

2025 – 2026
Valley Middle School of STEM
Student Handbook



**Rigor, Relevance, Relationships;
Educating a global community
of innovative thinkers.**

Welcome to Valley Middle School of STEM

2025-26 School Year

Starting a new year is always exciting as we anticipate the many opportunities and new challenges that await us. We look forward to working with you and your child. Together, we will make this a productive, exciting, and memorable school year at Valley Middle School of STEM.

You are invited to take advantage of all the opportunities VMSS has to offer and become more personally involved in our total middle school program, through volunteering, conferencing or visiting our school. We will be communicating with you throughout the school year, and welcome your input and involvement.

Sincerely,

VMSS Staff and Administration

School Security and Safety

To insure the safety of students, staff and visitors, Valley Middle School of STEM has implemented the following security measures:

- All employees wear identification badges.
- All doors will remain locked during the school day (except for the front entry handicap door).
- All visitors should sign in at the main office and wear a visitor's name tag.
- Valley Middle School of STEM works closely with local fire and police departments to form an effective response team in the event of an emergency situation.



Table of Contents

I. Welcome to Valley Middle School of STEM	2
Security and Safety	2
II. List of VMSS Staff Voice Mail Numbers	5-7
District 196 & VMSS Calendar	5
Parent Conference Schedule	6
Important Phone Numbers	6
III. Daily Schedule	7
Leaving School	8
IV. Middle School Curriculum	8
Grade 6	8
Grade 7	8
Grade 8	8
V. Attendance Procedures	9
Absences	9
Excused Absence	9
Unexcused Absence	9
Attendance Passes	10
Permit to Leave the Building	10
Change of Address and Phone Number	10
Sign In Procedures	10
Truancy/Tardies	10
Visitors and Deliveries	11
Withdrawing from School	11
Non-Discrimination Notice	12
VI. General Information	12
Books, Workbooks and iPads	12
Contacting Teachers	12
Fire Drills/Tornado Drills/Lock-Down Drills	12
Grades	13
Home-Bound Instruction	13
Homework	13

Library Media Center	13
Lockers	13
Lost and Found	14
Breakfast Information	14
Lunch Information	14
Lunchroom Behavior Expectations	14
Physical Education/Health	15
Pledge of Allegiance	15
Registration/Schedule Change	15
Report Cards	15
School Closing Announcement	15
Student Drop-off and Pick-up	16
Technology Resources/Internet Use at VMSS	16
VMSS and District 196 Guidelines for Internet Use	16
Student Responsibilities	16
VMSS Cell Phone & EarBud Policy	17
Tobacco and Vape Free Statement	17
Volunteer Program for Parents	17
Volunteer Opportunities	18
VII. Co-Curricular Activities	18
Activities offered for VMSS Students	19
Athletics	19
Athletic/Fine Arts Participation Fee	19
Buses to Out-of-Town Activities	19
Gifted Athletic Program	19
Insurance	20
VIII. General Conduct Rules	20
Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools	20
Intervention Time	21
Suspension	22
Disruptive/Distractive Items	22
Bikes/Longboards/Skateboards	22
Student Dress	22
Student Transportation	23

IX. Student Services	23
Assessment Program	23
Child Study Services	23
Gifted and Talented Program	23
Guidance Services	24
Health Services	24
Illness and Injury	24
Guidelines for Sending Your Student to School	24
Immunizations	25
Medications	25
Health Screenings	26
Health Plans	26
7 th Grade Students – Two Immunization Requirements	26
Extended Day	26
Police Liaison Officer	26
You Matter (Support Information)	26
X. District 196 School Board & VMSS Administration	27

DISTRICT 196 & VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL OF STEM CALENDARS

Located on the District 196 Website (www.district196.org/about/calendar) and the VMSS Website vmss.district196.org

On the VMSS website, click on “Families” at the top of the page and then click on “Calendar” for the most up-to-date information

Valley Middle School of STEM Phone Number Directory VoiceMail
(651-683-6969)

Individual Email Addresses and Phone Numbers

- To email staff members please use the following example:
firstname.lastname@district196.org or go to [Valley Middle’s website](#) for a direct link.
- To find the voicemail extension for a staff member, please use the staff directory located on our [Valley Middle Contact page](#).

Important Phone Numbers

VMSS Attendance & General Information (7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.)	952-431-8300
VMSS Attendance (non-business hours)	951-683-6969 #82616
VMSS Fax	952-431-8313
Community Education	952-423-7758
District Office Switchboard	651-423-7700
District Transportation	651-423-7685
District Voice Mail	651-683-6969
District Information	651-423-7777
District Web page	www.district196.org
VMSS Webpage	vmss.district196.org

Principal: Dr. Stacey Buchwald Ext. 18786

Assistant Principal: Ms Stefanie Thomas Ext. 18785

Assistant Administrator/Athletic Director: Mr. James Jotter Ext. 18735

Behavior Specialist: Ms Jennifer Venz Ext. 18783

6th Grade Counselor: Ms Tracy Walberg Ext. 18312

7th Grade Counselor: Ms Niki Johnson Ext. 18783

8th Grade Counselor: Mr. John Bronson Ext. 18782

School Psychologist: Ms Cassandra David Ext. 82513

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

VMSS will host conferences most months of the school year. Please note that Wednesday's are reserved for academic concerns. You are encouraged to stop in and meet your students' teacher at our Back-to-School Open House and then our first general conference is on October 30th.

**Wednesday's are reserved for academic concerns.*

Wednesday, September 24, 2025 from 3-5PM

Wednesday, October 29, 2025 from 3 - 5PM

Thursday, October 30, 2025 from 12 - 7PM

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 from 3 - 5PM

Wednesday, February 4, 2026 from 3-5PM

Thursday, February 5, 2026 from 12 - 7PM

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 from 3 - 5PM

DAILY SCHEDULE

7:00 a.m. Teacher day begins. Students may make arrangements to meet and work with teachers during this time. Students are welcome to enter the main part of the building at 7:40 a.m. In the event of inclement weather or students being dropped off early by parents, students may wait in the cafeteria.

