

COMMUNITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

HOUSE SYSTEM HANDBOOK



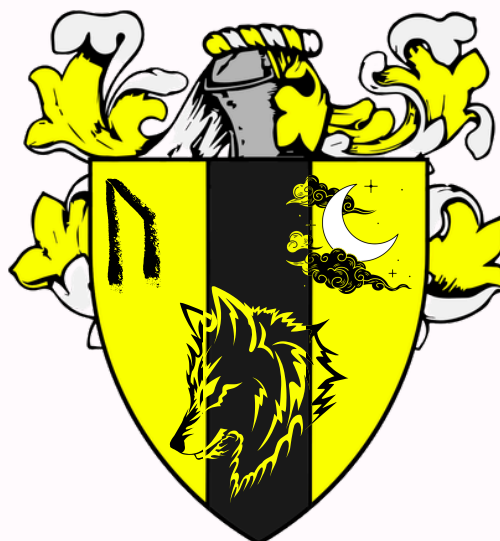
VALKYRIE



LONGBOAT



RAVEN



FENRIR

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

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HOUSE SYSTEM

THE WHY

The idea of using a House System was developed and implemented at The Ron Clark Academy (RCA) in Atlanta, Georgia.

They used this system to help students have a culture of belonging, school-wide community, and to help build character within their school.

We will be implementing this system at our school to help better our students mentally, socially, and emotionally. RCA has proven that providing these things to students actually helps them perform higher in their education.

1. School houses give every kid the chance to be a part of something.

By creating smaller, more connected communities within the broader school community, students have a built-in place where they belong. They are automatically a part of a group—but not just nominally. The houses don't merely encourage inclusion, they rely on it. Working together to gain points means that students must recognize and encourage each member's talents and abilities. Once a student is placed (or sorted) into a house, they become a part of a little family that will cheer them on and rely on their participation to reach specific goals. This can be extremely positive for new kids or kids who struggle to fit in—because a sense of belonging can have a tremendous impact on a child's happiness, identity, and even academic engagement.

2. Every kid gets a chance to contribute.

Throughout the year, each house earns points through things like athletic contests, academic success, artistic endeavors, team spirit, and attendance. This means that everyone has a chance to help their house earn points whether they are athletic or have great grades. Contributing to their house's goal in this way can be a huge confidence booster for kids—particularly those who don't feel like they stand out in any one area- or feel like they aren't good at anything- or feel like they don't belong.

3. Houses provide opportunities for mentoring and one-on-one connections.

Having a mentor or house buddy helps those new students get acquainted with the school. Buddies are able to help answer questions about the house and/or school that new students may have. It is also a great way to develop leadership and people skills for students in a less intrusive environment. These type of relationships can be encouraged within an academic house. Whether they are called Bigs and Littles or something else, students are given the opportunity to make a meaningful connection with someone they might not otherwise get to know. Bigs and Littles can be encouraged to do projects together to earn points for their house. They can remember each other's birthdays or be expected to cheer each other on at events or encourage each other throughout the school year. With clear guidelines and opportunities for bonding, a Big/Little relationship within a house can provide students with an even deeper sense of belonging and connection.

4. Houses give schools an opportunity to express the identity or values of their school or local community.

We are able to create our own houses with own history at our school. That way the students have buy in and attachment to what is going on at our school. We can teach them about core values of being positive, productive citizens in school and the community by using what our houses represent.

5. A school house system is fun!

One of the most compelling reasons to adopt a school house system is because it's fun. Teachers and kids often lament that the school day has become too structured and that stringent academic expectations make it impossible to incorporate fun into the learning experience. But because the house system promotes a strong sense of belonging, it is a great way to increase academic engagement. So administrators and the powers they answer to can more than justify the time "off-task." A house system is fun with a higher purpose. Kids welcome the occasional break from their routine for house activities, and they love the chance to engage in some healthy, spirited competition. It's really a win/win!

(BoredTeachers.com Blog author Laura Hudgens)

At the end of the day, this is just about doing it for the kids. We want our teachers to enjoy being here at our school. Because if the teachers show enthusiasm for being at school, then the kids will eventually start to show enthusiasm for being at school.

