

# Rena Student Handbook 2023-2024



720 Rena Road  
Van Buren, AR 72956  
Phone: (479)471-3190  
Fax: (479)471-3193

**Every Student Matters. Every second counts.**

*In compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws, the Van Buren Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, gender identity, or disability in its employment and educational practices.*

After reading the Rena Elementary School student handbook with your child, this page must be signed, dated, and returned to school.

Thank you!  
Tia Smith, Principal

I have read and discussed the material in this handbook with my child. I understand and agree that my child will abide by the rules and regulations set by the Van Buren School District and Rena Elementary School.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Homeroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

### Release of Information

*I hereby authorize emergency medical services for this student. I give VBSD staff permission to give my child first aid treatment with OTC ointments and pain relieving sprays, cough drops, band-aids, and bandages. I hereby authorize the Van Buren School District Health Services to share or discuss my child's health issues with any **pertinent** person.*

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Van Buren School District Field Trip Permission Slip

This signature of permission will allow your child to attend any field trip sponsored by the school district. You will receive information regarding specific field trips. If you do not want your child to attend a specific field trip, you will need to notify the school.

I give my child \_\_\_\_\_ permission to attend field trips with their school.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Student Media Release

The Van Buren School District Requests signature permission to use your child's name, recognizable picture or video image in any district-approved media releases. Throughout the year, student pictures may be used in different media formats (social media posts etc..) in an effort to make the public aware of positive things occurring in the schools.

I **GIVE** permission to use my child's name, recognizable picture, or image in any VBSD media release.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I **DO NOT** give permission to use my child's name, recognizable picture, or image in any VBSD media release.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Rena Elementary Faculty and Staff 2023-2024

Kindergarten:	Valerie Burns	Cara Graham	Amy Martin	Shannon McKeown
First Grade:	Misti Gardner	Jill Haley	Tara Ree	
Second Grade:	Edie Chappell	Hillary Elliott	Amra Nicholson	
Third Grade:	Deanah Dahlem	Angela Guess	Shayna Henson	
Fourth Grade:	Destiny Morales	Dawn Nichols	Angela Shackelford	
Fifth Grade:	Josie Hudson	Crista Kham	Taylor Webb	
Special Services:	Kendra Fanning	Kami Morey	Allison Frazier	
	Speech	Resource	Speech	
Specialty:	Angie Blake	Tina Jenkins/ Meagan Van Herpen	Andy Lockhart	Landi Brown
	P.E.	Art	Music	Librarian
Paraprofessionals:	Carrie Berry	Rosemary Gregory	Kathy Harris	Heather Riley
Office Staff:	Lauren Knoner	Patty Botello	Amber Anderson	
	Secretary	Receptionist	Nurse	
Cafeteria Staff:	Souriya Webb	Stacey LaRue	Paula Dillard	Evelyn Iraburo Cindy Clotfelter
Custodians:	Michael King	Tasha Lee	David Sexton	
	Tia Smith Principal	Alexa Brown Assistant Principal	Eryn Wallis Counselor	Officer Megan Slayton SRO

## PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The teachers, staff, and administration of Rena Elementary welcome you to our school! The word *our* truly means our children, parents, teachers, and entire staff. Together, we enable our school to climb to its greatest heights. As educators, we know the most incredible adventure for every child is discovering their individual path to knowledge, understanding, and awareness. Therefore, we strive to create a climate of caring and compassion, affirming that, as educators, we can and do make a difference in children's lives. The faculty and staff join together in saying we are excited to have you as part of the Rena family.

The pages of this book are filled with necessary information regarding school procedures that align with Arkansas law and Van Buren School District Policy; nothing in this student handbook supersedes the Van Buren School District's board policy. I suggest that parents and students review the contents together. If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, please feel free to call the school. If I can't take your call, I will get back to you as soon as possible.

