

# PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK

VALLEY PREPARATORY SCHOOL



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# INTRODUCTION

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Welcome to Valley Preparatory School! We are happy to have you as part of our school community. It is the responsibility of each student and family to read and understand this handbook. If something needs clarification, please ask the Head of School. The Parent-Student Handbook is intended to provide information about Valley Prep's policies and procedures to families, as we work in partnership to develop an environment that supports both our overall mission and the needs of individual students.

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

**NOTE:** Valley Prep reserves the right to amend this handbook throughout the year; families will be notified accordingly.

## 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 preschool through eight.

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is for Valley Preparatory School to be a 21st 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.

## SCHOOL 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 type of experience.

## ACCREDITATION

Valley Prep is a fully accredited independent school and maintains accreditation with the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), as well as with the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) as an IB World School.

## GOVERNANCE

Valley Prep is governed by the Board of Trustees. The Board is represented by parents and the community at large. Individual trustees, including the Board President, have no authority to act unless authorized by the Board acting as a whole. Valley Prep parents interested in high-level decision making should stay informed by reading the meeting minutes (available upon request) or by speaking with the Head of School. The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Appointing, evaluating, and supporting the Head of School
- Developing broad, institutional policies that guide the Head of School in running the school

- Establishing policy guidelines which enhance and reinforce the stated mission of the school
- Maintaining the financial security of the school
- Overseeing long-range strategic planning for the school

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, including but not limited to:

- Hiring, supervising, and evaluating all school personnel
- Coordinating and developing school programs
- Maintaining disciplinary standards
- Administering the school budget
- Promoting the image of the school

### **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 events, such as fine arts programs and the PTO spring Fundraiser, as well as getting involved in our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) are a few examples of how you could be a part of your child's school life and the Valley Prep community.

### **VOLUNTEERING**

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

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION / INCLUSION POLICY**

Valley Prep is a private, secular school for student in grades Preschool – 8<sup>th</sup>. We welcome students of every race, gender, color, national or ethnic origin, or exceptionality extending to our diverse student body's opportunities, programs, and privileges. Our commitment to inclusivity is unwavering, and we do not tolerate discrimination based on race, gender, color, national or ethnic origin, or exceptionality when implementing our educational policies, admission procedures, scholarship and loan programs, athletics, or other school-administered initiatives. This policy is designed to address the diverse needs for all students to be internationally minded and successful learners.

## FINANCIAL POLICIES

### TUITION PAYMENTS

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

### 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 TUITION

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

- MacBook laptops are required for students in 2-8th grade and cost approximately \$1,800.
- Daily lunch, which is paid directly to Panera Bread.
- Uniforms, which are purchased through [Lands' End](#) (approximately \$250 annually).
- Yearbook – ordered in the Spring (approximately \$50)
- Overnight field trips in 4-8th grade (costs vary and are approximate)
  - 4th grade – Sacramento: \$1200
  - 5th grade – Pali Institute: \$600
  - 6th & 7th grade – Either Joshua Tree, Catalina Island, or Colorado River: \$1200
  - 8th grade – Washington D.C.: \$2500

### PAYMENT OF LATE CHARGES

Students may not be given semester final examinations, may not receive a certificate of graduation, and may 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 Valley Prep is not current. Any unpaid balance is assessed a late charge by Blackbaud. In addition, the school reserves the right to withhold re-enrollment contracts until the overdue balance is paid in full.

### 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. However, the school understands that certain circumstances may arise which could not be anticipated at the time of contract signing. Hence, Valley Prep provides the following Refund Policy:

- If written notice of withdrawal is received after July 1 but before the first day of classes, the family is responsible for \$1000 of the total contract amount.
- 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:
  - The family moves-out of the area,
  - The student(s) becomes physically incapable of attending school,
  - The family suffers a catastrophic financial reversal,
  - Testing during the first 45 days of the academic year results in the school recommending a different grade-placement, or

- 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 the above conditions can be clearly demonstrated, Valley Prep 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.

#### **LATE ENROLLEES**

For students who enroll after the school year begins, tuition is pro-rated on a monthly basis.

#### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

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

#### **EDUCATIONAL LOANS**

Valley Prep partners with [Your Tuition Solution](#) for educational loans. Families choosing to finance tuition payments will select the one-time rate and make monthly payments directly to this financial third party.

#### **GIFTS TO SCHOOL STAFF**

Employees of Valley Prep 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 August, teachers create a Classroom Wish List. Parents are encouraged to contribute items from the list to support the school's program. Please deliver any donations to the Office Manager or Head of School for proper recording.

#### **ANNUAL FUND**

Valley Prep 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. At the beginning of each school year, every family is encouraged to contribute to the Annual Fund to the best of their ability. The Annual Fund directly benefits school programs and facilities, assists in securing the best educators, and provides opportunities and/or professional development for our faculty. Valley Prep's goal is 100% participation by parents, faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustees.

## **SCHOOL LOGISTICS**

### **SCHOOL HOURS**

Students need to be in class by 7:55am and ready to work by 8:00am. Parents are asked not to linger near classes after 7:55 am, as teachers need to begin class promptly and without distractions.

