum studies in the Yeshiva of Virginia and Shaarei Torah, our local Jewish high schools, and also into the college level. Others find success in Richmond's highly competitive specialty centers and honors programs, as well as in the area public schools.

Reading and math are stressed throughout all grades. Writing, spelling and grammar, as well as social studies, science, technology, art, and physical education are integrated at every level with increasing sophistication as the child progresses.

One of the goals of the program is to create a positive Jewish identity for the student. This is stimulated through Shabbat celebrations, stories from the Torah, tzedaka, holiday celebrations, Israeli singing and dancing, prayers and blessings. Children are introduced to our beautiful Jewish heritage through these activities.

Accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools, the Rudlin Torah Academy is also a member of the National Society of Hebrew Day Schools.

The Academy is a school where Jewish children from all backgrounds are comfortable. The Rudlin Torah Academy is a family environment in which every child "belongs."

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Rudlin Torah Academy provides the highest quality Jewish and General Education to children in grades K-8. Open to Jewish youth of all backgrounds, RTA prepares its students to meet the challenges of modern society by promoting educational excellence, instilling an appreciation and love of Judaism and Torah, and imbuing respect for all humanity. Our graduates are responsible community servants, role models, future leaders, and lifelong learners. RTA is an integral and integrated part of the Richmond Jewish Community.

In providing excellent Jewish and General Education, RTA:

- \* Creates an environment where all of our students and families feel welcome, engaged, and respected;
- \* Inspires our students ethically, morally, and spiritually;
- \* Promotes a love of and sense of responsibility for the people and state of Israel;
- \* Provides instruction and learning opportunities that challenge our students to reach their maximum level of language proficiency in modern Hebrew;
- \* Implements state of the art technology and environmentally responsible practices;
- \* Develops enriching extracurricular, after school, and arts programming;
- \* Emphasizes community service to foster a strong sense of social and civic responsibility; and
- \* Strengthens relationships with local Jewish organizations through creative and innovative programs and activities.
- \* RTA's mission is best achieved by an active partnership involving students, parents, administrators, teachers, staff, and the community. Open lines of communication, straightforward assessments of challenges and opportunities, and thoughtful, transparent decision-making and planning are vital for the continued success of our program, our students, and the Richmond Jewish community.

## **OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES**

- \* to prepare Jewish youth as the next link in our illustrious chain of tradition
- \* to encourage Jewish youth to be skilled in the professions and crafts which influence the direction of our nation
- \* to instill in our students the desire and enthusiasm to continue in the pursuit of their Jewishness
- \* to foster Jewish pride and to give children a place to have uninhibited Jewish experiences
- \* to develop enlightened, sensitive, curious, concerned and responsible human beings who will desire to make significant contributions to the society in which they live, and
- \* to help in the development of the total child to his/her potential in all areas (intellectual, physical, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual) in order to fulfill personal aspirations while making a positive contribution to society.

## ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance in school is a prerequisite for scholastic achievement – especially in the Academy’s dual program where every precious moment counts. In case of absences, parents should arrange for assignments and books to be sent home with a friend or deposited in the office. Every attempt should be made to schedule medical, dental and other appointments outside of class time.

It has been said, “better late than never” is not half as good a maxim as “better never late”. The child who comes late not only misses part of class time, but also disrupts those who are on time. We ask for your cooperation in this area by allotting the proper amount of time to arrive at school.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Parents, please abide by the following arrival and dismissal procedures. These procedures have been established to protect and assure our students a safe and orderly arrival and dismissal.

The carpool pattern for both arrival and dismissal will start on Kensington Avenue heading west and turn right heading north on Reveille Street toward Patterson Avenue (as indicated on the map on the next page.) Drop-off and pick-up will be in the front of the school. **Please do not leave your vehicle** while in the carpool line, both for dismissal and arrival. Parents who wish to come into school should use street parking. Please do not park your vehicle close to the corner by Patterson Avenue as this impedes the vision of drivers turning on to Patterson.

