

Valley Charter Elementary School



Diversity

Community

Global Citizenship

Valley Charter Elementary School

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Affirmations

VECS will comply with Education Code §47605(d) and thus shall:

1. be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations, shall not charge tuition, and shall not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. Except as provided in paragraph [2], admission to a charter school shall not be determined according to the place of residence of the pupil, or of his or her parent or guardian, within this state, except that any existing public school converting partially or entirely to a charter school under this part shall adopt and maintain a policy giving admission preference to pupils who reside within the former attendance area of that public school.
2. admit all pupils who wish to attend the school. However, if the number of pupils who wish to attend the charter school exceeds the school's capacity, attendance, except for existing pupils of the charter school, shall be determined by a public random drawing. Preference shall be extended to pupils currently attending the charter school and pupils who reside in the district except as provided for in Section 47614.5. Other preferences may be permitted by the chartering authority on an individual school basis and only if consistent with the law. In the event of a drawing, the chartering authority shall make reasonable efforts to accommodate the growth of the charter school and, in no event, shall take any action to impede the charter school from expanding enrollment to meet pupil demand.
3. If a pupil is expelled or leaves the charter school without graduating or completing the school year for any reason, VCES shall notify the superintendent of the school district of the pupil's last known address within 30 days, and shall, upon request, provide that school district with a copy of the cumulative record of the pupil, including a transcript of grades or report card, and health information. This paragraph applies only to pupils subject to compulsory full-time education pursuant to [EC] Section 48200.

Introduction

The Board of Directors for Valley Charter Elementary School, respectfully submits this charter petition to the Los Angeles Unified School District with a request for a 5 year charter to establish a K-5 high-performing, comprehensive, site-based educational program that will serve a student population in the San Fernando Valley.

Our Mission Statement

The mission of Valley Charter Elementary School is to provide a holistic and exceptional education to a diverse student body, cultivating in students intellectual curiosity, collaboration, respect for others, and a passion for excellence.

We fulfill this mission by:

- o Providing a constructivist, inquiry-based learning environment in which teachers guide students through active learning processes that develop conceptual understanding as well as self-knowledge.
- o Implementing a project-based curriculum that develops academic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and artistic skills.
- o Creating a program that develops students to be creative and critical thinkers, who are unafraid to question, challenge and express themselves; and that prepares students to lead and to serve the greater good as members of a democratic society and as citizens of our growing global community.
- o Setting the highest individualized standards for all students, so our students realize their potential and can compete with the best students in the country.
- o Creating a school culture that values character and citizenship as well as achievement, and process as well as product.
- o Giving faculty time, resources, autonomy and a collaborative atmosphere to continually develop their skills, research, create, evaluate and refine project-based curricula, and reflect on the learning of their students.
- o Communicating regularly with students' families, seeking family involvement in the life of the school, and continually reaching out to all families in the neighborhood to ensure a diverse and inclusive learning community.

Our Vision

We believe all children deserve an excellent education that realizes their potential. A core value of Valley Charter Elementary School is respect for diversity -- ethnic, socio-economic, social-emotional and academic. We will embody Horace Mann's vision of "the common school" where children of all backgrounds learn together and from one another. We will strive to be a model of teacher innovation, collaboration, and professionalism. We will strive to develop and communicate best practices, and mentor others as we have been mentored. We believe communities can come together to build great schools, bringing parents back to the public school system and creating a future where academic excellence is available to all children.

Our Educational Philosophy

At the foundation of our educational philosophy is a belief that learning should be an active experience that involves a community of educators, students and families. We believe that effective schools create a culture of caring and respect that supports all members in achieving their potential academically, socially, emotionally, artistically, and physically. To enable all to work together toward these ends, we believe in explicitly expressing our learning goals – derived from academic standards and

school-defined behavioral and attitudinal objectives. Valley Charter Elementary School expects all involved with the school to support these convictions and to endorse a constructivist learning environment that nurtures, challenges, and values every member of the community. VCES also adheres to the belief that students should be given opportunities to direct their own learning. VCES students will be asked to explore their interests through the process of choosing specific projects and formulating essential questions that drive their learning experiences. Similarly, teachers will develop their own questions about student learning and will examine their practices through action research projects.

Our Pedagogical Practices

Current research shows that a constructivist approach to teaching and learning develops deep and long-lasting conceptual understanding in students. When coupled with a project-based curriculum and problem-based lessons, constructivism is even more effective. We, therefore, embrace these three practices fully. In our classrooms, teachers facilitate as students actively explore topics and strive to answer questions and solve problems that they themselves have posed at the outset of a course of study. Sometimes students work collaboratively, sometimes individually, but always with the knowledge that they can receive peer and teacher support. As they reach different project milestones, students wrestle with concepts, take risks, make mistakes, and revise. Teachers continually assess each student's progress through observation, interaction, and testing, and then design lessons in response to student needs. The completion of a project represents the culmination of a course of study and the achievement of specific learning objectives.

Our Founders

VCES is being founded by experienced educators and charter operators as well as former leaders from the Board of Directors of Larchmont Charter School (a K-6 project-based elementary school that opened in 2005). The Board members have experience opening and smoothly operating charter schools in California.

Educators involved in these efforts include:

- **Dvora Inwood**, Founding Educator of Larchmont Charter School, Larchmont Charter School West Hollywood and Los Feliz School for the Arts; curriculum author for teacher education at Insight Education Group and The New Teacher Project; former teacher at Los Angeles schools (Harvard-Westlake, Archer School, Aviva Center); educational consultant to start-up charter schools. BA, Harvard University; M.A. in Education, Stanford University.
- **Alissa Goler Chariton**: Ms. Chariton is in her 10th year of teaching. She holds a Professional Clear Multiple Subject Credential and a Master's in education from UCLA. She received her B.A. in History and Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis. Prior to joining LCS in 2006, Alissa taught K-3 in LAUSD schools for 7 years. Ms. Chariton began her educational career in the private sector where she worked in Marketing and Business Development for Knowledge Adventure and Education.com
- **Nat Damon**: Mr. Damon is the Assistant Head of John Thomas Dye and has been an independent school coach, teacher and administrator for sixteen years. Mr. Damon taught eighth and ninth grade English at Harvard-Westlake School and was the founding Academic Dean and Dean of Students at Sierra Canyon School. Connecticut College, BA; Middlebury College's Breadloaf School of English, Masters Degree in Literature.
- **Patricia Hannum**: Ms. Hannum is currently Executive Director MOCHA, Museum of Children's Art, in Oakland, California. She has been providing cultural services to children and their families for 19 years. Her work history includes children's museums and cultural arts institutions, as well as historic houses, history interpretive centers, parks, and museum associations. Ms. Hannum was the executive director of the start-up campaign for the Westchester Children's Museum. Bank Street

College of Education, M.S. in Education and Museum Leadership; Syracuse University, B.F.A. Illustration and Textile Design College of Visual Arts.

Individuals with expertise applicable to school management, operations and finance include:

Lindsay Sturman, Secretary: Founder of both Larchmont Charter School and Larchmont West Hollywood, and Founding Chair of LCS Board of Directors. She spearheaded LCS's charter authorization and implementation, ongoing assessment of school operations, and strategic growth. She has raised over a million dollars for the organization, developed partnerships with CBOs across the city and state, and was honored this year by CCSA as Volunteer of the Year. Television writer/producer, Ms. Sturman holds a BA from Harvard and a Masters from Columbia.

Eugene Straub, Treasurer: Mr. Straub is the Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer of the Youth Policy Institute, a leading provider of services to low income families and youth throughout Los Angeles. Previously, he has been the COO of Larchmont Charter School, the Treasurer on the Board of Directors of Larchmont Charter School, the CFO of IMMS, Inc, a provider of marketing and management tools to independent insurance agents, and the COO of Break the Cycle, Inc., a national nonprofit that works to eradicate domestic violence. He has also served as Senior Vice President- Studio Operations for Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, where he was directly responsible for the daily operational activity of the 54+ acre studio facility and the oversight of a \$85 million operating budget. Mr. Straub's responsibilities have included all areas of financial management as well as executive oversight of development, program implementation, public policy, construction, maintenance, administrative services, risk management, purchasing/strategic sourcing, real estate, environmental affairs, and production services. Gene holds a B.A. in finance from Michigan State University and a Diplome de Cuisine, with honors, from Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. He and his family live in Hancock Park, and both of his children attend Larchmont Charter School.

Ari Engelberg: Mr. Engelberg has been in the education world for nine years, first as a teacher and later as an administrator. He taught eleventh grade history at Harvard-Westlake School and was the Assistant Coach of the Boys Varsity Basketball Team. Prior to 2001, Ari was a successful businessman and entrepreneur. Ari graduated with honors from UCLA School of Law / The Anderson Graduate School of Management. He holds a BA in Psychology and Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley, which he also received with high honors. He is presently Chief Executive Officer of Bright Star Schools.

Ben Paul, Chair: Mr. Paul is President/CEO for After-School All-Stars, a non-profit organization founded by Arnold Schwarzenegger that provides after-school programs to 60,000 children in 15 cities through a network of local chapters. He served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for Larchmont Charter School. Prior to joining ASAS, Mr. Paul was a partner in a Los Angeles-based real estate investment group that acquired residential properties in Southern California. Mr. Paul also co-founded the Highland Swim School, a private swim school in Los Angeles, providing water safety skills to more than 10,000 children since 1993. He holds an M.B.A. from the University of Southern California.

Dixon Slingerland: Mr. Slingerland is the Executive Director of the Youth Policy Institute (YPI), a position he has held for the past fourteen years. The Youth Policy Institute has an annual budget of \$20 million (including affiliated charter schools) and operates programs at 85 sites in Los Angeles with more than 700 staff. Mr. Slingerland is President of the Board of both Bert Corona Charter School and Monseñor Oscar Romero Charter Middle School. Bert Corona Charter School opened in September 2004, and serves 370 students in grades 6-8 in Pacoima. YPI opened Monseñor Oscar Romero Charter Middle School in 2007 and now serves 150 grade 6-7 students in the Pico Union/Westlake community.

Our Community: Target Student Population

VCES will recruit students from several neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley: Van Nuys border to the West through North Hollywood to the East, focusing on the greater Van Nuys area because of the school site's location. Although the school will not have specific boundaries and will be open to all children in the State of California, it is expected that the majority of students will reside in three zip codes: 91411, 91405, and 91401. According to the 2007 population estimates, 124,488 people reside in these areas and approximately 81,659 are families with school age children. The table below identifies the 2000 census and 2007 estimated populations, revealing a significant number of families that could be served by the school.

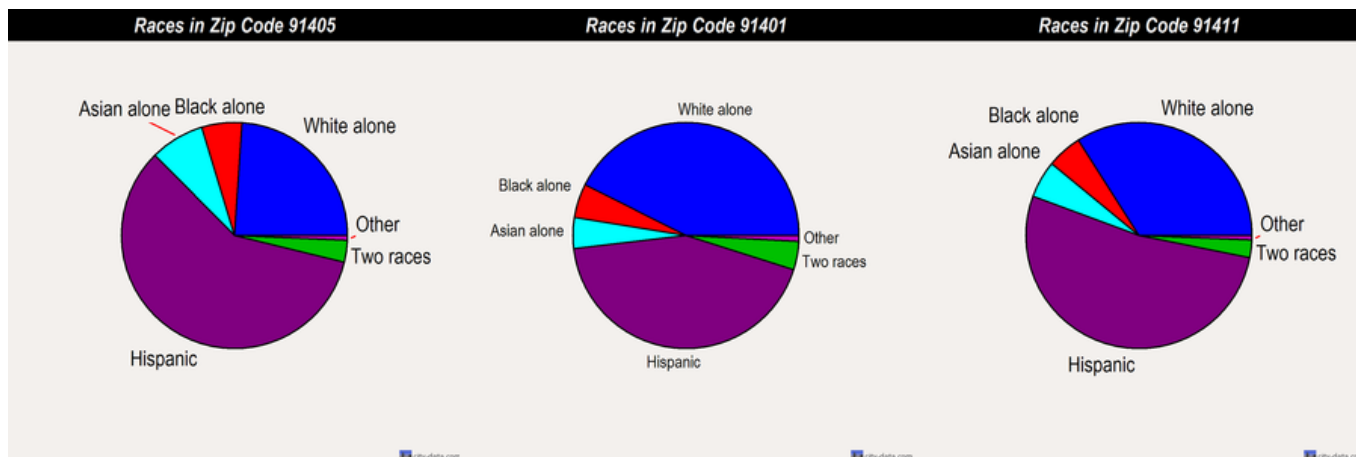
<i>Size of Market</i>			
	2000 Pop.	Estimated Pop. in 2007	Percentage of family households (2000 census)
91411	23,641	25,512	59.9%
91405	51,344	55,408	69%
91401	40,372	43,568	64.6%

The median family income in all three of the zip codes in the school's vicinity falls below the median income of the State, and the percentage of families living below the poverty line is far above the percentage for the United States. The school's goal of 50% Title I students reflects our desire to serve a large percentage of the most needy students in the targeted neighborhoods. The table below presents the financial data of these areas in detail.

<i>Financial Data – by zip code in Van Nuys</i>			
	Median Household income (2007 est.)	# Families below poverty level	% of families below poverty level
91411	\$43,252	877	16.7%
91405	\$37,435	2,382	20.9%
91401	\$44,687	1,918	19.9%
CA	\$59,948		
United States			9.2%

The school will be drawing from a racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse population. Foreign born residents comprise 44%-50% of the three identified zip codes, originating from 11 countries in significant numbers and many additional nationalities in smaller proportions. The four tables below demonstrate the range of cultures represented in the school's target neighborhoods. This tremendous variety in student background is the impetus for the school's focus on global citizenry and dedication to developing global competence and awareness in all students.

Racial/Ethnic Data



International Population

Foreign born population	Foreign born population
91411	44.4%
91405	50.5%
91401	45.0%

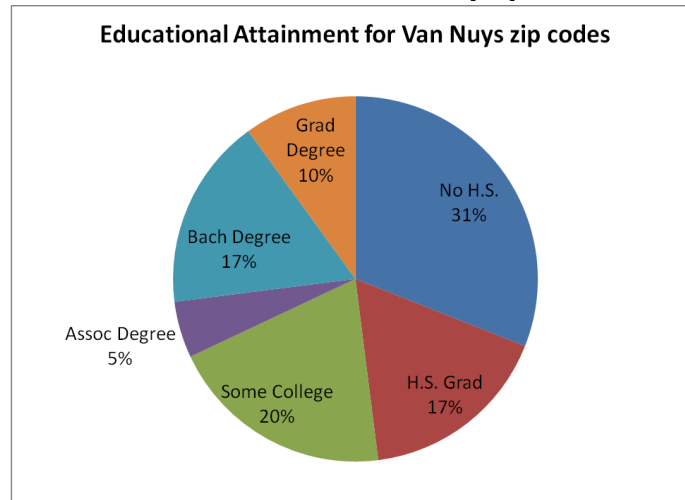
Country of Origin

Foreign Born Native Country	91411	91405	91401
Mexico	45.0%	37.0%	28.0%
El Salvador	16.0%	17.0%	14.0%
Guatemala	9.0%	10.0%	9.0%
Armenia	3.0%	7.0%	11.0%
Philippines		7.0%	3.0%
Korea	n/a	2.0%	n/a
Honduras	n/a	2.0%	n/a
Russia	n/a	n/a	2.0%
Israel	2.0%	n/a	2.0%
Vietnam	3.0%		
Iran	3.0%		

Language Spoken at Home	English	Spanish	Indo-European	Asian	Other
91411	38.7%	49.3%	6.4%	3.9%	1.8%
91405	28.6%	54.5%	9.2%	6.8%	0.9%
91401	41.5%	39.3%	12.8%	3.8%	2.5%

An estimated 69% of the adult population in the Van Nuys zip codes has graduated high school, yet only 27% has earned a Bachelor's or higher level post-secondary degree. The VCES emphasis on conceptual understanding and literacy is intended to provide a strong foundation for students to enable them to succeed in middle school, high school, and beyond. In addition, schools with a mixed SES model have been shown to be able to effectively expose students to the myriad benefits of meeting academic challenges and completing college.

Educational Attainment of adult population in Van Nuys



Valley Charter's elementary school will open with approximately 120 students - 40 in each grade Kindergarten through 2nd grade – and will target the schools listed in the table below.

LAUSD SCHOOLS	# of Students	Multi-Track School?	Program Improvement ?	Met Schoolwide Growth Target?	Met all Sub-group Growth Targets?	API score	API State Ranking	Similar Schools Rank	% Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced Lunch	% of Special Ed. Students	% of ELL Students	% Major Ethnicity #1	% Major Ethnicity #2	% Major Ethnicity #3
Sylvan Park	891	No	Year 4	No	No	692	2	5	90%	15%	68%	94%	2%	2%
Kester	843	No	No	Yes	Yes	870	9	10	53%	10%	18%	42%	36%	9%
Columbus	639	No	Year 2	Yes	Yes	682	2	3	92%	7%	69%	91%	4%	3%
Hazeltine	945	No	Year 4	Yes	Yes	680	2	3	87%	10%	58%	88%	4%	4%
Valerio	1049	No	Year 5	No	No	738	3	8	91%	12%	56%	88%	4%	3%
Chandler	474	No	No	Yes	No	810	7	10	70%	16%	26%	55%	31%	10%
Erwin	883	No	Year 1	Yes	No	743	4	6	92%	14%	47%	67%	25%	5%
Kittridge	791	No	No	Yes	Yes	681	2	4	91%	12%	65%	80%	15%	2%
Van Nuys	738	Yes	Year 2	No	No	708	2	5	57%	14.00%	62%	95%	1%	1%
CHARTER SCHOOLS	# of Students	Multi-Track School?	Program Improvement ?	Met Schoolwide Growth Target?	Met all Sub-group Growth Targets?	API Score	API State Ranking	Similar Schools Rank	%Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced Lunch	% of Special Ed. Students	% of ELL Students	%Major Ethnicity #1	%Major Ethnicity #2	%Major Ethnicity #3

ELEMENT #1: Description of the Educational Program

Element Requirement: "The educational program of the school, designed, among other things, to describe what the school intends to accomplish, to identify those whom the school is attempting to educate, what it means to be an "educated person" in the 21st century and how learning best occurs. The goals identified in that program shall include the objective of enabling students to become self-motivated, competent and lifelong learners."

The address of the Charter school is: We currently are searching for a school facility; the mailing address is 4016 Goodland Ave. Studio City, CA 91604

The phone number of the Charter school is 818-917-4085.

The contact person for the Charter school is Jennifer Simpson, Founding Parent and Board member.

The number of rooms at the charter school is (in most likely current space) 12 classrooms plus additional multi-use rooms, a theater/auditorium, a chapel, an outdoor play area and open space that can be converted into an edible garden.

The grade configuration is K-5, 40 students per grade.

The number of students in the first year will be 120 students.

The grade level(s) of the students the first year will be K, 1st and 2nd.

The opening date of the charter school is September 2, 2010.

The admission requirements include: VCES will enroll all pupils who wish to attend (Education Code Section 47605 (d)(2)(A)) to the extent that space allows. If the number of students applying for enrollment exceeds the openings available, entrance shall be determined by random public drawing in accordance with Education Code §47605(d)(2) and all federal requirements. Enrollment to the school shall be open to any resident of the State of California. Enrollment will be on a first come, first served basis. VCES affirms that the school shall be nonsectarian in all aspects of its programs and operations, including admissions and employment. VCES shall not charge tuition. VCES will not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, or disability as set forth in Education Code Section 47605(d)(1) or other applicable state, local or federal law. (See also Element 8: Admissions)

The operational capacity will be 300 students.

The instructional calendar will be 180 days (calendar Element One, Section E).

The bell schedule for the charter school will be 8:30 to 2:40/2:50 (see Element One, Section E)

If space is available, traveling students will have the option to attend.

A. Who will VCES serve?

VCES intends to open in September 2010 with 120 students, divided among grades K-2. Each year, the school will grow by adding a new class of 40 kindergartners, until reaching full size of 240 students in grades K-5. If space allows, we anticipate the student population will increase in the following increments over the next five years:

Grade	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
K	40	40	40	40	40
1	40	40	40	40	40
2	40	40	40	40	40
3		40	40	40	40
4			40	40	40
5				40	40
Total	120	160	200	240	240

The student population will be varied in terms of native language, prior academic achievement, skills, and interests as well as ethnic and religious identification and socioeconomic status. The Introduction describes the vibrant communities that make up the local area and the vast diversity of students in terms of language, culture, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

VCES will be non-sectarian in its programs, admission practices, employment practices and all other operations. VCES will not charge tuition and will not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability.

B. VCES will prepare an educated citizenry for the 21st century

VCES's definition of an "educated person in the 21st century" will be reinforced in explicit school guidelines of conduct in the classroom, in the schoolyard, and in the larger community. Faculty will analyze this definition annually in order to ensure that it is translated into measurable student outcomes to be developed and assessed throughout the year. Our definition draws upon concepts of global competence and Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences.

The concept of 'global competence' is receiving increased attention at the post-secondary level and is most commonly described as follows:

- The ability to work effectively in different international settings, an awareness of the major currents of global change and the issues arising from such changes, knowledge of global organizations and business activities, the capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and a personal adaptability to diverse cultures (Brustein).
- Having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others [and] leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one's environment (Hunter)
- Intercultural adroitness (behavioral aspect focusing on communication skills), intercultural awareness (cognitive aspect of understanding cultural differences), and intercultural sensitivity (focus on positive emotion toward cultural difference). (Dearloff)

We believe an educated person in the 21st century is one who possesses the skills and attitudes encompassed by global competence as described above and also:

- Effectively Communicates: writes clearly, listens actively, questions intently, reads critically, expresses oneself honestly and respectfully in a variety of mediums, seeks to master at least two languages (Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Musical and Linguistic Intelligences)
- Continually Learns: seeks to develop skills and acquire knowledge in all realms and at all times, obtains multiple perspectives, maintains an open-mind and a willingness to change in response to data, reflects on new experiences and information (Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Linguistic, Naturalistic Intelligences)
- Assertively Perseveres: when problems cannot be solved readily or when faced with criticism and disappointment, maintains focus and self-discipline, works through struggles and setbacks, attempts trials, examines errors, tries harder, tries differently, tries again (Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligences)

C. VCES's educational philosophy: How learning best occurs

In keeping with our respect for the 'backward design' technique¹ of developing an educational program, our educational philosophy begins with the end in mind. After reviewing research and schools that share similar learning goals to VCES, we have concluded that a constructivist approach to teaching and learning is the most effective way of developing student mastery of both state standards and habits of heart and mind described as learning outcomes in this charter.

- 1. Model Schools.** The following table identifies schools with similar educational philosophies. These schools approach teaching and learning in the same way as VCES and provide evidence that this approach is successful with diverse learners. Unfortunately, there is no school that reflects the exact demographics of a mixed socioeconomic and mixed ethnic student body that VCES intends to encompass. However, given the differences in demographics of the schools below, we believe that our educational approach has been demonstrated to be effective with a variety of students and can, therefore, be considered appropriate for our students.

¹ *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, 1998) is a theory of curriculum construction that involves the following process: 1) Identify desired results – learning outcomes; 2) Determine acceptable evidence – assessment data; 3) Plan learning experiences and instruction.

School	Demographics	Test Results	Constructivist approach to teaching/learning	Project-Based
Edwin Rhodes	46% Latino, 26% white, 16% Asian	API 965 (Hispanic 943, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged 930)	√	√
Country Springs	38% Asian, 24% White, 16% Latino	API 945 (Hispanic 907)	√	√
Rocketship Mateo Sheedy	91% Latino, 73% English language learners, 84% participating in Free and Reduced Lunch	API 926 (Hispanic 922, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged 924)	√	√
Larchmont Charter School	28% participating in Free and Reduced lunch, 15% Asian, 15% Latino, 8% African American	API 889 (Socioeconomically Disadvantaged 820)	√	√
University of Houston Charter School	42% Black, 30% Latino, 22% White, 7% Asian: Economically Disadvantaged 28%, Special Education 11%, Gifted 0%	93-94% of 5th graders meet or exceed standards on TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge & Skills) 2009	√	√
Discovery Charter School (4-8 grade)	44% eligible for free lunch, 29% eligible for reduced lunch; 81% black, 11% Asian, 8% Latino	75%-100% of 8th graders at or above proficient on NJ ASK (assessment of skills & knowledge)	√	√
Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy	65% economically disadvantaged, 12% students with disabilities, 29% limited english speakers; 43% Latino, 35% White, 15% Black	5th graders meeting or exceeding standards on Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests: 99% Reading, 94% Language Arts, 96% Math	√	√
New Visions School of Discovery and Exploration (K-4)	52% eligible for free/reduced lunch; 50% Latino, 38% Black, 9% White	4th graders meeting or exceeding standards on NY's State Assessments: 96% Language Arts, 98% Math	√	√

2. Research. Evidence from research in the fields of cognitive science, brain function and education lead us to conclude that learning best occurs when educational programs:

1. Develop and implement curriculum that is relevant, age appropriate and meaningful.
2. Create learning environments in which representations of world experiences and knowledge serve to invite students "...to experience the world's richness, empower them to ask their own questions and seek their own answers, and challenge them to understand the world's complexities" (Brooks and Brooks, pp. 5, 1999)

3. Ensure teachers continually strive to teach students at their instructional level (ZPD-Zone of Proximal Development) based on ongoing formal and informal assessments.
4. Articulate and establish high expectations. Engage students in rigorous academic studies to continually improve their capacity and performance, reaching beyond their own perceived limits.
5. Model and guide early learners in developing high level thinking skills.
6. Consistently provide a variety of modalities for access to learning, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic that inspire children to engage in ongoing practice of self-reflection and self-assessment, that facilitates their taking responsibility for their own learning.
7. Offer students a degree of choice in terms of what they read, what they write, and what they construct as evidence of having met learning objectives.
8. Incorporate language learning and multi-cultural education; celebrate and bring relevance to cultural and individual diversity with a commitment to equity, by providing open exchange of perspectives, talents, and ideas to include everyone and inspire educators, students, and their families to reach for the highest level of social, ethical and intellectual integrity.
9. Cultivate a caring community of learners, where teachers, parents, and students share dynamic interactions, build warm, trusting relationships and work together in a safe, stable, supportive learning environment where character development is taught and high moral/ethical behavior is recognized and celebrated.

More specific research that demonstrates a successful alignment between our instructional approaches and our projected student population can be found in section F below.

D. Goals to Enable Students to be Self-Motivated, Competent, Life-Long Learners

VCES originated from the dedication of a group of parents, educators and former Larchmont Charter School (LCS) Board members who were inspired by the progress LCS was making toward achieving its vision of a smaller, alternative learning community in which all involved develop as 1) self-motivated, 2) competent, and 3) lifelong learners. A confluence of resources in the form of skilled individuals, funds, a site, and a growing number of families seeking a diverse neighborhood school has given rise to the conviction that VCES can meet the objective of enabling students to develop these three qualities and meet other, specific academic goals.

- **Developing self-motivated learners:** VCES believes that self-motivation requires students to internalize the benefits of learning. VCES will, therefore, seek to connect students' personal interests and questions with curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Students will be empowered to choose community service and academic projects that have personal meaning to them. By beginning with each student's interests and questions, VCES can provide students with the means of making connections between their studies, themselves and life beyond the school's walls. Furthermore, VCES's emphasis on Global Citizenship throughout the program will foster student appreciation for the many positive impacts their skills and abilities can have on the world.
- **Developing competent learners: The "Backward Design" approach that teachers will take in creating all lessons and curriculum, coupled with Data Driven Instruction efforts that guide teachers in refining their pedagogy in light of student assessment information, will ensure that learning objectives are met by students. In addition, the constructivist and**

project-based teaching methodologies require students to reflect after formative assessments, a practice considered essential in improving student's understanding of the way they learn best. In these ways, students will develop a solid foundation of knowledge and a competence in learning upon which they can build in the future.

- **Developing lifelong learners: A lifelong learner is one who has both the interest in and the ability to continue to learn outside a formal school setting. Our program as described above in the context of developing competent and self-motivated learners is also expected to inspire lifelong learning. VCES's emphasis on international understanding and responsible citizenship throughout the program will further foster student appreciation for the many positive impacts their skills and abilities can have on the world.**

Additional academic goals include mastery of the California State Standards and the school's definition of an educated person. All curriculum designs are directly aligned to the California State Standards, as indicated in the tables included in the Curriculum section of this Element. The standardized testing and benchmarking required by the district and the State of California will be just as much a part of our assessments as our faculty-constructed rubrics, project goals, student portfolios, and student exhibits. In addition, character development and social responsibility are inherent to our entire program and will be assessed through student and teacher evaluations.

E. Description of the Learning Setting

Minutes of Instruction Assurances

The VCES daily schedule and annual calendar amounts to more than the minimum number of instructional minutes set forth in Education Code § 47612.5, and the required number of 180 school days. This code requires kindergarten students to experience 36,000 minutes, grades 1-3 to experience 50,400 minutes and students in grades 4-8 to experience 54,000 minutes. At VCES, students in grades K-1 will have 50,940 minutes, 2nd and 3rd graders will have 51,840 minutes, and 4th and 5th graders will have 54,180 minutes (see charts below). Furthermore, VCES will comply with the **Education Code** Section 51210(g) requirement of 200 minutes of physical education every ten days for elementary students by enrolling all students in a 40 minute physical education class 3 times a week.

Proposed school calendar for 2010-2011

Month	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	x	S	SD	Student Days	Work Days						
SEP			1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30		15	5	2		18	20					
			SD	x	x	H	x	S	H	x	x	x	S	x	S	x	x	S	x	SD	x	x	S	x												
OCT					1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29											
					x	x	x	S	x	x	H	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	20	4	0	20	20						
NOV	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30														
	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	H	SD	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	H	H	H	x	x				14	3	1	17	18						
DEC			1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31											
			S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H		10	3	0	13	13						
JAN	3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28	31															
	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	H	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x				16	4	0	20	20						
FEB		1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28															
	x	S	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x				16	4	0	20	20						
MAR		1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31												
	x	S	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x		18	5	0	23	23						
APR					1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29											
					x	x	x	S	x	x	SD	SD	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	x	x	S	x	x	9	2	2	11	13						
MAY	2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31														
	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	H	x				17	4	0	21	21						
JUN			1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30												
			S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	S	x							13	4	0	17	12						
TOTALS																										133	38	5	180	180						
SD	Staff Development					Holidays					Parent Events																									
S	Shortened Day					Labor Day					Back to School Night					Sep 22																				
H	Holiday					Rosh Hashanah					Fall Conference					Nov 1-5																				
x	Regular Day					Columbus Day					Spring Conference					May 2-6																				
						Veteran's Day					Nov 11																									
						Thanksgiving					Nov 24-26					First Semester ends					Jan 28															
						Winter Break					Dec 20-31					Second Semester ends					June 16															
						Martin Luther King Day					Jan 17																									
						Mid-Winter					Feb 21																									
						Spring Break					April 11-22																									
						Passover					April 20-22																									
						Memorial Day					May 30																									

Bell Schedule

Schedule for K and 1st Grade							
Instructional minutes	Monday	Instructional minutes	Tuesday & Thursday	Instructional minutes	Wednesday (shortened day)	Instructional minutes	Friday
	8:30 - 8:50		8:30 - 8:40		8:30 - 8:40		8:30 - 9:00
20	Introduce the week	10	Introduce the day	10	Introduce the day	30	Community Sing
	Circle Time		Circle Time		Circle Time		School-wide meeting: songs, performances, announcements
	Character Education						
	Cultural Education						
	8:50 - 10:00		8:40 - 10:00		8:40 - 10:20		9:00 - 10:00
70	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	80	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	100	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	60	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge
	10:00 - 10:20		10:00 - 10:20				10:00 - 10:20
	Recess		Recess				Recess
20	10:20 (25) - 10:45	20	10:20 (25) - 10:45		10:20 - 10:40	20	10:20 (25) - 10:45
	Read Aloud		Read Aloud		Recess		Read Aloud
90	10:45 - 12:15	90	10:45 - 12:15	45	10:40 (5) - 11:30	90	10:45 - 12:15
	Project-based Learning		Project-based Learning		Math		Project-based Learning
	Begin with language arts related instruction, transition to project-based centers, alternate b/w social studies & science focus, include data analysis & add'l math standards		Begin with language arts related instruction, transition to project-based centers, alternate b/w social studies & science focus, include data analysis & add'l math standards				Transition to project-based centers, alternate b/w social studies & science focus, include data analysis & add'l math standards
	12:15 - 12:55		12:15 - 12:55		11:30 - 12:30		
	Lunch and Recess		Lunch and Recess		Project-based Learning, Social Studies or Science emphasis		
	12:55 - 1:45		12:55 - 1:45		12:30 - 1:00		12:15 - 12:55
	Math		Math		Lunch and Dismissal		Lunch and Recess
50	1:45 (50) - 2:30	50	1:45 (50) - 2:30		1:00 - 3:00	90	12:55 - 2:25
	Physical Education		Physical Education		Faculty meeting, professional development, and grade level planning		Math: Differentiated instruction (intervention, challenge), tie-ins to project when applicable
	2:30 - 2:40		2:30 - 2:40				
10	End of Day Review	10	End of Day Review	215		15	2:25 - 2:40
300		300					End of Day Review
							Choose work for portfolio, determine if new standards have been met this week and check off related rubric items in portfolio
						305	

Schedule for 2nd and 3rd Grade							
Instructional minutes		Instructional minutes		Instructional minutes		Instructional minutes	
	Monday		Tuesday & Thursday		Wednesday (shortened day)		Friday
	8:30 - 8:50		8:30 - 8:40		8:30 - 8:40		8:30 - 9:00
20	Introduce the week	10	Introduce the day	10	Introduce the day	30	Community Sing
	Character Education		Circle Time		Circle Time		School-wide meeting: songs, performances, announcements
	Cultural Education						
	Community Service						
	8:50 - 10:20		8:40 - 10:20		8:40 - 10:00		9:00 - 10:20
90	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, writer's journey, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	100	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, writer's journey, Read Aloud, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	80	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, writer's journey, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	80	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, whole class instruction, writer's journey, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge
	10:20 - 10:40		10:20 - 10:40		10:00 - 10:20		10:20 - 10:40
	Recess		Recess		Recess		Recess
20	10:40 - 11:00	90	10:40 - 12:10		10:20 - 11:10		10:40 - 11:00
	Read Aloud		Project-based Learning: alternating focus on science and social studies	50	Math	20	Read Aloud
70	11:00 - 12:10			80	11:10 - 12:30		11:00 - 12:10
	Math				Project-based Learning, Social Studies or Science emphasis	70	Math: Differentiated instruction (intervention, challenge), tie-ins to project when applicable
	12:10 - 12:50		12:10 - 12:50		12:30 - 1:00		12:10 - 12:50
	Lunch and Recess		Lunch and Recess		Lunch and Dismissal		Lunch and Recess
100	12:50 - 2:30	40	12:50 - 1:30		1:00 - 3:00	40	12:50 - 1:30
	Project-based Learning: alternating focus on science and social studies		Physical Education		Faculty meeting, professional development, and grade level planning		Physical Education
		55	1:30(5) - 2:30 Math				1:30(5) - 2:30
10	2:30 - 2:40	10	2:30 - 2:40			55	Project-based Learning: alternating focus on science and social studies
	End of Day Review		End of Day Review	220			
310		305					2:30 - 2:40
						10	End of Day Review
							Choose work for portfolio, determine if new standards have been met this week and check off related rubric items in portfolio
						305	

Schedule for 4th and 5th Grade						
Instructional minutes	Monday	Instructor's minutes	Tuesday & Thursday	Instructor's minutes	Wednesday (shortened day)	Instructor's minutes
	8:30 - 8:50		8:30 - 8:40		8:30 - 8:40	8:30 - 9:00
20	Introduce the week	10	Introduce the day	10	Introduce the day	30
	Character Education					Community Sing
	Cultural Education					School-wide meeting: songs, performances, announcements
	Community Service					
	8:50 - 10:00		8:40 - 9:50		8:40 - 9:40	9:00 - 10:00
70	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, writer's workshop, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra challenge	70	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, writer's workshop, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra	60	Language Arts/Literacy centers, small group instruction, writer's workshop, lessons related to language arts and projects, differentiated instruction for intervention and extra	60
	10:00 - 10:40		9:50 - 10:40		9:40 - 10:40	10:00 - 10:40
40	Physical Education	50	Lang. Arts & Social Studies	60	Lang. Arts & Social Studies	40
	10:40 - 11:00		10:40 - 11:00	40	10:40 (5) - 11:25	10:40 - 11:00
	Recess		Recess		Physical Education	Recess
50	11:00 - 11:50	40	11:00 - 11:40			11:00 - 12:40
	Math		Project-based Learning: Social Studies		11:30 - 12:30	Project-based Learning: alternate every other Friday between Social Studies and Science
50	11:50 - 12:40	60	11:40 - 12:40	60	Math	
	Project-based Learning: Social Studies		Project-based Learning: Science		12:30 - 1:00	
	12:40 - 1:20		12:40 - 1:20		Lunch and Dismissal	12:40 - 1:20
	Lunch and Recess		Lunch and Recess		1:00 - 3:00	Lunch and Recess
20	1:20 - 1:40		1:20 - 1:40		Faculty meeting, professional development, and grade level planning	1:20 - 2:10
	Read Aloud	20	Read Aloud			50
	1:40 - 2:50		1:40 - 2:50			2:10 - 2:30
70	Project-based Learning: Science	70	Math			20
		320		230		2:30 - 2:50
320						20
						End of Day Review
						Choose work for portfolio, determine if new standards have been met this week and check off related rubric items in portfolio
						320

Minutes Instructional Time Per Week - 4 full days, 1 shortened day						
K and 1st	M	T	W (short)	R	F	total
days in year	34	38	38	36	34	
literacy	90	100	100	100	80	
math	50	50	45	50	90	
mixed	90	90	60	90	90	
other	30	20	10	20	45	
PE	40	40	0	40	0	
daily	300	300	215	300	305	
annual	10200	11400	8170	10800	10370	50940
grade 2 3	M	T	W (short)	R	F	
days in year	34	38	38	36	34	
literacy	110	100	80	100	80	
math	70	55	50	55	90	
mixed	100	90	80	90	55	
other	30	20	10	20	40	
PE	0	40	0	40	40	
daily	310	305	220	305	305	
annual	10540	11590	8360	10980	10370	51840
grade 4 5	M	T	W (short)	R	F	
days in year	34	38	38	36	34	
literacy	90	115	60	115	80	
math	50	70	60	70	50	
sci	70	60	0	60	50	
soc stud	50	65	60	65	50	
other	20	10	10	10	50	
PE	40	0	40	0	40	
daily	320	320	230	320	320	
annual	10880	12160	8740	11520	10880	54180

Note that the bell schedule for grades K-1, 2-3 and 4-5 are similar in light of developmental and standards-based changes. Fourth and Fifth graders, for example, have a day that is 10 minutes longer than that experienced by students in grades K-3. In addition, these upper elementary students experience more time in single subject lessons related to science and social studies. The totaling of instructional minutes do not count certain 5 minute transition times, such as the 5 minute transition after Physical Education classes and a 5 minute transition for Kindergarten and 1st grade after recess. It is expected that grades 2-5 will not lose time between recess and academic classes as the recess will end prior to the 20 minute allotment in order to begin class promptly.

