Village Community School

CURRICULUM GUIDE

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Specific coursework at VCS is determined on a year-by-year, class-by-class, student-by-student basis.
Contents of this guide are subject to change.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

At VCS, children are immersed in their education. Students experience hands-on, project-based learning as well as direct instruction, repetition, review and reinforcement. We teach subject matter in depth with a strong interdisciplinary focus; children gain a substantial body of knowledge along with the ability to make connections between various areas of learning.

Our program challenges students to reach their full potential through myriad opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth. Children master material in different ways; we provide diverse approaches to subject matter. Teachers may ask students to write about a topic, graph it, debate and test it, contact a world-renowned researcher about it, act it out, paint it or explore it through other activities that tap into the children's talents.

VCS students are intellectual investigators who question assumptions, express their opinions with confidence and turn to one another – not just the teacher – as valued sources of information. The lively discourse of a diverse classroom advances their thinking and self-expression. They are empowered to take intellectual risks that discipline and stretch their minds.

We develop self-motivated students who continue to value learning as a challenging and rewarding process throughout their lives. Our graduates are skilled readers and writers, critical thinkers and creative problem solvers, respectful leaders and enthusiastic collaborators; they are well prepared to succeed in high school and beyond.

CORE CURRICULUM

Social studies forms the nexus of the integrated VCS curriculum. Through their exploration of human communities across history and the world, VCS students gain an understanding of themselves and others as social beings creating and living in cultural contexts that both reflect and define who they are.

The VCS social studies program provides for in-depth, hands-on learning experiences across subject areas. Geography, artwork, scientific inventions, literature, musical traditions, architecture, religious and political ideologies all may be explored and analyzed to understand their impact on history and our current world.

Our curriculum has a consistent scope and sequence complemented by subject matter inspired by the evolving interests of teachers and students. Beginning with a study of their own communities in which they live, their families, classrooms, school and neighborhoods– through to their studies of complex ancient and modern civilizations, our coursework promotes an appreciation for human diversity and interdependence while imparting knowledge and supporting students' mastery of skills.

Lower School – Grades K-1

During these early years, VCS students master the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics; they also develop crucial social skills and self-confidence as learners.

Young children need an array of sensory experiences to develop their cognitive abilities. We enrich the homeroom academic program with small-group, specialist-taught classes in art, library, music and woodshop along with physical education and daily active play in our gym, play yard and rooftop playground.

Teachers meet with parents on two scheduled conference days each year; student progress reports are sent home in winter and spring.

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Older children are capable of more abstract learning, but they continue to need a balance between conceptual, intellectual work and hands-on experiences to become agile thinkers and problem solvers.

Our program emphasizes the refinement of academic skills in a stimulating environment where the acquisition of new skills can be put to effective use. Specialized subjects – science, technology, drama, Spanish, STEAM – and regular homework are added to an already rigorous curriculum. We deeply immerse students in every aspect of their studies; children may act as archaeologists in ancient Egypt, brush painters in China or biologists in Hudson River Park.

Children begin taking standardized tests as a practical measurement of recognized standards. Student progress reports are sent to families in winter and spring; teachers meet with parents on two scheduled conference days each year.

As the curriculum expands, teachers help students navigate the increasing complexities. Students learn time-management skills and begin using an

ACADEMIC OVERVIEW

organizational system that continues through Upper School. Digital technologies provide further opportunities for customized, hands-on learning.

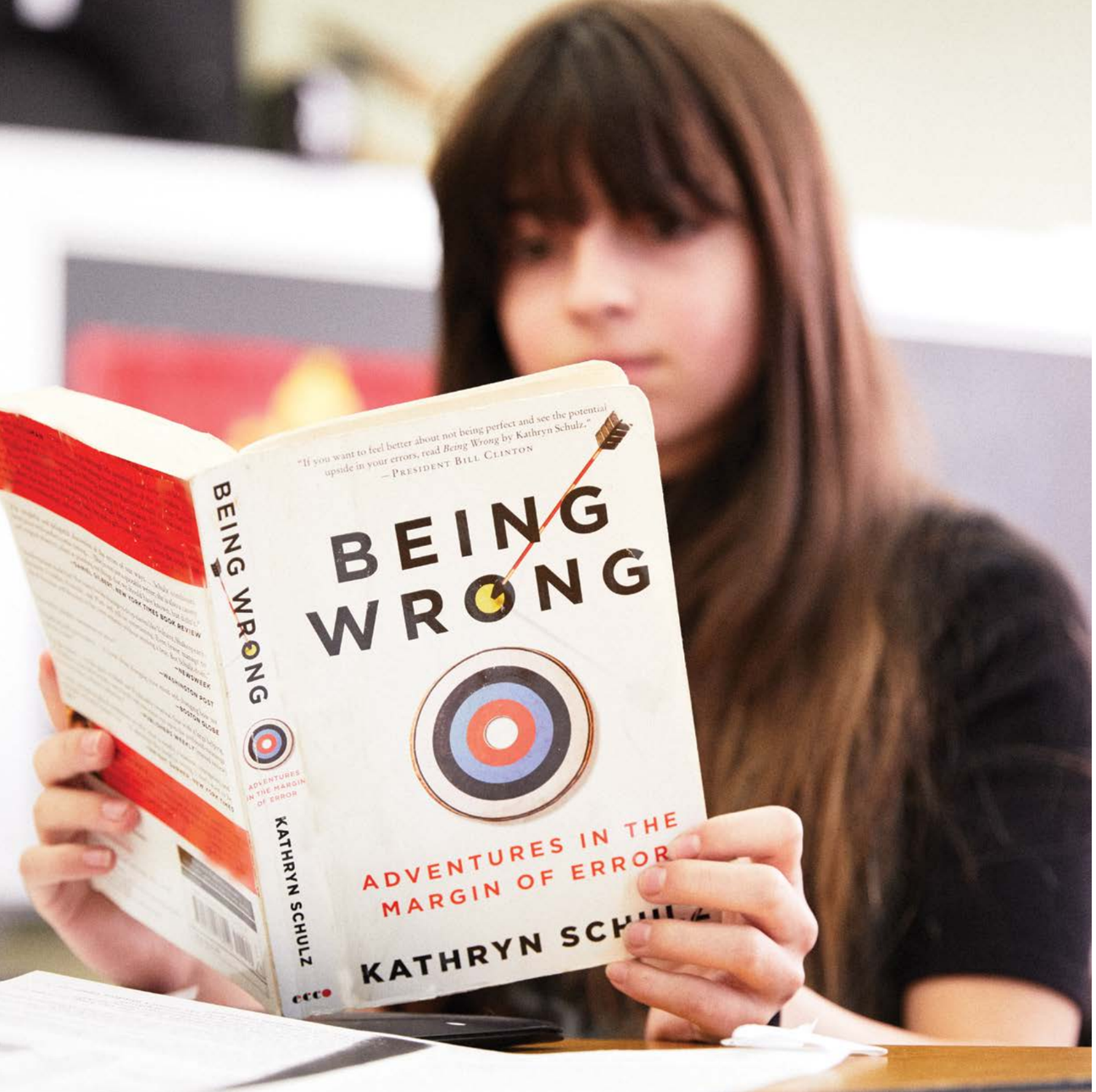
Upper School – Grades 6-8

The Upper School program is a carefully balanced, challenging blend of required studies and elective courses that guides students from concrete to abstract thinking. We continue employing both traditional and innovative teaching methods to ensure pre-adolescents remain engaged, active learners. Teachers and advisors provide steady guidance and support as children mature into young teens.

Students encounter a rigorous curriculum including algebra, chemistry, three world language options – Spanish, Latin, Mandarin – and a rich array of elective coursework on topics like Model Congress, Japanese culture, Shakespeare, biodiversity, novel writing and vocal ensemble. Our *VCS Beyond the Classroom* initiative offers students unique opportunities to stretch their minds and explore their world through programs to travel abroad, be an apprentice alongside working professionals and partake in scientific research camps. Students' physical development remains important; we offer a structured physical education program, daily recess and opportunities to participate in interscholastic athletics. Students employ effective scheduling strategies, developing self-disciplined study habits.

Each student's advisor communicates regularly with parents about their child's academic and social development. Parents confer with subject-area teachers twice each year and progress reports are sent home in winter and spring. Standardized testing continues through Upper School. 8th Graders take our High School Prep class to mentor them through the high school placement process.

Small classes, individual guidance and demanding instruction prepare our Upper School students to move into high school with ease and confidence.



SOCIAL STUDIES

The VCS social studies program provides the means through which we help children understand their world and the world of other peoples across time and space. Students master interdisciplinary skills through their social studies coursework. They expand their intellectual framework and feed their curiosity, becoming self-motivated, critical thinkers for a lifetime.

Our emphasis on concepts as the underlying foundation for social studies puts us firmly in accord with the approach recommended by the National Council for the Social Studies' Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. Our social studies program is anchored in the Teaching Tolerance Social Just Standards, which is divided into four main domains – identity, diversity, justice and action.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Coursework focuses on the themes of "What is a community?" and "What does it mean to be part of a community?" as children explore their own identity and environments of home, school, neighborhood and city. Students frame these big ideas through the lens of family traditions, community jobs and/or transportation.

