



Helpful Hints Parent Information

Valley Catholic Middle School is a college prep campus with enhanced academic and school life. We are entering into a partnership with you to provide the best possible education for your child.

HELPING YOUR STUDENT TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Your child is growing in all sorts of areas. These next few years will bring many changes. Not the least of which is your child's growing independence. Please know that your wisdom, guidance, love and understanding will be needed now more than ever. Although your child may push you away at times, please stay involved. We WANT your help at school events, we WANT you to check with the teachers and we WANT you as active advocates for your children.

With that in mind, your child is now entering the developmental stage where their friends'/classmates' opinions carry more impact than yours may. To help ease some of the potential conflict areas, set ground rules now: Phone time, computer use (Oregon live, My Space, and blogs), rules about "dating", etc.

WHAT TO EXPECT - APPROACHING AREAS OF ANXIETY WITH CONFIDENCE

In an effort to help the students be calm and comfortable in their new school setting, we have developed several programs to assist in transition between sixth and seventh grade, or for new eighth grade students. Please see details, as listed below:

BEGINNING THE SCHOOL YEAR:

Your child's first experience for the 2009-2010 school year begins with seventh grade, new eighth grade student and parent orientation (date and time TBA). During orientation, we will explain the general middle school program, teach them how best to use their lockers/locks/book bags, and go over any last minute questions.

Then, seventh and eighth grade students will begin the registration process, which includes taking school photos (for the yearbook), receiving locker assignments and class schedules, buying new and used text books, receiving the handbook, the curriculum guide, calendar, and the uniform sweatshirt and tee shirt (for seventh and new eighth grade students only).

This is also the first time students will have access to their lockers. Students may bring locker shelves and supplies to begin to decorate their locker. We also encourage parents to help students practice opening their lockers. Books will be sold though out the day but middle school schedules, locker assignments, access to the lockers and uniform sweatshirt pick-up will not be available until the middle school time period.

FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL

During the first week of school, the middle school students will participate in one week of orientation. Topics will include: Self Evaluation, General Study Skills, Organization, Note taking and Outlines, Improved Academic Reading Techniques, Writing Basics, Study Techniques, School Policy, Transitional Adjustments (finding classrooms, opening lockers, packing bags for two classes at a time, etc.)

CLASS SCHEDULING

- **Music classes** – Your child will have a choice of music classes: band, choir, and orchestra. Middle School students will take **one music class** for the school year. Students may participate in as many music electives/honors groups as the student is qualified to do so. The elective/honors groups for VCMS include honors choir, honors orchestra, pep band, and hand bells. Your child's music teacher will contact you by registration day. If you do not receive confirmation prior to registration, your child's class assignment will be listed in the registration packet, along with the instrument (when applicable).
- **Foreign Language (8th grade)** – Eighth grade students may choose between taking a first year of the high school foreign language class in French, Japanese, or Spanish or a student may choose to take a guided study hall class. If your eighth grade student is not already registered for a class, please contact the office. Your child will receive confirmation of their class on registration day.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **School start and dismissal time/early dismissal** – School will begin at 8:00 a.m. and dismiss at 3:10 p.m. Monday through Friday for the 2009-2010 school year.
- **Lunch/Recess** – Unlike grade school, VCMS students do not have a recess. Students have four minute passing breaks between each class with a 15-minute break in the morning, a 30-minute lunch and a break in the afternoon.
- **Uniform and Spirit Dress** – Students are expected to be in uniform at all times during the school day. This included PE classes and lunch. All uniform tops must have a VCS logo and be purchased from Dennis Uniform Company or Lands End Uniform Company. See the uniform code for specific details. **Please be sure and label ALL clothing, including shoes.**
- **Homework Load** – Homework will range 2 ½ -3 hours a night, five nights a week. However, please expect your child to spend up to 4 ½ hours the first few weeks of school until he/she learns how to use class time effectively. After the last week of September (the first progress report), please let us know if your child is spending significantly more or less time on homework.
- **Varying Expectations per Class** – Students will see an average of eight different teachers every day (nine within any given week). Please know that each teacher will have specific classroom rules and procedure. These rules will be provided to the students and parents by Back to School Night in the form of a class syllabus
- **Teacher/Student Conference Time** – First 10 minutes after school is reserved for student/teacher interaction. We ask that parents respect this time and allow students this initial contact. If you would like to arrange to talk to the teacher, you are more than welcome to approach the teacher after 3:15 p.m.

CYO SPORTS REGISTRATION – Mr. Herb Lommen is the main contact for CYO information. HLOMMEN@VALLEYCATHOLIC.ORG or direct line 503-520-4718. Please let me Lommen know – prior to registration day - if your child is interested in playing CYO volleyball or football this coming fall.

LIBRARY – There are a variety of support services provided through the library. These include assistance in finding print and electronic research.