Students in Kindergarten and 1st grade follow similar schedules but projects become more academically-oriented in 1st grade. Projects alternate between a social studies or a science emphasis but always are equally focused on developing student literacy and math skills. Students work at their own pace and are provided small group, whole group, and individualized instruction as is appropriate to ensure maximum growth of skills and understanding of concepts. Reading recovery and other research-based interventions would be provided for “at risk” students.

Targeted language arts instruction in the morning, projects that contain “real life” experiences, and GLAD² trained teachers who deliver whole group lessons will enrich the environment to enable all students to achieve end of year first grade standards before transitioning to 2nd grade.

The schedule for 2nd and 3rd graders reflects a developmental leap from first grade. All students are expected to be “readers” and independent learners. The curriculum reflects more rigor. Teachers continue to utilize GLAD strategies to teach academic language to ELL and English only students alike. Projects remain an important aspect of science and social studies but are more targeted on specific concepts and skills than are projects in the primary center. Projects, however, continue to provide “real life” applications that enrich and solidify learning for ELL, English only, and “at risk” students.

The schedule for grades 4 and 5 reflects a departmentalized approach in order that teachers can develop expertise and attention to student need in areas of science, social studies and math. Teachers continue to employ GLAD strategies as complexity of content language increases. Interdisciplinary projects that reflect subject-specific learning goals are more essential than ever in these grades as learning and assessment tools. Therefore, in addition to subject-specific instruction time, project time occurs every day as students will always be in the process of completing a project. Since all projects require explicit instruction in reading comprehension and writing, language arts instruction will more than surpass the recommended 2 hour daily allotment. Faculty and school leaders will regularly analyze the learning activities during project time to ensure this is occurring.

A Typical Day

Although the school day begins at 8:30, a pre-school opening program will be available to families that need to drop children off earlier. Therefore, beginning as early as 7:30 AM, students will begin arriving on campus. They will experience a supervised recess outside (or inside the gymnasium if it is raining) and a supervised ‘study hall’ inside the library. When the technology center is completed, students (with their parents) will be able to sign up in advance for educational games and interactive learning experiences on computers during this time as well. As students arrive closer to 8:30, they will join their classmates at recess.

Faculty and administrators will arrive by 8 AM. As teachers prepare in their rooms for the day, administrators will be outside to greet parents and children. Volunteers and teacher’s aides will walk students to their classrooms at 8:30.

The school day begins with a circle time during which the day is introduced. Songs may be sung and music may be played. There are three possible main topics of discussion during this 10-20 minute period of time: character education, community service or cultural education. The character education piece involves the implementation of activities that utilize the UCLA Lab School’s Cool Tools program or

² Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) is an award-winning model of effective training for teachers in multilingual settings for both ELL and English only students, and is the recommended K-8 project for the California State Superintendent’s Task Force on successful implementation of Proposition 227.

a theme-based discussion that utilizes the Ojai Foundation's Council process. The community service piece will encompass the planning of and then reflection upon a project of the class's choosing (with faculty guidance) each semester. The implementation of the community service project will involve 1-2 half day-long field trip/s that occur/s after the shortened day's (Wednesday) academic schedule has ended. The cultural education piece will involve families of students at the school and provide opportunities for students to share their cultural heritages, traditions, beliefs and celebrations.

The first core block of the day for all students will focus on developing literacy and language arts skills. For the younger students (grades K-3) this 60-100 minute block will be followed by snack and recess. For students in the older grades (4 – 5), this 60-70 minute block will be followed by a 40 minute period of physical education (3 days a week) or a transition from exclusively language arts to a 50-60 minute project-based learning experience that develops social studies knowledge and skills along with language arts skills (reading comprehension, oral communication, writing and analysis). Parent volunteers who had attended a school-led (faculty or administrator) workshop on 'developing literacy' are welcome to join the class during this time. Parents are always welcome to observe, but to truly be a part of the learning, the school will hold several workshops a year for parents who want to know more about the teaching and learning of language arts.

While students are engaged in active learning experiences during this block, school leaders will visit classrooms and take copious notes on students and teachers, then share this information with teachers during a later meeting. The purpose of these visits is to ensure that school leaders are aware of the teaching and learning occurring in the classroom and can, therefore, knowledgeably guide teachers. In addition, school leaders will be reviewing student assessment data in order to prepare for the weekly (shortened day) meeting with faculty that is intended to be used for professional development and will most often include a focus on data driven instruction.

The Executive Director will also be a regular visitor to classrooms but the individual in this role will have more than one campus to attend to (the middle school will be housed nearby, but not necessarily adjacent) and will be focusing on meeting with individuals throughout Los Angeles, California, and potentially nationally. The Executive Director will need to be familiar with the reality of the school, the teachers and students, and will need to meet regularly with school leaders to continually assess the program and student learning. A large part of the day, however, will most likely be spent fundraising. The ED will be introducing and touting the school to individual donors, foundations and corporations in order to effectively garner funding that is needed to secure an excellent site for all Valley Charter Schools. The ED may, therefore, visit a classroom with a potential donor as a guest.

While students are at recess, they will be supervised by aides/assistants and parent volunteers so that teachers have 20 minutes to reflect on the learning and struggles of their students during the morning and utilize this knowledge as they prepare for the next block of learning to take place after recess.

For the youngest students (K-1), the transition between recess and learning will be bridged by a 20 minute Read-Aloud time. Teachers will not only read to students, but also model effective reading comprehension strategies and question students as they read to help develop. For 2nd and 3rd graders, Read-Aloud will also provide a bridge, two times a week. Read-Aloud will take place before recess for two other days and will not occur during the shortened day. When Read-Aloud is not directly after recess, students in 2nd and 3rd grade will – like 4th and 5th graders - enter the classroom and experience

a hands-on mathematics lesson or a project-based learning experience with a focus on social studies or science. After Read-Aloud, students will transition to project-based learning. Parent volunteers who wish to be in the classroom during project time will be encouraged to read faculty-chosen articles about project-based learning so that they have an understanding of the activities and lessons that are essential for effective project-based learning.

If school leaders did not visit classrooms during the language arts block because of pressing matters related to families or school operations, this project-based learning and mathematics time of day will serve as equally important areas of examination. While visits to classrooms are important, school leaders must also use this time to attend to operational matters, answer parent questions, meet with the Site-Based Council, and prepare for meetings (with the Board, the Executive Director, potential parents, faculty, et al).

During the 40 minute lunch and recess period, students will once again be supervised by aides/assistants and parent volunteers so that teachers can have lunch together and use that time to learn from each other as they share the learning challenges and successes they are witnessing in their classrooms. They may also wish to check in on matters related to assessment and curriculum. At VCES, students as well as faculty learn from discussion, listening, questioning and sharing.

Depending on the day, students experience 1-2 last blocks of learning after lunch. The blocks can be project-based science or social studies, mathematics, Read-Aloud, or physical education. For parents that wish to volunteer in the classroom during mathematics lessons, workshops will be offered to explain the use of manipulatives and other hands-on ways that research has shown leads to mathematical (number sense) conceptual understanding.

Students in grades K-3 will experience a close of day ritual that reviews the day, revisits the school day opening discussions and asks students to review their own portfolio of sample works to reflect on their learning and their goals. The portfolio aspect of the close of day will receive additional attention every Friday as students in all grades may choose to replace work with updated samples that demonstrate their skills and knowledge. The standards and learning goals will be discussed and students will be encouraged to speak using 'Council' about the standards that have almost been reached and what they hope to do the next week in order to learn more.

After school, students will leave or remain on campus to take part in a variety of after school enrichment programs provided by partner organizations. The details of the program will be dependent on partnership offerings but the school will pursue programs related to the arts, music, athletics, academics, technology, and culture. Furthermore, a garden on campus will allow students to enroll in the 'edible schoolyard' science program (edibleschoolyard.org) led by parents and faculty who wish to earn a stipend for after-hours enrichment teaching.

After the school day is done, faculty and administrators may still have school-related commitments. The school will host a variety of free workshops for parents that wish to volunteer in the classroom and learn more about the school's approach to literacy and mathematics (mentioned above). Workshops will also be made available to the greater community in order to allow parents of preschool age children to learn about what they can do to help their children develop literacy and number sense. Faculty and administrators may also have nightly events related to community outreach in order to introduce the school to prospective parents in the neighborhood.

F. Instructional Design and Methodologies

VCES is dedicated to developing each student's potential and providing an intellectually challenging, experiential learning environment. Our project-based educational model focuses on a student-centered, constructivist approach to teaching and learning that is designed to:

- **Educate the "whole child" by providing students with the tools for academic, social-emotional, creative and physical mastery.**
- **Enable each child to investigate, research and learn at his or her own pace, in a small group setting.**
- **Use diverse teaching strategies that consider each child's learning style and that vary in response to student assessment data.**
- **Empower and support teacher action research focused on improving student learning and developing engaging curriculum.**

We intend to utilize a variety of instructional methodologies to ensure all students are achieving academic success and developing the qualities VCES deems essential for an 'Educated Person.' The fundamental strategies include:

- 1) Data Driven Instruction: Teacher inquiry and research to guide curriculum development and pedagogical choices
- 2) Backward Design
- 3) Family participation and community involvement in the educational process
- 4) Constructivism
- 5) Project-Based Learning (PjBL)
- 6) Problem-Based Learning

The six strategies listed above and described below are critical to effectively serving the diverse population that VCES anticipates serving. The research base for each strategy is described in the corresponding section, and establishes the validity of each strategy for

maximizing the learning of all students. However, these strategies are also particularly effective for language learners, who will represent a significant portion of our projected student population. Karen Carrier in, "Key Issues for Teaching English Language Learners in Academic Classrooms," (Middle School Journal, November 2005) identifies three key issues ELLs face in the academic classroom:

- The amount of time required for second language acquisition
- The dual job of ELLs – learning content and learning the language
- The need for multiple modes of input and output

The kind of schools we need would use videotaped teaching episodes to refine teachers' ability to take the practice of teaching apart – not in the negative sense, but as a way of enlarging our understanding of a complex and subtle process... To teach really well, it is necessary to reflect on the processes of one's own teaching and on the teaching practices of others.

Eisner, E.W. (April 2002). *The Kind of Schools We Need*. Phi Delta Kappan.

The VCES instructional model addresses all three of these issues directly. Students are afforded extra time through the project-based learning period of the day that allows teachers to frontload key vocabulary and concepts, and engage in multiple modes of instruction within one class period, therefore meeting the needs of diverse learners. The very nature of a constructivist education is designed to be student centered and build on student interests and prior knowledge. This approach will allow the teacher to easily tailor the learning experiences to individual students, and to allow students to acquire new content at a pace that is appropriate for them. Finally, the ELL student's need for multiple modes of input and output is directly addressed by problem-based learning, which provides students with real-world applications and built-in visuals and realia to contextualize new learning.

1. Data Driven Instruction

Our instructional program will be driven by student data through two distinct data analysis processes: Administrator-led Data Conferences and teacher-led action research.

a) Data Conferences

At least monthly, the principal will facilitate data conferences to engage teachers in conversations, reflection, and planning based on student achievement data. In order to support this process, the school will systematically collect and analyze student data on key demographic, behavioral, and proficiency indicators. Data will be collected through the implementation of a robust set of diagnostic and benchmark assessments that complement the state standardized test data (CST, CELDT, etc.) and provide continuous information about student progress towards standards. For example, the school may implement diagnostic assessments such as the NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE. As an additional literacy assessment program, the school will use the Developmental Reading Assessments and a higher frequency program such as DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). The selected assessments will provide data at least three times per year (and DIBELS type program on a weekly basis) that informs student grouping, lexile levels, math placement, intervention and enrichment needs, and pre-teaching and re-teaching needs. Furthermore, teachers will be able to generate and administer (at least every 6 weeks) standards-based benchmark assessments aligned to their grade-level content standards. They will either have access to standards-based test item banks, or computer-based adaptive assessments (e.g. I Can Learn) that provide ongoing data about students' real-time mastery of grade level standards. Data-driven conversations will also focus on teacher-generated grades to ensure that grading policies are fair, equitable, and focused on student proficiency (as opposed to behavior, homework completion, or compliance). Each progress reporting period (every 5-6 weeks), the principal will examine grade distributions, and engage in reflective conversations with any teacher demonstrating an excessive number of failing students.

Utilizing a technology accelerator (to be determined) such as spreadsheets (e.g. Excel) and data management systems (PowerSchools) the school leadership will be able to track student growth on state standards and run analyses such as pivot tables to compare growth on two dimensions, correlation analyses (to address assumptions about student demographic factors and links to student achievement), and identify patterns of behavior and achievement that can be addressed through instructional and behavioral policies and practices.

Data-driven conversations will be principal led, but faculty will be trained by the principal to develop the capacity to design common formative assessments, run data reports, and analyze data to inform instruction. Grade level teachers will be provided with common planning time that they will use to examine data at least monthly. Even as faculty become adept in data driven instruction, the principal will continue to supervise the use of data by teachers (through meetings and collection of data conferencing agendas and notes, and to monitor actual student progress through weekly examination of the data. In particular, the principal will monitor the progress of all subgroups (particularly language learners and special education students), and patterns of academic achievement or behavior that may indicate declining progress or inequitable outcomes among different sub groups. Any problematic data trends will be directly addressed through meetings with individual teachers, and through the examination of policies that may be contributing to declining achievement or inequities. At all times, teachers will be expected to be able to articulate data patterns in their classrooms and describe what they are doing to raise the achievement of all students, and close any gaps that may exist. Teacher action research projects will be focused on raising student achievement.

It should be noted that teachers will learn effective data driven instruction at no additional cost to the school. Only Principal candidates with expertise in data driven instruction will be considered.

b) Action Research

All teachers will participate in collaborative action-research³ in their classrooms to make informed decisions about assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, and student services. Our definition of action research is “a process in which participants systematically examine their own educational practice using the techniques of research, for the purpose of increasing learning of students, their teachers, and other interested parties.”⁴

Rather than send teachers to a variety of informative yet disconnected professional development seminars throughout the year, VCES will place teacher inquiry, research and student assessment data at the center of its professional development model. Informally, teachers will look at student work and questions in order to inform their instructional practice. Formally, teachers will be trained to take an analytical approach to teaching, learning, and the analysis of student assessment data. Teachers will act as researchers in their classrooms to test hypotheses, gather data, and draw conclusions about their instructional practices. Teachers will then be expected to base their pedagogical decision-making on collective research and to share best practices regularly both within their grades and across grades with their department.

The five steps to action research include:

1. Problem Identification
2. Plan of Action
3. Data Collection
4. Analysis of Data
5. Plan for Future Action⁵

The kind of schools we need would treat the idea of “public education” as meaning not only the education of the public inside schools, but also the education of the public outside schools...to create educational forums for members of the community in which the purposes and processes of education can be discussed, debated, and deliberated and from which consensus can be arrived at with regard to our broad mission as an educational institution.

Eisner, E.W. (Lee Jacks Professor of Education and Art, Stanford University.) (April 2002). *The Kind of Schools We Need. Phi Delta Kappan.*

We focus on teacher research because implementing this model of teacher development has three necessary outcomes. First, our educational program will be focused on students needs, constantly modified in response to research findings. Second, our teachers will form a true community of learners as they take a more reflective and analytical approach to their instruction. Third, by supporting teachers who wish to become published researchers, we may begin to bridge the gap between educational theory and classroom practice.

Benefits of action research include:

- Creates a system wide mindset for school improvement – a professional problem-solving ethos.
- Enhances decision making – greater feelings of competence in solving problems and making instructional decisions. In other words, action research provides for an intelligent way of making decisions.

³ Since the process of becoming National Board Certified for teachers is “similar to action research” according to the nbpts.org website, VCMS will support teachers in every way possible in their pursuit of National Board Certification and will consider this pursuit to be the fulfillment of this instructional methodology goal.

⁴ Caro-Bruce. (2000). *Action Researcher: Facilitator’s Handbook* National Council of Staff Development.

⁵ Adapted from the St. Louis Action Research Evaluation Committee

- Promotes reflection and self-assessment
- Instills a commitment to continuous improvement
- Creates a more positive school climate in which teaching and learning are foremost concerns
- Impacts directly on practice
- Empowers those who participate in the process. Educational leaders who undertake action research may no longer, for instance, uncritically accept theories, innovations, and programs at face value.
- Promotes student achievement

2. Backward Design

VCES teachers will plan all units of study with other departmental faculty using the 'backward design' guidelines described in *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, 1998). This strategy advises teachers to "begin with the question, 'What would we accept as evidence that students have attained the desired understandings and proficiencies' – *before* proceeding to plan teaching and learning experiences." There are three steps to this process:

- 1) Identify desired results: Using educational standards and additional goals, teachers will determine a three-tiered hierarchical set of learning expectations:
 - a) Information and skills worth being familiar with
 - b) Important knowledge and skills
 - c) Enduring understandings

Teachers will answer four questions to help them select and prioritize these learning expectations:

- To what extent does the idea, topic, or process represent a 'big idea' having enduring value beyond the classroom?
- To what extent does the idea, topic, or process reside at the heart of the discipline?
- To what extent does the idea, topic, or process require uncoverage? (meaning, what parts of these concepts do students typically have difficulty understanding)
- To what extent does the idea, topic, or process offer potential for engaging students?

2) Determine acceptable evidence: Teachers will select forms of evidence that can be assessed throughout the unit of study and include: informal checks, observation/dialogue, quiz/test, open-ended prompts, performance tasks, projects and presentations.

3) Plan learning experiences and instruction: Now that the learning expectations (knowledge and skills) have been identified, teachers will work together to determine the most effective teaching methods and select the appropriate materials and resources to achieve their goals.

3. Prioritizing community and family participation

The participation of families and the surrounding community is critical in meeting the needs of the whole child; such participation is therefore a top priority. Meaningful learning can only take place if the objectives taught in classes are extended into children's lives outside the classroom. We will incorporate:

- Family education

Teachers, Administrators, parents, and community members will conduct socioculturally sensitive, hands-on workshops with parents of current students and prospective parents of pre-school age

children to enable them to develop early math and literacy concepts. As our school grows and matures, we intend to partner with community based organizations in order to build an adult education component that will serve the needs and desires of parents and community members in reaching their own academic and career goals.

- Parent/teacher/Student conferences

Students will co-lead, with their teacher, a conference 1-2 a year in order to demonstrate complete understanding of their academic achievements, challenges and plans. These conferences will be mandatory for every family.

- Parent volunteers

Parents will always be welcome and encouraged to volunteer in the classroom, the office and at school events as arranged with the teachers and office staff. In this way, parents may provide valuable and needed services and are empowered to effectively shape school programs and operations. As part of the Family Agreement with VCES, a degree of parent involvement will be mandated. This arrangement will be made with respect to the family's members' abilities and schedules and could take the form of volunteering at the school or volunteering from a more convenient location, in a way that suits the skills and interests of the family. VCES recognizes that parents cannot be mandated to volunteer at the school site. Furthermore, VCES recognizes that parents do not necessarily have time to give to the school and will never attempt to place a hardship or burden on families.

- Families

All parents and guardians will vote for parent representatives to the Site-Based Council. The parent representatives will then be responsible for working with the Principal to set up Town Hall meetings as needed to ensure parent concerns are aired and addressed and to communicate school events, policies and news. One of the main ways parents will be involved in the governance of the school is through their grade level elected representatives to the Site-Based Council. This council is based on similar structures that exist in schools that share educational goals, curricular choices and student demographics. The Aspire schools and a collection of successful, rigorous schools in Arizona provide the main models for this council which we define as follows:

The Site-Based Council is a policy-making, advisory body that determines all items related to school operation. The Site Council include an equal number of teachers and parents (representing each grade level) and will report directly to the principal, only reporting directly to the Board when encountering serious, unresolved issues. An individual Board member will be publically identified as the Council's main contact should Board attention be desired. The council:

- acts as an initial discipline review board;
- addresses school safety issues;
- reviews parental concerns;
- determines budget priorities; and
- sets policies that are unique to the school.

In addition, per the Brown Act, the public will be given time at pre-announced, publicized meetings to share views, concerns and questions with the Board. The Board is committed to ensuring parental voice is heard and responded to – in fact, parent surveys are given serious consideration by the Board in assessing the success of the school.

In order to maximize participation and create an inviting school environment for all parents, all education and outreach materials will be provided in the English and Spanish, and translators will be available at all school events.

4. Constructivism

VCES teachers will implement learning experiences grounded in constructivist learning theory, as described in previous sections of this charter. Numerous independent researchers have documented the success of the constructivist model of education with historically under-served populations, including at such schools as North Oakland Community Charter School in Oakland, University of Houston Charter School in Texas, Discovery Charter School in Newark, NJ, Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy in Georgia and additional model schools identified above. These schools and countless others have long demonstrated that when children from disadvantaged neighborhoods, including recent immigrants and ELL, are given the opportunity to attend a school like VCES, their test scores and more importantly their self-confidence and whole development excel. (Amaral, 2002; Mester, 2008; Hollins, King, J. and Hayman, 1994; Mathison & Young, 1995; Thornton & McEntee, 1995; McCombs, 1994; O'Neil & Drillings, 1997; Freire, 1995.)

The perspective outlined above is derived from a number of educational models: situated learning theory, expeditionary learning, experiential learning, project-based learning, and collaborative learning. In order to bring these theories to life, we will support our teachers in developing and implementing curriculum that includes real-world activities, multiple representations, metacognition, and critical theory.

It should be emphasized that VCES believes that guidance must be provided to students. As noted psychologist Lev Vygotsky described in *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, the key to a learning experience within a student's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is "problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." Student discussion is essential to learning since the mental processes involved in formulating one's thoughts into words contribute to development and concept-formation. However, research has shown that *purely* discussion-based or collaborative learning can be ineffective if no student acts as a capable guide, if students treat each other with disrespect, or if students are reluctant to share their thoughts (Lewis, C. 1999). VCES is aware of these potential problems and intends to sidestep them by always ensuring that appropriate guidance is taking place. One way is to model effective cooperative group and conflict resolution strategies, such as those used in programs such as *Cool Tools* (gseis.ucla.edu), *Tribes* (tribes.com) and *Council* (ojaifoundation.org).

Furthermore, the active learning strategies inherent in the constructivist approach are validated by the findings of *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (1999), an authoritative synthesis of research on learning that was jointly commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation. The full text of *How People Learn* is freely available at the website of the National Academies Press (nap.edu).

How People Learn supports the scientific basis for constructivism in its section on "active learning":

New developments in the science of learning also emphasize the importance of helping people take control of their own learning. Since understanding is viewed as important, people must learn to recognize when they understand and when they need more information. What strategies might they use to assess whether they understand someone else's meaning? What kinds of evidence do they need in order to believe particular claims? How can they build their own theories of phenomena and test them effectively?....

In order to implement the active learning described in *How People Learn*, teachers will be given time and resources to fill their lessons with student-self-paced 'Investigations.' These activities will be designed to develop subject-specific skills in a problem-based learning environment and to develop skills and knowledge related to students' project work. Investigations are an effective way to develop deep and enduring conceptual understanding because they are structured activities in which students:

1. Use manipulatives and/or technology
2. Analyze both open-ended and specific questions
3. Transition from concrete to abstract reasoning at their own pace
4. Work individually, or in groups, depending on the specific investigation's design

Furthermore, teachers will be guided in utilizing a variety of representations, including the multiple intelligences and Lesh's translation model (see below) to ensure that students can best "take control of their own learning."

The screenshot shows a document with the title "Lesh's translation model". On the left, there is a list of student actions: "I wrote the problem with numbers (symbols)", "I drew a picture of the problem", "I wrote a real-life story or situation describing when they would use this concept", "I explained how they solved the problem through the use of manipulatives", "The verbal mode is implied in the students' discussion of what is recorded in all quadrants.", "At the beginning, the students had difficulty representing their understanding in a variety of ways, so I went through the process using various types of problems. Further, many students had not used manipulatives to justify their mathematical reasoning or had not been asked to represent their mathematical understanding using multiple modes.", "One of the most challenging processes when teaching with manipulatives is to facilitate students' ability to transfer what they do with the manipulatives to their conceptual and procedural understanding.", "Through this activity, I was able to gauge my students' understanding of the problem." On the right, there is a diagram titled "Lesh's translation model" showing five interconnected nodes: "Real Life Situations", "Manipulatives", "Pictures", "Written Symbols", and "Verbal Symbols". The diagram shows a central node "Real Life Situations" connected to all other nodes. "Manipulatives" is connected to "Real Life Situations", "Pictures", and "Written Symbols". "Pictures" is connected to "Real Life Situations", "Manipulatives", and "Verbal Symbols". "Written Symbols" is connected to "Real Life Situations", "Manipulatives", and "Verbal Symbols". "Verbal Symbols" is connected to "Real Life Situations", "Pictures", and "Written Symbols". Below the diagram, it says "Source: Lesh et al. (2003)".

This active engagement of students in their own learning through highly structured yet creative learning experiences is the foundation of the VCES understanding of constructivism.

5. Project-Based Learning

VCES defines project-based learning (PjBL) as a curricular and pedagogical strategy that organizes learning around projects. In this framework, students are involved in planning, problem-solving, decision-making, and investigation; they work relatively autonomously as well as cooperatively over extended periods of time; they reflect on their work, receive feedback and incorporate the feedback; they are guided by teachers' facilitation, not direction, to develop skills; their final product represents the skills and knowledge they gained, which fulfill explicit educational goals (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997; Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, 1999; Moursund, 1999; Diehl, Grobe, Lopez, & Cabral, 1999). The effectiveness of this approach has "led to recommendations for shifting the major portion of instruction in schools from teacher-directed, teacher-assigned 'schoolwork' with its emphasis on comprehension, to student-initiated, goal-driven, independent, 'intentional learning' models with an emphasis on knowledge building (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1991; quoting Thomas, 2000).

For ELL and economically disadvantaged students, PjBL takes on additional importance. The collaborative activities inherent to PjBL provide ELLs with systematic opportunities to improve their English proficiency in the context of authentic peer communication. Group interactions with the focus on the task rather than the language provides a nonthreatening opportunity for the second language learner to listen to other children's discourse and, once confident, to contribute to the conversation (Amaral et al., 2002; Echevarria et al., 2004). Research also indicates that the use of projects for the education of children living in poverty (1) increases their motivation for learning academic skills and the opportunity to meaningfully practice these skills, (2) helps children see themselves "as learners and

problem solvers" and develops their self-esteem, (3) strengthens positive relationships between teachers and families, and (4) helps families become aware of resources available in their communities (Helm and Lang, 2003).

Furthermore, PjBL aligns well with a standards-based curriculum. Educators in several research studies (Dresden & Lee, 2007; Helm & Gronlund, 2000; Schuler, 2000) have demonstrated that standards can easily be met using the Project Approach, and Dixon (2001) found that even some standards that had not been included in the original plan were addressed when the Project Approach was implemented.

In order for VCES to consider a PjBL project, its central activities must involve the transformation and construction of knowledge (by definition: new understandings, new skills) aligned to state standards on the part of students (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1999). If the central activities of the project represent no difficulty to the student or can be carried out with the application of already-learned information or skills, the project is an exercise, not a PjBL.

VCES' teachers will use preexisting curricular materials and also develop their own projects and lessons that are aligned to state standards. Their process will follow two basic steps:

- 1) BEGINNING OF UNIT: Teacher elicits questions and problems from students and rephrases as needed to pose developmentally-appropriate challenging questions or problems that become the "driving" question for the project (Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx, & Soloway, 1994; Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, Blunk, Crawford, Kelly, & Meyer, 1994).
- 2) PROJECT TIME EACH DAY: In line with the "master-apprentice relationship," VCES' teachers will then "scaffold" instruction: breaking down tasks, using modeling, prompting, and coaching to teach strategies for thinking and problem solving to help students become proficient at conducting the relevant inquiry activities (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

In the first step, teachers have a broad interdisciplinary topic in mind, with a rubric of learning goals aligned with state standards (for example, history of California for 4th grade or a FOSS module on Air and Weather for 1st grade that involves maps and weather). By beginning with discussion, teachers allow students to express their curiosity and interests, as well as their past knowledge. This allows the teacher to tailor projects for multiple points of entry, as some students may already know a great deal about the topic and wish to explore in greater depth while other students may have a very broad question in mind.

In the second step, students have honed their "driving" question, and begin to work individually or in small groups of students who share the same "driving" question. During the project time of the day, the students experience a variety of lessons, sometimes in whole class instruction and sometimes one-on-one and sometimes in a small group, depending on their needs. This is a time of independent inquiry, supported by scaffolded, differentiated instruction.

Through this form of project based instruction, VCES will create a self directed learning environment in which teachers are facilitators and students are learners and doers.

It should be noted that teachers will learn effective PjBL at no additional cost to the school. It is essential that the Principal be an expert in PjBL and excellent, free, online resources will form the basis of professional development (pbl-online.org).

6. Problem Based Learning

VCES intends to infuse problem-based learning (PBL) experiences into the classroom as much as it is appropriate to do so because it is entirely consistent with a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. VCES accepts the definition of PBL advocated by the Project on the Effectiveness of Problem

Based Learning (PEPBL). This consortium of educational researchers organized by professors at England's Middlesex University, established criteria for defining the PBL instructional model in 2000 as follows:

- Curriculum is organized around problems rather than disciplines, with an emphasis on cognitive skills as well as knowledge.
- The learning environment uses small groups, active learning, and independent study, and it is student centered. Teachers are facilitators, providing knowledgeable structure for the learners.
- Outcomes focus on skills development and motivation, as well as abilities, for lifelong learning. (Newman et al., 2003)

Research thus far indicates that PBL is effective with diverse students in the K-12 context as well as in graduate schools of engineering, nursing, medicine, education and business. In K-12 science instruction, for example, research has supported that problem-based instruction benefits ELLs significantly (Amaral, Garrison, & Klentschy, 2002; Bredderman, 1983; Gibbons, 2003; Valadez, 2002).⁶ Gallagher and Stepien (1996) found that secondary students using PBL in American studies did as well on multiple-choice tests as students using a traditional model of instruction. The PBL students also showed a better depth of understanding of the content. A study by Dods (1997) analyzed the performance of students in a biochemistry course using PBL. The PBL students were found to have content knowledge equal to those in a traditional lecture course. The PBL students did, however, retain more of the information, and they demonstrated a greater depth of understanding of the material.

