



VALLEY CHARTER
MIDDLE
SCHOOL

Valley Charter Middle School

Charter Petition Table of Contents

Affirmations.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Our Mission.....	5
Our Vision.....	5
Our Educational Philosophy.....	5
Our Pedagogical Practices.....	5
Our Founders.....	6
Our Community: Target Student Population.....	7
ELEMENT #1: Description of the Educational Program.....	11
A. Who will VCMS serve?.....	12
B. VCMS will prepare an educated citizenry for the 21 st century.....	12
C. VCMS's educational philosophy: How learning best occurs.....	13
D. Goals to Enable Students to be Self-Motivated, Competent, Life-Long Learners.....	14
E. Description of the Learning Setting.....	15
Minutes of Instruction Assurances.....	15
Proposed school calendar for 2010-2011.....	16
Sample Schedule.....	17
A Typical Day.....	19
F. Instructional Design and Methodologies.....	20
G. Curriculum – Scope and Sequence.....	27
Process for Selecting Curriculum, Materials, Instructional Activities.....	27
H. Instructional Strategies for Special Populations.....	37
I. Charter School Special Education Program.....	45
J. Timeline for Implementation.....	46
K. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development.....	46
ELEMENT #2: Measurable Student Outcome.....	48
A. Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes.....	49
B. Frequency of measuring pupil outcomes and use in modifying instruction.....	49
C. Accountability for Student Progress.....	50
D. Standardized Tests.....	50
E. Benchmarks to be met.....	51
ELEMENT #3: Outcome Measurement Process.....	53
A. Assessment strategies.....	53
B. State Mandated Tests Assurances.....	54
C. Student Progress Reporting.....	55
D. Longitudinal Analysis of Progress.....	55
ELEMENT #4: Governance.....	56
A. Assurances: Brown Act, Conflicts of Interest, and Audit.....	56
B. By-Laws.....	57
C. Board of Directors Responsibilities and Composition.....	57
D. Board Meetings.....	58
E. Board Meeting Postings.....	58
F. Stakeholder Involvement.....	58
G. VCMS Governance Structure.....	59
H. Board of Directors – Resumes.....	61
ELEMENT #5: Employee Qualifications.....	62
A. Staff Selection.....	62
B. Key Personnel Qualifications.....	62
C. Performance Evaluations.....	66
D. Assurances & Background Checks.....	66
E. Child Abuse Reporting.....	67
ELEMENT #6: Health and Safety of Pupils.....	68
A. Health and Safety Policies.....	68
B. Site Compliance.....	69
C. Draft of the school's health and safety policy.....	69
D. Insurance Requirements.....	73

E. Asbestos Management.....	74
F. Facilities.....	74
G. Child Abuse Reporting.....	75
ELEMENT #7: Means to Achieve Racial/Ethnic Balance.....	76
Mixed SES Philosophy.....	76
Closing the Achievement Gap.....	76
Means of Recruiting A Diverse Student Body to VCMS – Outreach Plan.....	76
ELEMENT #8: Admission Requirements.....	83
Assurances.....	83
Random Public Drawing.....	83
ELEMENT #9: Annual Audit.....	85
Annual Independent Audit.....	85
ELEMENT #10: Pupil Suspension and Expulsion.....	87
A. Disciplinary Policy.....	87
B. Preliminary List of Offences.....	87
C. Due Process.....	88
D. Appeal of Suspension or Expulsion.....	90
E. Rehabilitation Plans.....	90
F. Readmission.....	90
G. Data Collection and Reporting - Special Education Students.....	90
H. School Handbook and Family Contract.....	91
ELEMENT #11: Employee Rights.....	92
A. Retirement System.....	92
B. Code of Conduct - Employees.....	92
C. Due Process.....	92
D. Other Issues.....	92
ELEMENT #12: Student Attendance.....	93
ELEMENT #13: Description of Employee Rights.....	94
ELEMENT #14: Dispute Resolution Process, Oversight, Reporting and Renewal.....	95
A. Disputes Arising from within the School.....	95
B. Disputes between VCMS and the Los Angeles Unified School District.....	96
C. Oversight, Reporting, Revocation and Renewal.....	97
ELEMENT #15: Collective Bargaining.....	98
ELEMENT #16: School Closure.....	99

Affirmations

VCMS will comply with Education Code §47605(d) and 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 physical or mental disability (religion, race, color, medical condition, sexual condition, sexual orientation) .
2. Not enroll pupils over 19 years of age unless continuously enrolled in public school and making satisfactory progress toward high school diploma requirements.
3. not require any child to attend a charter school nor any employee to work at a charter school
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. If a pupil is expelled or leaves the charter school without graduating or completing the school year for any reason, VCMS 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 the Valley Charter Middle School (VCMS) respectfully submits this charter petition to the Los Angeles Unified School District for a 5 year charter to establish a grades 6-8 rigorous, innovative, college preparatory middle school program that will serve a diverse student population in the San Fernando Valley.

Our Mission

The mission of Valley Charter Middle School is to provide a holistic and exceptional education to a diverse student body, cultivating in students intellectual curiosity, respect for others, and a passion for excellence. We fulfill this mission by:

- Providing a constructivist, problem-based learning environment in which teachers guide students through active learning processes that develop conceptual understanding and self-knowledge.
- Implementing a rigorous, subject-specific curriculum that incorporates multiple assessments and projects in order to develop academic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and artistic skills.
- Creating a culture that values character and citizenship as much as achievement, process as much as product.
- Providing support and freedom for faculty to analyze research studies on learning and to experiment with its applications in order to help all students succeed.
- Giving faculty time, resources, autonomy and a collaborative atmosphere to continually develop their skills and create, evaluate and refine curricula, and reflect on the learning of their students.
- 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 seek to establish an inclusive, diverse community that will become a model of education reform, teacher innovation, and collaboration. We intend to graduate individuals who effectively meet academic challenges, thoughtfully interact with others, and positively contribute to the diverse local and global community in which we all live. 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 Middle 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. VCMS also adheres to the belief that students should be given opportunities to direct their own learning. VCMS students will be asked to explore their interests through the process of choosing specific projects and formulating essential questions that drive their learning experiences.

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 data driven instruction and problem-based lessons, constructivism is even more effective. We, therefore, embrace these three practices fully. Teachers continually assess each student's progress through observation, interaction, and testing, and then design lessons in response to student needs. Similarly, teachers will assess their

own pedagogy's effectiveness in promoting student learning by examining their practices through action research projects.

Our Founders

VCMS is being founded by experienced educators and former leaders from the Board of Directors of Larchmont Charter School (a K-6 project-based elementary school that opened in 2005). Educators from high achieving independent middle schools are creating the educational program in conjunction with the expert guidance of Board members and outside consultants who have the capacity to open and smoothly operate charter schools in California.

Educators involved in these efforts include:

- **Dvora Inwood**, Founding Educator of Larchmont Charter School and other Los Angeles charter schools, former mathematics teacher at Los Angeles schools (Harvard-Westlake, Archer School, Aviva Center) and educational consultant to start-up charter schools. BA, Harvard University; M.A. in Education, Stanford University.
- **Alissa Goler 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, Ms. Chariton 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
- **Wendy Samson**, English Department Chair at the Mirman School for the Gifted (K-8), former teacher at LAUSD's John Muir Middle School and the all-girls' Immaculate Heart Middle School. Honors Literature degree, UC Santa Cruz; Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential with Supplementary Authorization in English, San Francisco State University.
- **Lindsay Koss**, Viewpoint Assistant Head of Middle School, formerly Spanish teacher and Curriculum Coordinator with expertise in integrating technology, former teacher at Archer School and the American School in Switzerland. BA, Columbia University in Latin American Studies; Fulbright Fellow, Spain. Presenter at Middle School and Independent School conferences on project-based learning, integrating technology and foreign language acquisition.
- **Valerie Braimah**, the Chief Learning Officer at Insight Education Group, responsible for training and supporting teachers and principals, and for conducting school-wide assessments that inform comprehensive plans for sustainable school reform. Previous positions include: Leadership and Staff Development Coordinator for Leadership Public Schools, helped to found Leadership's first school site in Richmond, where she coordinated testing and intervention programs, helped design the Staff Development Plan for the school, and authored the Leadership Advisory Curriculum which was based on best practices in youth development, project-based learning, and service-learning; Staff Research Associate at the UC Berkeley Service Learning Research and Development Center, conducted national and local evaluations of educational programs; regional Service-Learning Director at Youth Community Service, a non-profit organization based in Palo Alto, provided consultation, training, and technical assistance services to teachers, schools, and districts, and published the Service-Learning Leadership Development Training Guide to help educational and community-based organizations build leadership capacity for their service-learning programs; Oakland Unified School District elementary school teacher who also served as the school leader for professional development in Mathematics instruction. Valerie holds a Master's Degree in Education Policy from Johns Hopkins University. She is currently affiliated with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), the California Charter School Association (CCSA), and the International Reading Association.
- **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.