### ARRIVAL

1. School begins at 8:00 a.m. (There is no teacher supervision prior to 7:50 a.m.)
  - \* Kindergarten – third grade: 8:00 – 8:30 - recess
  - \* Fourth – eighth grades: 8:10 – 8:30 – Tefilah (prayer) in the gym
  - \* Students who arrive prior to 8:00 should wait in the main hallway until the 8:00 bell and then proceed to their designated location.
2. **Please do not park or leave your car in front of the school building during the school day.** This area is designated for drop-off of arriving students and pick-up at dismissal.
3. Parents are not to go to classrooms unless prior clearance is obtained from the office.

### DISMISSAL

1. Students will be dismissed at 3:35 p.m. with the exception of early Fridays (as noted on our school calendar).
2. Students will be dismissed through the front door exit.
3. Carpools will be loaded in front of the school.

4. Parents who wish to come into the school at dismissal time should use street parking which is not on the designated carpool line.
5. Any parent who picks up a child early must come into the office and complete the sign-out sheet.

SCHOOL OFFICE - The office will be open during the hours of 7:50 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

## SPECIAL NOTICES AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In the event that school is canceled or delayed because of inclement weather or any other reason, announcements will be made on the school's website ([www.rudlin.com](http://www.rudlin.com)), and also on local television stations Channels 6, 8, and 12. In the event of a widespread power loss, 901-1012 will be used as a back-up information hotline.

**Text alerts will be available this year - All parents who wish to receive text messages for closings and emergency announcements, please email your cellphone number and service provider to [mrshardy@rudlin.com](mailto:mrshardy@rudlin.com).**

### CLASS TRIPS

During the course of the year, the Academy arranges a number of field trips which are an integral part of our education program. Transportation is generally provided by parent volunteers. Parents will be notified in advance whenever a class function is planned.

### LOST AND FOUND

Every summer we send a large box of unclaimed lost clothing to charity organizations. Often sweaters, jackets, hats, pants, gloves and shirts in excellent condition are among articles given away. To prevent needless loss of clothing, all jackets, sweaters and coats should have name tags or identification with a marking pen.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY PROVISIONS

### FIRST AID AND HEALTH CARE

Pupils should have a complete checkup before school starts. Visual, hearing and speech functions should be assessed. Physical problems in these areas should be called to our attention in writing. All kindergarten and new students are required by the Virginia Department of Health to have immunization forms filled out by a physician prior to the opening day of school.

In addition, it is now required that all students entering sixth grade have a second rubeola vaccine. Please contact the Department of Health, your physician, or the school office for further details.

In case of emergency, parents will be notified immediately. **It is the responsibility of each parent to leave his/her business and personal numbers with the Administrative Office so that we may be able to contact parents, if necessary.** Should we be unable to reach any parent, it is our policy to have the child taken to St. Mary's Emergency Room either by a faculty member or the Rescue Squad. We will contact your personal physician whenever possible.

Please inform the school office if your child has a contagious disease. If your child has a fever we ask that you do not send him/her back to school until they are fever free for 24 hours.

Children who are well enough to come to school are generally well enough to participate in the recess period. All students are required to participate in the recess period unless there is a written note from a parent or teacher.

## **RTA FOOD POLICIES**

At RTA the safety and well-being of our students is of paramount importance. Since food is involved in many parts of our day from lunch and snack to celebrations and after school activities, we have strict food policies to ensure that every student is safe and to maximize inclusiveness. We strive to accommodate allergies and food sensitivity issues, adhere to kosher standards and promote the overall health of our students.

### **NEWLY REVISED ALLERGY POLICY!**

**Grades K-8 are now completely peanut & sesame-free, as are all school events held at RTA.**

We ask that all parents take the extra time to read food labels when sending anything to school, as many unexpected products present issues – as an example, even some brands of plain bagels may contain sesame.

Products which say “May contain **traces**” (of peanuts and/or sesame) or “manufactured in same facility”/“made on shared equipment” are acceptable.

A website which is an excellent resource and recommended reading and viewing is [www.allergyready.com](http://www.allergyready.com).