G. Curriculum – Scope and Sequence

A subject-specific, commercially-produced curricular program that is standards-aligned provides the foundation of VCES' educational program. In this way, teachers can utilize the "Backward Design" (Wiggins, McTighe, 2005) methodology of devising lesson plans, learning outcomes and assessments in broad strokes in advance. However, for instruction to be truly effective, lesson plans need to be constantly revised to accommodate new assessment information (Data Driven Instruction), and lessons need to be customized to suit the learning needs of individual students (Differentiated Instruction). In order to implement both Data Driven and Differentiated Instruction, teachers will receive professional development experiences (on shortened days and as indicated on the Professional Development Calendar) and administrative guidance (described in F), making objective observations and adjusting instruction and curriculum to best serve student needs.

VCES respects teachers and wishes to empower them to be the most effective educators possible. Therefore, purchased curricular materials will be used as a basis upon which teachers will build. During the blocks of time when subject-specific lessons occur, teachers will draw upon the resources described below and other resources they deem appropriate for their students. During project-time, the resources will vary and include materials not limited to those described in this charter. Since the projects are to be completed in answer to student-produced questions, we cannot predict the resources that will be needed at this time.

Process for Selecting Curriculum, Materials, Instructional Activities

The following curricular programs have been chosen for the first two years of VCES' existence.

⁶ Despite these findings, effective PBL practices are generally lacking in schools that serve lower SES populations (Banks & McGee Banks, 1989; Chamot, 1983; Jones, 1985; Kessler, Quinn, & Fathman, 1992).

Math: Investigations in Number, Data and Space (TERC, Scott Forsman), Connected Mathematics (Pearson, Prentice Hall), and manipulatives described below.

Literacy: The Balanced Literacy curriculum and form of instruction that is designed by CELL, which will provide professional development and ongoing guidance to VCES' faculty. All the curricular resources and texts are listed in Appendix 1B.

Science: The Full Option Science System (FOSS, Lawrence Hall of Science) learning modules created for California will form the basis of science-heavy interdisciplinary projects. Since they are already aligned with California's science standards and many social studies, language arts and mathematics standards, they will ensure students have an effective, hands-on education in the sciences.

Social Studies: Houghton Mifflin (Kindergarten through Grade Six *Houghton Mifflin History-Social Science*) as well as multiple resources referenced in curriculum maps in Appendix One.

All instructional activities will be developed in alignment with California state standards as well as the stated goals and measurable student outcomes of VCES. Additional materials will be made available based on the API and AYP of the school, and the needs of English Language Learners. Faculty and administration will analyze the efficacy of the programs listed above in the spring of the school's second year. Faculty and administration may choose to continue with these programs or switch to different research-based, constructivist-grounded, programs that have been shown to succeed with populations akin to the student population at VCES.

In future years, grade level teachers will meet and advise the principal as to areas of need and their decisions on books and materials for the following year. The curricular purchases will be implemented by the administration, only after faculty approval has been secured. Most importantly, all curricular materials must have a proven record with our targeted student population and must have been developed through sound, research-based methods that utilize the latest information on teaching, learning and brain functions. Curricular materials will also be analyzed in perspective of the whole educational program and in relation to lessons and assessments that would follow from curricular programs. Decisions will be made in light of the following questions:

1. Is interactive learning promoted and is the child's construction of knowledge encouraged?
2. Does it help achieve social, emotional, physical, and cognitive goals?
3. Does it encourage development of positive feelings and dispositions toward learning while leading to acquisition of knowledge and skills?
4. Is it meaningful for these children? Is it relevant to the children's lives? Can it be made more relevant by relating it to a personal experience children have had or can they easily gain direct experience with it?
5. Are the expectations realistic and attainable at this time or could the children more easily and efficiently acquire the knowledge or skills later on?
6. Is it of interest to children and to the teacher?
7. Is it sensitive to and respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity? Does it expect, allow, and appreciate individual differences? Does it promote positive relationships with families?
8. Does it build on and elaborate children's current knowledge and abilities?

9. Does it lead to conceptual understanding by helping children construct their own understanding in meaningful contexts?
10. Does it facilitate integration of content across traditional subject matter areas?
11. Is the information presented accurate and credible according to the recognized standards of the relevant discipline?
12. Is this content worth knowing? Can it be learned by these children efficiently and effectively now?
13. Does it foster children's exploration and inquiry, rather than focusing on "right" answers or "right" ways to complete a task?
14. Does it promote the development of higher order abilities such as thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making?
15. Does it respect children's physiological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment/elimination?⁷

Curriculum, materials, and instructional activities will be selected by each grades' teachers based on their relevance and appropriateness for their alignment with standards and our definition of an educated person in the 21st century, and reflective of the goals of the school as a whole. Choices must be compatible with the school's emphasis on active learning strategies, investigation and project-based assessments. Secondary, or enrichment, resources can be chosen at the discretion of the teacher, and must be used in a way that is compatible with the school's educational philosophy.

All instructional activities will be developed in alignment with the stated goals and measurable student outcomes of VCES.

PROJECTS

VCES faculty will conceive projects (described below and in the Social Studies section) that cover social studies and science standards, incorporate language arts and mathematics standards, and integrate learning outcomes derived from our definition of an educated person. The broad topics for these projects will be teacher created, but the specific projects will be designed by students in answer to their own driving questions. Given the flexibility of these projects, an exact description cannot be provided at this time. What follows are overarching sample projects. The students will experience two - three projects each semester that alternate between emphasizing science and social studies.

In addition to the academic standards, the project-based curriculum incorporates behavior and attitudinal learning objectives. For example, during project time, students must be respectful toward members of their group, they must remain on task when working independently, and they must treat classroom materials properly. The beginning of each year at VCES will be a time for students to learn the rules of conduct that are necessary for them to follow in order to be productive during project time. Teachers will work with students individually in filling out a weekly citizenship grade based on a rubric that is derived from interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence descriptions as well as several California state standards, including:

K.1 Students understand that being a good citizen involves acting in certain ways.

1. Follow rules, such as sharing and taking turns, and know the consequences of breaking them.
2. Learn examples of honesty, courage, determination, individual responsibility, and patriotism in American and world history from stories and folklore.

⁷ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE).

3. Know beliefs and related behaviors of characters in stories from times past and understand the consequences of the characters' actions.

1.1 Students describe the rights and individual responsibilities of citizenship.

1. Understand the rule-making process in a direct democracy (everyone votes on the rules) and in a representative democracy (an elected group of people makes the rules), giving examples of both systems in their classroom, school, and community.

2. Understand the elements of fair play and good sportsmanship, respect for the rights and opinions of others, and respect for rules by which we live, including the meaning of the "Golden Rule."

1.5 Students describe the human characteristics of familiar places and the varied backgrounds of American citizens and residents in those places.

1. Recognize the ways in which they are all part of the same community, sharing principles, goals, and traditions despite their varied ancestry; the forms of diversity in their school and community; and the benefits and challenges of a diverse population.

3.4 Students understand the role of rules and laws in our daily lives and the basic structure of the U.S. government.

1. Determine the reasons for rules, laws, and the U.S. Constitution; the role of citizenship in the promotion of rules and laws; and the consequences for people who violate rules and laws.

2. Discuss the importance of public virtue and the role of citizens, including how to participate in a classroom, in the community, and in civic life.

The current draft of the citizenship grade rubric is:

NAME	Communicates honestly & behaves with integrity	Positive leader in group situation	Cooperative in group situation	Respectful of others' property, cleans up after oneself	Sensitive to and inclusive of classmates	Quietly pays attention when asked to do so	Asks questions to facilitate his/her learning
Jane Doe	3	3	3	4	3	3	2

Contributes thoughts to class discussion	Respectful when classmates participate	Focuses on in-class work	Total Points	Percent: Grade
4	4	3	32	80%

Points: 4 consistently and excellently, 3 occasionally excellent and always appropriate, 2 occasionally appropriate, 1 rarely, 0 never

The tables in Appendix I demonstrate the projects that Larchmont Charter School teachers have designed, aligned to California content standards. VCES teachers will build upon these examples and tailor them to their student needs and interests.

LANGUAGE ARTS – LITERACY

VCES will utilize the Balanced Literacy program supported by the Foundation for Comprehensive Early Literacy Learning (CELL). Leveled reading books will form the core of the materials (in Appendix 1B), supplemented by trade books and original source materials identified for use within our project-based program. In addition, the textbooks and instructional resources, all used and recommended by Larchmont Charter School faculty, are listed in Appendix 1B.

A balanced literacy approach to instruction provides students with daily opportunities to engage in various reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting activities to help them communicate more effectively. Teachers provide these opportunities in reading and writing across all content areas. In a balanced literacy framework, students participate in reading (shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading), writing (modeled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing), word study (phonics, phonemic awareness, word analysis, syllables, and spelling), vocabulary (word meaning), fluency (automaticity or reading fluidity), and comprehension

(understanding). Teachers model behaviors to be learned through read alouds (fluency), writing, and other observable behaviors/activities. Students are given many daily opportunities to read a myriad of texts for enjoyment.

In the books “Practical Guidelines For The Education Of English Language Learners: Research-Based Recommendations For Instruction And Academic Interventions”⁸, the researchers found that ELL students (and, in fact, all students) require explicit instruction in active reading strategies in order to succeed academically. VCES’s emphasis on 20 minute Read Alouds by the teacher (4 times a week for grades 2-5, daily for K-1) follow the research’s recommendation of:

- Teaching students to make predictions consciously before reading.
- Teaching students to monitor their understanding and ask questions during reading.
- Teaching students to summarize what they have read after reading.

As the researchers explain:

Read-alouds provide essential opportunities for ELLs to develop and extend their language via structured talk with teachers and peers while the teacher supports the verbal interactions. Read-alouds that include modeling of explicit comprehension strategies (predicting, monitoring, summarizing) also prepare students to engage in active comprehension behaviors as they become readers of more sophisticated texts. By upper elementary school, effective comprehension instruction should provide opportunities for students to be strategic readers of a wider variety of texts, and should focus on the academic language and sentence structures that are key to comprehension.

What follows are narratives describing the Language Arts programs for each grade K-5. Tables that describe the curriculum and alignments to standards in greater detail can be found in Appendix I.

Kindergarten:

Kindergarten students will learn in an integrated language arts environment that stresses the development of cooperation, independence, democratic thinking and self-esteem. As children are easily motivated at this age to learn about themselves, about others and the world around them, a kindergarten curriculum is socially constructed with meaning centered activities. The children learn mostly through play, by freely choosing a variety of learning centers, figuring out how things work, interacting with each other, trying out new roles, experimenting with their own ideas, building on their own experiences and solving real problems.

Assessments:

In order to find out how children are progressing in kindergarten, the teacher must observe the children engaged in a variety of literacy events: Children sitting on the carpet sharing a Big Book; using a pointer, children are reading from poetry charts; the teacher sitting at a table with a small group of children presenting a mini-lesson or conferencing; the teacher’s action research provides him or her with an appropriate lens through which to observe the children as they are engaged in the literacy events and document their behaviors. These observations, along with student work samples over a period of time gathered in a portfolio, guide the instruction and will be assessed against state standards and official checklists/rubrics provided by the CELL program.

In addition to student work, students will take formal assessments including the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, DIBELS, and NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE.

8 David J. Francis, Mabel Rivera Center on Instruction English Language Learners Strand, Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics, University of Houston; Nonie Lesaux, Michael Kieffer, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Hector Rivera, Center on Instruction English Language Learners Strand Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics, University of Houston.

First Grade:

Building upon the Kindergarten experiences, first grade fosters a love for reading and writing in students by sharing great works of literature, reading and re-writing grade-level appropriate material, and reading and writing for a purpose. The first grade student continues to grow in understanding of how language works through opportunities to share individual expressions and make connections to real life experience. With their increased confidence, the students are able to express their views and their responses to literature and writing in a more organized and detailed manner. Children also learn to follow directions and listen to others. To extend their oral vocabulary and language development, the students work in small group, large group and partner discussions. Oral language activities are maintained as an integral and rewarding part of the first grade program as evidenced by the time spent on nursery rhymes, songs, poems, chants, finger plays and choral speaking.

First grade students learn to write by writing every day for many purposes. They demonstrate various levels of writing development, from random letters used to express meaning to sentences reflecting complete thoughts. As students learn sound symbol relationships, they use invented spelling. When they become more sophisticated in their use of language, they progress to the use of conventional spellings. The teacher continues to model written expression for students through language experience and shared and guided writing. Children learn the writing process in a risk-free and risk taking environment. They learn to value writing as a way of expressing their ideas through writer's workshop, personal journal writing and writing about their own experiences. They begin to develop a sense of audience and purpose when they share their writing with others.

Assessment:

Teachers continue to action research based observations in order to find out how their students are progressing. Through running records, reading conferences and documentation, teachers evaluate a student's progress and provide interventions through mediation, individual conferences, and small group instruction. These observations, along with student work samples, over a period of time, gathered in a portfolio, guide the instruction and will be assessed against state standards and official checklists/rubrics provided by the CELL program.

Students participate in three faculty-designed (CELL-derived) formal reading and spelling assessments a year to evaluate student work against standards and CELL checklists/rubrics. In addition, students will take formal assessments including the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, DIBELS, and NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE.

Second Grade:

Second grade students will be learning in an integrated language arts environment that stresses the development of communication, cooperation, independence and self-esteem. Oral language development continues to occupy an integral part of the second grade program. Active listening skills become more critical as students develop questioning techniques, engage in class discussions, learn paraphrasing and follow more complex directions. With guidance and support, students express ideas when working with partners and cooperative groups, and are more comfortable participating in class discussions. Students can effectively demonstrate oral language skills by giving individual reports and participating in Readers Theatre, choral reading, poetry recitals, plays, etc.

Assessment:

Teachers continue to utilize action research based documentation including running record, anecdotal records and informal observation in the assessment of second graders. However, as the year progresses, students are able to produce independent work samples such as journal entries, short reports, written stories and responses to literature. Second grade students are able to participate in self-reflection and will work with their teacher in self-selecting work samples to be included in the

portfolio. By the end of the year, most second grade students should be performing at the developing level or above in Reading, Writing, and Speaking on the Assessment Scales.

Teacher observation, along with student work samples over a period of time, guides the instruction and will be assessed against state standards and official checklists/rubrics provided by the CELL program. Informal assessments, including observation and work samples, happen daily.

Students participate in three formal reading and spelling assessments a year to evaluate student work against standards and CELL checklists/rubrics. In addition, all second grade students are assessed in the writing types of narration, information, and friendly letters. The writing samples will be evaluated using the Personal Expression Scoring Guide K-2 and the Friendly Letter Scoring Guide 3-6. Students will also take formal assessments including the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, DIBELS, and NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE.

Third Grade:

In the interdisciplinary, integrated language arts classroom, students are offered many opportunities to speak. In both formal and informal situations, the third grade student is expected to organize information and use strategies to engage the listener. Working in collaborative and/or cooperative groups enables students to share ideas, feelings, and opinions in a supportive environment.

Assessment:

By the end of the third grade most students should perform at the proficient level or above in Reading, Writing and Speaking on the adopted Assessment Scales. On-going assessment of daily work and formal evaluation using scoring guides, tests and checklists provide the teacher, parent and student with feedback on student achievement and progress in language arts. The *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)* is used for developing readers, in addition to official checklists and rubrics derived from the CELL program. Third grade students also participate in self-reflection. They select works to be included in the portfolio that is used to guide the instruction.

Formally, all third grade students are assessed in the writing types of narration and persuasion, to be evaluated against standards and rubrics. Students will also take formal assessments including the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, DIBELS, and NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE.

Fourth Grade:

In fourth grade, the literary themes of Personal Growth, Man and the Environment, Social, Moral and Ethical Issues, and Historical and Cultural Perspectives are used to help students develop their interpersonal relationships and support their expanding view of the world. Core literature units and/or thematic units that are cross curricular provide many opportunities for making connections, developing meaning and thinking critically. These units are integrated to include reading, writing, speaking, and listening and allow students to learn through different modalities.

Assessment:

By the end of fourth grade, most students should be at the proficient level or above in reading, writing and speaking as measured by the Assessment Scales for grades three through six. While the teacher continues to use many informal tools of evaluation such as observation, journal responses, participation, and other daily work samples, evaluation becomes more formal by the end of fourth grade. Students produce book projects, responses to literature, reading records and final draft writing that includes letters, poetry and other forms of written expression. Portfolios are used to assess student growth in reading and writing and facilitate both the student and the teacher in identifying the next steps

for growth. Fourth grade students continue to participate in self reflection and self select works to be included in their portfolios.

Formally, all fourth grade students are assessed in the writing types of personal expression, persuasion and information (report of information), to be evaluated against standards and rubrics. Students will also take formal assessments including the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, DIBELS, and NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE.

Fifth Grade:

Fifth grader students experience an increased awareness of the changing world and the changes that will occur in their own lives. The core books reflect this theme. The literary themes of personal growth, man and the environment, social, moral and cultural issues, and historical and cultural perspectives continue to be explored. Through thematic and core literature units, which are often connected to social science, students have the opportunity to use meaning-making strategies, to make personal connections, to think critically and to express their ideas through discussion and written expression. Students study literary elements such as characterization, setting, the author's purpose, theme and point of view to enhance their understanding and enjoyment of the literature. Students expand their reading to include nonfiction, science fiction, fantasy, poetry, short stories, drama, tall tales, and informative material such as newspapers and magazines. The students' experience with reading should elicit a personal reaction and/or response when connecting their own experiences with the literature. In addition to time spent on assigned works, the teacher sets aside a period of time on a daily basis for sustained silent reading. Students are given opportunities to self-select books that reflect their personal taste and allow them to grow as readers.

By reading aloud daily, teachers enrich units of study and provide a positive model for reading and writing.

In fifth grade, the focus is on writing for many purposes and communicating effectively for a variety of audiences. Writing is valued as a means of communication whether it be writing a letter to a friend or making a request for information. Because of their increasing sophistication and maturity, fifth graders know what it means to change, and expand on their original ideas. In addition to composing stories and essays of greater length, students begin to use more varied sentence structure, expand their vocabulary and establish a natural voice. Students are expected to demonstrate effective use of the standard conventions of spelling, grammar, usage and punctuation when writing for an audience. They are expected to understand and utilize all stages of the writing process with an emphasis on revision and correctness in final draft writing.

Collaborative and cooperative strategies are used frequently and help students better apply the writing process. Writing is assessed holistically by the teachers and students through the use of scoring guides. Students are given time to write to topics of their own choice in addition to writing to prompts and assigned topics. As research skills continue to be modeled, students utilize materials from multiple sources and are able to organize and synthesize information to produce a paper that demonstrates critical thinking and knowledge of content.

Oral language abilities reflect the confidence and self assurance of fifth graders. These students are more comfortable speaking in front of their classmates. As listeners, they are able to sustain their attention for longer periods of time and apply critical and inferential listening skills. They have opportunities in both informal and formal situations to practice speaking. Working in collaborative or cooperative groups and during class discussion, students are growing in confidence when sharing opinions, ideas or feeling and learn to support their ideas with evidence and reasons. In a risk free environment, students begin to grapple with ideas about themselves and the world around them which

allows them to be concerned more with the thinking process than whether their answers are right or wrong. In giving formal presentations fifth grade students are expected to organize information and use strategies to engage the listener such as eye contact, use of expression, voice projection and enunciation.

Assessments:

By the end of fifth grade, most students should be at or above the proficient level in reading, writing and speaking as measured by the Assessment Scales for grades three through six. Teachers evaluate students' ongoing progress on a daily basis through the use of journals, reading records, literature logs, look talks, Venn Diagrams, discussion, Readers Theatre, learning logs and written response. Formal evaluation may include tests, writing to prompts, final draft writing, checklists and literature response. Portfolios are used to assess student growth in reading and writing and facilitate both the student and the teacher in identifying next steps for growth. Fifth grade students learn to value self reflection in taking responsibility for their own learning and self select works to be included in their portfolio.

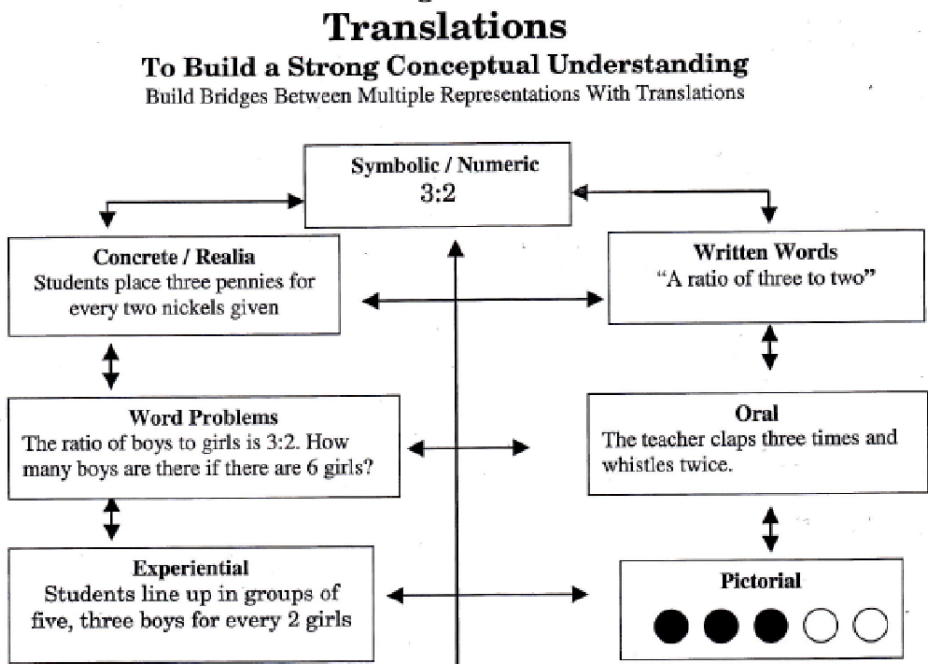
All fifth grade students are assessed in the writing types of narration and information. Students will also take formal assessments including the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*, DIBELS, and NWEA MAPS or Pearson G ● RADE and G ● MADE.

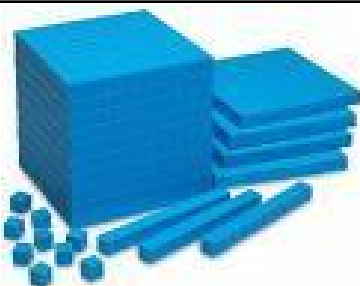
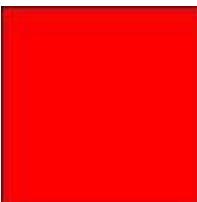
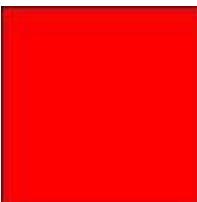
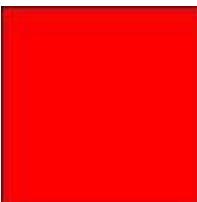
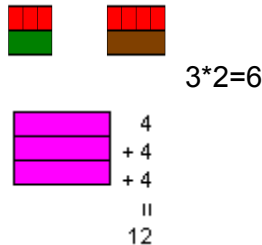
MATHEMATICS

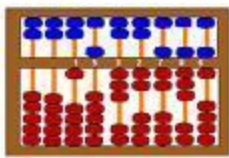
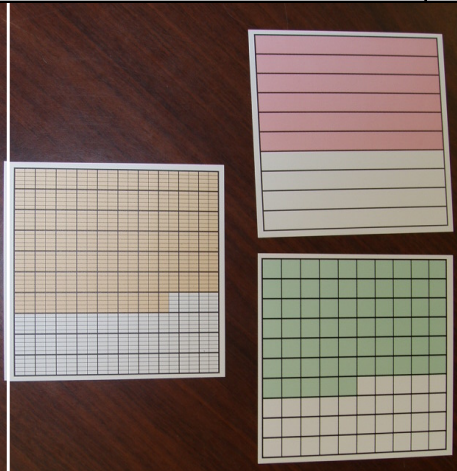
VCES will use the “Investigations in Number, Data, and Space”® curriculum (TERC, Scott Forsman publisher) to ensure student’s comprehension of math skills and its applications. The Connected Mathematics program will also be available for teachers to utilize. Teachers may use additional activities or learning games to support children in the fundamental skills in math. The Mathematics direct instruction time will provide students with a single subject focus aimed at developing conceptual understanding and number sense fluency. In addition, interdisciplinary projects will provide many opportunities for students to develop and apply their mathematics-related skills.

The instructional methodology for mathematics will be varied, in keeping with the constructivist educational philosophy, and will make use of research-based practices that have been shown to increase mathematics proficiency with similar students. The use of multiple representations and manipulatives, (a constructivist foundational approach) when used in the systematic ways described by experts in the field (Dienes, Lesh, et al), will be major components of mathematics instruction. The illustration below depicts the Lesh model for multiple representations and will be referred to by teachers when planning their lessons.

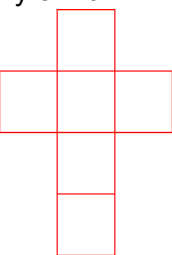
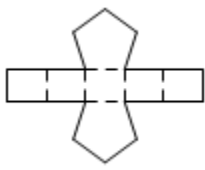
The use of manipulatives will take many forms. Examples are described in the tables below:

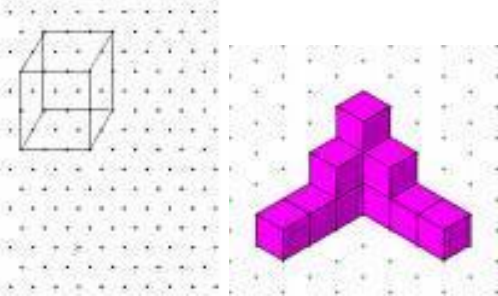
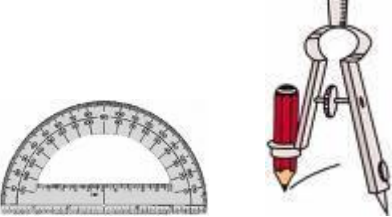


Manipulative	Definition	Visual	Virtual (online)												
Base 10 Blocks	Base 10 blocks consist of unit cubes ($\frac{1}{2}$" x $\frac{1}{2}$" x $\frac{1}{2}$"), ten rods ($\frac{1}{2}$" x $\frac{1}{2}$" x 5"), and hundred flats (5" x 5" x $\frac{1}{2}$"). Sometimes thousand cubes (5" x 5" x 5") are also included. Used for operations, place value, decimals and integer operations	 <table><thead><tr><th>Block Shape</th><th>Block Name</th><th>Size</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td></td><td>1-block</td><td>1 unit</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>10-block, rod, or long</td><td>10 units</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>100-block or flat</td><td>100 units</td></tr></tbody></table>	Block Shape	Block Name	Size		1-block	1 unit		10-block, rod, or long	10 units		100-block or flat	100 units	http://arcytech.org/java/b10blocks/b10blocks.html (English, Spanish, French) http://argyll.epsb.ca/jreed/math9/strand1/divide_base10.swf
Block Shape	Block Name	Size													
	1-block	1 unit													
	10-block, rod, or long	10 units													
	100-block or flat	100 units													
Integer Bars or Cuisenaire Rods	Rods of differing lengths and colors for which each shape represents a specific integer. Use on top of graph-like paper for which squares directly correspond to 5X5 or 10X10 rods. Used for operations, factor-related analyses	 3*2=6 4 + 4 + 4 = 12	http://arcytech.org/java/integers/												
Fraction Bars/Tiles	Similar to Integer bars but labeled as fractions Used for operations, fraction manipulations (common denominator, simplification, et al)		http://arcytech.org/java/fractions/fractions.html and http://coe.tamu.edu/~sozel/aect/ and http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/frames_a_sid_106_g_3_t_1.html?from=category_g_3_t_1.html												

Abacus	Each of the beads above the dividing bar represents 5 units, and each bead below the bar represents 1 unit. Thus each vertical "wire" shows a place-value for a number. Used for adding/subtracting, place value To represent a number such as 546, starting at the right: 1. Click 1 bead down and 1 bead up to show $1+5=6$ 2. On the next wire, move 4 of the bottom beads up to show 4 3. On the next wire, move 1 top bead down to show 5		http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/frames_asid_196_g_3_t_1.html (English, Spanish, French)
Decimal Squares	Graph-like square represents 1 unit, lines drawn can represent tenths, hundredths, thousandths. Shading can represent exact decimals. Or 2-3 cut out pieces can be placed on top of the thousandths square to solve problems. Used for decimal and fraction operations and comparisons.		http://www.decimalsquares.com/

Manipulative	Definition	Visual
Acrylic Geometric Solids	These lightweight, unbreakable figures can be handled by all students in order to help them gain understanding of concepts such as faces, vertices, edges, slant height, surface area, right triangles within shapes, shapes within shapes, et al. It is best to purchase a set that has string inside that can be manipulated	

	to demonstrate slant height and internal triangles.			
Nets	Imagine making cuts along some edges of a solid and opening it up to form a plane figure. The plane figure is called the “net” of the solid. Students are taught to construct nets to facilitate their understanding of surface area and develop their visual/spatial skills.	Cube Pyramid 	Pentagonal Prism 	Heptagonal 
Geoboard s	A physical board with a certain number of nails/pegs in a symmetrical array. Rubber bands placed around the pegs model geometric figures. Used to explore basic concepts in plane geometry such as perimeter, area, or characteristics of 2-D figures.	plastic version (left), online interactive version (right)		

Isometric Dot Paper	Paper with equally spaced dots. Facilitates 3-D drawings. Ideal for teaching students the fundamentals of 3-D space, modeling geometrically, and understanding the dimensions of 3-D shapes made from rectangular blocks.	
Compass, Straight Edge, Protractor	Fundamental tools of geometry: 1) the compass is used to draw a circle with a given center (where the “point” is placed) and passing through another given point (where the pencil tip is placed), 2) the Straightedge is used to draw a line through a given pair of points, and 3) the protractor is used to measure angles. “Compass and straight edge constructions” are activities that students traditionally learn and often include bisecting angles, creating equilateral triangles, drawing squares, et al.	
Linking Cubes	Usually 2cm³ plastic cubes that fit together easily and come in 10 bright colors. Used for many purposes including developing spatial sense, students can: build 3-D shapes based on 2-D drawings, create 2-D drawings based on 3-D shapes, draw figures on isometric paper or non-lined paper, draw ‘views’ of 3-D objects, calculate surface area and volume, count faces/edges/vertices, et al.	

Tables that represent the content, for each grade, as aligned with the curriculum, state standards and NCTM standards can be found in Appendix I.

SCIENCE

VCES will use the FOSS CA (Full Option Science System) modules as the foundation of its science-heavy projects in grades K-5. This program was developed at Lawrence Hall of Science, UC Berkeley, is aligned with California state standards and National Science Foundation education standards, and provides hands-on investigations (inv), student resources (sr), laboratory experiences, and projects.

The overall goal of this program is to develop a scientific literacy for students of all ages and backgrounds. Research has consistently shown that the constructivist approach to teaching and learning is the best way for students to appreciate the scientific enterprise, learn important scientific concepts, and develop the ability to think critically. The 'constructivist approach' in this case is defined as the active construction of through student's own inquiries, investigations, and analyses. These programs are created to engage students in these processes as they explore the natural world. The curriculum provides all students with science experiences that are appropriate to their stages of cognitive development. These experiences serve as a foundation for more advanced ideas that prepare students for life in an increasingly complex scientific and technological world.

The learning modules are organized under the strands of Life Science, Physical Science, Earth Science, and Scientific Reasoning and Technology. Most modules and courses are designed to be appropriate for two grade levels, which is why certain modules will appear in more than one grade level table in Appendix I.

FOSS CA fully covers the California Science Content standards and reinforce many mathematics, language arts and social studies standards. The teachers at VCES will expand these projects to integrate social studies standards. When studying life and earth sciences, VCES students will also study man's relationship with flora, fauna and the natural environment, throughout time and in different locations. In this way, life and earth sciences will be connected to economics and history. When studying the physical sciences, students will explore man's inventions and discoveries in the realm of physics and engineering and the greater ramifications of industrialization, warfare and technology. In this way, students will see connections between the physical sciences and their present reality, history and economics.

Appendix I contains a specific correlation between the Foss curricula and California's science and social studies standards.

HISTORY/SOCIAL SCIENCE

The social sciences lend themselves to exploration, analysis, and discussion. As students become readers, their ability to follow their own paths of inquiry deepens, and their investigations as young historians become richer and more involved. For this reason, VCES will gradually increase the depth and breadth of projects and increase the multitude of resources used.

The FOSS science curriculum allows for a great deal of social studies curriculum (as described above), but many standards call for a connection to Language Arts or the Arts, rather than the sciences. As a result, VCES' teachers will utilize the Houghton-Mifflin Social Science curricular materials, created with

California's standards in mind, for grades K-3. Fourth and Fifth Grade is being modeled on the multi-resource based Larchmont Charter School program.

Assessments will take the form of traditional unit quizzes and tests as well as writing assignments, essays, research papers, presentations and projects.

In Appendix I are tables correlating the standards to the curriculum content, projects, resources, and assessments (covering requirements for Elements 1,2 and 3) for grades K-5. Note that the Fourth and Fifth Grade curriculum maps are adapted from those created by Larchmont Charter School teachers.

What follows below is a narrative giving the overview of the prospective projects to be implemented for each grade.

Kindergarten:

The following standards will be addressed on an ongoing basis throughout the year, during the study of coins and money in mathematics, important American holidays (Presidents Day, Flag Day, etc.), and daily classroom routines such as read-aloud books, calendar time, and shared writing.

K.2 Students recognize national and state symbols and icons such as the national and state flags, the bald eagle, and the Statue of Liberty.

K.5 Students put events in temporal order using a calendar, placing days, weeks, and months in proper order.

K.6 Students understand that history relates to events, people, and places of other times.

K.6.1 Identify the purposes of, and the people and events honored in, commemorative holidays, including the human struggles that were the basis for the events (e.g., Thanksgiving, Independence Day, Washington's and Lincoln's Birthdays, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day).

K Sample Projects and brief descriptions:

My Community and its History-An investigation of our local community; beginning with our school layout, proximity to local landmarks, libraries, parks etc. Explorations include field trips to libraries, interviews with firefighters, police officers and other community helpers. Local resources used to check out books about historical figures, and folklore characters. Students will construct maps (one and three dimensional) and will use it to give directions to a local area, students will compare/contrast by using maps and globes as a guide.

A Biography- Students will become familiar with the concept of a biography and an autobiography and choose a famous figure in American history to bring to life by drawing upon different sources including literature and the arts. The goal will be for students to experience different stories and perspectives on the same person and acknowledge the difficulty in knowing what really happened and what is really 'true'. Project will culminate in brief oral presentations requiring classmates to give positive feedback and ask questions.