- **Nat Damon** is the Assistant Head of John Thomas Dye School (grades 4-6). He has been an independent school coach, teacher and administrator. Previously, he taught 8th and 9th grade English at Harvard-Westlake School and was the founding Academic Dean and Dean of Students at Sierra Canyon School. He earned a BA from Connecticut College, and a Masters Degree in Literature from Middlebury College's Breadloaf School of English.

Individuals experienced in school operations and management 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.
- **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.
- **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.

Our Community: Target Student Population

VCMS 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.

Size of Market

	2000 Pop.	Estimated Pop. in 2007	Percentage of family households (2000 census)
91411	23,641	25,512	59.90%
91405	51,344	55,408	69%
91401	40,372	43,568	64.60%

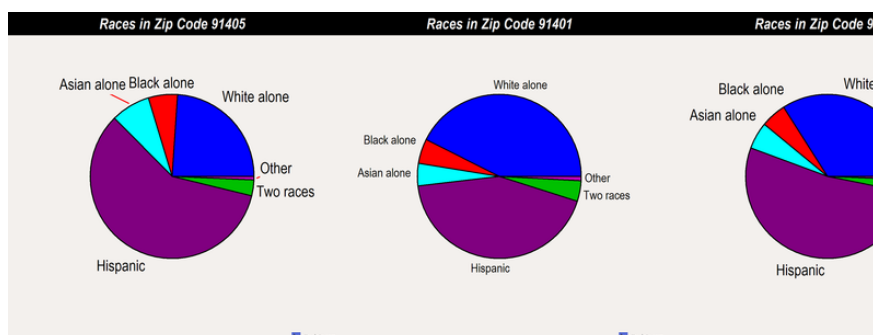
The median family income in these zip codes falls below the median income of the State, and the percentage of families living below the poverty line is far above the percentage for the United States. The school's goal of at least 50% Title I students reflects our desire to serve a large percentage of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

Financial Data – by zip code in Van Nuys

	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 in this area comprise 44%-50% of the population. They originate from 11 countries in significant numbers and many additional nations 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	44.40%
91405	50.50%
91401	45.00%

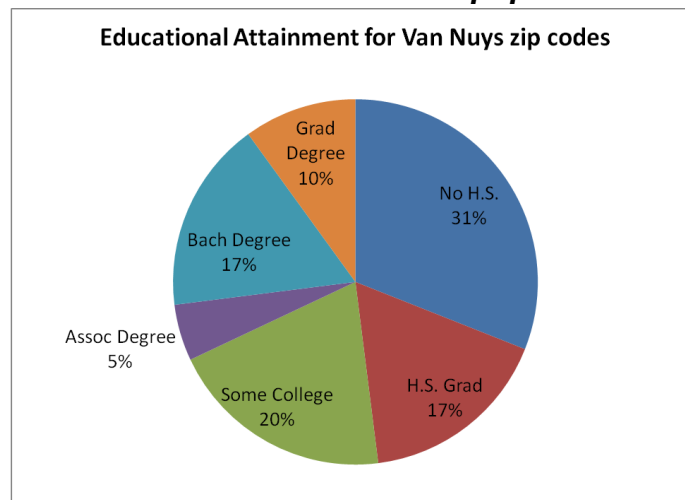
Country of Origin

Foreign Born Native Country	91411	91405	91401
Mexico	45%	37%	28%
El Salvador	16%	17%	14%
Guatemala	9%	10%	9%
Armenia	3%	7%	11%
Philippines		7%	3%
Korea	n/a	2%	n/a
Honduras	n/a	2%	n/a
Russia	n/a	n/a	2%
Israel	2%	n/a	2%
Vietnam	3%		
Iran	3%		

Language Spoken at Home	English	Spanish	Indo-European	Asian	Other
91411	38.70%	49.30%	6.40%	3.90%	1.80%
91405	28.60%	54.50%	9.20%	6.80%	0.90%
91401	41.50%	39.30%	12.80%	3.80%	2.50%

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 VCMS weekly study skills course will not only prepare students to succeed in high school, but will aim to expose students to the myriad benefits of meeting academic challenges and completing college.

Educational Attainment of adult population in Van Nuys



The middle school will open with approximately 120 students in 6th grade and will grow by 120 students each year reaching a full student population of 360 students in grades 6-8. VCMS will be open to all

students in California and LAUSD, and will target the zip codes described above and, more specifically, the schools listed in the table below.

LAUSD SCHOOLS	# of Students	Multi-Track School?	Program Improvement ?	Met Schoolwide Growth Target?	Met all Subgroup 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
Van Nuys Middle	1585	No	Year 5	Yes	No	670	2	7	75%	16%	33%	81%	8%	6%
William Mulholland Middle	1856	No	Year 5	No	No	679	3	6	81%	15%	27%			
Sylvan Park Elem	891	No	Year 4	No	No	692	2	5	90%	15%	68%	94%	2%	2%
Kester Elem	843	No	No	Yes	Yes	870	9	10	53%	10%	18%	42%	36%	9%
Columbus Elem	639	No	Year 2	Yes	Yes	682	2	3	92%	7%	69%	91%	4%	3%
Hazeltine Elem	945	No	Year 4	Yes	Yes	680	2	3	87%	10%	58%	88%	4%	4%
Valerio Elem	1049	No	Year 5	No	No	738	3	8	91%	12%	56%	88%	4%	3%
Chandler Elem	474	No	No	Yes	No	810	7	10	70%	16%	26%	55%	31%	10%
Erwin Elem	883	No	Year 1	Yes	No	743	4	6	92%	14%	47%	67%	25%	5%
Kittridge Elem	791	No	No	Yes	Yes	681	2	4	91%	12%	65%	80%	15%	2%
Van Nuys Elem	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
Community Harvest Charter	308	No	No	No	No	695	4	8	100%	No Info Available	10%	58%	41%	1%

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, an outdoor field and offices that allow teachers to meet with 4-6 students.

The grade configuration is 6-8, 120 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 6th.

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

The admission requirements include: VCMS 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. VCMS affirms that the school shall be nonsectarian in all aspects of its programs and operations, including admissions and employment. VCMS shall not charge tuition. VCMS 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 400 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 2:50 (see Element One, Section E)

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

A. Who will VCMS serve?

VCMS intends to open in September 2010 with 120 sixth grade students. Each year, the school will grow by adding a new class of 120 sixth graders. 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
6 th	120	120	120	120	120
7 th		120	120	120	120
8 th			120	120	120
Total	120	240	360	360	360

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.

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

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

VCMS'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. VCMS'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 VCMS, 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 that approach teaching and learning in the same way as VCMS 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 VCMS 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. Furthermore, research on our specific curricular and pedagogical choices (section F) indicates efficacy with a variety of students most specifically socioeconomically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities.