This is also a way for us to show the kids that they are more than just a test score and we care about them as people. We just have to be open to the possibility of something different and watch it grow within our school.

HOUSE SYSTEM GOALS

Our goals for using the House System are:

- We want to foster a more close-knit and supportive school community for all students.
- We want to create leadership opportunities for our students so that they can display their individual skills.
- We want to encourage our students to take a greater responsibility in their learning.
- We want to cultivate an inclusive, caring, and respectful learning environment to significantly reduce bullying behaviors.
- We want to provide enhanced academic support while engaging students in fun and challenging competitions.
- We want to instill a strong sense of pride in students as they strive to be exemplary members of the school and our community.
- We want to infuse more joy and creativity into classrooms and school activities to enhance overall learning experience.
- We want to encourage positive behavior and good citizenship through a structured recognition and rewards system.
- We want to increase parental and community involvement in school activities and events.
- We want to support students' social and emotional well-being through targeted house activities and programs.
- We want to develop a sense of belonging and school spirit through house-specific traditions and events.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

1. On the first day of the school year, incoming 6th graders are to be sorted into a House at random.
2. Students remain in the group until they go to high school.
3. Each house is composed of every child in the school--teachers, faculty, and staff--allowing students to socialize with one another across grades and with positive adult role models beyond just the classroom setting.
4. Throughout the year, the Houses compete against one another in a variety of competitions by accumulating House points. Individual students can also accumulate points for the House based on behavior and academic success.
5. At the end of the year, the House with the most points wins the House Championship--and all of the honor and glory that comes with it! (Basically bragging rights)

SORTING STUDENTS INTO HOUSES

On the first day of school, we will sort the incoming 6th graders and any new students we have received. House Leaders will make an introductory speech and explain what their houses are, represent, and goals for the upcoming year.

Then we will sort each student. **Our inaugural year, we will sort students with an electronic wheel to spin.** This allows the houses to be set up by fate. Houses may not be equal and that is fine; life isn't equal and fair either.

We will also assign mentors to all of the incoming students. Upperclassman will help the lower classmates in tutoring, character building, etc. This helps build leaders (potential future House Leaders) and helps newer students have a sense of belonging to our community.

HOUSE MEETINGS & LEADERSHIP

We will have House meetings on the first Friday of every month during RTI/CTE time. During these meetings, Houses will discuss upcoming events for the month, the assigned 55 Essential Rules that we will learn for that month, Staff Leaders can check in with their assigned set of students, etc.

House Leadership should be student led with staff support. Students should be coming up with the ideas, projects, events, cheers, dances, etc. that they want to do. This is not to say that teachers shouldn't have some input, but they shouldn't be doing all the leg work. Getting the students to step up and be leaders is what we are trying to create with this system.

Each house will have a house council. How each house sets up their council is up to them. There are only a few nonnegotiable items in each house.

- Staff Head of House
- Student House Leader(s) no more than two total
 - How you decide to choose is up to each house
 - election
 - interviews
 - staff pick
 - whatever works best for your house
- Each staff member is assigned a number of students as their smaller family (will be used for our check-in/check-out program)
- Each committee created needs to have a staff advisor

- Each house needs a mini-handbook about how their house is ran, so newcomers have guidelines to work within

Types of Committees you could have in your house could be:

- House Cheers Committee
- Dance Committee
- “Hype Crew” Committee
- Tech Committee
- Community Service Committee
- Social Committee
- Academic Committee
- Mentorship Committee

Each house will create a calendar of events and submit that to the Viking Council so that we can all collaborate events for the year.

- The Viking Council will consist of Staff Heads of House, School Administration, and members of the Instructional Leadership Team.
- Make sure these calendars get sent out to parents (paper copy, Dojo post, Remind group, emails, etc. Multiple ways so no one can say that they didn’t know)

House events can include a variety of things:

- Christmas Parties on the 2 hr day
- Group lunches together
- Fun snacks, mini gifts, messages, etc. provided to all students on holidays that may be connected to your house
- Scavenger Hunts
- Silent Parties
- Parent Orientation Competitions
- Game Nights or After school

- **Mentoring/Tutoring Times**
- **Show up to support your fellow house members at important events (sports, theatre, band, or maybe something not connected to the school)**
- **Community Service Projects (would like each house to do at least one project a year/semester)**
- **Surprise presents for birthdays**
- **Teacher appreciation week could be shared with each house**

POINT SYSTEM

GIVING POINTS

The House System is supported by a point system. This helps create a healthy competitive environment where all students feel that they can contribute to the whole. Points will be given throughout the entire year to students and will contribute to their total House points to determine the winner of the House Champions.