Students could undertake a study of community workers in and around VCS, learning about the various jobs needed to create a thriving neighborhood. Through interviews, field trips to local businesses and art assignments, children engage in comparative analysis of work and its fulfillments.

Similarly, a transportation curriculum would engage students with the urban landscape of New York City. Children investigate myriad transportation modes and communities' dependence upon them. Using measurement, building and teamwork skills, students might construct a mock city block providing additional lessons in patience, motivation and creativity.

Selected Key Skills

- Uses maps as tools
- Understands that people in a community work together
- Identifies similarities, differences among people, cultures
- Connects information between sources

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Grades 2-4 – Learning From the Past to Understand the Present

Children at this age can grasp broader concepts of time and are ready to learn about New York City's past. Students may study the culture of local Native American groups and the arrival of the Dutch and other European and African settlers to better inform their understanding of today's New York. They explore essential questions such as: What can we learn from studying the past? Why do people move? In an exploration of world geography, students build an understanding of how our lives are shaped by the physical environment.

Students read and make maps, exploring New York's geography, topography and ecosystems. They visit museums and cultural sites such as the National Museum of the American Indian, American Museum of Natural History, The Staten Island Museum and Inwood Hill Park. Students incorporate their social studies content with projects in other subjects like art, physical education, music, science and literature.

On the Move in America

The social studies curriculum moves back in time and further away in place as children's curiosity and interests increasingly move outwards. Students cover a variety of units to build their understanding of the push and pull forces that spur human migration. Students concentrate their studies on the Great Migration of African- Americans from the rural south to the urban north and explore Black history in America.

Reading, discussion, role-playing, field trips, dramatic reenactments, written assignments and art projects plunge students deep into historical contexts, providing them with a new, multifaceted understanding of their own movement-filled American culture.

Grade 5 – Ancient River Civilizations

Students begin their two-year journey into ancient history with an exploration of how such studies can better inform our understanding of modern society. As students examine the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras, they seek answers to questions like: What do ancient objects tell us about their makers? What essential elements make up a civilization? How do people acquire resources? They then dive into studying three river civilizations: Mesopotamia, Indus Valley and Egypt.

Selected Key Skills

- Identifies similarities, differences amongst peoples, cultures
- Understands how places are influenced by physical geography, surrounding cultures
- Understands concepts of chronology, key historical events
- Utilizes geographic tools and interprets various maps
- Examines the past and present from multiple perspectives

Students engage in multiple immersive, hands-on projects as they travel a collaborative timeline, experiencing its vastness and the myriad turning points for each ancient society. Pivotal questions include: Why does conflict develop? What drives people to create?How do discoveries and inventions shape lives?

Upper School – Grades 6-8

Students in 6th, 7th and 8th Grades take a more departmentalized approach, studying social studies and English as discrete courses.

Grade 6 – A Thematic Study of the Ancient Past

Students undertake a comprehensive study of ancient Greece and Rome. Through primary source examination, secondary source readings, class discussions, individual writing and cooperative learning, students seek to answer essential thematic questions across unit topics including: human and physical environment interaction, mythology, values and philosophy, social status, social control and the legacy of civilizations.

Major projects may include: an extensive Greek god role-play, a thought-provoking philosophy paper, a mock session of the Athenian Assembly, a reenactment of the Greek Olympics, an exploration of social status and its influence and a large-scale research project focused on modern legacies.

Selected Key Skills

- Understands chronology from civilization's origins to present
- Makes inferences about people based on their artifacts
- Compares, connects characteristics of ancient and modern world
- Analyzes interconnections between humans and physical environment

Selected Key Skills

- Analyzes interrelationships of a civilization's components e.g. government, religion, technology
- Compares, contrasts ancient civilizations to each other and modern society
- Makes convincing claims based on historical evidence
- Integrates factual details into writing; avoids unsupported generalizations

Grade 7 – Voices in American History: How the Past Informs the Present

Students examine the complex formation of American society and government from various perspectives. Students uncover the voices of marginalize groups in American history and how they thrived and shaped our nation Class readings are drawn from a variety of sources and include A People's History of the United States, Fault Lines in the Constitution, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass and The Gettysburg Address: A Graphic Adaptation.

Students learn to view historical events through the eyes of individuals who witnessed them. To that end, students might draft their own constitution and engage in formal debate as well as craft historical arguments and support their ideas with evidence.

Grade 8 – American Identity: The Evolution of "We The People"

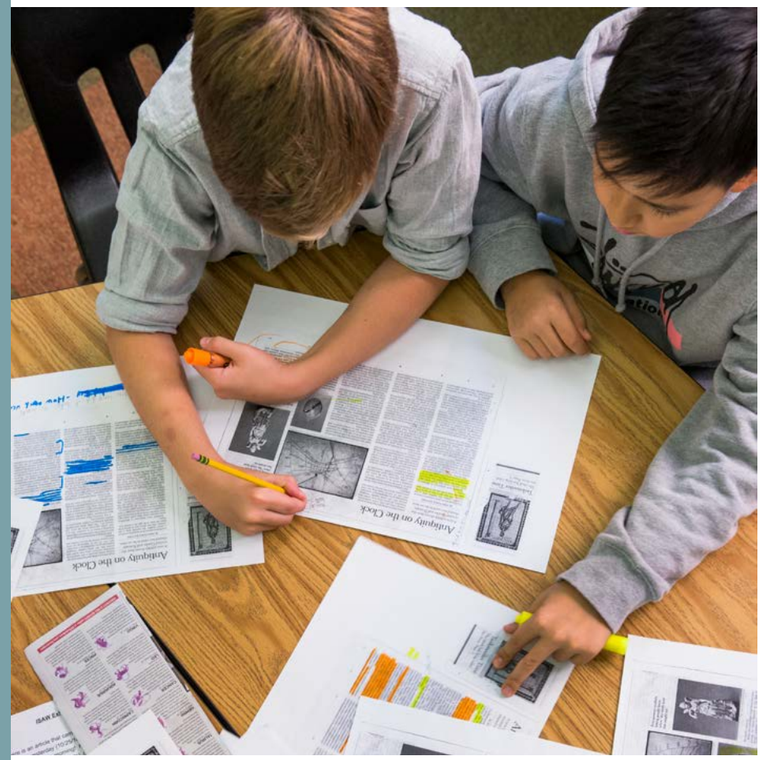
Students explore and compare the experiences of various historically marginalized groups within the context of U.S. history. Students view America's past through a lens sharply focused on civil rights and social justice issues as they examine the concepts of discrimination, activism, the historical interpretation of the Constitution and the evolving American identity.

Approaching all resources in a multifaceted manner, students are expected to use facts and data to create a concrete historical narrative, connecting abstract concepts to both overall thematic

Selected Key Skills

- Identifies main idea, claims and evidence in primary, secondary sources
- Examines, selects relevant information from diverse sources
- Identifies, analyzes perspectives based on historical evidence
- Written work is well-organized, clear, follows standard conventions
- Utilizes geographic tools and interprets various maps
- Examines the past and present from multiple perspectives

structures and to specific periods or historical events. Assignments and activities include comparative and persuasive essays, debates, formal research projects, role-playing and class discussion.



Selected Key Skills

- Analyzes subjectivity of historical study; synthesizes contexts from multiple perspectives
- Develops sound, logical arguments, written and oral, supported by historical evidence
- Researches effectively, selects relevant information from diverse sources
- Draws connections between historical and current events
- Writes clearly and persuasively

LANGUAGE ARTS

The VCS language arts program develops students into avid readers, skilled writers and confident public speakers.

From their very first day at VCS, children are expected to spend time each evening reading for pleasure and intellectual growth. As they progress, students learn to reflect on their reading, analyze texts and create their own works.

Language arts coursework closely aligns with social studies topics through the Lower School. Upper School students delve into great literary works, using their understanding of cultural contexts and critical-thinking skills to enhance their appreciation of literature for its own sake.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Customized instruction ensures every child discovers delight in the written word. For new readers, VCS uses a multisensory program to build the foundational skills necessary for reading. Students develop associations between letters (visual), sounds (auditory) and motor patterns for writing these letters (kinesthetic). As these associations become automatic, children begin reading and writing.

Students focus on consonant-vowel-consonant words. They also learn to identify various vowel patterns to decode unfamiliar words. Alongside the phonics-based instruction, sight words (words that cannot be decoded and must be learned by sight) are introduced.

Students develop age-appropriate comprehension skills through stories read aloud by the teacher and those they read independently.

Students develop as readers and writers. They solidify decoding skills and begin examining texts for meaning while building their comprehension. They write complete sentences and collaborate on stories with a beginning, middle and end.

Students also begin presenting their ideas to their classmates, becoming comfortable with public speaking and setting a precedent for future assignments requiring confident oratory skills.