State	School	Testing Results		Diversity	Constructivist approach to teaching/learning	Emphasis on Projects, Presentations	Block Schedule
GA	Atlanta Charter Middle School	8th graders on Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT): Percent scoring proficient or above was 100% in Reading, 98% in Language Arts and 96% in Mathematics		40% Title I, 60% Black, 8% Latino	X	X	X
PA	Avon Grove Charter School	8th graders on Pennsylvania System of Standardized Assessments: Percent scoring proficient or above was 90% in Reading, 88% in Writing and 88% in Mathematics		N/A	X	X	N/A
GA	Rabun County High School	11th graders on Georgia High School Graduation Test: Percent at or above passing 92% in Language Arts and 94% in Mathematics		47% Title I	X	X	not block
Alameda, CA	Alameda Community Learning Center	API 865	Statewide/Similar 10/9	12% Title I, 39% non-white	X	X	X
Sanger, CA	Sanger Academy Charter School (K-8)	884	9/10	63% Title I, 81% Latino, 4% Asian, 1% Black	X	X	N/A
Clovis, CA	Quail Lake Environmental Charter	924	10/10	27% Title I, 29% Latino, 13% Asian	X	X	not block
Napa, CA	River Charter School	884	10/7	12% Title I, 17% Latino, 4% Asian, 13% multiple	X	X	X
Newark, NJ	Discovery Charter School (4-8 grade)	75%-100% of 8th graders at or above proficient on NJ ASK (assessment of skills & knowledge)		44% eligible for free lunch, 29% eligible for reduced lunch; 81% black, 11% Asian, 8% Latino	X	X	X

2. Research. Evidence from research in the fields of cognitive science, brain function and education lead us to the following conclusions about the way learning best occurs. An educational program must:

- be relevant and authentic
- model and require high level thinking skills; be demanding and promote depth of learning

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.

- incorporate language learning and multi-cultural education; celebrate and bring relevance to cultural and individual diversity
- model self-reflection and self-assessment
- construct a psychologically and emotionally safe environment where character development is taught and moral standards are high
- expect students to take responsibility for their school, their learning, and their community
- provide a variety of modalities to learning — visual, auditory, and kinesthetic
- 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
- involve parents and significant others in their child's education
- ensure teachers continually strive to teach students at their instructional level (ZPD-Zone of Proximal Development) based on ongoing formal and informal assessments
- "...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)

Research on specific curricular choices is in Section H.

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

VCMS 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, and a growing number of families seeking a diverse neighborhood school has given rise to the conviction that VCMS can meet the objective of enabling students to develop these three qualities and meet other, specific academic goals.

- **Developing self-motivated learners:** VCMS believes that self-motivation requires students to internalize the benefits of learning. VCMS 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 single subject-focused projects that have personal meaning to them. By beginning with each student's interests and questions, VCMS can provide students with the means of making connections between their studies, themselves and life beyond the school's walls.
- **Developing competent learners:** Students who can effectively express how they learn best can 'own' their education and be both competent and life-long learners. VCMS will approach this goal in three ways. 1) A weekly study skills course will guide students in accessing meta-cognitive processes in order to learn how they learn best. The course will guide students in implementing strategies that will improve their approach to learning, studying, planning, organizing and taking responsibility for their growth as students and human beings. 2) A school-wide constructivist pedagogy that emphasizes problem-based learning and differentiated instruction assures that students are given manifold opportunities and a variety of support systems to achieve academic success. 3) The "backward design" approach that teachers will take in creating all lessons and curriculum was chosen to ensure that learning objectives are clearly identified and met by students. 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:** VCMS's emphasis on international understanding and responsible citizenship throughout the program will foster student appreciation for the many positive impacts their skills and abilities can have on the world. In addition, students will participate in a weekly Advisory class that incorporates a service learning curriculum and global competence learning goals. The aim of this class will be to demonstrate to students as they move from one grade to the next that the more they know and can do, the more they can improve 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, and student portfolios. 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 VCMS 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 students in grades 4-8 to experience 54,000 minutes. All VCMS students will have 57,765 minutes of instructional time (not including lunch or passing periods) each year. Furthermore, VCMS will comply with the *Education Code* Section 51210(g) requirement of 200 minutes of physical education for students in grades 1-6 and 400 minutes every ten days for secondary students (grades 7-12). Instead of only receiving the required 200 minutes of physical education, VCMS 6th graders will receive 320 minutes, comprised of 4 days per week of 40 minute classes. Minutes are accounted for in detail on pages 18-19.

Proposed school calendar for 2010-2011

Sample Schedule

The average bell schedule will be:

TIME	inst	min
8:30 - 8:55	5	25
9:55 - 10:20	25	25
10:25 - 11:05	40	25
11:05 - 11:35	lunch	30
11:40 - 12:30	50	50
12:35 - 1:15	40	40
1:20 - 2:50	85	85

All students experience a core block at the beginning and end of the day, as well as a morning 25 minute period for educational clubs and individual or small group tutoring with teachers. The 10:25-11:15 time puts students on a staggered rotation of lunch, physical education, foreign language and a non-core course. This time frame includes the following:

- 1) Physical Education (40 minutes): daily for 7th and 8th graders and 4 times a week for 6th graders;
- 2) Study Skills (40 minutes): weekly;
- 3) Advisory (40 minutes): weekly, guides students through service learning projects, aims to develop Global Citizenship knowledge and values, and incorporates Character Education;
- 4) Major (40 minutes): weekly for 6th graders and twice a week for 7th and 8th graders, this individualized course of study will support students in developing expertise in one of four student choice majors: Writing, Math, Science or Music Performance (7th and 8th graders only). Students can change major choices each semester.
- 5) Instrumental Music (40 minutes): three times a week for 6th graders, weekly for 7th and 8th graders, taught by full-time instrumental music instructor.

The decision to offer daily foreign language classes reflects our emphasis on developing global citizenship and is in line with research that shows frequent foreign language study improves student learning. By speaking and hearing Spanish (or other foreign language) on a daily basis, it is expected that students will develop a comfortable familiarity with the language. It should be noted that different levels of Spanish instruction will be offered in order to best meet student needs. Spanish-speaking students who demonstrate exceptional fluency in speaking, reading and writing the language will be offered a course in a different foreign language, to be chosen by the Principal.

Unlike foreign language instruction, the other core academic subjects do not rely so much on familiarity as on deep, conceptual understanding and analysis. Therefore, the core classes of Math, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts will be experienced in the longer blocks, every other day Monday through Thursday and alternating Fridays. The longer blocks of time will allow students to experience math and science in a laboratory-like environment that will include hands-on 'investigations' and multi-step problem-solving. Similarly, the language arts and history courses will be able to include in-class writing, discussion, reading, and presentation activities.

The 25 minute period between 9:55 and 10:20 will serve as a full school Assembly (Monday), a grade level meeting (TBD day), and a clubs/activities time. It is also a time for students to seek out teachers if they have specific questions that need clarification. The 'Clubs' will vary depending on student interest and teacher sponsors, but will all be focused on developing student excellence. Ideally, the school will be able to offer clubs that bring students into state-wide or nation-wide competitions like Science Fair (incorporated into a MAJOR), Mock Trial, Speech & Debate, Model UN, Math Team (incorporated into a

MAJOR), Junior Statesmen of America, and others. Clubs may also include Yearbook, Newspaper, Literary Magazine, Improv Comedy, Student Government, and other pursuits that result in campus-wide publications and presentations.

To bring this schedule to life, an example for a 6th grade would be:

TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday A/Friday B
8:30 - 9:55	History	Math	History	Math	History/Math
9:55 - 10:20	Assembly	Class Meeting	Clubs	Clubs	Clubs
10:25 - 11:05	Physical Education	Physical Education	Technology	Physical Education	Advisory
11:05 - 11:35	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch
11:40 - 12:30	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
12:35 - 1:15	Study Skills	Music	Major	Music	Music
1:20 - 2:50	Science	English	Science	English	Science/English

A 7th grade schedule would be:

TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday A/Friday B
8:30 - 9:55	Math 7	Science 7	Math 7	Science 7	Math 7/Science 7
9:55 - 10:20	Assembly	Clubs	Clubs	Class Meeting	Clubs
10:25 - 11:15	Spanish B	Spanish B	Spanish B	Spanish B	Spanish B
11:20 - 12:00	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education
12:00 - 12:35	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:40 - 1:20	Music	Study Skills	Major	Major	Advisory
1:25 - 2:50	English 7	History 7	English 7	History 7	English 7/History 7

An 8th grade schedule would be:

TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday A/Friday B
8:30 - 9:55	English 8	History 8	English 8	History 8	English 8/History 8
9:55 - 10:20	Assembly	Clubs	Clubs	Class Meeting	Clubs
10:25 - 11:05	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education
11:10 - 12:00	Spanish C	Spanish C	Spanish C	Spanish C	Spanish C
12:05 - 12:45	Study Skills	Music	Major	Major	Advisory
12:45 - 1:20	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:25 - 2:50	Algebra	Science 8	Algebra	Science 8	Algebra/Science 8

