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## Rock Falls Township High School District #301

June 3, 2019

Dear Students, Parents, and/or Guardians:

As we prepare for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year, we celebrate our students' past successes and look for ways to improve, targeting areas that make the greatest impact on student success and the school climate. The identified areas of concern include daily attendance, tardiness, cell phone/electronic device use, and student attire. In these areas, just a little effort from students, parents, and staff can make a significant difference at Rock Falls High School.

Absences, excused and/or unexcused, continue to be an issue of concern for RFHS. Research confirms the relationship between student attendance and student achievement, with school attendance being a major factor in determining student success. Students who attend school regularly have been shown to achieve at higher levels than students who do not have regular attendance. Regular attendance not only benefits students academically in high school but also helps them to develop an important life skill for future success in college and/or their careers.

Students should set attendance goals, 2 excused absences or less per quarter. Parents/Guardians can support these efforts by ensuring that their student(s) attend school every day. This includes ensuring that their student(s) have updated physicals and immunizations by October 1st to remain in school. If an absence is necessary, it is important for parents/guardians to follow school policy, providing a call off and/or professional documentation **within 24 hours, no later than 2:30 p.m. the day following the absence**, to avoid an unexcused absence. Continuing this school year, **students will be excused for only 5 call offs per semester**. These may include but are not limited to call offs for illness, parent request, family emergency, and/or approved vacation. A call off, **any parent-excused absence**, may range from a partial period to a full day of school. All additional absences will require professional documentation to be considered excused. Absences, due to vacation, must be approved at least 5 days in advance. It is important to remember that a missed school day is a lost opportunity for students to learn.

Tardiness, not getting to school and /or class on time, also remains a matter of concern. As with absences, students who are frequently tardy demonstrate a tendency to have lower GPAs, lower scores on standardized assessments, lower graduation rates, and are more apt to be fired from a job for showing up late. When a student walks into class minutes or even seconds late, that student not only misses instruction, affecting his/her own learning, but also causes a distraction, disrupting the learning of other students. Understanding the effects that tardiness has on student success, both now and in the future, we as a school will make more conscious efforts to improve punctuality, holding students accountable by following the tardy policy within the Student Handbook.

As technology has become more and more accessible to students through cell phones and other electronic devices (smart watches, iPods, iPads, tablets, etc.) and social media has developed into an outlet for students,



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schools have the responsibility of educating students on their proper usage. To promote proper use and help minimize distractions and interruptions during the educational process, we will continue to enforce the policy as outlined in the Student Handbook: all electronic devices, including cell phones, are only permitted for use before school, after school, during passing time, and in the cafeteria during a student's scheduled lunch time. Simply stated, electronic devices **may not be seen or heard during a class period**, without prior approval from the teacher or administration.

Lastly, on a daily basis, the halls at RFHS become the runway for fashion. Although students wish to express themselves through their clothing and their outfits may be acceptable outside of the school, we require that students' attire is **SCHOOL** appropriate, as outlined in the student handbook under Student Dress Code. Accordingly, students have the opportunity to express themselves through their personalities and efforts. To minimize distractions, we at RFHS will be diligent in our efforts to uphold the student dress code. A noteworthy provision in the dress code is the clarification on the acceptable length for shorts, skirts, skorts, and dresses. All of the mentioned clothing and holes in pants and/or shorts **must extend below the student's longest fingertip when the student places his/her relaxed arms at his/her side. Additionally, no tube skirts, tube dresses, or cut out shirts will be allowed.** To avoid difficulties due to dress code violations, we ask students and parents/guardians to review and follow the Student Dress Code policy.

Addressing these areas of concern will take the combined efforts of students, parents, and staff. Together, we can make a difference, creating a school climate that focuses on student learning and success. Have a great summer break. I look forward to an exciting school year.

If you have any comments, questions, and/or concerns, please contact me.

**Vicki L. Dunphy**

Vicki L. Dunphy

Assistant Principal

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