Selected Key Skills

- Applies decoding skills to read unfamiliar words
- Self-corrects while reading
- Uses text evidence to answer comprehension questions
- Identifies story elements e.g. setting, plot
- Chooses appropriate independent reading material

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Grades 2-4 are an exciting time for young readers as they make the transition from learning to read, to reading to learn. Students begin to focus more on comprehension and fluency skills.

Students are reading and analyzing novels, periodicals, poetry and nonfiction to support comprehension and critical-thinking skills. Students demonstrate understanding of character, theme, plot and literary devices. By Grade 5 students are discussing and debating literature and learning how to support their opinions and interpretations of texts.

Starting in Grade 5, students learn about and practice various approaches to the six core traits of writing: ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice and conventions. Using a writing workshop format, students develop their "voice" and improve the clarity and fluency of their compositions.

By the end of Grade 5, students have written journals, expository essays, newsletters, narratives, fables, comic strips, poems and research reports.

Selected Key Skills

- Reads fluently with comprehension across genres
- Recalls facts, makes predictions and inferences from texts
- Determines meaning of words as used, including figuratively
- Compares, contrasts characters, setting, events in story
- Produces summary of main ideas, relevant details

Upper School – Grades 6-8

Grade 6

Grade 6 English offers students opportunities to explore personal perspectives and make empathic connections to the essential ideas and questions in their social studies curriculum. Students read a variety of texts including novels, short stories, poems, plays and personal narratives.

The class incorporates diverse writing assignments to help students develop their expository and creative work. Through direct instruction, drafting and teacher-student conferencing, they gain a firm understanding of the writing process as well as the proper mechanics of grammar and vocabulary.

Grade 7

Grade 7 English delves deeply into literature and writing, equipping students with the skills and content knowledge needed to engage with diverse texts, ideas and perspectives. Discussions, group work and writing exercises develop their analytical and expository skills.

Students typically cover several units of study, using literary texts to strengthen comprehension and as models for their own writing. Novels may include *The Outsiders, American Born Chinese* and *The House on Mango Street*, in addition to a variety of contemporary poetry, plays and media.

Selected Key Skills

- Recognizes, interprets figurative language
- Makes relevant, meaningful connections between texts
- Writes grammatically correct sentences
- Applies outlining skills when writing
- Elaborates writing using details and examples

Grade 8

Grade 8 English is a seminar-style forum emphasizing close analysis of texts and in-depth, extended writing. Literary works may include *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, A Raisin in the Sun* and *Othello* as well as a variety of editorials, poetry and short stories.

Selected Key Skills

- Comprehends overall narrative of assigned literature
- Clearly articulates thoughts during discussions
- Completes notes and annotations
- Effectively structures a persuasive essay
- Implements learned vocabulary in assignments

LANGUAGE ARTS

Challenging assignments hone students' expository and creative writing skills, focusing on writing as a process. Students craft essays with clear thesis statements and supporting evidence, character-driven monologues and editorials about pressing issues. They also undertake long-term, self-directed projects reflecting personal interests.

Selected Key Skills

- Analyzes literature; comprehends its structural elements
- Appreciates works' cultural, social, political underpinnings
- Writes formal, thesis-based expository essays
- Revises thoughtfully; edits using proper grammar, spelling, punctuation
- Delivers articulate, confident oral presentations

MATHEMATICS

The VCS math program builds proficient mathematicians by developing conceptual understanding, reasoning skills, problem-solving strategies, computational fluency and a positive mindset toward the discipline. Coursework incorporates direct instruction, inquiry-based exploration, guided practice and independent study in alignment with the National Research Council's mathematical proficiency strands.

In Grades K-5, we emphasize building a balance between conceptual comprehension and procedural fluency. Students use concrete materials and visual models to variously represent concepts, make discoveries, find connections to abstract ideas and explain their thinking.

Upper School students advance their abstract thinking and operational skills, completing a rigorous Algebra 1 course.

Lower School – Grades K-1

At this age, we focus on children's development as mathematical thinkers. Students explore mathematical concepts by using manipulatives like base ten blocks and other learning tools that help them develop a variety of strategies for problem solving and developing number sense.

Selected Key Skills

- Creates and extends patterns
- Understands place value through the hundreds
- Collects, organizes data in various ways
- Understands non-standard units of measurement
- Adds and subtracts whole numbers
- Communicates mathematical thinking effectively

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Students continue to grow as mathematicians who know that being able to explain one's reasoning and problem-solving strategies is as important as getting the right answer. While building computational fluency, they participate in group work and discussions about myriad concepts and approaches, deepening their appreciation for math's elegance and applications.

Selected Key Skills Grade 2

- Effectively communicates mathematical thinking
- Understands place value through thousands
- Multiplies using repeated addition, skip counting, arrays
- Understands division concept making equal groups, using repeated subtraction
- Estimates, measures and compares units of length, capacity, mass
- Classifies, compares plane and solid shapes
- Identifies parts of a line and curves

Selected Key Skills Grade 3

- Manipulates various math processes within problem-solving situations
- Multiplies, divides whole numbers in the thousands
- Identifies patterns, both numerical and geometrical
- Makes and interprets bar graphs
- Measures using metric and U.S. systems
- Computes perimeter of triangles and quadrilaterals

Selected Key Skills Grade 4

- Solves multi-step problems; memorizes basic facts
- Writes simple variable expressions to model word problems
- Understands fraction, decimal equivalents
- Adds and subtracts fractions using models, algorithms
- Finds statistical measures: mode, mean, median, range
- Extends multiplication, division skills to multi-digit arithmetic
- Computes perimeter of polygons, area of rectangles

Selected Key Skills Grade 5

- Uses variables to model problems
- Solves multistep equations using order of operations
- Understands exponential notation
- Understands expanded form place value up to billions
- Extends multiplication, division skills to fractions, decimals
- Understands percentage equivalents
- Analyzes and graphs data
- Computes volume of prisms

Upper School – Grades 6-8

Grade 6: Pre-Algebra

In preparation for algebra, students integrate real-life problem solving in their work writing, interpreting and using expressions and equations while continuing to hone computational fluency across topics including geometric constructions, ratio, proportion and rational numbers.

Selected Key Skills

- Understands, articulates how mathematical concepts interconnect
- Demonstrates procedural fluency across operations
- Analyzes, interprets, represents data accurately
- Accurately applies operations using fractions, decimals and rational numbers
- Creates and simplifies algebraic expressions
- Understands relationships between ratio, proportion and percent
- Can solve multi-step algebraic expressions in one variable

Grade 7: Algebra I

In this first year of a two-year Algebra I curriculum, students explore proportional relationships and operations with rational numbers, probability and the Pythagorean Theorem. Students work with expressions and linear equations, building the abstract-thinking skills needed to master algebraic concepts.

Selected Key Skills

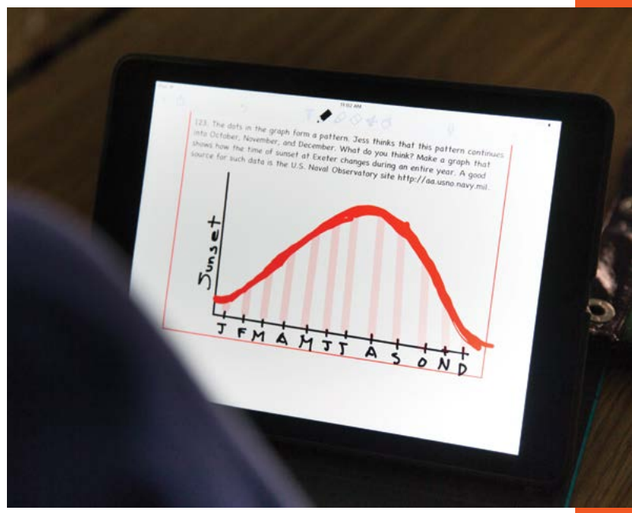
- Applies and adapts a variety of appropriate strategies to solve problems
- Internalizes the abstract nature of algebra
- Uses algebraic vocabulary and notation with precision
- Applies properties of exponents to simplify expressions
- Adds, subtracts, multiplies polynomials

