

VAN WERT MIDDLE SCHOOL

2026-2027

10694 State Route 118 South

Van Wert OH 45891

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Home of the Cougars

A National and Ohio School to Watch since 2005

Principal's Office 419-238-0727

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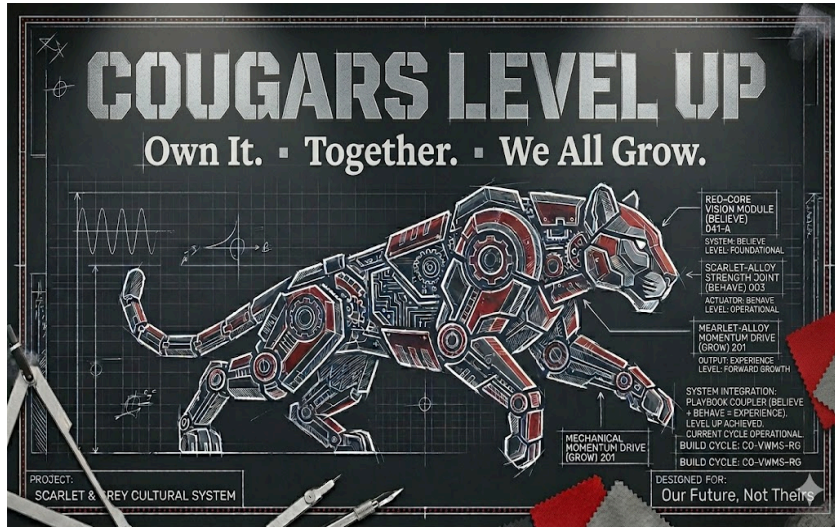
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To the Classes of 2031, 2032, and 2033

Welcome to Van Wert Middle School!



Middle school is a time of growth, discovery, and opportunity. It is a time to explore new interests, build lasting friendships, develop independence, and discover the strengths that make you unique.

At VWMS, we believe that What You Do Matters. Every choice, every effort, and every interaction helps shape who you are becoming. That's why our theme is:

LEVEL UP

At VWMS, we continue to Level Up by strengthening the habits, relationships, and systems that help students and staff grow. As we look ahead, we are also building the foundation for what comes next—helping every Cougar understand they are built for more.

OWN IT

- Act with purpose
- Do the right thing, even when it's difficult
- Take responsibility for your choices and actions

TOGETHER

- Believe that We > Me
- Build positive relationships
- Support and encourage one another

WE ALL GROW

- Embrace challenges
- Learn from mistakes
- Persevere through setbacks
- Focus on progress, not perfection

At VWMS, Cougar Pride means being:

 Respectful  Responsible  Safe  Kind

We are excited to partner with you and your family as we learn, grow, and Level Up together.

What You Do Matters. Own It. Together. We All Grow.

THE VWMS EXPERIENCE

At Van Wert Middle School, we believe every student deserves to feel safe, connected, valued, and successful.

Every Student Belongs We intentionally create opportunities for students to build meaningful relationships with peers & adults.

Small Learning Communities

- Students are part of either the Scarlet Team or Grey Team at each grade level.
- Smaller teams help students build stronger connections with teachers and classmates.

Dens That Last Every student belongs to one of our four Dens: ★ Glory ★ Honor ★ Merit ★ Valor

Students remain in the same Den throughout middle school, building friendships, school pride, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging.

Strong Relationships We believe students learn best when they feel known, supported, and connected. Our staff is committed to building positive relationships with students and partnering with families to support student success.

Discover Your Interests Middle school is a time to explore new opportunities and discover your passions.

Discovery Classes allow students to explore

 Art  Band, Choir, & Music  STEM & Technology  Gateway to Technology (GTT) Engineering
 Green Architecture  Medical Explorations  Video Production  Makerspace  Life Foundations

These experiences help students develop creativity, problem-solving skills, collaboration, and real-world knowledge.

Explore Your Future Career exploration begins in middle school.

Through YouScience and other career-readiness experiences, students explore how their interests and natural aptitudes connect to future careers and educational opportunities. Students begin discovering:

✅ What they enjoy ✅ What they do well ✅ Career pathways that match their strengths ✅ Opportunities available after high school

Grow as a Leader Students have opportunities to lead, serve, and make a difference through:

 Cougar Leaders  PBIS & Den Points  Cougar Time Supports  Service Learning Opportunities  School Activities & Athletics

A Tradition of Excellence Van Wert Middle School is proud to be a:

 National School to Watch  Ohio School to Watch

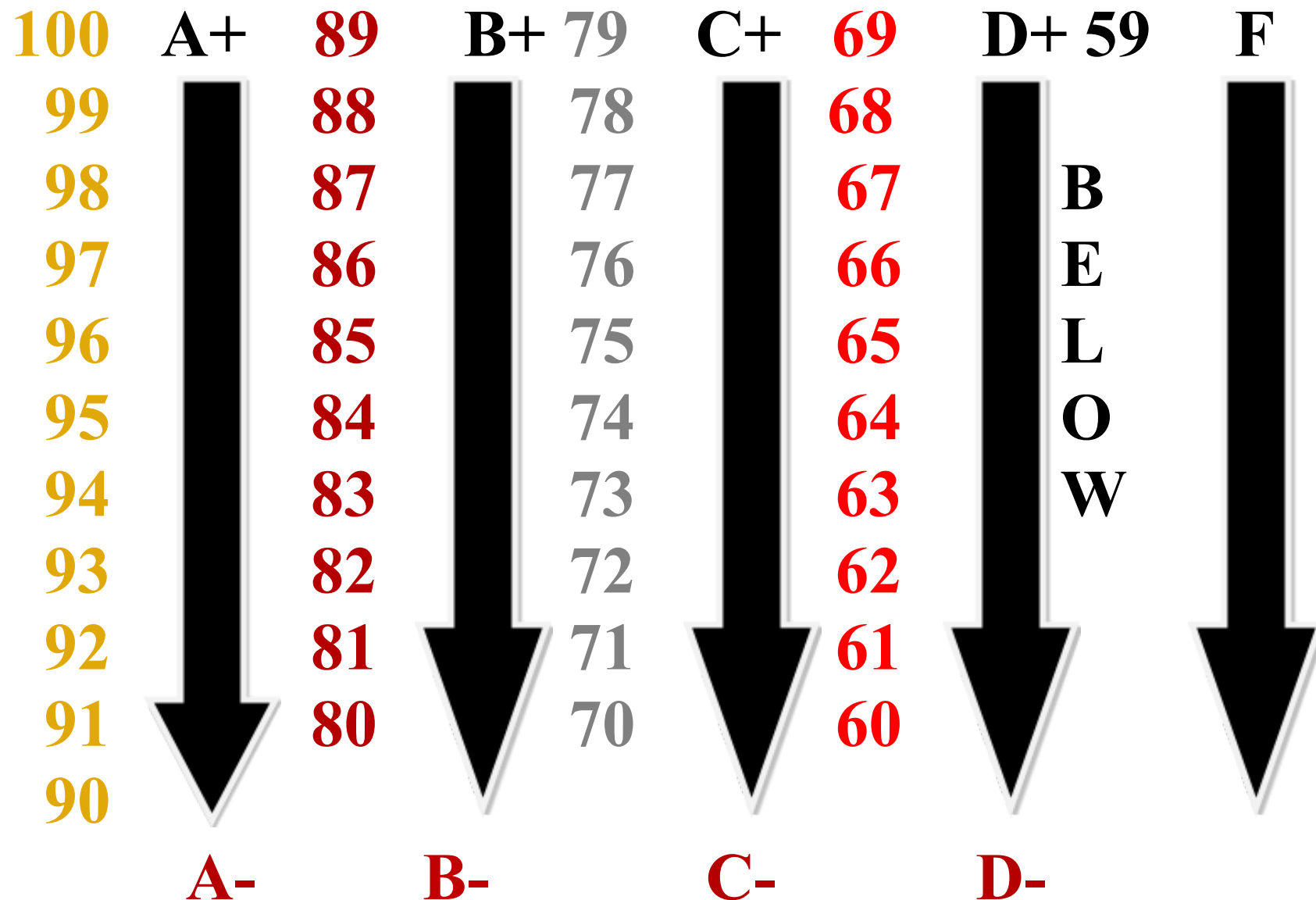
Our commitment to academic excellence, strong relationships, student leadership, and a safe, supportive environment has earned this distinction for nearly two decades.

At VWMS, every student has strengths, talents, and unlimited potential. Our mission is to help students discover who they are today while preparing them for who they can become tomorrow.

What You Do Matters.

Own It. Together. We All Grow.

VAN **W**ERT **M**IDDLE **S**CHOOL **G**RADE **S**CALE



Student Services & Supports

Focus: Resources that support student well-being, academics, and safety.

TCB (Taking Care of Business) Assignments & Attendance support - Expectations – 2026 - 2027

At VWMS, completing all assignments — on time and with effort — is an important part of “**Leveling Up.**” When students fall behind (due to absences) or turn in low-quality work, **TCB (Taking Care of Business)** provides time, support, and accountability to help them catch up and take ownership of their learning.

Why TCB? TCB is not a punishment. It’s a natural consequence for absences, missing or incomplete work — and a chance to get back on track.



Work Sessions Schedule & Location

- **Working Lunch (first step):** Assigned when a student has missing or low-quality work.
- **Morning TCB:** 7:15–7:45 AM (Monday–Friday) **Location:** VWMS Media Center
- **After-School TCB:** 3:05–4:05 PM (Monday–Thursday) **Location:** VWMS Media Center
- **Team Determined TCB Work Session** - any time a team or Grade level determines it is necessary.

If students have multiple absences or don’t complete work during their working lunch, they may be assigned a **before- or after-school TCB session**. Families will receive at least **24-hour notice** before a student is required to attend an extended TCB session.

Students are always welcome to attend TCB **voluntarily** for extra help! Parents are encouraged to enroll students who struggle with completing work at home in TCB on regular days to help them create a routine of doing quality work outside of school.



Student Responsibilities During TCB Work Sessions To make the most of this time, students are expected to:

1. **Be Prepared**
 - Know what work needs completed. Check **Echo, Remind**, or teacher directions daily.
 - Bring all needed materials: books, notebooks, supplies.
 - Basic supplies may be available in TCB — just ask.
2. **Stay Focused**
 - Use time wisely and work the entire session.
 - Avoid distractions or side conversations.
3. **Sign In On Time**
 - **Morning TCB:** Sign in by **7:15 AM**.
 - **Afternoon TCB:** Sign in by **3:05 PM**.
4. **Turn in Completed Work**
 - Hand completed assignments to a TCB teacher so they can check them off your list.
5. **Follow Expectations**
 - If a student **refuses to work**, becomes **disruptive**, or is **disrespectful**, they will be sent to the **Contract Room** with their planner and work.



Need Help or Have Questions?

If parents or guardians have concerns about their child’s progress or work habits, please call the **School Counselor’s Office** at **419- 238-5520** to set up a team meeting.

We’re here to help students succeed — **TCB is one of the ways we Own It, Together, so We All Grow**

PBIS at VWMS: Cougar Pride in Action

At Van Wert Middle School, we use **PBIS** — which stands for **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports** — to help all students learn and practice the behaviors that lead to success in school and in life.

PBIS is a **schoolwide system** that focuses on:

- Teaching clear expectations
- Recognizing positive behavior
- Helping everyone grow — academically, socially, and emotionally

How It Works

Just like we teach math or reading, we also teach and model what **respectful, responsible, safe and kind behavior** looks like in all areas of the school. You'll see posters around the building with our **school norms**, showing what it means to follow expectations in the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and beyond.