Lunch:

- Preschool and Pre-K: 11:00am – 12:00pm
- 6 – 8th grades: 11:35am – 12:15pm
- K – 5th grades: 12:00pm – 12:45pm (Kindergarten has lunch at 11:35am on Friday.)

Dismissal:

- K – 8 students are dismissed beginning at 2:55pm to the carpool area.
- Preschool and Pre-K students must be picked up at their classroom and signed in/out by a parent or authorized adult.
- Students are NOT allowed to be picked up or dropped off on the street.

### **CARPOOL PICK-UP PROCEDURES**

Preschool and Pre-K parents must park in the lower parking lot when signing their children in and out of their classroom or from daycare. Beginning at 2:55pm, K – 8 students not picked up at their classroom will line up behind the fence on the blacktop and wait for parents to drive into the pick-up area. All students will remain in the pick-up area until they are dismissed to either a parent, daycare, or to pre-registered school activities.

For the safety of yourself and others:

- The speed limit on campus is 5mph.
- Stay off of your phone.
- Do NOT pull around another car at any time.
- Remain in your vehicle at all times.
- Staff members will escort your child(ren) to your vehicle.
- Walking up or down the main drive is dangerous and is prohibited.
- Students who walk home must provide written permission to school administration.

### **ACCESS TO CAMPUS**

Between the hours of 8:00am – 2:45pm, the main gate is closed, and the pedestrian gates are locked. Visitors must enter the campus using the pedestrian gate in the lower parking lot. An intercom/keypad is located at the top of the steps. Adults may use the entrance code or push the call button to be let onto campus. Outside food delivery services are NOT allowed on campus at any time.

### **PARKING**

Valley Prep has two parking lots. The upper parking lot is closed during school hours. Please DO NOT park in Staff or Reserved parking spaces in the lower lot. Reserved parking spaces may be purchased for the upcoming school year at the Spring Gala Auction.

### **FLAG CEREMONY**

Parents are encouraged to attend our weekly Flag Ceremony. Student representatives lead the ceremony, which includes the Pledge of Allegiance, announcements of upcoming events, birthday recognitions, performances and/or class highlights, award presentations, and the school song. The weekly Flag Ceremony is a wonderful opportunity to continually strengthen our school community.

### **DAYCARE \***

Daycare services for grades 1-8<sup>th</sup> are billed on a monthly basis at a rate determined at the beginning of each school year. Afternoon daycare ends promptly at 6:00pm, at which time late charges are assessed at \$1 per minute. Any daycare service after 6:00pm is performed on an emergency basis only. When picking up your child from daycare, you must personally sign them out. Students may NOT sign themselves out of daycare or leave campus to meet you in the parking lot. Students will be released only to authorized individuals. \*Daycare **is included** in the tuition rates for Preschool, Pre-K, and Kindergarten.

- **Morning daycare** begins at 7:00am. There is no charge for students arriving after 7:30am. All students are dismissed to their classrooms and/or lockers at 7:50am.
- **Afternoon daycare** begins at 3:15pm. Students not picked up after carpool are automatically signed in to daycare. Students signed up for after school activities are signed into daycare once their individual program ends. Charges begin to incur at the time of student sign-in.

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 any teacher supervising students. Students may NOT use electronic devices; however, laptops are permitted for homework purposes.

### **HOT LUNCH PROGRAM**

The school has an optional catered hot lunch program. A limited, online menu from [Panera Bread](#) is available for parents to order lunches for desired days. Parents are encouraged to pack healthy lunches for their students not participating in the hot lunch program. Outside food delivery services are NOT allowed. Soda is prohibited.

### **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

It is required that the main office has a completed Emergency Information Card for each student. Before the start of each school year, an online form is provided to families that must be completed and returned by the first day of school. For the safety of your child, please notify the office of any changes in telephone numbers or persons authorized to remove your child from school. If a student is picked up by someone not on their Emergency Card, the student will not be released without a note or phone call from the student's parent. When students become ill at school, parents will be notified and asked to arrange for the student to be picked up from school in a timely manner. If parents cannot be reached, the alternate phone numbers on the Emergency Card are used.

Also, at the beginning of each school year, parents are requested to send a set of emergency clothes, a completed information form, a current photo, and a note of encouragement for their student(s). These items are kept at school.

### **DISASTER PROCEDURES**

Valley Prep frequently practices procedures for fire, earthquake, and lockdown. In the event of an actual emergency, parents are contacted via email, text message, and/or phone, if possible. Following a major earthquake or other disaster, all students will evacuate to a safe area. Perimeter gates are locked, and students will remain under the supervision of Valley Prep teachers and staff. A staff member will maintain a log sheet to track each student. Students will be released only to someone listed on their Emergency Card. If roads are inaccessible, students will be provided with care and supervision until they are released to an approved adult.

### **DISASTER PROCEDURES (CONT.)**

In the event of a major disaster, please do NOT call the school. The volume of calls from parents would overload the phone system, and it is very important that the school has the ability to call out. In case of such an emergency, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) provides real-time updates and information and is broadcast by most local radio and television stations.