6th Grade Shortened Day			7th Grade Shortened Day			8th Grade Shortened Day		
8:30 - 9:55	Core I	85 min	8:30 - 9:55	Core I	85 min	8:30 - 9:20	Spanish	50 min
10:00 - 10:50	Spanish	50 min	10:00 - 11:25	Core II	85 min	9:25 - 10:50	Core I	85 min
10:55 - 12:20	Core II	85 min	11:30 - 12:20	Spanish	50 min	10:55 - 12:20	Core II	85 min
12:20 - 12:50	Lunch and Dismissal		12:20 - 12:50	Lunch and Dismissal		12:20 - 12:50	Lunch and Dismissal	

Instructional minutes are accounted for below. Note that the table identifies the block schedule's alternating Friday schedule as F-a and F-b:

day type	Standard Day	Standard Day	Short Day	Short Day	
day	M/W/F-a	T/R/F-b	M/W/F-a	T/R/F-b	
days per year	(33/35/16)	(37/35/17)	(1/2/2)	(1/1/0)	
total days per year	84	89	5	2	
	minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes	
Language Arts	85		85		
Math		85		85	
Science	85		85		
Social Studies		85		85	
Spanish	50	50	50	50	
Physical Education	40	40	0	0	
Non-Core (music, study skills, advisory, meetings, Major)	65	65	0	0	
daily total	325	325	220	220	
annual total	27300	28925	1100	440	57765

As a result of this scheduling, all students will experience 57,765 minutes of instructional time a year (not including the time allotted for lunch or passing between periods). The calendar for the school year identifies 173 full days of school and 7 shortened days. Since a full-day accounts for 325 instructional minutes and a shortened day accounts for 220 minutes of instructional time, the total minutes for the year is $(173 \times 325 = 56,225) + (7 \times 220 = 1,540) = 57,765$, more than the required 54,000 minutes of time for grades 4 – 8.

A Typical Day

All faculty will be in their offices or classrooms by 8 AM. They will be meeting with students to provide additional academic support, or preparing for the day, or on the phone with parents to discuss a particular student's success and struggles, or collaborating with other teachers and administrators. Students who need to be at school prior to 8:30 will be in the library or technology center (supervised by a librarian and/or technology instructor), quietly studying, reading or otherwise occupied in their schoolwork. Administrators will be either in their offices attending to operations-related needs or circulating the campus to speak with students and parents as they arrive on campus.

At 8:30 the school day will begin and all students will begin a core class. These courses will comply with the school's active learning strategies in the block schedule (described in Element 1, Section F). Teachers who are not teaching during this time will be continuing their morning work of preparing for their courses by reviewing student work and planning data driven instruction, speaking with parents, and meeting with faculty and administrators.

Administrators will be regular visitors in the classrooms; they will observe students and teachers and take copious notes to review with faculty later. Administrators will also be communicating with parents on an as-needed basis to ensure all are working together to help the students succeed at school. In addition, they will be attending to the components of effective school operations, compliance and community building, including meeting with stakeholders such as Board members, Site-Based Council members and parents.

After the first core course, the school will transition into the 25 minute 'clubs' period. Students will be guided in being leaders and responsible community members during the Monday assembly and weekly grade level meeting. During the non-meeting days, students who are not serving detention and who are not at required teacher meetings, will be free to decide the way they wish to productively spend this period. Some students will be in the library completing schoolwork, others will be in a classroom to pursue excellence at a 'club' activity (described above), and others will be voluntarily meeting with teachers to seek answers to their questions. Students who do not use this time productively will be assigned to a teacher meeting. Students who use this time destructively will be subject to the school's discipline policy. Teachers will spend this time working with student club leaders, meeting with students to

provide group or one-on-one tutoring, or supervising school grounds to ensure all students are productive.

Following the clubs period, students will experience 4 periods on a rotation including foreign language instruction, physical education, lunch, and either Music/Major/Study Skills/Advisory (described briefly above and in Section G). The day concludes with a larger (85 minute) block of a core course where, once again, students are taught with active learning strategies.

At 2:50, students may leave campus or remain in the technology center, the library or in teacher offices to continue their learning. An optional after school program that is implemented on campus through partner organizations will provide students with a variety of extra-curricular learning opportunities until 6:00.

The school day of administrators rarely ends when the students leave campus. There are myriad of after-school and evening meetings that may occur including Board meetings, orientation meetings and family education events. However, in keeping with the school's valuing of all its community members, it is expected that most evenings will be free of meetings to enable administrators and faculty to spend quality time with their loved ones, just as we hope our students will enjoy their evenings with their families.

F. Instructional Design and Methodologies

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

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

The six strategies listed above and described below are critical to effectively serving the diverse population that VCMS 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 VCMS instructional model addresses all three of these issues directly. Students are afforded extra time through the block schedule longer block periods allow 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. The selected assessments will provide data at least three times per year 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 (e.g. Data Director, PowerSchools, etc.) 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 initially, but will eventually be the responsibility of departmental and grade-level leaders, who will develop the capacity to design common formative assessments, run data reports, and analyze data to inform instruction. Departments and grade levels will be provided with common planning time that they will use to examine data at least monthly. Even as the responsibility transitions to departmental leads, the principal will continue to supervise the use of data by teachers (through meetings with department leads 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 departments, 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.

b) Action Research

All teachers will participate in collaborative action-research² 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.”³

Rather than send teachers to a variety of informative yet disconnected professional development seminars throughout the year, VCMS 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 Action⁴

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.
- 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 and Multiple Assessments

VCMS 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:

² 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.

³ Caro-Bruce. (2000). Action Researcher: Facilitator’s Handbook. National Council of Staff Development.

⁴ Adapted from the St. Louis Action Research Evaluation Committee

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. At least one project/presentation per semester, in each subject area, will be required in light of research connecting assessment relevance to student engagement and achievement.

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.

Backward design of instructional units is a critical precursor to differentiating instruction for all learners. By clearly defining what standards students need to master for each unit, teachers can more effectively assess their level of mastery in relation to standards and develop targeted instruction to help all students meet those expectations. In the backward designed environment, teachers are knowledgeable about their curriculum and “can more effectively support the academic language development of our ELLs” by providing them with “the main ideas, the content specific vocabulary, and the sentence structures related to upcoming lessons.” (Carrier, 2005). Furthermore, that intent of Backward Design is to build units that focus on meaningful, real-world, and authentic content. Such content has been shown to better engage middle-level learners as well as students in minority subgroups (Mayday, 2008).

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. Per the Brown Act, the public will be given time at pre-announced, publicized meetings to share views, concerns and questions with the Board. Parental voice and input is essential to the mission of the school and parent surveys play a significant role in the Board’s assessment of the school. Furthermore, in order to maximize participation and create an inviting school environment for all parents, education and outreach materials will be provided in English and Spanish, and translators will be available at all school events.

Formal structures will include:

- **Family education**

Teachers, Administrators, parents, and community members will conduct socioculturally sensitive, hands-on workshops with parents of current students and prospective parents of children age 9-11 to enable them to help their children develop in mathematics and language arts. Our Study Skills course

will prepare students to become tutors and mentors of elementary age children and we hope to provide our students with the opportunity to then teach other middle school students to tutor effectively. Through partnerships with community based organizations, we will 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. VCMS board members who lead Youth Policy Institute are committed to supporting the school's families through their multitude of family services programs.

- Parent/Teacher/Student conferences

Students will co-lead, with their Study Skills teacher, a conference two times a year in order to demonstrate complete understanding of their academic achievements, challenges and plans.

- Parent volunteers

Parents will always be welcome and encouraged to volunteer in 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 VCMS, a degree of parent involvement will be requested. 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. VCMS recognizes that parents cannot be mandated to volunteer at the school site. Furthermore, VCMS 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.

- Family Committee & Site-Based Council

All parents and guardians will be considered voting members of the Family Committee (FC). They 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 style meetings as needed to ensure parent concerns are aired and addressed and to communicate school events, policies and news.

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.

4. Constructivism

VCMS 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 Sanger Academy Charter School in Sanger, Discovery Charter School in Newark, NJ, and the model schools on page 13. 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 VCMS, 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 VCMS 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). VCMS 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).