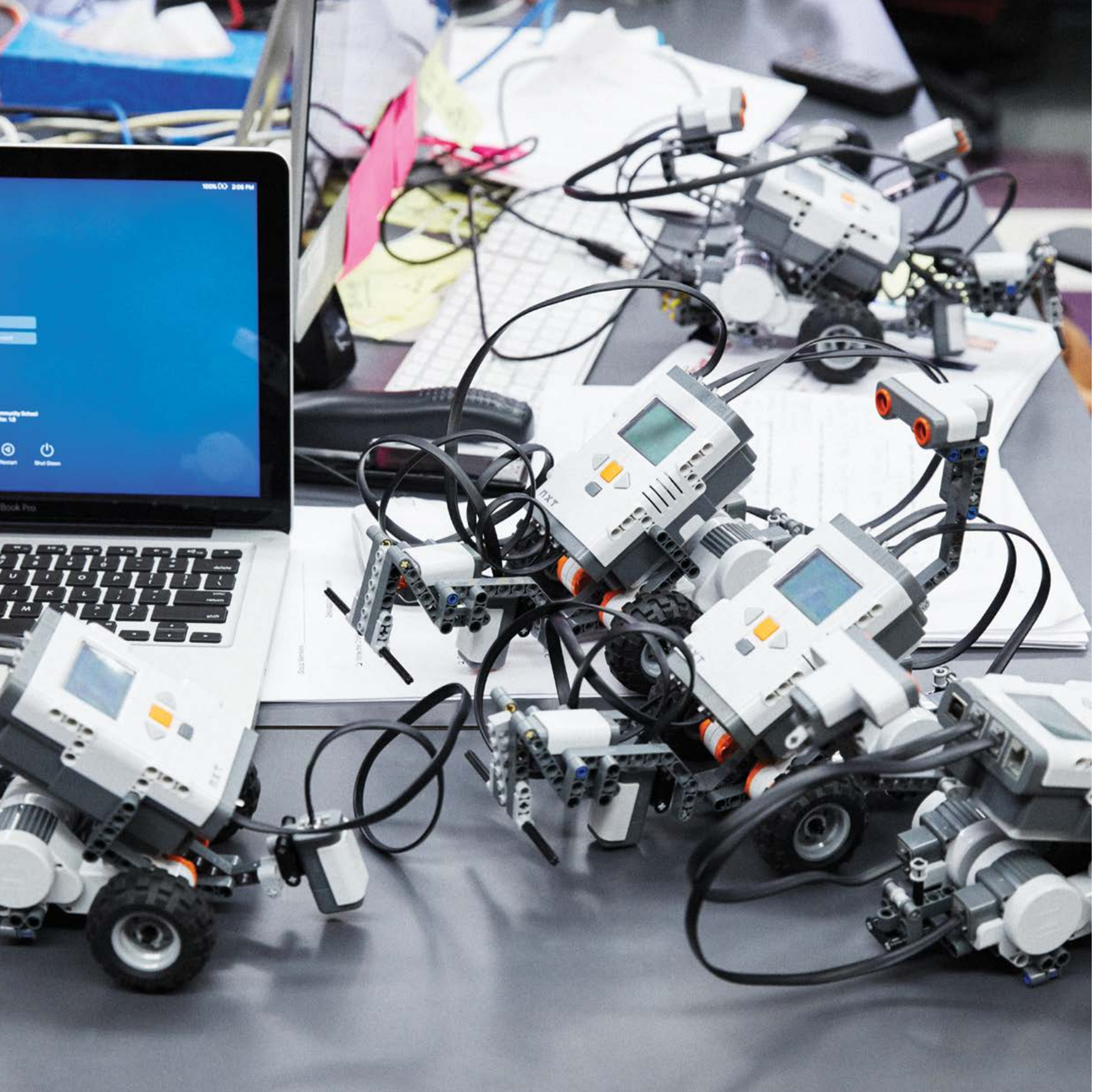
Grade 8: Algebra I

Students expand their algebraic knowledge by analyzing and solving linear equations, systems of equations, quadradic equations, rational and radical expressions and inequalities. Coursework emphasizes using precise algebraic notation and producing exact calculations. Deploying iPads, students engage in dynamic, interactive exercises with customizable opportunities to challenge their skills and review material as needed.

Selected Key Skills

- Factors polynomials
- Uses appropriate strategies of algebraic fractions to solve word problems
- Solves simultaneous equations
- Graphs linear inequalities in two variables
- Simplifies and calculates radicals
- Solves and graphs quadratic equations
- Demonstrates organized, consistent class preparation





TECHNOLOGY & STEAM

VCS students learn to effectively use a variety of digital technologies and online learning programs as tools to enhance their education. Laptop computers, e-readers, iPads, SmartBoards, 3D printers, document cameras and more seamlessly blend into the life of the school as students use digital tools to interact, analyze, create, code, document, present and publish work.

Students deploy Google Drive, Microsoft Office, iWork, Adobe Creative Suite and other applications to create, organize and collaborate on projects. VCS also provides access to e-learning programs like Fluencia (Spanish), Sadlier Connect (vocabulary), NIH Labs (science), among others for individual and classroom coursework.

Our STEAM program integrating science, technology, engineering, art and math offers exciting opportunities to build multiple skills at once. STEAM students learn to design, build and code robots. They develop video games from idea to completion. They explore the fascinating possibilities of industrial design using 3D printing and more. Students may also pursue independent STEAM lab projects.

All along, students are learning to use computer languages to code programs. VCS graduates become fluent in this essential grammar of modern life, coding with visual programs such as Tynker, Mindstorms and Scratch as well as text-based languages like Java, Javascript and Python. We continue to expand opportunities in this evolving, exciting area of modern education.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Young children need primary experiences to develop their social abilities and hands-on, physical tools to develop their fine motor skills. Technology is integrated into K-1 classrooms as teachers use SmartBoards, document cameras and other digital tools to advance curriculum-based activities.

Students may encounter manipulatives like Bee-Bot mini robots and iPad applications like Scratch Jr. to challenge their problem-solving and visualization skills, providing multiple pathways for children to consolidate new knowledge.

Lower School – Grades 2-4

Technology Lab classes meet once a week in Grades 2-4. Each student is equipped with his/her own device to make the most of every hands-on lesson. Students build a repertoire of project-enhancing skills in graphic design, video/audio and sensor-based tools like Little Bits. In addition to technical skills, students learn how to safely navigate digital spaces, evaluate findings critically and respect the privacy and legal rights of others, online and off.

Technology – Grade 2

Students log on to the VCS network, learn about the Mac OS platform, begin keyboarding and master basic operations. Using Kid Pix, they build graphic design skills with geometry-based projects. Students program Ozobot robots using Ozocodes to enhance sequential thinking skills and grasp coding concepts. Working as industrial designers, students sketch ideas and realize them as real objects using our 3D printers.

Selected Key Skills Grade 2

- Understands technology concepts, systems, operations
- Uses logical reasoning, coding concepts to program Ozobot robots
- Creates drawings, graphics, 3D designs
- Able to navigate Internet for class-related information
- Uses best practices for digital privacy, security

Technology – Grade 3

Student's imaginations come alive as they begin coding engaging animated characters and stories using Scratch, a visual programming language from MIT. Spatial awareness, geometry and computational math skills grow as students continue their industrial design studies using TinkerCAD. With increasing precision, these budding engineers transform two-dimensional designs into 3D objects. Students also learn about the physical components of a computer.

Selected Key Skills Grade 3

- Demonstrates understanding of file hierarchy
- Designs and codes animations using sequences, loops, conditionals
- Creates digital presentations that integrate text, visuals, sound
- Designs 2D and 3D work
- Recognizes rights, responsibilities, opportunities of digital citizens

Technology – Grade 4

Students become video game designers, working through the process of identifying the game structure, designing gameplay, testing, soliciting feedback, debugging and iterating improvements. They expand their Scratch programming skills and prototype a game controller using novel materials and Makey Makey circuit boards. In connection with their social studies curriculum, students use Minecraft to design structures and environments typical of the historical period being explored.

Selected Key Skills Grade 4

- Employs spreadsheet software to create tables, charts, graphs
- Designs and codes animations using loops, conditionals, variables, event handlers
- Demonstrates proficiency with multiple applications
- Uses proper keyboarding techniques
- Demonstrates awareness of their digital-world actions as permanent

STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math Grades 5, 6, 7

In STEAM, students work on projects that explore this essential question: How can we apply what we know about science, technology, engineering, art and math to meet our needs?

Students work primarily in small groups on design challenges, and apply the (engineering) design process as a protocol for problem solving. They conduct research, brainstorm multiple approaches to a challenge, produce scaled drawings and negotiate their ideas with teammates as they work to build models and prototypes.

Robotics, Toy Design – Grade 5

Students conduct a brief study of robots – their components, capabilities, real-world uses and importance to society. Students work cooperatively to build and program a "Mars Car" robot that interacts with the physical world through sensors and motors. Open-ended programming challenges allow students to practice algorithmic thinking while creating and testing unique solutions.

Students next embark on a toy design project, including: designing, planning and marketing a safe and lightweight toy prototype for young children. They conduct focus groups with youngsters in Grades K/1, learning to balance the desires of their target audience with their preferences as designers. Final presentations include an advertisement for their new product.

Selected Key Skills

- Uses deliberative design process for generating ideas, testing theories, solving problems
- Deploys variety of technologies to create new, useful, imaginative solutions
- Develops, tests, refines prototypes with iterative process
- Debugs code independently and accurately
- Engages in positive, safe, legal, ethical online behavior
- Understands, respects intellectual property rights and obligations

Selected Key Skills Grade 5

- Develops, tests and refines prototypes as part of a cyclical design process
- Exhibits tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance and the capacity to confront open-ended problems
- Comprehends automation and uses algorithmic thinking to develop processes for creating and testing automated solutions

Robotics, 3D Printing, Sustainable Fashion – Grade 6

Students deepen their robotics study with an examination of ethical questions sparked by this growing industry, including a future of self-driving cars. Students work together to build and program a robotic prototype of a self-driving car that interacts with the physical world through sound, touch, ultrasonic sensors, light sensors and motors. They code solutions to real-world challenges like stopping the motor when an object or person is detected on the roadway.