### **SCHOOL LIBRARY**

The school library is a resource center where students may check out books and other materials. Students may visit the library with their classes, before school Monday through Friday, or after school from 3:00 – 3:30pm. The library is also open during Middle School lunch. Students are accountable for items checked out to them, and parents will be billed for damaged or lost books. Parents are invited to purchase a suitable book for the Valley Prep 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, Valley Prep conducts a variety of service projects, including a food drive at Thanksgiving and Adopt-a-Family in December. Contributions are donated to Inland Harvest, Family Service Association of Redlands, and other organizations that support local families in need.

### **LICE POLICY**

To avoid the possibility of children giving head lice to others, we discourage the sharing of combs, hats, clothing, barrettes, helmets, scarves, headphones, or other personal items. Valley Prep's policy is that if a staff member sees what appears to be live head lice on a student, the parents of that student will be contacted to pick them up from school as soon as possible. While maintaining strict confidentiality, a notice will be sent to all families from that particular class indicating a possible outbreak of head lice. The student is expected to undergo treatment, or the parents can obtain a note from a physician concluding that head lice are not present. In accordance with the recommendation of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), "Students diagnosed with live head lice can return to class after appropriate treatment has begun and live head lice are no longer present."

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

The goal of Valley Prep's attendance policy is to help students succeed not only in school but also in life. 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 affect academic performance and lower a student's grades.

However, for the health and well-being of the students and teachers, Valley Prep asks each parent to exercise good judgment when sending their child to school if they are 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 treated. Any student with a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea must remain at home for a minimum of 24 hours or until they are no longer showing symptoms. If head lice are detected at school, parents are 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. Family vacations are NOT typically considered as "excused," unless otherwise approved by the Head or Assistant Head of School.

Valley Prep considers five (5) unexcused absences per quarter to be excessive. Students with excessive unexcused absences may not be permitted to participate in the following school activities, including but not limited to:

- Optional field trips
- After school activities
- House Council

We strongly discourage 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.

### **REPORTING ABSENCES**

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. 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.

### **MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS**

Students who have an excused absence will be given sufficient time to make-up most 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.

### **MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS (CONT.)**

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 may 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.

### **TARDINESS PROCEDURES**

Preschool, PK, and Kindergarten 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.

1-8th students who arrive late to school must 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 FROM SCHOOL**

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 after school 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.

- The weekly 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 School Newsletter is distributed electronically every Friday. It includes a weekly message from the Head of School in addition to announcements, student profiles, and community events.
- The [Valley Prep website](#) serves as a clearinghouse for all essential information. PowerSchool can be accessed through the site and contains the student's grades, assignments, etc.
- 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. The spring conference is student-led.

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 (or the teacher directly) to schedule an appointment, at least 48 hours 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.

Teachers are expected to reply to emails and phone calls from parents/guardians within 24 hours (not including weekends). Parents are encouraged to inform the Head of School if this is not occurring.

Teachers are expected to update PowerSchool with students' assessment results no more than 10 days after the assessment is administered. Parents are encouraged to inform the Head of School if this is not occurring.

## UNIFORM POLICY

The school uniform is mandatory on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Wednesdays are designated as free dress and/or spirit days. **NOTE:** When weather is cold enough to require outerwear, please keep in mind that Valley Prep jackets, sweaters, or sweatshirts are required. On extremely cold or rainy days, non-Valley Prep outerwear, such as raincoats and ski jackets, are acceptable.

### UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS

Uniforms must be purchased through our contracted vendor, [Lands' End](#), 1-800-469-2222.  
Valley Prep's school ID #900040478

### PRESCHOOL – 2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE:

#### REQUIRED:

- Navy shorts, pants, skirt, skort
- White polo with Valley Prep shield
- White socks
- Shoes must be sturdy sneakers with laces or easy closure; no distracting colors, lights, wheels, high heels, boots, or open toes

#### OPTIONAL:

- Red polo with Valley Prep shield
- Outerwear: Cardigan sweater, sweatshirt, fleece, or rain jacket with Valley Prep shield
- **Girls** – plaid jumper, white blouse with navy piping, navy knee socks, navy or white tights, navy leggings or bicycle shorts for under skirts
- **Boys** – Navy sweater vest with Valley Prep shield

### 3<sup>RD</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE:

#### REQUIRED:

- Navy shorts, pants, skirt, skort
- White polo with Valley Prep shield
- White socks
- Shoes must be sturdy sneakers with laces or easy closure; no distracting colors, lights, wheels, high heels, boots, or open toes

#### OPTIONAL:

- Red polo with Valley Prep shield
- Outerwear: Cardigan sweater, sweatshirt, fleece, or rain jacket with Valley Prep shield
- **Girls** – Plaid skirt, navy sweater vest with Valley Prep shield, navy knee socks, navy or white tights, navy leggings or bicycle shorts for under skirts
- **Boys** – Navy sweater vest with Valley Prep shield

