

Rising Leaders Academy



Student Handbook

2026–2027

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About Rising Leaders Academy

Rising Leaders Academy (RLA) is a K–12 charter school dedicated to preparing students for outstanding academic achievement, interpersonal skills, elevated ethical character, a firm command of foreign languages, and knowledge of meaningful careers. RLA strives to meet the needs of every student in an inclusive classroom setting that encourages lifelong learning through a focus on strong leadership skills. Students achieve academic excellence through a developmentally rigorous, innovative, challenging, college-preparatory curriculum in a warm, nurturing environment.

RLA has defined a number of broad goals for the school that include both targets for student achievement and goals for the broader community:

1. **Goal 1:** Demonstrate a high level of academic performance.
2. **Goal 2:** Develop clear and effective oral and written communication skills in each student.
3. **Goal 3:** Develop strong foreign language skills in each student.
4. **Goal 4:** Enhance students' ethical character development.
5. **Goal 5:** Develop an environmental consciousness in students.
6. **Goal 6:** Empower students to pursue excellence.
7. **Goal 7:** Encourage civic responsibility.
8. **Goal 8:** Create an environment where parents and family members are actively engaged in students' education.
9. **Goal 9:** Develop and maintain outstanding teachers.
10. **Goal 10:** Establish sound and accurate financial management practices in all areas of the school's business operations.

Rising Leaders Academy prepares students for high academic achievement by emphasizing individual learning styles and critical-thinking skills through in-depth, experience-based, thematic instruction and relevant co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Our academic programs are founded on the Expeditionary Learning (EL) model, one of the nation's most innovative and successful school-design instructional models. Through EL's design principles and practices, our teachers implement real-life, project-based learning expeditions that promote literacy and integrate curricular content.

Through the full range of training and professional development provided by EL, RLA teachers learn how to manage classes containing students with differing skill levels and abilities. Rising Leaders focuses on constructivism, differentiated instruction, and creating a reading culture throughout the school to increase learning opportunities for students. Students also receive hands-on experience in flourishing careers, such as medicine, technology, and education, and learn by serving the community. This helps promote civic and environmental responsibility through real-world applications, community service, and by fostering a global mindset with an appreciation for the natural world and the rich diversity of humanity. The hands-on experience

helps students improve the community and expand their knowledge and skills. They are motivated to rise as leaders who will make a difference in this world.

Mission, Vision, and Features of Rising Leaders

Mission

Rising Leaders Academy (RLA) in Bay County, Florida is dedicated to preparing students to be lifelong learners who demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and values to excel in the 21st century. RLA provides outstanding academic achievement, interpersonal skills, elevated ethical character, and a firm command of foreign languages. Students achieve academic excellence through a developmentally rigorous, innovative, challenging curriculum in a warm, nurturing, and safe environment with outstanding teachers who provide individualized and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of every student. RLA provides students with a comprehensive academic experience to include fine arts through art, music, and theater, as well as student wellness through vigorous physical activity. RLA prepares students to have a sincere responsibility to give back to the community through service-learning projects, with a focus on strong leadership skills. This mission is achieved through sound financial management practices.

Vision

Our vision is to be recognized as one of the best schools in the state of Florida — a school that empowers students to become successful leaders.

RLA is dedicated to providing the best educational practices in Bay County to help students and teachers excel. Our mission includes full inclusion of all students across the range of academic and language achievement, from educationally disadvantaged to gifted. RLA has unique features that make it top-notch, such as:

- **A Harvard research-based educational program in Bay County:** Hundreds of advanced schools in the U.S. apply the Harvard research-based educational program known as Expeditionary Learning. Schools that implement this advanced program have outperformed district averages in language arts and math. At RLA, teachers implement real-life, project-based learning expeditions that promote literacy and integrate curricular content.
- **Leadership training with a focus on interpersonal skills:** RLA emphasizes leadership skills in curriculum, instruction, and school culture through Expeditionary Learning. Every student is given the opportunity to lead, which increases students' confidence and self-esteem.
- **Two foreign languages for all students from kindergarten:** In addition to all subjects being taught in English, RLA introduces students to one or more of the six UN languages in every grade. Research shows that students who learn a second language achieve greater divergent thinking, creativity, and cognitive development compared to monolingual students.