Students delve into an independent 3D printing project employing Makerbot and/or Ultimaker equipment and online resources – creating products like polyhedron-shaped dice used for games in math class and mini rollercoaster cars used in science class.

Students also discuss common waste materials in manufacturing and challenge themselves to devise a clothing accessory created from such castoff resources. Once prototypes are complete, students apply design thinking to organize and present a fashion show to showcase their work.

Selected Key Skills Grade 6

- Selects, uses appropriate digital tools to plan, manage a design process that considers design constraints and calculated risks
- Collects data or identifies relevant data sets, analyzes data via digital tools and represent findings in various ways to facilitate problem solving and decision-making
- Creates original works and/or responsibly transforms existing digital resources into new creations

Video Game Design, e-Textiles, Wearable Technologies – Grade 7

Using online software, students further their understanding of the principles of game design and systems thinking by developing a video game from concept to completion.

Students expand their conceptual and development skills by studying the future of wearable technologies. They complete case studies of real-life examples of these technological products, and explore and debate their successes and pitfalls. Students work collaboratively to design e-textiles using Lilypad Arduino circuit boards to code programmable LEDs.

Selected Key Skills Grade 7

- Understands the fundamental concepts of technology operations, demonstrates ability to choose, use and troubleshoot current technologies; able to transfer that knowledge to explore emerging technologies
- Publishes and/or presents content customized for specific audiences, selecting appropriate platforms/tools to meet the desired communication objectives

Throughout various projects, students apply their knowledge of coding concepts and visual programming languages like Scratch and integrate text-based languages such as Processing and Java, through which they encounter deeper intricacies of syntax and code.

Computer Programming – Grades 2–8

The VCS coding curriculum empowers students as they learn to control computers and other tools while building their logical thinking and problem-solving skill sets through persistent, collaborative work.

Our Technology and STEAM courses introduce students to computer programming in Grades 2-4 through the use of Scratch, a visual programming language created by the MIT Media Lab, in which core computational concepts such as iteration, loops and conditionals are explored. Students use their new language to create interactive stories, animated adventures and multimedia games.

Grade 5 and 6 students continue their coding study with robotics, using logical thinking, Boolean logic and the scientifc method to program solutions to coding challenges. As engineers, they harness the versatility of the building system and deploy their visual programming skills to infuence diverse creative outputs.

Our coding track culminates in Grade 8 with a year-long course focusing on text-based programming in Java and Python. Students gain further experience in computational problem-solving by breaking down increasingly complex goals into their constituent parts and learn to create large-scale projects like video games and cryptographic “secret message” encoders. Elective coursework offers additional opportunities to go deeper into coding languages and more creative experiences such as programming Arduino electronics and mini drones.

SCIENCE

The VCS science curriculum is designed to stimulate scientific curiosity and develop critical-thinking skills.

Our inquiry-based program is aligned to Next Generation Science Standards and emphasizes learning by doing: observation, classification, measurement, prediction, experimentation, recording data, analyzing results and communicating findings. Our graduates master both conceptual and factual knowledge across scientific subjects, preparing them well for high school requirements.

Students are challenged to be analytical critics of scientific information disseminated in popular culture, the media and among peers. They return again and again to the scientific method – learning to systematically ask questions, test hypotheses and present results in class and at Science Fair events.

VCS Beyond the Classroom additionally offers opportunities for budding scientists to partake in field research with summertime programs like OceansWide Science Camp.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Active, hands-on science experiences are integrated into the curriculum. Classroom and field studies reflect children's natural interest in the world around them.

Students may explore topics such as where food comes from, the life cycle of butterflies or how to make a circuit. Children explore local animal habitats, notice patterns in nature, examine rocks and water and deepen their appreciation for the physical/sensory abilities of different living things.

Selected Key Skills

- Observes, predicts and asks questions
- Demonstrates knowledge of scientific concepts
- Communicates effectively about investigations and explorations
- Plans, organizes and carries through tasks
- Works both independently and cooperatively on scientific inquiry

Lower School – Grades 2-5

In Grades 2-5, students begin laboratory work in the VCS Science Lab as they explore topics in three broad areas of science: earth science, physical science and life science. Coursework encourages children to see themselves as inquisitive scientists who understand science as both a body of knowledge and a way of learning.

Working individually, in pairs and in small groups, students manipulate objects, learn to use basic science equipment and document their work and findings in written lab reports. Small group, grade-specific sessions allow for explanation, demonstration, investigation, observation, interrogation, interpretation and analysis.

Selected Key Skills

- Shares observations, makes predictions, tests assumptions
- Measures, records, interprets and communicates data
- Understands core concepts of physical, life and earth sciences
- Generates new questions based on own investigations
- Seeks corroborating/conflicting information from multiple sources

While specific topics vary throughout the year, and from year to year, we consistently emphasize the scientific process skills students must incorporate into any empirical endeavor.

Earth science topics include water, geology, weather and the atmosphere. Physical science topics include matter, force and motion, energy, phase changes and chemical reactions. Life sciences topics span botany, zoology, interrelationships of living things and balance in ecosystems.

Upper School Science

Upper School students transition into a departmentalized science curriculum, devoting an entire year to one core area of inquiry. This ensures our graduates master both conceptual and factual knowledge across topics in earth science, life science, physical science, chemistry and environmental science.

Textbook coursework, active lab learning, student-created visual presentations and independent research form a dynamic curriculum for students to continue developing their skills as critical thinkers who can observe, measure and evaluate scientific evidence and then draw conclusions and articulate findings to others.

Upper School science class requirements include homework, research and tech projects, written reports, lab work, class participation and exams.

Grade 6 – Earth Science

Students embark on year-long journey investigating all aspects of Earth Science. By studying Earth's systems and their interactions, students gain an understanding of the principles governing our dynamic planet and can then interrogate current theories about the formation of Earth, the solar system and the universe.

Topics examined include geology, meteorology, oceanography, astronomy and the impact of human activity on Earth's systems.

Grade 7 – Life Science

In Life Science, students become more aware of all life forms, including those we cannot see. Frequent experiments and lab reporting assignments guide students to a better understanding of myriad biological forces.

The year begins with introductory life science concepts and microscopic lab work, before moving into units on taxonomy and biodiversity – exploring ecosystem relationships and organism interactions.

Students then undertake intensive studies of the cell, cell processes and DNA. With this foundational knowledge established, students delve into genomics and data science. Students learn about DNA sequencing technologies and applications and analyze large data sets created from an extensive, hands-on investigation of micro-biomes and bacterial diversity.

Selected Key Skills Grade 6

- Asks testable questions to clarify evidence, seek new information
- Constructs, refines arguments with supportive evidence
- Develops hypothesis; conducts investigation, produces data to refute or confirm hypothesis
- Describes, measures, graphs data to address scientific problems
- Analyzes various media to obtain new scientific information
- Constructs models to represent ideas, provide explanations

Selected Key Skills Grade 7

- Identifies, asks testable scientific questions
- Conducts experiments using proper lab procedure
- Integrates current events into daily assignments, discussions
- Completes independent, evidence-based research
- Acquires, uses new scientific vocabulary

Grade 8 – Physics, Chemistry and Environmental Science

Students begin the year encountering physics concepts including: the physical characteristics of matter, motion and work; Newton's laws of motion; energy and its changes and transfers; waves and wave properties.

During second semester, chemistry topics are introduced. Students study the interior structure of atoms, the periodic table, the law of conservation of mass, chemical reactions, bonding and chemical equation balancing.

Throughout the year, students also explore contemporary environmental issues through the lens of physical and life sciences, developing an informed understanding of human-environmental relationships and their influence on sustainability.

Hands-on experiments, traditional laboratory techniques and computer-based lab work are integral to the course.

Selected Key Skills Grade 8

- Understands the nature of matter, chemical reactions
- Understands connection between environmental, social, economic factors in sustainability
- Performs lab experiments accurately and carefully
- Writes quality lab reports
- Effectively uses technology to make scientific presentations

WORLD LANGUAGE

The VCS world language program opens up new worlds of communication and cultural understanding for students. We introduce the program at an age that will develop the neurological tools for a lifelong capacity for language acquisition. Our curriculum aligns with the National Standards for Foreign Language determined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language.

Our goal is for every VCS graduate to achieve basic conversational fluency in Spanish. Upper School students are provided the opportunity to continue their Spanish studies, or to switch to Mandarin or Latin coursework.

Lower School – Spanish

Children begin their Spanish studies in Grade 2 and progressively build their skills through Lower School. Students receive direct instruction on linguistic mechanics, vocabulary and the varied cultures of Spanish-speaking countries.

In addition to thrice weekly Spanish classes, students encounter immersive Spanish practice opportunities during other coursework. Spanish teachers participate in various specialists' classes – arts, STEAM, physical education, science – engaging learners in authentic Spanish conversation within the context of that subject area. Such immersion deepens students' understanding and expands their vocabulary.

