

An Analysis of Riverwood Elementary School Handbooks

[Parent/Student Handbook](#) Description

The Parent/Student Handbook is organized into clear sections that are pertinent to all students and all parents. Sections are short but many. The headings cover mission/Vision, arrival procedures and expectations, times students are permitted on campus, how to arrange for alternative arrival, visitors and volunteers, field trip procedures, student health and medication procedures, cafeteria and snacks, parent visitation for lunch, student celebrations and recognitions, school-wide communication methods, emergency drills, dates for progress reports and report cards, definition of grading system, and non-discriminatory statement.

The black and white format is very reader-friendly and the language is clear and concise. All sections are clear and include links to district forms as needed. It is easy to understand and doesn't have a lot of details that over-complicate the reader's understanding. If a parent wants more information they are free to reach out to the school and ask their question(s).

However, the format is simplistic and outdated. The parent/student handbook is posted on the school webpage as a pdf link. A fresher design could be more appealing and visually stimulating. I believe this online version is identical to the one printed in the student agendas and therefore is consistent in its practicality. As a parent, I would like to see an additional version that would be visually stimulating and maybe included pictures of students and a more professional layout. This would be an additional way to show the community of the school without really saying "We are a community". This change to the format would make a tremendous difference. In addition, I would like to see translated versions of the handbook in all the languages of our families. Every parent needs to have access.

The parent and student handbook supports the vision of the school by providing the expectations of the school for both parents and students laid out.

[RES Staff Handbook](#) Description

The RES Staff Handbook is shared with the staff each year. It is digital and hyperlinked and is unlike any staff handbook I have ever seen. The Assistant Principal updated it last year to this format, and it is smart, easy to use, visually appealing. This format will be one idea I plan to keep in my toolbox. Usually, the handbook is one document, both long and boring. This handbook is two pages, uses the school colors alternating in boxes labeled with the hyperlinks to all the procedures in detail, the forms teachers need, expectations of teachers during different parts of the school day, attendance for students and staff, duty schedule and leave forms, emergency and safety procedures, schedules and calendars, facilities, cafeteria, transportation videos and also includes links to staff created videos from the past. When teachers need to look up information, it is just a click away.

As much as I love this format for the handbook, I think that it could become a platform for all the information that teachers need throughout the year. I would use this Handbook format and add to it as the school year continues adding other links or sections that all teachers need to refer to. For example, I would add a PLC section for the various grade-level agendas. I would also add an MTSS section with the links to the forms and letters that teachers need. At the end of the school year, this handbook can be easily copied/updated for the next year.

The handbook aligns with the vision and mission by outlining the expectations for a successful staff while being innovative in its format. It is easy and accessible for all teachers to refer to as needed throughout the school year.

This publication was created by the District to support the required PLC piece for all schools in North Carolina. It is a beautifully designed and professional looking handbook that covers the What of PLCs, the Why of PLCs and the Hows of PLCs. It is an overview of what PLCs are and their purpose. It also contains links to a number of more detailed and explanatory articles that dive deeper into PLCs. The expectation is that every school will have PLCs for every teacher and that the school's responsibility is to build time into the schedule for PLCs to meet. It does a great job of covering basic PLC information, however, since it is a single handbook for all levels of schools, it doesn't really provide an opportunity for teachers to use the PLC handbook as a learning guide.

I wonder if the handbook could be redesigned to meet the various needs of the different levels of schools and included resources for the PLCs to use in looking at data. If the handbook was much more of a tool, then perhaps the PLC purpose would be better served and achieved. One of my take-aways from going from a high school level to an elementary level is that Elementary PLCs are much more productive in actually looking at the students. The MTSS process seems to lend itself to the PLC in ways that teachers are supported and student improvement can be the focus of these meetings. As a member of a PLC at the high school level, we were not functioning in this way. The purpose of our PLC was not clear, nor did we really ever talk about student improvement. My two examples cannot be unique, and it shows the diverse spectrum of function PLCs have in our county.

If the PLC Handbook could be redesigned, or if a toolbox could be added so that the PLC Handbook was more than a pretty brochure but something that would help guide teachers or schools who are struggling to start a PLC. It would also set an expectation of the district in what

the PLC should look like. Not every school would have to follow it, especially if the principal is a strong instructional leader, but if a principal is new, or the school has challenges, using district tools to get the PLC moving in the right direction would be very helpful.

Analysis

In looking at how the Staff and the Parent/Student handbooks align, I do not see any similarities between the two handbooks. The Staff Handbook is functional while the Parent/Student handbook is straight forward and basic. If I were a parent looking at sending my student to Riverwood Elementary, I would not be excited about sending my child to Riverwood. I think that we have a missed opportunity to make our parents feel special and excited about sending their child to Riverwood. This is an improvement that can be made to reach our parents. The Staf Handbook is great and as a new staff member, this handbook elevated my expectations for working at the school. It was organized, thorough and I can refer to it in order to check what the school expectations/procedures are.

A Handbook's purpose is to be the first place to research any question a Staff member, Parent or Student could have. It needs to be attractive, functional and user-friendly. It should include all the pieces I will need in order to resolve my issue (forms, policy, etc.) I believe that the time has come to get rid of the long book-style format and switch to a digital quick format with hyperlinks. This will be something that I will take with me as I continue my journey into school leadership.