 Cougars Level UP By Being... School Expectations R ESPECTFUL R ESPONSIBLE S AFE K IND				
CLASSROOM	Follow classroom instructions and norms	Show up on time, with supplies, and participate	Keep hands and feet to yourself.	Use kind words and actions to staff and other students
BUS	Keep your arms, feet, and objects to yourself	Leave the bus cleaner than you found it	Follow safety directions	Be kind to everyone on the bus
COMMONS	Respect people, property, and others' food	Leave the commons cleaner than you found it	Stay in your seat and push in your chair	Wait patiently for your turn
HALLWAY	Walk quietly on the right, allowing space for others	Be where you are supposed to be (pass, if necessary)	Keep hands and feet to yourself	Use kind words and actions
RESTROOM	Wait your turn	Leave the restroom cleaner than you found it	Respect privacy and space	Only be in the restroom to use toilet or sink
TECHNOLOGY	Only use your own Chromebook	Only use your Chromebook for school work	Only visit school appropriate websites	Think before you send

 Cougars Level UP By Being... Before & After School Expectations R ESPECTFUL R ESPONSIBLE S AFE K IND				
AM COMMONS (8TH GRADE)	Take care of your space and respect others' food	Stay in your assigned area and check in before leaving	Clean up after yourself	Use kind words and actions
AM COMMONS (6TH/7TH GRADE)	Take care of your space and respect others' food	Stay in the breakfast area and head to the gym when finished	Clean up after yourself	Use kind words and actions
AM GYM (6TH/7TH GRADE)	Follow adult directions and keep the gym clean	Sit in your grade's area and stay seated	Ask before leaving; keep hands and feet to yourself	Include others and use kind words
TECHNOLOGY USE	Use your own device and respect others' privacy	Choose appropriate games or videos; keep volume off or use one earbud	Keep devices to yourself; no photos or videos without permission	Think before you post or send
AFTER SCHOOL COMMONS (ALL GRADES)	Take care of your space and respect others' food	Stay in your assigned area until your ride arrives	Keep the area clean and follow directions	Use kind words and actions

Dens & Den Points Every student at VWMS is placed in one of our four **Dens**: - **Glory** - **Honor** - **Valor** - **Merit**

You can **earn Den Points** by showing positive behaviors throughout the day — like helping others, following expectations, working hard, and making good choices.

- Individual Students can spend Den Points at the School Store or in Raffles
- Den Points also accumulate as a team competition to earn awards for ALL members of the Den such as activities or trips.

At the end of each trimester, all four Dens compete in a **Den Competition** to celebrate teamwork, school spirit, and growth.

When you help your Den by earning points, you're not just following the rules — you're showing pride in your school & choosing to **Level Up**.

School Counseling Services *"Helping you navigate school, relationships, and goals."*

The belief is WHAT YOU DO MATTERS at Van Wert Middle School. It is our goal to provide your child with direct and indirect support in 3 key areas:

- Academic progress
- Career exploration
- Social-emotional well-being

Students may request to visit the counselor, and parents are encouraged to reach out as needed. Parents may request student progress reports or make arrangements for a parent-teacher conference through this office. Call **419-238-5520** for support or to schedule meetings.

Schedule Changes

Schedule changes must go through the school counselor and will be based on academic placement needs. Students do not choose their Discovery classes or choose / request teachers.

Visitors

All visitors are to report to the principal's office upon entering the building. Parents and guardians are welcome to visit the school during school hours after checking in through the Raptor Visitor Management System. To strengthen our campus safety program for students and faculty in all buildings, all visitors are now required to check in using the **Raptor Visitor Management System**. Upon arrival, visitors will be asked to present a form of identification, such as a Driver's License, which may be scanned or manually entered into the system. If a parent or guardian does not have a U.S. government-issued ID, school staff can manually enter the person's name using an alternative form of identification.

Support for Pregnant or Parenting Students

Van Wert City Schools supports all students, including those who are pregnant or parenting. Educational programs and activities are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or disability, as required by law.

If a student becomes pregnant, the school encourages the student (and the father, if also a student) to meet with a school counselor or principal to create a support plan. Students have the right to:

1. **Continue attending school** with any needed adjustments for health or safety, as determined by a doctor.
2. **Take temporary medical leave** before or after the birth of the child, and receive **homebound instruction** if needed, at no cost to the student.

Our goal is to help all students stay on track, return to school as soon as possible, and complete their education with support and dignity.

 **Accidents at School** If you're hurt at school, report it to a staff member right away. The school nurse or someone in the office will contact parents if medical care is needed.

 **Lost and Found** Lost items should be turned in to the office. Students can check with the office secretary to recover missing items.

 **PE Excuses** To be excused from Physical Education, students must provide a doctor's note to their PE teacher & the office.

 **Class Fees** Some classes may require additional fees for materials or supplies. Teachers will notify students if this applies.

 **Chromebooks** Chromebooks are provided at no cost. Students are responsible for taking care of them. Lost Chromebooks must be paid for at full price. Damaged Chromebooks will be billed for replacement parts and labor if necessary.

School Policies & Procedures

Focus: Clear operational rules that students must follow to stay in compliance.



Attendance Policy – Van Wert Middle School

At Van Wert Middle School, we believe that being present and on time every day matters. When you miss school, you miss important learning that can't be repeated. We follow state law and board policy to track attendance and support student success.



Reporting an Absence

- A parent or guardian must **call the school by 8:30 a.m.** on the day of the absence.
- If we don't hear from home, **we will try to call your parent/guardian** that day.
- If no contact is made, a **written excuse is required when you return** to school.



Excused Absences

You will be expected to make up missed work. The following are excused absences if verified and approved:

1. Absences that are reported to the office, by parent/guardian, not to exceed state hour limits (ORC 2151.018).
2. Illness or medical appointments — if a doctor's note is turned in within 5 days of return.
3. Family emergencies or other important reasons, up to 10 days (60 hours) with Principal approval.
4. Death of a relative, if approved in advance by the Principal.
5. Religious holidays, if approved in advance by the Principal.



Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences mean your absence is not approved under state or school rules. You must still make up missed work. You may also receive detention or other consequences. Absences are unexcused if:

1. No parent or guardian contacts the school.
2. You go over your allowed parent-verified hours (ORC 2151.011).
3. You skip class or leave your assigned area without permission.
4. You arrive after 8:30 a.m. without an excused reason.



What is Habitual Truancy? Chronically Absent (with or without excuse)?

By Ohio law (HB 410), students are habitually truant if they miss:

- 30+ consecutive hours
- 42+ hours in one month
- 72+ hours in one school year

Chronically Absent guidelines

- 0-5% missed hours
- 30+ hours
- 65+ hours

We are required to take action when these limits are reached.



Attendance – Special Rules

- If you need to leave school during the day, a **parent must call or send a written note** to the office.
- You must **sign out in the office** before leaving. Note: Students may not leave the building without permission.
- To attend sports, practices, or after-school events, you **must be at school at least half the day.**
 - That means arriving by 11:30 a.m.
 - If the schedule changes (like early release), this rule still applies.
 - Special permission can be granted by the Principal.

Note: Students may be assigned attendance recovery, including after-school, Saturday, or summer sessions, as part of the school's intervention process to address missed instructional time and support regular attendance.

Tardy to School

- You are tardy if you arrive **between 7:51–8:30 a.m.** without a valid excuse. (parent calls are not automatically excused)
- You must get a tardy **pass** from the office before going to class.
- A parent/guardian should **call or send a note** explaining the tardy.
- If you are tardy **3 or more times** in a grading period, you may receive **interventions** like detention or lessons..

At VWMS, being present and ready shows you're **Owning It**. Respecting attendance expectations and showing up for yourself and your team helps us **grow Together**.

Technology Use & Digital Responsibility

Technology is a powerful tool for learning at VWMS. Using devices and the internet the right way shows you are respectful, responsible, and ready to Level Up. Misuse can affect not just you, but your classmates, and may result in consequences.

 **School-Issued Devices (Chromebooks)** Students are issued a Chromebook for learning. This is a privilege, not a right.

Allowed:

- Use **only for school-related learning** (assignments, research, projects).
- Use **school Wi-Fi only** w/signed Acceptable Use Policy on file
- Use **only when directed by a teacher** during class.

Not Allowed:

- Games, texting, or using social media during class
- Taking photos or videos of others **at any time** (before, during, or after school)
- Sharing or posting content during the school day without approval
- Accessing inappropriate or blocked content
- Sharing your password or logging in as someone else

 **Personal Devices (Phones, Watches, earbuds, etc.)** All personal devices must be stored in **lockers from 7:50 AM–3:00 PM**, unless directed otherwise by staff [VWCS Cell Phone Policy](#)

 **Earbuds & Headphones:** Headphones may only be used in class for **educational purposes** with teacher permission.

Before & After School Device Guidelines (Commons/Gym)

Before and after school, Chromebooks & personal devices may be used **with limits**:

Allowed:

- Quiet music or messaging with **one earbud only**
- Playing games, reading or watching appropriate content **silently**
- Checking homework or school-related messages

Not Allowed:

- Taking or sharing **photos or videos**
- Passing phones around
- Playing anything **with volume**
- Watching or sharing inappropriate content

 **Internet Use Expectations** All internet use must follow the **VWCS Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy**, signed during a student's first year and kept on file.

Responsible Use Means:

- Going online only for **school-related learning**
- Asking a teacher if you're not sure something is appropriate
- Keeping passwords private and **never using someone else's account**

Safety & Privacy

- Do not share your full name, address, phone number, or personal info
- Never arrange to meet someone you met online
- Report anything unsafe or inappropriate to a trusted adult right away
- Know that **school devices, accounts, and Wi-Fi are not private**. Activity may be monitored or reviewed at any time.

Be a Good Digital Citizen

- Be respectful in all messages, emails, and posts
- Don't send or forward anything hurtful, embarrassing, or unkind
- Don't share someone else's work, images, or private information without permission
- Remember: **what you post, forward, or screenshot matters**

➔ Letting **someone else misuse your account, or not reporting it, also violates the rules.**

Consequences for Misuse Tech misuse may result in:

- Loss of Chromebook or device privileges
- Detention or other disciplinary action
- Confiscation of phones or personal devices
- Suspension of internet or account access

Filters & Monitoring

VWMS uses filters and monitoring tools to protect students from harmful or inappropriate content.

Bypassing filters or trying to access blocked content is against school rules. Only a teacher or administrator can approve access for research purposes.

Legal Notice [Link to the Acceptable Use & Internet Policy](#)

- All students must sign the **Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy (AUP)** of the Van Wert City School District and the regional Data Acquisition Site.
- This agreement is **on file** for every student and is **signed during their first year** at VWMS.

Level Up with Tech

Using technology the right way means we: **Own It** — Make smart, honest choices **Together** — Help create a safe space for everyone **We All Grow** — Use tech to learn, lead, and explore

Dress Code

Students and families are responsible for choosing appropriate clothing for school. Clothing should support a positive learning environment and not be disruptive. If a staff member determines clothing is disruptive or inappropriate, the student will be asked to change to correct the violation.

Not Allowed:

- Clothing with **offensive language**, references to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, violence, or sexual content
- **Excessively ripped** or revealing clothing
- **Spaghetti straps, tube tops, see-through** clothing, or anything exposing **midriffs, cleavage, or undergarments**
- **Short shorts or skirts** that are not an appropriate length
- **Sleepwear/Pajamas/Pajama Pants**, unless permitted for special events
- **Outdoor coats or backpacks** during the school day — these should be kept in lockers
- **Hats, hoods, scarves**, or other head coverings unless permitted by staff for specific situations

 Violations may result in removal from class, unexcused absences, and further disciplinary action.

Daily Routines & Expectations

Focus: How students move through the day and what they should know/do.

