

# PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK

VALLEY PREPARATORY SCHOOL  
2017-2018



# **VALLEY PREPARATORY SCHOOL** **PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**LAST UPDATED May 12, 2017**

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# INTRODUCTION



## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

This Parent Student Handbook is intended to provide information about the school's policies and procedures to our Valley Prep families as we work in partnership to develop an environment that supports both our overall mission and the needs of individual students.

Although this booklet does not anticipate every scenario that may occur, we have tried to provide you with guidelines concerning our policies and practices for most situations. We look forward to working with all of our families to support the policies and practices outlined in this handbook in the spirit of partnership and collaboration.

Please note that the school reserves the right to amend this Handbook throughout the year. Families will be informed of all amendments through the ROAR weekly newsletter.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Valley Preparatory School is to inspire each student to reach his or her potential through an enriched, student-centered, college preparatory educational program in grades pre-school through eight.

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is for Valley Preparatory School to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning institution that graduates students who are confident communicators, critical thinkers, and problem solvers. These students will be motivated to engage in life-long learning and empowered to achieve personal and educational goals in a culturally diverse, local, national, and global community. The graduate will be a highly literate and well-balanced student with an appreciation for the arts and world languages. In addition, he or she will demonstrate the ability to acquire knowledge and access information using well-developed technological skills.

## HISTORY

Valley Preparatory School was founded in 1957 as an independent, nonprofit coeducational day school. The school was established by a group of parents interested in providing a challenging academic program to area students who were willing and able to take advantage of this kind of experience. In 1982, the school became a fully accredited independent school and a member of the three accrediting agencies: California Association of Independent Schools, (CAIS), National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

## ACCREDITATION

The school maintains accreditation with the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The school will be seeking accreditation from the International Baccalaureate Organization by 2018 as an IB World School.

## GOVERNANCE

The responsibility for governance of VPS resides with the Board of Trustees. The Board is responsible for establishing policy guidelines which enhance and reinforce the stated mission of the school, for maintaining the financial security of the school, for overseeing long range strategic planning for the school, and for appointing and evaluating the Head of School. The Board is represented by a group of talented and professional individuals drawn from parents and the community at large. The Board of Trustees is responsible for evaluating the structure of the current Board and evaluating future needs with the goal of cultivating and encouraging prospective new members. The Board meets on an approved calendar that is set at the annual meeting in May. The Board meetings are generally held on the last Monday of each month. The Head of School is an active, non-voting ex-officio member of the Board. The Head of School is responsible for the

day-to-day operations of the school. The Head of School is responsible for the hiring, supervising, and evaluating of all school personnel, coordinating and developing all school programs, maintaining disciplinary standards, administering the school budget, and promoting the image of the school.

The Board focuses on three areas critical to the success of the school:

1. It selects, evaluates, and supports the Head of School, to whom it delegates authority to manage the school.
2. It develops broad institutional policies that guide the Head of School in running the school.
3. It is accountable for the financial well-being of the school.

The Board acts only as a whole. Individual Trustees, including the Board President, have no authority to act unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board acting as a whole. VPS parents who are interested in high-level decision making should stay informed about the work of the Board of Trustees by reading Board Meeting minutes, by talking to the Head of School and by attending appropriate meetings.

### **PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)**

We encourage you to take an active role in your child's education. There are many opportunities to become involved. Some activities are one-time only and others are ongoing. Helping out in your child's classroom, attending fine arts and athletic events and the PTO spring Fundraiser, and getting involved in our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) are but a few examples of how you can be a part of your child's school life and the VPS community.

### **VOLUNTEERING**

In accordance with California State Regulations, any adult intending to volunteer at the school must complete a volunteer application, which includes a fingerprint/background check. The cost of the fingerprinting and background check will be paid by VPS. The information gathered is confidential, and will not be used in any manner other than to determine volunteer status. At VPS, it is our intent to provide the safest learning environment possible for each child.

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

VPS admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

# FINANCIAL POLICIES



## TUITION PAYMENTS

Parents or financially responsible parties may choose to pay tuition in 10 monthly installments or as a one-time payment. Smart Tuition manages the collection and bookkeeping of tuition payments as well as other ancillary billing matters for VPS. All families, regardless of tuition payment preference, will register with Smart Tuition. Payment will be made directly to Smart Tuition.

## TUITION INSURANCE

Tuition insurance is available through Dewar, The Tuition Refund Plan. Families who choose to pay tuition in 10 monthly installments will be required to purchase tuition insurance. Families who choose to pay tuition as a one-time payment are strongly encouraged to carry the insurance, but it is not required.

## OTHER COSTS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TUITION

Additional costs not included in the tuition include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Laptops are required for 2-8<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Daily lunch (approximately \$6 daily) – paid monthly directly to *Progressive Catering for Kids*
- Uniforms purchased through *True-Grits* (approximately \$250 annually)
- Overnight (mandatory) fieldtrips in 4-8<sup>th</sup> grade – Costs will vary yearly.
  - Fourth Grade – Sacramento: \$1200
  - Fifth Grade – Pali Institute: \$600
  - Sixth and Seventh Grade – Either Joshua Tree, Catalina Island, or Colorado River: \$1200
  - Eighth Grade – Washington D.C.: \$2500

## PAYMENT OF LATE CHARGES

Students will not be given semester final examinations, will not receive a certificate of graduation, and will not receive a report card or transcripts if any outstanding charges remain unpaid. Students may be suspended from attending classes if his/her financial account with VPS is not current. Any unpaid balance is assessed a late charge by Smart Tuition. Any accounts that are more than one month overdue will be assessed a penalty by VPS of 5% of the overdue balance. This penalty is independent of the fee imposed by Smart Tuition.

## REFUND POLICY

No portion of tuition paid or outstanding will be refunded or canceled in the event of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal from the school of the above mentioned student(s). However, the school understands that certain circumstances may arise which could not be anticipated at the time of this contract's signing. Hence, VPS provides the following Refund Policy:

1. If written notice of withdrawal is received by VPS after July 1 but before the first day of classes, the family is responsible for \$1000 of the total contract amount.
2. If written notice of withdrawal is received after the first day of classes, no portion of tuition paid or outstanding will be refunded or canceled unless one or more of the following conditions can be clearly demonstrated:
  - a. The family moves-out of the area
  - b. The student(s) becomes physically incapable of attending school
  - c. The family suffers a catastrophic financial reversal
  - d. Testing during the first 45 days of the academic year results in the school recommending a different grade-placement
  - e. The school concludes that it cannot meet the academic or social needs of the child and informs the family of such in-writing.

If one of these conditions can be clearly demonstrated, the school will refund tuition paid (or cancel tuition outstanding) for the remainder of the academic year. The refund will be calculated on a monthly basis, whereby full payment for the month of withdrawal is required.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

New families requiring financial assistance are encouraged to apply through the Private School Aid Service (PSAS). Returning families are required to re-apply each year before March 15. The school uses the information provided by PSAS to determine the amount of assistance which can be provided. The maximum per-family award is 50% of the annual tuition. The average per-family award is 25% of the annual tuition. It is the responsibility of all applicants to follow the procedure and provide the documents as required by PSAS. Only families who complete this procedure will be considered for assistance. The school does not guarantee that the same level of assistance will be provided annually.

## **EDUCATIONAL LOANS**

Valley Prep partners with *Your Tuition Solution Inc.* to offer educational loans. Families choosing to finance tuition payments by this means will select the one time pay rate and then make monthly payments directly to this financial third party.

## **GIFTS TO SCHOOL STAFF**

Employees of Valley Prep School may not accept gifts valued at \$50 or more, whether in the form of cash, event tickets, meals, gift cards, or goods. Parents may wish to consider a contribution in the name of the teacher to the school's Annual Fund.

## **CLASSROOM WISH LISTS**

Each September, teachers develop a Wish List for their classroom. Parents are invited to donate items on the list, in support of the school's overall program. However, it is preferred for these donations to be given to the school's Director of Development for logging purposes.

## **ANNUAL FUND**

VPS relies on the generosity of our extended community to support the students and the school through a partnership of parents, staff, faculty, trustees, grandparents and alumni. Every family is encouraged to contribute to the VPS Annual Fund to the best of their ability each year. The Annual Fund directly benefits school programs and facilities, assists in securing the best educators for our school and provides opportunities for professional development for our faculty. The goal is 100% participation by parents, faculty, staff and the Board of Trustees.

# SCHOOL LOGISTICS



## SCHOOL HOURS

Students are expected to be in their classroom by 7:55 a.m. and in their seats ready to work by 8:00 a.m. Parents are asked not to linger around the classrooms after 7:55 a.m. as the teachers need to start class promptly without any distractions.

### Lunch:

Preschool and Pre-K: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

5-8<sup>th</sup> grades: 11:30 am - 12:00 pm

K-4<sup>th</sup> grades: 12:00 pm – 12.45pm

### Dismissal:

All students K-8 are dismissed at 3:00 pm to the carpool area. Pre-school and Pre-K students must be signed out by a parent or authorized adult in their classroom.

## CARPOOL PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Preschool and Pre-K parents will park in the lower parking lot and sign in/out their children from their classroom or daycare. Beginning at 3:00 pm, all K-8 students will line up behind the fence of the blacktop by grade levels and wait for parents to drive into the pick-up area. No one should pull around another car at any time. All students in the school will be required to stay in the pick-up area until dismissed. Please stay in your car at all times. A staff member will escort your children to your vehicle. Walking up or down the main drive is an extremely dangerous practice and is prohibited. The speed limit on campus is 5 miles per hour.