Please see the back of the handbook for details regarding sesame free foods, labels that are acceptable, and peanut alternative suggestions.

**If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the school office.**

### **General Food Policies:**

**There is a strict “no sharing food” policy throughout the school.**

In order to alleviate various problems, meat lunches should not be brought to school.

Many parents choose to bring cake or other special items for birthday celebrations or when students reach certain milestones in class. Since these foods are generally shared, please adhere to the following policies when bringing in food for others:

- Whenever food is brought in for a classroom party, birthday, or other occasion, it must be brought by the office for approval.
- If bringing in dairy items to be shared, please make every effort to include a pareve option. For a list of pareve snack and lunch ideas please see the back of this handbook.
- In addition to the sensitivity to allergies and kosher supervision, it is preferred that food brought into school for birthdays, class parties or other occasions be healthy rather than in the “junk food” category.



## ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION POLICY

Administration of medication to students is the responsibility of the student's parents or legal guardian and physician. Every effort should be made by school staff to encourage the parent or legal guardian to arrange for medication under the supervision or subject to the direction of the parent or legal guardian and/or physician.

In special circumstances the principal, if requested by the parent or legal guardian, may assist in this matter for students who are not sufficiently mature or reliable to care for their own needs. In such instances, the following conditions are to be met:

1. All requests for the administration of medication to students shall be made through the Principal of the school.
2. The Principal shall require a signed request from the parent or legal guardian and physician indicating the type of medication to be administered, time and manner of administration, required dosage, and action to be taken in the event of possible hazards or side effects.
3. If the Principal feels the request is reasonable, the Principal may make appropriate arrangements with the staff member(s) willing to administer the medication and to undertake its safekeeping. The staff member(s) designated to administer the medication should become familiar with the routines required. Provision for direct contact with the physician would form part of any emergency procedure. The authority for contacting the physician should be provided in writing beforehand by the parent or legal guardian and the physician should be requested to provide a written procedure to be followed in case of emergency. In every case, the parent or legal guardian should be advised by the school whenever contact has been made with the physician or the physician's office.
4. In every case, a completed RTA medication release form and permission for medication form MUST be obtained by the school from the parent or legal guardian. The forms are enclosed. Medication shall be kept in a secure and appropriate location; refrigerated, if necessary, in accordance with specific directions from the physician. In accordance with our policy on the dispensing of medication, medications will be dispensed by the school only three times during the day. Medications will not be dispensed unless these forms are completed and signed by parent and physician. (Non-prescription drugs in original packaging according to dosage need parental form.)

## **PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL**

1. Names or name tags should identify all lunch bags, lunch boxes, book bags and articles of clothing. Children should assemble their personal effects and school belongings before retiring for the evening. This will result in a well-organized student fully prepared for the next school day.
2. **Basic Daily School Supplies**
  - a. Books should be neatly covered on the day of issuance. All texts are supplied by the school and are the property of the school with the exception of Siddurim.
  - b. Parents should encourage their children to come to school prepared with English and Hebrew notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, pencil holders and rulers.
  - c. A recommended supply list from teachers regarding the need for other school supplies was sent via e-mail to all parents in late July, and is available on the school's website – [www.rudlin.com](http://www.rudlin.com)

## **CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONICS**

Cell phones, ipods, game boys and other electronic devices are not appropriate for use in school. Students may carry cell phones with them so long as the device is turned off until school dismissal is concluded.

## **RTA'S RELIGIOUS STANDARDS**

As a community school, members of our parent body come from various backgrounds with varying degrees of commitment to religious observance. In being sensitive to all students and their families, there are certain standards that must be met in order to maintain an atmosphere within which to teach the beauty of Torah values and concepts.

Every attempt should be made to ensure that all food brought into the school be kosher. In order to alleviate many problems, lunch should be either dairy or pareve (neutral – such as tuna fish, jelly, and cheese etc.) Whenever food is brought in for a classroom party, birthday, or other occasion, it must be brought by the office for approval. (Please refer to peanut/sesame allergy policy above).