We welcome your participation and support during the school year and encourage your involvement. Working together, we can reach our collective and individual goals for student success. We look forward to celebrating with you the achievements of our students!

Sincerely,

Tia Smith  
[tia.smith@vbsd.us](mailto:tia.smith@vbsd.us)  
(479)471-3190

### School Hours

School hours are from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM each day. Children should not arrive earlier than 7:15 AM or remain on campus after 3:45 PM. Tardy students must be checked in by a parent at the office before attending class. If a student must leave early for any reason, a parent must come into the office to sign out the student. Parents are requested not to pick students up before 3:00 PM unless absolutely unavoidable because it interferes with the required 6 hours of instructional time.

### Attendance

When a student is absent due to emergencies, such as illness, death in the family, or other extenuating circumstances, the parent or guardian of the student should contact the student's principal or designee and relate the facts causing the emergency. Parents may contact the school by writing a note, in person, or by other means deemed appropriate by the school principal. A written statement presented for an absence having occurred more than five (5) school days prior to its presentation will not be accepted. Students may have six (6) parent permission notes per semester. Any absence after six (6) without a doctor's note will be unexcused.

Make-up work will be allowed for these absences and must be accomplished within a reasonable length of time as determined by individual teachers. Unexcused absences are all failures to attend other than those specified above. Please refer to District Policy 4.2.3

Students will not be released between 2:45 and 3:00 PM.

### Excessive Absences

Eleven (11) absences per semester will be considered excessive in elementary school (K-5). At this point, school officials will notify the prosecuting attorney and juvenile court authorities as determined by the principal.

### Notification to Parents of Student Absences

The student's parents or guardians will be notified by letter when the child has accumulated five (5) days. A phone call will be made on the eighth (8) day of absences per semester.

### Excessive Tardies and/or Early Checkouts

Six (6) morning tardies or early checkouts per semester will be considered excessive and will result in one marked day of absence from school. Tardies are defined as students arriving between 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM. Early Checkout will be defined as a student checking out of school between 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM.

### Safety Procedures for Arrival and Dismissal

At Rena Elementary, the safety of our students is the primary goal as they leave at the end of the school day. Parents are asked to follow these safety procedures every day:

- 1) **BUS RIDERS:** Students riding a bus will be released from class at 3:00 PM. They will then go to a designated area and wait quietly to board their bus.
- 2) **CAR RIDERS:** Students traveling by vehicle will be released from class at 3:00 PM. They will go to the designated area, sit quietly and wait to be called to go to their vehicle. All traffic must enter the school parking lot from Darla Lane, then onto Mitzi Lane, where you will form two lines for student pick up and to exit onto Rena Road. Adult drivers must stay in their vehicles in the car line to pick up students. Please have your child's car tag visible.
- 3) **WALKERS:** Students walking home from school will be released from class at 3:00 PM.
- 4) **END OF SCHOOL DAY CHECKOUT:** Students may not be checked out after 2:45 PM.

### Parent Drop Off and Pick-Up

**Drop Off:** The school day begins at 8:00 AM, with the first bell ringing at 7:50 AM. Students are not allowed at school before 7:15 AM and should NOT be allowed out of the car before a school staff member is present! For the safety of all children, please use the car drop-off lane to drop your child off and stay in your vehicle. We will have greeters assisting young children out of vehicles until 8:00 AM. Students should not be dropped off in the parking lot area, nor should you park and walk your child across traffic.

**Pick Up:** Students are dismissed at 3:00 PM. Students will stay inside the building and be called out to the parent pick-up area by one of our duty aides. Students will come straight to your vehicle. Parents will not be allowed to wait on the sidewalk or in the front office area for students. You must come through the car line so the duty teacher will know to call your student outside. Parents will be given two Rena car tags per student. The person picking the student up must have a car tag. If the person picking up the student does not have the car tag, they will be asked to go into the alcove and check the student out to ensure they are on the authorized pick-up list. This is for the safety of all students. Cars must drive through the drive, do not park on the street or in the parking lot. Bus riders will be called out by their bus numbers to load their bus. Please communicate with the Rena office staff if your child will go home in a different way than how they usually go home by 2:15 PM.