Our Economic World- An exploration and study of our economic world and the roles we play in it. Students will discuss how people earn money to purchase goods and services. Each student will participate in a class-culminated project to create a book to illustrate and describe different types of jobs. Students will role-play the specialized work that people do. Instruction will include the specialized work that people do to manufacture, transport, and market goods and services. Students will actively participate in research and decision making process of a classroom purchase.

First Grade:

The following standards will be addressed on an ongoing basis throughout the year, during the study of coins and money in mathematics, important American holidays (Presidents Day, Flag Day, etc.), and daily classroom routines such as read-aloud books, calendar time, and shared writing.

1.1.1 Students describe the rights and individual responsibilities of citizenship.

Understand the rule-making process in a direct democracy (everyone votes on the rules) and in a representative democracy (an elected group of people make the rules), giving examples of both systems in their classroom, school, and community.

Understand the elements of fair play and good sportsmanship, respect for the rights and opinions of others, and respect for rules by which we live, including the meaning of the "Golden Rule."

1.1.3 Students know and understand the symbols, icons, and traditions of the United States that provide continuity and a sense of community across time.

Recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing songs that express American ideals (e.g., "America").

Understand the significance of our national holidays and the heroism and achievements of the people associated with them.

Identify American symbols, landmarks, and essential documents, such as the flag, bald eagle, Statue of Liberty, U.S. Constitution, and Declaration of Independence, and know the people and events associated with them.

1st Grade Sample Projects and brief descriptions:

Now and Long Ago- Students will explore their family and their school community to their family's ancestors and schools/communities in other eras. Through interviews (family, community members, librarians etc.) and research from literature and photographs, students will compile and share with peers: information about beliefs, customs, traditions, ceremonies, social practices, transportation methods, etc. Students will compare/contrast communities including weather patterns, available transportation systems and schools of now and long ago through illustrations, 3-dimensional work, simple stories and oral discussions.

Maps and Directions- Students will investigate the common routes they take (to school, to family, to friends, to extra-curricular activities, et al) by exploring maps, photographs, online tools (mapquest, google earth, etc.). They will construct maps (one and three dimensional), building upon their Kindergarten Our Community project, integrating mathematics concepts like a general understanding of scale. They will compare different directions to get to the same destinations and analyze one particular instance (a destination from their home or from school) and present the different directions and benefits/disadvantages/compare/contrast of each route.

Our Economic World: Revisited- Building upon the K project: An exploration and study of our economic world and the roles we play in it. Students will discuss how people earn money to purchase goods and services. They will be guided to use resources that provide information about salaries, about major and recurring expenses (healthcare, rent/mortgage, insurance, utilities), and about general life expenses (groceries, clothing, drug store purchases). Each student will participate in a class-culminated project to create a book to illustrate and describe different types of jobs and the lifestyle it affords. Students will role-play the specialized work that people do. Instruction will include the specialized work that people do to manufacture, transport, and market goods and services. Students will actively participate in research and decision making process of a classroom purchase, in light of the larger class FFE budget.

Second Grade:

Sample Projects and Brief Descriptions:

Institutions and Practices of Government- This unit is designed as a simulation to introduce students to the institutions and practices of the United States government and other countries. During this project, students will learn about the United States Government and who makes the laws (Legislative Branch), who enforces the laws (Executive Branch), and who punishes the wrong-doers (Judicial Branch). A mock classroom election is held in which students nominate and elect a class president by direct vote. Students determine qualifications, process of election, duties, and compare with the requirements for U.S. President. Students help determine classroom rules and conduct public opinion polls. Collaborative letter is written to school principal or Congress to establish a law/rule; after discussions and research. A basic understanding of economics is incorporated into the discussions surrounding the creation of the law. The far-reaching and unintended consequences of the law are explored in light of the possible impact on people's jobs and on the relationships between buyers and sellers of goods and services.

Investigation of Family Roots and Biographies – Students will participate in an investigation of their family roots through interviews, literature, and will use graphic organizers and charts to compare between generations. Students will develop “My Personal Time Line”, “A Day in the Life of” (of a hero). Students will develop charts, polls and experience graphing activities. Through an in depth, investigation of self (self-portraits, studying their lives thus far, and understanding differences and preferences) students will organize an autobiography (written or pictorial) that is shared with parents and peers.

Maps and Directions: Revisited- Students will re-examine their 1st grade project and look at a variety of maps in order to improve upon their previous creations and place their ‘route’ in a greater context.

How Can I Make a Difference?- Students identify a local need and design a community service project. Resources include: Massachusetts Department of Education:Community Service Project Ideas <http://www.doe.mass.edu/csl/grades.html?section=elem> and Education World: Special Theme Page Community Service in Action http://www.educationworld.com/a_special/community_service.shtml

Third Grade:

For the first half of the year, students experience a long-term project. They also, in an ongoing manner cover the following standards through our emphasis on building a community of learners. Students create the citizenship grade rubric and quarterly examine the class's rules of conduct and assess their own behavior. Furthermore, class meetings will incorporate discussion, arts explorations, and celebration of important American holidays (Presidents Day, Flag Day, etc.):

3.4 Students understand the role of rules and laws in our daily lives and the basic structure of the U.S. government.

3.5.4 Discuss the relationship of students’ “work” in school and their personal human capital.

Historical Interpretation 3: Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events.

Beginning in the second semester of the third grade, VCES students will complete in-class ‘report back’ papers and ‘Book Reports’. These report back papers are free response writings that students complete in response to questions about a very recent field trip or guest speaker. Papers are assessed against a teacher-created rubric that is shared with students prior to the speaker or the field trip. In this

way, students know what the learning outcomes are for the experience prior to embarking upon it. These 'report back' papers are first drafts and can be integrated into the Language Arts program when they are chosen as papers to re-write, edit, and polish. Then, these papers are assessed against new rubrics that are focused on writing mechanics rather than social studies-related skills and content knowledge. Book reports, on the other hand, are homework assignments completed over the course of at least a week. These reports present student essay answers to language arts and social studies themed questions and are on books that students have chosen independently from a list of suggested reading.

Sample projects and brief descriptions:

Local Landscapes and Local People– During this semester-long project, students will study local landscapes and explore the lives and culture of local American Indians and the different waves of explorers and settlers in Los Angeles. Tools, shelter, clothing, food, transportation, economy, systems of government, culture, and influences of the American Indians will be studied and compared to today's methods. Students will read "How California was Made" from the Gabrielino Legend to spin off a study of research (through literature, parents and grandparents) of myths/legends about how something came to be (rain, earthquakes etc.) Graphic organizers will be used to organize life in our region, as it is today, and compare with the lives of local Indians. Students will create cultural replica and local landscapes after designing their driving questions and seeking to answer them through observations, discussions, and research. The class will present their findings and then collaborate to design and paint a mural depicting their perspective on Los Angeles over time.

Fourth Grade and Fifth Grade:

The multi-resource-based social studies program designed by teachers at LCS will be the basis upon which VCES teachers will build in creating a project-based, challenging, standards-aligned social studies curriculum. Projects, resources, assessments, and standards-alignment for these grades can be found in the curriculum maps of Appendix I.

COMMUNITY SERVICE/CHARACTER EDUCATION/GLOBAL COMPETENCE

This program encompasses standards from California's Health content standards and mission-driven school goals. It involves class discussions, community service projects and learning activities. The curricular resources include the Cool Tools Safe Schools program designed by the UCLA Lab School (described below), the Ojai Foundation's Council program (described below), faculty-designed activities, and faculty-led (in Council style) discussions. This non-core curricular program is process-oriented with the underlying intention of raising students' interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, developing respect for and appreciation of others, and gaining a sense of personal and social responsibility. Students are given opportunities to reflect on their lives and examine the quality of their relationships to themselves, others, and the community. Students are taught techniques for focused listening and speaking, working cooperatively and behaving with respect towards themselves and others. Students will learn how to be introspective, learn about their strengths and how they can add value to their community.

This program occurs during the morning and afternoon close-of-day Circle/Whole Class times as follows:

I. Morning Circle Time: The underlying purpose of the morning contact time is to refocus the children and assist them in organizing and seizing control of their day from the start. We want to help the children put a positive spin on the start of their day. It is a time for health education-related information

sharing and conversations, Cool Tools and character education discussions, community service planning and reflecting and global citizenship education that is age appropriate.

- A. Attendance
- B. Note collection for office
- C. Distribution of information regarding school programs/ community service/field trips, etc.
- D. Review of the week's schedule/review daily schedule
- E. Reports by student council reps
- F. Character Education – see Scope and Sequence below

II. Daily Close of Day Meeting

- A. Review assignments and materials children need to take home
- B. Preview the next day/upcoming special events
- C. Follow-up with children with special needs
- D. Review/discuss behavior (i.e., Cool Tools)
- E. Send the children home on a happy note!

III. Monday Morning Extended Periods

- A. Character Education - see Scope and Sequence below

IV. Friday Close of Day Extended Period

- A. Students (with faculty) review work of the week, identify samples for portfolio, check off learning goals/standards met
- B. Character Education - see Scope and Sequence below

Appendix One C (1C) contains tables that align learning outcomes (standards), teaching strategies, resources and assessments for each grade level. Below are narrative descriptions of the two research-based programs (Council and Cool Tools) that provide the basis for instructional methodologies. Other instructional strategies used for this program are defined in Appendix One C.

1) *The Ojai Foundation's (TOF) Council program:*

Research has shown that Council is a program that develops self-awareness and communication skills (*The Way of Council*, J. Zimmerman) as well as increases grade point levels (B. Dietsch, West Ed, 2001).

Text below is from the TOF website:

THE WAY OF COUNCIL: Council is the practice of speaking and listening from the heart. Through compassionate, heartfelt expression and empathic, non-judgmental listening, Council inspires a non-hierarchical form of deep communication that reveals a group's vision and purpose.

Council offers effective means of resolving conflicts and for discovering the deeper, often unexpressed needs of individuals and organizations. Council provides a comprehensive means for co-visioning and making decisions in a group context. Council is about our personal and collaborative story.

Today the practice of Council is the core of The Ojai Foundation's programs in schools and in our peace and reconciliation work abroad. It is the major component of our youth and adult outreach to both public and private schools and businesses and is utilized by the Foundation staff and community regularly, both personally and professionally.

BACKGROUND: TOF's Council in Schools Program includes numerous projects at various national and international cities and towns. In Southern California, we serve more than 6000 students with weekly councils in more than 60 public and independent schools. These students come from highly diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Our programs also serve the adult members of the school communities (teachers,

counselors, administrators, parents, and community members) with opportunities to be trained to lead student councils and/or continue the practice of council.

The majority (nearly 40) of the Los Angeles public school programs are supported through the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Council Practitioners Center (CPC), while independent schools and some of the other public school programs are internally funded and administered directly through the Ojai Foundation.

The core mission for Council in Schools is to provide a practice that addresses relationship (connection) and relevance (meaning) in education. These two "R's" have been increasingly neglected in public education, and in the culture at large, for some time. Council provides students and all participants a sense of "coming home."

Council does not teach values explicitly, but exposes students to a process through which values are formed. By learning how to listen "from the heart" to the stories and expressions of others, students and adult participants develop true empathy. They learn to "re-spect" or re-see each other. There are many programs that offer various forms of "social-emotional" education, but few that address this fundamental need in a way that comes from within each individual.

2) Cool Tools

Cool Tools is a conflict resolution program that is based on the idea of "cognitive reframing" in which key words or colors are used to elicit new responses to given actions. The goal of Cool Tools is to teach students to create internal resiliency and self-managing behaviors in the face of conflict. Developed under the leadership of Corrine A. Seeds University Elementary School (UES) health educators and a UCLA Department of Psychology faculty member, the system has been at UES since 2003 and has attracted interest from educators, parents and the national news media. Team members pilot-tested the system at one school in the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) in 2008-2009. CONNECT is working with UES and SMMUSD to explore means for using Cool Tools in other schools in the district and to follow up with systematic research on the effectiveness of the methods. It is being used in Larchmont Charter School, Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts and other charter and private schools in Los Angeles.

Examples of [Cool Tools](#):

- The Cool Tools toolbox includes inflatable toys, kaleidoscopes, mazes, ice cube trays, toothpaste tubes and a "BIG Mistake" eraser. It serves as the core learning component for Cool Tools.
Put Ups vs. Put Downs: Put Ups are affirmations, kind words, compliments, smiles, or thumbs-up. In contrast, Put Downs are insults, rumors, threats, unkind words, smirking, or laughing at someone. Put Downs are not okay anywhere at school, and they shouldn't be okay at home either. Cool Tools teach the 5:1 rule: it takes at least 5 Put Ups to repair 1 Put Down. Squeezing toothpaste from a tube is a good visual that we use at school to explain the concept of a Put Down. Anytime someone says a Put Down, squeeze out some toothpaste. Then ask the person to put ALL of the toothpaste back in the tube. It's impossible! The children are told to think of a Put Down as the paste—it hangs around with a sticky residue and you can never completely take it back.
- Bubble of Space: Cool Tools teach children that everybody has a Bubble of Space as the basic principle of being considerate. Keeping their bodies in check and keeping their hands, feet, and other objects to themselves also makes them aware of their own bubbles and how they should be respected by others. Awareness of their own Bubble of Space allows them to situate themselves to anticipate and avoid conflict whenever possible.
- Exit Shoes: Using Exit Shoes are a way to get out of a situation that is not right for you. It is a way to give your child permission to just walk away. When conflict heats up and the chance of compromise goes down, use your Exit Shoes and walk away. It is a cool way to deflate a situation. This tool can be used at home, at school and at the playground. Exit Shoes are a cue

to help people stop and think about what they are doing before they act. They allow the person to make a choice and change the situation.

- Choice of Voice: Your child has been taught that there are Cool Blue Voices and Red Voices. The Cool Blue Voice is the one used when communicating calmly and speaking normally. If your voice and tone are Cool Blue, then you're likely going to deflate a situation and help keep it calm. A Red Voice inflates a situation. Cool Tools suggest that when a Red Voice is coming, take deep breathes—and use those Exit Shoes to walk away and chill out until a Cool Blue Voice is ready to speak.

The character education piece involves the implementation of activities that utilize the UCLA Lab School's Cool Tools program or a theme-based discussion that utilizes the Ojai Foundation's Council process. The community service piece will encompass the planning of and then reflection upon a project of the class's choosing (with faculty guidance) each semester. The implementation of the community service project will involve 1-2 half day-long field trip/s that occur/s after the shortened day's (Wednesday) academic schedule has ended. The cultural education piece will involve families of students at the school and provide opportunities for students to share their cultural heritages, traditions, beliefs and celebrations.

H. Instructional Strategies For Special Populations

Since our constructivist, project-based educational program emphasizes data driven instruction and teacher action research, our special needs populations (ELL, Gifted, At-Risk of Low Achieving, Low Socioeconomic and Special Education) can receive differentiated instruction that focuses on their needs and capitalizes on their strengths. Coupling this with a number of other essential components can ensure that students with special needs receive the most effective education possible. These other components of the program assist in meeting the individual needs:

- 1) Small class sizes which allow the teachers to truly know their students
- 2) A minimum of 40 minutes each day during which teachers can modify and create lessons and curriculum to meet the needs of individual students
- 3) A culture among teachers of openness and collaboration, allowing teachers to share their action research documentation of students and learn from each other's varying expertise in handling learning differences
- 4) Ongoing communication between teachers and parents and a commitment to work together for the education of their children
- 5) Various forms of assessment that are used to guide instruction
- 6) Learning goals that are clearly articulated
- 7) High expectations for all students

1. English Language Learners (ELL)

"Students achieve (second-language acquisition) significantly better in programs that teach language through cognitively-complex content, taught through problem-solving, discovery-learning in highly-interactive classroom-content.....In the long term, students do less well in programs that focus on discrete units of language taught in a structured, sequenced curriculum with the learner treated as a passive recipient of knowledge." -- Virginia P. Collier

VCES will comply with federal, state, and district mandates regarding ELL education and re-designation of ELL students. We will meet all requirements of federal and state law relative to equal access to the curriculum for English language learners.

Our goal is to meet the educational needs of all students in an environment that fosters an appreciation and understanding of other languages and cultures. Given the variety of home languages spoken by

students residing in the central Hollywood area, VCES will prepare teachers for a multi-lingual environment. Project GLAD, with its multi-lingual emphasis, is therefore the optimal program for VCES teacher training.

English Learners (ELs) will have full access to VCES' educational program. While all students will develop as English speakers, readers and writers, all cultures and languages will be honored and integrated as much as possible. At all times, students' primary language will be honored and valued as both an instructional tool and learning resource for all students in the class. The entire school community will be enriched by the multi-lingual and multi-cultural qualities of its students.

VCES will be vigilant about timely redesignation of ELL students. Within 30 days of the beginning of the school year, the school will administer the state-required home language survey to identify students' levels of English fluency. VCES will use this information, annual CELDT data, teacher assessments, and ELD and ELA standards to determine EL student levels and reclassify English Learners as English proficient when appropriate. This data will also be used to enable teachers to plan curriculum and instruction that will support and develop students' ability to progress through the ELD levels.

Furthermore, VCES aims to provide primary language support to ELL in the form of teachers, aides, other students and/or parent volunteers.

VCES will hire CLAD certified, experienced teachers with full understanding of Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)⁹ and/or train teachers in the nationally-recognized program, Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design). Having secured \$30,000 recently (12/20/09) from the Walton Family Foundation for the purpose of holding an effective professional development institute in August, VCES will be able to fund all necessary training. Teachers will be trained by Project GLAD staff in specific methods of instruction for a successful English immersion education in a multi-lingual classroom.

Project GLAD has over ten years of experience and has received the following awards: the United States Department of Education, OBEMLA, Project of Academic Excellence; a California Department of Education Exemplary Program; a model reform program for the California School Reform Design; and training model for five Achieving Schools Award Winners. It is the recommended K-8 project for the California State Superintendent's Task Force on successful implementation of Proposition 227.¹⁰ Major components of this pedagogical approach include:

1. Teach to the Highest: A classroom environment that values the student and provides authentic opportunities for use of academic language and maintains the highest standards and expectations for all students (Goodman, Cummins, Smith, Collier).
2. Brain Research--Metacognition

⁹ VCES considers SDAIE as an important aspect of its English immersion program because it provides context and support in a cognitively demanding environment, allowing students to gain skills in both the subject material and in using English. A resource to be studied by all VCES teachers will be: SDAIE Handbook: Techniques, Strategies, and Suggestions for Teachers of LEP and Former LEP Students: <http://www.csupomona.edu/~tassi/sdaie.htm>

¹⁰ In 1991, Project GLAD was declared Exemplary by the California Department of Education. The growth of standardized test scores far exceeded the norm. In 1991, Project GLAD was declared a Project of Academic Excellence by the US Department of Education, OBEMLA. At a national level, the growth in scores also far exceeded the norm. Project GLAD was chosen as a national dissemination model of effective training for teachers in multilingual settings. Five GLAD-trained schools have won Title I Achieving Schools Awards. GLAD is a recognized Model Reform Program for the California School Reform Design. Project GLAD has trained in over 120 school sites nationally. Project GLAD has certified 24 sets of Key Trainers to train in their own district.

- **A time to activate and focus prior knowledge: inquiry charts, brain-storming and clustering (Costa, Rico, Kovalik).**
 - **An opportunity to insure a common base of understanding and scaffolding: direct experiences, films, visuals, teachers read aloud (Krashen, Collier, Vygotsky).**
 - **Students taught how and encouraged to organize thoughts and texts utilizing multiple intelligences: graphic organizers, summaries, visuals, or contextual and semantic clues (Costa, Rico, Krashen, Long, Gardner, Lazear).**
 - **Metacognitive aspect of teacher and students modeling of how an answer was obtained not merely the correct answer (Costa, Farr).**
3. Brain Research and Second Language Acquisition
 - A student set purpose for learning: motivating, stated result or goal; student choices; inquiry charts (High Scope, Hunter).
 - Chances to negotiate meaning from language and text: co-op activities for problem solving, social skills; heterogeneous grouping (Long, Kagan, Vygotsky, Cummins, Shefelbine).
 4. Reading and Writing To, With and By Students:
 - Reading that stresses the purpose and joy before the skills; that begins with writing and reading one's own language; continues with immense amounts of being read to; time for silent sustained reading and silent sustained writing with oral book sharing and quickshares (Goodman, Krashen, Flores, Traill).
 - Direct teaching of concepts, vocabulary or necessary skills; text patterns, academic language, writing patterns; decoding skills (UCI Writing Program, Bettances, Chall, Reading Task Force, Shefelbine, Adams).
 - Writing that stresses the metacognitive use of reading and writing as a process; use of clustering/brainstorming to initiate writing; acceptance of developmental level of writer; editing and revising done only in appropriate place in the process. No over-editing in early drafts; not all writing brought to editing stage; use of conferencing methods to guide student through the process; use of logs for personal responses to texts or issues; use of interactive journals (Goodman, Graves, Calkins, Rico, UCI Writing Project).
 - Big Books on walls, shared reading/writing experiences are only a few strategies for a language functional environment; use of personal interaction values oral ideas and cross-cultural respect (Traill, Cummins).
 5. Active participation in all components of the unit, negotiating for meaning, comprehensible output (Long, Cambourne, Cummins, Swain, Goldenburg).
 6. A theme and strategies to foster respect, trust, identity, and voice (Cummins, Berman, Baron).
 7. Ongoing assessment and closures to units using a variety of assessment tools to provide reflection on what has been learned, how it was learned and what will be done with the information. Assessment, on-going and summative, based on strengths as well as needs (Costa, Wiggins, Farr, Treadway, Lazear).

In this way, VCES expects students to acquire English language skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and thinking and to proficiently meet grade level ELA standards.

2. Gifted Students

VCES is concerned that potentially high achieving students are often merely given additional work to do rather than effectively engaged and supported in their learning. While our project-based curriculum and problem-based learning activities will be designed to allow all students to pursue their learning in an in-depth way and at a challenging pace, additional efforts will be made for students identified as “gifted.”

Gifted children will be identified using the following observations: 1) They tend to get their work done quickly and may seek further assignments or direction. 2) They ask probing questions that tend to differ from their classmates in depth of understanding and frequency. 3) They have interests in areas that are unusual or more like the interests of older students. These students potentially differ from their classmates on three key dimensions (Maker, 1982):

1. the pace at which they learn
2. the depth of their understanding
3. the interests that they hold.

In addition, staff will utilize the research of Renzulli (1986) who concluded that giftedness involves the interaction of three sets of characteristics: above average intellectual ability, creativity and task commitment. This interaction may result in giftedness in general performance areas such as mathematics, philosophy, religion or visual arts, or in the performance areas as specific as cartooning, map-making, play-writing, advertising or agricultural research. VCES faculty, using a rubric for projects, will actively seek to identify students that possess these characteristics, as further described by Treffinger (1986):

Above Average Intelligence

- Advanced vocabulary
- Good memory
- Learns very quickly and easily
- Large fund of information
- Generalizes skillfully
- Comprehends new ideas easily
- Makes abstractions easily
- Perceives similarities, differences, relationships
- Makes judgments and decisions

Creativity

- Questioning; very curious about many topics
- Has many ideas (fluent)
- Sees things in varied ways (flexible)
- Offers unique or unusual ideas (original)
- Adds details; makes ideas more interesting (elaborates)
- Transforms or combines ideas
- Sees implications or consequences easily
- Risk-taker; speculates
- Feels free to disagree
- Finds subtle humor, paradox or discrepancies

Task Commitment

- Sets own goals, standards
- Intense involvement in preferred problems and tasks
- Enthusiastic about interests and activities
- Needs little external motivation when pursuing tasks
- Prefers to concentrate on own interest and projects
- High level of energy
- Perseveres; does not give up easily when working
- Completes, shares products
- Eager for new projects and challenges
- Assumes responsibility

Another educational researcher (Kaplan, 1986) suggested the following ways for teachers to enhance the curriculum for a gifted student:

- Present content that is related to broad-based issues, themes or problems.
- Integrate multiple disciplines into the area of study.
- Present comprehensive, related and mutually reinforcing experiences within an area of study.
- Allow for the in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within the area of study.
- Develop independent or self-directed study skills.
- Develop productive, complex, abstract and/or higher level thinking skills.
- Focus on open-ended tasks.
- Develop research skills and methods.
- Integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum.
- Encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce "new" ideas.
- Encourage the development of products that use techniques, materials and forms.
- Encourage the development of self-understanding. For example, recognizing and using one's abilities, becoming self-directed, appreciating likenesses and differences between oneself and others.
- **Evaluate student outcomes by using appropriate and specific criteria through self-appraisal, criterion-referenced and/or standardized instruments.**

It is well-documented in research and practice that gifted students greatly benefit academically, socially, and emotionally from grouping practices that allow them to learn with their intellectual peers with appropriately challenging and engaging curriculum.

However, diversity exists within a gifted population, as demonstrated through the range in relative strengths and weaknesses, interests, work output, and personality traits of students. Staff will use a variety of teaching styles in order to encourage each student to reach his or her potential. Ability grouping, flexible pacing of instruction, project-based work, student-directed learning, and individual investigations are some of the specific techniques to be employed in our classrooms.

Underachieving Gifted

For those students who are gifted but do not have the task commitment, we will apply similar tactics that address our "At Risk" population. By fostering active student involvement in their own learning we will increase student interest and enthusiasm. Teaching self-monitoring and self-management skills will help these students set their own goals and persevere when working on a project. Grouping them with more motivated students – both gifted and struggling - will also provide a peer attitudinal model to help engage them in their own learning.

3. At-Risk Of Low Achievement

Students who are identified as at-risk of failing to perform at grade level will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by teachers and parents working together. Our goal will be to provide a large variety of pedagogical practices as early as possible in order to determine methods that best fit the individual student.

Pedagogical practices will include: explicitly teaching learning strategies, providing concrete experiences to enhance concepts, encouraging cooperative learning, balancing instruction with challenging activities that allow for student choices and actively involve students in their own learning. In addition, we intend to form a partnership with an organization that provides effective after-school tutoring to provide additional, individualized support for these students. Examples of such organizations include 826 LA (<http://www.826la.org/>) which offers individualized writing and tutoring

support and After School All Stars (whose CEO is on the Board of VCES) which offers more general active learning instruction.

With the number of low-achieving and at-risk students increasing, a greater responsibility for educating these students falls within the regular classroom. In order to reach the greatest number of our students falling within this category, teachers will utilize the following “best practices.”

High Expectations:

By believing in and identifying each student’s potential, teachers then utilize the student’s strengths to help him/her reach this potential.

Reality-Based Teaching:

Students need to be provided with “real life” purposes for their reading, writing and problem-solving. Reality-based learning approaches help to build a bridge between school and home, thereby helping students see relevance to their learning. Many at-risk students do not see the relevance in their schooling and, therefore, lose motivation to succeed and learn. The expected diversity of our student body will influence curricular choices and efforts will always be made to ensure we utilize culturally relevant literature, reality-based economic scenarios, and multiple perspectives.

Active Learning:

Students who are motivated and engaged in their learning are more likely to achieve higher levels of performance and learning than those students who “learn” only to please others and pass a test or course. A student-centered classroom where students take an active role in their education fosters better learning than classrooms where the teacher does all the work and students play a passive role.

Varied Grouping:

“Pigeon holing” students in stagnant groups for the entire year or semester, is often a detriment for the student. Research supports practices where groupings are often varied from homogeneous to heterogeneous, and changed often with different activities.

Cooperative Learning:

Students learn well from each other and opportunities should be provided for students to work together in order to plan, create and perform projects, as well as to discuss and debate issues. Cooperative grouping allows students to practice the social aspect of learning and contributes to active participation and team work. Each student can utilize his/her strengths in groups and learn from the strength of his/her peers.

Peer Tutoring and Cross Age Tutoring:

Tutoring students in one’s own classroom and at other grade levels is an effective strategy for enhanced learning in literacy as well as in academic areas. Benefits are the tutor and the student being helped. A variety of both cross-age and peer tutoring models can be used successfully.

Metacognition:

Teachers who share their thoughts on how they approach and complete a task or arrive at a conclusion help students become aware of their own thinking, which is called metacognition. Successful students are able to understand and are aware of the most effective strategies they need in order to study and learn. Teachers help less successful students by modeling effective learning strategies for them, showing them how and when to use these strategies and teaching them why they are important for their success.

Multiple Intelligences:

Once teachers are aware that students possess a variety of intelligences, they can increase their teaching repertoires to reach these intelligences in their lessons. Howard Gardner’s work is the underpinning of the project-based curriculum that we will use in our classrooms.

Varied Assessment:

As all students possess and utilize different strengths for their learning, a teacher who allows for a variety of assessments is more apt to find out what students have truly learned, not just how they take a test. Portfolios, oral presentations, open-book test, group projects and graphic maps are only some of

the many avenues available for teachers to tap into their student's knowledge. The wider the variety of assessment the teacher uses and the more authentic and on-going it is, the truer the picture the teacher can get of their student's understandings.

Direct Instruction:

As an instructional strategy, direct instruction responds to the student's needs by focusing directly on the skills required to be successful in school and ensuring that these skills are learned (Better Thinking and Learning, Maryland State Department of Education). Students can learn high level concepts if they know how to learn, how to question, how to access prior knowledge, and how to integrate new knowledge. The following shows the elements of Direct Instruction:

- **Clearly communicating goals for students.**
- **Structuring academic tasks for students.**
- **Demonstrating the steps necessary to accomplish a particular academic task.**
- **Monitoring student progress.**
- **Providing student practice and teacher feedback to ensure success.**
- **Holding students accountable for their work through frequent teacher review.**

By continuing to look to research, and giving teachers time to meet, to discuss, and learn what works best with their students, teachers will continually assure that they are using the most effective strategies for helping all of their students become active and motivated learners who master the knowledge necessary for life-long learning and success.

Classroom Modifications For At- Risk Students

In order to help students who appear to need special services or "a reasonable accommodation," classroom modifications will be made. The following modifications or accommodations will be used by the regular classroom teacher for students who are at risk, depending on the student's specific need:

Materials:

- **Use highlighted or underlined reading materials**
- **Provide visual aids**
- **Provide concrete manipulative materials**
- **Provide taped texts and/or other class materials**
- **Allow use of calculator**
- **Provide materials with wide spacing, few items per page and clear print**
- **Type teacher materials**

Methods:

- **Teach to student's learning style (based on multiple intelligence theory): Linguistic, Logical, Musical, Spatial, Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal**
- **Provide visual clues and/or demonstration (model) when instructing**
- **Read written material to student**
- **Provide organization aids such as outlines, etc.**
- **Utilize peer tutors, etc.**
- **Utilize shared and guided note-taking**
- **Use clear and concise directions**
- **Provide written steps for directions**
- **Have student repeat directions to teacher or peer**

- Use manipulatives
- Emphasize critical information
- Pre-teach vocabulary
- Preview lesson for student before given to whole class
- Reduce language level of reading level of assignment
- Share activities

Assignments:

- Give directions in small, distinct steps (written/picture/verbal)
- Use written back-up for oral directions
- Lower difficulty level
- Shorten assignment
- Reduce paper and pencil tasks
- Read or tape record directions to student
- Use pictorial directions
- Give extra cues or prompts
- Allow student to record or type assignment
- Adapt worksheets, packets
- Utilize compensatory procedures by providing alternate assignment/strategy
- Avoid penalizing for penmanship

Pacing:

- Reduce paper and pencil tasks
- Provide distributed review and drill
- Extend time requirements
- Vary activity often
- Allow breaks
- Omit assignments requiring copying in timed situation
- Provide home set of text/materials for preview/review

Testing:

- Give tests orally (may include dictated or taped answers)
- Allow student to take test while standing at the board, if this is student's preference
- Read test to student
- Preview language of test questions
- Use visuals or pictures
- Give similar questions in regular classroom setting before test
- Use objectives test technique, limit choices for multiple choice, provide word bank for fill-in-blank, limit items per matching section
- Use essay tests, allow to be dictated
- Shorten length of test
- Have test administered to the student outside of the class setting

Learners Needs:

- **Provide student with assignment sheets or require that he/she maintain one**
- **Provide a visual daily schedule**
- **Provide calendars**
- **Check often for understanding/review**
- **Set defined limits**
- **Provide positive reinforcement**
- **Allow projects to be presented orally or on tape**
- **Allow projects to be presented through demonstration, pictures, and/or models**
- **Use preferential seating**
- **Monitor and redirect student to task as needed**
- **Request parent reinforcement**
- **Have student repeat directions**
- **Teach study skills explicitly**
- **Use study sheets to organize material**
- **Design/write/use long term assignment timelines**
- **Review and practice in real situations**
- **Plan for generalizations**
- **Teach skill in several settings/environments**

Environment:

- **Preferential seating**
- **Alter physical room arrangement**
- **Define areas concretely**
- **Provide for a quiet space**
- **Eliminate too many visual distractions**
- **Play 60-80 beat Baroque classical music, just at a conscious level, when students are doing generative work, such as writing, reading silently, etc.**

4. Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students

VCES will offer a whole day program (8:30a.m.-2:40p.m.) from kindergarten on, and a before- and after-care program from 7:30-8:30am and 2:40-6pm, respectively, to accommodate working families.

Recent data from a similarly-themed charter school (Larchmont Charter School) demonstrated that socioeconomic status had no impact on measurable student achievement. In fact, students eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program at this school were among the top scorers on standardized tests. More pointedly, of the students that fall into the 'economically disadvantaged' designation, 37.8% in LAUSD scored at the proficient or above level on Math and English tests while 74% of the same category of student scored at proficient or above levels at Larchmont Charter School.

Data from Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary School¹¹, a charter elementary school that implements project-based learning, balanced literacy and a constructivist approach to teaching and learning presents virtually no achievement gap. The school's API for socioeconomically disadvantaged

¹¹ 91% Latino, 73% English Language Learners, 84% students participating in free or reduced lunch.

students is 924, for Hispanic/Latino is 922, and for English learners is 920. While VCES will be sensitive to socioeconomic differences and ensure all students have full access to the educational, extra-curricular, and social activities at the school, VCES has not found systematic research that correlates socioeconomic status with school achievement in a way that can lead to a pedagogical generalization. If students that are socioeconomically disadvantaged are low achieving or struggle with learning differences or are identified as English Language Learners, VCES will utilize strategies described in other sections of this petition.

I. Charter School Special Education Program

Prior to Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD") Governing Board approval, VCES will either execute a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") by and between the Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD") and VCES regarding the provision and funding of special education services consistent with the requirements of the LAUSD Special Education Local Plan Area ("SELPA") Local Plan for Special Education or provide approved legal verification of membership in another state-approved SELPA with agreement to adhere to the LAUSD's MCD requirements.

Modified Consent Decree Requirements

All Charter Schools chartered by the Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD or the District") Governing Board are bound by and must adhere to the terms, conditions and requirements of the *Chanda Smith* Modified Consent Decree ("MCD") and other court orders imposed upon District pertaining to special education. The MCD is a consent decree entered in a federal court class action lawsuit initially brought on behalf of students with disabilities in LAUSD. It is an agreement of the parties approved by the federal court and monitored by a court-appointed independent monitor. The MCD includes eighteen statically measureable outcomes and facilities obligations that the District has to achieve to disengage from the MCD and federal court oversight. All Charter Schools are required to use the District's Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual and Welligent, the District-wide web-based software system used for online IEPs and tracking of related services provided to students during the course of their education.