Arriving at School

- School starts at **7:50 AM**. Please do **not arrive before 7:10 AM**.
- When you arrive:
 - **8th graders** go to the **commons**
 - **6th & 7th graders** go to the **gym**
- Stay in your assigned area until the first bell at **7:43 AM**, unless you have **permission** to go somewhere else (like TCB, the media center, band room, or office).

AM Expectations in the Gym & Commons

- Sit in your assigned area or grade-level section. Remain **seated**, not standing, walking, or changing spots without permission.
- You must have **staff permission to leave** the Commons or Gym for any reason (restroom, office, etc.).
- **Noise level should be low** — conversations are okay, but shouting, yelling, or disruptive noise is not.
- **Clean up your space** — throw away trash and leave tables/seats as you found them.

Lunch Expectations

- Stay in the **commons** during your assigned lunch period. You may only leave with permission from a **lunch supervisor**.
- **No restaurant lunches, fast food, or soft drinks/ energy drinks** may be brought in or delivered.
- **All food stays in the commons** — no walking around with snacks or drinks.

 **School Cafeteria** The cafeteria is a shared space where students gather to eat, socialize respectfully, and recharge for learning. VWMS participates in the National School Lunch Program, offering nutritious meals to support student wellness.

Breakfast & Lunch

- Breakfast is available each morning (except on delay days).
- Students may bring a packed lunch or purchase a school lunch.
- Outside **fast food or caffeinated beverages** (including pop & energy drinks) **may not be brought or delivered** to school.
- All food and drinks must remain in the **Commons** during lunch.

Meal Accounts

- VWMS uses a confidential **computerized debit system** for purchasing meals.
- Students use the same system whether they receive **free, reduced, or full-price meals**.
- Money can be added to your account by check or online payment — checks should include your name & student ID number.
- Students may use their account for full meals or **à la carte** items.

Offer vs. Serve VWMS uses the “Offer vs. Serve” model in the lunch line.

- Students are offered **five food components** each day.
- You must take at least **three**, and one must be a **fruit or vegetable**.
- You are encouraged to take all five, but you can skip items you don’t want.

This model gives you **choice**, helps **reduce waste**, and ensures all meals meet nutrition standards.

Free & Reduced Lunch Families may apply for free or reduced-price meals through the **National School Lunch Program**.

- Applications are available at the beginning of the school year, in the main office, or on the school website.
- Meals must be paid for until an application is **submitted and approved**.

Charging Policy

- Students may charge meals (not à la carte items) up to **\$10.00**.
- A phone call will be made to families if the balance goes over.
- **No charges** are allowed during the **last three weeks** of the school year.
- No student will be denied a school meal due to an unpaid meal balance.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Menus are subject to change.

Hallway Behavior

- Walk on the **right side** of the hallway
- **No running, pushing, or playing** during class changes
- Use your locker quickly and head straight to class — plan ahead so you don't need to go between every period

 **High School Access** Middle school students are **not allowed** in the high school unless you are given permission from an adult

Leaving the Building

- All students must be **out of the building by 3:30 PM** unless:
 - You're participating in a school sponsored activity or sport
 - You're staying for TCB

Medications at School

- If you need to take medication (prescription or over-the-counter) at school:
 - Your parent/guardian must contact the office **beforehand and send a signed note / medicine form**
 - You must bring medication to the office **right away** when you arrive, along with the signed form from your doctor
 - Only bring the **amount needed for that day**
- The school will **secure and supervise** the taking of medications but may **not administer** medication of any kind to students.

After School: Country Route Bus Riders (Commons) Students waiting for **country route buses** after school will stay in the Commons until their bus is called. **Here's what Leveling Up looks like in the after-school Commons:**

What's Allowed:

- **Snacks are okay**, as long as you **clean up after yourself**
- **Talking with friends** is encouraged — keep voices at a respectful level
- **You may choose your seat**, but once seated, you **must stay in that spot**
- Permission is required to leave the Commons for **bathroom, office, or other locations**

Not Allowed:

- Moving around the Commons without permission
- Leaving a mess — if you make a mess, you clean it up

After School: Students Walking to the Elementary Students who walk to the Elementary School after dismissal must report directly to **Room 115** and remain there until **dismissed at 3:10 PM**.

Expectations while you wait

- Stay **seated and quiet** while waiting.
- **Do not leave the room** without permission.

 **Reminder:** This space is still part of the school day — show respect, use self-control, and **Own It** so everyone can end the day positively.

Behavior at Athletic Events

- Whether you're at a middle school or high school game:
 - **Follow all school rules**
 - Show respect to others
 - Stay in your assigned section if one is marked
- Fighting, throwing things, acting unsafe, or breaking school rules can lead to:
 - **Being removed from the game**
 - **Suspension from school or future events**

Public Displays of Affection (PDA)

- School is not a place for displaying affection of any kind.
- Any act of affection should be considered private and out of respect for all others, will not be tolerated in school.

 **Security Cameras** Our school building and grounds have **security cameras** in use at all times

Lockers

- Every student gets a locker at the start of the year to store books, supplies, and personal items.
- Lockers are **school property** and may be searched by school officials if necessary.
- Keep your locker clean and appropriate — no images or messages that are offensive or distracting.
- **Do not share lockers** or trade lockers without office permission.
- Keep your locker **locked** at all times. Tampering with locks can lead to disciplinary action.

 **Announcements** Daily announcements are made in the morning and important information is also scrolled in homeroom.. They provide important updates on activities, events, and opportunities.

 **Telephone** Students may use the office phone with permission from a staff member.

 **Safety Drills** VWMS practices regular drills for fire, lockdowns, and other emergencies. Students are expected to respond seriously and follow instructions during all drills.

At VWMS, we show respect for ourselves and others by following school expectations — not just because we have to, but because we're choosing to **Level Up: Own It. Together. We All Grow.**

 **School Transportation & Bus Expectations** Riding the bus is a privilege and part of the school day. All students are expected to show respect, responsibility, and self-control to keep rides safe and comfortable for everyone.