Points are not given, they are **earned** by going **above and beyond expectations** set throughout the school. Students should not just be receiving points just because, but they should be earned by working hard and doing things for others. We are looking for character building virtues.

Don't try to inflate the points either. We will not give more than **one point** for an action unless specifically stated in the handbook. This will lead to points and earning them to not be valuable. We want our students to earn the points and to not be given to them like a free piece of candy. Points don't have to be given out every day or even every class period.

**REMEMBER TO SPRINKLE POINTS LIKE SALT, NOT
TOSS THEM AROUND LIKE CONFETTI.**

Students should **never** ask for points to be given to them or parade that they are doing something for someone else just to get points. We want them to do these things because it makes them good people not just for the sake of getting a point. So you don't always

have to give a student a point for always picking up the trash. Maybe just give it them once a week because they will never know when they will earn the point.

We will also **not be taking points away** from students. They have earned those points and should not be taken away. Discipline issues will be addressed within your Discipline Log in your classroom.

Points can be given to any student by any adult in the building. The office staff, custodians, cafeteria workers, teacher assistants, etc. can all give points to students that they see going above and beyond in the building. This way students know that even if they aren't being seen by a teacher they could still earn points.

HOW TO EARN POINTS

Students can earn an point for acts that are deemed worthy by the viewer:

- Good Character
- Academic Excellence
- Outstanding Performance
- School Spirit
- Effort
- Teamwork
- Humility
- Compassion
- Responsibility
- Resiliency

Quick Guide of Point Distribution

Basic Points:

- 1 Point: Getting a difficult question correct, picking up trash without being asked, being the first one to clap for another, etc.

Above and Beyond Points:

- 2-4 Points: Winning a class competition (trivia game, highest earner on a fundraiser), befriending a new student, cleaning up the class without being asked, improving behavior
- 5-7 Points: Making a perfect score on a major test, showing up to a community service project and working extremely hard all day, and demonstrating an overwhelming display of good character

Special Points:

- 8-9 Points: Best performance on a class project, being named MVP of a school team or club, winning an art/writing contest
- 10 Points: Highest grade on a final exam, winning a school wide competition, demonstrating an iconic display of character, or no behavior referrals for a quarter

ULTRA Points:

- 15 Points: Perfect Attendance for the Quarter
- 15 Points: A-B Honor Roll
- 25 Points: Principal's List

Spirit Day Points:

- 25 Points: Best Costume, Best House Costumes, Best Spirit Day Cheer

POINT COLLECTION

We will be tracking student and House points through the ClassDojo app. Every teacher will have an account and every student and parent will be able to see their point collection.

During class, you don't have to constantly be on the app to keep up with points. You are able to come up with ways to make it work within your classroom for you.

- You could assign a student each day/week to track points on a piece of paper for the period and have them turn it in on your desk as they exit the class.
- You could create a spreadsheet and just place checkmarks for what a student may have done well that day.

Make sure that you do submit all your points for the day by the end of the day or during your planning period.

We will be keeping a scoreboard of the house points and will update them weekly (possibly daily if possible).

CELEBRATIONS

Celebrating our successes is a vital piece to have for the system. We need to celebrate when our students do well academically, socially, athletically, etc.

We will incorporate things that we have already been doing in our school before we began the House System. Some of these celebrations need to be planned out in advance as they are celebrations will do quarterly and annually.