7:40 a.m. Students welcomed into building classroom areas.

7:55 a.m. All students should be in their first period class with their books, iPad and other materials for the morning.

6th Grade		7th & 8th Grade	
7:55 – 8:49	Period 1	7:55 – 8:49	Period 1
8:53 – 9:43	Period 2	8:53 – 9:43	Period 2
9:47-10:37	Eagle Time	9:47-10:37	Eagle Time
10:41 – 11:31	Period 3		LUNCH A
	LUNCH A	10:41-11:07	Lunch A
11:35 – 12:01	Period 4	11:09– 12:03	Period 3
12:03-12:09	Lunch A		LUNCH B
12:31 – 12:58	Period 4	10:41 – 11:07	Period 3
	Lunch B	11:09- 11:35	Lunch B
11:35– 12:29	Period 4	11:37 – 12:03	Period 3
12:31- 12:58	Lunch B		LUNCH C
1:01 – 1:51	Period 5	10:41 – 11:35	Period 3
1:55-2:45	Period 6	11:37-12:03	Lunch C
		12:07- 12:57	Period 4
		1:01-1:51	Period 5
		1:55-2:45	Period 6

2:45 p.m. Students are dismissed for the day.

2:55 p.m. End of school day buses depart. All other students not riding the bus need to be under the direct supervision of a teacher, coach, or other staff member in order to remain in the building.

3:00 p.m. Teacher day ends.

4:45 p.m. After school activities end. When the activity ends, students must leave school or wait in the front entryway for their ride. Parents should be aware that no direct supervision is provided for students after 5:00pm and they must wait in the vestibule.

LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY

Students are to remain on school property once they arrive for the day. Students leaving the building during the day can leave the building with parent/guardian permission and need to be signed out in the office before they leave the building. No ill student may leave without seeing the school nurse. Parents/Guardian must come into the main office to pick up their student if they are leaving early.

CURRICULUM

6th Grade

1. English Language Arts (2 class periods)
2. Minnesota Studies
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. Phy Ed/Health (1/2 year)
6. One Elective: Choir, General Music, Band (1/2 year)

7th Grade

1. English
2. American Studies
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. * Phy Ed/Health (1/2 year)
6. Communications (1/2 year)
7. Electives

8th Grade

1. English
2. Global Studies
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. Phy Ed/Health (1/2 year)

6. Communications (1/2 year)
7. Electives

*District 196 teaches students human growth and development curriculum and sexually transmitted infections and diseases prevention curriculum in seventh grade health classes. If you would like specific information about what is taught, please attend one of the meetings on these programs at your school or contact your school principal. Parents who are uncomfortable with either curriculum after talking with the principal may withhold their children from specific class sessions in which these curricula are taught.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If you are interested in reading the [2025-26 Overview of Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#), please click on this link.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Minnesota law requires that all children between the ages of 6 and 18 attend school every day that school is in session. Students are expected to be in attendance starting at 7:55AM to 2:45PM unless they have an excused absence.

ABSENCES

If a student needs to be absent from school, please report their absence to the attendance line each day at (651) 683-6969 #82616 prior to 7:15 a.m. or you can go online to the VMSS Website click on families, click on attendance, click on report an absence. State the student's name, grade and reason for their absence. Your telephone call eliminates the need to send a note with your child when they return to school. After 7:15 a.m., please call 952-431-8300 to report an absence. Students who have not had their absence excused by a parent/guardian will be considered unexcused until communication is received. The Attendance Secretary will make an attempt to call home or work numbers and parents/guardians are encouraged to keep contact numbers current in Infinite Campus.

EXCUSED ABSENCE

Absences from school should be verified by either a parent phone call or parent note to the main office. Excused absences are for illness, appointments, funerals, and unique special events in the family. Please attempt to arrange appointments before and after school.

Arrangements are to be made in advance for planned absences from school (whether for one day or several weeks) by the student bringing a note from a parent/guardian to the Attendance Secretary one week prior to the absence. The note should state the reason for the absence and the dates the student will be gone.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

Absences may be incurred with or without the knowledge of the parent/guardian. Any absence from school is considered unexcused if a parent has not notified the school of his/her student's absence by either a phone call or a note by the next day. Unexcused absences are generally any absence from school not including illness, medical appointments or approved family vacations. If concerns arise connected to absences a counselor or administrator may request a parent conference.

ATTENDANCE PASSES

The Attendance Secretary writes passes each morning in the main office, prior to first period. Any notes from parents concerning absences are to be brought to the Attendance Secretary at this time. Students should not give notes directly to their teachers.

PERMIT TO LEAVE THE BUILDING PASSES (BLUE)

Appointments – Students are required to have a parent/guardian note if they need to leave during the school day. The note should state the reason the student will be leaving early, the time the student needs to leave, who will be picking up the student and a parent/guardian signature. The student should bring the note to the Attendance Secretary in the main office prior to first period of that day. The student will then give their teacher the pass to leave class and meet their parent/guardian in the office. Students are released only to parents unless the note specifies otherwise. Should a parent forget to send a note with their student for an appointment, etc., a phone call to school will allow the student to get a pass prior to the parent arriving for pick-up.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER

Parent/guardian should make changes in the home, work, cell, and emergency phone numbers and/or addresses by contacting the school or on Campus Parent in Infinite Campus.