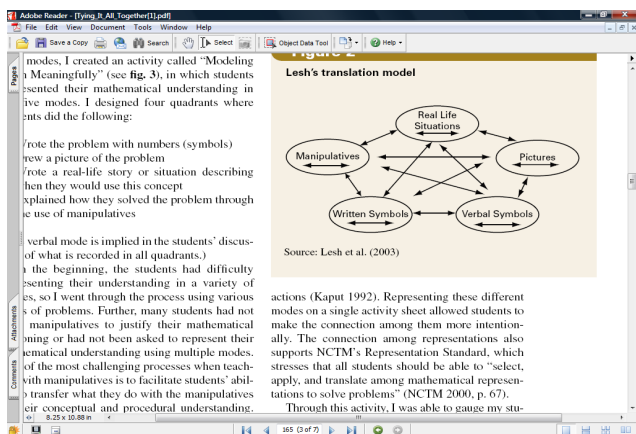
How People Learn supports the scientific basis for constructivism in its section on "active learning":

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."



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

5. **Problem Based Learning**

VCMS 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. VCMS 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. In K-12 science instruction, for example, research has supported that problem-based instruction benefits **English Learners** significantly (Amaral, Garrison, & Klentschy, 2002; Bredderman, 1983; Gibbons, 2003; Valadez, 2002).⁵ Researchers (Gordon, Rogers, Comfort, Gavula, McGee, 2001) implementing PBL with an **urban minority, at-risk middle school** population over a two-year period found that students showed increased academic performance in science and improved behavior ratings. More recent researchers (Liu, Hsieh, Cho, Schallert, 2006) also found that **middle school students** had a better understanding of science concepts and felt more confident about being successful learners after they completed a computer-enhanced PBL unit. Overall, "young adolescents are more likely to engage in the classroom when they connect content and learning tasks with life beyond the classroom walls." (Caskey & Anfara, 2007; Learning Point Associates, 2005).

VCMS is committed to beginning this form of study in middle school because research has shown the **long-term positive** effects of this form of learning. For example, a study of 10th-grade Earth science students corroborated that PBL instruction improved their knowledge of the material as measured on an achievement test as compared to their peers in more traditional classes (Chang, 2001). High school students using PBL in pre-12th grade classes such as biology, chemistry, and Earth science, outscored their peers on 44% of the items on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science test given during their 12th-grade year (Schneider, Krajcik, Marx, & Soloway, 2002).

⁵ 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).

6. Active learning strategies in a block

The choice of a block schedule is based on research demonstrating that a more active learning experience and deeper conceptual understanding results when students are given fewer classes each day that have longer periods. The traditional schedule of 6-9 single-subject, 40-50 minute classes each day requires students to quickly adjust to different teaching styles, homework requirements, tests, academic disciplines, and behavior codes. Teachers in this situation may interact with 100-180 adolescents each day. Over the course of such a fragmented day, learning in each class can often seem superficial, the workload can seem overwhelming and the teacher-student interactions can be quite limited.

Several studies support block scheduling on the ground that it **increases student achievement** (Fletcher, 1997; Khazzaka, 1998), **decreases discipline referrals** (Duel, 1999; Stader, 2001), **increases student attendance rates** (Queen, Algozzine, & Eaddy, 1997; Snyder, 1997), and improves school climate (Buckman, King, & Ryan, 1995). Canady & Rettig, in their book "Teaching in the Block, Strategies for Engaging Active Learners" (1995), summarize research findings and conclude that a block schedule:

- Allows students variable amounts of time for learning, without lowering standards, and without punishing those who need more or less time to learn
- Provides teachers with blocks of teaching time that allow and encourage the use of active teaching strategies, hands-on investigations and greater student involvement
- Increase opportunities for some students to be accelerated
- Reduce the number of classes students must attend and prepare for each day
- Reduce the number of students/courses teachers must prepare for each day

Some studies show mixed results and, upon closer examination of these studies, it becomes clear that there are many ways for schools to implement a block schedule. In order to maximize the benefits of a block schedule, VCMS will not merely stack 2 formerly 45 minute long lessons to form one 90 minute class. Instead, the longer class periods will be organized into 3 main parts that have been shown to produce an effective use of time: explanation, application, synthesis.

- 1) **Explanation:** mini-lecture, review previous lessons/homework, demonstration, reading, basic identification of what is to be learned, objectives, specific tasks to be completed
- 2) **Application:** bulk of the block, active learning strategies, students apply what teacher explained. Examples of 'application' formats include:
 - Seminar: Socratic questioning
 - Experience: Become a historian/mathematician/writer/scientist/etc.
 - Learning Centers
 - Group or pair work
 - Utilizing technology
 - Simulation
 - Guided practice (teacher observe and intervene)

According to Canady, Rettig (1996), 'providing "hands-on" active learning strategies during the application stage may be the most important determinant of the success or failure of teaching in the block.' VCMS's emphasis on constructivism ensures that 'hands-on active learning strategies' will be valued and utilized.

- 3) **Synthesis:** Teachers assist students in connecting explanation with application. Students reflect and review. Teachers assess learning through questioning, observations, or paper-pencil means. Teachers may re-teach.

G. Curriculum – Scope and Sequence

In designing the middle school curriculum, VCMS educators will utilize the ‘backward design’ approach. The ends will be the learning goals enumerated in the California state standards as well as school-designed outcomes derived from our definition of an educated person.

VCMS believes that certain textbooks and published curricular materials are essential as guiding resources in core courses, but all educators should be given the support and freedom to bring additional resources into the classroom in order to provide curriculum that is appropriate in meeting student needs.

Process for Selecting Curriculum, Materials, Instructional Activities

Curriculum, materials, and instructional activities will be selected by each of the core departments after a minimum of a year-long study and analysis. All materials that will be considered primary resources must be able to be aligned to California state standards. They must also be compatible with the school’s emphasis on:

- active learning strategies in a block schedule (with the exception of Spanish which is not in a block schedule),
- problem-based learning,
- cognitive science research that proves the curriculum and its recommended pedagogical methods develop conceptual and in-depth understanding, and
- multiple assessments, including projects.

Secondary, or enrichment, resources can be chosen at the discretion of the teacher, with department chairman approval and must be used in a way that is compatible with the school’s educational philosophy. The curriculum for the first years of the school has been chosen and includes:

- SOCIAL STUDIES: History Alive! from Teachers’ Curriculum Institute
- MATHEMATICS: Pearson, Prentice Hall: Connected Math grades 6-8 and Algebra I
- SCIENCE: Science Education for Public Understanding Program (SEPUP), publisher Lab Aids, Inc.
- LANGUAGE ARTS:
 - Authentic literature choices (see CURRICULUM in Element One);
 - Holt, Rinehart & Winston’s grammar books: English Workshop, First Course, Second Course, and Third Course.
 - Houghton Mifflin Co., Great Source, vocabulary texts: Vocabulary for Achievement, Second Course and Third Course;
 - Sadlier-Oxford’s vocabulary texts: Vocabulary Workshop, Level F & G
- SPANISH: Adelante Level 1A, En Camino Level 1B, Ven Conmigo Level 1 Holt, Rinehart & Winston
- MUSIC: Essential Elements 2000 for Strings, Book 1, Book 2 (Hal Leonard Corp)
- STUDY SKILLS: age appropriate educational research articles on learning styles to be chosen by principal and faculty
- ADVISORY: multiple resources (articles, podcasts, documentaries) related to **current events** to be chosen by principal and faculty each month
- MAJORS: Current resources on US FIRST (firstlegoleague.org), current resources related to Science Fair (<http://www.usc.edu/CSSF/>), current resources related to writing contests (http://www.newpages.com/npguides/young_authors_guide.htm#contests), current resources related to Math Olympiad (<http://www.moems.org/>) and MATHCOUNTS (mathcounts.org).

The **History Alive! program** was chosen because research has demonstrated its success in raising test scores, engaging students and supporting teachers in reaching diverse learners (<http://www.teachtci.com/tci-approach/research.html>). Unlike standard curricula comprised of textbook reading followed by short answer questions, this program guides students in discovering information, reasoning through problems, debating issues, working in pairs and groups, reflecting on learning and demonstrating knowledge in multiple assessments. Resources for teachers explicitly state research-based practices to reach **English language learners, learners reading and writing below grade level, students with special needs, and advanced learners**. Research studies have demonstrated improved test scores for students **who initially tested below proficiency** and no negative impact on students who initially tested advanced proficient.