### Going Home With Other Children

You must send a signed note or call the school giving permission for your child to go home with another child, as well as a note/phone call from the parent of the child with whom your child is going home.

### Student Placement

Placement into a classroom is at the discretion of the building principal and/or designee. Any concerns about placement should be expressed in writing (signed and

dated) to the building principal prior to the end of April in the current school year for consideration. No specific requests for classroom placements will be accepted. Class lists are considered finalized once letters are mailed. Any placement change requests after this time must be in writing with valid reasoning as to why such a change should take place and will have to be approved through the Guiding Coalition.

### Student Behavior

Students are to act respectfully toward each other, toward our staff, and toward the property of others. Students are expected to behave in a manner that will allow everyone to be successful at school and which will help students grow into citizens of honorable character. These behaviors include:

- Coming to school ready to learn
  - Fully participate in class activities with a positive attitude
  - Having each day's homework and assignments completed and ready to hand in
  - Working to reach the highest expectations
- Showing respect for the rights, feelings, and property of others
  - Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves
  - Refrain from talking without permission
  - No name calling or "put downs"
  - Bullying will not be tolerated in accordance with the Van Buren School District Policy 4.3.6
  - Walk quietly and orderly inside the building
  - Play safely and fairly
- Demonstrating responsibility
  - Making parents aware of conferences and school events
  - Making teachers aware of notes, money, or information from parents
  - Following all classroom and school procedures
  - Acknowledging the responsibility and consequences of their behavior

The Discipline Plan in the classroom is designed to help students honor these expectations and to encourage them to make positive choices. If a student disrupts the learning environment, logical and consistent consequences will occur. In most cases, the first time will be a verbal warning. If inappropriate behavior continues, the teacher will employ a consequence system to remind students to make better choices. The teacher will communicate with you the specifics of the classroom plan. In extreme cases, students will be referred to the assistant principal/principal for further disciplinary action.

We will make every attempt to keep you informed of your child's behavior. Thank you for working with us to provide a nurturing, safe, and orderly environment for learning.

### Discipline

Each staff member at Rena Elementary accepts responsibility for the maintenance of discipline and for the promotion of wholesome human relations. A student's behavior



should conform to acceptable standards of conduct that reflect self-respect and consideration for the rights, feelings, and property of others. If a student is sent to the office for disciplinary action, a written report will be sent home, or parents will be contacted by phone call. Refer to District Policy 4.3

### Character Education

Rena values the uniqueness and dignity of each person. It is our desire to help children grow into citizens of the highest character. Some of the delivery systems for our character education program include a Friday morning assembly, *Rise & Shine*, a "Word of the Month" representative of universally accepted guiding principles, and monthly guidance lessons.

### Curriculum

The instructional program of Rena Elementary School is in alignment with the curriculum and instructional methods of the Van Buren School District and the Arkansas Department of Education (DESE). This includes a program of comprehensive literacy, standards-based mathematics, inquiry-based science, social studies, physical activity, and the arts. Specific student learning expectations for each grade level are available on the DESE website under Arkansas Frameworks.

### Dress Code

Students may not wear clothing that can be hazardous to them in their educational activities. All clothing worn by students must adequately cover them. Shorts, skirts, tunics, and dresses may be worn as long as they are "fingertip" length. The student's shorts, skirt, dress or tunic must come below the student's fingertips when placed at his/her side. This includes tunics and shirts worn with leggings. No pajamas or house shoes (sleepwear, lounge wear, etc.) except on specified days. Refer to District Policy 4.3.4