Examples of Celebrations:

- End of Quarter House Celebrations
 - Celebrate the Top 10 Point Leaders in each house
 - Celebrate Most Improved Students from each quarter
 - Celebrate Student of the Quarter from each house
 - winner will be based on points earned for that quarter
- End of Year House Celebration
 - The whole school will be decorated in the winning house's colors to celebrate their victory and the House will be placed in the Hall of Heroes
 - All students & staff will wear the color of the winning house
 - Special lunch and trip for winning House
- End of Year Academic Celebration
 - Honors Day could have medallions for the top 10 in each grade (the ribbons for the medallions are in that house's color)
 - Valedictorian of 8th Grade only (medallion with house color)
 - Names will be added to the Hall of Heroes

- Individual House Awards
 - Student of the Year from each house
 - Viking of the Year (chosen from the student of the year recipients)
 - Themed awards based on the house's characteristics
 - Most spirited, Most helpful, etc.
 - Honor our parents as well
 - award those that have shown up to help with projects, events that your house has hosted
 - End of the year, announce the next year's head of house student leader
 - may also need to have back up options in case someone does move during the summer
 - This way they can go ahead and start planning with fellow members about their ideas for what to do to make the next school year even better (leadership skills, showing initiative)

VIKING HOUSES



VALKYRIE



Title: House of Integrity

Power: Honesty, Strong Moral Principles

Symbolic Animal: Flying Horse

First Student Leaders: Sara Coleman, Leo Reyes, Zaiden Crick,
Hannah Amaro, Charleigh Kupczyk, Gabe Wright

First Staff Leader: Erin Haywood and Kristy Tocchio

Championships Won:

House History: The story of the Valkyrie goes back to 13th century. Valkyrie were fierce warriors. They were the protectors and choosers of those that would go to Valhalla. They have the ability to decide how battles are won and do this in a fair and honest way. The Vikings believed that women were as equally as important as men. In our house, we treat all family members and outsiders with the upmost respect because we are all important.

Traditions:

House Motto: “Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody’s going to know whether you did it or not.” Oprah Winfrey

OUR HOUSE CREST

STARS

The stars symbolize being the guiding light to others and making wise decisions.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is the quality of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

TREE

The tree on the shield represents our roots in our beliefs. We stand tall and firm for what we believe.



VALKYRIE

THE KNIGHT

The Knight symbolizes our ability to protect others when some won't.

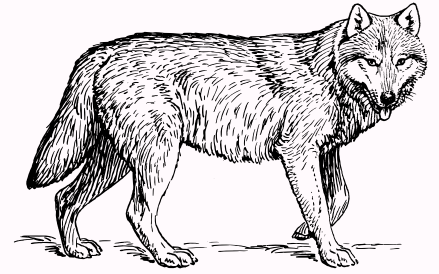
PURPLE

Valkyrie is the purple house because purple represents royalty. Royals were leaders, as we all strive to be.

SCALE

The scale is to symbolize our belief in fairness for others; not necessarily to level the playing field but to give what one needs to succeed.

FENRIR



TITLE: HOUSE OF GRIT

Power: Unyielding Courage

Symbolic Animal: Wolf

First Student Leader: Gemma Gambil

First Staff Leader: Paul Bischoff and Kelly Beasley

Championships Won:

House History: The house of Fenrir takes its name from the legendary wolf of Norse mythology, symbolizing strength, resilience, and the courage to face challenges head-on.

Traditions:

House Motto: Strength in Unity, Power in Perseverance

OUR HOUSE CREST

GOLD

Symbolizes the strength, honor, excellence, and unity of House Fenir

GRIT

Embodies perseverance, resilience, hard work, and courage within the House.

BLACK

Represents the power, mystery, and deep heritage of House Fenir



NORSE RUNE

The Norse Rune for Strength (Uruz) represents the physical and mental strength, resilience, and determination.

MOON

Reflecting the mysterious and powerful nature of the house, the crescent moon also symbolizes new beginnings and growth.