The **SEPUP science program** is itself a non-profit research project that has been tested and refined for over 20 years through a partnership between UC Berkeley and the National Science Foundation. It has also been the subject of countless doctoral dissertations, journal articles, conference papers, and federal studies. The research has been conducted on a wide variety of students with diverse learning needs from a range of geographical locations. The demographics of VCMS correspond to the demographics of these studies significantly because the majority of the studies have taken place in California schools. In studies comparing SEPUP students to non-SEPUP students, the SEPUP students have consistently, with statistical significance, demonstrated gains in content knowledge. In addition, several studies examined students' decision-making skills and found differences in student responses that generally favored SEPUP over non-SEPUP students (<http://sepuplhs.org/research.html>).

The **Connected Math Project** is also a non-profit research project that was funded by the National Science Foundation. Between 1991-1997, the NSF mandated the CMP develop a complete middle grade mathematics curriculum based on ongoing research. In 2000, NSF funded a 5 year research project involving educational professionals and CMP teachers in order to further review, revise, field-test and evaluate the program. More recently, research studying the revised CMP program in Texas and Arizona schools that have similar demographics to VCMS, demonstrated that CMP students outperformed non-CMP students, with significant growth on standardized test for **Hispanic, low SES and English learner populations** (<http://www.connectedmath.msu.edu/rne/2006.shtml>).

Research is also at the foundation for VCMS's choices in ELA curriculum. Research has demonstrated that English Learners, at-risk students and students with disabilities require multiple modalities of learning, contextualized learning and explicit, direct instruction. The multi-resource approach of VCMS's **Language Arts program** responds to these needs by incorporating explicit grammar and vocabulary textbook-based instruction, contextualized learning through authentic literature that gives teachers choices to bring culturally relevant reading materials in place of more traditional texts, and multiple assessments and teaching strategies in the block schedule. In particular, researchers writing "Practical Guidelines For The Education Of English Language Learners: Research-Based Recommendations For Instruction And Academic Interventions"⁶, found that classrooms, in particular at the middle and high school level, are not spending enough time explicitly teaching 'academic language' in the form of vocabulary and grammar that is essential for students to become skilled readers and writers in academic contexts.

What follows are the descriptions of all core courses (Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, and Spanish) and non-core courses (Study Skills, Advisory, Music, Majors, and Physical Education).

Language Arts

The language arts program places a heavy emphasis on writing and reading comprehension.

⁶ 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.

To support students in becoming lucid writers and critical readers, VCMS believes a strong foundation in grammar and a broad vocabulary are essential. There will be explicit instruction in grammar utilizing the grammar text books English Workshop, First Course, Second Course, and Third Course (Holt, Rinehart and Winston) and supplemented by many more exercises and examples created by teachers and other resources. There will also be explicit approaches to learning vocabulary words utilizing the text books, Vocabulary for Achievement, Second Course and Third Course (Great Source, a Houghton Mifflin Company), and, for the advanced student, Vocabulary Workshop, Level F and G (Sadlier-Oxford). In addition to these skills-based approaches, VCMS will emphasize a holistic approach to learning. To truly become a good writer and reader, one simply has to read and write – often and analytically. To these ends, each language arts course includes a rich and varied selection of literature, ongoing current events analysis, and weekly writing and revising of essays or longer papers. Students will always be in the process of improving an essay, a project, a presentation or a research paper.

Since a pillar of our definition of an educated person is “effectively communicates”, students will be both writing and presenting their analyses of literature, their interpretation of current events, and their creative writing and their research papers/projects. Rehearsals of presentations will take place before the whole class or in small groups throughout the year in order to give students the opportunities to both improve their own presentation skills and help their fellow students improve. Students will also be asked to respond to presentations, both orally and in writing, in order to develop their skills in aural analysis and comprehension.

VCMS’s approach to Language Arts is especially well suited to English Language Learners because of its explicit emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. In the books “Practical Guidelines For The Education Of English Language Learners: Research-Based Recommendations For Instruction And Academic Interventions”⁷, the researchers found that classrooms, in particular at the middle and high school level, are not spending enough time explicitly teaching ‘academic language’ in the form of vocabulary and grammar that is essential for students to become skilled readers and writers in academic contexts.

Tables aligning curriculum, standards and assessments can be found in Appendix I.

History/Social Studies

The social studies program at VCMS will be utilizing the History Alive! curricular resources and additional primary and secondary resources to be chosen by faculty in order to support student investigations into multiple perspectives on historical events and concepts. Assessments will take the form of traditional unit quizzes and tests as well as homework assignments, essays, research papers, presentations and long-term projects. Teachers will utilize Socratic method seminar-like class structures in order to take note of student understanding, thus class discussion itself will be a formative assessment.

Tables aligning curriculum, standards and assessment can be found in Appendix I. Since a 1994 teacher survey revealed that 7th grade history teachers are unduly burdened by 11 major strands while 6th grade teachers have only 7 strands, VCMS will bring the first two units of study from the 7th grade course into the 6th grade course.⁸

Science

VCMS will adopt the middle school science program developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science, at the University of California, Berkeley. This curriculum, known as the Science Education for Public Understanding Program (SEPUP) is distributed nationally by LAB-AIDS, Inc. and supported by grants

⁷ 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.

⁸
^{7.1} Students analyze the causes and effects of the vast expansion and ultimate disintegration of the Roman Empire.

^{7.2} Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages.

from the National Science Foundation. This program provides hands-on investigations, laboratory experiences and projects. It also lends itself to traditional, quantitative assessments in the form of tests and quizzes. Teachers will, therefore, be able to utilize a variety of pedagogical methods and a variety of assessments in order to best develop conceptual understanding in all students.

Tables aligning curriculum, standards and assessment can be found in Appendix I.

Mathematics

The VCMS mathematics program will utilize a variety of curricular materials. Homework assignments will be considered important formative assessments and windows into a student's conceptual understanding of the topics at hand. The assignments will be collected by teachers and graded as pass/fail in accordance with the following explicit requirements:

- 1) Did students, in pencil, attempt each problem
- 2) Did students, when unable to complete a problem, ask for clarification during the daily, in-class homework review period, and then take notes on their homework in *pen* or *colored pencil* to demonstrate that they have gained understanding of the problem

Teachers will be encouraged to create their own assessments that will change each year and can be kept by students. Students will be assessed in a summative manner on a weekly basis in the form of a quiz, a test, or a project. If a unit has a quiz and a test, the quiz will be considered in a more formative light, and students will be allowed to get "points back" on a quiz if they answer a comparable question correctly on a test.

Teachers will also be encouraged to seek out resources that they deem most appropriate to meeting their students' needs. The main curricular choices will be:

- Grade 6: Connected Math Grade 6 (Pearson, Prentice Hall)
- Grade 7: Connected Math Grade 7 (Pearson, Prentice Hall)
- Grade 7 Pre-Algebra: Connected Math Grade 8 (Pearson, Prentice Hall)
- Grade 8 Pre-Algebra: Connected Math Grade 8 (Pearson, Prentice Hall)
- Grade 8 Algebra I: Algebra I (Pearson, Prentice Hall, Charles/Smith 2006)

Tables aligning curriculum and standards can be found in Appendix I.

Spanish Language

All students will be enrolled in a Spanish language course. If students enter 6th grade with a strong foundation in Spanish, they will be assessed by the faculty and placed in an appropriate course. The courses will emphasize both language acquisition and cultural education in order to expose students to the many cultures throughout Latin America, Spain, Los Angeles and Spanish-speaking regions of the world.

Tables aligning curriculum, standards and assessment can be found in Appendix I.

Non-Core: Study Skills Course

This course is designed to support the pillars of the VCMS definition of an educated person, with particular emphasis on the "continually learns" and "assertively perseveres" goals. Students will be guided in assuming greater responsibility for their own learning. They will be provided with explicit strategies in time management, organization and learning how to learn. In addition, students will be

required to devise questions reflecting their personal intellectual curiosity, and pursue answers to their questions in a systematic and thorough manner.