### Health Information

Students are expected to have on file a record of immunizations according to the state laws of Arkansas. The school's staff will care for any child who becomes ill or injured at school. If the child's condition is thought to be serious, the parents will be contacted, and the child will be sent home. For a condition that may be contagious, students will be sent home until the child is no longer a danger to other students. Students should be free of fever, without medication, for 24 hours before returning to school. In case of an emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital, and the parents will be notified. Refer to District Policy 4.1.2

Rena students are not allowed to bring medicine to school. Students may be administered medications by office personnel while at school under the following policy:

- No over the counter medications will be given at school.
- A parent must bring in prescription medication. Transportation of medicines on school buses is strictly prohibited.
- A parent must sign the consent form before any medications will be given.

- Medications must be in the original container with the child's name on the prescription.
- With the exception of ADD/ADHD medications, no medication which is prescribed for three times a day or less will be administered at school.

**IMPORTANT:** It is crucial for you to list on the Emergency Call Information at least **two people who can be reached in case of an emergency with your child.**

### **Health Screenings** (state mandated)

**Vision:** (A.C.A. 6-18-1501)

Act 1438 of 2005 requires students in grades PreK, KF, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and transfer students to have an eye and vision screen. Only failure notifications are sent home. A child who does not pass the screening shall be required to have an exam conducted by an optometrist or ophthalmologist within 60 days of receipt of the screening report and show proof of the exam. Parents needing financial assistance should contact the school nurse.

**Hearing:** Hearing screens are mandated for students in grades PreK, K, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and transfer students. Only failure notices are sent home. Parents have 60 days to show proof that a doctor or audiologist examined their child.

- Insurance is billed for students covered under Medicaid/Arkansas Kids 1<sup>st</sup>, where applicable, for hearing and vision screenings conducted at school unless notified in writing by parents to decline within 60 days of receipt of this handbook.

**BMI:** (ARK Code 20-7-133 and 3.04)

Act 1220 requires students in grades KF, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 to have their height and weight assessed. A parent who refuses to have their child assessed must provide a written request of the refusal to the school. Screening results will be sent home only upon request of the parent/legal guardian.

### **Inclement Weather**

When severe weather creates hazardous conditions, the regular school schedule may be suspended to ensure students' safety. It is the parent's responsibility to monitor news reports via television or maintain communication with your child's teacher for announcements regarding changes in the school schedule. On a school day with wet or extreme temperatures (below freezing or heat index over 100 degrees), students will remain indoors during recess and before school starts.

### **Drills and Procedures**

**Fire Drills:** The fire signal will be one continuous alarm that can be heard throughout the facility. Students should remain quiet and listen to the directions of the teachers. Everyone will exit the building to their assigned locations following the designated routes that are posted in each room. The all-clear signal for returning to the facility will be a verbal command.

**Tornado Drills:** The signal for a tornado drill will be a vocal command. Students will walk quickly and quietly to the designated shelter area. Students should be quiet and listen for directions.

### Lost and Found

Parents are urged to clearly mark student jackets, sweaters, backpacks, lunch boxes and other personal items with their child's name. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items. All items not claimed within a reasonable time will be given to a charitable organization.

### Parent Involvement

The Rena PTA is a vital part of our school program. We encourage your membership and participation in the PTA. Meetings are usually held monthly with several projects throughout the year.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in many ways at school. You will have an opportunity to indicate your interest in volunteer programs at the beginning of the school year. Please feel free to suggest other ways in which you can become involved. We hope you will be an active part of your child's school career.

A parent facilitator from the staff heads a Parent Advisory Committee, which serves multiple functions, such as setting the calendar for parent involvement events and reviewing data for our school improvement process.

Parents are welcome to visit the school to have lunch with their child, observe a special event, or provide volunteer services so long as our check-in procedures have been followed and their presence does not interrupt the learning process.

If eating lunch with your child, please keep in mind that your child needs to be escorted back to his/her classroom by a teacher. Parents are encouraged to eat lunch; however, the lunch schedule and instructional time need to be honored and not interrupted. Parents are not allowed to go onto the playground or back to the classroom with their child. You may only eat with your student; their friends will not be allowed at the parent table.

