

Rock Brook School 2023-2024

Student/Parent Handbook



Rock Brook School

Mission Statement

At Rock Brook School we offer a truly unique approach to learning. Our students participate in an all-encompassing classroom in which teachers and related service providers collaborate on multidisciplinary teams to address the diverse needs of every child. This flexible approach to instruction enables our school to challenge each student with a differentiated learning plan and is supported by real world projects and functional life experiences. The child is always at the center of our work which serves as a guide to our fundamental purpose - improving communication with others. Rock Brook School is deeply committed to creating a caring, nurturing and stimulating environment whereby all students are seen as capable of learning. The parents are an integral part of the Rock Brook team approach to teaching and the partnership that exists between home and school creates the framework for each child's growth and development.

Vision Statement

Rock Brook School believes that all students with disabilities and their families have the right to high expectations, dignity and respect. Children also have the right to participate in an educational program that is able to meet their diverse and individual needs.

We know that every child's experience with a disability is remarkably unique and their educational and therapeutic programming must be designed in a manner which will allow students to learn and grow to the best of their abilities. Rock Brook School believes in self determination and that education should be child/family driven to the fullest extent possible. We value the expertise that parents and families have about their children. We honor and respect the goals that families have for their child and we know with certainty that optimal results occur when there are meaningful and purposeful partnerships formed between parents, teaching teams and resident school districts. This connection is the cornerstone upon which Rock Brook School maintains an unyielding commitment to support student goal acquisition at school as well as at home. We firmly believe that our Rock Brook students will receive not only an appropriate, but rather the best education possible.

2023-2024 Student/Parent Handbook

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I. School Overview

Rock Brook School is a private, non-profit school for communication impaired and multiply disabled children, from age 3 through age 21. Rock Brook School is approved by the New Jersey State Department of Education and was recognized as a School of Excellence by the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET). In addition, the school received accreditation from The Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools (MSCES).

We currently have over 50 students from 25 different school districts in central New Jersey. Our program runs from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm Monday through Friday. The school year is from September through June, with an Extended School Year (ESY) Program available for five weeks in the summer.



Rock Brook School

109 Orchard Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
(908) 431-9500
www.rock-brook.org

Main Office

W. Glenn Famous, Executive Director
Thomas Connolly, Principal
Bob Hegedus, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Jenie Vargas, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
Tammy Quick, Program Secretary
Chisty Tracey, Administrative Secretary
Carolynn Sasso, School Nurse



II. Daily Schedule

- **Regular Day:** 8:30 am – 3:00 pm (Staff supervision begins at 8:25)
- **Early Dismissal:** 8:30 am - 12:30 pm (Staff supervision begins at 8:25)
- **Delayed Opening:** 10:30 am - 3:00 pm (Staff supervision begins at 10:25)

III. Rock Brook School Policies and Procedures

- **Absences and Early Pick Up:**
 - a. **Student Absences:** In the event your child is going to be absent, please call the Program Secretary in the main office by 9:00 am at 908-431-9500, ext.110. Our automated system is available 24 hours a day for your convenience and please be sure to call the school each day your child is absent. In addition to contacting the main office, you may contact the teacher as well. Upon your child's return to school from illness, please provide a note to the homeroom teacher which will be delivered to the nurse. For students with a serious illness, accident, or hospitalization, medical clearance to return to school is required. As a note, if contact is not provided by the parent regarding a student absence, the school will make contact with the parent.
 - b. **Student Early Pick Up:** Should you be picking your child up early from school on a particular day, please notify the main office 908-431-9500 and your child's teacher so we are aware of your child's early dismissal from school.
- **Affirmative Action:** It is the policy of the Rock Brook School not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, social or economic status, or handicaps in its educational programs or activities and employment policies, as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments 1972 (prohibiting sex discrimination in education), N.J.A.C. 6:4 (Equality in Education Program), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of handicaps).
- **Annual Reviews and Transition Planning:** The Annual Review of each child's progress is held with the local child study teams, parents, Rock Brook staff and, if appropriate, the student. Transition planning begins at age 14 to delineate the instructional activities to be taught in preparation for graduation and employment and is an integral part of the

continuum at Rock Brook. All of our resources are utilized to facilitate the move from school to adult life.