- **Community service embedded in academics through Expeditionary Learning:** RLA prepares students to have a sincere responsibility to give back to the community through clinics and other locations where volunteering is permissible.
- **STEM focus:** STEM and hands-on experience are a major aspect of our curriculum.

Understandings About School Culture and Community

Rising Leaders Academy believes students learn best in a safe, caring, and well-structured environment. Clear expectations and predictable routines help every student feel secure and focus on learning. We ask students, families, and staff to work together to keep our school respectful, orderly, and welcoming.

School-Wide Code of Conduct

School Code of Conduct posted in the classrooms and hallways in the following format:

- **Trustworthiness**
- **Respect**
- **Citizenship**
- **Responsibility**

Teachers may also have individual rules and expectations specific to their classrooms. **In the hallways, students are expected to remain silent.** Talking in the hallway is not permitted unless there is an emergency.

Student Uniform Policy

Appropriate dress is the primary responsibility of the student and his/her parents or guardians. The RLA dress code must be followed from student arrival until the end of the day. Students are expected to follow the uniform policy and adhere to the following guidelines. Students who are in violation of the dress code will not be permitted to attend class until the issue is corrected.

Approved school colors for uniform tops: green, yellow, black, white, blue, purple, and gray.

Shirts: Students are required to wear a school uniform top with a school logo every day, unless it is a special dress or spirit day. Approved uniform tops are RLA collared shirts, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or performance dry-wear tops. A long-sleeve or short-sleeve t-shirt may be worn under uniform tops, but it must be a solid color similar to the RLA uniform shirt colors. Nothing can cover the school shirt unless it is approved outerwear (see the Outerwear section below). No pins can be attached to RLA shirts.

Outerwear: Approved outerwear is the school-approved RLA logo fleece, jacket, sweater, or sweatshirt. Other outerwear should be removed once inside the classroom and should always be worn over a school uniform shirt. Inside the classroom, students must be in their RLA school shirt, which can be a short- or long-sleeve shirt, sweater, sweatshirt, or RLA jacket. Please purchase outerwear early to allow for arrival before cold weather arrives.

Hair: Students cannot come to school with any chemicals or unnatural coloring in the hair. Hair below the shoulder is recommended to be pulled back or braided and not a distraction in the learning environment. No headwear except for simple headbands and bows, or headwear for religious purposes. No shaved heads with designs.

Jewelry: Students cannot wear any flashy or heavy jewelry that might create a hazard to a student's safety. Light, small necklaces and bracelets are permissible. Students may not have any body piercing other than small stud earrings in the earlobes, which can be gold or silver. No colorful beaded earrings that hang below the earlobe.

Shoes: All students must wear closed-toe and closed-back shoes. Crocs, cowboy boots, steel-toe boots, spiked-heel shoes, roller-shoes, flip-flops, and/or slippers are NOT allowed. Athletic shoes are recommended. Socks of any color are acceptable and may have a manufacturer's label or logo, but may not have words or images.

School Uniform Bottoms

Students may wear solid khaki or solid black pants/shorts. Students in grades 6–12 may also wear solid blue or black jeans. No other colors, stripes, patterns, logos, graphics, or designs are permitted.

All bottoms must:

- Fit appropriately
- Be worn at the waist and not sag
- Be free of rips, holes, tears, graphics, designs, or embellishments
- Be straight-leg or traditional uniform style
- Be knee length if shorts are worn

The following are NOT permitted:

- Cargo pants or cargo shorts
- Sweatpants
- Bell-bottoms or flare pants
- Baggy or hip-hugger styles
- Overalls
- Jeggings, leggings, biker shorts, or tight-fitting/spandex-style bottoms worn as pants
- See-through, sheer, leather, hosiery-style, or leotard-style materials

Skirts, dresses, jumpers, and skorts are not permitted, as students participate in physical activities throughout the school day, including PE, Ninja Warrior, and recess. Uniform bottoms may be purchased from any store, provided they meet the school uniform policy guidelines.