SIGN-IN PROCEDURES

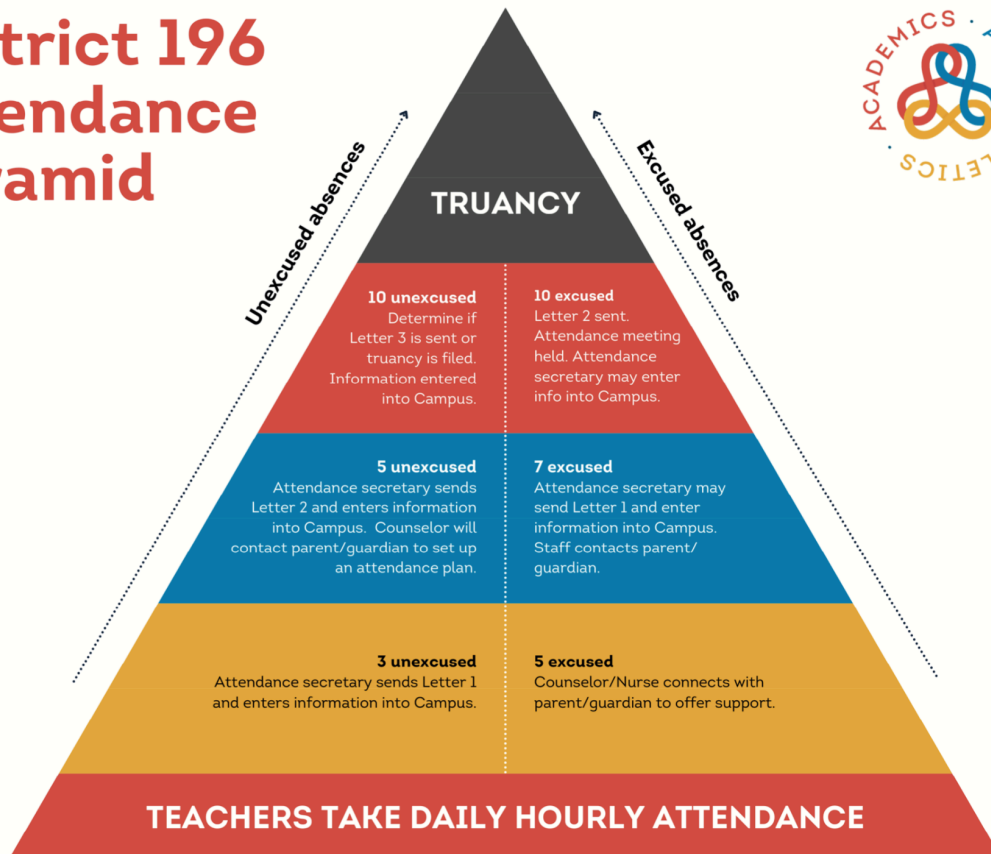
Students arriving to school at 7:54 a.m. or later will be required to sign in at the Attendance Secretary's desk in the main office before they go to class. The student will be given a pass to class. Parents do not need to accompany their students to sign in at the office provided they have notified the school that the student will be tardy or have sent a note with the student for the Attendance Secretary. If students do not have an approved excuse, the tardy will be recorded as unexcused. Excessive tardiness to school may result in the student making up time during noontime or after school.

TRUANCY AND TARDIES TO SCHOOL

Cases of suspected truancy and/or excessive tardies are handled by the administration. Parents will be notified as soon as possible if their child is truant. Cases of habitual or extended periods of truancy and/or excessive tardiness will be documented and referred to the Dakota County Attorney. Parents and their student will be involved initially in a diversion conference.

Tardiness: If you arrive at school tardy, check in at the office before you go to class. Excessive tardiness will not be permitted, and may result in consequences. Parents will be notified by an administrator in cases of their child's excessive tardiness to class. Examples: oversleeping, missing the bus, homework and being late to homeroom or class. Tardies to class during the school day will result in detention during lunch, WIN, or after school.

District 196 attendance pyramid



Please visit District 196 [attendance matters website](#) for more information.

VISITORS & DELIVERIES

Only parent/guardian approved adult visitors are allowed to visit students. All visitors must sign in at the main office and obtain a visitor's name tag. Visitors are strongly encouraged to make appointments.

Parents/guardians dropping off items for students may leave them at a table located just outside the office doors. VMSS is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

*DELIVERIES FROM OUTSIDE SERVICES SUCH AS GRUB HUB ARE NOT PERMITTED.

WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL

Parents are asked to contact their child's counselor one week prior to moving to obtain a withdrawal card. Students should see that all school materials (including school issued Ipad) are returned and all personal items are removed from their assigned locker.

NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE

District 196 does not discriminate in employment or in any of its programs and activities, including vocational opportunities, on the basis of sex, race, religion, color, creed, national origin, marital status, familial status,* disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, membership or activity in a local human rights commission,* age or genetic information.* District 196 provides equal access to designated youth groups. (Asterisked categories (*) are limited to employment-related discrimination and harassment.)

CONTACTS:

The Director of Human Resources

Tom Pederstuen (651-423-7859 – tom.pederstuen@district196.org) designated to respond to employment-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX.

The Director of Elementary Education

Sally Soliday (651-423-7782 – sally.soliday@district196.org) designated to respond to student-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX.

Director of Secondary Education

Eric Hansen (651-423-7712 – eric.hansen@district196.org) designated to respond to student-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX.

The Director of Special Education

Janet Fimmen (651-423-7629 – janet.fimmen@district196.org) designated to respond to inquiries concerning the rights of a student with a disability.

*The mailing address for all directors is 3455 153rd Street W, Rosemount, MN 55068.

GENERAL INFORMATION

BOOKS, WORKBOOKS AND iPads

Textbooks and iPads are furnished by the district according to district curriculum adoption policies. However, each student is responsible for these items. Lost or damaged books are the financial responsibility of the student. Workbooks will be used in some classes.

