



Student & Parent Handbook

2012-2013

- Meals canceled either i) before 8 a.m. on the day of, or ii) after 4 p.m. the day before the meal service was to have taken place will receive LunchMaster account credit for HALF the value of the price of the cancelled meal.
- LunchMaster account credit will remain on the account and be available for use on future meal orders. There are no cash refunds for cancellations of meal service, only credit for future meals.

Snacks

Children may bring healthy snacks to school such as fruits and/or vegetables. We discourage foods that contain sugar, MSG, and other additives. **Do not send carbonated beverages or candy.**

Birthday Celebration Policy

As a community, we care about each other. As you plan home parties, think about how you will handle activities outside of school, so that you do not leave some children feeling excluded. A good rule is: invite everyone in your child's class or fewer than five. Please do not distribute party invitations at school. Use US mail or email.

VCMS values each child and recognizes the special significance of an individual's birthday. SSP teachers will honor each child in some sort of form of celebration with the class. Note that if you would like to provide something to celebrate it must be a healthy snack, you must bring something for the whole grade level; that is providing something for 64 students.

VI. Our Community

VCMS was built with the energy of parents, educators and the community – bringing together community groups, long-time residents, and parents with experienced educators to create a school that has both a grassroots spirit and the education establishment's knowledge and experience. The participation of families and the surrounding community is critical in meeting the needs of the whole child.

Fundraising and volunteer hours support 40% of the school's program. Each family commits to fulfilling 50 hours of volunteer work at the school; 75 for those with more than one child at the school. Fundraising is a key component of the school; we strive for 100% participation in our annual pledge drive and volunteering.

Home/School Agreements

We believe that every child is a unique individual and wants to learn. We are committed to providing a program that promotes educational excellence in a humanistic, nurturing and challenging environment. To assist each student in achieving his / her highest potential for intellectual and social growth, we recognize that the home and school must work together, recognizing and agreeing upon each party's responsibilities in the learning process.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Providing a regular time, a quiet, well-lit place, and supervision for homework.
- Making sure my child gets to school on time and has had enough to eat and adequate sleep.
- Attending two parent/guardian/teacher conferences that are scheduled each year, as well as any other meetings that may be needed.
- Volunteering and participating at school, in my child's classroom, or at school events.

- Communicating the school's mission, goals and policies to students and families.
- Providing and participating in a process for ongoing planning, reviewing and improving school activities and programs.
- Acting as the instructional leader by supporting teachers in their classrooms.
- Providing appropriate training and workshops for teachers and parents/guardians.
- Demonstrating respect for all students and adults at school.
- Responding in a timely manner to feedback from students, families, and staff.
- Communicating with parents/guardians about school activities and ways they can support their child's learning.

Community Awareness

We must be respectful of our neighbors. We want to preserve a good relationship within the community and model cooperative citizenship for our students. Showing courtesy and respect to our landlords and the neighborhood is important maintaining to positive ongoing relationships. Parental behavior also serves as a model for our students. Please be respectful of the neighbors' driveways when parking on the street.

Classroom Visits

Parents are asked not to volunteer in their child's classroom during the first month of school, allowing the teacher time to build a rapport with students, create a classroom culture, and establish routines and procedures. Teachers will coordinate volunteer opportunities based on classroom needs. Please do not drop in unannounced. The purpose is to assist in the classroom, not to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Teachers need time to teach and to plan. If you need to take time to observe in your child's classroom, this time is limited to twenty minutes and must be prearranged with the principal.

Parent Participation Philosophy

Parent volunteerism is key to the success of any school, but especially important at VCMS, where our charter specifies that each family commit to volunteer for a minimum of 50 volunteer hours (75 for families with more than one child at VCMS). Parent volunteers:

- Develop community involvement and interaction, which is essential to the quality of our school program;
- Keep our operational costs down;
- Enable our school to function well in day-to-day routines;
- Enable us to successfully plan events that raise money to support our school and build school and community involvement; and
- Enable us to apply for grants, as parent participation is a key element in most grant applications.

All families are expected to contribute the hours described above. If you have difficulty finding ways to contribute, please do not hesitate to call the office or ask the classroom teacher how you can help.

Volunteer hours must be tracked in the school office this year (please complete the volunteer log each time you finish volunteer); we will not be sending home tracking forms unless you

would like a private way to track your own hours. The school will contact families that are not visibly volunteering in order to help them find opportunities for volunteering.

Important! Please Note:

- ***Volunteers who regularly work directly with students or who drive students on field trips must go through the Livescan process (fingerprinting) and have a current (within four years) negative TB/Mantoux test on file in the office.***
- ***Parents who are working in the classroom are expected to keep confidential any observations and opinions about students and staff in the class. Parents can only discuss their own child's progress with teachers and administrators. Any parent who is found to be breaching student confidentiality and disregarding this expectation will no longer have the privilege of working the classroom. Please follow the classroom teacher's directions when working with students.***

VII. Fundraising

Why Do We Fundraise?

Fundraising is a part of life in California schools – public and private. Unless something radically changes in Sacramento, our public schools will continue to be under-funded.

It is possible to run a school on state funds, but for us it would mean *no* possibility of enrichment during the school day such as PE, no teaching assistants in the classroom, and none of the other programs that are necessary, we believe, for a child's growth and academic achievement. In order to start these programs, we must fundraise to make up the difference between what it costs to educate a child at VCMS and state and local revenue. It is important that everyone gives at his or her comfort level. The important thing is for everyone to understand the need – and for all of us to get involved.

VCMS Fundraising Facts

Your contribution to Valley Charter Middle School is not only an investment in our children's future but it's also an investment in the here and now. With your donation, we'll be able to preserve the things we value most about VCMS:

Small class sizes: VCMS class size is an average of 30 students while comparable LAUSD schools have increased to 35-45 students.

Exceptional teachers: Though many area schools are being forced to lay off teachers due to a statewide "reduction in force," we will continue to make the retention and professional development of top educators a top priority.

Teacher assistants: Every class will continue to have a highly qualified teaching assistant. LAUSD is currently funding NO aides except for special education assistants.