Children are expected to be neatly dressed and clean in accordance with standards of good taste and modesty. Appropriate dress enhances self-respect and has a definite relationship to conduct. Proper grooming creates an atmosphere conducive to learning and reduces distractions. Flip flops, halter tops, sleeveless, “spaghetti straps”, low cut blouses and other extremely brief apparel are not acceptable. Shorts and skirts should be knee-length.

A kippah is worn by boys while in school, and one should be brought from home every day to school. (Boys should also carry a spare kippah in their school bags). It is traditional for boys and men to wear a small tallit (tzitzit), during the day. This is based upon the verse in Bamidbar (Numbers) 15:38. “These shall be your tzitzit and when you see them, you shall remember all of G-d's commandments so as to keep them.” It serves as a reminder of our commitment to, and love of, Torah and Mitzvot. The school encourages the wearing of tzitzit and will make them available to the students anytime, upon request.

## PARENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

### HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Parent-Teacher conferences and written reports for all grades are scheduled periodically throughout the year. Please do not wait until these designated times to discuss any concerns with your child's teacher. Additional conferences may be arranged at any time during the year. To schedule a conference, parents should call the office and leave a message for the faculty member who will return the call as soon as possible. Should a problem arise, the communication procedure is as follows:

1. The teacher should always be contacted first. An appointment should be made with the teacher outside of class time to deal with the situation.
2. If a problem cannot be resolved with the teacher, please contact the Principal. It is important to deal with issues right away and not allow a crisis to develop.
3. If the problem is not resolved after speaking with the Principal, the Board President may be contacted.

**We respectfully ask that all members of our school family follow the above protocol. It is very important that when an issue or concern arise that the appropriate staff member is spoken to. Often problems have been exacerbated when complaints were made in a public/social media forum, whereas a direct contact with the appropriate teacher or administrator would have cleared up the situation smoothly.**

### V'AHAVTA – SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Each Friday the school newsletter will inform you of news – past, present and future – that pertains to your child's class and the school in general. The V'ahavta is sent to all families via e-mail. If you wish to have a hard copy sent home on Friday please contact the office. Also please let the office know if you are not receiving the weekly emails – occasionally there are issues with firewalls and other technical glitches.

If you have anything to submit for printing in the V'ahavta, please contact the school office. Items must be submitted by **Wednesday at noon.**

### HOMEWORK

Homework policy is set by the principal and the faculty in accordance with the specific needs of each class. Individual adjustments may be made by joint agreement among teachers, parents and students. Please speak to your child's teacher if any concerns arise in this area.

### TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are provided by the Rudlin Torah Academy. Students need to care for textbooks properly and it is requested that they be covered. If a book is lost or damaged, students are responsible for full replacement cost.

## **REPORT CARDS**

The school year is divided into four marking periods. Report cards will be distributed at the end of each marking period according to the following schedule:

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Quarter Ends	11/4/16	1/27/17	3/31/17	6/16/17
Report Cards Distributed	11/11/16	2/3/17	4/6/17	7/1/17 (by mail)

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

In order to facilitate formal parent-teacher communication, there are two scheduled Conference Days during the school year, the days after report cards are distributed (November 14, 2016 and February 6, 2017). In addition to this, faculty will contact parents throughout the year when necessary.

## **STANDARDIZED TESTS**

The Iowa Achievement Tests and CogAt series will take place the week of ? 2017. Student reports (test results) will be distributed by mail.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION (PVA)**

The Rudlin Torah Academy Parent Volunteer Association is a vibrant organization of parent volunteers dedicated to enhancing the total educational experience of our children while helping to create a warm school environment in which all of our families can grow together. The PVA fulfills its mission by providing a variety of social activities, educational programs and scholastic enhancements. Examples of PVA programs include: Back-to-School picnic, Sukkot family dinner, school photos, Chanukah Happening and graduation party.

The PVA funds its activities through fundraisers and dues. The largest fundraiser is the sale of Shalach Manot baskets to the community at large. The PVA has also raised funds through Scholastic Book Fairs and other events.

The PVA is a vital component of the school. All parents are strongly encouraged to join the organization and participate in its activities – we simply cannot make these wonderful events happen without the help of each and every family.