Replacement of lost books, workbooks or iPads may require payment at cost prior to the end of the school year.

CONTACTING TEACHERS

Should you wish to contact one of your child's teachers, e-mail is the most efficient method using this framework: firstname.lastname@district196.org . If the staff member is not listed in this handbook, please check the VMSS website at vmss.district196.org for more directory information. You may call the district voicemail number (651) 683-6969, dial the teacher's personal voicemail number (listed at the beginning of the handbook) and leave a phone number

and time when you can be reached. The teacher will return your call at his/her earliest availability. You may also call the school at (952) 431-8300.

FIRE DRILLS, TORNADO DRILLS, LOCK-DOWN DRILLS

According to Minnesota State Law, schools must have fire drills, tornado drills and lockdown drills. Emergency drills are held throughout the year. Instructors will explain the evacuation plan or shelter plan in each class. The instructors will accompany students from the building to a safe area out of the building. During tornado drills, students will move quietly and orderly to a shelter area. The instructors will show students “how to sit”, to help avoid serious injury. If students are outside, the instructor will select a shelter area. During lock-down drills, students are to remain quiet and follow the direction of the adult giving instructions until the completion of the drill. During fire drills, students will move quietly and orderly out of the building. All procedures will initially be explained to students during a designated “Safety Day” at the start of the school year.

GRADES

Grading is done on a letter basis, A, B, C, D and F (59% or below). Each subject area has criteria for student grades. Parents & Guardians are encouraged to check their students' grade status regularly in Schoology. When a student is doing unsatisfactory work or is failing to work up to his/her potential, parents will be notified. Communication will come while there is still time to make changes in student progress. Please notify the teacher, the counselor, or administration with any concerns.

HOME-BOUND INSTRUCTION

If it becomes necessary for a student to be absent from school for an extended period because of a serious illness or accident, arrangements may be made to provide instruction at home. Parents should call the school counselor to discuss accommodations. Fifteen consecutive days of absence and/or a doctor's note is a requirement for these services.

HOMEWORK

Students will have homework most days. Most classes have work to be done outside of class in the form of preparing for tests and projects will result in home study time. A one hour study time each night is suggested to help each student develop good study habits. If your student does not have homework on a particular night, we strongly suggest using this hour for recreational reading. Check the teachers' Schoology pages for assignments.

LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER

The Library Media Center is a multi-purpose area where students are welcome to study, research, work on the computers, or find great books and magazines to read! The Library Media Center hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Students may check out two items at a time. Members of the READ Club receive extra checkout privileges. Books may be checked out for two weeks and magazines for overnight. Students must return overdue materials to the Library Media Center in order to check out new materials.

LOCKERS

All students are assigned a locker which they should not share or give someone else their locker combination. Before leaving their locker, students should make sure the door of the locker is completely closed, turn the dial of the locker and ensure it is locked. Students are encouraged not to bring large sums of money or other valuables to school. Losses from lockers and problems with locks should be reported to the office immediately. No permanent writing or items such as vinyl stickers may be adhered to the inside or outside of lockers. Students are also advised to bring a lock to secure their items during their physical education period.

LOST AND FOUND

All items of jewelry, purses, wallets, watches, calculators, iPad eyeglasses and dental appliances will be kept in the office lost and found area. Lost clothing, school supplies and other low-cost items will be kept in the lost and found closet under the skylights by the restrooms. *At the end of each conference period or month clothing not claimed by students will be donated to charity. All other items will be thrown away.

BREAKFAST/LUNCH INFORMATION

All families are strongly encouraged to complete an Educational Benefits Application, formerly the free and reduced-price meals application. A new application must be submitted each year.

VMSS has a computerized system for payment of school meals. Every student is assigned a 4 or 5-digit personal account identification number which should be placed on the outside case of their iPads. Students may deposit pre-payments into their accounts at the cash registers or pay cash daily. If students prepay with a check, please include the student's lunch account number and name on the check, especially if the student's last name is different from the name on the check. The cashiers will notify students when their account balance is low. To apply for free or reduced lunch, go to www.district196.org/edbenefits.

BREAKFAST

Milk is included with the meal and can also be purchased separately. Breakfast items are available daily from 7:35 to 7:50 a.m.

LUNCH

Milk is included with the meal and can also be purchased separately. Each day there are three choices available for "regular" lunch. There are additional "ala carte" items available periodically for purchase for a nominal fee. These items can be purchased through the student's lunch account with a signed permission slip from the parent or guardian or they can be purchased with cash at the registers.

Please call the VMSS food service office with any questions or concerns at 952-431-8311.

LUNCHROOM BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Students are encouraged to wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer before eating lunch.

- Students should set down any bags they might have at their seat and take their iPad with their lunch code adhered to them to get in line.
- Students should then get their food and be seated in their own seat which they will remain in for the duration of the lunch period.

- Students are expected to pick up after themselves/their lunch tables and deposit any trash in a waste container as they are excused by an adult.
- Students may be assigned a seat if displaying inappropriate behavior & ALL students may be asked to sit in Advisory sections as necessary due to behavior.
- Students may not order food from local restaurants and have it delivered to school. **No Doordash delivery.**

**Unfortunately, we cannot host organized birthdays or celebrations during lunch time as these parties are often disruptive to the lunchroom environment. This includes ordering/bringing in food, balloons, and/or providing a birthday cake for a group of students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH

The physical education (PE) area (pool, gymnasium, stage area and locker rooms) is an area where students can participate in physical activity while learning basic performance and life skills. Students following these guidelines will have a successful class experience:

- Enter PE areas only when you have PE class.
- Wear suitable physical education attire, such as a T-shirt, shorts and athletic shoes and socks. Swimsuits during swimming courses.
- Provide a combination lock to secure your items. Be aware that items in unlocked lockers can disappear from the locker rooms. **VMSS IS NOT LIABLE FOR LOST, DAMAGED OR STOLEN ITEMS.** *All locks in the locker room will be cut two days after the completion of each sport season.
- No food or drinks are allowed in the gym or locker rooms with the exception of water.