### Parent /Teacher Conferences

Arkansas State Law requires a minimum of two Parent/Teacher Conferences per year. Our calendar will provide afternoon and early evening times for your convenience. The teacher will contact you a few days beforehand so you can select an appointment time. We also welcome your requests for conferences at additional times. Please schedule conferences by calling the school office so the secretary can assist you in arranging a conference with your child's teacher or the principal.

### School Meals

Breakfast is free of charge district-wide. Lunch may be purchased on a daily basis or paid in advance. Students use a computerized debit system to pay for their meals at school. Send your check or money in a sealed envelope to the classroom teacher. Write on the outside of the envelope the student's name, teacher's name, and the amount of money enclosed for meals. Due to the large number of charges not being paid, the Van Buren School District will only permit a limited number of charges per student. We prefer that meals be paid for in advance. Any remaining balance at the end of the year will be returned to you. Applications for Free/Reduced Meals are available through the school office. If you qualify, we encourage your participation in this program and assure you that all financial information is confidential.

Lunch price: \$2.85 for students and \$4 for adults

### **Non-Nutritional Days**

The Arkansas Department of Education has passed rules governing nutrition standards in Arkansas Public Schools. These rules have an effect on what food items parents are allowed to send to school.

- Elementary students will not have access to vended (sold or given away) food and beverage items anytime, anywhere on school premises during the declared school day.
- This does not apply to students with special needs indicated in the student IEP or to school nurses providing health care to individual students.
- Students may be given any food and/or beverage items for up to nine (9) different school events each school year to be determined and approved by school officials.
- Nutritional foods may be used for instructional purposes. The school, as part of the planned Instructional program, may also distribute nutritional snacks (kindergarten snacks, for example).
- This does not restrict what parents may provide for their own child's lunch or snack.
- To meet state regulations (law), we must ask parents to refrain from providing food/beverage items to other children at school for events such as birthday parties.
- Parents may provide food/beverage items upon request to support one of up to nine (9) allowable events, such as Valentine's Day.

### **Birthday Information**

Birthday party invitations may be distributed only if every student OR all boys OR all girls in the class receives one. Invitations should be put in a Ziploc bag and brought to the teacher for distribution through student folders and should not be handed out by the student at breakfast, lunch, recess, or in the classroom.

Your child's birthday is special to us, and we will recognize his/her special day through our birthday announcement at Rise n Shine. Birthday treats are not allowed to protect instructional time and adhere to food guidelines.

### **Student Information**

Parents will be asked to complete a packet of informational pages regarding their child upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year in an online format called Ready Sign. It is imperative the school office be notified immediately of a change of address, home or office telephone number, or of a change in emergency information during the academic school year. In the case of court-ordered custodial parents or guardians, a copy of the court document granting custody, along with other pertinent information, should be on file in the school office to prevent unauthorized access to students or their records. According to the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, only school personnel, parent/guardian, or person by court order are permitted to inspect and review educational records relating to the student.

### **Student Performance and Evaluation**

Reports of student progress will be sent home at the end of each quarter (about 9 weeks) and at the mid-term of each quarter. Our evolving communication of student progress reflects our goal of every student succeeding on standard learning expectations.

### **Remediation Plan**

In order to provide a learning environment that enables all students to learn at high levels, Rena Elementary will provide an intense remediation program to any student failing to achieve the proficient level on the state-mandated criterion-referenced tests or scores below the fiftieth percentile on the state-mandated norm-referenced test. The program will be specific to the student's identified deficiencies, different from the previous year's regular classroom instructional program, and take into account the student's learning style. After evaluation by school personnel knowledgeable of the student's performance, a student plan will be developed, identifying the student's specific areas of deficiency in literacy and/or mathematics, the desired level of performance in these areas, and the instructional and support services provided to meet the desired levels of performance. The plan shall be flexible, contain multiple remediation methods and strategies, include formative assessments, and shall be revised periodically based on the results from the formative assessments. Students shall receive remediation from a highly qualified teacher and/or highly qualified paraprofessional under the guidance of a highly qualified teacher. According to state regulations, failure to participate in required remediation may result in retention if proficiency is not attained.