## PARKING

VPS has two parking lots. The upper parking lot is designated primarily for visitor and guest use. These spaces may not be used during carpool. Please do not park in "Staff Parking" or "Reserved" places in the lower lot when dropping off or picking up students.

## MONDAY FLAG CEREMONY

Parents are encouraged to attend our Monday Morning Flag Ceremony at 8am. Student representatives lead the ceremony, which includes announcement of upcoming events, awards, birthday announcements, pledge of allegiance, and the school song. This presents a wonderful opportunity to continually strengthen our school community.

## DAYCARE

Those families using daycare will be billed on a monthly basis at the rate of \$7.50/hr (or any part of an hour). Afternoon daycare service ends promptly at 6:00 pm, at which time late charges will be assessed as \$1/minute after 6:00 pm. Any daycare service after 6:00 pm is performed on an emergency basis only. No student may sign him/ herself out of daycare. When picking up your child from daycare, you must personally sign them out. Students may not leave the campus to meet you as you drive up. Students will only be released to authorized individuals.

**Morning Daycare:** Morning Daycare is available beginning at 7am. There is no charge for students who arrive after 7:30 am. Students are not allowed to go to their classrooms or lockers before 7:50 am. At that time, all students shall report immediately to their classrooms.

**After School Daycare:** Students not picked up by 3:15 pm are automatically signed-in to Daycare. Students participating in **Homework Club** will be signed-in to Daycare by the Homework Club teacher. Students participating in afterschool programs (i.e., sports, chorus, band, etc.) will be signed

into afternoon daycare once the program ends and daycare charges will begin at that time. Snacks are provided for the children every day at 4:00 pm. Students in daycare are expected to observe the same rules of courtesy and fair play as during the regular school day. The daycare supervisor has the same authority as a teacher in supervising students. Students may not use electronic devices during daycare. Laptops are permitted to be used in Homework Club, for homework purposes.

## **HOT LUNCH PROGRAM**

The school has an optional catered hot lunch program. Each month, an online menu is available for parents to select lunches for desired days. If you are not participating in the hot lunch program, parents are encouraged to pack healthy lunches for their children. **Soda is prohibited.**

## **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

It is mandatory that the office has a completed *Emergency Information Card* for each student. Before the school year begins, an online, fillable form is provided to families. The information must be updated by the first day of school. For the safety of your child, please notify the office of any change in telephone numbers or the persons authorized by you to remove your child from school. If a student is being picked up by someone not included on the release form, the student will not be released without a note or phone call from the student's parent to the school office. When students become ill at school, parents will be notified and requested to arrange for the student to be removed from school in a timely manner. If parents cannot be contacted, numbers on the emergency release cards will be used.

## **DISASTER PROCEDURES**

Students will repeatedly practice procedures for fire, earthquake, and lockdown. If in the event of an actual emergency, parents will be contacted via email and text messages (and phone, if possible). Following a major earthquake or other disaster, all students will immediately evacuate to an open area. Perimeter gates will be locked. Students are to remain under the supervision of VPS teachers and staff and will be released only to a person on the emergency release card. A staff member will maintain a log sheet to track each student. In the event that roads are inaccessible, students will be provided care and supervision until they are released to an approved person. Student **emergency kits** will be requested of you to be kept at school and will include such items as a change of clothes. In the event of a major disaster, please do not call the school, as the volume of calls from parents would obviously overload the phone system. It is very important that the school have the ability to phone out and we do not want to overload the system with incoming calls. The following organizations participate in the Information Broadcast System and will give updated information in case of an emergency: KFROG, Redlands Daily Facts, Time Warner Cable, and City of Redlands TV Channel 3.

## **SCHOOL LIBRARY**

The school library is a resource center where children are encouraged to check out books and materials. They may come to the library with their classes, or individually before school Mondays through Fridays or after school from 3:00-3:30 pm. The library is also open during Middle School lunch. Students will be held accountable for books checked out to them and parents will be billed for damaged or lost books. Parents are invited to purchase a suitable book for the VPS library in recognition of their child's **birthday**.

## **CLASSROOM PARTIES**

Parents are asked to consult with the teacher about classroom parties and to keep things as simple as possible.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

In an ongoing effort to remain connected with our community, the school conducts a variety of outreach projects, including a Thanksgiving Food Drive and an Adopt-a-Family during December. These student contributions are given to the Inland Harvest organization that distributes our offerings to needy social service entities in the local community.



## **LICE POLICY**

With the understanding that “*children can give head lice to other children when they share combs, hats, clothing, barrettes, helmets, scarves, headphones, or other personal items,*” (<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/Pages/Headlice.aspx>), the school adheres to the following policy:

If a staff member sees what they believe to be lice in a student’s hair, the student’s parents will be contacted to pick-up the student as-soon-as-possible, and a notice will be sent to all families in the student’s class indicating a possible outbreak of head-lice. Strict confidentiality will always be maintained. All parents then have the responsibility of checking their child for the possible presence of head-lice. The student who was sent-home is expected to undergo treatment, or the parents can obtain a note from a doctor/specialist indicating that head-lice are not present. If such a note is not provided, then all students in the class will continue to be checked by a staff member upon entering the classroom each morning for at least one week following the believed outbreak. If the examining staff member continues to see what they believe to be lice in the student’s hair, the student will not be allowed to attend class. This policy has been reviewed by the local office of the *California Department of Social Services*.

# ATTENDANCE



The goal of the VPS attendance policy is to help students succeed not only in school but also in life. To that end, we stress the importance of regular and punctual attendance as would be expected in any workplace. Consistent attendance in every class is the first and most basic requirement of a quality education. Students who are absent and/or frequently tardy are unable to participate in meaningful classroom discussions and therefore miss important class material. Accordingly, both students and parents must be aware that excessive absences and/or tardiness can potentially **lower a student's academic grades**.

However, for the **health and well-being** of the students and teachers, the school asks each parent to exercise good judgment when sending their child to school when he/she is not feeling well. A child with a fever, cold, or any type of infectious skin or scalp condition should remain at home until the condition is corrected. Any student with a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea must remain at home for a minimum of 24 hours or until such time as they are no longer exhibiting these particular symptoms. If head lice are detected at school, parents will be contacted and the child will be sent home for immediate treatment.

## ABSENCES

Excused absences are defined as legitimate medical illness, court appearances, urgent medical appointments, a death in the family, or an absence due to participation in a religious ceremony. Written evidence is required in order for an absence to be categorized as excused. Otherwise, the absence will be categorized as unexcused.

VPS considers five (5) unexcused absences per quarter to be excessive.

Students with excessive unexcused absences will not be permitted to participate in the following school activities, including but not limited to:

- Optional fieldtrips
- Afterschool activities (including sports)
- House Council

*We strongly discourage any absences due to activities such as family vacations or routine appointments.* However, we recognize that sometimes, extraordinary opportunities may arise for extracurricular enrichment, which may require a student to be absent. In such cases, parents are required to submit a request for special attendance consideration with the Assistant Head of School well in advance. The Assistant HOS will then determine if the absence can be categorized as excused. Criteria for approving or denying such a request include but are not limited to: academic standing, record of behavior, and accumulated tardies and absences.

## Procedures

1. A parent or guardian **must call the school office by 8:00 a.m.** to report a student's absence. Should this not occur, our office will contact the parent/guardian to verify the absence.
2. Upon the student's return to school, written verification of the reason for the absence must be provided to the school office in order to categorize the absence as excused. Without such written verification, the absence will be considered unexcused.
3. Once a student accumulates three (3) unexcused absences in a single quarter, the school will send an email notice to the student's parents to remind them of the consequences outlined above.
4. Once the student accumulates four (4) unexcused absences in a single quarter, the Assistant Head of School will contact the student's parents to remind them of the consequences outlined above.
5. Once the student accumulates five (5) unexcused absences in a single quarter, the appropriate consequences will be applied for the remainder of the given quarter (see above)

## **Make-up Assignments**

- Students who have an excused absence will be given sufficient time to make-up any missed assignments and assessments. For example, once a student returns from an excused absence of two days, they have two days to submit any missed assignments and/or take any missed assessments.
- For students with unexcused absences, the school is not obligated to allow the student to make-up missed assignments or assessments, nor is the school obligated to provide assignments ahead-of-time.

**NOTE:** Students who have twenty (20) or more excused or unexcused absences during an academic year will be at-risk of not being promoted to the next grade level.

## **TARDINESS**

Getting to school on-time is an essential component in maintaining a learning environment that is free from interruptions. Additionally, instruction begins promptly at 8am. If a student is not present for the beginning of a lesson, he/she is missing the lesson's introduction which is needed to firmly grasp the particular concept being presented. Additionally, the teacher has to repeat directions thereby slowing the pace of the lesson for the rest of the class. This can **potentially lower a student's academic grades in a class.**

A tardy will be recorded for students who arrive to school after 8am. Three (3) tardies within the same quarter will count as an unexcused absence. Consideration will be given to tardiness due to traffic congestion that affects multiple families.