Rising Leaders Academy will contact parents if a student's attire is inappropriate or if a dress code violation occurs. Multiple dress code violations may result in progressive disciplinary action, up to and including suspension and/or dismissal from RLA for failure to follow school policies.

Celebrations and Parties Policy

The mission of RLA is to provide academic excellence in a nurturing environment. The reason for any celebration or party at RLA must be aligned with the mission and related to learning. RLA values students' and staff's time, and therefore celebrations and parties are meant for meaningful fun that is directly related to learning and will further enhance the learning and environment — such as Community Circles, which are celebrations of learning. All other celebrations and parties must have administrative approval.

Drop-off and Pick-up Policy

RLA hours are:

- K–1: 7:40 – 3:00 Monday–Thursday; 7:40 – 12:30 Friday
- 2–3: 7:50 – 3:15 Monday–Thursday; 7:50 – 12:30 Friday
- 4–5: 7:50 – 3:15 Monday–Thursday; 7:50 – 12:45 Friday
- Middle/High: 8:00 – 3:30 Monday–Thursday; 8:00 – 12:45 Friday

Parents may drop students off no earlier than 7:15 a.m. A staff member will be outside to bring the students to the cafeteria. Parents/guardians are not permitted inside the facility during drop-off/pick-up. Students must be picked up on time. If a student is not picked up on time, the family will be charged for after-school care at the applicable rate then in effect. Parents must leave immediately after pick-up and cannot remain parked in the school parking lot. Other than aftercare student pickup buses, no cars are to park directly in front of the school on school property. There are parking spots on the sides of the facility, as well as across the street.

RLA–Parents Partnership Policy

Rising Leaders Academy and parents are partners in educating our children. Therefore, RLA has the following expectations for parents that align with our student character education program:

1. Talk with your child about school and his/her academic and behavioral goals.
2. Model our character traits for RLA students.
3. Ensure that your child is at school on time and ready to learn.
4. Ensure that your child gets 8–10 hours of sleep, minimum.
5. Ensure that your child eats a healthy breakfast.
6. Get to know your child's teacher and communicate respectfully on a regular basis.
7. Engage in the life of the school.
8. Attend school events: parent meetings, Community Circles, Expeditionary Learning Gallery Night, Presentation of Learning, etc.
9. Be good stewards of our school and community.

10. Learn with us. Grow with us. Celebrate with us.

11. Believe that your child can do more than you ever imagined possible.

In addition, families are asked to participate in the Parent Volunteer Program by contributing ten (10) hours per family in a capacity that supports the needs of the school. The school provides flexible options for families who are unable to volunteer during school hours, including alternative contributions such as PTO support or approved at-home activities.

Dismissal Policy

RLA follows the Bay District Code of Conduct policies and will take action in accordance with district and school policies. In addition, all parents must sign the Parent Contract form, which states the expectations and policies for being an RLA member.

RLA will strive to keep the school environment safe and nurturing for all staff and students. If a child or parent/guardian interferes with the educational environment in a disruptive or disrespectful manner toward any student or staff member, the parents will be notified. Continued behavior after notification may be considered a breach of the Parent/Student Contract and may result in appropriate action in accordance with school policy and applicable law. A breach of the Parent/Student Contract may result in the student losing preferential re-enrollment status for the following school year, meaning the student may not automatically articulate to the next grade level and may be required to reapply through open enrollment procedures, in accordance with applicable law and school policy, as well as continued enrollment the current school year.

Donation Policy

All donations to RLA or individual classes must be given to the RLA office. The donor will be given a donation letter. If the donation is for a specific class or expedition, the office will then forward the donation to the specific class. All donations must be recorded and then forwarded to the accountant.