### 6<sup>TH</sup> – 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE:

#### REQUIRED:

- Khaki shorts, pants, skirt, skort (of modest length)
- White polo with Valley Prep shield
- White socks
- Shoes must be sturdy sneakers with laces or easy closure; no distracting colors, lights, wheels, high heels, boots, or open toes

#### OPTIONAL:

- Navy polo with Valley Prep shield
- Outerwear: Cardigan sweater, sweatshirt, fleece, or rain jacket with Valley Prep shield
- **Girls** – plaid skirt, navy socks, navy or white tights, navy leggings or shorts for under skirts
- **Boys** – Navy sweater vest with Valley Prep shield

### HAIR AND ACCESSORIES

Hair should be neat, clean, combed, and non-distracting. Hair should be the student's natural color. Extreme or non-traditional hair styles are not permitted except on Crazy Hair Spirit Day. Trendy accessories 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. Cosmetics are limited to neutral lip gloss and lip balm.

### UNIFORM CLOSET

Valley Prep maintains the Uniform Closet (located adjacent to our music room) serving the Valley Prep 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 Valley Prep 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 Uniform Closet.

### WEDNESDAY FREE DRESS AND SPIRIT DAYS

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 considered **unacceptable attire** for Wednesday Free Dress:

- cut-off shirts or those exposing the midriff
- tank tops/tube tops
- cut-off shorts or frayed clothing
- clothing that displays suggestive or inappropriate slogans
- clothing that advertises alcohol or illegal drugs
- transparent clothing,
- spaghetti straps
- pajamas
- pants worn at or below the hips
- flip-flops, sling-back shoes, or any type of open-toe shoe

Sleeveless dresses or blouses may be worn provided shoulder straps are at least 2" wide. 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 or leggings should be worn under skirts, shorts, and dresses. Leggings cannot be worn alone.

Spirit Days are typically held monthly, usually on Wednesdays, and are announced accordingly. Students who do not to participate in Spirit Day are required to wear the daily uniform or Valley Prep spirit wear.

# ACADEMICS

## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Valley Prep's educational 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.

## THE IB-PYP

As of 2020, Valley Prep is an accredited International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, offering the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The PYP nurtures independent learning skills and encourages every student to take responsibility for their learning. The PYP is holistic in nature and incorporates local and global issues into the curriculum. The PYP incorporates six related, transdisciplinary themes, such as *Who We Are*, *Where We Are in Place and Time*, and *How the World Works*. The PYP does not change the content of our curriculum, but instead it structures it in a way that further provides cross-curricular learning opportunities. Please refer to the section IB-PYP for additional information.

## STEAM PROGRAM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS, MATH)

Like the PYP, STEAM uses transdisciplinary themes to create links between science, technology, the arts, and mathematics. During the course of the academic year, students 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. Also, like the PYP, STEAM does not change the content of our curriculum, but instead it structures it in a way that further provides cross-curricular learning opportunities.

## STUDENT GRADES

Valley Prep uses a standards-based grading system, which places the focus on learning and increases overall student achievement. Please refer to the Standards-Based Grading section of this handbook for details about Valley Prep's grading policies, as well as the standards-based and effort grading scales.

## HOMEWORK

Homework is a responsibility that requires time and effort outside the regular classroom. The grade and is noted on the Report Card as part of Effort. Homework is assigned to help students:

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

Students are to note homework and other assignments in their Valley Prep Agenda (provided). Parents may check in the Agenda or on PowerSchool for assignments.

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

In accordance with California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) membership requirements, students in 2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade are formally assessed each spring using the CPT4 test, administered by the Education Records Bureau (ERB). Additionally, students in 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade complete the Writing Assessment Program (WrAP), which helps pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in writing. Valley Prep uses these results to help guide instruction to ensure that each student is receiving a high-quality education. Test results are forwarded to parents when they become available.

## **ACADEMIC PROBATION**

Students are required to take a full course load of academic and specialist classes. Students who receive multiple 1s on their Report Card are considered at-risk of not graduating, may be placed on academic probation, and assigned to Study Hall during their Elective. Academic probation is used to help students meet Valley Prep's academic standards. These students are closely monitored and given academic assistance so they may be successful at Valley Prep.

At the end of each trimester, students who have not met the minimum academic standards are placed on academic probation. A probationary contract will be written, and a meeting will be held with the student, parents, teachers, and administration. This contract contains specific steps designed to monitor and help the student. Academic probation that continues for two or more trimesters will be grounds for possible dismissal. Any student who is on academic probation will not be allowed to participate in certain activities, such as House Council.

## **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR 8TH GRADERS**

Students who have an excessive number of 1s on their Report Card will not be permitted to participate in the following graduation activities:

- Graduation ceremony
- Awards ceremony
- Disneyland trip
- Field Day

In addition, a diploma will not be awarded unless the student successfully completes an approved summer school program. In addition, 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who have accumulated 20 or more tardies and/or 20 or more unexcused absences for the year may not participate the activities listed above.

## **AWARDS**

While Valley Prep 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 achievements, hard work, and positive attitude. This balance helps to establish and maintain a positive learning environment.