### **Procedures**

1. **Preschool or Prekindergarten** students who arrive late to school must be accompanied by their parent/guardian to the school office to receive a Tardy Slip which is then presented to the classroom teacher to gain entry into the classroom.
2. **K-8<sup>th</sup> students** who arrive late to school must go first to the school office to receive a Tardy Slip which is then presented to the classroom teacher to gain entry into the classroom.

## **EARLY RELEASE**

A student who leaves school early creates a disruption in the classroom. Accordingly, students should not be removed from school early, unless for a family emergency. Medical and dental appointments should be scheduled afterschool or during school holidays. If a child must be removed from school early, the parent must go to the main office to sign out their child. **NOTE:** Three (3) "early releases" during the same quarter will count as an unexcused absence.



# COMMUNICATION

Educating a child must be a partnership between the Home and the School. Accordingly, we endeavor to maintain constant communication with our families.

**Monday Morning Flag Ceremony** provides an opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to interact. During the ceremony, various announcements are made with respect upcoming events.

**Friday Envelopes** are distributed to students in our lower grades and include homework assignments, PTO announcements, Progress Reports, and other special announcements.

The **ROAR** is our weekly newsletter, distributed electronically every Friday. It includes a weekly message from the Head of School in addition to announcements, student profiles, and community events.

The **VPS Website** has recently been enhanced to serve as a clearinghouse for all essential information. Teacher-ease (student grades) and Haiku (homework) can be accessed through the site.

**Parent-teacher Conferences** are scheduled twice a year and provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to sit down together and discuss each child's progress.

Parents wishing to **visit a classroom** during school hours are requested to contact the teacher 48hrs in advance. Upon arrival, all visitors must check-in at the front office.

Parents wishing to **meet with a teacher** are requested to contact the school office to schedule an appointment, at least 48hrs in advance.

Parents who wish to **express a concern** should first meet with the appropriate teacher. If they feel that their concern is not being addressed, they should schedule an appointment with the Assistant Head of School (for disciplinary issues) or the Curriculum Coordinator (for academic issues). If the concern remains unaddressed, an appointment should be made with the Head of School.



# UNIFORM POLICY

The school uniform is mandatory on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays (and select Wednesdays). Select Wednesdays are designated as free-dress days.

## WEDNESDAY FREE DRESS

Students are expected to dress in an appropriate manner that does not detract from a positive and productive learning environment for faculty and students. Students may dress casually but the clothes must be clean, neat, in good condition, and not call undue attention to themselves. Clothes are to be worn as designed by the manufacturer. The following type of clothing is unacceptable attire for Wednesday Free Dress: cut-off shirts or those exposing the midriff; tank tops/tube tops; cutoff shorts or frayed clothing; those displaying suggestive or inappropriate slogans; those advertising alcohol or illegal drugs; transparent clothing, spaghetti straps; pajamas, and pants worn at or below the hips. Sleeveless dresses or blouses may be worn providing shoulder straps are at least 2" wide. All shoes must be closed toe and must have a back (i.e. no flip-flops or sling back shoes). For girls, skirts, shorts, skirts, split skirts, culottes and dresses must fit appropriately, reach the middle of the thigh and be modest when sitting or standing. "Bicycle" shorts are advised to be worn under skirts and dresses.

## SPIRIT DAYS

Spirit Days are always held monthly, usually on Wednesday. Students who choose not to wear such spirit-wear will be required to wear their school uniform.

## UNIFORM VENDOR

All uniforms must be purchased through our contracted vendor, True Grits ([www.truegrits.com](http://www.truegrits.com))

True Grits  
11880 Sterling Ave. #L  
Riverside, CA 92503  
Phone: (951) 343-0411  
School Code: VPS184

## UNIFORM CLOSET

VPS maintains *The Uniform Closet* (located adjacent to our music room) serving the VPS community with an inventory of gently-used items. If you have any clean, wearable uniform pieces that could be donated to the Closet, please bring them to the Main Office.

## UNIFORM VIOLATIONS

We appreciate your help and support in adhering to the VPS uniform policy. Teachers and administration have the authority to cite students when students are not in compliance with our dress code. Each case will be addressed individually. Parents may be contacted to bring correct uniform clothing. If a parent is unable to bring the proper uniform, the school may utilize clothing from the school's uniform closet.

## HAIR AND ACCESSORIES

Hair should be neat, clean, combed, well groomed, and non-distractive. Hair should be the student's natural color. Extreme or non-traditional hair styles are not permitted except on a day designated as "crazy hair day." Trendy accessories (including nail polish) that are deemed an educational distraction or a hindrance to the

learning process are not permitted. Exceptions to any of these policies may be granted for Spirit Days and in preparation for Field Day. Make-up will be limited to neutral lip gloss and chapstick.

## **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

In attempting to define any uniform standard related to dress and/or hair length and style, it is essential that such standards accommodate the school-community's wide-range of ethnic, religious and cultural traditions. In that Valley Prep's student composition reflects a true diversity of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, the establishment of any common standards must be sensitive to, and respectful of, the personal and legal rights of all involved. Toward this end, when any issues associated with hair length and/or style may arise, it is recommended that staff bring such matters to the attention of the school administration immediately to review identified concerns. The administrative review process shall include the participation of the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and specified staff. In those instances where students' health and safety may be associated with hair length/style, wearing jewelry, etc., i.e., participation in science lab activities, physical education activities, competitive sports, etc., the administration will work with parent(s) and/or guardian(s) to provide for the health and safety of students. It is further recommended that when staff interact with a student regarding his/her dress and grooming, that they do so outside of the presence of other students. In circumstances where issues related to dress and grooming are associated with a possible disruption to the educational process, the administrative review process should also be pursued by staff. Should parents or guardians have any questions regarding Valley Prep's Uniform Requirements, please feel free to contact the school administration.

## **COLD AND WET WEATHER**

On rainy days, students in all grade levels are permitted to wear "rain boots" which can be worn throughout the school day, both in and out of the classroom. On cold days, students can wear non-uniform jackets, but only outside of the classroom. Upon entering the classroom, the non-uniform jacket must be removed to reveal the proper school uniform.

## **PRESCHOOL - SECOND GRADE**

### **Daily Uniform**

- Navy short, pant or skirt
- Red or white polo with logo
- White socks, peds, white or navy tights, knee high socks or navy leggings to the ankle
- Shoes must be sturdy tennis shoes with laces or Velcro. NO sparkles, lights, wheels, high heels, boots, slip ons, or open toes.

### **Dress Uniform - Girls**

- Plaid jumper
- White collared blouse
- Bicycle shorts
- Navy knee-high socks
- Black or navy shoes (Mary-Jane type)
- VPS cardigan sweater (optional)

### **Dress Uniform - Boys**

- Navy pants
- White polo with logo
- VPS sweater vest
- Black socks
- Black dress shoes
- VPS cardigan sweater (optional)

## **THIRD - FOURTH GRADE**

### **Daily Uniform:**

- Navy short, pant, skirt
- Red or white polo with logo
- White socks, peds, white or navy tights, knee-high socks or leggings to the ankle
- Shoes must be sturdy tennis shoes with laces or Velcro. NO sparkles, lights, wheels, high heels, boots, slip-ons, or open toes.

### **Dress Uniform - Girls:**

- Plaid skirt
- White polo with logo
- VPS sweater vest
- Bicycle shorts
- Black shoes (Mary-Jane type)
- Navy knee-high socks
- VPS cardigan sweater (optional)

### **Dress Uniform - Boys**

- Navy pants
- White polo with logo
- VPS sweater vest
- Black socks
- Black dress shoes
- VPS cardigan sweater (optional)

## **FIFTH - EIGHTH GRADE**

### **Daily Uniform:**

- Khaki shorts, pants, skirt (of modest length) with brown or black belt (optional)
- Navy or white polo with logo
- White socks or peds, navy knee-high socks, navy tights, navy legging to the ankle
- Shoes must be sturdy tennis shoes with laces or Velcro. NO sparkles, lights, wheels, high heels, boots, slip-ons, or open toes.

### **Dress Uniform - Girls:**

- Plaid skirt of modest length
- White button down oxford with logo
- Navy blazer with logo
- Bicycle shorts
- Navy knee-high socks
- Plaid tie
- Black or navy dress shoes

### **Dress Uniform - Boys**

- Khaki trousers
- White button down oxford with logo (logo optional)
- Brown shoes (dress type) with brown or tan socks and brown belt or black shoes (dress type) with black socks and black belt
- Navy blazer with logo
- Striped tie

### **Physical Education (Middle School):**

- Grey t-shirt with logo and navy mesh shorts with logo
- Navy sweat pants with logo (optional)
- VPS sweatshirt (optional)

# ACADEMICS



## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophy is based on four key tenets:

- 1. Student-Centered:** We focus on the student as a learner and employ a variety of techniques to utilize his/her primary learning style to facilitate achievement of objectives.
- 2. Active learning:** Hands-on strategies are emphasized to include lab exercises, small group learning, case studies, projects, fieldtrips, and a variety of strategies to engage actively the learner.
- 3. Holistic:** We use an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning that utilizes the entire combination of traditional academic subject areas (mathematics, language arts, social studies, science), in addition to instruction in Spanish, French, computer technology, music, visual arts, physical education and other extracurricular interests.
- 4. Positive and encouraging:** We understand the importance of providing a learning environment that is free from as many distractions as possible. Accordingly, we maintain high standards for student conduct. But these high standards are always balanced with a familial environment where teachers, students, and parents work together and learn from one another.