Student Lunch Policy

Rising Leaders Academy provides free breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge to families, in accordance with National School Lunch Program (NSLP) guidelines. School meals offer a variety of choices, including fresh fruits and vegetables, salads, allergen-free selections, daily hot meals, and vegetarian and vegan options. Students are not allowed to bring sodas or other soft drinks. For safety purposes, students are not permitted to use the microwave, nor should a staff member microwave meals for students. Families are welcome to participate in our cafeteria program or to provide nutritious meals for their students from home.

Absences Policy

Parents are expected to notify the school the day of the absence. Parents must provide school personnel with accurate telephone contact numbers (home, cell, and work for parents or legal

guardians) and ensure the numbers are correct if there is a change during the school year. As an Expeditionary Learning school with foreign languages, RLA provides students with an advanced curriculum that contains a larger amount of information than other schools. Students who are absent frequently miss this information and have difficulty making up all the subjects and activities. Repeated unexcused absences will lead to interventions in keeping with Florida law, and ongoing attendance concerns may be referred to the school's child study team for support. Because RLA's curriculum is rigorous, students are expected to keep absences to a minimum and should not exceed ten (10) absences during the school year.

An excused absence includes:

- illness (doctor's note may be required);
- medical or dental appointments (doctor's note may be required);
- automobile accident (accident report may be required);
- deaths or funerals;
- emergency situations acceptable to the Principal or designee;
- required court appearance (subpoena required);
- established religious observance;
- severe weather.

Family Leave Absence

Rising Leaders Academy recognizes that students may occasionally need to be absent for family reasons. Whether a Family Leave absence is excused, and how many days are permitted, depends on the reason for the absence.

Excused Family Leave

Consistent with Bay District Schools' attendance policy, a Family Leave absence is excused only when it is for the death of a family member or another bona fide family emergency. A student may be granted up to five (5) consecutive school days per event as excused Family Leave. To be excused, the parent/guardian must file written justification with the Principal's office within three (3) days of the absence. A student with an excused Family Leave absence may make up all missed work without academic penalty by contacting each teacher on the first day back and completing the work within five (5) school days.

Extended or Planned Family Leave

Any Family Leave that exceeds five (5) school days, or any planned (non-emergency) family absence, is treated as pre-approved family leave and requires the parent/guardian to submit a written request to the Principal and obtain approval before the student is absent. Consistent with Bay District Schools' attendance policy, pre-approved family leave also requires that the student have a C average or higher in all classes for the grading period and that it be demonstrated the leave cannot be taken during a scheduled school break. When approved, the Principal may attach a make-up learning plan so the student can keep pace with instruction, and may extend

the five-day limit for extraordinary circumstances (for example, an extended hospitalization or a death requiring out-of-state travel).

Unexcused Family Leave

A Family Leave absence that is not based on a significant family circumstance — for example, a family trip, vacation, or other discretionary family event — does not qualify as an excused absence under Bay District Schools' attendance policy. Such an absence is recorded as unexcused, and work missed during an unexcused Family Leave absence may not be made up for credit.

Attendance Monitoring

All absences, excused and unexcused, count toward the school's attendance totals. When a student reaches five (5) absences in a grading period, the school will reach out to the parent/guardian to discuss the reasons and offer support.

Tardy and Early Pick-up Policy

A student is tardy when the student arrives after the beginning of the school day, or when he/she is not in his/her assigned seat or station right after the Pledge of Allegiance. A student's tardiness shall be excused when the reason given is acceptable to the Principal or teacher. In the event students arrive late, the office will issue excused tardies for physician/dentist appointments with a doctor's note. All other tardies are unexcused. Your child should attend school every day, on time. Teachers cannot provide an effective instructional program for children who are frequently absent or tardy. Students who arrive tardy for class disrupt the other students who are engaged in learning. Three tardies constitute one absence. Excessive unexcused absences will result in interventions consistent with the Absences Policy above and applicable Florida law. Early pick-up is when the student is picked up before the end of the school day. An unexcused early pick-up counts like a tardy.