Selected Key Skills

- Retains and applies vocabulary
- Demonstrates accurate pronunciation
- Understands, applies grammatical rules and concepts
- Participates in conversational activities

By Grade 5, students have built extensive conversational Spanish skills. Foundational, familiar topics expand and requirements for reading, writing and speaking increase. Children learn geographical terminology, read short novels in Spanish and compose Spanish poems to recite from memory.

Upper School - Spanish, Latin or Mandarin

Students select one language to study for three consecutive years, providing the equivalent of at least a Level 1 high school course. VCS graduates often place at Level 3 in high school coursework.

Cultural study, field trips, assigned reading, composition exercises and independent projects complement students' rigorous, text-based coursework. Students make classroom presentations and take tests to help them achieve written, aural and oral proficiency.

Our *VCS Beyond the Classroom* initiative also offers opportunities for studying abroad, providing invaluable stays with local families, trips to cultural sites and tastes of the country's cuisine.

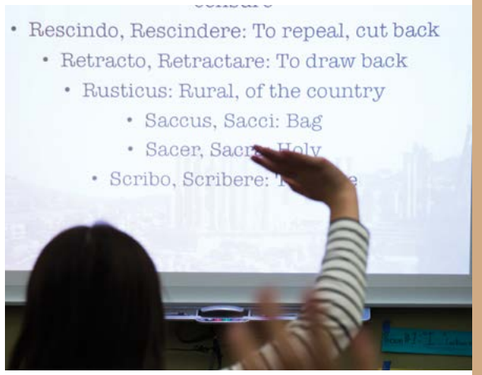
Selected Key Skills

- Recognizes, reproduces Mandarin sounds with accuracy
- Gains accuracy in writing pinyin and tones
- Recognizes, reproduces Chinese characters and radicals
- Incorporates new vocabulary into known structures to express ideas
- Able to write in Mandarin using a computer

Mandarin

Upon completing this three-year course, students attain basic conversational fluency as well as the ability to read and write in Mandarin. Students work to develop a wide-ranging vocabulary on topics such as clothing, food, body parts, sports, visiting friends, making phone calls, daily routines and weather. Class time is focused on speaking and listening using practical conversational language.

Students learn about Chinese culture, including the pop culture of modern-day youth. Students write analytical essays and prepare presentations that illustrate the influence of language on a culture and its worldview.



Latin

Latin students develop their grammatical skills to include: regular and irregular verbs in all six tenses, declension nouns, pronouns, the cases and their functions, adjectives and agreement. Students continually build their vocabulary through memorization of Latin words, exercises in decoding English derivatives and games like Latin Scrabble. Preparation for the National Latin Exam provides further opportunities for translation practice and skill mastery.

Selected Key Skills

- Understands, retains Latin grammatical concepts
- Identifies, analyzes word endings; builds Latin and English vocabulary
- Performs accurate translation
- Engages with Roman cultural material
- Uses context to infer meaning in written Latin

Students also study cultural, social and historical aspects of ancient Rome. They might investigate ancient medicine, explore women's roles in Roman society or create comic strips featuring a Roman god as a superhero. Students complete translations and artistic projects inspired by Latin-speaking authors including Erasmus, Horace and Ovid.

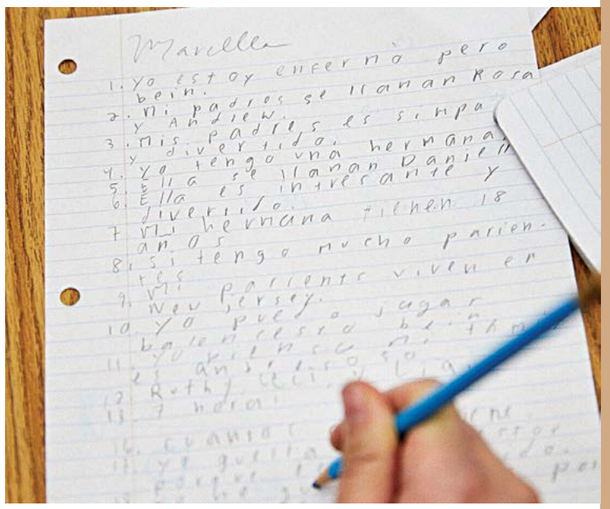
Spanish

Building on their earlier studies, students in Grades 6-8 develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills while expanding their cultural awareness of the Spanish-speaking world. Oral communication is emphasized; students put new grammatical structures into immediate practice, expressing themselves with increasing fluency and accuracy. Grammar topics include past and present verb tenses, pronouns and noun-adjective agreement.

Selected Key Skills

- Retains, applies new Spanish vocabulary including idioms
- Retains, applies more advanced grammatical concepts
- Speaks in class with ease and authentic pronunciation
- Completes compositions with accurate spelling, grammar

Cultural study expands to include units on the influence of Spanish-speaking populations in the United States and the salient cultural differences between Mexico and Puerto Rico. Virtual trips to Oaxaca, Barcelona and Quito allow students to make connections to and comparisons with their American lives. Students may also take field trips to see prominent Spanish-speaking artists perform.



PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Our physical education program exemplifies VCS's commitment to active, meaningful learning experiences that educate the whole child. Children develop psychomotor, cognitive, athletic and social skills through a rich array of daily recreation activities, indoor/outdoor play, games and sports.

VCS physical education courses include instruction in basic skills, game rules and safety procedures for a variety of fitness pursuits, with an emphasis on sports. Our curriculum is aligned with the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE).

We provide a safe environment where positive attitudes toward physical activity blossom and endure for a lifetime of benefits.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Our youngest students explore the joy of movement and develop their fine and gross motor skills through a wide variety of games and activities. We ask children to use their originality, inventiveness, concentration, memory and critical-thinking skills as they enjoy movement and develop social awareness.

Selected Key Skills

- Participates eagerly in daily physical activities
- Demonstrates competent motor skills and movement patterns
- Communicates effectively with classmates
- Takes risks and makes good choices when selecting physical activities

Lower School – Grades 2-5

As children progress through the Lower School, physical activities become more specialized to enrich students' awareness of body mechanics, build their confidence and deepen their skills repertoire. Our program encourages students to find enjoyment through challenging themselves.

We use myriad lead-up games to build skills for various sports that are introduced throughout the year, including: soccer, volleyball, touch football, ultimate Frisbee, kickball, t-ball, gymnastics, handball, basketball, softball and bocce ball. Rules and strategies are explained; cooperation and courtesy are emphasized.

Selected Key Skills

- Works to develop sport-specific skills
- Achieves a health-enhancing level of physical fitness
- Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior
- Listens to and follows specific cues and instructions during game play
- Demonstrates an appreciation for physical activity

Upper School – Grades 6-8

The Upper School curriculum focuses on further developing students' sport-specific skills, team play and sportsmanship. We also offer an array of cooperative games, communication exercises and teambuilding challenges that encourage physical and emotional growth. Students take physical education class four periods a week; classes are held at Pier 40's sports and recreation facilities as well as in our own gymnasium and play yard.

Many students also enjoy our interscholastic athletics program spanning soccer, volleyball, track and field, basketball and softball. VCS student-athletes shine with school pride, taking pleasure from diligent practice and hard-fought matches with players from other schools. Students who volunteer to play must make a commitment to participate fully. There is a no-cut policy; all children may enjoy the camaraderie and excitement of competition.

Selected Key Skills

- Achieves a health-enhancing level of fitness
- Asks for help when needed as skills are developed and refined
- Exhibits good sportsmanship, respecting self and others
- Challenges self to take risks in new athletic arenas
- Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, social interaction

ART & THEATER

The arts provide an important way for students to learn about their world and communicate their thoughts and emotions. Our program emphasizes exploration and the development of children's artistic process skills.

Students master basic techniques across multiple media and experience both the challenge and the pleasure of visual self-expression. Students also discover art amid the cultural richness of New York City. VCS hosts artists-in-residence who share their work and insights; classes regularly visit area studios, galleries and museums.

Our Theater Arts program cultivates an environment of exploration and understanding of the discipline. Through creation, performance and response, students gain confidence, collaborative skills and an appreciation for production that will serve them well throughout life.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Art class at the beginning level is designed to be an exciting, discovery-rich experience where children are encouraged to touch and manipulate the materials that interest them. Students learn to channel their imaginations while building their fine motor skills and observational powers through media such as clay, paint, charcoal pencil and textiles.

For many young students, art making is both a visual and a verbal process. Once a drawing, painting or clay sculpture is finished, students become effusive storytellers who enjoy explaining their work, often in great detail.

Selected Key Skills

- Explores art media with interest and enthusiasm
- Incorporates life experiences into artwork
- Stays on task; is disciplined and conscientious

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Children continue to refine and develop their skills in areas including painting, drawing, sculpture, construction and printmaking. Each class begins with a motivating question that deepens students' connection with their subject. They acquire techniques of increasing complexity to enhance their work and study topics like perspective, shading, mood creation and portrayal of human figures at rest and in motion.