Sixth grade will be a significant year of academic transition for students. It forms the bridge between elementary school and secondary school. Sixth graders will experience their first day of school before 7th and 8th graders – this day will serve as an ‘orientation to middle school’ and ‘introduction to VCMS’ day.

While one day can expose students to certain values, daily re-enforcement is needed to deepen and solidify understanding. All students will be given a week-at-a-glance planner and will be required to maintain a binder for each core class. The Study Skill course will become increasingly sophisticated through the grades in helping students develop metacognition, recognize the way they learn best, and take responsibility for their own learning. The sixth grade course will be the most explicit in teaching organizational and study skills that will serve students as they move into secondary schooling. In addition, all core teachers (in decreasing amounts over the course of grades 6-8) will regularly review student binders and planners in order to best guide children in becoming organized, efficient and effective students.

Post-Assessment Review is an important but often overlooked aspect of the learning process, and will be emphasized in the Study Skills and supported in core courses. All assessments will be reviewed after being graded to ensure students can build upon successes and address difficulties. In secondary school, assessments are graded and returned to students after students have moved beyond that part of the curriculum. Reviews of assessment are rare and students simply move on, either forgetting what they have learned in the past or hoping to never revisit ‘past’ lessons. However, this attitude never serves students well since most courses are cumulative and early minor misunderstandings can lead to later major difficulties. Therefore, reviewing assessments and maintaining understanding will be explicitly addressed in the Study Skills course. Students will see the tremendous benefit of reviewing assessments, correcting errors and misunderstandings, and maintaining knowledge and skills from all periods of the school experience.

Students who enter VCMS middle school in 7th or 8th grade will be tutored by a Study Skills teacher during the club period in their first weeks of school to ensure they have the study and organizational skills that were taught to VCMS 6th graders. In addition, these students will experience the VCMS orientation and overview day at the same time as 6th graders in the fall.

A detailed scope and sequence, measurable outcomes and additional class information can be found in Appendix One B.

The basic outline for the study skills course follows:

- I. Time Management
 - a. Tracking assignments, activities, tasks in a planner (week-at-a-glance school-specific calendar to be given to each student)
 - b. Breaking down assignments/activities/etc. into manageable steps
 - c. Assigning time slots in planner to steps (B)
 - d. Continually refining/revising planner use
 - e. Grades: filled out planner, completion of all tasks by deadline/s
- II. Organization System
 - a. Each core course binder organized according to teacher requirements
 - b. All pending and completed assignments in ‘home base’ to facilitate ease of turning in and working on as needed
 - c. Filing system at home and in locker to facilitate ease of accessing items from past and present as needed
 - d. Grades: Binder checks by teachers, assignment ‘home’ checks by Study Skills teacher, parental checks confirmed at home

- III. Learning Needs Assessment
 - a. Ongoing and continual self-assessment of one's understanding of core class goals
 - i. Reviewing notes, assignments, assessments, etc. to identify areas in each core class that are not completely understood
 - ii. Create a plan to improve understanding
 1. Design questions to ask teacher in class
 2. Self-assess post-class to determine if additional support is necessary
 3. Make appointment with teacher
 4. Plan for meeting with teacher
 5. Post-meeting self-assessment
 6. Re-visit with teacher if necessary
 - iii. Check if improvement is demonstrated on assessment and/or ask teacher to assess
 - b. How to tutor tutorial
 - i. As part of an ongoing unit in the Study Skills course, students will be partnered with an elementary school student (or a 6th grader if the middle schooler is an 8th grader) to provide extra help throughout the year
 - ii. Students will share their tutoree's assessment and analyze their tutoree's learning needs and create plans to fill in the gaps of the tutoree's understanding
- IV. How Learning Occurs
 - a. Research on learning: a syllabus of required reading, peer-reviewed articles on
 - i. Brain related research
 - ii. Cognitive science experimental research
 - iii. Field of education research studies and theory
 - b. Analysis of articles
 - i. Read and answer comprehension questions
 - ii. Write questions to improve understanding
 - iii. Share questions in discussion format with class
 - iv. Reflect/write responding to article in terms of applicability to self
 - c. Self-analysis of learning styles
 - i. Synthesis of all reflection essays from (b)
 - ii. Take learning styles tests and analyze results
 - iii. Experiment with study and classroom behaviors to respond to learning styles
 - d. Utilization of learning styles knowledge with tutoree (described in III. b.)

Non-Core: Advisory

The weekly Advisory class is reflective of the school's values and definition of an educated person. It serves three purposes:

- To guide students through Community Service project design, implementation, reflection and follow-up
- To engage students in reading and discussing issues related to developing global competence
- To involve students in an explicit Character Education program that supports them in developing empathy and integrity

Community Service: The Advisory leader and students will embark on a five step process each year to support Community Service endeavors. The first step will be to explore possible areas of interest. Students and the leader will share issues, concerns and ideas in the local and global community that could benefit from support of varying kinds. By bringing in articles, podcasts, and other pieces of information, all will learn about each other's interests and contribute thoughts that will lead to the second step – research. Students will then hone in on the area of interest by researching the various ways people, NGOs, and government agencies are currently attempting to ameliorate the situation. At this point, students will be encouraged to set up 'informational interviews' with adults, including teachers and

experts in the field that can be accessed via the Internet. Once again, students will share their findings and move into the third step – planning. Through group discussion and one-on-one conversations with the teacher, the student will design a plan to become involved and make a difference in his or her chosen area of interest. The fourth step will be completed outside of the classroom – implementation. Students will then execute their plan, an estimated 10 hour time commitment. The final step of their experience will be to write a reflection paper which will be graded against a rubric that will be made available to students prior to writing.

Global Competence: The curriculum for this course will be different each year as it will be developed in response to current events. A committee of faculty will be assigned the task of tracking world events and selecting areas to be analyzed by the entire student body that year. The goal of the Advisory period will be to introduce the topics, present a variety of perspectives on the issue and guide students in developing a question they wish to answer that is related to the topic. Students will then be given a rubric-defined research project to complete in answer to their questions. Students will each complete one project and present it to their Advisory each semester.

Character Education: Advisory is one of many opportunities that students will have to experience Character Education. In Advisory, students will develop a safe ‘family’ community through community- and trust-building activities and the Council (ojaifoundation.org) format of discussion. The discussions related to Character Education will be both scheduled and spontaneous and will arise in response to concerns and issues occurring in the school community and concerns identified by faculty and administration.

The most effective way that beliefs and values are taught is not by lecture but by modeling. Especially in middle and high school, students begin to see the gap between what is espoused and what is actually done; then cynicism sets in. When their teachers’ words and actions match what they are teaching which is modeling the value of integrity, students are more likely to trust them and then learn what is being taught. For instance, if teachers talk about the value of equality in a democracy, the respecting of diverse opinions in a democracy, but don’t allow students to question, to have different opinions; talk down to them instead of talking to them respectfully as they would an adult; students start to mistrust teachers, start to disengage in the classroom.

Research indicates that, when teachers have a mutually respectful relationship with their students, they are able to mentor students in ways that lessen the impact of the “herd mentality” of peers and superficiality of television.⁹ Therefore, all VCMS teachers will model the values of good character at all school experiences, and enforce codes of behavior in the classroom. These behavior codes, including honesty, respect, listening and consideration, will be assessed each quarter by the teachers and by students in a self-assessment citizenship rubric, resulting in a citizenship grade.

The current draft of this rubric is:

⁹ www.riverschool.org

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

A scope and sequence for this course can be found in Appendix One C.

Non-Core: Instrumental Music

Research has discovered significant correlations between academic success and disciplined, consistent study of instrumental music. For example, a number of studies support the contention that students who participate in formal music education have higher academic achievement scores than students who do not participate in formal music education (Babo, 2001; Cardarelli, 2003; Cobb, 1997; Cox, 2001; Frakes, 1984; Huang, 2004; Linch, 1993; Miranda, 2001; Mitchell, 1994; Parrish, 1984; Schneider & Klotz, 2000; Trent, 1996; Underwood, 2000; Zanutto, 1997). Furthermore, being excused from nonmusic classes to attend instrumental lessons does not adversely affect academic performance (Corral, 1998; Cox, 2001; Dryden, 1992; Engdahl, 1994; Kvet, 1982).