The student should present a physician's certificate or consult with the school nurse to be excused from physical education for any period of time.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance is intended to promote community and citizenship at VMSS. Students will be invited to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of each day. If students choose not to participate, due to personal beliefs, we ask that they be still and observe the time respectfully.

REGISTRATION - SCHEDULE CHANGE

All student programming is done in accordance with individual registrations completed the year prior or at the time a new student enrolls. In most cases, students are placed in the elective courses of their choice. In some cases, changes are necessary due to course enrollment, class availability, or placement into intervention classes.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards will be available through your Campus Parent account within two weeks after the end of each trimester. If you don't have access, contact our office for a hard copy of your child's report card.

SCHOOL CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT

For information regarding the closing of school due to inclement weather, listen to station WCCO, or call the district weather number (651) 423-7777. Please do not call the school for this information. You may also check the district website at www.district196.org. An automated phone call is also being made to parents that have their correct phone numbers in the Parent Portal.

STUDENT DROP OFF & PICKUP

For safety purposes, if you bring your student to school and pick them up at the end of the school day please follow these procedures:

- Only use the EAST entrance off Garden View Drive.
- Form TWO lines of vehicles when needed.
- Line cars up SINGLE-FILE and pull ahead in an orderly fashion. Vehicles may EXIT RIGHT OR LEFT back onto Garden View Drive.
- Students should be let out of their vehicles directly onto the sidewalk and picked up at the designated safe areas on the sidewalks.
- DO NOT let your student out or pick your student up in the parking lot or in the street.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES & INTERNET USE AT VMSS

All students will be issued an iPad with Internet access. We are confident that the 1:1 program will provide all of our student's appropriate access to Internet resources and we will be able to utilize that access in maximizing student engagement in the classroom.

- It is a privilege to use iPads and computers at VMSS.
- Technology should be used in a responsible, ethical and legal manner. If used inappropriately, students may lose their privileges to use technology.
- Students are NOT to share passwords.
Gaining access to someone's personal folder, other than your own, is considered to be trespassing.
- Food or drinks are not allowed at computers.
- Intentional damage to school technology is considered vandalism and students may lose their computer privileges.

VMSS AND DISTRICT 196 GUIDELINES FOR INTERNET USE

All Internet use at Valley Middle School of STEM will take place in teacher supervised settings. The following are District 196 Student Responsibilities for Internet use.

Student Responsibilities:

The Internet, an international network of networks, allows people access to hundreds of thousands of networks and computers. Access to the Internet via the District 196 wide area network is governed by the same guidelines that govern use of any computer or computer network in the district. Failure to adhere to responsible, ethical and legal guidelines of use may result in revocation of access privileges. The following are student guidelines for Internet use:

- Only students who have completed their school's requirements for Internet access are allowed to go on-line.
- Our policy is to access the Internet for specific educational purposes only, such as researching a specific topic for a classroom project.
- Any information downloaded from the Internet should be classroom related.
- Students may not use impolite or abusive language via electronic mail or list serves.
- Students must never give out any personal information such as their address, telephone number, parent's name, etc.
- Students must always tell a teacher if they come across any information that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- No review or downloading of material that is obscene, vulgar, sexually explicit or offensive in terms of race, sex or religion will be tolerated.
- Only district/VMSS purchased applications are allowed to be used on VMSS computers. Downloading of software/computer applications is NOT allowed.

VMSS CELLPHONE & EARBUD POLICY

- Students are not allowed to miss class to place phone calls. Students may use the student phones outside the office and should limit their calls as not to miss instructional time. Students do not need a cellphone while at school and are encouraged to leave such devices at home. Cell Phone use is not allowed during the school day. Per district policy, If a cell phone is brought to school it must be kept turned off and put away such as in the student's locker or backpack.
- Students may ask permission to use their phones briefly for emergencies.
- Wired earbuds are only allowed with teacher permission. No blue-tooth headphones are allowed
- If a student's cell phone is taken by any staff member, it will be taken to the office until a parent/guardian comes in to pick it up if the student has already been issued a warning.

TOBACCO & VAPE FREE STATEMENT

District 196 and Valley Middle School of STEM is a tobacco-free environment. Use of tobacco in district buildings or on district grounds is prohibited. ****Please note that tobacco and vape detectors have been installed in all student used restrooms.***

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

Our community contains a wealth of untapped resources which can enrich the educational program at Valley Middle School of STEM. The PTO always welcomes parents and guardians to volunteer. Please visit their website (Valley Middle School of STEM on Facebook) and/or attend their monthly meetings for more information.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Student parties held at Valley Middle School of STEM are sponsored solely by the Parent Communication Network. These parties are organized, supervised, and chaperoned by PCN parents.
- Back-to-School Open House, PCN Communication Table & 7th grade vision screening.
- School Pictures - assisting the photographer with paperwork and student organization.
- Library Media Center - to shelve books, cover new books, or for special projects.
- Music/Band - to catalog music, piano accompanist for choir concerts or musicals, and help clean instruments at end of year.
- Chaperoning field trips.
- Staff Appreciation Dinners - Parents provide a potluck supper for teachers during first and second trimester conferences.
- Assist in the Fab Lab with lots of opportunities to help with engineering and coding projects.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES OFFERED FOR VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL OF STEM STUDENTS

Fall

READ Club
 Drama Production
 Cross Country (6-8 gr. boys/girls)
 Soccer (7-8 gr. boys/girls)
 Volleyball (7-8 gr. Girls)
 Tennis (6-8 gr. girls)