As part of fulfilling the District's obligations under the Modified Consent Decree, data requests from Charter Schools that are not connected to the District's current Student Information Systems ("SIS") are made on a regular basis. The requested data must be submitted in the Office of the Independent Monitor's required format and are as follows:

- # The Independent Charter School Suspension/Expulsion Report, due monthly throughout the school year.**
- # Paper SESAC Report and Welligent Student Listing Verification, due monthly throughout the school year.**
- # CBEDS, which is due at the end of October of Each School Year.**
- # All Students Enrolled December 1 of Each School Year, due at the end of December every school year.**
- # Graduation Status of 12th Grade Students Enrolled on December 1, due at the end of June every school year.**

The District is currently in the process of developing an Integrated Student Information System (“ISIS”) as required by the MCD. Although most Charter Schools are not currently utilizing the District’s current SIS, the MCD requires all Charter Schools to implement the use of ISIS once it is developed.

J. Timeline for Implementation

- 1) Present-Charter Approval: Hire Principal and Executive Director: the process of identifying these individuals is ongoing. Leading candidates will be identified by Fall 2009, prior to charter approval. After charter approval, official hiring of these two school leaders will be finalized.
- 2) Present-Ongoing: Founding Board will lead fundraising, development and grant seeking efforts. When Executive Director is in place, the majority of these efforts will be led by him or her and the Board will be focused on high level development efforts.
- 3) January 2010-June 2010: Outreach: Principal will lead efforts to recruit Founding Families and work with them to conduct outreach events and distribute information about the school to potential students and families. By spring, 40 students in K, 1st and 2nd grades will have been confirmed. If more applicants than spaces, a lottery will take place in the spring and the Wait List will be referred to, as needed, until the school opens in the fall.
- 4) Charter Approval – ongoing: Fundraising: Executive Director will create and implement fundraising plan. Founding Families will be organized to lead community building/fundraising events.
- 5) Charter Approval – April 2010: Staff/Faculty Hiring: Principal will recruit and hire staff and faculty.
- 6) Spring – Summer 2010: Site/Facility preparation: Since the site is already under VCES management, it is expected that the summer of 2010 will be sufficient time to finish all furnitures, fixtures, and equipments preparation.
- 7) August 2010: Faculty Professional Development: a two week teacher institute will enable all faculty and administration to prepare curriculum, pedagogical practices, assessments, and other logistical processes to ensure a smooth first year of school.

K. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

The recruitment process of teachers will utilize the Internet, conferences (Teach for America, charter school organizations, et al) and agencies (California Teachers on Reserve, Carney Sandoe, et al). Email forwards through educator networking groups such as Edupreneurs, graduate school of education alumni groups, and university alumni groups have also been considered effective by similar schools. Websites to be posted at include the school website and:

- Essentialschools.org
- Myschool.org (California Charter Schools Association website)
- Calwesteducators.com

Teachers will be hired who are closest to the ideals described in the teacher job description in Element 5. The school leader will analyze strengths and needs of all hired faculty to ensure professional development supports teachers appropriately. This analysis will take place prior to hiring, and then after two full evaluations (3 days in a row of in-class visits) in early Fall and early Spring. Professional development will take place during two weeks in August, on all Wednesday shortened days (see calendar) and on days assigned for Staff Development (see calendar).

An example of the annual plan for professional development is:

Program goals: Backward Design of a Project-based Curriculum, Problem-Based Learning, Action Research (data driven instruction) to improve student learning

Summer (August) Institute:

- 1) Implementing the (CELL) Balanced Literacy program, (funded from \$30,000 received from Walton Family Foundation)
- 2) Intro to Action Research & Data Driven Instruction, (school leader-led)
- 3) Intro to Global Competence and the values underlying our definition of an educated person in the 21st century, (school leader-led)
- 4) Backward Design of curriculum (projects) that incorporate the learning outcomes valued by the school (California Content standards/our definition of an educated person), (pbl-online.org free online course)
- 5) Intro to using Portfolios to Document Student Academic Growth, (school leader-led)
- 6) Intro to Project GLAD. (funded from \$30,000 received from Walton Family Foundation)

November: Action Research (ongoing link to Data Driven Instruction), Backward Design that incorporate our definition of an educated person, Problem-based learning

December/January: Action Research (ongoing link to Data Driven Instruction), using Portfolios to Document Student Academic Growth, assessing student needs and Data Driven Instruction

February/March: Action Research (related to mid-year assessment data), Service Learning, Project GLAD

April/May: Action Research (ongoing), Backward Design and Multiple Assessments

ELEMENT #2: Measurable Student Outcome

Element Requirement: “The measurable pupil outcomes identified for use by the charter school. ‘Pupil outcomes’ means the extent to which all pupils of the school demonstrate that they have attained the skills, knowledge and attitudes specified as goals in the school’s educational program.”

The measurable student outcomes for VCES are designed to reflect our dedication to educate children so that they can flexibly apply the skills and information they have learned in school to a variety of settings. Student outcomes are derived from the California State Standards and our definition of an educated person in the 21st century. Students will demonstrate progress toward meeting and exceeding these learning goals through their completion of interdisciplinary, subject-specific and community service projects, as well as through their performances on embedded assessments in our mathematics and literacy programs.

VCES believes that standardized tests provide only part of the picture in determining student achievements. While the school’s educational strategy does not focus on testing, our students will take all standardized tests required by the state, and will participate in CST testing, which takes place in grades 2-5. By disaggregating the data and looking at individual students’ results, faculty and staff will utilize test results to determine student’s academic needs, and will create individualized learning plans to address these needs. Furthermore, school leaders will analyze test results from the perspective of teacher education. Gaps in student knowledge will become the focus of teacher action research in the classroom and will help determine appropriate teacher professional development experiences. As a result of these efforts, it is anticipated that scores will rise gradually throughout the first 5 years of the charter. By year 5, VCES anticipates an API score of at least 800. We intend to meet AYP targets identified by NCLB regulations in all years, exceed these proficiency rates in all subgroup populations by Year 3, and achieve more than 75% proficiency rates on CST exams for all subgroup populations by Year 5. These outcomes reflect our commitment to ensure that all of our students will grow to be literate, self-motivated, articulate life-long learners.

Through high academic expectations, an optimal learning environment, and the use of assessments to drive instruction, students will acquire the skills needed for higher education and will acquire the skills to be thoughtful members of society in the 21st century.

A. Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes

The skills, knowledge and attitudes listed in the charts below are measurable learning goals derived from state standards, national standards, and our definition of an educated person.

In addition, please see the Element One detailed scope and sequences for all core courses. Element One aligned standards, curricular resources, activities, and assessments. **The tables below list ‘measurable student outcomes’ as well as the means and frequency of assessing students.** The assessment approaches in the grades change over the grades, but K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 are grouped together below since they are similar in their approaches.

Kindergarten and First Grade

Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes – K	Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes – 1 st	In House Assessment Tools	Frequency of Assessment

Reading: 1. Uses appropriate reading behaviors when looking at books. Recognizes that print and/or pictures convey messages by retelling or rereading. Demonstrates one-to-one correspondence when working with text. 2. Self-motivated: Views self as a reader and chooses to read independently. 3. Develops phonemic awareness (sound structure) as demonstrated by stating sounds heard at beginning or end of limited number of words. 4. Recognizes and identifies letters of the alphabet. 5. Applies concepts of story to his or her own experiences. Demonstrates understanding of story elements	Reading: 1. Uses a variety of reading strategies to make meaning of what they encounter in print: cueing systems, semantic, syntactic, graphophonic. 2. Makes personal connections to literature. Self-motivated: Views self as a reader and choose many types of books. 3. Increases phonemic awareness by identifying sounds heard in beginning, middle and end of short words. 4. Identifies logos and signs from print environment. Recognizes and identify a minimum of 50 high frequency words (sight words, anchor words). Recognizes vocabulary words in context. 5. Recognizes the basic elements of a story.	• classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) • book choices: recorded in student's portfolio • checklists from CELL Balanced Literacy Program (quantitative documentation) • children interviews: one-on-one by teacher during project time and Writers Journey time (filling in any qualitative and quantitative blanks) • portfolios including a great variety of children's work - portfolios analyzed using teacher-created rubric that incorporates Seeds' checklists, state standards, and additional learning goals • teacher comments sent home • Full Report card (standards-based) • photographs/video taping • Observation by additional faculty • DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), DIBELS, NWEA MAPS or Pearson Grade/Gmade	• Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule • ongoing on daily basis • Every 2 weeks • Every month • Updated in ongoing manner. Progress is reported quarterly • Twice per year • Twice per year • ongoing • Ongoing, and formally triannually
Writing: 1. Recognizes that writing is used for various purposes and audiences. 2. Recognizes that text contains a message and distinguish it as separate from the illustration. Will be aware of the connection between picture and print in his/her own writing.	Writing: 1. Writes for a variety of purposes, audiences and formats. Selects pieces for portfolio. 2. Completed by end of K 3. Forms upper and lower case letters.	• classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) • Performance on teacher-generated quiz/test that prompts students to write specified words and/or ideas • Writing assignments evaluated against a checklist and/or rubric that incorporates Seeds' checklists, state standards,	• Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule • Every 2 weeks • Every 2 weeks

3. "Writes" (squiggles, letters and/or words) to represent meaning. Approximates appropriate letter formation of upper and lower case letters. 4. Writes name with appropriate upper and lower case letter formation. 5. Moving toward 1st grade standards by asking questions to facilitate learning 6. Experiences different stages of the writing process throughout the year to create original stories or reports either in whole or small group activities, as collaborator AND as leader. 7. Writes/illustrates a timed first draft connected to a piece of literature and/or a prior experience in response to a prompt.	4. Writes first and last name and a few other names or words either accurately or with approximate invented spelling. 5. Writes to express an idea using close approximations to conventions of language (spelling, usage, mechanics). 6. Experiences different stages of the writing process to create original stories or reports either in whole or small group activities, as collaborator AND as leader. 7. Writes a timed first draft in response to a prompt. 8. Analyzes writing samples with the teacher and re-writes in response to constructive criticism.	and additional learning goals ● teacher comments sent home ● Full Report card (standards-based) ● photographs/video taping ● Observation by additional faculty	● Twice per year ● Twice per year ● ongoing ● As needed ● Ongoing, and formally at the end of each year
Speaking & Listening: Expresses ideas, by contributing regularly in small group, partner and classroom discussions. Connects prior knowledge and recognize similarities and differences in stories, literature, language, scientific concepts, mathematical concepts, and social studies trends. Demonstrate polite and respectful quiet while classmates ask questions and share thoughts. Demonstrate consistently honest and respectful communication among peers in all settings during the school day		● classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) ● classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student behavior and interactions (quantitative documentation) ● Observation by additional faculty and staff (both qualitative and quantitative as described above) ● teacher comments sent home ● Full Report card (standards-based) ● photographs/video taping	● Systematic, ongoing, updated every two weeks. ● Documentation added to portfolios each month, shared with parents at conferences and at parents' request ● As needed ● Twice a year ● Twice a year ● Ongoing, analyzed every 2 months to measure

Demonstrate positive feedback to students who are presenting their knowledge/skills either by being a good audience member (clapping, for example) or by responding with appropriate praise. When working in a group or during a group lesson, students attempt to help other students learn by answering questions and sharing their own understanding of concepts			student progress both qualitatively and quantitatively
Mathematics: 1. Counts with understanding (up to 30), recognizes "how many" in sets of objects and whether sets are equal, greater, less than other sets 2. Emerging understanding of U.S. money values 3. Manipulate concrete objects (plastic pie chart pieces, different length blocks, etc.) to represent different fractions 4. Use concrete objects and estimate to solve basic addition and subtraction 5. Sort, classify, and order objects by size, number, and other properties. Compare length, weight, and capacity of objects. 6. Understand concepts of time. Understand relative distance.	Mathematics: 1. Counts with understanding (up to 100), uses multiple models to demonstrate understandings of place value and the base-ten number system, represents numbers by composing/decomposing 2. Understanding of U.S. coin values as added up to a dollar 3. Recognize, compare and show flexibility of applications for common fractions 4. Use a variety of methods to add and subtract one and two-digit numbers 5. Identify, describe, compare, and classify geometric shapes, plane and solid objects. Recognize, describe, extend, and utilize patterns such as sequences of sounds, shapes and numeric patterns 6. Tell time to nearest half an hour. Describe location and directions.	● Quiz/Test formative and summative assessments derived from Investigations in Numbers and Space curriculum: chosen for portfolio inclusion ● In-class written examples of student's mathematics communication: chosen for portfolio inclusion ● Classroom observation documented against rubrics and checklists (quantitative): all documentation in student portfolio ● Classroom observation documented in anecdotal, narrative form (qualitative): summarized in student portfolio ● teacher comments sent home ● Full Report card (standards-based) ● photographs/video taping ● Observation by additional faculty	● Every 2 weeks ● Daily review of written work: choose weekly sample for portfolio ● Every 2 weeks per student ● Every 3 weeks per student, on staggered schedule ● Twice per year ● Twice per year ● ongoing ● As needed
History/Social Science: 1. Understands that being a good citizen involves acting in certain ways. 2. Recognizes national and state symbols and icons.	History/ Social Science: 1. Begins to understand the concepts of rights and responsibilities in the contemporary world.	● classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) ● classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student understanding of social studies content and	● Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule ● Every two weeks

3. Matches simple descriptions of work that people do and the names of related jobs at the school and in the community. 4. Compares and contrasts the locations of people, places and environments. 5. Puts events in order using a calendar placing days, weeks and months in proper order. 6. Understands that history relates to events, people and places of other times. 7. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	2. Uses the classroom as a microcosm of society in which decisions are made with respect for individual responsibility, for other people, and for the rules by which we all must live: fair play, good sportsmanship, and respect for the rights and opinions of others. 3. Explores the varied backgrounds of citizens in America and other places in the world. 4. Learns about the significant traditions, historical figures, and icons of different cultures. 5. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	concepts (quantitative documentation) - Completed projects that communicate understanding of social studies content and concepts measured by rubrics and checklists: communication may take the form of oral, written, artistic, musical, physical, and/or technological expression - one-on-one child interviews in which teacher elicits demonstrations of student's understanding of social studies content and concepts, measured against a rubric or checklist	- Every five to eight weeks - every 3 – 5 weeks, to coincide with mid-point and close of units
Science: 1. Explores basic concepts of physical, life and earth sciences. 2. In the Physical Sciences, learns about change and properties of solids, liquids and gases. 3. In Life Science, focuses on plant and animal behaviors and structures. 4. In Earth Science, identifies characteristics of landforms and identifies resources from Earth that are used in everyday life. 5. In Earth Science, understands that many of Earth's resources can be conserved. 6. In addressing these three strands of the science curriculum, performs investigations and experiments. 7. Develops science skills such as predicting, observing,	Science: 1. Explores basic concepts of Physical, Life, and Earth Sciences. 2. In the Physical Sciences, learns about change and properties of solids, liquids and gases. 3. In Life Science, learns concepts such as habitat, life cycles, adaptation, classification, and change. 4. In Earth Sciences, focuses on weather, including water cycle, temperature change, and seasons. 5. In Environmental Science, learns about conservation, responsible trail use, and environmental ethics. 6. In addressing these three strands of the Science curriculum, performs investigations and experiments. 7. Develops science skills such as predicting, observing, recording	- classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) - classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student understanding of science content and concepts (quantitative documentation) - Completed projects that communicate understanding of science content and concepts measured by rubrics and checklists: communication may take the form of oral, written, artistic, musical, physical, and/or technological expression - one-on-one child interviews in which teacher elicits demonstrations of student's understanding of science content and concepts, measured against a rubric or checklist	- Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule - Every two weeks - Every five to eight weeks - every 3 – 5 weeks, to coincide with mid-point and close of units

recording observations and synthesizing data.	observations, and synthesizing data.		
8. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	8. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.		

Second and Third Grade

Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes – 2 nd Grade	Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes – 3 rd Grade	In House Assessment Tools	Frequency of Assessment
Language Arts: 1. Demonstrates fluency in recognition of 150 high frequency words and will recognize vocabulary words in context. Uses reading strategies to make meaning of text. Will apply cueing systems: semantic, syntactic, graphophonic, to make meaning. 2. Recognizes the basic elements of a story and will make personal connections to literature. 3. Writes to express an idea or feeling, with some elaboration. Will write for a variety of purposes, audiences and formats. Will re-write after receiving constructive criticism. Demonstrates a developing understanding of the conventions of language, including spelling and handwriting. 4. Will write a timed first draft in response to a prompt. 5. Will reflect on his/her writing by self selecting pieces for his/her portfolio and giving evidence for selection.	Language Arts: 1. Will use a variety of reading strategies which demonstrate comprehension. 2. Makes personal connections to literature, thinking critically about the story when reading. Will recognize use of literary elements and story structure. Will read often from a variety of genre. 3. Learns and applies the conventions of language, including spelling and handwriting. Will write to express an idea, opinion or feeling with supporting reasons. Will write for a variety of purposes, audiences and formats to demonstrate knowledge and critical thinking. Will re-write after receiving constructive criticism in order to better communicate their ideas. 4. Will write a timed first draft connected to a piece of literature and/or prior experience in response to a prompt. 5. Reflects on his/her writing by selecting piece to share.	- classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) - book choices: recorded in student's portfolio - checklists (quantitative documentation) - portfolios including a great variety of children's work - portfolios analyzed using teacher-created rubric that incorporates CELL's checklists, state standards, and additional learning goals - teacher comments sent home - Full Report card (standards-based) - photographs/video taping - Observation by additional faculty - DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), DIBELS, NWEA MAPS or Pearson Grade/Gmade	- Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule - ongoing on daily basis - Every two weeks - At the close of each unit of study (every 5 – 8 weeks). Updated in ongoing manner. Progress is reported quarterly - Twice per year - Twice per year - ongoing - As needed • - Ongoing and formally triannually
Speaking & Listening: Asks questions to facilitate learning, asking both faculty and classmates. Expresses ideas with supporting reasons regularly in small group, partner and classroom discussions.		- classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) - classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student behavior and	- Systematic, ongoing, updated every two weeks. - Documentation added to portfolios each month, shared with parents at

Connects prior knowledge and recognize similarities and differences in stories, literature, language, scientific concepts, mathematical concepts, and social studies trends. Demonstrate polite and respectful quiet while classmates ask questions and share thoughts. Demonstrate consistently honest and respectful communication among peers in all settings during the school day. Demonstrate positive feedback to students who are presenting their knowledge/skills either by being a good audience member (clapping, for example) or by responding with appropriate praise. Demonstrates changes in opinion or ideas when faced with reasonable alternative opinions and ideas. When working in a group or during a group lesson, students attempt to help other students learn by answering questions and sharing their own understanding of concepts		interactions (quantitative documentation) ● Observation by additional faculty and staff (both qualitative and quantitative as described above) ● teacher comments sent home ● Full Report card (standards-based) ● photographs/video taping	conferences and at parents' request ● Monthly by non-core teachers & by others as needed ● Twice a year ● Twice a year ● Ongoing, analyzed every 2 months to measure student progress both qualitatively and quantitatively
Mathematics 1. Understand the relationship between numbers, quantities, and place value in whole numbers up to 1,000 2. Estimate, calculate, and solve problems involving addition and subtraction of two-and three-digit numbers and solve simple problems involving multiplication and division 3. Solve problems involving operations with money 4. Tell time to the nearest quarter hour and know relationships of time 5. Identify and describe the attributes of common figures in the plane and of common objects in space 6. Formulate questions that can be addressed with data, and collect, organize, and display relevant data to answer them 7. <u>Understand measurable attributes</u> of objects and the units,	Mathematics 1. Understand the relationship between numbers, quantities, and place value in whole numbers up to 10,000 2. Understand the relationship between whole numbers, simple fractions, and decimals 3. Calculate and solve problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division 4. <u>Represent and analyze mathematical situations and structures using algebraic symbols</u> 5. <u>Understand measurable attributes of objects and the units, systems, and processes of measurement</u> 6. Describe and compare the attributes of plane and solid geometric figures and use their understanding to show relationships and solve problems	● Quiz/Test formative and summative assessments derived from Investigations in Numbers and Space curriculum: chosen for portfolio inclusion ● In-class written examples of student's mathematics communication: chosen for portfolio inclusion ● Classroom observation documented against rubrics and checklists (quantitative): all documentation in student portfolio ● Classroom observation documented in anecdotal, narrative form (qualitative): summarized in student portfolio ● teacher comments sent home ● Full Report card (standards-based) ● photographs/video taping ● Observation by additional faculty	● Every 2 weeks ● Daily review of written work: choose weekly sample for portfolio ● Every 2 weeks ● Every month ● Twice per year ● Twice per year ● ongoing ● As needed

systems, and processes of measurement 8. <i>Understand how patterns grow and describe them in general ways</i> 9. Communicate their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly	7. Understand and apply basic concepts of probability 8. Apply and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve problems		
History/ Social Science: 1. Develops a deepening understanding of the world and community. 2. Develops a concept of fair play and good sportsmanship, including the meaning of the Golden Rule. 3. Learns about their world through locating continents on the map. Geography skills include being able to locate cardinal directions, identifying major features on the globe, and understanding basic map symbols. 4. Describe how different climate, weather, and location affect the way people live, including food, clothing and shelter. 5. Learns about people now and historically who have made a difference. 6. Differentiates stages of history, noticing differences between long ago and yesterday. 7. Explores early stages of government structure and economy. 8. Recognizes how actions lead to reactions. Understand how one person can affect change as well as recognize their own role and responsibility in a changing and growing world. 9. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	History/ Social Science: 1. Describes the physical and human geography and use maps, tables, graphs, photographs, and charts. 2. Identifies geographical features in their local region 3. Traces the ways in which people have used the resources of the local region and modified the physical environment. 4. Describes the American Indian nations in their local region long ago, their national identities, religious beliefs, customs, and various folklore traditions. 5. Draws from historical and community resources to organize the sequence of events in local history. 6. Understand the rules and laws in our lives and the basic structure of the United States Government. 7. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	● classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) ● classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student understanding of social studies content and concepts (quantitative documentation) ● Completed projects that communicate understanding of social studies content and concepts measured by rubrics and checklists: communication may take the form of oral, written, artistic, musical, physical, and/or technological expression ● one-on-one child interviews in which teacher elicits demonstrations of student's understanding of social studies content and concepts, measured against a rubric or checklist	● Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule ● Every two weeks ● Every five to eight weeks ● every 3 – 5 weeks, to coincide with mid-point and close of units
Science: 1. Explores early concepts of motion. 2. Explores properties of light and color.	Science: 1. In Physical Science, understands energy and matter and their changing forms.	● classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) ● classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by	● Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule ● Every two weeks

3. Understands the life cycles, unique adaptations and interdependent nature of plants and animals. 4. Understands humans have large role in the future of both plant and animal species. 5. Recognizes that the Earth is made from a variety of materials that have distinct properties. And know that these resources are not necessarily renewable. 6. Recognizes science as a process of experiments, including questioning, observation and recording data. 7. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	2. For Life Science, knows examples of diverse life forms in different environments. 3. In Earth Science, knows the position of the Sun in the sky changes during the course of the day and from season to season. 4. Pursues answers to project-related questions and demonstrates perseverance in the face of difficult challenges and setbacks.	faculty to document student understanding of science content and concepts (quantitative documentation) - Completed projects that communicate understanding of science content and concepts measured by rubrics and checklists: communication may take the form of oral, written, artistic, musical, physical, and/or technological expression - one-on-one child interviews in which teacher elicits demonstrations of student's understanding of science content and concepts, measured against a rubric or checklist	Every five to eight weeks every 3 – 5 weeks, to coincide with mid-point and close of units
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Fourth and Fifth Grade

Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes – 4 th	Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes – 5 th	In House Assessment Tools	Frequency of Assessment
Language Arts: 1. Will make personal connections to literature. 2. Will read often and from a variety of genre. 3. Recognizes literary elements that support the meaning of selections. 4. Monitors and adjusts reading in content areas. 5. Uses a variety of reading strategies to demonstrate comprehension. 6. Learns and applies study skills when reading grade level texts.	Language Arts: 1. Makes personal connections to literature. Thinks critically about the story when reading core literature and other selections. 2. Reads often from a variety of materials and genres. 3. Recognizes the literary elements used by an author and understand how they contribute to the development of the literature. 4. Adjusts reading rates to meet specific purposes. 5. Demonstrates comprehension and make meaning from core literature and grade level content materials.	- classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) - book choices: recorded in student's portfolio - checklists (quantitative documentation) - portfolios including a great variety of children's work - portfolios analyzed using teacher-created rubric that incorporates CELL's checklists, state standards, and additional learning goals - teacher comments sent home - Full Report card (standards-based) - photographs/video taping - Observation by additional faculty	- Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule - ongoing on daily basis - Every two weeks - At the close of each unit of study (every 5 – 8 weeks). Updated in ongoing manner. Progress is reported quarterly - Twice per year - Twice per year - ongoing - As needed

7. Utilizes all stages of the writing process. 8. Writes a research report that demonstrates good organization and supporting details.	6. Produces a final draft addressing audience, purpose and task as given in a prompt. 7. Reflects on his/her writing by recognizing strengths and weaknesses. 8. Begins to develop voice and style. 9. Organizes information and ideas in a formal presentation.	• DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), DIBELS, NWEA MAPS or Pearson Grade/Gmade	• Ongoing and formally triannually
Speaking & Listening: Seeks answers to questions in order to facilitate learning, utilizing faculty, classmates, written resources, a variety of media. Regularly expresses ideas with supporting reasons and welcomes conflicting information which requires an adjustment to one's ideas. Connects prior knowledge and recognize similarities and differences in stories, literature, language, scientific concepts, mathematical concepts, and social studies trends. Demonstrates polite and respectful quiet while classmates ask questions and share thoughts. Demonstrates consistently honest and respectful communication among peers in all settings during the school day. Demonstrate positive feedback to students who are presenting their knowledge/skills either by being a good audience member (clapping, for example) or by responding with appropriate praise. Demonstrates different forms of communication depending on the reason for the communication. Clearly differentiates expressing ideas as intellectual discourse from expressing ideas in order to help others learn. Adjusts communication depending on one's role as a leader or a collaborator. When working in a group, self-selects the role of leader and collaborator, depending on one's own strengths and the strengths of others in the group.		• classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) • classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student behavior and interactions (quantitative documentation) • Observation by additional faculty and staff (both qualitative and quantitative as described above) • teacher comments sent home • Full Report card (standards-based) • photographs/video taping	• Systematic, ongoing, updated every two weeks. • Documentation added to portfolios each month, shared with parents at conferences and at parents' request • Monthly by non-core teachers & by others as needed • Twice a year • Twice a year • Ongoing, analyzed every 2 months to measure student progress both qualitatively and quantitatively

Mathematics 1. Understand the place value of whole numbers to the millions and decimals to two decimal places and how whole numbers and decimals relate to simple fractions; use the concepts of negative numbers 2. <i>Estimate and compute the sum or difference of whole numbers and positive decimals to two places. Solve problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers</i> 3. Use and interpret variables, mathematical symbols, and properties to write and simplify expressions and sentences 4. Understand perimeter and area 5. <u>Analyze characteristics</u> and properties of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes and develop mathematical arguments about geometric relationships 6. Organize, represent, and interpret numerical and categorical data and clearly communicate their findings 7. Monitor and reflect on the process of mathematical problem solving	Mathematics 1. Compute with very large and very small numbers, positive integers, decimals, and fractions and understand the relationship between decimals, fractions, and percents; understand the relative magnitudes of numbers 2. Perform calculations and solve problems involving addition, subtraction, and simple multiplication and division of fractions and decimals 3. Use variables in simple expressions, compute the value of the expression for specific values of the variable, and plot and interpret the results 4. Understand and compute the volumes and areas of simple objects 5. <u>Analyze characteristics</u> and properties of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes and develop mathematical arguments about geometric relationships 6. Display, analyze, compare, and interpret different data sets, including data sets of different sizes 7. Monitor and reflect on the process of mathematical problem solving	• Quiz/Test formative and summative assessments derived from Investigations in Numbers and Space curriculum: chosen for portfolio inclusion • In-class written examples of student's mathematics communication: chosen for portfolio inclusion • Classroom observation documented against rubrics and checklists (quantitative): all documentation in student portfolio • Classroom observation documented in anecdotal, narrative form (qualitative): summarized in student portfolio • teacher comments sent home • Full Report card (standards-based) • photographs/video taping • Observation by additional faculty	• Every 2 weeks • Daily review of written work: choose weekly sample for portfolio • Every 2 weeks • Every month • Twice per year • Twice per year • ongoing • As needed
History/ Social Science: 1. Demonstrates an understanding of physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California. 2. Describes the social, political, cultural and economic life among people	History/ Social Studies: 1. Clearly understands American and North American geography. Recognizes the major cultural regions of Native North America and Pre-Columbian backgrounds. Become aware of cultural backgrounds of	• classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) • classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student understanding of social studies content	• Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule • Every two weeks

of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexico rancho periods. 3. Explains economic, social, and political life of California throughout its history. 4. Explains how California became an agricultural and industrial power.	Europeans who came to colonize America. Identifies motives and impacts of European exploration. Explains the causes of the American Revolution and outcome. Recognizes motives and aims of exploration of American West. 2. In Ancient Studies, understands the literal and mythical geography of Classical Greece. Understands the Prehistoric and Heroic background of Greek Culture. Examines all aspects of Classical Greece. 3. In Ancient Studies, understands the literal and mythical geography of Classical India. Recognizes the pre-classical background of Indian History. Explains all aspects of Classical India.	and concepts (quantitative documentation) - Completed projects that communicate understanding of social studies content and concepts measured by rubrics and checklists: communication may take the form of oral, written, artistic, musical, physical, and/or technological expression - one-on-one child interviews in which teacher elicits demonstrations of student's understanding of social studies content and concepts, measured against a rubric or checklist	- Every five to eight weeks - every 3 – 5 weeks, to coincide with mid-point and close of units
Science: 1. In Physical Science, understands electricity and magnetism and their many useful applications in everyday life. 2. In Life Science, knows all organisms need energy and matter to live and grow. 3. For Earth Science, knows the ecology of the regions of California is made up of its habitats, life cycles and ecosystems. 4. Understands the scientific process asking meaningful questions and conducting careful investigations.	Science: 1. In Physical Science, explores the basics of chemistry. Recognizing atoms, molecules. Through the study of Astronomy, Hydrology and Botany, understands nature of atomic structure, chemical reactions, states of matter, elements common to our Earth and properties of some common compounds. 2. In Earth Science, identifies features of the celestial sphere, properties of the bodies of the solar system, and composition of the universe. Recognizes that water circulates through the Earth. Discovers the basic properties of water and relate this to the water cycle and water conservation. 3. In Life Science, identifies structures of plants, and relates these to parallel structures in birds. Classifies native species of wildflowers, shrubs and trees. 4. In Environmental Science, understands components of ecosystems and how species are able to find new niches with changing conditions or go extinct. Discusses	- classroom observations and anecdotal notes (qualitative documentation) - classroom observations applied to checklists and rubrics generated by faculty to document student understanding of science content and concepts (quantitative documentation) - Completed projects that communicate understanding of science content and concepts measured by rubrics and checklists: communication may take the form of oral, written, artistic, musical, physical, and/or technological expression - one-on-one child interviews in which teacher elicits demonstrations of student's understanding of science content and concepts, measured against a rubric or checklist	- Every 2 weeks per student, on staggered schedule - Every two weeks - Every five to eight weeks - every 3 – 5 weeks, to coincide with mid-point and close of units

	issues of conservation and use relating to native flora and forests.		
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Note on Science Assessment

The following narrative, from the FOSS California curriculum, describes in greater depth the approaches to assessment provided by these resources:

Grades K-2 Formative Assessment. The FOSS formative assessments allow you and your students to monitor learning continuously as you progress through the module. The primary formative assessment strategies are:

- Teacher Observation - Teacher observation can take the form of anecdotal notes or 30-second interviews with the students.
- Science Notebooks - Making good observations and using them to develop explanations for how the natural world works is the essence of science. Science notebook sheets are designed specifically to help you to find out what sense students are making of the activities.

Grades K-2 Summative Assessment. The end-of-module assessment evaluates students' learning after they finish all the investigations. The assessment has two formats. Performance items require students to use equipment, write observations, and record findings. Written items focus mostly on content vocabulary and basic understanding.

Grades 3-5 Embedded Assessments. Embedded assessments allow you and your students to reflect on learning continuously as you progress through a module. They take place as a regular part of instruction, and allow you to provide feedback to individual students and the class as a whole. Embedded Assessments include:

- Teacher observation - Occurs while students are immersed in activities.
- Science notebook sheets (student work) - Generally students use science notebook sheets to record and organize data during an investigation.
- Response sheets (student work) - Response sheets are usually given at the end of Part 1 or Part 2 in an investigation, and require students to use what they have learned so far in a slightly different situation.

Grades 3-5 Benchmark Assessments. Benchmark assessments occur before instruction begins, after each investigation, and after instruction is completed. Benchmark assessments serve two purposes. They provide teachers with information about student achievement and diagnostic information. They also give students the opportunity to reflect on their own learning. **There are 3 kinds of benchmark assessments:**

1. Pretest to measure entry-level skills and knowledge
2. I-Check to measure progress after each investigation
3. Posttest to assess complete understanding of content and investigation standards

B. Measuring Pupil Outcomes

Descriptions of the assessment tools and methods of assessments can be found in Element #3.

C. Frequency of Measuring Pupil Outcomes and Use in Modifying Instruction

Taken together, the scope and sequence tables in Appendix I, the narratives in Element One, the tables and text above describe the measurable student outcomes, the frequency and form of objectives assessments (both formative and summative, with more summaries in Element #3) and the resources

and curricular materials. When students do not meet the learning goals, as measured by objective assessments, a variety of intervention strategies will be used to work with the students and, in some cases, the families, to support student achievement. Our emphasis on data driven instruction and the means of implementing this rigorously and consistently is described in Element One, Sections F and H. Additional strategies or curricular materials may be necessary and school leaders will investigate appropriate resources and professional development activities as needed.

D. Accountability for Student Progress

Student assessment at VCES will not only comply with federal and state standards but it will also include faculty-devised instruments and processes to appraise students' academic competence, emotional growth and social responsibility. The Principal and the faculty will be accountable for the academic achievement and psychological well-being of VCES' students. The Principal is ultimately responsible for meeting target goals, and will be held accountable by the Executive Director. The Principal will also be accountable for meeting Adequate Yearly Progress as required by NCLB.