Field Trip Policy

"EL differentiates between traditional field trips, in which students are often spectators, and fieldwork, in which students are active investigators, applying the research tools, techniques of inquiry, and standards of presentation used by professionals in the field." (EL Core Practice 6)

As an Expeditionary Learning school, students should attend field trips with the intent to participate with research and study, not as spectators. Teachers will provide students with a guide on research goals and methodologies. According to EL Core Practice 6, fieldwork is structured so that it is safe and productive, and teachers preview sites to shape the field experience effectively. For the safety of our elementary school students, field trips must be within a one-hour drive (one-way) from Rising Leaders Academy. If there is a location longer than one hour that is necessary for an expedition and unique, with no similar venue within one hour of RLA, the teacher must provide convincing evidence, and it must be approved by the School Principal.

Parents/guardians are required to cover any costs associated with field trips and fieldwork, when applicable.

“Students are prepared to be ambassadors for their school when on fieldwork. They are courteous, articulate, organized, and helpful.” (EL Core Practice 6)

Non-Discrimination

Rising Leaders Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (gender), marital status, disability (Section 504/ADA), gender identity, age, or other legally protected characteristics in its educational programs and activities. No person shall, on the basis of any protected characteristic, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program, activity, or work environment. This practice applies equally to students, employees, applicants for employment, and all persons having business with Rising Leaders Academy.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

Rising Leaders Academy desires to maintain an academic and work environment in which all employees, volunteers, and students are treated with respect and dignity. A vital element of this atmosphere is the Board’s commitment to equal opportunities and the prohibition of discrimination and harassment. The Board’s prohibition against these practices includes prohibitions based upon a person’s membership in a protected class as defined by applicable state or federal law. Rising Leaders Academy, Inc. policies forbid sexual harassment, or any other form of illegal harassment, of any employee, student, volunteer, or visitor. The school will not tolerate harassment by any of its employees, students, volunteers, agents, vendors, or service providers who have access to school facilities.

All employees shall be allowed to work, and all students allowed to learn, in an environment free from all forms of illegal discrimination, including sexual harassment and unlawful retaliation. Any person who engages in illegal discrimination, sexual harassment, and/or unlawful retaliation during the performance of their duties — or any adult who knowingly permits these unlawful actions to occur without intervention or reporting — shall be in violation of Rising Leaders Academy, Inc.’s policy.

Title IX Notice of Nondiscrimination

Rising Leaders Academy does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs or activities and is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (34 C.F.R. Part 106) not to discriminate in such a manner. This requirement extends to admissions and employment.

Title IX Coordinator (Designated Official): School Principal

Email: Principal@RisingLeadersAcademy.org | **Phone:** (850) 215-0844

Prohibited conduct includes slurs, intimidation, and other harassment directed at a person because of a protected characteristic, as well as retaliation against anyone who reports a concern or participates in an investigation. The school’s full discrimination and harassment policy, including detailed definitions and complaint procedures, is maintained in the RLA Policy

Manual and is available from the front office upon request. Students or parents/guardians with a concern may contact the Title IX Coordinator named above.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504

Rising Leaders Academy complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and protect every student's right to equal access to the school's educational programs, services, and activities. RLA provides reasonable accommodations and, where appropriate, develops Section 504 plans so that students with disabilities can participate fully in the life of the school. Families who believe their child may need accommodations should contact the school's Section 504/ADA Coordinator.

Section 504/ADA Coordinator: School Principal

Email: Principal@RisingLeadersAcademy.org | **Phone:** (850) 215-0844

Bullying and Harassment (Including Cyberbullying)

Rising Leaders Academy is committed to providing a safe, secure, and respectful learning environment for all students. Consistent with the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act (section 1006.147, Florida Statutes) and the Bay District Schools bullying and harassment policy, RLA prohibits bullying and harassment — including cyberbullying — of any student or employee. This prohibition applies to all students, employees, volunteers, and visitors. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated, and RLA will take prompt and appropriate action in response to any reported or observed incident.