Winter I

READ Club
 Speech
 Basketball (7-8 gr. girls)
 Wrestling (6-8 gr. boys/girls)

Winter II

READ Club
 Drama Production
 Speech
 Basketball (7th gr. Boys)

Winter III

READ Club
Swimming/Diving (6-8
gr. boys/girls)
Basketball (8th gr. Boys)
Chess Club

Spring

READ Club
Tennis (6-8 gr. boys)
Track(7-8 gr. boys/girls)

- 7th & 8th grade students can participate and compete in all of the above sports/activities at VMSS. The following sports are available at high school: gymnastics, softball, baseball. For football contact the Valley Athletic Association.
- 6th grade students can participate fully in Boys/Girls Cross Country, Wrestling, and Tennis, Declam, Ski Club, Drama, READ Club (The Library Club), and academic clubs. 6th Graders are also eligible to participate in swimming/diving and track practice but are not eligible to compete.

ATHLETICS

All students are invited to participate in athletics. Sports physical examinations are required (this is different from 7th grade immunization). The following athletic department regulations will be in force throughout the entire year and shall govern all students participating in any sport sanctioned as part of the school program.

- Every student will have access to any co-curricular programs in which they wish to participate.
- Grades - All athletes must maintain passing grades in school work, according to the Minnesota State High School League rules to be eligible.
- Drugs, tobacco and/or alcohol - We will follow guidelines of the Minnesota State High School League.
- Students should be in attendance all day on the day of activity to be eligible to participate in that activity.

ATHLETIC/FINE ARTS PARTICIPATION FEE

There is a fee required by the district for participation. Please see the school website for more information. The fee will be non-refundable. Students qualifying for free/reduced lunch will have a reduced cost or no cost to join. Sign up and pay online through Edu Track Connect before participation in co-curricular activities is permitted. MyPaymentPlus will end on September 30th with Edu Trak Connect starting October 1st for payments. A valid sports physical signed by a doctor is needed in the main office and is valid for 3 years. Immunization records do not qualify for a sports physical.

BUSES TO OUT-OF-TOWN ACTIVITIES

Students riding on a school bus to an out-of-town activity must also return on the school bus, unless the parents/guardians sign and submit a release form to the advisor/ head coach before leaving with their child. Students can be released to their parents/guardians only.

GIFTED ATHLETIC PROGRAM

A seventh or eighth grade student may participate in a high school varsity athletic activity in which he or she demonstrates exceptional and superior ability in a particular sport. A gifted athlete is one whose needs cannot be adequately met by the middle school program because he or she has the ability to be a consistent starter at the high school varsity level. A request is initiated by the parents by contacting the athletic director of the high school. These students, if accepted onto the high school teams will have to pay the high school fee for that sport. Middle school students do not leave school early for practice at the high school. High school coaches will notify the VMSS office for early dismissal on game days.

INSURANCE

Students wishing to participate in athletics should be covered by medical insurance provided by the parent(s). The school district does not have insurance for participants in the school athletic programs, any school activities, or for accidents that occur at school.

GENERAL CONDUCT RULES

The main goal in our school is education through academic, social and behavioral development. Students, staff, and parents share responsibility for developing a school climate that fosters learning and provides an opportunity for the free expression of ideas. As citizens of a school, students have certain rights and privileges and they are responsible for their actions. Keeping this in mind, all discipline will be handled on an individual basis when the need arises and addressed through a lens of education.

The district "Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook" is distributed to all District 196 families in August by U.S. Mail. This publication explains district behavior expectations and the consequences of misbehavior, and due process requirements as defined in state and federal law, board policy and district regulations. We urge parents/ guardians and each student to review the material carefully and refer any questions to school administrators. A review of the handbook with students will occur during the first weeks of school.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE MINNESOTA SCHOOLS

Students have the right to be safe and free from threatening situations on school property, at school activities and in district vehicles. Bullying interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. To the extent bullying affects the educational environment of the schools, it is the school district's intent to prevent bullying from occurring, and to investigate and respond to bullying that has not been prevented.

The Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act defines bullying as intimidating, threatening, abusive or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in prohibited conduct and the target of the behavior and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services or privileges.

The Act defines cyberbullying as using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound or data,

including a post on a social network Internet website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone or other electronic device.

Bullying behavior should be reported to a staff member. The district's processes for reporting and responding to bullying behavior can be found on the district website.

For Administrative Regulation 503.8AR, Bullying Prohibition, go to

<http://www.district196.org/District/schoolboard/policies/500/503.8AR.pdf>.

For Procedure 503.8P, Report of Bullying Behavior, go to <http://www.district196.org/District/schoolboard/policies/500/503.8P.pdf>.

INTERVENTION TIME

Time may be assigned after or during school by teachers or administrators for general infractions of the classroom, school rules and/or failure to meet academic standards. During this time students will work with staff to develop skills to be more successful in the school setting. Transportation arrangements will be made ahead of time with parents/guardians. Students assigned may receive a school issued bag lunch if their intervention time occurs over the lunch period.

Academic Honesty

All coursework completed by students at Valley Middle School STEM is expected to be completed with integrity and understanding of the following expectations:

Student Responsibility: I will do my learning and collaborate with others only with teacher authorization for graded submissions

Parent and guardian Responsibility: I will actively support my student's understanding of the academic honesty policy for Valley Middle School.