### **MONTHLY AWARDS:**

- IB Learner Profile Awards:

### **TRIMESTER AWARDS:**

- Accelerated Reader (AR): recognizes those who meet or exceed their individual reading goal

### **8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE GRADUATION AWARDS:**

- Department Awards (see below for criteria)
- The Krebs Memorial Award – Monetary award given to a student who has maintained outstanding citizenship throughout 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and a 4-grade average during 8<sup>th</sup> grade

## **GRADUATION AWARDS (CONT.)**

- The Auerbacher Leadership & Service Award – Monetary award given to a student who best exhibits the ideals of service and action
- Headmaster’s Award – Non-monetary award given to a student who best exhibits the ideals of Valley Prep

### **DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, SCIENCE:**

The qualities expected of a student worthy of the Science Award is one who embodies the qualities of a good scientist and of a Valley Prep student. Such a student exercises the science process skills and exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Observant and asks questions about the observations
- Strong critical thinker and is able to spot mistakes or identify variables in a procedure or experiment
- Able to clearly and effectively communicate through presentations or written assignments
- Respectful, responsible, and a reliable lab partner
- Someone who has shown progress in all of these areas

### **DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, TECHNOLOGY:**

The Technology Award is given to a 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

### **DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, FINE ARTS:**

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

- Must excel in the Arts
- Successfully completed Art electives at Valley Prep
- Observes instructions and rules
- Accepts criticism and recommendations graciously
- Demonstrates perseverance and application to projects
- Understands and communicates themes visually
- Attention to detail
- Exceptional craftsmanship
- Projects completed with patience and understanding
- Works diligently and maintains a positive attitude throughout the creative process
- Strong time management skills
- Strong understanding and application of art elements and principles
- Meets project deadlines

### **DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, PHYSICAL EDUCATION (P.E.):**

The P.E. Award is given to the student who best exemplifies the following characteristics:

- Outstanding character, which contributes to the overall positive tone of the P.E. classes as well as the school
- Makes an outstanding effort to be cooperative, honest, poised, self-confident, attentive, industrious, and enthusiastic
- Works to support the instructional efforts of the class and for the success of others
- Outstanding sportsmanship on and off the field
- Strong leadership skills in class activities
- Achieves a high level of physical fitness as determined by individual accomplishments
- Accepts responsibility and demonstrates a positive attitude towards instructional activities

**DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, MUSIC:**

The Music Award is given to a 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. Notebooks and experimental time were used to the maximum. The student participated wholeheartedly in the recordings and encouraged others to do the same.
- Valley Prep Concerts: The student attended all concerts, participated wholeheartedly, and encouraged others to do the same. The student participated in set-up and/or teardown.
- Electives: The student successfully completed music electives at Valley Prep.
- Talent Show: The student prepared acts for the talent shows and performed in them.
- After-School Programs: The student participated wholeheartedly in after-school programs at Valley Prep
- Private lessons: The student had private lessons and showed consistent progress in them.
- Outside Recitals/Performances: The student participated in recitals/performances related to private study.

**DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, MATH:**

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

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

**DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, LANGUAGE ARTS:**

The Language Arts Award is given to a 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 their writing
- Accepts criticism and incorporates it into writing revisions

**DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, SOCIAL STUDIES:**

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

- Displays an everyday positive attitude in class
- Respectful to all other students and teachers
- Motivated to do their best in every situation
- 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 historical events
- Shows an understanding of how and why the history of civilizations and countries are intertwined

**DEPARTMENT AWARD CRITERIA, FOREIGN LANGUAGE:**

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

- Strives to reach their 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 provides evidence of thoughtful and creative input in projects
- Develops understanding, reflects, & connects when comparing cultures studied and personal experience
- Uses the language both within and beyond the school setting for personal enjoyment

### **FIELD TRIPS - DAY**

Field trips are generally chaperoned by Valley Prep staff, but some field trips will require a limited number of parent volunteers. Parents acting as a Valley Prep chaperone must make arrangements in advance with the respective teacher, being sure to provide appropriate documentation. In the event that Valley Prep charters a bus, all students and chaperones must ride on the bus. Non-Valley Prep students, including siblings, **may not** attend field trips.

### **FIELD TRIPS - OVERNIGHT**

Field trips are an essential component of the Valley Prep curriculum, as they provide a valuable opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to a real-world environment. Accordingly, all students are strongly encouraged to attend. The school understands that various situations arise which cause parents to reconsider their child's attendance on these trips. In such instances, the school must be notified **NO LATER** than October 1<sup>st</sup>. After this date, the family remains responsible for all trip costs, regardless of attendance.

- 4<sup>th</sup> graders travel to Sacramento in the spring to learn about California history, particularly the Gold Rush Era.
- 5<sup>th</sup> graders attend an overnight camp in the nearby mountains.
- 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> graders are typically combined to enjoy a spring adventure on Catalina Island or the Colorado River (alternate years).
- 8<sup>th</sup> graders travel to Washington D.C.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY**

Valley Prep's Academic Honesty policy addresses the implementation of our values and beliefs, which align 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, authenticity of work, and proper conduct during testing procedures are related to academic honesty. As part of educating students about the importance of academic honesty, the following definitions are used:

### **DEFINITION OF CHEATING**

Cheating is the intentional giving or receiving of an unfair or dishonest advantage over others that is not authorized by a teacher and/or other staff member. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, fraud, threat or force, theft, unacceptable talking, signs, gestures, copying from others, unauthorized use of any materials, books, software, Internet, computer, or other information. Attempted cheating is also unacceptable.