## WHAT IS IB-PYP?

Beginning in 2016, Valley Prep will be gradually implementing the International Baccalaureate – Primary Years Program (PYP). By choosing to implement the PYP, schools will develop students' academic, social and emotional wellbeing, focusing on international-mindedness and strong personal values. The PYP nurtures independent learning skills, encouraging every student to take responsibility for their learning. The program is holistic in nature (see Education Philosophy above) and incorporates local and global issues into the curriculum, asking students to look at six related, transdisciplinary themes and to consider the links between them. The themes include 'who we are', 'where we are in place and time' and 'how the world works'. The program does not change the content of our curriculum, but instead structures it in such a way as to provide cross-curricular learning opportunities for the students. (See ADDENDUM for more info)

## WHAT IS STEAM? (science, technology, engineering, arts, math)

Beginning in 2016, Valley Prep will be implementing a STEAM program under the umbrella of the PYP program (see above). Like the PYP, it uses transdisciplinary themes to create links between science, technology, the arts, and mathematics. During the course of the academic year, the students will complete several units of study, designed to establish these links. The units can be as short as several days, or as long as a few weeks. And like the PYP, STEAM does not change the content of our curriculum, but instead structures it in such a way as to provide cross-curricular learning opportunities for the students.

## HOMEWORK

Homework is a school-related responsibility that requires time and effort outside the regular classroom. This policy is designed to improve academic efforts. Homework assignments are given to help students:

1. Develop effective study habits and self-discipline
2. Reinforce and expand upon classroom lessons
3. Have the opportunity to develop a personalized, creative approach to projects and other schoolwork.



Homework is assigned at all grade levels. The length of time a student may spend will vary with the study habits, ability of the individual student, and course load. The following table should serve as an approximate guideline:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Homework</b>	<b>Reading</b>
K	15 min	15 min
1st	20 min	20 min
2nd	30 min	20 min
3rd	45 min	20 min
4th	60 min	20 min
5-8 <sup>th</sup>	90 min	30 min

To become aware of homework and assignments, parents should always check with:

1. Student agenda
2. Haiku (password protected, online resource)  
Log-in information is provided at the beginning of the academic year
3. TeacherEase (password protected, online resource)  
Log-in information is provided at the beginning of the academic year

## **MISSING ASSIGNMENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

- Students who are present in class but fail to submit a class-assignment when requested by the teacher will be issued a zero in teacherease. The assignment can be submitted late, but will be downgraded.
- Students who have an excused absence will be given sufficient time to make-up any missed assignments and assessments. For example, once a student returns from an excused absence of two days, they have two days to submit any missed assignments and/or take any missed assessments.
- For students with unexcused absences, the school is not obligated to allow the student to make-up missed assignments or assessments, nor is the school obligated to provide assignments ahead-of-time.

## **REPORTING**

All students will receive quarterly report cards containing academic, citizenship, and effort grades with appropriate teachers' comments. A conventional A-F grading system is employed in grades 1-8, with citizenship and effort graded on an OGSNU scale (outstanding, good, satisfactory, needs improvement).

## **HONOR ROLL**

At the end of each quarter, individual student progress is recognized for students in grades 5-8. Those students who have maintained a minimum grade point average of 3.7 in all subject areas, with no D's or F's will be recognized at a Monday flag ceremony and presented with an Honor Roll Certificate by the Homeroom Teacher. A student whose grade point average is 4.0 in all subject areas will receive High Honors recognition. A minimum grade of S for citizenship and effort must accompany all subject grades as well. Any student who receives an N or U in citizenship or effort is not eligible for Honor Roll. Any student earning honors in all four quarters will be named to the Headmaster's Honor Roll.

## **GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

GPA (Grade Point Average) is based on the following criteria:

- Core subjects (5 credits/class)
  - English
  - Math
  - Social Studies
  - Science
  - Foreign Languages
- P.E. (4 credits/class)
- Art, Music, and Technology (2 credits/class)
- Life Skills (1 credit/class for 5 and 6th grade only)

## MIDDLE SCHOOL EXAMS

At the end of quarters 2 and 4, VPS 7th and 8th grade students take final examinations in each of their core academic subjects. These final examinations are intended to be a culmination of a semester of work. This requires each student to study the major concepts in each academic discipline.

## GRADING SCALE

100 - 98	A+	76 - 73	C
97 - 93	A	72 - 70	C-
92 - 90	A-	69 - 67	D+
89 - 87	B+	66 - 63	D
86 - 83	B	62 - 60	D-
82 - 80	B-	59 - 0	F
79 - 77	C+		

## PROMOTION POLICY

### Preschool – 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Promotion to the next grade level is determined by the classroom teacher(s) in consultation with the Academic Coordinator, Assistant Head of School, and Head of School based upon the following factors: Report Cards; Student-work portfolios; Disciplinary record; Socio-emotional readiness (i.e. how does the student interact with other students). Students with excessive absences and tardies may not be promoted.

### Fifth – Seventh grade

Middle School students who fail two subjects (end-of-year cumulative average) and/or have a cumulative GPA of less than 1.7 will not be promoted to the next grade level, unless the student successfully completes an approved Summer School program. Middle School students who have accumulated 20 or more tardies and/or 20 or more unexcused absences (for the entire year) may not be promoted to the next grade level.

### Graduation requirements for 8<sup>th</sup> graders

Eighth Grade students who fail two subjects (end-of-year cumulative average) and/or have a cumulative GPA of less than 1.7 will not be permitted to participate in the following graduation activities:

1. Graduation ceremony
2. Awards ceremony
3. Disneyland trip
4. Field Day

In addition, a diploma will not be awarded unless the student successfully completes an approved Summer School program. Eighth Grade students who have accumulated 20 or more tardies and/or 20 or more unexcused absences (for the entire year) may not be permitted to participate the activities listed above.

## ACADEMIC PROBATION

All students are required to take a full course load of academic and specialist classes. Students who receive any D's or F's on their Report Cards are considered "at risk" and will be placed on "Academic Probation" and assigned to a Study Hall during their elective-class. Academic Probation is used to help students in grades K-8 meet VPS's academic standards. These students will be closely monitored and given academic assistance so that they can be successful at VPS. At the end of each quarter, students who have not met the minimum academic standards will be placed on academic probation. A probationary contract will be written up and a meeting will be held with the administration, teachers, parents and student. This contract will contain specific steps designed to monitor and help the student. Academic Probation continuing for two or more quarters will be grounds for possible dismissal. Any student who is on Academic Probation will not be allowed to:

1. Participate in sports
2. Be a member of House Council

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

In accordance with California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) membership requirements, students in first through eighth grades are formally assessed each spring using the CPT4 test produced by the Education Records Bureau (ERB). Additionally, students in grades three and above take the WRAP writing proficiency test. VPS faculty use these results as one tool to help guide instruction to ensure each student is receiving the high quality education they deserve. Test results are forwarded to parents when they become available.

## FIELD TRIPS

Field trips afford VPS students an opportunity for extended learning activities and expanded learning outcomes in all areas of the curriculum. Student participation in these trips is essential to maintain the quality of our educational program. Students are expected to participate in field trips with their respective classes. Permission slips are sent home in the back-to-school packet for all one-day field trips and are to be returned by the first day of school. Parents will be informed of each field trip before the occurrence. Separate permission slips for overnight field trips will be required. Field trips are generally chaperoned by VPS staff, but some field trips will require a limited number of parent volunteers. All parents attending a VPS field trip must make arrangements in advance with the respective teacher, being sure to provide appropriate documentation. In the event that VPS charters a bus, all students and chaperones must ride on the bus. **Non VPS students, including siblings, may not attend field trips.** Each year, the fourth through eighth grade classes go on week long trips. These trips are mandatory as they are considered part of the curriculum. The cost for these trips is not included in the tuition and is billed separately. Detailed information of the specific trips will be provided at orientation.

Field trips are an essential component of the VPS curriculum. Accordingly, all **students are required to attend** all trips (day trips and overnight trips) unless a medical excuse (issued by a physician) is submitted to the Assistant Head of School. Students who miss field trips without such an excuse will be downgraded (not to exceed 10% of the final grade), as per each teacher's grading policy.

## AWARDS

While Valley Prep School believes in the importance of a structured learning environment with high behavior expectations and clear consequences for misbehavior, we also understand the importance of recognizing students for their academic achievement, hard work, and positive attitude. This balance helps to establish and maintain a positive learning environment.

### QUARTERLY AWARDS:

- **5-8<sup>th</sup> HONOR ROLL:** Recognizing students with a GPA above 3.7
- **K-8 AR AWARDS:** Recognizing students who earn levels in Accelerated Reader.
- **PS-4<sup>th</sup> PERSONAL SUCCESS AWARDS:** Recognizes students for efforts, academic improvement, and citizenship.
- **PS-8<sup>TH</sup> PERFECT ATTENDANCE:** Recognizes students with no absences, no tardies, and no early-dismissals

### SPOTLIGHT

The website and bulletin boards will continually spotlight students' work that demonstrates the concepts of STEAM (science, technology, the arts, and math).