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

- **E-mail** – All teachers have e-mail access. The e-mail address is published in the parent guide and on the school website.
 - In most cases, the e-mail address for faculty members that are not sisters is the first initial of the teacher's first name (J for Jennifer) and then the teacher's last name followed by @valleycatholic.org. Example: Jgfroerer@valleycatholic.org (Jennifer Gfroerer / "Mrs. G")
 - To send an e-mail to a sister, the e-mail address is typically Sr, followed by the sister's first name and last initial. Example: Srjulianam@valleycatholic.org (Sr. Juliana Monti).
- **Voice mail** – All teachers can be reached by phone. Please call the main school number 503-644-3745 and you will be transferred to a private line or private voice mailbox.
- **Syllabus** – Each teacher will provide a syllabus with detailed information on class expectations, grading and overall content. The syllabus, coupled with the course catalogue (included in the Parent Guide that is distributed on registration day) provides an overview of the course.
- **Discuss with the TEACHER First** – Should an issue arise, please discuss the incident with the teacher first. In most cases this will solve the issue.
- **Where to go for help after a discussion with the teacher** – Once you have addressed your concern with the teacher, you are then free to seek assistance from a school administrator. In most cases, your next step would be to contact Mrs. Gfroerer, Dean of the Middle School. Please know that a school administrator CANNOT meet with you until you have first addressed the concern with the teacher.
- **Conferences** – At any point during the year, you are able to request a conference with your child's teachers. There are several types of conferences available to assist you and your student. These include:
 - **School Wide Conferences** –Valley Catholic school wide conference days are scheduled for mid-October. All families will be given the opportunity to meet with all of your child's teachers. The conferences last six minutes per teacher and are an opportunity to meet and check in with the teacher. Should you require additional time; the teacher will make an appointment for further discussion at another time. Conference times are assigned through the front office and are typically scheduled between 1-4 p.m. and 6-8:30 p.m.
 - **Multiple Teacher Conferences** - You have the opportunity to meet with two or more of your child's teachers at the same time. This is arranged by calling Mrs. Gfroerer, Dean of the Middle School or Mrs. Mary Poulsen, Counselor. These conferences are arranged for after school.

NHS TUTORS

The high school students who are accepted in National Honor Society are required to provide several hours of community service. Often, the students elect to tutor middle school students, free of charge, as a way to fulfill their service hour requirement. However, this service is limited to the student interest and availability.

VALLEY CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL ON THE INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The Valley Catholic website (www.valleycatholic.org) features a special section dedicated to news, photos and events about the Middle School.

PARENT'S CLUB / VOLUNTEER HELP

We strongly encourage parent participation. On registration day in August, each family will receive a volunteer information packet that provides information of the different volunteer opportunities that exist at Valley Catholic School.

PARENT GUIDEBOOK

You will receive a parent's guidebook on registration day in August. The book will contain:

- A copy of the VCMS Handbook
- VCMS Calendar
- Introduction to MS program
- Curriculum Guide
- Parent Volunteer Opportunities
- Development and Fundraising
- Calendar/community events

COMPETITIONS

VCMS students participate in several competitions throughout the school year. Some include:

- ❖ VCMS Annual Speech Tournament (All VCMS students are required to enter the contest. It is held approx. the last Saturday in February/first Sat. in March each year)
- ❖ Intel Science Fair
- ❖ VCS Science Fairs (In-House fair is held in February, Regional fair is held in April)
- ❖ Math Counts / Pentagrams
- ❖ Spelling and Geography Bee
- ❖ Holocaust Unit
- ❖ For a complete list, please consult the *VCMS Introduction to the Middle School Program* packet

FOREIGN EXCHANGE HOSTING – opportunities are available for weekend, week, and semester exchanges. Please contact Marty Karlin at mkarlin@valleycatholic.org or 503-644-3745 for more details.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP SUPPORT THEIR CHILD

PUT THEIR NAME (not siblings or the person you bought the item from) in all textbooks/clothing/shoes/jackets/ musical instruments! (Students own their books). All lost and found, no name items, and unclaimed items are donated to charity on a quarterly basis. It is overwhelming how many school supplies, uniform clothing, jackets, and even shoes that are not claimed. **AGAIN, PLEASE MARK ALL ITEMS.** Your child will go to **at least** eight different locations **DAILY**. The potential for finding a lost item increases significantly with a name!

MONITOR HOMEWORK BUT DO NOT DO IT FOR THE STUDENT, EVEN TYPING OF REPORTS! – There is one major assignment assigned per quarter (consisting of research that, when finished, is over 3 pages of typed work – regardless of whether the final project is delivered orally or in writing). These assignments are listed in the curriculum guide (provided with the acceptance packet in May). Thus, he/she will have ample time to prepare and complete the assignment.

WRITER'S VOICE AND GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE – There is a vast difference in the work that some students complete within the classroom and the work that is taken home. When helping your child complete homework, please edit for spelling and grammatical errors, incomplete thoughts, or inaccurate facts. **DO NOT** rewrite or ask your child to rewrite his/her work unless you are working with the teacher. Your child cannot learn how to build on his/her skill if you edit the work to this level of detail. Thank you.

PICK UP AND DROP OFF – More details to follow in August. In general, students dropped off before 7:45 or not picked-up before 3:20 must wait in the school cafeteria or library. Parents will need to park their car and come to the study hall location to retrieve their child.

MONITOR: (THEY STILL NEED YOUR GUIDANCE!)

Food Intake/Vending Machines –Teachers do not monitor student food choices for lunch or snacks.

Bedtimes

Extra Curricular Activates

Sports/Dance/Etc.

IM (Instant Messaging)

Social Interactions – Many families have specific hours that phone calls are allowed. Although each family is different, we recommend not more than 1 hour of phone, IM, or Internet time per school night.

Make sure they have ALL the supplies on the supply list – Have them start the year prepared! Please buy what's specifically on the supply list – it's what we consider to be important for our program.

Make sure they are ready for their day:

Eaten breakfast

Had plenty of sleep the night before

Have all supplies needed for school

Homework (completed!)

Textbooks

Uniform Clothing/appropriate clothing

Encourage your child to:

Follow directions the first time

Have an appropriate attitude and behavior at home/with friends and family/in the community

(Back to School Night materials will cover more specific curricular information)

Things to have at home:

- ❖ Word/Excel/Access/PowerPoint/Internet access at home nice but not critical if you do not have
- ❖ A second set of general supplies, as listed on the supply list.

Questions – Please call 503-520-4703 or e-mail me at Jgfroerer@valleycatholic.org.