WOLF

Symbolizing strength, leadership, and unity, the wolf's head is a central emblem of House Fenir

RAVEN



TITLE: HOUSE OF WISDOM

Power: Wisdom to see qualities within others

Symbolic Animal: Raven

First Student Leader:

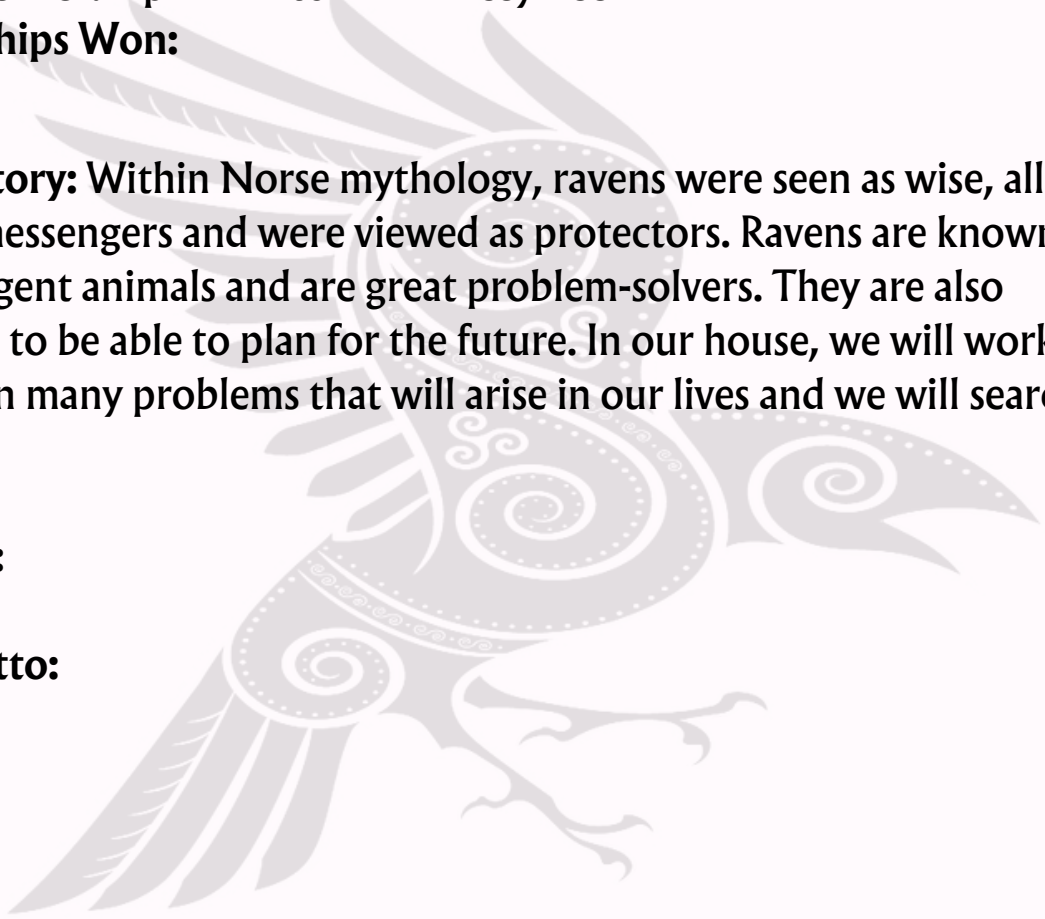
First Staff Leader: April Blanton and Lacey Reed

Championships Won:

House History: Within Norse mythology, ravens were seen as wise, all-knowing messengers and were viewed as protectors. Ravens are known to be very intelligent animals and are great problem-solvers. They are also considered to be able to plan for the future. In our house, we will work together on many problems that will arise in our lives and we will search for answers.

Traditions:

House Motto:



OUR HOUSE CREST

RAVEN

The raven is a symbol of wisdom. Ravens are thought to be quite intelligent animals. They are also used to represent insightfulness.

WISDOM

Wisdom isn't just about intelligence. It can be the ability to understand others, prudence, calmness, and learning from the past.

LOTUS

The lotus is considered to represent a wise and spiritually enlightened quality in a person



RAVEN

COLLABORATION

Ravens are together to help protect each other, have a watchful eye for survival, etc.