Bus - Country Routes

- Students are assigned to a **specific bus and stop** and must use that route unless they have **parental and administrative approval** to change it. **No friends/ extra riders may be dropped off.**
- Buses drop students off at their **regular stops only.**

At the Goedde Shuttle Bus Stop / Pick Up & Drop off

- This is the **ONLY** Middle School / High School bus stop for VWCS
- Arrive **a few minutes early** — buses won't wait. (busses leave from 7:00 - 7:25)
- Wait in a **safe location**, away from the street.
- Respect the staff & Follow all school rules
- Behavior at the bus stop should be safe, respectful, and free from horseplay or threats.

 **Weather Delays or Cancellations** In case of poor weather conditions:

- Families will be notified through the district text system, the **VWCS website**, and local news outlets (WANE, WPTA, Lima News).
- Announcements will be made **by 6:15 AM if possible.**
- Please **do not call the school** to check on delays or closings.

On the Bus

Students on the bus are expected to behave like they would in the classroom — with a few extra safety rules.

- Follow the driver's instructions **the first time and respectfully.**
- Stay **seated in your assigned seat** at all times.
- Keep **aisles and exits clear.**
- Use **quiet, respectful voices** — loud noises or shouting distract the driver.
- No moving seats while the bus is in motion.

Not Allowed on the Bus To keep everyone safe all school rules apply, the following are not allowed:

- Eating or drinking
- Vaping, tobacco, or any drug or alcohol products (except doctor-approved medication)
- Weapons, fireworks, or dangerous objects
- Throwing items or passing objects
- Bringing pets or animals
- Items too large to hold on your lap (band instruments must go where the driver approves)
- Putting hands, arms, legs, or heads out the windows
- Using offensive language or threatening others
- Damaging the seats or interior of the bus

Emergency Procedures Drivers will teach emergency evacuation procedures. Remain quiet and follow all directions.

Cameras on Buses All school buses may have **video cameras** to help monitor behavior. Recordings may be reviewed by the principal and used to address misbehavior.

If Bus Rules Are Broken

Riding the bus is a **privilege** — not a right.

Students who behave unsafely, damage the bus, or repeatedly break rules may **lose bus privileges** for a short time or permanently.

Transportation procedures can be found at <https://www.vwcs.net/transportation-procedure>.

Learning Spaces & Resource Guidelines

Focus: Clear expectations for shared learning spaces that support student collaboration, creativity, and responsibility.

Media Center Guidelines & Expectations

Media Center Atmosphere The Media Center is a **shared space** for reading, researching, collaborating, and creating. Students are expected to use it **responsibly and respectfully**. The Media Center is a welcoming, quiet environment designed to support **Project-Based Learning (PBL), independent work, and creativity**.

- Speak in a quiet voice to avoid distracting others.
- Clean up after yourself — leave your area better than you found it.
- If your group needs a space for group work, ask the library staff to use a conference room.
- Middle school students should not interact with high school students while in the Media Center.

Borrowing Materials

- Students may borrow books, games, cameras, ebooks, and audiobooks.
- Items can be renewed in person or online using the OPAC system.
- Print materials are checked out for 1 month, digital items for 2 weeks, and games/equipment for 1 week.
- You'll get an email reminder 2 days before items are due.
- Return items to the designated area on the circulation desk.
- Ebooks automatically return themselves after 2 weeks unless renewed.

Overdue Items

- Students receive regular email and paper reminders about overdue items.
- Students with overdue items may not be able to check out new materials until they are returned or renewed.
- Items not returned by the end of the year will be carried over to the next school year (this follows to HS as well)



Lost or Damaged Items Lost or damaged materials must be paid for



Media Center Closures

- Sometimes the Media Center will be closed for meetings, testing, or events.
- If no staff are present, students must return to class and visit again later.



Makerspace Expectations The Makerspace is available for students who have completed classroom work or who are using the space as part of a project. It's designed to support creativity, problem-solving, and design thinking.

When using the Makerspace:

- Be a good steward of supplies — use them responsibly.
- Clean up and return all materials before you leave.
- All Media Center and school rules still apply in the Makerspace.



Media Center & Maker's Space Hours & Access

- The Media Center is open during regular school hours.
- To visit independently at PAWS, students must sign up in eHallPass and check in with staff when they arrive.
- Students must also check out with staff when returning to class.
- Students must ask permission to go anywhere else during their time in the Media Center.

Inappropriate behavior may result in a loss of Media Center privileges — temporarily or permanently.

Behavior Consequences & Disciplinary Actions

Focus: Helping students take ownership of their choices and grow from mistakes through fair, consistent consequences.

At VWMS, students are responsible for meeting the behavior expectations that help keep our school respectful, safe, and focused on learning. When students make choices that violate school rules or disrupt the learning environment, consequences may be assigned to help correct behavior and support student growth. Due Process: Students have the right to know the reason for disciplinary actions and to share their perspective before consequences are assigned, consistent with district policy and state law.



Detention

Detention may be assigned by a teacher or the office for behavioral or academic reasons. Detentions take place **Monday–Friday** and must be served in full. Detention may be assigned for before school, at lunch or after school. Detention is different from a working lunch or TCB.

Detention Rules:

- You will receive 24-hour notice for any detention scheduled outside the school day.
- Be on time — late arrival may lead to further consequences.
- Bring schoolwork or a book.
- No sleeping, talking, or using electronics.
- No food or drink is allowed.
- Not showing up for detention is considered **insubordination** and will result in additional consequences.



Afternoon School

Afternoon School is more serious than a typical detention. It is assigned by the **Principal's Office** and takes place **Monday–Thursday from 3:05–4:05 PM**. Students must sign in and remain with the teacher assigned to monitor the detention.