Definitions

Bullying means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, teasing, social exclusion, threats, intimidation, stalking, cyberstalking, physical violence, theft, sexual, religious, or racial harassment, public or private humiliation, and destruction of property.

Harassment means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, or any use of data, computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct directed against a student or employee that places that person in reasonable fear of harm, that has the effect of substantially interfering with the person's educational performance or opportunities, or that substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school.

Cyberbullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication — including email, social media, text messages, websites, applications, or online games — whether or not the device or platform is owned or operated by the school. It includes distributing an electronic communication, or posting material online, that creates any of the harms described above.

Bullying and harassment also include retaliation against anyone who reports an incident or participates in an investigation, and any conduct by an adult or student that incites, encourages, or assists bullying or harassment.

Where This Policy Applies

This policy applies to bullying and harassment that occurs on school property; at any school-sponsored activity, function, or event; on a school bus or at a school bus stop; and through a school computer, network, or device. It also applies to off-campus conduct, including cyberbullying through a personal device or non-school platform, when that conduct substantially interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from school, or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school.

Expected Behavior

Every student and employee is expected to treat others with respect and dignity, to refrain from bullying or harassing behavior, and to report bullying or harassment they experience or witness. Students are expected to uphold RLA's character expectations — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship — both in person and online.

How to Report

If you experience or witness bullying or harassment, report it right away to a teacher, the School Principal, or the front office. You can report in person, in writing, or anonymously through FortifyFL ([GetFortifyFL.com](https://www.getfortifyfl.com)) or SAFE (safe.bayschools.net). No one will be punished for making a report in good faith.

What Happens After a Report

The school takes every report seriously and will look into it promptly and privately, then take appropriate action. The families of the students involved will be kept informed of the steps taken, and they have the right to appeal a decision. If an incident may involve a crime, the school will contact local law enforcement. The school's complete bullying and harassment policy — including the full reporting, investigation, and notification procedures — is kept in the RLA Policy Manual and follows Bay District Schools Policy 5517.01.

Consequences

A student found to have committed bullying or harassment is subject to disciplinary action in accordance with this policy, RLA's standards of conduct, and the Bay District Schools Code of Conduct, up to and including suspension or dismissal and possible referral for criminal charges. The consequence will reflect the severity, frequency, and circumstances of the conduct. An employee, volunteer, or contractor found to have committed bullying or harassment is subject to discipline up to and including termination or removal from school grounds.

False Accusations

A student or employee found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another person of bullying or harassment is subject to disciplinary action in the same manner as a person who commits an act of bullying or harassment.

Counseling, Support, and Prevention

RLA will refer students who are targets of bullying or harassment, and students who commit it, for counseling and appropriate support services. The school's prevention efforts include age-appropriate instruction on recognizing, preventing, and responding to bullying and harassment, including online behavior and cyberbullying awareness.

Reporting Data and Publication

All incidents of bullying and harassment are reported in the school's safety and discipline data as required by Florida's School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) system. This policy is published in the Student Handbook and made available to students, parents/guardians, and employees, and is reviewed consistent with Bay District Schools' policy and applicable law.

Student Cell Phone and Gaming Policy

Students may not use cell phones, tablets, smart watches, or similar personal devices during school hours — including arrival and dismissal — inside school buildings, in outdoor common areas, in class, in hallways, in bathrooms, or in the cafeteria. A student who needs to use a phone may do so in the front office with written permission from a teacher. Only academic or educational games are permitted, at the teacher's discretion; games for entertainment are not permitted during school hours.

Consequences escalate with each offense: a first offense results in a write-up and confiscation for the day; a second, confiscation for one week (or parent pickup); a third, confiscation for one month (or parent pickup) plus one day of suspension; and additional offenses, confiscation for the remainder of the quarter (or parent pickup) plus two days of suspension.

Drug-Free School

Rising Leaders Academy maintains a drug-free school. There is a zero-tolerance policy on the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession, or use of any controlled substance, including alcohol, on all school property and at school-sponsored activities.