### **DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is presenting words and/or work, including images, photos, art, etc., ideas, or 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 is also prohibited.

### **CONSEQUENCES**

Valley Prep expects our students to choose, act, and reflect in an ethical manner. Any cases of cheating and/or plagiarism will be treated seriously and will be appropriately sanctioned. Each case will be evaluated on an individual basis and according to relevant circumstances. It should be noted that if a student cheats or plagiarizes, they may receive zero credit for the assignment.

## RETAKE AND LATE WORK POLICY

### MIDDLE SCHOOL RETAKE POLICY

Middle School students may request to retake a Summative Assessment if:

- The student scored 85% or below
- ALL practice exercises were completed prior to the assessment
- The student properly completed a *Request to Retest* form, submitted it to the appropriate teacher, and scheduled a conference to review the form

Retakes must be completed before or after school within 10 (ten) calendar days of the initial assessment OR by the first Wednesday after a major vacation or the end of the trimester.

### LATE WORK POLICY

Homework – Although not typically used in calculating a student’s final course grade, homework should still be completed and submitted to the teacher in order to receive useful feedback.

Classwork is considered a formative assessment which comprises a part of a student’s final course grade (which appears on the Report Card). Students must submit these assignments on-time or risk being down-graded. Students who are absent (for an “excused” reason) may be required to make-up these assignments. 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.

Major assignments, such as large projects or research papers, can be considered as formative OR summative assessments. Accordingly, they can comprise a significant percentage of a student’s final course grade. Students must submit these assignments on time or risk receiving a lower grade. Students who are absent (excused) will be given additional time to complete the assignment. For students with unexcused absences, Valley Prep is not obligated to allow the student to make up missed assignments or assessments, nor is Valley Prep obligated to provide assignments ahead of time.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Learning occurs best in an environment of honesty, mutual respect, concern, consideration, and courtesy. Valley Prep 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 is not tolerated. Classroom teachers set and model the tone within their classrooms, and they are primarily responsible for dealing with student behavior. Each teacher has a set of classroom expectations posted within their 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 student. 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 Valley Prep and 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 at all times.

### **DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

Interactive and dynamic classrooms are a benchmark of good learning. Students who disrupt the learning process with inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. After appropriate warning and consequences from the teacher, a 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 AND 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**

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

### **NON-EDUCATIONAL ITEMS**

Students may not bring objects or materials to school that are not part of the educational process. Chewing gum is not permitted on campus. 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 kept in the student's backpack or locker at all times. After 3:15pm, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students may use their cell phone to call home, but only in the presence of a teacher or other Valley Prep staff member. If a student is found using their cell phone during the school day, the phone will be confiscated, and parents and administration will be notified. The student may pick up their cell phone at the end of the day. For a second offense, the cell 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, or weapons, of any kind or imitations thereof are strictly prohibited. The school will confiscate these items, and disciplinary action will be taken. Valley Prep reserves the right to immediately expel any student who brings such prohibited items on campus.

Additionally, Valley Prep does not permit the possession or use of tobacco, smokeless tobacco, vaping devices, 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. Valley Prep will confiscate such items, and disciplinary action will be taken. Any involvement with alcohol or other drugs is grounds for immediate expulsion.

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

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

### **BULLYING POLICY**

Valley Prep believes that all students have the right to a safe and healthy school environment. Therefore, 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; and social isolation or manipulation.

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

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 Valley Prep's current procedures.

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

- Students who engage in bullying are subject to disciplinary action.
- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to a teacher.
- Staff will promptly investigate each report of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- If the student (or parent of the student) making the complaint 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. Valley Prep prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

## **CYBER HARASSMENT / BULLYING**

Cyberbullying is defined as the use of any electronic communication, including social media, to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. If a member of the community feels that they are being cyberbullied, they should immediately take a screenshot of the hurtful remarks and share them with a parent and/or teacher. The school prioritizes restorative justice techniques where students are encouraged to talk with each other to better understand the impact of the incident. Valley Prep also encourages parents to be directly involved, to ensure proper oversight of their child's online activities at home.

In certain situations, and at the discretion of Valley Prep's administration, a student who repeatedly cyberbullies another person is subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Temporary or permanent confiscation of the student's MacBook (if it was involved in the cyberbullying)
- Blocking access to certain programs on the student's MacBook
- Temporary loss of privileges at school (recess, etc.)
- Suspension
- Expulsion

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

In the event disciplinary action is needed, the classroom teacher will address the issue in the classroom. If the issue persists, the teacher will notify an administrator who will meet with the student. This meeting may result in the issuance of a behavior infraction, categorized as either a minor (Category 1) or a major (Category 2) infraction. Examples of category-II infractions include cheating & fighting. Parents will be updated accordingly and encouraged to support the school's disciplinary approach.