### END OF THE YEAR AWARDS

At an *End of Year Awards Ceremony*, the following awards are distributed

- Term 4 Honor Roll for 5-8<sup>th</sup>
- Headmaster's Honor Roll for 5-8<sup>th</sup> (students who have achieved Honor Roll status each term)
- Department Awards for 5-8<sup>th</sup>

- Term 4 Personal Success Stories for PS-4<sup>th</sup>
- Term 4 Perfect Attendance for PS-8<sup>th</sup>
- Headmaster's Perfect Attendance for PS-8<sup>th</sup> (students who have no absences, tardies, or early-dismissals for the entire year)

## **GRADUATION AWARDS**

At the *Graduation Ceremony*, the following awards are distributed:

- Valedictorian: Highest overall GPA during 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade, with no N's or U's for conduct, and minimum GPA of 3.7
- Salutatorian: 2<sup>nd</sup> highest overall GPA during 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grad, with no N's or U's for conduct, and minimum GPA of 3.2  
(only presented to classes with 10+ students)
- Krebs Award: Monetary award given to a student who has maintained good citizenship in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and 3.0 average during 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Headmaster's Award – student who best represents Valley Prep
- Additional Graduation Awards:

### **CRITERIA FOR THE SCIENCE AWARD**

The qualities expected of a student worthy of the department award for Science is one who embodies the qualities of a good scientist and of a VPS student.

- Such a student exercises the science process skills
- The student is observant and asks questions about the observations.
- The student has developed some level of critical thinking over the years and is able to spot mistakes or identify variables in a procedure or experiment.
- The student is able to clearly and effectively communicate through presentations or written assignments.
- The student is a respectful, responsible and reliable lab partner
- The student is someone who has shown progress in these areas.

### **CRITERIA FOR THE TECHNOLOGY AWARD**

The Technology award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Academic success in the classroom
- A positive role model in and out of the classroom
- Adheres to class rules and regulations
- Possesses exceptional citizenship in class
- Outstanding progress in class projects
- Willingness to go above and beyond specified guidelines
- Creativity and imagination
- Respect for classmates and teachers
- Understands the importance of technology as a tool for education
- Demonstrates a high level of motivation, initiative, and integrity

### **CRITERIA FOR THE FINE ARTS AWARD**

The Fine Arts award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Must excel in the Arts
- Successfully completed Art electives at VPS.
- Observes instructions and rules
- Accepts criticism and recommendations graciously
- Demonstrates perseverance and application to projects
- Project work:
  - Understands and communicates themes visually
  - Attention to detail
  - Exceptional craftsmanship
  - Work finished with patience and understanding
  - Work diligently and maintained a positive attitude throughout the creative process

- Good time management skills
- Good understanding and application of art elements and Principles
- Meets project deadlines

### **CRITERIA FOR THE THREE SISTERS ART AWARD**

The student who receives this award ...

- Attended 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at VPS
- Excels in Art (see Fine Arts criteria above)
- Exemplifies a positive attitude
- Inspires positive attitude in others
- Shows courtesy, concern, and respect for others
- Observes instructions and rules
- Accepts responsibility
- Volunteers in a dependable and cheerful way
- Accepts criticism willingly
- Demonstrates high standards of honesty
- Demonstrates perseverance to studies
- Maintains A/B/O average
- Participates in art-related extracurricular activities outside of school

### **CRITERIA FOR THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AWARD**

The Physical Education award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Outstanding Character- The student contributes to the overall positive tone of the Physical Education Classes as well as the school. The student makes an outstanding effort to be cooperative, honest, poised, self-confident, attentive, industrious and enthusiastic. And at all times, the student is working to support the instructional efforts of the class.
- Sportsmanship- The student shows good sportsmanship on and off the field.
- Physical Education Leader – The student is a leader in class activities and accepts responsibility.
- Role Model – The student achieves a high level of physical fitness as determined by individual accomplishments. The student demonstrates a positive attitude toward the instructional activity and provides support for the success of others.

### **CRITERIA FOR THE MUSIC AWARD**

The Music award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Rehearsals: The student was consistently on time, ready to participate, and wholeheartedly contributed to singing, playing instruments, and listening exercises. The student encouraged others to do their best in these areas.
- Compositions: The student turned in the assigned compositions on time and executed according to the directions. Notebook and experimental time was used to the maximum. The student participated wholeheartedly in the recordings and encouraged others to do the same.
- VPS Concerts: The student attended all the concerts, participated wholeheartedly and encouraged others to do the same. The student participated in set-up and teardown as he or she was able.
- Electives: The student successfully completed music electives at VPS.
- VPS Talent Show: The student prepared acts for the talent shows and performed in them.
- After-school groups: The student participated wholeheartedly in after-school groups at VPS.
- Private lessons: The student had private lessons and showed consistent progress in them.
- Recitals/Performances: The student participated in performances/recitals related to private study.

### **CRITERIA FOR THE MATH AWARD**

The Math award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Always gives his/her best effort in class discussions and on assignments.
- Displays a positive, can-do attitude even in the face of challenge or disappointment.
- Is able to think critically to solve problems and make connections between concepts.
- Asks questions to deepen understanding and seeks help when needed.
- Is respectful toward others and responsible for his or her actions, including submitting work on time.

### **CRITERIA FOR THE LANGUAGE ARTS AWARD**

The Language Arts award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Consistently submits quality work that demonstrates their best-effort
- Maintains high expectations for self
- Develops and demonstrates critical thinking skills.
- Has an eagerness and willingness to learn.
- Works to improve his or her writing.
- Accepts criticism and incorporates it into writing revisions.

### **CRITERIA FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES AWARD**

The Social Studies award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Displays an everyday positive attitude in class.
- Is respectful to all other students and teachers
- Is motivated to do their best in every situation that comes forth
- Portrays strong critical thinking skills when it comes to all assignments
- Accepts constructive criticism
- Shows a desire and excitement to learn more about new civilizations and events that occurred in history
- Shows an understanding of how and why the history of civilizations and countries are intertwined with

### **CRITERIA FOR THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE AWARD**

The Foreign Language Award is given to the students who best exemplify the following characteristics:

- Strives to reach his/her full potential
- Consistently motivated and ready to embrace new challenges
- Shows respect to other students and teachers at all times
- Exceeds the minimum requirements and provide evidence of thoughtful, creative input in quarterly projects.
- Develops understanding, reflection and connection through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.
- Uses the language both within and beyond the school setting for personal enjoyment

## **STUDENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)**

Valley Prep recognizes that children process information in different ways and at different rates. While the school does not employ Special Education teachers or remedial specialists, a strong effort is made to meet the learning-needs of every child. A *Student Improvement Plan* (SIP) is developed in collaboration with the parents, teachers, and administrators, and serves as a means to set goals and facilitate communication between the Home and the School.

Each plan includes the following components:

1. Student Strengths
2. Student challenges
3. Goals of the SIP
4. Current academic strategies used in the classroom
5. Recommended strategies to be implemented in the classroom
6. Recommended strategies to be implemented at-home

A Student Improvement Plan is developed when at least two of the following conditions are met:

1. The student scores below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile on the ERB standardized testing and/or STAR tests
2. The teacher recommends the student to have a SIP
3. The administration recommends the student to have a SIP



# SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

## HOUSE COUNCIL

The Houses of VPS is a program designed to instill leadership skills, encourage service to others, and strengthen the school's founding values - **Truth, Judgment, and Courage**. Students from kindergarten through eighth grade are members of one of the three houses throughout their VPS years. Leaders and members of each house lead the rest of the school in a service project determined by the House Council each semester.

The House Council is a group of elected and appointed middle school and junior high school students who, together under the guidance of an adult advisor, meet at lunch on a weekly basis to form VPS's student government. Students are taught techniques of good government and problem-solving as they determine and execute community service projects and school spirit activities. Elections and appointments are held annually. Each house is represented by one elected president, one elected vice-president, one appointed secretary, one appointed historian and two appointed members-at-large from middle school. The position of the President is filled by a student in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. To be a candidate for a house council office, students must be in "good standing" socially and academically (3.0 GPA or better and no N's or U's in citizenship or work habits).

## CALIFORNIA JUNIOR SCHOLARSHIP FEDERATION

Junior High School students may apply for membership in [CJSF](#) each semester. This is a statewide organization originally founded in 1967 with its main purpose to foster high standards of scholarship, service and citizenship in the middle school grades. Students participating in CJSF will show strong service to Valley Preparatory School as well as the community, while fostering pride in scholastic achievement. Eligibility is based on academic standing. For more information, please see the Junior High School CJSF advisor.

## ATHLETICS

VPS fields middle school/junior high teams in a variety of sports. The sports in which we participate are the following:

- Fall: Flag Football and Girls' Volleyball
- Winter: Basketball
- Spring: Track and Field

Fifth through eighth graders will be eligible to play on the teams with preference going to seventh and eighth graders. Fifth grade students may practice with the teams but will not travel to away games unless specified by a coach. The school will provide game jerseys and equipment. Students must purchase their own shorts and shoes. In order to participate in sports, students must have at least a 2.3 GPA in core academic classes (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language), and be in good behavioral standing (no N's or U's) at the end of each quarter. All decisions regarding eligibility are at the discretion of the Head of School and the Assistant Head of School.