### **Technology**

We are fortunate to have computers and other technology available at Rena for student use in the pursuit of learning. Technology is also used by staff for communication, administrative, and assessment purposes. In accordance with school district policy, students will be asked to sign a contract regarding the appropriate use of technology while at school. Refer to District Policy 2.29. Families are encouraged to communicate with staff via e-mail and to visit the school's website for current school information at [www.vbsd.us](http://www.vbsd.us).

### Toys or Electronics

Students are requested to leave toys at home, with the exception of soccer balls, kick balls, and basketballs, which are allowed on campus. The school is not responsible for any toys brought to school. If a student brings a toy or electronics to school, the teacher, assistant principal, or principal may confiscate it until a parent comes to claim it. The school will not be responsible for lost or stolen items.

### Cell Phones

If a student brings a cell phone to school, it must remain off and in the child's backpack throughout the day. If a student takes the phone out of the backpack, it will be taken from the student, and a parent must pick it up in the office. Rena is not responsible for any lost or stolen cell phones.

### Video Surveillance

The Board of Directors has a responsibility to maintain discipline and protect the safety, security, and welfare of its students, staff, and visitors while at the same time safeguarding district facilities, vehicles, and equipment. As part of fulfilling this responsibility, the board authorizes the use of video/audio surveillance cameras, automatic identification technology, data compilation devices, and technology capable of tracking the physical location of district equipment, students, and/or personnel. Video/recording devices may be in use in school buildings, on school grounds, and in school vehicles as determined by the VBSD. Refer to policy 4.48.

### Parents Can Make the Difference

Parents can help their children reach their full potential in school. The home environment and the quality and quantity of time spent with your child (ren) can make the difference. Here are some ideas:

- Provide a suitable space for study and work.
- Praise your child for the work shown to you.
- Help your child organize his or her work.
- Help your child to be responsible for coming to school prepared.
- Set reasonable standards of behavior and help your child meet them.
- Communicate your problems or concerns to the teacher or principal.
- Participate in school-sponsored activities with your child.
- Make sure your child gets healthy meals, enough sleep, and good exercise.
- Avoid comparing your child to brothers, sisters, and friends.
- Limit and monitor the television programs watched by your child(ren).
- Encourage reading! Help your child find worthwhile reading materials.
- If your child is home ill, his or her homework should be to get well. Teachers will take care of makeup work, if necessary, upon your child's return to school. If your child insists on doing something academic, try reading a book. He or she could read a part, and you could add to the interest by reading a part too.

## "Every Child...Whatever It Takes!"

At Rena Elementary, we recognize the child's primary caregiver is the most important influence in his/her life and learning. The staff members at Rena Elementary welcome all parents, grandparents, guardians and other caregivers into our building and are pleased to have them join our learning community. In an effort to support each student's learning and well being, we provide several opportunities for teachers and parents to communicate on a regular basis. Our efforts include newsletters, agendas, email, telephone calls, notes home and scheduled parent/teacher conferences. Updates and information are also available on the school website. Our parent center holds many resources and information geared toward encouraging and supporting responsible caregiving. We will have special events throughout the year and strongly encourage parents and other caregivers to join us. Our goal is quality interaction between teachers and caregivers to accomplish our vision, "Every Child...Whatever it Takes!"

Many thanks for your cooperation, interest, and involvement. We are working hard to make it a safe, healthy, and happy school year for your child(ren). Together we can make it all happen!

Tia Smith and the Rena Staff