- Loss of Recess – typically issued following Category 1 infractions
- NOTE: Three Category 1 infractions = One Category 2 infraction
- 1st Category 2 infraction: Loss of multiple recesses
- 2nd Category 2 infraction: Loss of multiple recesses & PE
- 3rd Category 2 infraction: In-school or at-home suspension
- 4th Category 2 infraction: In-school or at-home suspension
- 5th Category 2 infraction: Issuance of a Behavior Contract with possible terms for expulsion

## **IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL**

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

## **ACCEPTABLE USE FOR TECHNOLOGY (AUP)**

All members of the Valley Prep community are required to follow the AUP, which is an honor code for technology. Key aspects of the school's Acceptable Use Policy include:

- Valley Prep endeavors to support each student's exploration of the digital world.
- Valley Prep will provide guidance to better ensure that students make good decisions regarding personal use of technology. Accordingly, the AUP is a guide to assist in making ethical and practical decisions related to the use of technology.
- Student laptops are academic learning tools. Valley Prep expects the laptops to be used in a safe and respectful manner.

### **OWNERSHIP**

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

### **DAMAGE OR LOSS OF EQUIPMENT**

In the event of damage or loss, report the problem immediately to the school's Director of Technology. The school will then facilitate the laptop's repair. Some charges may apply.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

- Bring the computer fully charged to school every day.
- Keep the computer in your laptop case 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 Valley Prep.
- DO NOT use the laptop to communicate (email, chat, etc.) with anyone during school hours. If caught doing so, the laptop will be confiscated.

### **GENERAL LAPTOP CARE**

- Do not do anything to the laptop that will permanently alter it in any way.
- Do not remove any serial numbers or identification placed on the laptop.
- Keep the equipment clean. Do not eat or drink while using the laptop, 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 laptop in the bag provided by Valley Prep or another suitable bag with a shoulder strap.
- Never carry the laptop with the lid open.

### **PERSONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- Avoid 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.

**SUBSTITUTION OF EQUIPMENT**

In the event that the laptop is inoperable, Valley Prep 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 their laptop or power charger to school, a substitute will not be provided.

**CUSTOMIZATION OF EQUIPMENT**

Each student is permitted to alter or add files in order 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 without a teacher's permission.

**CYBER HARASSMENT / BULLYING**

Refer to the Discipline section of this handbook for details about cyber harassment/bullying.

# STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

## STANDARDS-BASED GRADING OVER TRADITIONAL GRADING

Standards-based grading takes large subjects and breaks them into smaller learning objectives to help teachers better assess student learning. Instead of assigning grades using a traditional “all or nothing” scale, standards-based grading measures specific skills and content standards. In a standards-based grading system, students are intrinsically motivated and have ownership of their learning. Students can focus on mastery and understanding, without constantly worrying about getting the most points. Students will eventually ask fewer questions like, “Will this be graded?” and ask more questions that will help to gain a deeper understanding of the skills and concepts they’re learning. Parents can expect a more meaningful grade that clearly communicates what a student has or hasn’t mastered, rather than a grade that’s based on accumulating or losing points.

## BENEFITS OF STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

Standards-based grading creates a scenario in which all involved may engage in the learning process. For students, learning targets are clearly defined and aligned with the standards; they can demonstrate understanding with multiple opportunities and in multiple ways; they can focus on learning a concept rather than achieving grades for the sake of passing.

For parents, report card grades are less mysterious and have more meaning; they know which areas their child excels and where they might need support; parents are also empowered to increase their child’s confidence and to help set long- and short-term goals.

Teachers can use ongoing assessments to guide instruction; they can self-reflect and evaluate if their lessons truly met the needs of their students; they have a better understanding of a student’s learning level, including areas of excellence and areas of improvement.

## GRADING SCALE FOR CORE CLASSES

- **4 = Accomplished:** Student confidently demonstrates mastery, exceed expectations, and takes the learning to a higher level.
- **3 = Proficient:** Student demonstrates a good understanding, consistently does the task on their own, and is able to move to the next level of proficiency.
- **2 = Developing:** Student has a basic understanding of the material, can do some things on their own, but requires support to be successful.
- **1 = Emerging:** Student demonstrates little to no understanding and/or requires a lot of support to be successful.

## GRADING SCALE FOR SPECIALISTS, EFFORT, BEHAVIOR, THE LEARNER PROFILE, AND APPROACHES TO LEARNING

- **O = The student ALWAYS:** Stays focused on the task without disturbing others; Shares information or ideas when participating; Works well independently or with a group; Tries their personal best.
- **G = The student GENERALLY (usually):** Stays focused on the task; Shares information or ideas when participating; Works well independently or in a group; Tries their personal best.
- **S = The student SOMETIMES:** Stays focused on the task but often needs reminders; Shares information or ideas but often needs encouragement; Works well independently or in a group but often struggles to do so; Tries their personal best, but work can be messy or hard to read.
- **R = The student RARELY:** Stays focused on the task and almost always needs reminders to get to work or what to do; Shares information or ideas and almost always needs encouragement; Works well independently or in a group and almost always needs additional guidance; Tries their personal best, and work is usually messy or hard to read.