## SPORTBALL

Valley Prep contracts with Sportball (a national, afterschool program provider) to offer the following activities for our elementary-age students:

**Multi-Sport** classes are the heart of Sportball programming. Coaches focus on the basic skills common to all sports, like balance, coordination, stamina and timing in a fun, supportive, non-competitive setting that emphasizes teamwork. Each class focuses on one of eight different popular sports: hockey, soccer, football, baseball, basketball, volleyball, golf and tennis.

**Basketball** introduces fundamental concepts of gameplay and teaches the basic skills required to hit the court with confidence in a supportive, non-competitive environment. Coaches zero in on skills like dribbling, passing, catching, shooting and defense in fun, exciting, skill-focused play.

**Soccer** introduces fundamental concepts of gameplay and teaches the basic skills required to bend it like Beckham in a supportive, non-competitive environment. Coaches zero in on skills like throw-ins, dribbling, trapping and passing in fun, exciting, skill-focused play.

## **HOMEWORK CLUB**

Homework Club is available to students who are registered in the Daycare program. A teacher is assigned to monitor behavior, check homework, and answer questions.

## **ROBOTICS**

Robotics is a new afterschool activity at Valley Prep which provides opportunities for students (primarily in 4-8<sup>th</sup>) to build and program robots and drones. The program is designed to support the STEAM program (see above).

## **MUSIC & ART**

Music and art classes are mandatory for all students at all grade levels. In addition, afterschool programs are occasionally offered for students who want to explore these disciplines in more depth.

## **CHOIR**

The Lion's Choir (3-8<sup>th</sup>) and the First Notes Choir (K-2) meet weekly for rehearsal and frequently perform in the community.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL ELECTIVES**

Middle School students (grades 6-8) have the opportunity to sign up for an elective class each new semester of the academic year. These classes are a semester in length and are taught by the middle school teachers and specialists. Students sign-up online and rank their choices from 1 to 4. Students are assigned to classes on a first-come-first-served basis (i.e. the sooner the student signs-up online, the more likely they are to get their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> choice). When assigning students to the electives, administrators try to give special consideration to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Students who fail to sign-up online will be assigned to electives which have empty seats. Additionally, students are not guaranteed one of their top choices if they have already taken the same elective in a previous semester. At the beginning of each semester, the student can change their elective (if seats remain available) by speaking with the Assistant Head of School. NOTE: Yearbook class is not available for online sign-ups. Students are required to complete an application which is available with the Director of Technology.

## **CONCERT PARTICIPATION (Winter & Spring)**

All VPS students in every grade are required to participate in two annual concerts. Students will benefit from performing and from listening at these events. The performances are the reward for months of preparation. The Winter concert is in December and the Spring concert is in May. The concert dates are published in numerous school calendars and announcements. The students hear the dates in class frequently.

Concerts, which are held on specific dates, are unlike the ongoing work in other disciplines. Events such as concerts, graduations, parades, games, weddings, etc. cannot be "made up" in the normal sense. **Students in any grade-level who expect to miss a concert for any reason must inform the music director well in advance** so arrangements can be made to cover the part. *Unexcused absences* are likely to adversely affect a student's music grade. *Excused absences* can be made-up by completing a handwritten report which must be submitted to the music teacher before the end of the grading period. It is the responsibility of the student to request this assignment.





# DISCIPLINE POLICY

Learning occurs best in an environment of honesty, mutual respect, concern, consideration, and courtesy. VPS students are expected to demonstrate the tenets of truth, judgment, and courage. All students are expected to behave in a manner that is consistent with these standards. Any behavior that in any way disrupts the academic environment will not be tolerated. Classroom teachers set and model the tone within their classrooms, and they are primarily responsible for dealing with student behavior. Each teacher has posted a set of classroom expectations within his/her classroom. When classroom or playground problems arise, they are dealt with in an appropriate manner. Parents will be informed of inappropriate behavior and are urged to discuss the problem with their child. If improper behavior persists, the student will be referred to administration for further action.

## GENERAL BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

- Student behavior will be guided by safety, courtesy, respect for others, and good citizenship at all times.
- Students will show respect for the property of the school and the property of all individuals in the school community.
- Students will not harm other students, either physically or verbally.
- Students are expected to be honest and truthful at all times.
- Students are expected to follow all school rules and regulations.

## DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Interactive and dynamic classrooms are a benchmark of good learning. However, students who disrupt the learning process with inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. After appropriate warning and consequences from the teacher, the student may be asked to leave the classroom to discuss the situation with an administrator or assigned a detention. Continually disrupting the learning process will not be tolerated and will result in further disciplinary action.

## PLAYGROUND BEHAVIOR

Recess gives students the opportunity to play with classmates, to engage in appropriate physical activities, and to learn valuable social lessons. General playground rules have been developed and are presented to and discussed with all students at the beginning of the school year. Teachers always monitor recess and any infractions are dealt with immediately.

## CHEATING & PLAGIARISM

Students are required to complete all academic work by themselves. In addition, students are expected to adhere to the guidelines concerning plagiarism as discussed in classes. Students guilty of academic dishonesty will be referred to administration for disciplinary action.

## STEALING

The taking of another person's property is not acceptable is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Students who find another's property should turn it into the office immediately.

## NON-EDUCATIONAL ITEMS

Students may not bring to school any objects or materials that are not part of the educational process. Chewing gum is not permitted on campus. Any items that distract from the learning process are prohibited. The school will confiscate these materials and disciplinary action may be taken.

## **USE OF CELL PHONES**

Cell phones must be set to silent and maintained in the students' backpacks or lockers at all times. After 3:15pm, students in 5-8<sup>th</sup> grades may use their cell phone to call home, but only in the presence of a teacher or coach. If a student is found with their cell phone during the school day, the teacher will confiscate the phone and the parents and administration will be notified of the infraction. The student may pick up the cell phone at the end of the day. For a second offense, the phone will be confiscated and given to administration. The parents may pick up the cell phone at the end of the day. For the third offense, proper disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

## **PROHIBITED ITEMS**

Hazardous or dangerous materials, including, but not limited to fireworks of any kind, knives, guns, weapons of any kind or imitations thereof are strictly prohibited. The school will confiscate these materials and disciplinary action will be taken. The school reserves the right to **immediately expel** any student who brings such a prohibited item to school.

VPS does not permit the possession or use of tobacco, smokeless tobacco, matches or lighters on campus. Students may not use, possess, be under the influence of, or supply to any other student alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or over-the-counter medications. The school will confiscate these materials and disciplinary action will be taken. Any involvement with alcohol or other drugs are grounds for immediate expulsion from VPS.

## **NO FOOD OR DRINK IN THE CLASSROOMS**

Food or drink (except water) is not allowed in the classrooms without the expressed permission of the teacher.

## **BULLYING POLICY**

Valley Preparatory School believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. Accordingly, Valley Prep will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling (in-person or online); and social isolation or manipulation.

Valley Preparatory School expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the Assistant Head of School. Staff members who witness such acts should take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. Each complaint of bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds or attending a school sponsored event off-site.

Teachers should discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with the school's current procedures.

The Student Code of Conduct with respect to Bullying includes, but is not limited to:

- Any student who engages in bullying is subject to disciplinary action.
- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to a teacher.
- Students can rely on staff to promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- If the complainant student or the parent of the student feels that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, the student or the parent of the student should contact the Head of School. The school prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

In the event disciplinary action is needed, the following steps will be taken by the TEACHER:

1. **Verbal Warning:** A verbal warning or reminder will be given by a teacher or administrator.
2. **Discussion:** In most cases, an informal discussion between the student and the teacher helps the student identify and be aware of his/her inappropriate behavior and any necessary consequences.
3. **Note Home:** In the event a verbal warning and discussion is not sufficient, the teacher may document the behavior on Teacher-ease (online grading program), which is viewable by the parent.

In the event that the above-stated steps do not curb the misbehavior, the student will be referred to the ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL. This meeting may result in the issuance of an **Administrative Behavior Log** which will categorize the behavior “infraction” as either minor (Category-I) or major (Category-II). Examples of category-II infractions include cheating & fighting. The Assistant Head of School will then issue the appropriate consequence (see below) based upon the student’s accumulated number of infractions. Parents will be updated accordingly and encouraged to support the school’s disciplinary approach.

1. Loss of Recess
2. After-school Detention (3.15-4pm)
3. In-school Suspension (for one, two, or three days)
4. Issuance of a Behavior Contract with possible terms for expulsion

## **IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL**

In accordance with the Tuition Contract, VPS is authorized and entitled to suspend or dismiss any student if and when, at the sole discretion of VPS, the student (or family) is considered to be detrimental to the school’s overall environment.



# **ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR TECHNOLOGY**

All members of the VPS community are required to follow the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) when using VPS computers, the VPS network or VPS issued laptops. The primary goal of the 1:1 Laptop Program is to enrich the learning experience of students. The AUP is an honor code for technology. We want to be a partner in each student's exploration of the digital world. We allow the use of a personal laptop with the expectation that students will make good decisions with regard to personal use of technology. The AUP is a guide to assist in making ethical and practical decisions while using the laptop and the network. The laptop is an academic learning tool. With a laptop, students have access to an array of programs and tools. We expect laptops will be used in a safe and respectful manner. The actions listed under cyber harassment (see pages 46-47) will result in disciplinary action or the loss of the laptop and network privileges. VPS empowers the school faculty to set boundaries within their classrooms. Individual teachers may set further restrictions for their classrooms. Students are expected to bring their fully charged laptop to school each day. In order to ensure the safety and privacy of the community and its members, any member of the VPS community who uses technology to degrade a member of the VPS community or the reputation of the VPS community is subject to disciplinary action. Students may not use their laptops to communicate (email, chat, etc) with anyone during school hours. If caught doing so, the laptop will be confiscated.