- Same rules apply as regular detention & must stay the entire hour
- Assigned for repeated or more serious behavior concerns
- Refusal to attend or follow expectations will result in further consequences

▲ Note: **Afternoon School is not the same as a TCB Help Session.**

Saturday School

Saturday School is an intervention for helping students with time to complete missing work. Examples include:

- Chronic tardiness
- Truancy
- Unexcused absences
- Missing work because of attendance or lack of follow through

Saturday School is also used as a consequence for more serious or repeated behaviors. Examples include:

- Disrespect of staff members
- Skipping assigned detentions or work sessions
- Repeated behavior problems

Saturday School Rules:

- Students must follow all directions
- No sleeping, food, or distractions
- Students should bring all work and supplies necessary to complete school work.
- Failure to attend or follow the rules may result in **suspension or expulsion**

Saturday School is held on the **first & third Saturday each month**, from **9:00 AM to 11:00 AM**. Students are given **at least 24-hour notice**.



Suspension & Expulsion

- **Suspension** means a student is temporarily removed from school (out-of-school suspension).
 - Students are allowed to make up **quizzes, tests, and major assignments** during a suspension.
- **Expulsion** is a more serious removal from school for an extended time.
 - Students who are expelled **do not receive academic credit** for missed work.



In-School Intervention (ISI)

In-School Intervention (ISI) is used when a student needs time away from the classroom due to a serious behavior concern. It provides a structured environment for students to **think about their choices**, complete academic work, and begin the process of making things right.

During ISI:

- Students stay at school but are **separated from peers** to avoid further disruption.
- They are expected to **stay caught up on classwork**.
- Students may meet with the **school counselor or social worker** to talk through what happened and better understand the impact of their behavior.
- ISI may be used as a **step before suspension** or as a **step down after a suspension** to help students successfully re-enter the classroom.

The goal of ISI is to help students **Own It**, reflect, and **Level Up** through accountability and support — not punishment.



SERIOUS MISCONDUCT

Some behaviors are serious and will result in major consequences, including **suspension, expulsion, and/or police involvement**. These rules apply any time you are on school property, at school events (including field trips and extracurricular activities), riding school transportation, or representing Van Wert Middle School in any way.



Bullying, Intimidation, & Harrassment - On School Property, On a School Bus or At a School Sponsored Event

VWMS has **zero tolerance** for any form of **harassment, bullying, or intimidation**, including:

- Repeated verbal, written, electronic, or physical acts that harm another student
- Behavior that creates a threatening or abusive school environment
- **Cyberbullying** using devices like phones, computers, or apps
- **Aggressive behavior** such as stalking, name-calling, taunting, threats, or hazing
- **Dating violence** or any violent behavior in relationships



These actions violate Ohio law (R.C. 3313.666) and Board Policy. They may result in **disciplinary action and legal consequences**.

SERIOUS MISCONDUCT

Fighting

Fighting is never acceptable. There are always adults available to help with problems — use them. If you're involved in a fight:

- Both students will face consequences, even if one says they were “defending” themselves
- Under Ohio law, **you must walk away** if it is safe to do so
- “Words” (name-calling, insults, etc.) do not justify physical violence

“Right to Defend” Defined by the Van Wert County Court of Common Pleas: The right to defend is limited. A person has the right to defend himself but an individual can only use reasonable force necessary to defend. If you can safely leave, you are required to do so. If a person shoves another person, the person shoved must leave the area if that can be safely done. The “shoved” person cannot continue the fight in a more aggressive manner, but may only use reasonable force in his/her defense.

Assault

Physically hurting or trying to hurt someone — on purpose on school property, on a school bus or at a school sponsored event — is assault.

Hazing

Hazing is strictly prohibited. Hazing means forcing someone to do something that may harm them as part of joining a group or activity.

This includes **physical, mental, or emotional harm** — even if the student agrees. All school staff are legally required to report hazing.

Disrupting School

Any action that **disrupts learning** or the daily operation of the school is not allowed. This includes:

- Vulgar or offensive language
- Blocking halls or doors
- Starting a false fire alarm or bomb threat
- Setting fires or damaging school property
- Stopping others from getting to class or learning
- Excessive noise or behavior that disrupts learning

Vandalism

If you damage school property on purpose, you and your parent/guardian may be **financially responsible**, and you may face **school and/or legal consequences**.

Technology Misuse & Electronic Device Violations - [VWCS Cell Phone Policy](#)

Misuse of personal or school-issued technology is considered a violation of the **Serious Misconduct Code**. Technology may only be used for educational purposes and under staff supervision. Any use of devices that violates school rules, disrupts the learning environment, or endangers the safety or privacy of others may result in serious disciplinary consequences, including **loss of privileges, detention, suspension, or expulsion**.

Serious Violations Include:

- Using devices (personal or school-issued) to access, send, or share **inappropriate, illegal, or explicit content**
- **Taking photos or videos** of students or staff without their knowledge and permission
- **Sharing or posting content** (images, comments, videos) during the school day without approval
- **Cyberbullying**, harassment, or sending harmful or threatening messages through devices
- **Sexing** or possessing any nude or sexually explicit images (this is a **criminal offense** and will be reported to law enforcement)
- Attempting to **bypass filters**, hack school systems, or access unauthorized content
- Using another student's device, login, or personal information without permission

 Sexting and the possession or distribution of explicit images involving minors is **illegal** and may lead to law enforcement involvement and felony charges.

SERIOUS MISCONDUCT

Weapons or Dangerous Objects

No student may bring or carry any weapon — or anything that could reasonably be considered a weapon or looks like a weapon — to school, on a bus, or to any school event. This includes knives, explosives, or any object that could harm others.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco

Students are not allowed to use, have, sell, or share:

- Drugs or drug look-alikes
- Alcohol or tobacco
- Vapes or e-cigarettes
- Drug paraphernalia

Including before, during, or after school — or at school-sponsored events.

 Prescription medications are allowed **only if approved and stored in the office.**

Theft

Taking anything that doesn't belong to you is considered theft — even if it's meant as a “joke” or “borrowed.”

Students may be required to repay for stolen or damaged items. School and legal consequences apply.

Repeated Violations

Students who **continue to break rules** or refuse to follow school expectations may receive increasing consequences — including removal from class, suspension, or expulsion.