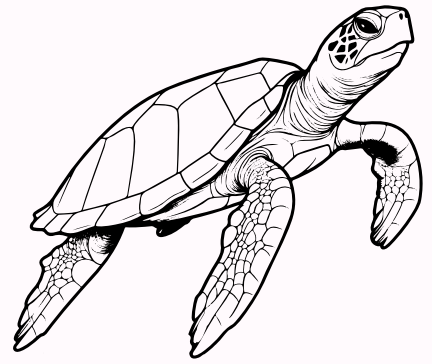
BLACK

Black is color of power, strength, and elegance.

WARRIOR

The warrior on top of the crest represents the power and strength all Ravens have inside them.

LONGBOAT



TITLE: HOUSE OF PERSEVERANCE

Power: Perseverance and willingness to adapt to change

Symbolic Animal: Leatherback Sea Turtle

First Student Leader:

First Staff Leader: Pam Guthrie and Lynn Smith

Championships Won:

HOUSE HISTORY:

THE LONGBOAT WAS USED BY VIKINGS IN THE NORTHERN SEAS. THEY WERE VERY STURDY AND FAST SHIPS THAT HELPED THE VIKINGS NAVIGATE THE OPEN SEAS. THESE SHIPS WERE ADAPTABLE TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT. VIKINGS COULD USE THEM IN THE SEAS AND ALSO THE RIVERS. EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE STURDY SHIPS, THEY WERE ALSO LIGHT ENOUGH TO BE CARRIED OVER LAND. LIKE THE LONGBOATS, WE WILL BE ADAPTABLE PEOPLE AND PERSEVERE THROUGH WHATEVER LIFE WILL THROW AT US.

Traditions:

House Motto: "Never, Never, Never, Give Up!" Winston Churchill

OUR CREED: "ACTION AND ADAPTABILITY CREATE OPPORTUNITY." GARRISON WYNN

"A FAILURE IS NOT ALWAYS A MISTAKE. IT MAY SIMPLY BE THE BEST ONE CAN DO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE REAL MISTAKE IS TO STOP TRYING." BF SKINNER

WE MUST PERSEVERE!!!!

OUR HOUSE CREST

LONGBOAT

THE LONG, NARROW DESIGN MADE THE SHIPS MORE STABLE IN ROUGH SEAS, WHICH ALLOWED THE VIKINGS TO NAVIGATE THROUGH STORMS AND CHOPPY WATERS. SECONDLY, THE LONGSHIPS HAD A SHALLOW DRAFT, WHICH MEANT THAT THEY COULD NAVIGATE THROUGH SHALLOW WATERS AND RIVERS WITH EASE. THEY ARE KNOWN FOR BEING STURDY, STRONG, AND ADAPTABLE TO CHANGE.

COMPASS

THE COMPASS CAN SYMBOLIZE PROTECTION AND SAFE PASSAGE, OFTEN USED IN RITUALS AND CEREMONIES. PHILOSOPHICALLY, IT REPRESENTS THE SEARCH FOR PURPOSE AND MORAL ALIGNMENT

LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE

THE LEATHERBACK IS IN FACT A SEA TURTLE. FOR A SPIRITUAL POINT OF YOU, THE SEA TURTLE SYMBOLIZE LONGEVITY, PATIENCE, WISDOM, AND ENDURANCE. LONGEVITY: THEY HAVE INCREDIBLY LONG LIFESPANS, SO THEY CAN BE AN INSPIRATION TO YOU IF YOU DESIRE A HIGHER LONGEVITY IN LIFE.



BLUE/GRAY

GRAY IS THE COLOR OF INTELLECT AND OF COMPROMISE. IT'S A DIPLOMATIC COLOR, NEGOTIATING ALL THE DISTANCE BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE. CALM SEAS ARE A REFLECTION OF OUR BLUE COLOR.

LONGBOAT

PERSEVERANCE

SIGNIFIES FEARLESSNESS, BRAVERY, AND ENDURANCE. PERSEVERANCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE QUALITY. IT GIVES YOU THE STRENGTH TO DEAL WITH THE INEVITABLE CHALLENGES THAT LIFE THROWS AT YOU.

ANCHOR

THE ANCHOR SYMBOLIZES HOPE, STEADFASTNESS, CALM AND COMPOSURE. IT ALSO CAN SYMBOLIZE SECURITY IN ONE OR MORE UNCERTAIN EXPERIENCES OF LIFE.