## **PERSONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- Avoid extended use of the laptop while resting directly on your lap. The bottom of the laptop can generate significant heat.
- Take frequent breaks when using the laptop for long periods of time. Look away from the laptop approximately every fifteen minutes.
- Do not provide your personal information to anyone over the Internet.
- Do not share your passwords with anyone.

## **OWNERSHIP**

VPS retains sole right of possession of the laptop and related equipment. VPS retains the right to collect and/or inspect the laptop at any time and to alter, add or delete installed software or hardware.

## **SUBSTITUTION OF EQUIPMENT**

In the event that the laptop is inoperable, VPS has a limited number of spare laptops for use while the laptop is repaired or replaced. This agreement remains in effect for the substitute. If a student forgets to bring her laptop or power charger to school, a substitute will not be provided.

## **CUSTOMIZATION OF EQUIPMENT**

Each student is permitted to alter or add files to customize the assigned laptop to their own working styles (i.e. System Preferences). The student is not permitted to install software on the assigned laptop.

## **DAMAGE OR LOSS OF EQUIPMENT**

In the event of damage or loss, report the problem immediately to VPS. All laptops are covered by a manufacturer's extended warranty (AppleCare) as well as an additional insurance policy. The warranty covers manufacturer's defects and normal wear and tear of the laptop (i.e. broken keyboard, malfunctioning hard drive, defective screen, etc.). The insurance policy is included in the cost of the laptop and has a \$100 deductible for each claim. The \$100 deductible is the financial responsibility of the student's family. If a laptop is damaged by neglect or abuse, it is the family's financial responsibility to replace the laptop.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Bring the computer fully charged to school every day.

- Keep the computer in your classroom cubby when it is at school and not in use.
- Keep the computer in a secure location when it is not at school.
- Do not let anyone use the computer other than your parents/ guardians.
- Back up your data.
- Report any problems, damage or theft immediately to VPS.

#### **GENERAL CARE**

- Do not do anything to the computer that will permanently alter it in any way.
- Do not remove any serial numbers or identification placed on the computer.
- Keep the equipment clean. Do not eat or drink while using the computer and wash your hands before use.
- Clean the screen with a soft, dry anti-static cloth or with a screen cleaner designed specifically for LCD type screens only.
- Transport the computer in the laptop bag provided by VPS.
- Never carry the laptop with the lid open.

# IB-PYP HANDBOOK



## WHAT IS IB-PYP?

The IB-PYP is a holistic, inquiry-based, cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning that promotes cultural sensitivity and international-mindedness. The program uses six transdisciplinary themes to organize traditional curricular content. At Valley Prep, two of these themes will be **STEAM**-related, encouraging students to work collaboratively to complete units of study that emphasize math, science, and technology, while still appreciating the importance of the Arts.

## WHY IMPLEMENT THE IB-PYP & STEAM?

Valley Preparatory School was founded in 1957 with the philosophy of **Holistic education**. The International Baccalaureate Program was established in the late 1960s using this same philosophy, whereby the content of the curriculum is presented to students **thematically**. Accordingly, this program does not change “what” our students learn, but instead changes aspects of “how” they learn. Valley Prep will take this approach a step farther and integrate STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) into the IB-PYP framework, whereby two of the six PYP themes will be STEAM-related. This approach will give greater purpose to our existing **1:1 laptop program**.

## ELEMENTS OF THE IB-PYP

The Primary Years Program (PYP) presents schools with a comprehensive plan for high quality education. It provides schools with a curriculum framework of essential elements — the knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and action that young students need to equip them for successful lives, both now and in the future. Schools work with the five elements to construct a rigorous and challenging primary curriculum for international education. The PYP aims to create a curriculum that is engaging, relevant, challenging and significant for learners in the 3–12 age range. The curriculum is transdisciplinary, meaning that it focuses on issues that go across subject areas.

The PYP is organized according to:

- **The written curriculum**, which explains what PYP students will learn
- **The taught curriculum**, which sets out how educators teach the PYP
- **The assessed curriculum**, which details the principles and practice of effective assessment in the PYP

## THE WRITTEN CURRICULUM

The PYP balances the acquisition of significant and relevant knowledge and skills, the development of conceptual understanding, the formation of personal, positive attitudes and the capacity to take responsible actions.

The PYP:

- addresses students’ academic needs and their social and emotional well-being
- encourages students to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning
- supports students’ effort to gain understanding of the world and to function effectively within it
- helps students to establish personal values as a foundation on which international-mindedness will flourish.

The written curriculum is made up of five essential elements and details what students will learn.

1. **knowledge**, which is both disciplinary - represented by traditional subject areas (language, math, science, social studies, art, music, library, pe) - and transdisciplinary
2. **concepts**, which students explore through structured inquiry in order to develop coherent, in-depth understanding, and which have relevance both within and beyond subject areas
3. **skills**, which are the broad capabilities students develop and apply during learning and in life beyond the classroom

4. **attitudes**, which contribute to international-mindedness and the wellbeing of individuals and learning communities, and connect directly to the **IB learner profile**
5. **action**, which is an expectation in the PYP that successful inquiry leads to responsible, thoughtful and appropriate action.

## THE TAUGHT CURRICULUM

The taught curriculum is the part of the PYP that sets out its pedagogical approach. It identifies how schools should teach the PYP written curriculum. The PYP is committed to structured, purposeful inquiry that engages students actively in their own learning. The program supports students' efforts to construct meaning from the world around them by:

- drawing on their prior knowledge
- providing provocation through new experiences
- providing opportunities for reflection and consolidation.

This approach respects students' developing ideas about how the world works. It encourages them to question, consider and refine their understanding of the social and natural world.

Collaboration is a key part of planning for schools implementing the PYP. All teachers are engaged in the planning process, defining the curriculum's central ideas, discussing how best to bring inquiry into those ideas in the classroom, and finding ways to meet the needs and interests of every student.

Teachers must attend training in order to implement the PYP. The IB offers a wide range of professional development to support educators in gaining a deeper understanding of the program.

## THE ASSESSED CURRICULUM

The assessed curriculum explains how teachers go about gathering and analyzing information about student performance. The IB does not set examinations or moderate grades in the PYP.

The purposes of assessment are to:

- promote student learning
- provide information about student learning
- contribute to the successful implementation of the program

Through assessment, the IB helps schools teaching the PYP to identify what students know, understand, can do and value at different stages in the teaching and learning process. In the PYP, learning is viewed as a continuous journey, where teachers identify students' needs and use assessment data to plan the next stage of their learning. Teachers use a wide range of assessment strategies to collect information on each of the elements represented in the written curriculum: the understanding of concepts, the acquisition of knowledge, the mastering of skills, the development of positive attitudes and the ability to take responsible action.

In the final year of the PYP (which can be either grade 5 or grade 8), students carry-out an extended, in-depth, collaborative project known as the **PYP exhibition**. This involves students working collaboratively to conduct an in-depth inquiry into real life issues or problems. Students collectively synthesize all of the essential elements of the PYP in ways that can be shared with the whole school community. It also provides teachers with a powerful and authentic process for assessing student understanding. The exhibition represents a unique and significant opportunity for students to exhibit the attributes of the IB learner profile developed throughout their engagement with the PYP. It also provides schools and students with a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the transition of learners to the next phase of their education.

## THE IB LEARNER PROFILE

Outlined below are the qualities we believe students should have, listed in a set of **ten student-learning outcomes** called the ‘learner profile’.

1. **Inquirers** - Their natural curiosity has been nurtured. They have acquired the skills necessary to conduct purposeful, constructive research. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives
2. **Thinkers** - They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to make sound decisions and solve complex problems.
3. **Communicators** - They receive and express ideas and information confidently in more than one language, including the language of mathematical symbols.
4. **Risk-Takers** - They approach unfamiliar situations without anxiety and have the confidence and independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are courageous and articulate in defending those things in which they believe.
5. **Knowledgeable** – They have spent time in our schools exploring themes which have global relevance and importance. In so doing, they have acquired a critical mass of significant knowledge.
6. **Principled** – They have a sound grasp of the principles of moral reasoning. They have integrity, honesty and a sense of fairness and justice.
7. **Caring** - They show sensitivity towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a sense of personal commitment to action and service.
8. **Open-minded** – They respect the views, values and traditions of other individuals and cultures and are accustomed to seeking and considering a range of points of view.
9. **Balanced** – They understand the importance of physical and mental balance and personal well-being.
10. **Reflective** – They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and analyze their personal strengths and weaknesses in a constructive manner.

## PYP ASSESSMENT POLICY

As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, we are also aligned with the IB Organization’s mission and their IB Learner Profile.

- The IB mission statement can be viewed at: <http://www.ibo.org/mission/>
- The IB learner profile can be viewed at: <http://www.ibo.org/programmes/profile/>

### **Philosophy or Assessment Beliefs**

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. The prime objective of assessment in the PYP is to provide feedback on the learning process. Assessment involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what students know, understand, can do, and feel at different stages in the learning process. Students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing the students’ progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self-assessment skills. The PYP approach to assessment recognizes the importance of assessing the process of inquiry as well as the product(s) of inquiry, and aims to integrate and support both.