E. Standardized Tests

VCES considers standardized test scores to provide a window into the achievement levels of students. Data from tests will be utilized to inform teaching and learning and will be acknowledged to represent a part of the whole picture of student growth, development, and learning. Because of the successful test results of students learning in a constructivist-based environment, we expect student test results to exceed the local average API test scores. This average was 734 in 2008 (see table in introduction).

CST/CAT-6:

The California Standards Test/California Achievement Test will be administered in English during the Spring to all students in 2nd grade and above. This multiple-choice test is assumed to measure student progress in Language Arts and Math Standards. Additionally, 4th graders will take an essay test in writing. Students in specified grades will also take Science and Social Studies sections of the test, and it is likely that these sections will be added to the test for all grades in the near future.

The results from the CST/CAT-6 are used by the State of California to determine the school's Academic Performance Index (API) and to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). These are the chief accountability measures in place from the state and federal government.

CELDT:

The California English Language Development Test will be administered every fall to all students who are classified as English Learners, in kindergarten through 6th grade. This test includes a Reading and Writing section, which is administered in a whole class setting, as well as a Listening and Speaking section, which is administered individually. Because this is a proficiency test instead of a norm-referenced test, the administration of the test is untimed.

The results from this test will be examined alongside other assessments by VCES teachers, since the school will be focused on providing quality English Language Development instruction to all English Learners at the school at their proficiency level. The CELDT is one of the measures used to determine whether students redesignate from English Learners to Fluent English Proficient students. Redesignation will be one of the school's primary goals and measures of success.

SABE:

The Spanish Assessment of Basic Education is used to evaluate students' progress in Language Arts and Math in Spanish. Spanish-speaking students who are new to the country will take this test as an initial assessment.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

California's state testing in physical fitness (grade 5) will be scheduled and adopted as a measurement of physical fitness for VCES students.

F. Benchmarks to be met

The achievement of VCES will be measured in both growth and absolute measures and will be compared to the achievement of selected District schools that are similar in demographic and other characteristics. We expect that all of our sub-groups will exceed the performance of sub-groups at similar schools. We will meet the following API growth indicators:

- Annual API will meet or exceed the established growth target
- All subgroups will make at least 80% of the school target
- The CST/CAT-6 participation rate will be at least 95%

VCES will meet or exceed Adequate Yearly Progress goals for our school, as required by NCLB.

In addition:

- **English Learners:** English Learners will progress at least one grade level overall on the CELDT each year and 80% of ELL students will be re-designated by the end of 5th grade.
- **Special Education Students:** Special education students will demonstrate appropriate progress toward goals in their IEPs each year.
- **Student Attendance:** VCES will maintain at least 96% Average Daily Attendance.
- **Teacher Retention and Satisfaction:** VCES will realize a higher teacher retention rate and higher teacher attendance rate than the average LAUSD elementary school, and demonstrate high levels of teacher job satisfaction as evidenced by end-of-year conferences and surveys.
- **Parent Satisfaction:** VCES will demonstrate a high level of parent satisfaction -- 85% or higher -- based on surveys.

A summary of these and additional outcomes appear in the two tables below:

Measurable School Outcome	Local Benchmark Instruments	State-level Year-End Assessments
96% student attendance	Daily attendance reporting via Student Management System (SMS)	Calculated ADA rate, comparison of attendance rate to other district schools
Meet or exceed AYP targets	Monthly DIBELS, writing rubric, DRA, FOSS and TERC unit assessments, portfolio standards-based rubric	AYP Report
Make at least one level of advancement in language proficiency (Beginning, Early Intermediate, etc.) annually for Els	Monthly DIBELS, writing rubric, DRA, FOSS and TERC unit assessments, portfolio standards-based rubric	CELDT Individual Student Score Reports

Meet or exceed State-wide academic performance index growth target	Monthly DIBELS, writing rubric, DRA, FOSS and TERC unit assessments, portfolio standards-based rubric, project standards-based rubric report for social studies emphasized projects	API Report
Meet or exceed the average achievement for the schools in the same geographic area: Sylvan Park, Kester, Columbus, Hazeltine, Valerio, Chandler, Erwin, Kittridge, Van Nuys	Monthly DIBELS, writing rubric, DRA, FOSS and TERC unit assessments, portfolio standards-based rubric	API Similar Schools Report

Pupil Outcome Goal	Proposed Assessment Tool/Methods
All students will demonstrate at least one year of growth toward grade-level proficiency in reading and language arts	Pre-Post reading/lang arts diagnostics (DIBELS< DRA), Curriculum embedded benchmark assessments, STAR test data, Informal class-room based assessments
All students will demonstrate at least one year of growth towards grade-level proficiency on standards in the areas of History, Math, Science	Pre-Post Diagnostic Assessments (FOSS/TERC/Projects), STAR test data
All students will develop in behavior goals of respect, listening, and taking responsibility for learning	Citizenship rubric/grade

ELEMENT #3: Outcome Measurement Process

Element Requirement: "The method by which student progress in meeting those student outcomes is to be measured."

A. Assessment overview

VCES views assessment as an ongoing process of observing, monitoring, recording, and interpreting children's progress across the curriculum. It will include a variety of formal and informal measures. The purpose of assessing children's progress is to plan and adapt instruction as needed and to share documented information about children's growth with the children themselves, their families, the school, and the district.

VCES will utilize a variety of assessments in order to inform instruction and facilitate student learning. Rubrics on projects and assignments, teacher observations, and progress reports will serve as "official" records of student learning but a larger variety of assessments will be ongoing and embedded. Formative assessments will occur regularly in order to allow teachers to know the current level of understanding for each student. Performance-based assessments will be explicitly described and available prior to the completion of projects and assignments.

Teachers will collect data in the areas of mathematics, writing and reading skills using formal assessments three times per year to track individual student success and to give a profile of the overall success and development of achievement at the school (NWEA maps or Grade/made). Additional formal assessments may take the form of traditional tests, timed essays and multi-step projects.

For students that are Limited English Proficient or with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and/or special needs, performance standards and assessments will be adapted as appropriate in accordance with their IEP or other plans that may be in place such as a 504 plan. Modifications will be used to assist student with special needs to show what they know. Allowing students more time on tests, administering the tests in a small group environment outside of classroom distractions, reading the tests to the students or taking dictation for the student, if needed, allows the "playing field to be leveled" for them. Other methods of accommodation, as appropriate for authentic assessment, criterion-referenced testing materials, or state mandated tests will be used, on an as needed basis, for our at-risk students.

VCES intends to demonstrate progress on the aggregate results of a standards-based report for each grade level. This report and standardized test data will be disaggregated to show how sub-groups; e.g. LEP, non-LEP, mobility, gender, etc., perform.

Student, parent and employee satisfaction data will be handled in a similarly rigorous fashion as surveys will be designed and analyzed regularly to ensure the school maintains an inclusive, positive, stimulating community of learners.

B. Methods Of Assessment

Students will be assessed by a range of qualitative and quantitative methods. The assessment tools used to determine students' progress toward achieving these outcomes will include, but are not limited to state testing measures, norm-referenced tests, criterion referenced tests, teacher observations, rubrics for projects and class work. VCES views assessment as a process which allows teachers, parents, administrators, and students to evaluate the quality of learning. It should be noted that teachers will be given the flexibility to assess more frequently and use additional methods, should the need arise. Assessment is an ongoing process needed to determine student progress, and when

progress is not advancing at the expected pace, both curriculum, pedagogy and assessment must adjust to best improve student learning.

Core methods of assessment include:

Authentic Assessment

Our use of authentic assessment will take two forms, the first of which is daily on-going documentation that observes students' progress in reaching outcomes defined in rubrics and checklists and observes students' progress in a more general, narrative manner. Through this type of qualitative and quantitative assessment, the teacher doesn't just assess a final result, but assesses all of the student growth along the way. This type of assessment becomes "embedded" in the curriculum and is considered formative. The second form of authentic assessment that we will use is portfolio assessment and is considered formative, and eventually summative. Portfolios are an important element for student assessment within our project-based format. The portfolio will be a highly organized collection of work carefully selected by both student and teacher. It will be updated throughout the year and it will be analyzed by faculty periodically in order to adjust curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to the students' needs. It provides a structure that encourages multiple indicators of student progress. It does not measure one student against another. Instead, it demonstrates student progress while encouraging the development of responsible and reflective learners.

Standardized Assessment/s

- **LAUSD Periodic Math Assessment**
- **State-mandated standardized tests in grades 2-5**
- **All grades, twice a year DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment)**
- **All grades, NWEA MAPS or Pearson Grade/Gmade to assess all content areas three times a year**
- **All grades, as needed ongoing basis: DIBELS**

Rubrics and Checklists (quantitative, formative and summative)

The cornerstone of VCES's in-house assessment process, rubrics and checklists will make learning goals clear for teachers, students, families and all interested parties who are responsible for evaluating VCES's educational program. Teachers and the school principal will collaboratively develop valid and reliable criteria that is standards-based. These rubrics/checklists will be used for evaluating projects and children's learning. These rubrics will reflect state and national standards, as well as additional learning goals based on VCES's definition of an educated person. Teachers will refer to these tools as they observe students and as they analyze student work. Students will also have access to these tools and will be guided in developing awareness of their own progress toward achieving learning goals.

Narrative Evaluation (qualitative, summative)

Narrative Evaluations will be given twice a year. They will include an overview of the projects and learning center activities the child has participated in and a discussion of the child's achievement in curriculum, growth in meeting state standards, citizenship and progress toward meeting our definition of an educated person.

Child's Evaluation of Their Learning (qualitative and quantitative, formative and summative)

This is a major component of VCES's assessment process. It is important for children to analyze and reflect on their learning, it encourages them to own their learning process and tells them what they think is important. Every Friday students will reflect on the week's learning as they determine what work samples, if any, to add to their portfolios.

Portfolios (qualitative and quantitative, summative)

As part of a “work sampling system,” students and teachers will collect samples of student work, photographs, video and tape recordings in order to demonstrate students’ progress toward reaching the learning goals of the given year of study.

Balanced Literacy (quantitative, formative and summative)

In keeping with the Balanced Literacy program adopted by VCES, and in conjunction with monthly DIBELS and bi-annually DRA tests, students will have timed writing and reading activities, skills tests and quizzes, and in-class assignments that will be evaluated in light of learning goals and checklists.

Investigations in Number, Data, and Space® Assessment Sourcebook (quantitative, formative and summative) and Connected Mathematics

Investigations in Number, Data, and Space® math curriculum include an Assessment Sourcebook as a teacher- student tool. Students will experience a range of quiz and test formats (including Pearson GMade/Grade or NWEA Maps triannually) as well as rigorously-evaluated in class activities.

FOSS Science, Houghton-Mifflin K-5 Social Studies

Students will complete interdisciplinary projects that will be evaluated against rubrics that articulate both state standards for science and social studies, additional learning goals and appropriate state standards for math and language arts. These projects will provide the bulk of student work in the sciences and social studies academic disciplines.

Parent Teacher Student Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences in the late fall and spring with conferences student-led where appropriate.

Non-Core methods of assessment include:

Documentation (qualitative, quantitative, formative and summative)

Documentation, as described earlier in Elements One and Two, is embedded in VCES’ program and helps the teacher evaluate students as both individuals and as participants in a group setting.

Documentation is not only qualitative data. Teachers will be guided in observing and documenting student progress against criterion-referenced checklists and rubrics that are derived from content standards and additional learning goals.

Citizenship Grade: The citizenship rubric (described in Element One, Section G) will measure the behavior of students as contributing members to a community of learners. Both students and teachers will fill out this report quarterly.

C. State Mandated Tests Assurances

VCES will meet all statewide standards and conduct pupil assessments required pursuant to Education Code Section 60602.5 and any other statewide standards authorized in statute.

If VCES does not test (i.e., STAR, CELDT, CAHSEE) with the District, VCES hereby grants authority to the state of California to provide a copy of all test results directly to the District as well as to VCES. The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools. A school’s score or placement on the API is an indicator of the school’s performance level and growth as measured by how well the school is moving toward target goals.

VCES will meet the following API growth indicators:

- Annual API will meet or exceed the established growth target
- All subgroups will make at least 80% of the school target
- The CAT-6 participation rate will be at least 95%
- Target API is 50 points above the average API (734) currently in the alternative schools listed at the beginning of this charter: 784

VCES values measurable student outcomes from standardized testing and reporting. Students will participate in all state sponsored testing programs and each VCES student will be expected to show continuous improvement as measured by instruments adopted by the State of California. VCES expects student test results to surpass levels on record at the alternative public elementary schools in the community and anticipates a minimum of 20% of students scoring at “far below basic” to accelerate to “below basic” the following year, and “basic” for the year after that. Furthermore, VCES expects that 80% of ELL students will be re-designated by the end of 5th grade.

Students who show a continued lack of progress will be served as detailed under *No Child Left Behind* and/or the Special Education section depending on individual student needs. Teachers will be guided by principal-designated professional development programs to *specifically* address the needs of learners who are not making adequate progress.

D. Student Progress Reporting

The principal and VCES faculty will develop and implement an effective student reporting system to provide progress report grades in the fall and spring, and formal mid-year and end-of-year grades in January and June. The report may use multiple measures such as the VCES rubric and rubrics for specific portfolios. End of year reports will also include a standards-based report, examples are included in Appendix 9. Students will be given grades of NY (your child is NOT YET showing the skill or understanding), DV (your child is DEVELOPING the skill or understanding, but is inconsistent), and C (your child is CONSISTENTLY demonstrating this skill). Teachers and administrators will meet together to analyze these reports and to make necessary adjustments in the program being offered to students who are showing a lack of progress.

E. Longitudinal Analysis of Progress

Results from assessments, data collection records, evaluations, stakeholder surveys and interviews will be collected, analyzed, reported, published, and distributed to the school community and interested members of the community at large as part of an annual progress and program audit. The annual audit will be used to determine student progress over time and the quality of programs of VCES.

ELEMENT #4: Governance

Element Requirement: "The governance structure of the school, including, but not limited to, the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement."

A. Assurances: Brown Act, Conflicts of Interest, and Audit

VCES will comply with the Brown Act.

Members of VCES's executive board, any administrators, managers or employees, and any other committees of the School shall comply with federal and state laws, nonprofit integrity standards and LAUSD's Charter School policies and regulations regarding ethics and conflicts of interest.

VCES and/or its non-profit corporation will be solely responsible for the debts and obligations of the Charter School.

Grievance Procedure for Parents and Students

VCES will designate at least one employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) including any investigation of any complaint filed with VCES alleging its noncompliance with these laws or alleging any actions which would be prohibited by these laws. VCES will notify all its students and employees of the name, office address, and telephone number of the designated employee or employees.

VCES will adopt and publish grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee complaints alleging any action, which would be prohibited by Title IX, or Section 504.

VCES will implement specific and continuing steps to notify applicants for admission and employment, students and parents of elementary and secondary school students, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with the recipient, that it does not discriminate on the basis of sex or mental or physical disability in the educational program or activity which it operates, and that it is required by Title IX and Section 504 not to discriminate in such a manner.

LAUSD Charter Policy

VCES will comply with the District policy related to Charter Schools, as it may be changed from time to time.

Responding to Inquiries

VCES shall promptly respond to all inquiries, including but not limited to, inquiries regarding financial records, from the District and shall consult with the District regarding any inquiries. VCES acknowledges that it is subject to audit by LAUSD including, without limitation, audit by the District Office of the Inspector General.

Notifications

Notification is to be made to the Charter Schools Division of any notices of workplace hazards, investigations by outside regulatory agencies, lawsuits, or other formal complaints, within one week of receipt of such notices by VCES.

Audit and Inspection of Records

VCES agrees to observe and abide by the following terms and conditions as a requirement for receiving and maintaining their charter authorization:

- VCES is subject to District oversight.
- The District's statutory oversight responsibility continues throughout the life of the Charter and requires that it, among other things, monitors the fiscal condition of VCES.
- The District is authorized to revoke this Charter for, among other reasons, the failure of VCES to meet generally accepted accounting principles or if it engages in fiscal mismanagement.

Accordingly, the District hereby reserves the right, pursuant to its oversight responsibility, to audit VCES books, records, data, processes and procedures through the District Office of the Inspector General or other means. The audit may include, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- Compliance with terms and conditions prescribed in the Charter agreement,
- Internal controls, both financial and operational in nature,
- The accuracy, recording and/or reporting of school financial information,
- The school's debt structure,
- Governance policies, procedures and history,
- The recording and reporting of attendance data,
- The school's enrollment process,
- Compliance with safety plans and procedures, and
- Compliance with applicable grant requirements.

VCES shall cooperate fully with such audits and shall make available any and all records necessary for the performance of the audit upon 30 days notice to VCES. When 30 days notice may defeat the purpose of the audit, the District may conduct the audit upon 24 hours notice.

In addition, if an allegation of waste, fraud or abuse related to VCES operations is received by the District, VCES shall be expected to cooperate with any investigation undertaken by the Office of the Inspector General, Investigations Unit.

B. By-Laws

VCES is a California non-profit 501(c)3 corporation. The non-profit benefit corporation (501c3) for VCES will also be the non-profit benefit corporation for VCMS. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws are included in Appendices 4 and 5.

C. Board of Directors Responsibilities and Composition

Responsibilities

The Board of Directors is the governing Board of both the Valley Charter Elementary and Middle Schools. The Board of Directors is responsible for all legal and fiduciary matters involving both schools. The Board will provide fiscal accountability by approving and monitoring budgets and other financial matters. The Board will also help ensure effective organizational planning by approving long range goals and annual objectives, and monitoring such issues as health and safety, and the use and maintenance of facilities. The Board will have the responsibility for hiring and evaluating the Executive Director/Head of School. Approving the yearly budget, contributing to the financial well-being of the school, fiscal oversight, compliance, and upholding the mission of the school as outlined in the charter are essential responsibilities. In accordance with our school culture, the Board strives for consensus. If

it cannot be reached, decisions are made by majority vote. See Appendix 3 for the Board of Directors Handbook.

The Board will create committees as needed to address issues related to fulfilling the mission of VCES. Possible committees include: Development, Governance/Nominating Committee, Finance, Strategic Planning and Assessment.

Composition of Board, Election, and Terms of Office

The Board of Directors is made up of representatives with expertise in education, finance/accounting, and nonprofit and community organizations. The Board of Directors consists of at least five (5) and no more than twenty-five (25) members. The Nominating Committee of the Board will interview and propose all other candidates to the full Board for vote. Families of current students will elect one parent representative to the board and a representative from the Founding Parents will be on the Board. The Board of Directors will also include the Executive Director, School Principal, Faculty representative and an LAUSD representative who will all be ex-officio, non-voting members. Each Director on our Board shall serve for a one year term, renewable at mutual consent for a maximum of four years.

The Board was founded in the spring of 2009 by four former members of the Board of Directors for Larchmont Charter School (LCS). Three were former chairs, and two were employees of the school (a teacher and a Business Administrator). The Board soon expanded to include the current roster, listed along with resumes in Appendix 2.

Process for Selecting Board Members

Any member of the community may refer a potential candidate to the Board's Nominating Committee for consideration either when there is a mid-term vacancy or an upcoming expiration of a regular Board term. The Nominating Committee will meet with all prospective candidates to determine whether or not they should be recommended as candidates to the Board and fit the stated needs of the Board recruitment strategy. If the candidate meets the needs of the Board at that time, the Nominating Committee will present the Nomination and the candidate's resume during the next Board meeting for a Closed Session discussion. If any Board members have questions or want to meet the potential member, the Nominating Committee will facilitate such a meeting. If support exists, the Nominating Committee will bring the Nomination to the Board for a vote at the next Board meeting. The Board strives for unanimous support for new Board Members, but per the by-laws, a simple majority is all that is needed.

D. Board Meetings

Board members meet monthly and more often as needed. Board elections are held each March for the following year. All Board meetings will be open to parents and staff and foreign language interpreters will be made available upon request.

E. Board Meeting Postings

Board meetings will be posted per the Brown Act 72 hours before meetings on our community email forum in public places around the school site.

F. Stakeholder Involvement

The governance of VCES is designed to reflect the best practices existing in effective, high performing, college preparatory K-12 institutions. The Board of Directors is the primary governing board of VCES and will have representatives from the world of education, business, and the community who bring relevant and diverse skills and expertise. A full list of current Directors and their bio/resumes can be found in Appendix 2.

Stakeholders will have roles through:

- Advisory Board
- Family Committees
- Dean of Faculty
- Site Council

The Board of Directors will be supported in its efforts by an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will be comprised of leading experts who can provide guidance to the school's educational, financial, site and growth-related endeavors. Members of the Board of Directors as well as the Executive Director can nominate individuals to this Board if a rationale exists for that individual's counsel at that point in time.

Families will be given a myriad of opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. For example, all families will participate in the election of grade level representatives [GLR] (corresponding to the grade of their child) to the Site Council. In April, parents of current students who are interested in GLRs for a term to run the following school year shall write a short greeting that explains their interest and goals as a GLR. There will then be an evening meeting open to all families in May during which prospective GLRs will each give a short speech and take questions and all parents/guardians present will vote. Parents of incoming kindergarteners will experience the same process in the fall of their child's first year at the school, instead of the spring. This council is based on similar structures that exist in schools that share educational goals, curricular choices and student demographics. The Aspire schools and a collection of successful, rigorous schools in Arizona provide the main models for this council which we define as follows:

The Site-Based Council is a policy-making, advisory body that determines all items related to school operation. The Site Council include an equal number of teachers and parents (representing each grade level) and will report directly to the principal, only reporting directly to the Board when encountering serious, unresolved issues. An individual Board member will be publically identified as the Council's main contact should Board attention be desired. The council:

- acts as an initial discipline review board;
- addresses school safety issues;
- reviews parental concerns;
- determines budget priorities; and
- sets policies that are unique to the school.

Furthermore, all parents can also join any family committee in which they have an interest. These committees will be formed at the request of the Principal or at the suggestion of parents, pending the approval of the Executive Director. Possible committees include:

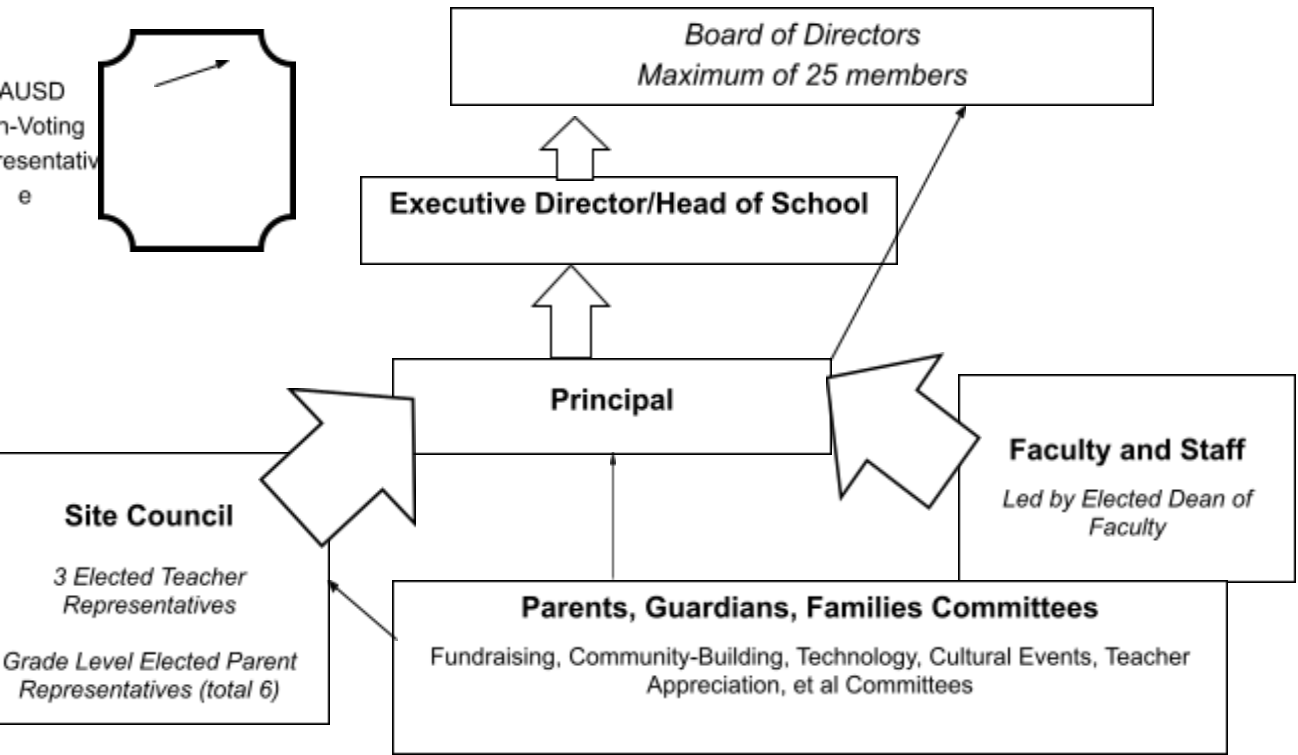
- Fundraising
- Technology Support
- Teacher Appreciation
- Cultural Events
- After School Program

Faculty will elect a Dean of Faculty who will sit on the Site Council and up to three additional faculty members to also join the Site Council. These elections will take place each May for a term to run the following school year. The Dean of Faculty is the main line of communication between administration and faculty. The Dean directs weekly faculty meetings (attendance optional) during which faculty make

announcements over school-sponsored continental breakfast. The Dean also manages the application and follow-up process that enables faculty to access school-provided professional development funds.

The Council will bring 6 elected parent representatives, one from each grade, and 3 elected teachers together in biweekly meetings with the Principal. The Council will be a means of ensuring that faculty and family voice is officially heard and responded to by the school administration. It will also be the means through which the Principal manages parent volunteers, community-building, fundraising and ad hoc committees.

G. VCES Governance Structure



H. Board of Directors – Resumes

Please see Appendix 2 for Board of Director bios, resumes and questionnaires

ELEMENT #5: Employee Qualifications

Element Requirement: "The qualifications to be met by individuals to be employed by the school, including the credentials held by the teachers of the school."

A. Staff Selection

All personnel must commit to the mission and vision of VCES. Employees' job descriptions and work schedules will be reviewed and modified as necessary to meet the needs of the school and students. The job descriptions will be based on the job duties and work basis as outlined in the charter.

A personnel committee will be formed as needed by the Executive Director in order to support efforts in hiring the school principal. The principal, too, can form a personnel committee to support him or her in hiring employees for any vacant positions. The Executive Director is ultimately responsible for hiring the principal, who is ultimately responsible for hiring faculty and staff.

VCES is committed to recruiting and hiring a community of professionals who are dedicated to the best practices education of all students. Regardless of his role in the school, every person hired by VCES will actively help to promote the curricular philosophy, instructional program and the school community's guiding principles. All requirements for employment set forth in applicable provisions of law will be met.

Salary ranges can be found in the attached budget.

The administrative positions for VCES include:

- Head of School/Executive Director
- K-5 Principal
- Office Manager/Clerk
- When the school reaches a student population of 250+, an Assistant Principal may be added (job description to be created by K-5 principal)

B. Key Personnel Qualifications

Executive Director/Head of School

The Executive Director/Head of School (ED) holds responsibility, accountability and authority for the school's overall performance and success in fulfilling the VCES mission. It is the primary responsibility of the ED to ensure the organization meets annual revenue goals and generates an appropriate surplus without compromising the quality of the program, securing the school's long-term sustainability.

The ED reports to the Board of Directors and is responsible for the overall operations of the schools. The ED hires and assesses the school Principal.

Responsibilities include:

- Extend fundraising beyond the school community to include outside sources of funds
- Facilitate strategic planning with the Board of Directors
- Create big picture educational program strategies with the Principal, but then respect the autonomy of the Principal in fulfilling the educational mission of the school
- Diagnose the gaps between where the school is versus where it aspires to be, and ensure that strategies and practices are implemented to close these gaps
- Develop and retain high-performing individuals who are passionate about the school and its mission
- Ensure that the annual fundraising target is met as well as additional funds to ensure long-term financial sustainability

- Develop and maintain relationships with philanthropic, business, and public sectors to increase awareness of the school and increase its donor base within a competitive nonprofit (specifically charter school) funding environment
- Work with the Board on a capital campaign to secure and develop permanent site(s)
- Oversee and manage the operating budget
- Ensure that VCES has suitable school site(s)
- Oversee school compliance with all applicable laws, regulatory reporting, contractual obligations, and donor restrictions
- Ensure that an effective performance management system is in place for all staff under his/her direct supervision
- Represent the school as a leader in the California charter school community in all advocacy efforts (e.g., legislative efforts to sustain charter school funding levels) as well as a community leaders to maintain support from the local communities
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with the LAUSD Charter Office, local leadership, school faculty and staff, students, parents, community members, partner businesses and organizations, and current and prospective supporters

Qualifications include:

Management and Leadership Experience: The ideal candidate will have extensive management experience with a record of success in leading and sustaining a school, fundraising, budgeting, government relations, and marketing. S/he will have the ability to inspire excellence from a diverse staff and to leverage the talents of the Board of Directors. S/he will be a confident decision-maker and possess the ability to facilitate collaboration and teamwork.

Visionary Experience: As the charter landscape is changing quickly, there will be many opportunities to take a leadership role in shaping the future of the charter school movement through partnering, innovation, and persuasion. The ideal candidate will be able to think creatively and envision new ways of cultivating and expanding partnerships within the public and private sectors.

Passion for Educational Excellence: Experience in the field of education is required, with knowledge of excellent schools beyond those affiliated with LAUSD absolutely essential. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate an ability to communicate a genuine passion for advancing educational achievement in diverse communities and embody the mission and vision of VCES.

Fundraising Focus: The ED must be able to make a compelling case for resources in an increasingly competitive environment. S/he must see building and maintaining relationships with individuals, foundations, members of the private sector, and government grant makers as an essential part of his/her role. Staying abreast of changing funding opportunities and challenges and working them to the school's advantage will be a critical component of this position.

K-5 Principal

The Principal of VCES will be the educational and instructional leader of a K-5 elementary school, and will also work with the ED to create systems that ensure a data driven, project-based, standards-based, constructivist educational program.

Responsibilities include:

1. Educational Leadership:
 - Provide hands-on guidance to teachers as they create a project-based curriculum that relies on rubrics to assess student learning of both state standards and additional learning goals (the school's definition of an educated person in the 21st century);

- Lead backward design curriculum creation efforts that ensure students will master state standards and be prepared for state tests.
- Use multiple sources of data to develop a data-driven instructional plan for the improvement of student achievement;
- Help teachers develop their pedagogy in light of recent research on brain development and in keeping with a constructivist approach to teaching and learning;
- Work with teachers to develop a teacher evaluation process;
- Develop partnerships with university researchers to support teacher's action research endeavors;
- Develop partnerships with similar schools to enable VCES teachers to be both learners and mentors;
- Lead the design and implementation of the school's programs for Special Education, EL, and GATE students;
- Hire and retain high quality faculty and staff;
- Promote the school mission and philosophy throughout the school community;
- Day to day site management with a commitment to ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff.

2. School and Community Relations:

- Participate in all aspects of Charter renewal, review and compliance;
- Work with the ED in the strategic planning for the growth of the school;
- Lead the Family Committee and Adult Education Committee;
- Schedule and participate in regular family and community meetings;
- Encourage and develop parent/guardian involvement/partnerships;
- Maintain positive relationships with LAUSD and its related entities;

3. School Management:

Budget creation with the ED; Charter renewal; Outreach & Partnerships.

Qualifications include:

Our ideal principal is a visionary whose experience, knowledge, and drive will set the tone for a supportive school climate that challenges our motivated students, teachers, and families to achieve academic excellence, character growth, and social change. Resourcefulness, flexibility, and an entrepreneurial spirit are key qualities for a new charter school leader. A required qualification is the ability of the principal to effectively implement a data driven instructional program and a project-based curriculum.

The ideal candidate will have (these are preferable but not required):

- Teaching experience in a variety of grade levels;
- A Master's Degree in Education and/or Administrative Credential (prior administrative experience desirable);
- Experience in a charter or independent school or public school that has record of high achievement;
- Knowledge of or experience with diverse populations, English learners and GATE;
- Experience with a constructivist approach to teaching and learning; backward design and creation of a project-based curriculum; commitment to incorporating learning goals beyond the state standards;
- Strong computer skills;
- Excellent communication skills; experience motivating and working with parent volunteers; and
- A track record as a successful and progressive educator.

Teaching Staff

VCES teachers and all paraprofessionals will meet the requirements for employment of California Education Code section 47605(l) and the applicable provisions of *No Child Left Behind*. These documents will be maintained on file at VCES and made available to LAUSD upon request.

The K-5 principal will select the teachers on an application, interview and teaching observation basis, with the help of a personnel committee per the discretion of the principal. Selection of teachers will be based on their teaching experience and their ability to demonstrate curriculum creation, implementation and assessment and classroom instructional capabilities. All candidates will be required to teach a model lesson to students at the school – and in the case of the creation of a new grade, teachers can teach the model lesson at their current place of work. Inexperienced teachers will be hired on educational experience (i.e. former paraprofessional, school volunteer, child care, etc.), work experiences found beneficial to education, and resumes with good references. Inexperienced teachers will be paired with mentor teachers for their first two years at the school.

The ideal elementary school teaching candidate will have:

- 2+ years experience teaching the relevant grades
- Experience with and passion for pedagogical practices grounded in constructivism and differentiated instruction
- Experience with and interest in creating project-based curriculum that is standards-based and incorporates additional learning goals that reflect the multiple intelligences.
- Commitment to the VCES mission and the goals of the VCES charter
- Experience with and/or desire to develop professionally through action research

Responsibilities will include:

- Preparing and implementing project-based curriculum that lead to student investigations and multiple assessments
- Pedagogical methods that emphasize active learning strategies
- Assessing student progress and maintaining accurate records
- Taking the lead in developing their individualized action research professional development plan
- Maintaining frequent communication with students, student's families, colleagues, and other school stakeholders
- Maintaining regular, punctual attendance

Other Certificated Staff: A pool of day-to-day substitutes will be established and a list of qualified substitutes will be maintained.

Financial Administration: In order to run the administrative financial functions of the school, VCES will contract with California CharterWorks, or a similar vendor. The accounting systems VCES plans to adopt will adhere to generally accepted accounting principles, giving VCES strong internal controls within the system.

Office Personnel: Clerical staff will be selected by the Principal or ED (depending on responsibilities of staff) on an applicant and interview basis. Selection will be based on experience and the ability to perform the job duties for that position.

Responsibilities will include:

- Answering phones
- Filing reports
- Enrolling students

- Managing and monitoring office operations
- Ordering and purchasing supplies and vendor management
- Developing and implementing clerical and administrative procedures for daily school operations
- Preparing correspondence, reports, bulletins, files, forms, memorandums, and performing other duties as assigned
- Bilingual translation and communication with parents

C. Performance Evaluations

Evaluations will be performed twice a year. Performance measures will be used to evaluate all school personnel.