- **Behavioral Expectations:** Rock Brook School strives to create a caring, respectful, and orderly climate. Students are commended for responsible, considerate behavior and advised of the consequences when expectations are not met. It is essential for the home and school to be mutually supportive in order for children to become responsible individuals.
- **Birthday Celebrations:** Parents are most welcome to send in a craft or activity to celebrate their child's birthday. In addition, should a parent want to send in birthday food treats for the students within the class, such as cupcakes, brownies, etc., prior approval is required from the school nurse. The teacher(s) will alert parents to allergy concerns and will provide approved classroom snack/food lists. Please note, prior to any food being sent in from home, the ingredients must be pre-approved by the school nurse at least one week in advance of the event. It is advised for parents to send the ingredients directly to the classroom teacher who will be able to facilitate the contact with the school nurse in order for the food to be reviewed. Once the food has been reviewed by the school nurse, the teacher will contact the parent to confirm the approval or not. Generally, classroom celebrations will be held toward the end of the day and limited to 30 minutes, unless otherwise approved by the school principal.
- **Buses/Vans:** Transportation is an extension of the school day, and the same student behavior standards that apply in the classroom apply on the bus and at the bus stop. Student behavioral expectations remain in effect while students are on the bus to ensure the safety of all passengers. Riders are expected to respect the driver's authority, remain in their seats, keep their hands, feet, and objects to themselves, keep the aisles clear, and generally behave in a way that contributes to a safe, pleasant trip to and from school. A driver may report a student's misconduct to the principal, and in serious situations, bus privileges may be taken away. Students may get on or off the school bus only at his/her assigned bus stop. As a note, bus evacuation drills will be conducted during the course of the year.
- **Calendar:** The school calendar contains building-specific events, activities, etc. and can be viewed at the end of this document Appendix IV.
- **Cell Phones/Electronic/Recording Devices:** Camera-equipped cell phones or similar devices (smart watches, etc.) may not be used by students as cameras during the school day (unless given permission by a faculty member for instructional purposes). Students are not allowed to take photographs or videos of students or staff without their knowledge or permission. Should a student have a cell phone, it must be silenced and put away during all instructional periods, however teachers may allow usage of cell phones for instructional activities, communication devices, and for reward purposes. Phone

accessories are also to be silenced and away when phone use is prohibited. Watches that serve a dual purpose (e.g., smart watch) may be worn; however, phone features (e.g., texting, Internet, calls, etc.) are to be off when phone use is prohibited. Storage may be in a backpack, pencil bag, etc., during classes. Students are prohibited from using phones, tablets, and other mobile devices in restrooms unless there is a medical/communication necessity.

- **Change of Information:** Please notify the main office immediately of changes to contact or emergency information, i.e., address, telephone numbers, email addresses.
- **Community Based Instruction:** Community Based Instruction (CBI) is sustained and repeated instruction that takes place in the community rather than the school building. The areas of study include career awareness, career exploration, and community living. The program provides functional literacy skills, mathematics, personal finance skills, and employability skills to support the transition from a traditional school environment to the world of work. Goals and objectives are aligned to the Common Core Standards and/or Essential Elements.
- **Dismissal:** Parents who may be delayed in picking up their child or have a change in transportation arrangements, must notify the main office and the child's teacher to make them aware. Communication can be provided through a phone call and/or email to the main office and the teacher.
- **Dress Code and Grooming:** Students are encouraged to wear clothing that is comfortable and appropriate for school. Safety is imperative. Clothing should not drag on the floor and flip flops should not be worn. Students may not wear items of clothing that may disrupt the school day, for example, shirts displaying inappropriate or suggestive language, alcohol or pro-drug messages. Additionally, please, no midriff showing, no hats, no rubber flip-flops, no exposed undergarments, no short shorts or short skirts and no low-cut tops or camisoles. Sneakers are required to participate in physical education and dance. Shoes/clothing should not have flashing lights, etc. since this could be a distraction to the learning process. Students should not bring valuables and/or cash to school.
- **Early Dismissals and Emergency Closings:** When we must close school or delay the opening time due to inclement weather or an emergency condition, you and your bus company will receive a phone call from our automated voice system as early as possible. We will also post this information on our website <https://www.rock-brook.org>
- **Emergency Contact Information:** Emergency contact information must be provided at the beginning of the school year. In the event parents/guardians are unreachable, emergency contacts will be responsible for the student. Emergency contacts must be available during school hours and able to pick up the student if necessary. Updating emergency contacts should be done using the Medical Information Form.