Staff Responsibility: We will support the Academic honesty policy by teaching expectations for student work and responsibilities

Definitions of Academic Honesty transgressions

Cheating: Presenting work done by another student as your work, using others' work. Examples include:

- Copying another student's work to pass off as your own
- Using unauthorized "cheat sheets"
- Buying or selling work to a student
- Having another student take an exam or write a paper for you
- Receiving and/or providing test questions /answers to other students

Plagiarism: A form of cheating through the taking of others' words, thoughts, or ideas and representing them as your own. Examples include

- Using another's speech, paper, or project as your own
- Use of direct quotes without citing sources
- Substituting words or rearranging the phrases of a work to pass it off as your own
- Not acknowledging or documenting sources used in the creation of works

Academic Use of AI

District 196 recognizes artificial intelligence (AI) as a powerful tool to enhance [teaching and learning](#). We are committed to integrating AI into our learning and technology framework to enrich the educational experience, promote equity, and meet the diverse needs of our students

and staff, all while upholding academic integrity. At Valley Middle School of STEM, the use of generative AI tools is governed by District 196's AI Guidance, which prioritizes ethical use, academic integrity, and transparency.

Permitted Use

- Students may use AI tools **only when explicitly authorized** by their teacher.
- AI should support—*not replace*—student effort.
- Students must cite AI use and be able to explain how it was used.

Prohibited Use

- Copying AI-generated content without approval or citation is **plagiarism**.
- Entering personal information into AI tools is **strictly prohibited** to protect student privacy.

Student Responsibilities

- **Transparency:** Be honest about AI use and when in doubt, disclose.
- **Accuracy & Authenticity:** Verify AI-generated content for correctness and bias.
- **Privacy:** Do not share personal or sensitive information in AI tools.

Consequences for Misuse

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action consistent with the school's **Honor Code and Academic Integrity Policy**, which may include but not limited to:

- A zero on the assignment
- A requirement to redo the work
- Disciplinary referral or additional consequences at the teacher/administrator's discretion

By following these guidelines, students can responsibly engage with AI while upholding the values of academic excellence and integrity in District 196.

SUSPENSION

Suspension is the result of more serious offenses such as: fighting, extreme insubordination, use of alcohol or drugs on school property, and willful destruction or defacing of school property. A possible alternative to suspension may involve parents attending school with their child or in-school suspension (ISS) when appropriate. If suspension occurs, it includes school activities, such as athletics, plays, concerts, etc. as students are not allowed on District 196 property during their Out of School Suspension (OSS).

DISRUPTIVE/DISTRACTING ITEMS

Items that distract and/or interfere with the learning process should be left at home. Staff members are permitted to confiscate any item or device (electronic or otherwise) that is being used in class without the permission of the teacher. Items confiscated will be turned into the front office. The student may be able to pick it up from the office at the end of the day. If there is a second violation, the device is held until a parent comes to the school and picks it up. Repeated violations will result in a loss of privilege for the students to bring these items to school or they may be kept until the end of the school year.

BIKES/E-Bikes(electric bikes)/LONGBOARDS/SKATEBOARDS

Items such as these should not be used inside school. Students biking to school should walk their bikes on school property while students are present and always use a lock on the bike racks only. Skateboards and longboards may be kept in a teacher's classroom with permission. VMSS is not responsible for the safety and security of these items.

State law prohibits individuals under the age of 15 to operate an electric assisted bicycle. Students at VMSS should not bring e-bikes onto school property. Per MN State Statute 169.222, you must be 15 years of age to use an e-bike.

STUDENT DRESS

School is a place of work and learning. Student attire should match this environment. Please be aware that because middle school students come in all shapes and sizes, what might be appropriate attire for one child may not be appropriate for another. Therefore, students should choose attire that is appropriate for the education setting. Students wearing clothing that poses a cause for threat or disruption will be spoken to about this concern and may be asked to change. These types of items can include: heavy or spiked chained accessories, hoods, and clothing with words or visuals which are obscene, abusive or discriminatory, or which advertise alcohol, tobacco, firearms, or drugs. Shoes should also be worn at all times. Hood should not be worn on heads for safety reasons so that the students can be identifiable. Undergarments (including sports bras and underwear) need to be covered with clothing. Hats are allowed to be worn.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The safety of all students is of primary importance. To help ensure safety, students are required to abide by all behavior rules included in the district Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Students are not allowed to change buses or bus stops (i.e. going home with a friend).

STUDENT SERVICES

ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The testing program is an aspect of the student services department. A number of standardized and statewide tests will be administered at various grade levels throughout the year. Results of these tests can be found on Campus Parent and any questions from parents or students may be shared with the counselors.

CHILD STUDY PROCESS

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is a federal special education law intended to ensure that every student with special education needs receives access to a high quality education. The process by which student needs, eligibility and potential program options is determined, is referred to as Child Study. This is a clearly defined and comprehensive process, which the school must pursue in order for a student to be designated as handicapped, and therefore in need of special education services. For more information regarding special education, contact your student's counselor, or the school psychologist.

GIFTED AND TALENTED DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM

Valley Middle School of STEM believes that every student should be provided with appropriate learning opportunities in an environment that supports their academic and affective needs. Because Gifted Services are an integral part of the school, a continuum of programming options is offered for high achieving students. Gifted students may be placed in advanced math courses as well as being clustered in other classes. VMSS staff

work diligently to engage these students in increased rigor, complexity, depth of curriculum and self-directed learning.

In addition, students are encouraged to explore a variety of enrichments offered before, during and after the school day. Examples may include Art, READ, Math and Chess Clubs, essay, math and poetry competitions, Thinking Cap, Scholastic Scrimmage, Future City, LEGO and FTC Robotics, Destination Imagination, Declam, WordMasters, theater productions, Stock Market Game, STEM trips, Young Authors Conference, and Battle of the Books. Exceptionally high math students may take the ACT or SAT.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR SERVICES

The goal of the school counselor program is to help students succeed in their academic and personal lives. This support may include helping students form good study habits, make sound educational decisions, resolve conflicts, and develop effective interpersonal skills. These topics can be explored individually, with small groups of peers in the confidential setting available in the counselors' offices, or as a part of classroom presentations. Parents are encouraged to use our on-line services and set up a plan to monitor their child's academic progress. If the student falls behind in their schoolwork the individual teacher(s) are the first contact in supporting students' academic progress. Students may schedule time with their School Counselor by sending them a message via Schoology or asking permission from their teacher if the matter is urgent.