The Executive Director will be evaluated by the Board based on:

- Completion of required and enumerated (from job description) job duties
- Reaching objectives and benchmarks on the path to permanent school site, fundraising and financial sustainability
- Choice and oversight of school administration in regards to:
 - o Implementing the charter and maintaining adherence to its guiding principles and requirements
 - o Overall successful school academic program and achievement of educational goals
 - o High parental and community involvement

The principal will be evaluated by the ED based on:

- Completion of required and enumerated (from job description above) job duties
- Implementing the charter and maintaining adherence to its guiding principles and requirements
- Overall successful school academic program and achievement of educational goals
- High parental and community involvement
- Creation of a school atmosphere of enthusiasm, warmth, and cooperation among all parties

Assessment tools will include staff and parent surveys, site visit, portfolio presentation and a rubric.

Teachers will be evaluated by the principal based on:

- Student progress as referenced from assessment measures
- Effectiveness of teaching strategies
- Performance of job duties

Classified and other personnel will be evaluated by the principal or the ED (depending on the reporting structure for each staff member) based on completion of assigned job duties and regular, punctual attendance.

If an evaluation reveals poor job performance, a conference will be scheduled between the staff member and the principal, or the ED and the principal, or the Board and the ED, to develop a written action plan detailing recommendations for improvement. The action plan will outline an implementation plan for support services, specific responsibilities and expectations, timelines, and consequences for failure to meet the expectations. If an employee disagrees with an evaluation, a written objection may be appended to the review. Employees always have the right to engage in Due Process and the Grievance Procedure.

D. Assurances & Background Checks

VCES will not discriminate against any applicant or employee on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, age, religion, gender, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, or actual or perceived medical condition.

All staff will be expected to be sensitive to the linguistic and cultural needs of students, and to participate in staff development to enhance their skills in this area.

VCES will require each employee to submit to a criminal background check as required by Education Code Section 44237. VCES will adhere to California laws, including fingerprinting, and prohibitions regarding the employment of any person who has been convicted of a violent or serious felony. VCES agrees to comply with the provisions of NCLB as they apply to certificated and paraprofessional employees of charter schools, including maintaining current copies of all teacher credentials so that they are readily available for inspection. Prior to employment each employee must furnish an up-to-date Mantoux Tuberculosis (TB) test result, and documents establishing legal employment status. The ED will monitor and be responsible for maintaining records of tuberculosis and criminal investigation clearances, according to California and federal law, for all VCES employees. No employee shall commence employment at VCES until he or she has been cleared by the Department of Justice.

E. Child Abuse Reporting

In accordance with state law, all teachers and staff at VCES will be mandated to report any suspected child abuse. The procedure for the mandated individual will be to immediately make a call to an appropriate child protective agency, including but not limited to Department of Children and Family Services. The mandated reporter will then file a report within 36 hours of first becoming aware of a suspected case of child abuse. The report will be filed with either the Police Department Child Abuse Unit or the Department of Children and Family services. The mandated individual will meet with the appropriate authorities accordingly. Staff will receive in-service training and sign a document verifying notification and understanding regarding this responsibility.

ELEMENT #6: Health and Safety of Pupils

Element Requirement: "The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. These procedures shall include the requirement that each school employee furnish the school with a criminal record summary as described by Education Code 44237. The procedures shall also address safe housing and employee clearance for tuberculosis."

A. Health and Safety Policies

We are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, healthy, and protective atmosphere in which every member of the community will grow and prosper. VCES will ensure the safety of the students and staff by complying with the current LAUSD independent charter school standards and policies for health and safety as well as all state and federal laws, including Education Code Section 44237. Each new employee or non-parent volunteer who will work in contact with students must submit to a fingerprint scan for the purpose of obtaining a criminal record summary. The cost of the scan for employees will be covered by VCES. This requirement is a condition of employment or volunteering.

Also, employees hired by VCES will be required to have a Mantoux tuberculosis test per Education Code 49406.

The school health and safety policy will be annually updated and reviewed, in consultation with staff and the specified Sub-Committee. This policy will be distributed to all staff and parents. The policy will cover the following points:

- A requirement that each employee of the school submit to a criminal background check and furnish a criminal record summary as required by California Education Code section 44237. Ed. Code §47605 9b)(5)(F)
- Safe use, maintenance, and sanitation of school equipment and facilities
- Emergency drill procedures and schedule (earthquake, fire and other)
- A policy for reporting child abuse, acts of violence, and other improprieties as mandated by federal, state, and local agencies
- Compliance with all health and safety laws and regulations that apply to non-charter public schools, including those regarding auxiliary services (food services, transportation, custodial services, hazardous materials, etc.) and those required by CAL/OSHA, the California Health and Safety Code, and EPA.
- Emergency site plan
- Health screening procedure (vision, hearing and scoliosis)
- A requirement that all enrolling students and staff provide records documenting immunizations to the extent required by law. Records of student immunizations will be maintained, and staff will honor County requirements for periodic Tuberculosis (TB) tests.
- Procedures expected of staff and parents in the case of a sudden illness or injury occurring at school
- Procedures for administration of medication at school
- Suggestions for families as to good nutrition for their children
- Explanation of the necessity of physical education for the child's health
- Legal obligation of reporting contagious conditions
- Prevention of drug, tobacco and alcohol use, violence, and early sexual activity

B. Site Compliance

VCES will utilize Proposition 39 to determine its site. It has an additional site in advanced state of negotiations that could be the alternative location.

At all sites, VCES will comply with the Uniform Building Codes, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), access requirements, and fire, health and structural safety requirements. The Certificate of Occupancy and other pertinent records will be kept on file by VCES.

VCES will adhere to the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment on separation of Church and State. That is, any lease arrangement with a church may not advance or inhibit religion, nor give rise to excessive government entanglement with religion.

The District-approved site for VCES must be fully usable without conditions. The VCES facility for students and staff shall comply with all building code standards and regulations adopted by the city and/or county agencies responsible for building safety standards of the city and/or county in which VCES is located. These code requirements shall also apply to the construction, reconstruction, alteration of or addition to any charter school building. In the event VCES is cited by any agency, e.g., Cal OSHA or the Fire Marshal, for failure to comply with regulations, the District's Charter Office will be notified immediately.

The District will be provided a Certificate of Occupancy, allowing VCES to use and occupy the site 45 days prior to the date the school is scheduled to open.

VCES will contract out with private companies to provide the following services as needed:

- Routine Maintenance
- Building Equipment Operations (e.g., air filter changes)
- Major or Deferred Maintenance
- Alterations and Improvements
- Custodial Services
- Gardening
- Landscaping
- Tree Trimming
- Pest Management (including methods VCES will use to comply with the Healthy Schools Act)
- Utilities

LAUSD shall charge the maximum oversight fee allowed under the law.

*If LAUSD facilities are used during the term of this charter, VCES shall abide by all LAUSD policies relating to Maintenance and Operations services.

C. Draft of the school's health and safety policy

The school will maintain an up-to-date School Health and Safety Plan and it will be kept on file for review. The school staff will be trained annually on the safety procedures outlined in the plan. All companies/services we contract with will be reputable and we will obtain all the required documentation to ensure the safe provision of all auxiliary services.

Here is a draft of the school safety plan that already exists:

Emergency Procedures

All classrooms have an "emergency kit" stocked with first-aid equipment and water. There will be a designated safe place in case of a disaster emergency where parents

may pick up their children. If this were to occur, it may be necessary for parents to show proof of identification.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be held monthly.

Office personnel will maintain a record of fire drills held and total required time for complete evacuation. When the fire drill signal sounds, teachers will lead the students in their room along the route indicated on the evacuation map posted for that purpose. Before leaving the room, teachers will see that all windows and doors are closed and that they have their class attendance roster with them. Students who are not in a classroom at the time the fire drill signal is given will attach themselves to the nearest teacher exiting the building for purposes of getting to the designated evacuation site.

Once at the designated evacuation site, teachers and other staff will ensure that all students find their respective teachers. Teachers will then take roll to ensure that all students are accounted for. The names of any missing students will be given to the office personnel and the administrative staff will attempt to locate missing students. Students will remain with their teachers at the designated evacuation site until the administrative staff gives the "all clear" signal.

Earthquake and Disaster Preparedness

Earthquake drills will be held four times a year.

Students will be made familiar with the "duck and cover" routine. A disaster drill commencing with the "duck and cover" routine will be initiated by an announcement. Staff and students will hear "This is an emergency drill. Duck and cover." During the "duck and cover" routine in the classroom, teachers will turn off the lights and have students get under a desk or table or against the wall away from the windows. Students must remain quiet and orderly so they will be able to hear additional instructions when given. All drills will be concluded with an "all clear" announcement, or a visible signal from the administrative staff.

In the event of a real earthquake, everyone must engage in the "duck and cover" routine immediately and remain in position until the teacher determines that it is safe to leave the building. If remaining in the room becomes dangerous, or when the shaking stops, teachers will proceed with their students to the evacuation site or another safety zone. If students are on the playground or other outdoor area when a disaster drill is called or during an actual earthquake, students are to drop immediately to the ground, away from trees and power lines, and cover their heads with their hands. They are to remain in that position until given additional instructions.

In the event of disasters other than earthquakes, the administrative staff will contact each room, advise staff of potential dangers, and give further directions or orders. Teachers and students will remain in their classrooms until instructions are received for an all clear or an evacuation. If there has been a chemical spill, the teacher must make sure that all doors, windows, and vents remain closed. The school site maintenance staff will turn off the gas. All unassigned staff will report to the office for assignments such as searching offices, bathrooms, and all other common areas, including outdoor facilities.

Teachers will stay with their classes for the duration of the emergency. In the event of an earthquake or other national disaster, all school employees are immediately designated "Civil Defense Workers" and are not allowed to leave school until they are given official clearance to do so by the administrative staff.

Bomb Threats

The person receiving the call or letter will note the time of day, wording of the message, background noises, and quality of the voice to try to determine if it is a young child or an adult. This person will delay the caller as long as possible, while they alert another adult to the crisis. That adult will immediately notify the telephone company to trace the call and immediately thereafter, notify the police using 911. Based on the information at hand, the administrative staff will make a decision whether an immediate evacuation is warranted. If so, the evacuation code word "safe school drill" will be given and evacuation procedures will be followed. The office personnel will coordinate information requests to and/or from law enforcement, the telephone company, and parents.

If an immediate evacuation is not warranted, the administrative staff will notify teachers to inspect their room for any suspicious materials or unknown packages, without alarming students. All unassigned staff will report to the office for assignments such as searching offices, bathrooms, and all other common areas, including outdoor facilities.

Evacuation Plan

A disaster of a significant nature may require the evacuation of the school. Immediately upon notification by outside authorities that the school must be evacuated, the administrative staff will verify the name and position of the person placing the alert. Once the source is confirmed, the administrative staff will give the evacuation code word "safe school drill". Teachers will proceed with their students to the nearest school exit. Before leaving the room, teachers will make sure they have their class attendance roster with the exit. Before leaving the room, teachers will make sure they have their class attendance roster with them. Students who are not in a classroom at the time the intercom signal is given will attach themselves to the nearest teacher exiting the building for purposes of getting to the designated evacuation site.

Prior to evacuation, offices, bathrooms, and all other common areas, (including outdoor facilities) will be searched by unassigned staff members designated by the principal.

Once at the designated evacuation site, teachers and other staff will ensure that all students find their respective teachers. Teachers will then take roll to ensure that all students are accounted for. The names of any missing students will be given to the office personnel and an individual will be assigned the task of finding any missing students. Teachers will work together to take care of students with injuries, respiratory problems, or other medical conditions.

Teachers will stay with their classes for the duration of the emergency. In the event of an evacuation, all school employees are immediately designated "Civil Defense Workers" and are not allowed to leave school until they are given official clearance to do so by the administrative staff.

Students will remain with their teachers at the designated evacuation site until the administrative staff gives the "all clear" signal. In the event students cannot return to the school site, the administrative staff will notify parents and/or the media as to where students can be picked up. The office personnel will sign out students as they are being picked up by a parent or other adult listed on the emergency information card.

Emergencies and Illnesses

Illness Policy

We wish to keep all children healthy. Please keep your child at home if he/she shows any signs of illness. The school will send a student home when it appears necessary. Children who run a fever should be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school.

Immunizations

All students who enroll for the first time must show a written report a Mantoux (PPD) test, to show that they are free of tuberculosis. Children must also have the following immunizations: polio (four shots), DPT (five shots), MMR (two shots), hepatitis B (three shots). The office will review all immunization, and children who do not meet state requirements will be excluded from school until these requirements are met. Documentation from a physician is required for all waived immunization requirements.

Injuries

If your child sustains any type of major injury (e.g., a broken bone), a note from your doctor is required before your child may return to school. Students needing any supportive appliances (crutches, cast, wheelchair, etc.) must also have a written order from the prescribing physician. Call the office for details. Children with cast and splints are not allowed to participate in physical education activities, but alternative activities are arranged until the cast or splint is removed.

Head Lice

Children with head lice are excluded from school until all nits/eggs are removed and clearance is given by the VCES school health specialist for the child to return to class. If you suspect your child of having head lice or you detect lice, please inform the school health office right away so all other children can be checked.

Special Medication

Children may only receive medication during school hours with a written request from the parent/guardian and from the physician who is responsible for the medical management of the child. Parents are urged, however, to request that the physician develop a schedule in which taking medication in school is minimized or eliminated. Request should be processed through the office.

All medications must be stored at school in the original prescription bottle, labeled with dosage instructions, and be administered in the office. No student may carry his or her own medication or take medication unsupervised except in the case of inhaler where the doctor has given permission.

If your child takes medication regularly during non-school hours, you should leave a short term supply in the office to be used in case of an emergency, such as an earthquake. Please fill out the Medication Request Form and label it in red "For Emergency Use Only."

Food & Nutrition

Lunch

Our school lunch will be prepared by Whole Foods for \$?.00 per meal. Menus will be sent home periodically.

Snacks

Children may bring healthy snacks to school such as fruits and/or vegetables. We discourage foods that contain sugar, MSG, and other additives. Do not send carbonated beverages or candy.

Birthday Celebration Policy

As a community, we care about each other. As you plan home parties, think about how you will handle activities outside of school, so that you do not leave some children feeling excluded. A good rule is: invite everyone in your child's class or fewer than five. Please check with your child's teacher to arrange any celebrations or items brought to class. Keep in mind, our healthy snacks rule when bringing edible items to school.

Healthy Choices Position Paper

We at VCES believe in educating the whole child. One aspect of holistic education is teaching healthy lifestyle choices. Good nutrition is vital to a child's physical, emotional, and academic development. "It is important that those concerned about the wellness of our children spread a common message to the community, that a child's healthy body and mind has a foundation in the food and beverage choices available and made both at school and elsewhere." Refer to www.ADADCmideast.com for additional information.

At VCES, we encourage healthy eating by:

- Working closely with our hot lunch provider to ensure that there will be balanced meals on a daily basis
- Encouraging parents to send snacks and lunches that are healthy;
- Fresh fruits and vegetables, protein, complex carbohydrates
- Limited refined sugar, trans fats, and artificial sweeteners
- Asking that students not bring soda or candy to school
- Notifying parents ahead of time of school celebrations that involve food

We realize that it is unrealistic and unnecessary to prohibit all foods with sugar. There are times when teachers and students will want to have class celebrations. For these celebrations, we ask that parents:

Gain consent from their child's teacher before bringing any food items into the classroom
Inform teachers of any food allergies or restrictions

Here are some tips to help improve nutrition and encourage smart eating habits at home:

- Have regular family meals
- Serve a variety of healthy food and snacks
- Be a role model by eating healthy yourself
- Avoid battles over food
- Involve kids in the process of buying and preparing food

We appreciate your participation in contributing to a healthy community!

D. Insurance Requirements

No coverage shall be provided to VCES by the District under any of the District's self-insured programs or commercial insurance policies. VCES shall secure and maintain, at a minimum, insurance as set forth below with insurance companies acceptable to the District [A.M. Best A-, VII or better] to protect VCES from claims which may arise from its operations. Each Charter School location shall meet the below insurance requirements individually.

It shall be VCES's responsibility, not the District's, to monitor its vendors, contractors, partners or sponsors for compliance with the insurance requirements.

The following insurance policies are required:

1. Commercial General Liability, including Fire Legal Liability, coverage of \$5,000,000 per Occurrence and in the Aggregate. The policy shall be endorsed to name the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles as named additional insured and shall provide specifically that any insurance carried by the District which may be applicable to any claims or loss shall be deemed excess and the Charter School's insurance shall be primary despite any conflicting provisions in VCES's policy. Coverage shall be maintained with no Self-Insured Retention above \$15,000 without the prior written approval of the Office of Risk Management for the LAUSD.
2. Workers' Compensation Insurance in accordance with provisions of the California Labor Code adequate to protect the Charter School from claims that may arise from its operations pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act (Statutory Coverage). The Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage must also include Employers Liability coverage with limits of \$1,000,000/\$1,000,000/\$1,000,000.
3. Commercial Auto Liability, including Owned, Leased, Hired, and Non-owned, coverage with limits of \$1,000,000 Combined Single Limit per Occurrence if VCES does not operate a student bus service. If VCES provides student bus services, the required coverage limit is \$5,000,000 Combined Single Limit per Occurrence.
4. Fidelity Bond coverage shall be maintained by VCES to cover all VCES employees who handle, process or otherwise have responsibility for VCES funds, supplies, equipment or other assets. Minimum amount of coverage shall be \$50,000 per occurrence, with no self-insured retention.
5. Professional Educators Errors and Omissions liability coverage with minimum limits of \$3,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 general aggregate.
6. Sexual Molestation and Abuse coverage with minimum limits of \$3,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 general aggregate. Coverage may be held as a separate policy or included by endorsement in the Commercial General Liability or the Errors and Omissions Policy.
7. Employment Practices Legal Liability coverage with limits of \$3,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 general aggregate.
8. Excess/umbrella insurance with limits of not less than \$10,000,000 is required of all high schools and any other school that participates in competitive interscholastic or intramural sports programs.

*Coverages and limits of insurance may be accomplished through individual primary policies or through a combination of primary and excess policies. *The policy shall be endorsed to name the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles as named additional insureds and shall provide specifically that any insurance carried by the District which may be applicable to any claims or loss shall be deemed excess and VCES's insurance shall be primary despite any conflicting provisions in VCES's policy.*

Evidence of Insurance

VCES shall furnish to the District's Office of Risk Management and Insurance Services located at 333 S. Beaudry Ave, 28th Floor, Los Angeles CA 90017 within 30 days of all new policies inception, renewals or changes, certificates or such insurance signed by authorized representatives of the insurance carrier. Certificates shall be endorsed as follows:

“The insurance afforded by this policy shall not be suspended, cancelled, reduced in coverage or limits or non-renewed except after thirty (30) days prior written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, has been given to the District

Facsimile or reproduced signatures may be acceptable upon review by the Office of Risk Management and Insurance Services. However, the District reserves the right to require certified copies of any required insurance policies.

Should VCES deem it prudent and/or desirable to have insurance coverage for damage or theft to school, employee or student property, for student accident, or any other type of insurance coverage not listed above, such insurance shall not be provided by the District and its purchase shall be the responsibility of VCES.

Additionally, the charter will at all times maintain a funds balance (reserve) of its expenditures as required by section 15543, Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. Currently, the required reserve is 5% of total operational expenditures.

Hold Harmless/Indemnification Provision

To the fullest extent permitted by law, VCES does hereby agree, at its own expense, to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the LAUSD and the Board of Education and their members, officers, directors, agents, representatives, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, damages, losses and expenses including but not limited to attorney’s fees, brought by any person or entity whatsoever, arising out of, or relating to this Charter agreement. VCES further agrees to the fullest extent permitted by law, at its own expense, to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the LAUSD and the Board of Education and their members, officers, directors, agents, representatives, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, damages, losses and expenses including but not limited to attorney’s fees, brought by any person or entity whatsoever for claims, damages, losses and expenses arising from or relating to acts or omission of acts committed by VCES, and their officers, directors, employees or volunteers. Moreover, VCES agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the District for any contractual liability resulting from third party contracts with its vendors, contractors, partners or sponsors.

E. Asbestos Management

VCES shall occupy facilities that comply with the Asbestos requirement as cited in the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), 40CFR part 763. AHERA requires that any building leased or acquired that is to be used as a school or administrative building shall maintain an asbestos management plan.

F. Facilities

If VCES fails to submit a certificate of occupancy to the District not less than 45 days before the school is scheduled to open, it may not open unless an exception is made by the Charter Schools Division. If VCES moves or expands to another facility during the term of this charter, VCES shall provide a certificate of occupancy to the District for each facility at least 45 days before school is scheduled to open in the facility or facilities. VCES shall not open in any location for which it has failed to timely provide a certificate of occupancy to the District, unless an exception is made by the Charter Schools Division. Notwithstanding any language to the contrary in this charter, the interpretation, application, and enforcement of this provision are not subject to the Dispute Resolution Process (Element 14).

ELEMENT #7: Means to Achieve Racial/Ethnic Balance

Element Requirement: "The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its students that is reflective of the general population residing within the district's territorial jurisdiction."

VCES is committed to making every effort to recruit students from various racial and ethnic groups so as to achieve a balance that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district. VCES will maintain an accurate accounting of ethnic and racial balance of students enrolled in the school. It will also keep on file documentation on the efforts the school made to achieve racial and ethnic balance.

The Board's history with LCS of achieving an increasingly desirable racial/ethnic balance speaks to our dedication and our success toward these efforts.

Mixed SES Philosophy

Founded by a group of parents who wanted a "diverse, neighborhood school" for their community, VCES is the embodiment of Horace Mann's concept of a "common school" where children of all backgrounds gather under one roof to learn together and from each other. While school districts across the country are "re-segregating" by race and socio-economic status (particularly when courts strike down race-based desegregation)¹², there is a nascent movement towards mixed SES (mixed socioeconomic status) schools and districts. Segregation in public schools goes against the ideals of America and exacerbates the growing achievement gap. A central part of the missions of VCES is to be a high-performing, mixed SES school that closes the achievement gap. In a city that is known as the wealth capital of the world and the poverty capital of the world, we hope to bridge this divide – a divide that is undemocratic and morally unacceptable.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The failure to educate low-income students has been called "the most pressing moral issue of our day" and "the civil rights issue of our time." There is compelling evidence that low-income children benefit enormously from going to mixed SES schools. Research shows that, in moving a child from a Title One school to a mixed SES school, that child can see his or her test scores reach and surpass grade level.¹³ In one study, researcher David Rusk found that "for every 1 percent increase in middle-class classmates, low income students improved 0.64 percentage point in reading and 0.72 percentage point in math."¹⁴ Why such mixed SES can have such a profound effect is up for debate.¹⁵

Means of Recruiting A Diverse Student Body to VCES – Outreach Plan

VCES intends to expand upon the outreach model of building official partnerships and organizing informal events that has been implemented under VCES Board members at Larchmont Charter School.

¹² According to research conducted by David Rusk for The Century Foundation, economic school segregation increased in the 1990s in 55 of the largest 100 metropolitan areas, was stable in 14, and lessened in 12 (with data unavailable in 19). These trends are consistent with Harvard professor Gary Orfield's research finding that American schools are re-segregating by race.

¹³ Brigid Schultz and Dan Keating, "Pupils' Poverty Drives Achievement Gap," *Washington Post*, September 2, 2001, p. A1: "In a study of 50,000 students in third through eighth grade in Montgomery County, Maryland schools published in September 2001, *The Washington Post* found that 'the overall performance of individual students differed dramatically depending upon the overall level of poverty in the school they attended...'"

AND Dianne Lefly, research manager of the Denver Public Schools Assessment and Testing Department, May 2002: *Some 53-54% of low income students attending schools where less than 50% of the classmates were low income had proficient or advanced reading scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program, while only 33% had such scores in high poverty schools (those with 75% of more of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.)*

AND Jenny LaCoste, "Poverty can hinder student achievement," *Pensacola News Journal*, May 19, 2002, p. 11A: *In a study of students in Escambia County Florida using data from the 2000 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, school district evaluation specialist Linda Harageones told the Pensacola News Journal in May 2002 that "low-income children posted higher scores at schools where the majority of students came from working- or middle-class homes than they did where more than 60 percent of students were poor enough to qualify for the federal free lunch program."*

¹⁴ David Rusk, "Classmates Count: A study of the interrelationship between socioeconomic background and standardized test scores of 4th grade pupils in the Madison-Dane County public schools," mimeo, July 5, 2002

¹⁵ A common misconception ascribes the gap to the fault of low-income parents, despite the fact that this has little basis in research and is contradicted by the performance of low-income students at high performing public and charter schools. A more viable explanation for why a mixed SES so profoundly affects academic performance is that middle and high-income families often have the resources or "voice" to demand better. Low-income families, and particularly families lacking documentation, frequently lack the political voice to make such demands. By attending a school that also attracts parents with more choices, low-income families benefit from the high standards middle class parents have the luxury to demand.

Both the principal and Executive Director/Head of School will be leading the efforts of building official partnerships by following the steps outlined below. After partnerships are in place, families will expand upon this plan by implementing informal events. The partnership building process has already begun and includes:

- 1) Research, examine and list all community service organizations, schools, religious and ethnic organizations, libraries, parks, community gathering places (farmer's markets, performance spaces, etc.) serving the people within the Van Nuys to North Hollywood geographical boundaries. In the interest of serving the greatest possible number of interested families, we will consider these boundaries to be Balboa Blvd to the West and Victory Blvd to the East, Moorpark/Alameda Ave to the South and Sherman Way/Vanowen St to the North.
- 2) Given the list to be created in Step (1), determine the language fluencies needed to best communicate with the populations in the area. If school leaders are not themselves proficient in the needed languages, a translator will be involved at every step of the communication process, and will be hired to translate all school materials and websites as well. It is anticipated that translations will be needed into Spanish, Armenian, and Korean, but other languages may also be considered essential.
- 3) Identify all local preschools and daycare facilities: meet with the leadership of these schools and arrange informational meetings with the parents to educate families about the charter school option, train and involve Founding Parents and/or registered students' parents (after school lottery determines students) in speaking with potential parents at these locations. If the school to be recruited from includes a significant number of families that are unfamiliar with school choice or unaware of the benefits of VCES's educational philosophy, an effort will be made by school leadership to identify families within that particular facility to lead the effort in reaching out to other families.
- 4) Identify all local community service organizations, including YMCA's and community centers: meet with leadership of these organizations, schedule orientation meetings with families of school age children to be led by school leadership with the aid of trained registered parents, ensure an ongoing space in the building to leave charter school brochures/information
- 5) Contact leadership of all local libraries, post offices, supermarkets, drugstores and other local businesses to establish a physical location in the building to leave notices/brochures/information about the charter school for all local residents to access. These activities could be completed by trained registered parents.
- 6) Identify all local religious and ethnic-centered organizations: meet with the leadership of these programs and arrange informational meetings with the parents to educate families about the charter school (led by school leaders with the help of registered parents), ensure an ongoing space in the building to leave charter school brochures/information

The goals in meeting with these community leaders include:

- Informing leaders and their constituents/clients/acquaintances of the school's mission, programs, services
- Hearing and addressing the needs, questions and concerns of all community members
- Fostering an ongoing mutually beneficial relationship with other organizations that are serving the community

In addition to utilizing the existing structures of organizations that serve the community, school leadership will publicize the school to potential parents using the following means:

- o Internet: website, yahoo-type groups, message boards, and other virtual communities that could be contacted and/or created
- o Community events/fairs/festivals: the principal, in conjunction with parents who are trained by the principal to be “School Ambassadors” (friendly individuals who are conversant about the school’s mission, programs, and plans) will attend local events including fairs, festivals, farmers markets, and others in order to meet potential families.
- o Multi-Lingual Park Information Sessions: To ensure that all potential families are included, every effort will be made to ensure that school representatives are present that speak a variety of languages. In addition, prior to the lottery each spring, school representatives will hold multilingual park events at local parks, near playgrounds. School Ambassador parents will volunteer to set up tables with food, will decorate to draw attention, will advertise 3 weeks in advance through free venues, will organize and run activities for kids, will speak with potential parents about the school, and will hand out school brochures/registration information.
- o Meet & Greets/Town Hall Meetings: Principal will lead Meet & Greet sessions for prospective parents to learn more about the school, and ask questions of our staff and Board members. These Meet & Greets will evolve into Town Hall Meetings as the group of parents and involved members of the community grows larger.

After initial outreach meetings and School Ambassador involved events are held, school leadership will assess the experiences and the results in order to write a detailed plan for ongoing and annually-updated outreach strategies. At the very least, a calendar will be created denoting the times of year to follow up with each organization/individual in order to schedule outreach events with potential future parents and in order to hear feedback and constructive criticism from the organization’s constituents about the school. In addition, the calendar will determine the other outreach events such as Multi-Lingual Park Information Sessions and fair/festival events, et al. The school leader will also set up workshops to train more parents who wish to volunteer as School Ambassadors.

It will be the responsibility of the Executive Director to continually monitor the Van Nuys greater area for new community organizations and businesses with which to form relationships. It will also be the ED’s responsibility to make the first contact with the leadership of these organizations and businesses in order to pave the way for meetings and outreach events. It will be the principal’s responsibility to plan meetings and events with future families and prepare registered parents to be “School Ambassadors.” In addition, the principal will work with the ED to involve local organizations and businesses in supporting the school and its families.

The organizations we intend to reach out to, include, but are not limited to the following:

Organization	City/State/Zip	Phone Number
Temple B’Nai Hayim	Sherman Oaks, CA 91403	(818) 788-4664
Valley Beth Shalom	Encino, California 91436	(818) 788-6000
Adat Ari El	North Hollywood, CA 91607	(818) 980-3282
Temple Beth Hillel	Valley Village, CA 91607	(818) 763-9148
Church of the Valley	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 786-4070
Little Brown Church	Studio City, CA 91604	
Church On the Way	Van Nuys, CA 91405	(818)779-8000

Iranian Church On the Way	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 785-5259
St Elisabeth Catholic Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 779-1756
Van Nuys Church Of Christ	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 785-2623
Central Lutheran Church Of Van Nuys ELCA	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 785-5414
First Lutheran Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 989-5844
Church Of Jesus Christ of LDS	Sherman Oaks, CA	(818) 785-3289
Church Of Scientology of the Valley	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 947-0600
Christ the King Lutheran Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 342-0302
Finnish Lutheran Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 988-5394
Church of Jesus Christ of LDS	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 778-6700
Church Of Christ	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 909-4997
Church Of the Valley Developmental Pre-School	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 786-2120
Presbyterian Church USA	Panorama City, CA	(818) 891-4781
St Genevieve's Catholic Church	Panorama City, CA	(818) 892-7177
St Mark's Episcopal Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 785-4251
First Foursquare Church Of Van Nuys	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 779-8000
Rock of the Valley Church Of God in Christ	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 781-4156
Valley Lighthouse Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 780-8334
Church Of Christ	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 909-4997
Presbyterian Church	Panorama City, CA	(818) 894-8316
St Peter Armenian Apstlc Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 344-4860
Seventh-Day Adventist Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 787-8380
Universal Church	Panorama City, CA	(818) 892-8599
St Bridget of Sweden	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 782-7180
First United Methodist Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 785-3256
Trinity Baptist Church	Panorama City, CA	(818) 786-1402
Van Nuys Catholic Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 782-7180
First Lutheran Church Missouri Synod	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 989-5844
Philippine Independent Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 785-4251
Presbyterian Church USA: San Fernando	Panorama City, CA	(818) 891-4781
Sunrise Japanese Foursquare Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 782-7847
Open Door Presbyterian Church	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 782-5726
Church Of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 352-5173
Church Of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 353-3676
Church Of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 833-7461
Kingdom of Jesus Christ	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 787-4466
United Pentecostal Church		(818) 780-8334
Cathedral of St Mary	Sherman Oaks, CA	(818) 907-5511
Church On the Way	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 779-8200
Church on the Way the: Youth Ministries	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 779-8070
Seventh-Day Adventist Spanish	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 782-8498
Jesus Embassy Los Angeles	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 782-2929
Church On the Way the: Children's Ministries	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 779-8020
Community Organizations YMCA	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 989-3800
	Sherman Oaks, CA	(818) 989-9539
Chabad of North Hollywood		
City Community Services		(818) 373-5585
Volunteer Center of San Fernando Valley	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 376-1066
SGI-USA Valley Community Center	Panorama City, CA	(818) 830-1344

Hispanic Community Services	Panorama City, CA	(818) 830-4177
West Valley Towers	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 994-0965
Fickett Towers	Van Nuys, CA	(818) 988-8628
YMCA	North Hollywood, CA	(818) 763-5126
Community Enhancement Services	North Hills, CA	(818) 894-7071
Mishkan Torah Valley: Community Kollel	Tarzana, CA	(818) 705-4926
YMCA West Valley	Reseda, CA	(818) 774-2840
Christian Community	North Hollywood, CA	(818) 762-2251
Metropolitan Community Church in the Valley	North Hollywood, CA	(818) 762-1133
San Fernando Shalom Community Project	North Hills, CA	(818) 830-4036
Living Hope Community Church	Mission Hills, CA	(818) 365-5550
YMCA	Mission Hills, CA	(818) 898-1131
YMCA	Tarzana, CA	(818) 996-8564
YMCA	Granada Hills, CA	(818) 360-5943
Icon Community Development	Pacoima, CA	(818) 899-3636
YMCA	Burbank, CA	(818) 845-8551
Christ Community Church	Canoga Park, CA	(818) 341-5750
Neighborhood Empowerment & Econ. Dev.	North Hills, CA	(818) 891-1884
Assistance League of San Fernando Valley	Canoga Park, CA	(818) 347-0590
Ave of the Bells	Woodland Hills, CA	(818) 340-4652
Boy Scouts of America	Glendale, CA	(818) 243-6282
Community Christian Center	Sunland, CA	(818) 951-9833
Immaculate Heart Community	Los Angeles, CA	(323) 466-2157
YMCA	Chatsworth, CA	(818) 882-4182
Ecclesia Hollywood	Hollywood, CA	(323) 464-8455
Metropolitan Community Church Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA	(323) 669-3434
Community Conservancy	Los Angeles, CA	(310) 398-8584
Fulfillment Fund	Los Angeles, CA	(323) 939-9707
YMCA	Tujunga, CA	(818) 352-3255
Nikkei Village Housing	Arleta, CA	(818) 686-0770
Nazareth House	Los Angeles, CA	(310) 839-2361

Public School Choice Traveling Students

The District and VCES are committed to providing all students with quality educational alternatives in compliance with all federal and state laws, including students who are enrolled in schools of the District identified by the California Department of Education as in need of Program Improvement. Public School Choice ("PSC") placement with Charter Schools is an alternative strongly encouraged by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ("NCLB"). VCES agrees to discuss with the District the possibility of accepting for enrollment District students participating in the District's PSC program. The parties agree to separately memorialize in writing any agreed-to number of PSC placements of District students at the school.