At Valley Prep, we believe that assessment provides information through its diagnostic, formative and summative components. Assessment is ongoing, authentic, varied and purposeful. It is a collaborative and informative process that involves students, families, teachers and community. Instructional and curricular decision making is driven by our assessments.

### **Purpose of Assessment**

The purpose of assessment is to inform and involve students, parents, teachers and administrators. Effective assessments allow:



1. Students to be an active part of the learning process through reflection and demonstration of their understanding.
2. Teachers to guide their instruction and to communicate progress with students and families.
3. Parents to see evidence of their child's learning and development, while supporting and celebrating their child's learning.
4. Administrators to build a sense of community within the school and communicate the school's progress.

### **Types of Assessment used at Valley Prep**

#### **Formative assessment**

Formative assessment is interwoven with daily instruction and assists the teacher in planning for the next stage of learning. It provides regular and frequent feedback to the teacher and the student. It also gives students an opportunity to improve their understanding and to cultivate enthusiasm for learning. Teachers use various assessment tools to keep a record of student progress.

#### **Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process and provides students with an opportunity to show what they have learned. It also shows how effectively students understand the central idea of the unit.

#### **Diagnostic/pre-assessment**

Diagnostic assessment prior to teaching helps teachers and students find out what the students already know and can do.

#### **The 5th Grade Exhibition**

The 5th grade students are expected to develop and present their own collaborative unit of inquiry that showcases the five essential elements of the PYP (knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes and action). This is an opportunity for the students to exhibit the attributes of the learner profile which they have been developing throughout the Primary Years Program.

### **Practice (Strategies for recording and reporting)**

1. **Observation**: Students are observed regularly with teachers noting the growth and progress of individuals, groups and the whole class.
2. **Performance assessment**: Students apply what they have learned by completing authentic tasks that have more than one acceptable solution.
3. **Process-focused assessment**: Teachers observe students with a particular skill in mind, noting students who are meeting, exceeding or struggling to meet the expectations.
4. **Open-ended tasks**: Students are asked to complete or communicate an original response. This can be a drawing, written response, diagram or a solution.
5. **Test/quiz**: These assessments provide a snapshot of students' subject-specific knowledge.
6. **Student reflections**: Students may be asked to reflect on what they have learned at the end of a lesson/unit.

### **School-wide Assessment Tools**

1. **Exemplars**: samples of students' work that serve as a concrete standard against which other samples are judged.
2. **Checklists**: lists of information, data, attributes or elements that should be present in students' work or performance.

3. Rubrics: an established set of criteria for rating students in all areas. The descriptors tell the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in students' work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics can be developed by students as well as teachers.
4. Anecdotal records: brief, written notes based on observations of students.
5. Continuums: visual representations of developmental stages of learning that show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a process.

## **Reporting**

### **The Written Report**

1. Teachers will complete the report card at the completion of each quarter. The report card includes grades for all curricular areas.
2. Families of students who are struggling academically or behaviorally will receive a mid-trimester report.
3. Staff will administer the ERB standardized exam to students in grades 2-8 in the spring of each year. ERB provides highly regarded admission assessments for students applying to independent schools and/or specialized public schools requiring entrance exams in the United States and Internationally for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12

### **Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences**

1. Fall: Goal setting. This is a relationship-building conference with the parent, teacher, and sometimes the student. The purpose of this conference is to discuss and identify social, emotional and academic strengths or areas for improvement.
2. Spring: This is a conference between the parent, teacher, and sometimes the student that reviews the student's progress, in addition to sharing academic information and work samples.

### **Portfolios (currently optional for teachers to maintain)**

1. Portfolios are a purposeful collection of a student's work that is designed to demonstrate successes, growth, higher-order thinking, creativity and reflection.
2. Portfolios are a cumulative collection of student work that travels with the student from Kindergarten through Fifth grade. They are housed in the student's classroom and are accessible to the student and his or her family at any time during the school year. The portfolio is the property of the student and goes with the child upon leaving or graduation from the program.

### **Assessment Review**

As a staff, we will review our assessment agreements and policy annually.

## **PYP LANGUAGE POLICY**

### **Statement of Belief**

At Valley Preparatory School, we believe that language is fundamental to the success of all student learning. This includes the ability to express oneself through speaking, reading, writing, drawing, acting, etc. This also includes communication through different languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts. Language is essential to the construction of meaning and connects all of our curriculum elements and ultimately supports the mission of our school. We believe that literacy instruction should connect to our units of inquiry, instilling an intrinsic love of literacy by using balanced literacy, authentic assessment, and instruction that is differentiated to the needs of each learner thus building life-long readers and writers.

Through inquiry, teachers provide students with opportunities to use language in many different formats, including debate, role-play, and art, as well as the traditional teaching of language both embedded in the units of inquiry and as stand-alone subjects. Valley Prep accepts the responsibility to recognize and support language development of all students through the expectation and understanding that all of our teachers work together to make sure that language is through integrated learning and meaningful contexts.

### **Identification of Language Needs**

During the application phase, students/families indicate the language most often spoken in the home, as well as additional languages spoken. For any student who is not from a home in which English is the listed primary language, testing may occur to determine level of ability in English to ensure proper support.

### **Support for Language Learners**

Our teachers are constantly working to create a caring language community to enhance the language learning of all students. Valley Prep strives to promote a language-rich campus for all students through the implementation of technology, multimedia and library resources. We ask that teachers be well informed of their students who have language needs and other language abilities. Valley Prep encourages families to continue mother tongue development at home, and support is given to these students whose mother tongue is a language other than English.

### **Parent Support for Language**

Parents are encouraged to support language development at home through homework assignments and grade level newsletter suggestions. Parents may be asked to read with students on a regular basis, discuss concepts to check for understanding/comprehension, assist with inquiry-guided research, complete writing prompts, and encourage oral communication.

### **Language in the Classroom**

In the classroom, language is supported through various literacy activities such as: reading A-Z, guided reading, writer's workshop, writing in content, classroom libraries, visuals, instructional vocabulary, individual word lists, daily read-alouds and opportunities for students to use language during presentations and collaboration. Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individually assessed in their reading ability using STAR testing, and often organized into leveled-groups.

### **Language and the Program of Inquiry**

Language is integrated throughout the Program of Inquiry. Higher level thinking, key concept questions, and extended research all lend themselves to having a strong vocabulary and language presence within the planners. Oral, visual, and written language are all present within planner activities. Literature selections both in read-alouds and guided reading are chosen to build an understanding of the concepts within the planners.

### **Additional Language**

Spanish and French are the second languages taught to students in PS-8<sup>th</sup> grade. In PS-1<sup>st</sup> grade, students take both languages. Beginning in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, students select one language of focus which meets 3-days per week for 45 minutes.

## **Language Resources**

Our goal is always to increase language resources. We continue to add to an extensive literacy library of leveled books that support our IB planners. The Valley Prep library has an array of fiction and nonfiction books, and we are continuing to grow our collection of books in other languages. In addition, we have a variety of online resources to support student learning and research. Valley Prep has also purchased online programs to support students who are struggling with reading.

Valley Prep offers professional development in the realm of language arts in a variety of ways. A professional library of resources is available for teachers to learn additional best practice methods and the teaching staff comes with a wide variety of abilities and experience and can provide professional development internally as well. We regularly utilize time during our staff development and team planning time to further our language knowledge, and we are working toward a vertically aligned campus in the area of Language Arts.

## **PYP ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY**

### **Our Philosophy**

This policy on Academic Honesty addresses the implementation of our values and beliefs which are in line with the IB philosophy. Academic honesty must be seen as a set of values and skills that promote good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The concepts of intellectual property and authenticity of work and proper conduct during testing procedures are related to academic honesty.

### **Teachers encourage honest creative, critical PYP work by:**

- creating inquiry-based assessment tasks where creativity is encouraged and where the use of information helps to solve a problem;
- designing assessment criteria that value and reward the work required, rather than only the result;
- teaching ways to acknowledge others: PYP students can learn to use quotation marks to mark other's words or describe what help was useful and why;
- teaching reflection on the learning process: reflective writing about source values students' hard work rather than stressing formal citation or demonizing copying;
- Students from all grade levels are made aware of academic honesty by teachers when doing research on their Macbooks or in the STEAM-lab

As part of the process of educating students about the importance of academic honesty the following definitions will be used:

### **Definition of cheating**

- The intentional giving or receiving of an unfair or dishonest advantage over other students; any such advantage that is not authorized by a teacher and/or other staff member.
- This may be done by any means whatsoever including but not limited to fraud, threat or force, theft, unacceptable talking, signs, gestures, copying from another students, unauthorized use of any materials, books, software programs, computer/ equipment or other information.
- Attempted cheating

### Definition of plagiarism

- Presenting as one's own words and work (including images, photos, art, etc.), ideas, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.
- Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without permission.

### Consequences

Although we expect our students to choose, act and reflect in an ethical manner, students must also understand that there are consequences for unethical behavior. Any cases of cheating and plagiarism will be treated seriously and will be appropriately sanctioned. Although each case will be evaluated on an individual basis according to relevant circumstances, it should be noted that if a student cheats or plagiarizes he or she may receive zero for the assignment.