HEALTH SERVICES

The nurse's office is located inside the main office. The nurse assists students who are ill, injured or require medication administration, or need help with medical problems. Office hours are 7:20 a.m. to 2:50 p.m.

Students need to obtain permission from their classroom teacher before reporting to the nurse's office except in emergency situations. Students may not leave school for illness without first reporting to the nurse's office and obtaining a permit to leave the building. Students who take daily medication are expected to report to the nurse's office at their assigned time to receive their medication. A health record is kept for each student. This contains immunization records, health history, vision and hearing screening results, and a sports physical for athletic participants. When a student transfers to another school, a copy of the student's health folder will be sent with their records. An emergency card is to be completed by parent/guardian for each student each school year on Campus Parent. Changes of address, phone numbers, or new health information should be reported to the school and/or changed on Campus Parent. This is vital to have accurate emergency contact information. All medication (prescription and non-prescription) must be kept in the nurse's office.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

In cases of illness or significant injury at school, a parent or guardian will be contacted by the Health Office. If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called. The emergency contact should be willing and able to provide transportation and supervision of the student. It is important the parent/guardian and emergency contact information is current for all students. If no one can be reached, 911 will be contacted as necessary. Please keep your contact and emergency contact information up to date.

GUIDELINES FOR SENDING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL

We want children in school and ready to learn. The following guidelines have been established to help determine when children should remain at home. They may need to rest at home if they have:

- Fever (100.4 degrees or higher.)
- Vomiting/Diarrhea (Stay home from school for 20 hours after last episode)
- Strep throat (students may return to school when they have been on antibiotics for 12 hours and fever free for 20 hours)
- Any rash, of which you do not know the cause
- Or they are not physically feeling well enough to participate in the school day.

When your child is feeling ill please don't hesitate to call your school nurse with questions or concerns. We would prefer your child remain at home for 24 hours after the above symptoms have subsided. This helps prevent the spread of communicable diseases and allows the opportunity to rest and recover fully from the illness.

The school district will follow the guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health for recommended exclusion and notification for vaccine-preventable diseases (mumps, measles, rubella, pertussis, diphtheria, viral hepatitis, chickenpox and meningitis). There will be no other classroom or grade level notification for communicable diseases.

IMMUNIZATIONS

In order for students to enroll or remain enrolled in elementary or secondary school, MN state law requires documentation of required immunizations, written proof of exemption, or conscientious objection. Students will not be allowed to start school until this information is returned to the Health Office. Your child can meet the immunization requirements through being fully immunized, providing a signed medical exemption letter or through a notarized conscientious objection.

<https://www.district196.org/services/health-services/immunizations>

MEDICATIONS

To ensure students receive needed medication and that it is not misused, the school district has developed rules for the administration of medication in school. All medication must be kept in the office of the school nurse and must be administered by the school nurse or other appropriate school personnel unless there is authorization for self-carry/self-administration on file with the health office.

Medication guidelines:

- A completed Prescription Medication Authorization Form from a student's parent or guardian and
- Medication in a prescription bottle or original container is required before a school nurse will give a student prescription or non-prescription medication
- Only FDA approved medications will be administered by school personnel

· Parent consent for non-prescription medications is required. If medication is to be given for more than two weeks, a written order from a physician or dentist must be provided to the school. If prescription medication remains in the nurse's office after the end of a school year or when the student is no longer attending the school, the nurse will contact the student's parent or guardian to pick up the medication. If the medication is not picked up within one month, it will be destroyed. With parent permission, epi pens, inhalers and insulin can be sent home with the student at the end of the school year

HEALTH SCREENINGS

Each year students participate in screening. Students also receive hearing and/or vision screening upon request from a parent/guardian or if the teacher suspects a hearing or vision concern that is affecting the student's ability to learn. If you do not wish to have your child screened please contact the School Nurse.

HEALTH PLANS

If your student has a health condition that could result in an emergency (for example, serious allergy with epi pen, diabetes, seizure disorder or asthma) or has a health condition requiring accommodations (for example, medication administration, treatments, or restrictions) contact the School Nurse before the school year starts or as soon as the condition develops. Our school and district websites have the necessary forms for you and your child's physician to complete. <https://www.district196.org/services/health-services>

7TH GRADE STUDENTS - TWO IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

7th grade students are required by Minnesota state law to have a Td or Tdap booster after age 11, 2 Varicella vaccines (or have had the Chicken Pox), a 2nd MMR Vaccine, the Hepatitis B series of three vaccine(s) AND 1 Meningococcal prior to entering 7th grade. Please report any vaccine updates to the nurse so the student's health record and computer can be accurate and up to date.

If you have questions call the VMSS nurse at (952) 431-8784 or via voice mail, 651-683-6969, mail box #18784.

EXTENDED DAY

After school academic assistance is available for identified students from mid-November through mid-May. Extended Day is held after school Tuesday, and Thursday afternoons from 2:50 to 4:45 p.m. Teachers and parents concerned about the academic progress of their students should contact the grade-level school counselor and/or the Assistant Administrator to explore support options that may include the extended day program.

POLICE LIAISON OFFICER

A police liaison officer has been assigned to the school to assist in establishing positive attitudes of understanding, respect, and trust of police officers and the system of law enforcement.

Parents/guardians and students should feel free to contact the school to speak to the liaison officer for support and/or concerning school or community problems.

YOU MATTER

If you or someone you know needs support:

Dakota County Crisis Response - CALL 952-891-7171
National Crisis Text Line - Text SCHOOL to 741741
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline - Call or text 988

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