Passive Resistance

Students are expected to **actively participate** in their education. Passive resistance includes:

- Sleeping in class
- Ignoring directions
- Skipping assignments or intentionally doing nothing

Insubordination

Refusing to follow a reasonable request from any staff member is insubordination.

This includes any form of disrespect, defiance, or refusing to comply with school expectations

Frightening, Degrading, or Disgraceful Acts

You may not say or do anything that degrades, threatens, frightens, or disrespects another person. This includes gestures, slurs, or insults based on race, gender, religion, or culture.

Sexual Harassment

Any **unwanted** comments, jokes, messages, or contact that are **sexual in nature** are considered harassment.

Sexual harassment is **illegal**, and includes:

- Sexual jokes or drawings
- Making comments about someone's body
- Touching someone without consent
- Sharing rumors or messages about someone in a sexual way
- Blocking someone's movement in a sexual manner

 This behavior will be investigated and may be reported to law enforcement.

Cheating & Plagiarism & Misuse of AI

Cheating is when you use someone else's work and claim it as your own — or help someone else do that.

Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas or writing without giving credit.

This includes the **unauthorized use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** tools (such as ChatGPT or image/text generators) to complete assignments, tests, or essays. If you use AI tools to do the work for you **without teacher permission**, it is considered plagiarism.

Consequences for cheating or plagiarism or Misuse of AI:

- Grade reduction or loss of credit
- Report to administration
- Possible removal from academic teams or clubs
- Repeated violations may lead to further disciplinary action, including detention or suspension

 If you're unsure whether you're allowed to use AI for an assignment — **ask your teacher first.**

Respecting others, owning your actions, and following the rules help keep VWMS safe, focused, and fair. This is how we **Level Up: Own It. Together. We All Grow.**

Student Involvement & Extracurricular Activities

Focus: Opportunities for students to grow as leaders, connect with others, and represent VWMS through clubs, service, and athletics. Expectations and responsibilities reflect the Level Up culture: Own It. Together. We All Grow.

Cougar Leaders – Student Leadership

Cougar Leaders is a student leadership group that represents the voice and spirit of Van Wert Middle School. These students promote kindness, positivity, and school pride.

Cougar Leaders are chosen through an application, student election and staff selection and are focused on:

- Supporting school-wide events and activities
- Serving the school and community through leadership and service
- Helping others and creating a welcoming environment
- Being role models of our Cougar Pride Playbook and Level Up mindset

Cougar Leaders believe in “Kids helping kids” and showing what it means to Own It. Together. We All Grow.



VWMS Extracurricular Activity Code Participation in clubs, athletics, and other activities at VWMS is a privilege, not a right. Students are expected to represent our school with responsibility, effort, and integrity — on and off the field.



Part I: Rights & Responsibilities

Van Wert Middle School offers a variety of extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports to help students grow as leaders, teammates, and individuals. These opportunities are part of what makes middle school exciting and meaningful. Students should listen to announcements to know what opportunities are available.

With these opportunities come expectations:

- Students must follow **all school rules**, as outlined in the Student Handbook.
- Students must follow the specific expectations of the **coach or advisor** of each program.
- Students have the **right to be treated fairly and respectfully** by coaches, advisors, and staff.
- The school has the **right to expect responsible, respectful, and team-centered behavior** from students.

 **Part II: Participation Expectations** The following expectations apply to **all clubs, teams, and activities** at VWMS. If a student violates these expectations, they may be **removed from the activity for the season or semester**.

General Conduct

- All **school rules apply** during practices, performances, events, trips, or meetings.
- Students must conduct themselves in ways that **do not disrupt** others or reflect poorly on the school.
- Students must follow the **specific expectations** shared by their coach or advisor.

Disciplinary Consequences

- Students who are **suspended or expelled** from school may not participate in any activities during that time.
- Students serving **In-School Intervention** for a serious misconduct violation may **not participate in events or contests**, but may still attend practice or meetings.

Attendance on Event Days

To participate in a practice, game, performance, or school-sponsored event:

- Students must be present for at least the **second half of the school day** (arriving by **11:30 AM**).
- Special exceptions must be **approved by the principal**.

Academic Eligibility To stay eligible for participation:

- Students must meet the **OHSAA eligibility standards**.
- Students must maintain a **GPA of 1.2 or higher** with **no more than one failing grade** on the previous report card.
- Academic eligibility applies to **both sports and non-athletic activities**.

Commitment & Conduct

- Students are expected to attend all **required practices, meetings, and events**, unless excused in advance by the coach or advisor.
- Students must remain in **good standing**, including meeting responsibilities, paying dues, and showing respect.
- Athletes must follow all **training rules and health guidelines** shared by their coach or program.

Quitting or Changing Sports

- A student who quits one sport **may not join another sport** until that season ends.
- A coach may allow a switch if they and the athletic director agree it is in the best interest of the student.
- If a student is removed from a sport for disciplinary reasons, they are not eligible for other sports during that season.

Part III: Rules, Documentation, and Due Process

Program-Specific Rules

- Coaches and advisors will share **written program rules** at the start of the season or activity.
- A copy of the rules must be given to each participant and signed by both the **student and a parent/guardian**.
- Copies of signed rules are kept on file by the **coach/advisor, principal, and athletic director**.

Denial of Participation Process

If a student may lose participation privileges:

1. **Prior notice:** The student must have previously received the rules in writing.
2. **Meeting:** If possible, the coach/advisor will meet with the student to discuss the issue.
3. **Written notice:** The student will receive written notification explaining the reason for removal.
4. **Principal notification:** A copy of the notice will be given to the **principal within 24 hours**.
5. **Right to appeal:** The student or parent may **appeal to the principal in writing within one week**
6. **During appeal:** The student **may not participate** in the activity while the appeal is being reviewed.
7. **Final decision:** The **principal has the final authority** in all participation decisions.

Interscholastic Sports: Students can try out for:

- Cross Country
- Football
- Volleyball
- Cheerleading
- Basketball
- Wrestling
- Track & Field

These teams compete against other schools and require commitment, teamwork, and good standing.