Art activities that integrate students' social studies curricula are of great importance during Grades 2-5. Art specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to define projects that expand and deepen students' understanding of the cultures under examination.

Selected Key Skills

- Actively engages in exploration of materials and ideas
- Understands, applies new techniques
- Develops works of increasing sophistication

Upper School – Grades 6-8

The Upper School art curriculum meets the growing interests and abilities of pre-adolescents with projects that develop their observational and manipulative skills as well as their capacity to think symbolically and metaphorically. In addition to hands-on exploration and practice, students are introduced to artists from other time periods and cultures, helping them to connect their own work to a larger artistic legacy.

Grade 6 students focus their studies around the design principles of balance, emphasis, movement, rhythm, contrast and harmony, producing both imaginative and representational work.

Grade 7 students develop narrative pieces and investigate the possibilities of both abstraction and realism, finding ways to express their ideas using multiple approaches.

Grade 8 students synthesize their artistic knowledge to create deeply personal work. In self-directed explorations, they undertake demanding methodologies like mold making, plaster casting, ceramic sculpture, observational drawing and watercolor painting.

Selected Key Skills

- Makes insightful observations when discussing works of art
- Carefully plans and develops new ideas for art projects
- Uses materials inventively and expressively
- Incorporates reflection and revision into work

Drama - Grade 5

Students begin their journey into the art of acting through the techniques of Stanislavski, including movement exercises for the actor and an introduction to basic voice.

Selected Key Skills

- Identifies, applies concepts of given circumstance, objective, intention
- Analyzes impact of variations on overall work
- Collaborates well
- Focuses on task at hand

Drama – Grade 6

Coursework expands into new concepts in acting theory and application. Students develop a greater understanding of script analysis, characterization, style and the relationship between actor and audience.

Selected Key Skills

- Actualizes, articulates choices
- Listens, responds to scene partners
- Uses self-knowledge to inform, motivate choices
- Works as productive ensemble

Theater Production – Upper School

Upper School students serve as cast and crew for three productions undertaken each year: a drama or comedy, a musical and The Student Theater Festival. Recent productions featured the works of Arthur Miller, Oscar Wilde, Thornton Wilder, Mary Rodgers, Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. The Student Theater Festival is written, directed and performed by students in a structured environment.

WOODSHOP

In woodshop, students master basic woodworking skills in a safe, developmentally appropriate manner. Children experience a sense of pride and accomplishment as they see their work take shape through their own practice and persistence.

Students discover how to use basic hand tools and measurement devices as they complete projects often related to the social studies themes they are exploring. Over time, students develop a vocabulary of techniques and a particular style of working in the woodshop.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Woodshop students learn how to plan and build their own ideas and work on projects including: shapes on wheels, pocket cars, shelves, birdhouses, sculptures and percussion instruments. Children are introduced to tools throughout the year and are taught proper usage of the hammer, eggbeater drill, brace drill, coping saw, cross-cut saw, as well as sanding and shaping devices.

Selected Key Skills

- Safely uses basic hand tools
- Actively explores and engages with materials
- Learns to follow and adapt to woodshop procedures
- Develops woodshop vocabulary
- Thoughtfully articulates ideas and questions about the subject matter

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Woodshop study focuses on exploration of ideas, planning and construction, as well as making connections to other curriculum subjects.

Students expand their working vocabulary and tool repertoire. They learn proper use of the Japanese pull saw, surface design techniques – including color application – and strategies for reclaiming and repurposing materials. In addition to required projects, children choose an independent project to complete such as puppets, boxes, shelves and musical instruments.

Selected Key Skills

- Becomes more skilled with a variety of tools
- Actively explores project ideas through drawings and plans
- Exercises good measuring skills
- Works collaboratively to complete group projects

MUSIC

Music education at VCS is an active process integrating Dalcroze, Kodaly and Orff methodologies; we use movement, singing, games, drama and instrumental play to teach musical skills. Music course content is connected to students' social studies curriculum whenever possible, deepening their appreciation for the cultures and time periods they are exploring.

We also take full advantage of our New York City musical community. VCS regularly hosts performing artists who offer mentorship and role modeling to students. Group outings to live performances of classical, jazz, opera, world and other musical styles cement learning and foster a lifetime love for great music.

Lower School – Grades K-1

Through movement and varied activities, children demonstrate steady beat, learn to count phrase lengths and explore the musical qualities of sound: high/low, fast/slow, loud/soft. They also learn to recognize rhythm notation e.g. eighth notes and whole rests.

Students sing age-appropriate songs and play games. Singing on pitch and listening carefully are continually encouraged. Children listen for musical form, expressed as same or different; they learn how to differentiate pitch and the notes of the scale.

Selected Key Skills

- Sings on pitch with good tone
- Changes movement to reflect beat
- Reads basic rhythm and pitch notation
- Keeps time in an ensemble
- Is focused and attentive in small and large group activities

The children follow Kodaly hand signs to sing patterns using these notes as well as to create their own patterns.

Children use Orff instruments (xylophone, metallophone, glockenspiel, claves, hand drum) to accompany their singing by playing the beat, rhythm and eventually, two contrasting parts. They also take turns being the "conductor," positively reinforcing teamwork.

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Singing, movement and instrumental playing continue to reinforce musicality in Grades 2-5. Students' repertoire expands to include elements aligning with their social studies curriculum, such as Native American musical games, Chinese ribbon dance and jazz. Ensemble teamwork continues to build in importance and complexity as students learn to sing harmony, play different percussion instruments and perform for audiences.

Selected Key Skills

- Reads rhythm notation and performs rhythms clearly
- Reads pitch notation, transcribes sung patterns into notation
- Applies musical concepts to creating and improvising music
- Demonstrates good recorder technique
- Embraces the challenge of singing harmony
- Monitors, adjusts own sound
- Works well in an ensemble

As their fine motor skills develop, children receive additional training on a wind instrument, initially the soprano recorder and by Grade 5, alto, tenor and bass recorders. Private lessons in additional instruments are available to interested students starting in Grade 4 through the VCS Instrument Lessons Program.

By completion of the Lower School, students have a broad appreciation of many types of music and the skills and literacy to participate in our Upper School ensembles.

Upper School – Grades 6-8

Upper School students are exposed to a wide variety of music and continue building their literacy and ensemble skills. All Upper School students choose an ensemble or process-based class from our electives program. Students may also elect to study an instrument through our after school music program; private lessons in flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and drums are also offered.

Selected Key Skills

- Challenges self to take risks, try new experiences in ensemble work
- Understands and applies musical techniques studied
- Brings original musical ideas to discussion
- Shows continuous improvement in performance

SAMPLE MUSIC ELECTIVES

Broadway Theater Experience
Young actors experientially discover the musical theater world, including its history and all aspects of production through individual and group activities.

Chorus
Students develop musicality as ensemble singers capable of performing melody and harmony in a concert setting. Exercises promote proper breath control, diction, sensitive phrasing and good vocal tone.

Young Composers & Improvisors Workshop (Y.C.I.W.)
Guided by professional musicians, students learn to compose their own original music – including proper notation – while developing their understanding of how music works. The course culminates in an extraordinary school concert where students' professional musician mentors perform the student pieces.

Guitar Ensemble
Guitarists develop their skills by analyzing and performing some of their favorite music in a group setting. Students expand their chord vocabularies and strumming patterns while exploring improvisation and timing variations.

Rock Band
Students rehearse and perform a diverse rock repertoire of their choosing. Band members contribute their individual talents – at various skill levels – to create a fun, high-energy show.

Jazz Dance
Students build their dance vocabulary by performing traveling and center work as well as original choreography by the teacher and students themselves. Dancers survey jazz dance's history and influential choreographers.

LIBRARY

Developing confident, discerning researchers and fostering a lifelong love of reading are the goals of the VCS library program. Students sharpen their media literacy skills while connecting to reputable reference resources across print and digital.

Our librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to prepare aligned coursework. As students pursue in-depth research and analytical projects, they may use the library's nearly 20,000 books and leading databases accessible through the VCS website.

Our program encourages reading for enjoyment. Librarians help students discover appealing books through read-alouds in Grades K-2 and book clubs in Grades 3-6. Students regularly participate in literacy projects, making connections between texts and the larger world through discussion, analysis and artwork.

Lower School – Grades K-1

K-1 students explore the purpose and function of the library through hands-on activities connected to literature. Engaging picture book read-alouds from all genres give students the opportunity to discover the kinds of books they enjoy reading. Through discussions and projects, students develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their peers and the world around them.

Lower School – Grades 2-5

Grades 2-4 students spend their year reading around the library, exploring different genres and Dewey subjects. Students learn how to use the library independently, locate reference materials and respond meaningfully to works including folktales and biographies.

Grade 5 students expand their reference repertoire through lessons in fair use and copyright, effective Google searching and research using scholarly databases. Students also participate in book clubs, building critical-thinking skills as they analyze, respond and create new media based on the books.