- **Emergency Medical Treatment:** When emergency medical treatment is necessary, a sick or injured student will be transported to a hospital by the parents (if available), local ambulance squad, or police emergency unit. When seen by a doctor for any injury, students must have a note to resume physical activity (including Physical Education).
- **Field Trips:** Field trips are planned by the teachers and administration to enhance and reinforce classroom curriculum and content. Parents may be invited to chaperone when necessary. Field trips are an extension of the classroom; therefore all students are encouraged to participate and follow behavioral expectations.
- **Food Allergies:** We are a nut safe school, but not a nut free school. The Health Office will need advanced notice before food is brought into your child's classroom. The teacher or the Health Office will notify the parents of an allergy student that an event is happening. This will allow said parent to send in a substitute food, if necessary. If your child has an allergy to any food, even minor allergy, please notify the Health Office via email: nurse@rock-brook.org or call the school immediately.
- **Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB):** Rock Brook School prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying as per N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15(3)(b)(1). A safe and civil school environment is necessary for pupils to achieve academic success. Rock Brook School teachers, staff, volunteers, and administrators will model appropriate behavior and commend students for demonstrating good behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Rock Brook School is a highly unique educational setting with specialized programming to meet the needs of students with special needs. Our school is composed of students with severe learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. There may be cases in which a behavior/action by a student appears to be an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying, however, the root core of the behavior is the student's documented disability. Before invoking the processes delineated in this policy, Rock Brook shall make a determination as to whether they believe that the student's reported behavior/actions are directly the result of their disability. Please view our website (www.rock-brook.org) to view additional information as it relates to HIB.
- **Homework:** Homework helps reinforce what is being taught in the classroom. Homework also teaches fundamental skills such as time management, organizing, task completion, and responsibility. At times, homework may be assigned from teachers and/or therapists for students to complete.
- **Immunization and Medical Information:** The State of New Jersey requires that proof of current immunizations be on record in the School Health Office. A current health appraisal form is required for all of our new students and for any student not participating in yearly Health Office screenings. The health appraisal Form and proof of current immunizations is due on or before the first day your child attends school. A

current Health physical on file in the health office helps to insure the health and safety of your child during these activities. Another very important part of your child's Health Appraisal is your information that you share with us. We respect your privacy and all information is considered confidential. It is also important for you to return all medical forms that are sent home with your child. If emergency information is not on file with the school, your child may not be able to participate in any on/off-site daily, or after school activities. *We ask for your prompt cooperation in returning medical forms to the school nurse.*

Information about any change in your child's health or change in medication should be shared with the school nurse immediately, so that your child's health care needs can be fully met during the school day.

- **Lunch:** Parents must provide lunch for their child each day. Should you need to drop off your child's lunch, please contact the school to provide them with a time of your arrival. Please be sure your child's lunch is clearly marked with your child's name and teacher.
- **Pets:** Animals are prohibited on school grounds without prior principal approval.
- **Progress Reports (Trimesters):** Progress reports are issued three times a year for all students. Should a parent have questions regarding their child's/progress, please contact your child's teacher and/or therapist. In addition, Progress Reports are also provided at the conclusion of our ESY program.
- **Related Services:** All students receive the services stipulated in their IEP: This includes speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy. All students have access to counseling support and assistance with social skills development on an as needed basis or as per IEP requirements.
- **Reporting Missing and Abused Children:** It is the policy of Rock Brook to immediately report children missing from school.. We will contact parents, child study teams, and if necessary the police and the State Department of Education. Absences of more than five days or habitual tardiness are reported to your child study team. If a child is missing while in school, the teacher shall immediately notify the administration, which will, in turn, notify the local police, the parents and your child study team. The State of New Jersey requires that school personnel report to the local police and DCP&P (Division of Child Protection and Permanency), suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect. Rock Brook policy complies with this responsibility to report suspicions and any staff member may notify DCP&P. DCP&P will investigate the reported problem. The child study team will also be notified so that coordinated intervention on behalf of helping the child can begin promptly if found necessary. Rock Brook provides staff with in-service training on the identification of signs of child abuse or neglect, reporting procedures and their responsibilities with regard to reporting.