Students who are found in possession of, or under the influence of, drugs or alcohol on campus or at a school activity will be subject to disciplinary procedures, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with the school code of conduct.

Audio and Video Surveillance

Rising Leaders Academy uses audio and video surveillance in common areas, including offices, hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms, of the school to help ensure the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. Signs are posted at school entrances to notify all individuals that recording is in progress. Recordings may be reviewed and used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings, investigations, or as otherwise permitted by law. Students, staff, and visitors should have no expectation of privacy in areas under surveillance.

Directory Information (FERPA)

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Rising Leaders Academy may disclose certain student information designated as directory information without prior written consent, unless a parent/guardian or eligible student opts out.

Directory information may include:

- Student name
- Grade level
- Participation in school activities and events
- Honors and awards received
- Photographs, videos, or recordings from school activities
- Student work or performances related to school programs

Directory information may be used in school communications such as newsletters, emails, programs, the school website, and official social media.

Parents/guardians may opt out of directory information disclosure by submitting a written request to the school office by the first day of school. Parents will receive a Print/Digital Likeness Permission Form to complete before the first day of school. Opt-out requests will be honored for the remainder of the school year.

Directory information does not include grades, discipline records, special education information, health records, SESIR, or Title IX information.

Internet Policy

This policy applies to all devices owned or provided by Rising Leaders Academy and to any device — including personal devices — connected to the school's internet. In keeping with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), RLA filters internet access and monitors students' online activity to protect students from harmful or inappropriate content, and teaches students about safe and responsible online behavior, including cyberbullying awareness.

Students are expected to use the internet and school devices responsibly and for educational purposes. Students may not try to bypass the school's filters, gain unauthorized access to systems or data ("hacking"), or use the internet for any unlawful activity, and they must protect their own and others' personal information.

Students may not access social media platforms unless a teacher directs them to for a specific educational purpose. Before assigning any online content, staff confirm it is appropriate and not blocked by the student filter.

Consistent with Florida law, TikTok and any successor platforms are prohibited on school-owned devices and on any device connected to the school's internet, and may not be used to communicate or promote the school, its clubs, organizations, or athletic teams.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Rising Leaders Academy recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly part of how students learn, create, and solve problems. RLA's goal is to help students use AI responsibly and ethically, in ways that support — rather than replace — their own thinking and learning.

Permitted use. Students may use AI tools only when a teacher expressly permits it for a specific assignment or purpose, and only on approved, school-filtered platforms consistent with RLA's Internet Policy. When AI is allowed, students must use it honestly and follow the teacher's instructions about how it may be used.

Academic integrity. Submitting AI-generated work as one's own — without permission and proper acknowledgment — is a form of plagiarism and violates RLA's expectations for academic honesty. Students are responsible for the accuracy and originality of the work they submit. When a teacher permits AI assistance, students must disclose how AI was used if asked to do so.

Privacy and safety. Students must never enter personal information about themselves, classmates, families, or staff into AI tools. AI tools do not replace adult guidance; students should bring questions or concerns to a teacher. Any AI content that is inappropriate, harmful, or inaccurate should be reported to a staff member.

Supervision and filtering. Consistent with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and RLA's Internet Policy, student use of AI tools is supervised and filtered. RLA may monitor student use of school devices and networks, and access to specific AI platforms may be enabled or restricted at the school's discretion.

Consequences. Misuse of AI tools — including dishonest use, accessing unapproved platforms, or entering prohibited information — may result in disciplinary action consistent with RLA's policies and the Bay District Code of Conduct.

Acknowledgment of Receipt

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Rising Leaders Academy Student Handbook for the 2026–2027 school year. I understand that the handbook describes the expectations, policies, and procedures of the school, and I agree to support these expectations. I understand that RLA also follows the Bay District Schools Code of Conduct, as well as school policies, and that the school may amend this handbook as needed during the year. This handbook is not a contract of enrollment.

Student Name (please print)

Student Signature