## ASSESSMENT & REPORTING

At Valley Prep, we believe that assessment provides information through diagnostic, formative, and summative components. Assessment is ongoing, authentic, varied, and purposeful. It is a collaborative and informative process that helps drive instructional and curricular decisions.

### PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment at Valley Prep is to inform and involve students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Effective assessments allow students to be an active part of the learning process through reflection and demonstration of their understanding. Teachers guide their instruction accordingly and communicate progress of learning and development with students and families.

### TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

- **Formative** assessments are used to *monitor student learning* to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. Formative assessments help students identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as target areas that need work. They also help teachers recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately. Examples of formative assessments include, but are not limited to, asking students to participate in class discussions, answer comprehension questions, draw a concept map, etc.
- **Summative** assessments *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against a standard or benchmark. Summative assessments may have a higher point value and often used as a factor in determining final course grades. Examples of summative assessments include, but are not limited to, a project or report, quiz, exam, writing assignment, etc.

### REPORT CARDS

Valley Prep teachers complete report cards at the conclusion of each trimester. The report card includes grades for all curricular and behavioral areas. Valley Prep utilizes a standards-based grading system, which is outlined in its own section of this handbook. Students struggle with academics and/or behavior will receive a Progress Report part way through the trimester.

### CONFERENCES

Valley Prep holds parent-teacher conferences in the fall, and student-led conferences in the spring.

- The **Parent-Teacher Conference** is a relationship-building conference with the parent, teacher, and sometimes the student. The purpose of this conference is to discuss and identify social, behavioral, and academic strengths and/or weakness and devise an action plan.
- The **Student-Led Conference** is a scheduled conference in which students show responsibility for their learning by sharing academic information and work samples with their parents.

## **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

### **AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS & CLASSES**

Valley Prep offers a diverse range of clubs and classes tailored to different grade levels. These activities provide students with enriching experiences beyond the regular school day and aim to foster creativity, teamwork, and skill development. These programs are led by either a Valley Prep staff member or certified/licensed third-party. Programs have included, but are not limited to Chess Club, Drama, Choir, Coding & Robotics, Gardening, LANGO (Mandarin, Spanish), Science, Soccer Shots, etc.

### **WINTER & SPRING CONCERT PARTICIPATION**

ALL Valley Prep students are required to participate in two annual concerts. These performances are the results of months of preparation, and the students greatly benefit from performing and listening at these events. The Winter Concert is in December, and the Spring Concert is in May. The concert dates are published in the school calendar, newsletter, and announced at weekly Flag Ceremonies.

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 who expect to miss a concert for any reason must inform the music director well in advance, so arrangements can be made to cover their part. Unexcused absences are likely to adversely affect a student's music grade.

### **HOUSE COUNCIL**

The Houses of Valley Prep is a program designed to instill leadership skills, encourage service to others, and strengthen the school's founding values - Truth, Judgment, and Courage. Students in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are members of one of the three houses throughout their time at Valley Prep. Elected officers and council members of each house lead the rest of the school in service projects determined by the House Council each trimester.

The House Council is a group of elected and appointed middle school students who, together under the guidance of an adult advisor, meet at lunch on a weekly basis to form Valley Prep'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 at the beginning of each school year. 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 president is filled by a student in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. To be a candidate for a House Council office, students must be in good standing socially and academically.

## IB-PYP INFORMATION

As of 2020, Valley Prep is an accredited International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, offering the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The PYP nurtures independent learning skills and encourages every student to take responsibility for their learning. The PYP is holistic in nature and incorporates local and global issues into the curriculum. The PYP incorporates six related, transdisciplinary themes, such as Who We Are, Where We Are in Place and Time, and How the World Works. The PYP does not change the content of our curriculum, but instead it structures it in a way that further provides cross-curricular learning opportunities.

### WHAT IS THE IB-PYP?

The [International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme](#) (IB-PYP) is a holistic, inquiry-based, cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning that promotes cultural sensitivity and international mindedness. The PYP uses six transdisciplinary themes to organize traditional curricular content. At Valley Prep, most of these themes are STEAM-related, encouraging students to work collaboratively to complete projects that emphasize Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, while recognizing the importance of the Arts.

### THE IB-PYP & STEAM AT VALLEY PREP

Valley Prep 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 the content students learn, but instead changes the manner in which they learn. Valley Prep takes this approach one step further and integrates STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) into the IB-PYP framework, whereby two of the six PYP themes are STEAM-related. This approach gives greater purpose to our 1:1 laptop program.

### ELEMENTS OF THE IB-PYP

The Primary Years Programme presents Valley Prep with a comprehensive plan for a 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's curriculum](#) is organized according to:

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

### THE IB LEARNER PROFILE

The IB learner profile represents a broad range of characteristics that incorporate intellectual, personal, emotional, and social growth. The [10 attributes of the learner profile](#) aim to develop learners who are Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Balanced, Risk-takers, and Reflective.