- **Security Drills:** All schools in New Jersey are required to conduct two emergency drills (one fire drill and one security drill) each month. Security drills could be any one of the following types of drills: Active Shooter, Bomb Threat Evacuation, Non-fire Evacuation, Lockdown, or Shelter in Place. Schools are also required to notify parents following each monthly "security" drill.
- **Social Skills:** At Rock Brook School, we strive to have our students increase their communication skills and create friendships with classmates. During the school year, the school counselor will conduct social skills groups with the whole class and also have small groups.
- **Special Area Classes:** Students will have opportunities to participate in a variety of special area classes throughout the week, specifically art, music, physical movement, and dance.
- **Staff Supervision re: Arrival:** On regular days, staff supervision of students begins at 8:25 am and students should not arrive prior to 8:25 am. At 8:25 am students may exit their vehicle as directed by staff.
- **Student Health:** It is school policy that the Rock Brook School Nurse share appropriate health information with the school staff and professionals who are designated as having “legitimate health interest” within the school, as well as other individuals who provide direct school health and education services to students.
 - a. **Administration of Medication in School:** If it is necessary for a student to take medication during school hours, only the School Nurse or an RN will administer the medication in compliance with the following rules:
 - i. For all of the prescription and non-prescription medications (a) a written and signed Medication form from the prescribing physician stating the medication, dosage, time and the purpose of the medication. (b) The drug must be labeled and be in the original bottle or package from the pharmacy. (c) Parents must sign next to the prescribing physician’s signature. (The Medication form can be requested from the Health Office).
 - ii. All prescription and non-prescription medication must be in their original labeled bottle and/or original packaging then placed in a sealed envelope or bag. The medication must be given to the school nurse by the parent or given to the bus driver to forward to the school nurse. Students may not have medication with them in school or be responsible for transporting it to school. Empty medication bottles will be sent home with the student in his/her school back-pack in a combination bag. If your bus driver will not accept the medication, please call the health office to discuss alternative plans.

- iii. All medicines are stored in a locked cabinet, and are administered by the School Nurse, or other RN in the Health Office.
- **Substance Use/Abuse:** Recognizing that the misuse of substances by students seriously impedes their education. Rock Brook provides a drug-free environment and has adopted policies and procedures to protect the welfare of all students. Rock Brook prohibits the use, possession and/or distribution of drugs, alcohol, tobacco or controlled substances at school on school property or school events.



IV. Appendix - 2023-2024 School Calendar

ROCK BROOK SCHOOL * 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

109 Orchard Road, Skillman, NJ 08558 * 908-431-9500 * www.rock-brook.org

<div>SEPTEMBER '23</div> <table><tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr><tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr><tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr></table> <div>Student: 16 / Staff 18</div>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	<div>4</div> <div>CLOSED FOR ALL</div> <div>Labor Day</div> <div>All Staff PD</div> <div>5-6</div> <div>7</div> <div>1st Day Students</div> <div>7-8</div> <div>12:30 Dismissal Students</div> <div>All Staff PD</div> <div>25</div> <div>CLOSED FOR ALL</div> <div>Yom Kippur</div>	<div>FEBRUARY '24</div> <table><tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td></tr><tr><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td></tr><tr><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <div>Student: 19 / Staff 19</div>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29			<div>2</div> <div>12:30 Dismissal Students</div> <div>All Staff PD</div> <div>8</div> <div>12:30 Dismissal Students</div> <div>Afternoon/Eve Conferences</div> <div>9</div> <div>12:30 Dismissal Students</div> <div>Afternoon Conferences</div> <div>16-19</div> <div>CLOSED FOR ALL</div> <div>President's Day Break</div> <div>16</div> <div>1st Tentative Emg. Closing Make-Up Day</div>							
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School Hours:

Regular Day..... 8:30 am - 3:00 pm
 Early Dismissal..... 8:30 am - 12:30 pm
 Delayed Opening.... 10:30 am - 3:00 pm

Required 23-24 School Days:

Student: 180
 Staff: 188

Board Approved: February 7, 2023

RBS reserves the right to revise this calendar.

Emergency Closing Information:

If needed, Emergency Closing Make-Up Days will be made up in the following order.

2/16 1st Tentative Emg. Closing Make-Up Day
 3/29 2nd Tentative Emg. Closing Make-Up Day
 5/24 3rd Tentative Emg. Closing Make-Up Day
 6/19-21 4th - 6th Tentative Emg. Closing Make-Up Days