## **ENRICHMENT PROGRAM – AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS/ACTIVITIES**

RTA offers a variety of after school activities and clubs throughout the school year. Participation is voluntary, and there is a fee to cover the basic program costs and materials. There are three separate sessions – Fall, Winter, and Spring. Enrollment information is mailed

to parents in August for the Fall session, and sent home via the V'ahavta and/or e-mail for the Winter and Spring sessions.

### **PUBLICITY**

RTA regularly features its current events, highlights, and photos in a number of venues. Regular online postings will appear on the school website, and on the RTA Facebook page. Publicity features also appear monthly in the Jewish Community Federation's newspaper – The Reflector. Please call the Principal if you have any questions about this.

### **CLASSROOM VISITATION**

Parents and visitors are welcome and encouraged to observe the class "in action." We are proud of what we are, and we want to share it with others. An appointment must be made with the Principal prior to proceeding into the classroom.

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Please inform the Administration Office immediately if there is a change in your address, phone number, or e-mail during the school year.

### **PARTNERSHIP**

Education is a three-way partnership between parent, school and student. Please let us know how we can help make the Rudlin Torah Academy experience memorable for you and your child. Your feedback is always valued and appreciated!

### **NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS**

The Rudlin Torah Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and other school administrated policies.

ELECTED OFFICERS AND BOARD 2016-2017

President.....Dr. Bob Weisberger  
Vice President, Administration .....Mrs. Meggie Hirsch  
Vice President, Ways and Means .....Mrs. Heather Dinkin  
Vice President, Finance .....Mr. Josh Goldberg  
Secretary .....Dr. Karen Wharton  
Treasurer .....Rabbi Elliot Plotnick  
Immediate Past President.....Mr. Brian Greene  
Past President.....Mrs. Rebecca Kalman-Winston

BOARD MEMBERS (one year remaining)

Mrs. Ellen Renee Adams                      Mr. Avery Lynn  
Dr. Tino Habib                                      Rabbi Mo Sherman

BOARD MEMBERS (two year term)

Mr. Elliott Bender                              Mr. Keith Rakofsky  
Mrs. Helen Griffin                              Mr. Eric Shoenfeld  
Mr. Mark Press

BOARD MEMBERS (To be elected to a one year term)

Rabbi Michael Aronowitz

Mr. Avi Gunzburg ??

PVA President – Mrs. Yali Klestzick

## PEANUT AND SESAME INFORMATION AND ALTERNATIVES

Peanut Butter Alternatives available at most grocery stores:

- Soy Butter
- Sunflower Butter
- Almond Butter (also comes in Chocolate and other flavors)
- Cashew Butter
- Hazelnut Butter/Nutella

Sesame; some foods to beware of:

- Hummus – most hummus will contain Tahini, which is sesame paste (Good news - Trader Joe's carries sesame free hummus!)
- Pretzels, crackers, chips, granola bars and some cookies

PLEASE check labels carefully to be sure there is no sesame or peanuts.

**Thank you!**

## LUNCH AND SNACK IDEAS

Meat Free lunch ideas:

- Bagel with cream cheese
- Pasta – with red sauce, butter, pesto, mac & cheese, cheese ravioli
- Tuna fish
- Egg salad
- Tofu deli meats
- Cheese sandwich or quesadilla
- Veggie burgers (i.e, Morningstar Farms griller or chikn patties)
- Salads, Soups
- Nut butter (such as soy, sunflower, almond; with jelly, honey, etc.

Kosher & Pareve snack ideas (for group functions):

- All fruits, veggies and dried fruits
- Many pretzels, chips, popcorns, corn chips (if the kosher symbol does not have a “D” next to it, it is pareve)
- Toffuti Cuties – pareve ice cream sandwiches
- Sweets: Laffy Taffy, Twizzlers, Dum Dum Lollipops, pareve chocolate chips, kosher marshmallows (Westbury pharmacy and some kosher sections of grocery stores)

If you are unsure, please feel free to ask another parent – they will be happy to help and impressed that you asked.