As required under NCLB, all PSC students attending VCES shall have the right to continue attending VCES until the highest grade level of the charter. However, the obligation of the District to provide transportation for a PSC student to VCES shall end in the event the PSC student's resident District school exits Program Improvement status.

VCES will ensure that all of its PSC students are treated in the same manner as other students attending the school. PSC students are and will be eligible for all applicable instructional and extra-curricular activities at the school. VCES will make reasonable efforts to invite and encourage the participation of the parents of PSC students in the activities and meetings at the school.

Determination of student eligibility for this PSC option, including the grade level of eligibility, will be made solely by the District, based on the District's PSC process, guidelines, policies and the requirements of NCLB. In the event demand for places at VCES under the PSC program increases in subsequent years, VCES agrees to discuss with the District the possibility of increasing the number of PSC places available at the school.

Federal Compliance

To the extent that VCES is a recipient of federal funds, including federal Title I, Part A funds, VCES has agreed to meet all of the programmatic, fiscal and other regulatory requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and other applicable federal grant programs. VCES agrees that it will keep and make available to the District any documentation necessary to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and other applicable federal programs, including, but not limited to, documentation related to required parental notifications, appropriate credentialing of teaching and paraprofessional staff, the implementation of Public School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services, where applicable, or any other mandated federal program requirement. The mandated requirements of NCLB include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Notify parents at the beginning of each school year of their "right to know" the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teacher including a timely notice to each individual parent that the parent's child has been assigned, or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who is not highly qualified.
- Develop jointly with, and distribute to, parents of participating children, a school-parent compact.
- Hold an annual Title I meeting for parents of participating Title I students.
- Develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy.

VCES also understands that as part of its oversight of the school, the Charter Schools Division may conduct program review of federal and state compliance issues.

Court-ordered Integration

VCES is subject to the requirements of the Crawford Court Order. The school will provide a written plan to achieve and maintain the District's ethnic balance goal which is within a 70:30 or 30:70 ratio.

ELEMENT #8: Admission Requirements

Element Requirement: "A charter school shall admit all pupils who wish to attend the school."

Assurances

VCES affirms that the school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations, shall not charge tuition, and shall not discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability as set forth in Education Code Section 47605(d)(1).

VCES will comply with the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act for homeless children.

VCES will actively recruit a socio-economically and ethnically diverse student population from the District and surrounding areas who are committed to the school's educational philosophy and instructional practices. Enrollment will be first come, first serve basis. VCES will enroll all pupils who wish to attend (Education Code Section 47605 (d)(2)(A)), in compliance with all laws regarding minimum age for public school attendance. If the number of students applying for enrollment exceeds the openings available, entrance shall be determined by random public drawing in accordance with Education Code §47605(d)(2) and all federal requirements. Enrollment to the school shall be open to any resident of the State of California.

Exemption from the lottery, in compliance with Federal law and non-regulatory guidance, will be offered to a small number of students who are children of school faculty and founding parents. The number of students receiving this exemption will not, in any one grade, exceed 10% of the total seats. Exemption in the lottery will also be given to siblings of enrolled students, also in compliance with Federal law and non-regulatory guidance. Furthermore, a weighted priority will be given to students seeking to change school assignment under the public school choice provisions of ESEA Title I.

Random Public Drawing

The school will designate an enrollment deadline (approximately February) and only applications received prior to the deadline will be included in the public random drawing. Enrollment forms will be accepted year-round. An explanation of the enrollment process will be available on our web site and in the office. Public notice will be posted at the school site, web site and Google Group (community email group) regarding the date, time and location of the public drawing once the deadline date has passed, encouraging people to attend (time will be weekday morning to maximize attendance; the location will be at the school site, exact location tbd). Applicants will be drawn publicly at random. During the same public random drawing, once enrollment is reached, the remaining names will continue to be drawn and will be placed on a waiting list in the order drawn. If vacancies occur during the school year, the vacancies will be filled according to the waiting list. Only uninterested parties who have signed confidentiality waivers will handle enrollment data. The original "pull numbers" and data will be kept on file at the school in the event of the need for an audit.

Parents of students who are offered spots will be notified by phone call or email. Parents of students who are not offered spots will receive an email – or phone call if no email address is provided. As spots are offered, families will be given a deadline of 72 hours in which to accept the spot and request an enrollment packet. The enrollment packet must be returned within the deadline given by the school (at least two weeks.) As spots become available, families on the wait list will be called in the order they appear on the wait list.

All parents of students eligible for enrollment must fill out all paperwork as required by law and must attend an orientation meeting with the principal or designated school representative in order to make

sure they understand the school philosophy, mission and instructional practices and agree to participate fully in the life of the school community. All meetings will be “no-frills.” Parents of enrolled students will also be required to attend two parent teacher conferences per year, one in the fall and the other in the spring. All meetings will be scheduled to allow everyone to participate. All parents will be asked to sign a home-school contract, which will delineate student behavior codes, rights and responsibilities, attendance policy, and the parental involvement expectation.

VCES hopes to offer busing to our students, but finances may not permit. VCES parents will be required to carpool, walk or take public transportation to fulfill our CUP requirements (except where individual circumstances do not permit).

ELEMENT #9: Annual Audit

Element Requirement: "The manner in which annual, independent financial audits shall be conducted. These audits shall employ generally accepted accounting principles, and the manner in which audit exceptions and deficiencies shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the Board."

Annual Independent Audit

VCES's Board of Directors will select an independent auditor and oversee an annual audit of the school's financial affairs to be completed no later than 4 months after the close of VCES's fiscal year. The audit will verify the accuracy of the school's financial statements as well as attendance and enrollment accounting practices.

The audit will be conducted in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the school and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Controller General of the United States. All auditors will report directly to the Finance Committee of the Board of Directors. To the extent required under applicable federal laws for audits of the major federal programs, the audit scope will expand to be in compliance with the requirements described in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, audits of states, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Should OMB Circular A-133 be rescinded, audits of the major federal programs will be conducted in compliance with standards and provisions approved by OMB.

The financial audits will be conducted by a qualified Certified Public Accountant familiar with school finances and operations. The audits will assure that the school's money is being handled responsibly and that financial statements conform to the Government Auditing Standards. Our Executive Director and our back office provider (CA CharterWorks) will make all records available to the auditor. Audit exceptions and deficiencies will be resolved in conference with the auditor to the satisfaction of the auditing agency prior to the completion of the auditor's final report. Audit exceptions and deficiencies will be resolved to the satisfaction of LAUSD.

It is anticipated that the annual audit will be completed each year within four months of close of the fiscal year and that a copy of the auditor's findings will be forwarded to the chief financial officer of LAUSD and the California Department of Education. VCES's Board of Directors will review any audit exceptions or deficiencies and determine means to resolve them. The Board of Directors will report to LAUSD regarding how the exceptions and deficiencies have been or will be resolved. Any disputes regarding the resolution of audit exceptions and deficiencies will be resolved to the satisfaction of the District.

The following reports will be submitted to LAUSD, in the required format and within timelines to be specified by LAUSD each year:

- a. Provisional Budget – Spring prior to operating fiscal year
- b. Final Budget – August of the budget fiscal year
- c. First Interim Projections – November of operating fiscal year
- d. Second Interim Projections – February of operating fiscal year
- e. Unaudited Actuals – July following the end of the fiscal year
- f. Audited Actuals - November following the end of the fiscal year
- g. Classification Report – monthly the Monday after close of the last day of the school month
- h. Statistical Report - monthly the Friday after the last day of the school month. In addition:

1. P1, first week of January
2. P2, first week of April
- i. Bell Schedule – annually by November
- j. Other reports

District Oversight Costs

The District may charge for the actual costs of supervisory oversight of VCES not to exceed 1% of VCES's revenue, or the District may charge for the actual costs of supervisory oversight of VCES not to exceed 3% if VCES is able to obtain substantially rent free facilities from the District.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the District may charge the maximum supervisory oversight fee allowed under the law as it may change from time to time.

ELEMENT #10: Pupil Suspension and Expulsion

Element Requirement: "The procedures by which pupils can be suspended or expelled."

A. Disciplinary Policy

Students learn best in an environment of clear expectations about behavioral and community norms that allows them to feel safe and nurtured. In order to maintain a positive learning community, VCES will develop and maintain a comprehensive set of student discipline policies through the work of a committee that includes all interested parents, guardians, students, and staff and is in accordance with California Education Code Section 48900.

A student handbook that describes these policies and is currently in use at Larchmont Charter School will be the first draft of this school's policies. The VCES handbook may evolve differently, while remaining in accordance with all legal requirements. Each family will receive a copy of these policies and be required to verify that they have reviewed them with their children at the time of enrollment or at the beginning of the school year.

Policies regarding suspension or expulsion will follow LAUSD guidelines and will conform to applicable state and federal laws regarding all students. Prior to expulsion, students will be accorded due process unless the student's conduct presents an immediate threat to the health or safety of others. Incidents that may warrant student expulsion will be handled in a manner consistent with California Education Code, Section 48918. VCES may seek the advice and guidance of, or work in conjunction with, LAUSD Pupil Services Department in accordance with District policy for handling expulsion recommendations.

The school will notify the district of any expulsions and will include suspension and expulsion data in the annual accountability report.

B. Preliminary List of Offences

Suspension and Possible Expulsion: Students will be recommended for suspension and may be recommended for expulsion upon a determination that the student has committed one of the acts listed below:

- Using tobacco or any products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, et al.
- Unlawfully possessed, used, or was under the influence of any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind
- Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code 11014.5
- Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, other school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties
- Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e., a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a responsible person to conclude that the replica is a firearm unless, in the case of possession of any object of the type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certified school employee, with the administrator's or designee's concurrence.
- Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.
- Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property.
- Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.

- Engaged in, or attempted to engage in, hazing as defined in Education Code Section 32050.
 - Aided or abetted the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person.
 - Engaged in sexual harassment as defined in Education Code Section 48900.2.
 - Engaged in harassment, threats, or intimidation directed against school district personnel or pupils as defined in Education Code Section 48900.4.
- Made terrorist threats against school officials, school property or both as defined in Section 48900.7.

Mandatory Expulsion: It is a federal mandate that a school expel, for a period of not less than one year (except on a case-by-case basis), any student who is determined to have brought a firearm to school. In addition, students shall be expelled upon determination that the student has committed one of the acts listed below:

- assault or battery upon any school employee—Section 48915(a)(5)
- brandishing a knife—Section 48915(c)(2)
- causing, attempting to cause or threatening to cause serious physical injury to another person, except in self-defense—Section 48915(a)(1)
- hate violence—Section 48900.3
- possession, selling, or furnishing of a firearm—Section 48915(c)(1)
- possession of an explosive—Section 48915(c)(5)
- robbery or extortion—Section 48915(a)(4)
- offering, negotiating a sale or selling a controlled substance—Section 48915(c)(3)
- committed or attempted to commit sexual assault or committing a sexual battery (as defined in Section 48900)—Section 48915(c)(4)
- harassed, threatened or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness

C. Due Process

Process for Suspension and/or Expulsion

- *Behavioral Intervention*

If a student violates school policies enumerated in the school handbook that are *not* specified in the Education Code as grounds for suspension or expulsion, a conference will be held between administrative staff, the student and the parents/guardians. The student shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against him or her and shall be given the opportunity to present his or her version and evidence in his or her defense. A contract will then be designed and signed by all parties present in which the student pledges to complete specified tasks or uphold specified codes of behavior within a given time frame. If this contract is broken by the student, another conference will be scheduled from which suspension is a possible outcome.

- *Informal Conference*

Suspension shall be preceded by an informal conference conducted by the administrative staff, with the student and his/her parent/guardian. The pupil shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against him or her and shall be given the opportunity to present his or her version and evidence in his or her defense. The conference may be omitted if the administrative staff determines that an emergency situation exists. An “emergency situation” involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or school personnel. If the student is suspended without conference, the parent/guardian shall be notified of the suspension and a conference will be requested as soon as possible.

- *Notice to Parents/Guardians*

At the time of suspension, a school employee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or in person to be followed up with a written notification. This notice will state the specific offense committed by the student. In addition, the notice may also state the date and time the student may return to school. If the school officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may note that the parents/guardians are required to respond to this request without delay and that violations of school rules can result in expulsion from school.

- *Length of Suspension*

The length of suspension for students may not exceed a period of 5 consecutive days without first scheduling a second conference between administrators and parents/guardians to discuss the progress of the suspension upon the completion of the 5th day of suspension. All arrangements will be made to provide the student with classroom material and current assignments to be completed at home during the length of the suspension.

- *Recommendations for Expulsion*

Students will be recommended for expulsion if the school administrative staff finds that at least one of the following findings may be substantiated:

- a) Other means of correction are not feasible or have repeatedly failed to bring about proper conduct.
- b) Due to the nature of the violation, the presence of the student causes a continuing danger to the physical safety of the student or others.
- c) Due to the nature of the violation, state law stipulates mandatory expulsion.

- *Expulsion Hearing*

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing to determine whether the student should be expelled. The hearing will be held within 30 days after the school administrative staff determines that an act subject to expulsion has occurred. The hearing may be presided over by the Board of Directors or an administrative hearing panel appointed by the Board.

Written notice of the hearing will be forwarded to the student and the student's parent/guardian at least 10 calendar days before the date of the hearing. This notice will include:

- a) The date and place of the hearing (if neither parent is available, another time will be found within the following week)
- b) A statement of the specific facts, charges and offense upon which the proposed expulsion is based.
- c) A copy of VCES's disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation.
- d) The opportunity for the student or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person at the hearing.
- e) Notice that the student will be permitted to bring witnesses and present evidence on his or her behalf.
- f) Notice that the student will be permitted to be represented by legal counsel or by a non-attorney advisor, to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing, to confront and question all witnesses who testify at the hearing, to question all other evidence presented, and to present oral and documentary evidence on the pupil's behalf.

Written notice to expel a student will be sent by the school administrative staff to the parent/guardian of any student who is expelled. This notice will include the following:

- a) The specific offense committed by the student for any of the acts listed in “Reasons for Suspension and/or Expulsion.”
- b) Notice of the student or parent/guardian’s obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student’s status with VCES.

Educating Students Through the Suspension/Expulsion Process

Every effort will be made to provide assignments and lesson materials to students while they are at home during suspension or at home awaiting expulsion.

D. Appeal of Suspension or Expulsion

The suspension or expulsion of a student will be at the discretion of the administrative staff of VCES. Parents will be notified in advance to the enactment of the suspension or expulsion and can appeal a student’s suspension or expulsion within two (2) weeks of being informed. A suspension appeal will be heard by the administrative staff. If the administrator denies the appeal and enforces the suspension, the parent can appeal to the Board of Directors or an administrative panel appointed by the Board. An appeal will not reinstate the student in school for the day(s) to be suspended. In reviewing the appeal, the Board or administrative panel, with a majority vote, may remove the suspension from the student’s records. In the case of an expulsion appeal, the student will be considered suspended until a meeting is convened to hear the appeal (within 10 working days) at which time the parent(s) must attend to present their appeal. VCES will strive to schedule the hearing to accommodate the parents presence.

In the event of a decision to expel a student from VCES, the school will work cooperatively with the district of residence, county, and/or private schools to assist with the appropriate educational placement of the student who has been expelled. Any incident of violent and/or serious behavior shall be communicated to the school to which the student matriculates. If requested by the parent/guardian, assignments will be sent home for the remainder of the semester so the student can continue their work until a new placement is found.

E. Rehabilitation Plans

Students who are expelled from VCES shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by VCES’s governing board at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. The rehabilitation plan will include a date not later than one year from the date of expulsion when the student may reapply to VCES for readmission.

F. Readmission

VCES’s governing board shall adopt rules establishing a procedure for the filing and processing of requests for readmission and the process for the required review of all expelled pupils for readmission. Upon completion of the readmission process, VCES’s governing board shall readmit the pupil, unless VCES’s governing board makes a finding that the pupil has not met the conditions of the rehabilitation plan or continues to pose a danger to campus safety. A description of the procedure shall be made available to the pupil and the pupil’s parent or guardian at the time the expulsion order is entered.

G. Data Collection and Reporting - Special Education Students

VCES will collect and produce data regarding the suspension and expulsion of special education students as required by the Modified Consent Decree. VCES will adhere to all provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, AB 602, ADA, the modified consent decree and the *Chanda Smith* Consent Decree.

In the case of a student who has an IEP, or a student who has a 504 Plan, the charter will ensure that it follows the correct disciplinary procedures to comply with the mandates of state and federal laws, including the IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Plan of 1973. As set forth in the MOU regarding special education between the District and the Charter School an IEP team, including a district representative, will meet to conduct a manifestation determination and to discuss alternative placement utilizing the District's Policies and Procedures Manual . Prior to recommending expulsion for a student with a 504 Plan, the charter administrator will convene a Link Determination meeting to ask the following two questions: A) Was the misconduct caused by, or directly and substantially related to the student's disability? B) Was the misconduct a direct result of the Charter's failure to implement the 504 Plan?

H. School Handbook and Family Contract

The School handbook and the template for a home/school contract will be designed in greater detail through a committee of interested parents/guardians and staff. Appendix 8 presents drafts of our Faculty, and School handbooks – all modeled after the Larchmont Charter School handbooks. The school has and will continue to review the list of offenses and procedures that apply to non-charter public schools believes that the list of offenses and procedures provide adequate safety for students, staff and visitors to the school and serve the best interest of the school's pupils and their families.

ELEMENT #11: Employee Rights

Element Requirement: "The manner by which staff members of the charter schools will be covered by the State Teachers' Retirement System, the Public Employees' Retirement System, or federal social security."

A. Retirement System

Staff at VCES will participate in the federal social security system and will have access to other school sponsored retirement plans according to policies adopted by the Board of Directors for the school's employees. The committee to recommend retirement plans to the Board of Directors must include representatives of the administrative, teaching, and clerical staff should members of these groups wish to be represented on the committee. VCES retains the option for its teachers to participate in the State Teachers Retirement System (or a similar program, in compliance with Education Code Sections 47611) and coordinate such participation, as appropriate, with the social security system or other reciprocal systems. Non-certificated employees will participate in the Social Security system. If the school should opt to participate in the STRS, or any other systems, VCES shall work directly with the Los Angeles County Office of Education to forward in a timely fashion any required payroll deductions and related data.

For full-time certificated employees who participate in the State Teacher Retirement System (STRS), employees will contribute the required percentage (currently 8.0% of salary), and VCES will contribute the employer's portion (currently 8.25%) required by STRS. All withholdings from employees and VCES will be forwarded to the STRS Fund as required. Employees will accumulate service credit years in the same manner as all other members of STRS.

VCES has contracted with CA Charterworks to handle our payroll and accounting services. The on-site financial manager is responsible for ensuring appropriate arrangements for coverage has been made.

B. Code of Conduct - Employees

Employees will be expected to engage in professional behavior with fellow employees, students, parents, and others with whom interaction is made on behalf of or while representing VCES. Unprofessional behavior includes unlawful harassment including, but not limited to jokes, threats, put-downs, decorations, and innuendoes related to gender, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation.

Employees are expected to refrain from such activity and to report alleged improprieties in accordance with state and federal laws.

C. Due Process

The grievance procedures are described in detail in Element #14. All staff members will have due process rights that include:

- Right to just cause discipline and dismissal.
- Right to mediation and a fair hearing if necessary.
- Right to appeal before a free state arbitrator (offered to small school districts)

D. Other Issues

Work Basis & Benefits can be found in the budget at the end of this petition. The process for staff recruitment, selection, evaluation, and termination can be found in Element #5. Salaries and benefits will be determined by the principal and approved by the Board of Directors. Work conditions, the calendar, holidays, vacations, work day and year will be determined by the administrative staff and faculty, working together, and approved by the board as necessary.

ELEMENT #12: Student Attendance

Element Requirement : "The public school attendance alternatives for students residing within the District who choose not to attend charter schools."

No student enrolled in the LAUSD will be required to attend VCES. Students who reside in the attendance area but who choose not to attend VCES will have the option of attending other public schools in their district of residence or pursue an interdistrict-transfer in accordance with existing enrollment and transfer policies of the district.

ELEMENT #13: Description of Employee Rights

Element Requirement : “A description of the rights of any employee of the school district upon leaving the employment of the school district to work in a charter school and of any rights of return to the school district after employment at a charter school.”

Former LAUSD employees must consult with LAUSD to determine their eligibility for leave. Certificated leave from the District may be up to one year. Classified leave from the District may be for one year, which may be extended for up to the term of the original petition.

All provisions pertaining to leave and return rights for district union employees will be granted to certificated and classified employees in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements. certificated and classified employees in accordance with current collective bargaining agreements.

Job applicants for positions at VCES will be considered through an open process, and if hired, will enter into a contractual agreement with the school. Any district union employee who is offered employment and chooses to work at VCES will not be covered by his or her respective collective bargaining unit agreement, although VCES may extend the same protections and benefits in individual employee contracts. Unless the employees elect to be represented by an organization for bargaining purposes, all employees will be individually contracted rating in at a level competitive to the district's salary schedules. The individual contract will address, among other issues, salary, health and welfare benefits, work schedules and responsibilities, accountability measurements, and standards for performance evaluations. Employee contracts are at-will, renewable each March 1st.

ELEMENT #14: Dispute Resolution Process, Oversight, Reporting and Renewal

Element Requirement: "The procedures to be followed by the charter school and the entity granting the charter to resolve disputes relating to provisions of the charter."

A. Disputes Arising from within the School

Public Comments: The staff and Board members of VCES agree to attempt to resolve all disputes regarding this charter pursuant to the terms of this section. Both will refrain from public commentary regarding any disputes until the matter has progressed through the dispute resolution process.

VCES will designate at least one employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) including any investigation of any complaint filed with VCES alleging its noncompliance with these laws or alleging any actions which would be prohibited by these laws. VCES will notify all its students and employees of the name, office address, and telephone number of the designated employee or employees.

VCES will adopt and publish grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee complaints alleging any action which would be prohibited by Title IX, or Section 504. The Family Handbook and Faculty Handbook, attached in the appendices, provide a first draft for these procedures.

VCES will implement specific and continuing steps to notify applicants for admission and employment, students and parents of elementary and secondary school students, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with the recipient, that it does not discriminate on the basis of sex or mental or physical disability in the educational program or activity which it operates, and that it is required by Title IX and Section 504 not to discriminate in such a manner.

Disputes arising from within the school, including all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, Board members, and partner organizations, will be resolved pursuant to policies and practices developed by the school. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) will, as an initial step, refer any complaints or reports regarding such internal disputes to the Board or administrative staff of VCES for resolution. If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the person or persons complaining, LAUSD may, among other things, refer the complaining person or persons to the appropriate state or federal agency.

The following Dispute Resolution Process will be used until the community members develop a replacement and receive Board of Trustees approval. All school staff, students, parents and Board members will sign pledges to resolve disputes via this process or its replacement:

- First attempt to discuss one's conflict with the people directly involved and try to resolve it without turning to uninvolved parties
- If discussion does not resolve the conflict, ask a peer to act as an objective mediator (unless the situation does not permit)
- If peer mediation does not resolve the conflict, ask the following persons to serve as mediator or, if mutually agreeable, as arbitrator.

- If the conflict is between two teachers or a parent and teacher, they should go to the principal, only after discussion between the two initial parties is deemed unsuccessful.
- If the conflict is between the principal and a parent or teacher, the parent or teacher may submit a written request to the board to settle the matter. The Board will only respond to the request if the parent or teacher discussed the matter with the principal first and the Board feels compelled to respond.
- Only after exhausting and documenting all procedures listed above will this conflict be brought to the attention of the LAUSD.

B. Disputes between VCES and the Los Angeles Unified School District

Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to the charter agreement between the District and VCES, except any controversy or claim that is in any way related to revocation of this Charter, shall be handled first through an informal process in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

- (1) Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to the Charter agreement, except any controversy or claim that is in any way related to revocation of this Charter, must be put in writing ("Written Notification"). The Written Notification must identify the nature of the dispute and any supporting facts. The Written Notification may be tendered by personal delivery, by facsimile, or by certified mail. The Written Notification shall be deemed received (a) if personally delivered, upon date of delivery to the address of the person to receive such notice if delivered by 5:00 PM or otherwise on the business day following personal delivery; (b) if by facsimile, upon electronic confirmation of receipt; or (c) if by mail, two (2) business days after deposit in the U.S. Mail. All written notices shall be addressed as follows:

Valley Charter Elementary School
C/O Ben Paul, President, Board of Directors
4016 Goodland Ave. Studio City, CA 91604

Charter Schools Office
Los Angeles Unified School District
333 South Beaudry Ave. 25th floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Attention: Director

- (2) A written response ("Written Response") shall be tendered to the other party within twenty (20) business days from the date of receipt of the Written Notification. The parties agree to schedule a conference to discuss the claim or controversy ("Issue Conference"). The Issue Conference shall take place within fifteen (15) business days from the date the Written Response is received by the other party. The Written Response may be tendered by personal delivery, by facsimile, or by certified mail. The Written Response shall be deemed received (a) if personally delivered, upon date of delivery to the address of the person to receive such notice if delivered by 5:00p.m., or otherwise on the business day following personal delivery; (b) if by facsimile, upon electronic confirmation of receipt; or (c) if by mail, two (2) business days after deposit in the U.S. Mail.

- (3) If the controversy, claim, or dispute cannot be resolved by mutual agreement at the Issue Conference, then either party may request that the matter be resolved by mediation. Each party shall bear its own costs and expenses associated with the mediation. The mediator's fees and the administrative fees of the mediation shall be shared equally among the parties. Mediation proceedings shall commence within 120 days from the date of the Issue Conference. The parties shall mutually agree upon the selection of a mediator to resolve the controversy or claim at dispute. The mediator may be selected from the approved list of mediators prepared by the American Arbitration Association.

Mediation proceedings must be administered in accordance with the mediation rules or guidelines of the American Arbitration Association.

(4) If the mediation is not successful, then the parties agree to settle the controversy, claim or dispute by arbitration conducted by a single arbitrator in accordance with the guidelines of the American Arbitration Association. The arbitrator must be an active member of the California State Bar or a retired judge of the state or federal judiciary of California. Each party shall bear its own costs and expenses associated with the arbitration. The arbitrator's fees and the administrative fees of the arbitration shall be shared equally among the parties. Each party shall bear their own costs and expenses.

(5) However, any party who fails or refuses to submit to arbitration shall bear all costs and expenses incurred by such other party in compelling arbitration of any controversy, claim, or dispute.

C. Oversight, Reporting, Revocation and Renewal

VCES shall respond to inquiries and requests for documents from LAUSD as described in Education Code Section 47604.3 which states, "A charter school shall promptly respond to all reasonable inquiries, including, but not limited to, inquiries regarding its financial records, from its chartering authority, the county office of education that has jurisdiction over the school's chartering authority, or from the Superintendent of Public Instruction and shall consult with the chartering authority, the county office of education, or the Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding any inquiries." VCES shall promptly respond to all inquiries and requests for documents from LAUSD and shall consult with LAUSD regarding any inquiries. Furthermore, VCES will provide any financial information requested by LAUSD and make its books available to LAUSD during any business day upon request or within 24 hours. In addition, all legally required financial reports will be submitted to LAUSD, in the format required by LAUSD within time lines specified by LAUSD each year.

If the LAUSD Board of Education believes it has cause to revoke this charter, the Board agrees to notify VCES in writing, noting the specific reasons for which the charter may be revoked, and grant the school reasonable time to respond to the notice and take appropriate corrective action, unless State law states otherwise.

The charter may be revoked by LAUSD for any reason provided under the law including, among other things, any of the following:

- Committing a material violation of the conditions set forth in this Petition,
- Failing to meet generally accepted accounting principles, or engaging in fiscal mismanagement,
- Violating any provision of law.

This Charter, upon approval of the State Board of Education, is granted for up to a five year period commencing September, 2010 and ending September, 2015. The VCES Board of Directors may request from the LAUSD Board an amendment of the Charter at any time prior to expiration. This charter may only be amended with the approval of two-thirds of VCES's Board of Directors and the LAUSD. The Charter may be renewed for one or more renewal periods, not to exceed five years at a time. VCES will present requests for renewal no later than six months prior to the expiration of the Charter, in accordance with the LAUSD policy. The LAUSD Board agrees to hear and render a renewal decision as specified in the Education Code Section 47605.

ELEMENT #15: Collective Bargaining

Element Requirement: "A declaration as to whether or not the charter school shall be deemed the exclusive public school employer for collective bargaining purposes."

VCES will be the exclusive public employer of all employees of the charter school for collective bargaining purposes. As such, VCES will comply with all provisions of the Educational Employment Relations Act ("EERA"), and will act independently from LAUSD for bargaining purposes. In accordance with the EERA, employees may join and be represented by an organization of their choice for collective bargaining purposes. However, unless the employees elect to be represented by an organization for bargaining purposes, all employees will be individually contracted.

ELEMENT #16: School Closure

Element Requirement: "A description of the procedures to be used if the charter school closes. The procedures shall ensure a final audit of the school to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of the charter school, including plans for disposing of any net assets and for the maintenance and transfer of pupil records."

In event of school closure, the assets and liabilities of the school will be disposed of by the VCES Board of Directors to another charter school, non-profit corporation or educational entity in accordance with the asset disposition provisions of the school's bylaws. The Board of Directors members will attend to enumerating and disposing of the assets and liabilities as directed by the bylaws, and the Board treasurer shall ensure that a final audit of the school's assets and liabilities is performed. Material assets covered under the lease agreement with the chartering agency revert to custody of the agency. Only unrestricted funds will be used to pay creditors in respect to regulations stating that categorical funds including AB 602 funds from LAUSD must be returned to the source of the funds.

In the event of school closure, the Board of Directors will provide for the transfer of necessary pupil records to the LAUSD and/or attendance area district. Former VCES staff may be retained for a designated period after the school closes to ensure that student records are transferred to families or appropriate agencies, if school resources allow. In the event that no willing repository for student records is available, the records shall be disposed of in a way that ensures their confidentiality.

Revocation

The District may revoke the charter of VCES if VCES commits a breach of any terms of its charter. Further, the District may revoke the charter if VCES commits a breach of any provision set forth in a policy related to Charter Schools adopted by the District Board of Education and/or any provisions set forth in the Charter School Act of 1992. Furthermore, the District may revoke the charter of VCES on any of the following grounds:

- VCES committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter.
- VCES failed to meet or pursue any of the pupil outcomes identified in the charter.
- VCES failed to meet generally accepted accounting principles, or engaged in fiscal mismanagement.
- VCES violated any provision of law.

Prior to revocation, and in accordance with Cal. Educ. Code section 47607(d), the District will notify VCES in writing of the specific violation, and give VCES a reasonable opportunity to cure the violation, unless the District determines, in writing, that the violation constitutes a severe and imminent threat to the health or safety of the pupils. Notwithstanding the immediately preceding language, revocation proceedings are not subject to the dispute resolution clause set forth in this charter.

Charter Renewal

VCES must submit its renewal petition to the District's Charter Schools Division no earlier than September of the year before the charter expires.

Closure Procedures

The following are closing procedures that abide by Cal. Educ. Code §47605(b)(5)(P), should VCES close for any reason. The decision to close VCES either by VCES governing Board or by the LAUSD Board, will be documented in a Closure Action. The Closure Action shall be deemed to have been automatically made when any of the following occur: the charter is revoked or non renewed by the LAUSD Board of Education; the Charter School board votes to close the school; or the Charter lapses. In the event of such a Closure Action, the following steps are to be implemented:

1. Written notification to parents/guardians/caregivers of the enrolled students of the VCES will be issued by VCES within 72 hours after the determination of a Closure Action. A sample copy of the language used in the written notification is also to be made to LAUSD within the same time frame.
 - a. The written notification will also include information on assistance in transferring each student to another appropriate school, and a process for the transfer of all student records.
 - b. The process for transferring student records to the receiving schools shall be in accordance with LAUSD procedures for students moving from one school to another.
 - c. Parents will also be provided with student information that includes closure notice, grade reports, discipline records, immunization records, completed coursework and credits that meet graduation requirements.
2. Written notification to LAUSD of the list of returning students and their home schools, to be made within 72 hours of the determination of the Closure Action.
3. Transfer of student records to the receiving schools, within seven calendar days from the determination of an Action to Close.
4. Written notification to the California Department of Education and the Los Angeles County Office of Education of the Closure Action shall be made by VCES by registered mail within 72 hours of the decision to Closure Action.
5. VCES shall allow LAUSD access, inspection and copying of all school records, including financial and attendance records, upon written request by LAUSD.
6. A financial closeout audit of VCES be paid for by VCES to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of VCES, including plans for disposing of any net assets. The final independent audit shall be completed within six months after the closure of the school. This audit will be conducted by a neutral, independent licensed CPA who will employ generally accepted accounting principles. Any liability or debt incurred by VCES will be the responsibility of VCES and not LAUSD. VCES understands and acknowledges that VCES will cover the outstanding debts or liabilities of VCES. Any unused monies at the time of the audit will be returned to the appropriate funding source. VCES understands and acknowledges that only unrestricted funds will be used to pay creditors. Any unused AB 602 funds will be returned to the District SELPA, and other categorical funds will be returned to the source of funds.
7. For six calendar months from the Closure Action or until budget allows, whichever comes first, sufficient staff as deemed appropriate by VCES Board, will maintain employment to take care of all necessary tasks and procedures required for a smooth closing of the school and student transfers.
8. The VCES Board shall adopt a plan for wind-up of the school and, if necessary, the corporation, in accordance with the requirements of the Corporations Code.
9. In addition to a final audit, VCES will also submit any required year-end financial reports to the California Department of Education and LAUSD, in the form and time frame required.
10. If VCES is operated by a nonprofit corporation, and if the corporation does not have any other functions than operation of VCES, the corporation will be dissolved according to its bylaws.
 - a. The corporation's bylaws will address how assets are to be distributed at the closure of the corporation.
 - b. A copy of the corporations bylaws containing the information on how assets are to be

distributed at the closure of the corporation, are to be provided to LAUSD prior to approval of this Petition.

This Element 16 shall survive the revocation, expiration, termination, cancellation of this charter or any other act or event that would end VCES's right to operate as a Charter School or cause VCES to cease operation. VCES and District agree that, due to the nature of the property and activities that are the subject of this petition, the District and public shall suffer irreparable harm should VCES breach any obligation under this Element 16. The District, therefore, shall have the right to seek equitable relief to enforce any right arising under this Element 16 or any provision of this Element 16 or to prevent or cure any breach of any obligation undertaken, without in any way prejudicing any other legal remedy available to the District. Such legal relief shall include, without limitation, the seeking of a temporary or permanent injunction, restraining order, or order for specific performance, and may be sought in any appropriate court.