Upper School – Grades 6-8

At this developmental stage, students are forming strong interests and opinions; books by outspoken individualists resonate deeply with young adolescents. VCS channels that enthusiasm with a Grade 6 library curriculum focused on banned books. In this weekly, e-books-based class, students discuss and debate the themes found in challenged-and-challenging works, completing several projects throughout the year. Media literacy skills also deepen as students analyze bias in advertising and create their own ads to counter common stereotypes.

Grade 7 has a monthly scheduled library time where students may choose books and engage in independent reading. Grade 8 students use the library in a flexible capacity, checking out books for pleasure reading and research projects.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

We believe in educating the whole child at VCS. Equipping students to make informed decisions about their Health & Wellness begins in K-1 and continues through graduation.

From choosing nutritious foods at lunch to navigating the many challenges of adolescence, our entire program builds and reinforces students' skills in mindfulness, managing authentic emotions, agency, self-advocacy, personal responsibility and more. Students also engage with outside experts through developmentally appropriate workshops that provide in-depth learning and perspectives on sexuality, substance abuse, personal safety and digital citizenship.

Our guidance counselor coordinates all Health & Wellness programming for students as well as parents, refining and augmenting resources to meet the changing needs of modern families.

Sex Education – Grades 5-8

In a series of workshops, students work with a sexuality educator to explore age-appropriate topics around sexual development, building on the healthy communication and relationship skills emphasized throughout the VCS program.

Sessions include discussions about what to expect during puberty (physical, social and emotional changes), gender roles and identity, sexual media literacy, personal boundaries, sexual identity, consent and what's considered "normal" as bodies and relationships evolve into adulthood.

Personal Safety Training – Grades 5-6

As they enter adolescence and gain more personal autonomy, students learn techniques to help them safely and confidently encounter new situations and new people.

Working with professional instructors, students hone personal safety skills including boundary setting, self-advocating communication and self-defense, with an emphasis on reducing risks and preventing unnecessary confrontations as they move through the city and their lives.

Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention – Grade 7

As students begin socializing with a broader array of peers and are thinking about their upcoming high school experiences, having an open dialogue about drugs and alcohol is an important developmental milestone.

Students meet with specialist counselors who educate them on the dangers of substance abuse and offer techniques for making good choices when encountering situations involving alcohol and drugs.

Digital Citizenship – Grades 7-8

An ideal complement to our Technology curriculum, these workshops foster critical reflection about students' digital lives and their responsibilities to themselves and others in a digital world.

Working with university-affiliated researchers, students explore real dilemmas, engage in perspective-taking and consider action steps related to topics including digital footprints, photo sharing, personal well-being, relationships, digital drama and civic life.

UPPER SCHOOL ELECTIVES

Elective courses provide opportunities for Upper School students and teachers to explore an area of shared interest and/or try their hand at something new. Each semester, each student chooses a new elective. The program empowers students to shape a part of their curriculum, a developmentally appropriate exercise during their Upper School years.

Electives meet twice weekly in mixed-grade grouping classrooms. Students in Grades 6-8 select from the same array of classes. Course topics vary; here are a few examples:

Model Congress
Students write original bills, debate and defend their ideas and participate in the Model Congress held each spring at an area school.

Coding
Students expand their foundational programming skills into text-based languages including Python and JavaScript, working with diverse data sets – numbers, strings, Boolean – to work on independent challenges that incorporate loops, functions and conditional statements.

The Art & Craft of Writing
In this writing workshop, students draw inspiration from accomplished writers, perform fun writing exercises, share work and give constructive feedback.

From Shakespeare to Musical Theater
Students compare scenes from Shakespeare's plays with more contemporary interpretations, surveying works like *Hamlet, The Lion King, Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story.*

Mathematical Puzzles & Wonders
Students plumb the mysteries and marvels of math by solving puzzles, exploring paradoxes, building platonic solids and playing strategy games.

Studio Art
Students develop their abilities and technique as they work on individual art projects or collaborate with peers.

UPPER SCHOOL STUDENT GROUPS

Students of Color Support (S.O.C.S.)
Is an Upper School support, awareness and affirmation group that has been in existence for over 10 years. The group was initially founded because VCS acknowledged that the experience of students of color at independent schools can often be challenging. S.O.C.S. meets regularly, mainly to discuss the issues concerning students of color in and out of independent schools. The group is not mandatory, so students can attend meetings when they feel the need.

Power of Women (P.O.W.)
The goal of P.O.W. is to create a safe, judgement free space within the VCS community, where all students (all genders invited can express their thoughts on sexism, gender roles and other present-day issues. Led by students, P.O.W. will provide a welcoming environment that will encourage its members to share their opinions and to listen to other perspectives and ideas. P.O.W. strives to address sexist issues in all areas, and to explore new and different ways we, as a community, can take action to fight gender inequality.

Students Organizing Against Racism (S.O.A.R.)
S.O.A.R. will be open to students and staff on a weekly basis on Zoom. S.O.A.R. will work to transform the culture at VCS to one that is actively antiracist. The Director of Diversity and one of the Antiracism & Anti-Bias Coalition Leaders (formerly known as Diversity Facilitators) will co-facilitate this group. The group will introduce students to skills needed to interrupt bias and microaggressions, and also develop a healthy and positive racial identity.

Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (G.S.A.)

G.S.A. is a group open to students in the Upper School facilitated by our Director of Diversity & Inclusion, Lily Medina. Students meet to learn about issues impacting the LGBTQ community and their allies. All students of this age range are welcome, including allies. We will do seminars and watch and read news about the current subject. Students will also have the opportunity to connect and engage with other G.S.A. clubs at other D.I.S.C. schools. The alliance will provide valuable leadership experience in seeking change, advocating positions, negotiating agreements and communicating with peers and adults.

Student Advisory Board

The student advisory board provides a voice for all students as members participate in administrative decision-making on issues affecting student life at VCS. In its bi-monthly meetings, the group has generated ideas addressing everything from kitchen menus to internet safety. The board offers valuable leadership experience in seeking change, advocating positions, negotiating agreements and communicating with peers and adults.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

At VCS, we strive to develop the skills students need to work and live together, both at school and in the world outside our walls. Community service projects mobilize and focus children's generous spirits while setting a precedent for a lifetime of civic responsibility. Students in each age group lead community service projects throughout the year, working with the entire community and sharing their activities and achievements with the whole school.

Our annual Service Day brings the entire VCS community together to complete several projects in a single, activity-packed day. For example, Kindergarten and 1st Grade students and parent volunteers have planted dozens of seedlings for local community gardens. Grade 2-5 students and parent volunteers have created LEGO kits for children living in homeless shelters and worked to benefit groups training canine rescue teams. Upper School students and parent volunteers have stocked food banks, created a community center library and built recreational facilities for homeless children.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Intellectual engagement and lively conversation extend beyond the school day for VCS students. We continuously seek to offer exciting, relevant activities to students who have the time, energy and interest to pursue them.Lower School students may participate in our supervised, drop-in PlayGroup from dismissal until 6:00 p.m. (billedat a reasonable hourly rate). Our AfterSchool program offers various classes in art, music, chess, sports, etc. for an additional fee. Study Center is available to children in 3rd-5th Grade at no additional cost, offering a supervised Lower School students may participate in our supervised, drop-in PlayGroup from dismissal until 6:00 p.m. (billed at a reasonable hourly rate).

Our AfterSchool program offers various classes in art, music, chess, sports, etc. for an additional fee. Study Center is available to children in 3rd-5th Grade at no additional cost, offering a supervised environment for completing homework and reading. Our Upper School program spans everything from Art Studio to yoga and is available at no additional fee. Offerings like Rube Goldberg 101, VCS Runs NYC, VCS Yoga, Biodiversity Club, The Art of Problem Solving, Classics Club and more ensure every can student find a curiosity-piquing activity to explore.

VCS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Students may choose to participate in enriching experiences offered through our *VCS Beyond the Classroom* initiative. These activities stretch imaginations while transforming classroom lessons into real-world adventures in learning. *VCS Beyond the Classroom* programs require payment of fees outside of tuition.

OceansWide Science Camp offers students in Grades 6-8 two weeks of hands-on scientific research projects in and around Acadia National Park in Maine. This June program includes science at sea, whale-watching, studies of maritime history and navigation, deep looks at intertidal organisms and much more. Students work with scientists on individual and team projects, growing their scientific acumen while forming new friendships.

Language study abroad is one of the best ways to cement learning and deepen understanding of cultures, including one's own. VCS offers a one or two week trip for Grade 8 students during Spring Break. Groups have ventured to Spain, Italy, China and Taiwan, with new destinations always in development. While abroad, students take daily language classes, spend time living with a local host family, travel to important cultural sites and sample diverse native dishes. Students' fluency improves as does their appreciation for the wider world.

Instrument lessons are available to students in Grade 4 or older through our VCS Conservatory Program. Children cultivate their technical and reading skills using their own instruments (except drums) and share their work during a springtime recital.

Village Community School

The New York Leader in K–8 Education

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VCS 2020—2021