Studies have also identified a cause-and-effect rather than coincidence relationship between instrumental music instruction and academic achievement. For example, Hoffman (1995) compared fifth graders who received keyboard instruction with those who received traditional text-based music instruction in the same urban school. After one year of instruction (at the end of fourth grade) the keyboard students had higher scores on only one measure, a subtest of language mechanics. However, after two years of instruction (at the end of fifth grade), the keyboard students outperformed their counterparts on total language, 3 R's battery, concept of numbers, math computations, math applications, and total math. As another example, Whitehead (2001) examined the effect of music instruction (Orff-Schulwerk) on math scores of middle and high school students. Subjects were randomly placed into three groups: full treatment (which received music instruction for 50 minutes five times per week), limited treatment (which received 50 minutes of instruction once a week), and no treatment (which received no music instruction). After twenty weeks, the full treatment group showed a higher level of significant gain in mathematics than the other two groups. The limited treatment group showed limited mathematics improvement and the no treatment group had the lowest gain in mathematics improvement.

VCMS is focusing on instrumental music rather than an integrated arts program, because research has revealed mixed, if any, impact of integrated arts on academic achievement (Matthews, 2001; Miller, 1995; Weisskoff, 1981; Andrews, 1997; Dominguez, 1991; Omniewski, 1999; McTeer & Bailey, 1980). In order to connect music with core courses, VCMS teachers will be educated about the research described above and, as part of the Data Driven Instructional professional development (ex. monthly data conferences) will be trained in continually discussing with students the similarities between the efficacious student habits that yield results in their music practice (discipline, practice, repetition, motivation, collaboration and reflection) and the habits that lead to academic achievement in their core classes. Furthermore, faculty music and core faculty will share scope and sequences and make adjustments to their courses in order to connect the themes, history and background of the music performed by students with the learning goals of the core courses.

Sixth graders will be enrolled in group instrumental (strings: violin and viola) music instruction 3 times a week. The groups will be flexible and changeable throughout the year and will reflect student skill level.

Seventh and eighth graders will also be required to enroll in similarly organized music classes that meet once a week. Students may augment their musical studies by choosing Instrumental Music as their Major class choice, thus increasing their musical instruction to a total of 4 times a week (6th grade) and 3 times a week (7th and 8th grade).

The scope and sequence of these courses is located in Appendix I.

Non-Core: Majors

In keeping with our goal of developing in students a passion for excellence, all VCMS students will choose a field of study in which to specialize each semester. The “Majors” course will guide students in meeting challenges and competing with confidence and skill against the best and brightest on a state-wide and national level. Just as athletes train for contests such as the Olympics and the World Cup, VCMS students will prepare for intellectual challenges. VCMS believes that students should not be sheltered from competitive experiences but instead should be taught to face competition with a healthy, positive attitude, learning from struggles and successes, and behaving graciously in victory as well as in defeat.

Students are given the opportunity to choose a Major, and change this choice each semester. Sixth graders will meet in their Majors course once a week, while 7th and 8th graders will meet twice a week. While the term ‘Major’ may not have an equivalent at other schools, the subject matter and student work in these courses exactly match currently existing courses at the top performing middle schools across the country. This subject matter includes:

- 1) Mathematics: focus on problem-solving. Semester One: Robotics - Lego League (<http://www.usfirst.org/community>). Semester Two: Math Team with weekly practice problems and monthly contests from The Mathematical Association of America AMC (<http://www.unl.edu/amc/>; Math Olympiad <http://www.moems.org/index.htm>); and MathCounts (<https://mathcounts.org>)
- 2) Science: focus on research. Semester Two: Students analyze research studies and science fair projects, culminating in their own science fair submission (<http://www.usc.edu/CSSF/Resources/GettingStarted.html>)
- 3) Writing: focus on prose and poetry writing. Offered both semesters. Students read and analyze renowned samples of poetry, essays, creative pieces. Students choose contests to enter, workshop their writing in class, submit to three contests each semester.
- 4) Music: focus on instrumental music performance, vocal performance, or dance performance preparation. Open to 7th and 8th graders only, by audition.

Scope and Sequence is in Appendix One C, after Advisory Scope and Sequence.

Non-Core: Physical Education

VCMS is committed to a varied, challenging and standards-aligned physical education program for all students. Sixth graders will experience more than the required 200 minutes every 10 days of physical education. Instead they will take 4 classes a week, totaling 320 minutes every 10 days. Seventh and eighth graders will meet the required 400 minutes every 10 days by meeting for 40 minutes each day.

At the very least, partnerships will be established in conjunction with core teacher and volunteers to implement a sports-based and yoga-based rotation of instruction that is standards-aligned. When funds are available, a full-time physical education teacher and supporting staff will be employed to design and implement a program that encompasses team sports, dance, martial arts, yoga, and gymnastics.

The two organizations that are most promising if the school pursues partnerships are:

- 1) Playworks (Formerly Sports4kids) <http://www.playworksusa.org/>

This organization is based in Oakland, CA. They provide PE services to schools that serve low income kids. The program, founded on a deep understanding of the importance of play, is based on classic

playground games. The coaches are trained by the organization then assigned to the schools. They have recently expanded to 27 new cities including Los Angeles. Extensive curriculum materials and lesson plans are available online, enabling us to begin by formulating our own program. In addition, they offer training programs of varying lengths.

2) YogaEd <http://www.yogaed.com/about.html>

Yoga Ed. develops and produces health/wellness programs, trainings and products for teachers, parents, children and health professionals that improve academic achievement, physical fitness, emotional intelligence and stress management.

Non-Core: Clubs/Meetings/Tutoring Period

This 25 minute period after the first core block of the day is a time for students to develop their skills and knowledge in a self-directed or community-based context that is in line with the school's mission of instilling a 'passion for excellence'. During the all-school and grade-level meetings, students will lead meetings with faculty guidance. These meetings are a time for students to share their recent achievements and publicize their upcoming exhibits or performances. Not only does this provide positive reinforcement for students who have achieved success in their core and non-core courses, but it also serves to inspire and motivate other students to aim for success in their own endeavors. In addition, these meetings serve to educate students in presenting themselves in a public forum and in being respectful audience members. On the three non-meeting days, most students will choose or be required to meet with teachers for one-on-one and small group tutoring sessions. Students that are not in need or desirous of academic support will be required to sign up in advance for an activity: study hall in the library, study hall in the tech center, or a 'club' that is meeting under faculty guidance.

Note on Technology

A singular-focused course on technology is not anticipated at this time. Since research has been mixed as to the efficacy of technology education and general academic achievement, budgetary priority will be given to other courses over technology courses. Technology can facilitate learning in remarkable ways, but not all technology actually improves upon non-technological methods of teaching and learning. VCMS educators believe it is important to be critical consumers, always questioning what technology is bringing to the classroom. When technology has been proven to improve student understanding, VCMS will utilize it. We also intend to develop in students a familiarity in teaching themselves to utilize software programs that facilitate their own future work and learning. VCMS will, therefore, make best efforts to provide students with a computer lab and/or a laptop cart that teachers can guide students in using for the purpose of meeting course goals.

For example, students can gain understanding of data analysis, statistics and graphing through the use of simulation software programs (SimCalc MathWorlds)¹⁰ and spreadsheet programs (Excel). These same programs are helpful to students in their social studies and global competence learning as they develop awareness of the ways statistics can be manipulated in different representations. Similarly, students should be taught to be critical consumers of information and will be guided in researching appropriately on the Internet and on school-purchased databases.

A multitude of free tools exist online that could facilitate learning in all core courses. Software programs (virtual manipulatives) have proven to facilitate geometric, number sense and algebraic conceptual awareness. Primary resources that enrich social studies learning are also freely available online. In addition, Global Learning Portals that allow students to collaborate with students across the world in problem-solving and project-based learning are an ideal fit to the school's emphasis on global competence.

The more our technology budget allows, the more we will utilize these and other technology-based learning experiences.

¹⁰ <http://www.kaputcenter.umassd.edu/products/software/>

H. Instructional Strategies for Special Populations

Since VCMS values a constructivist, problem-based educational program in which teachers utilize action research and ongoing assessment to inform teaching and curriculum, 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 and block scheduling (middle) which allow the teachers to truly know their students
- 2) A minimum of 40 minutes planning time 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 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

VCMS will comply with federal, state, and district mandates regarding ELL education and re-designation of ELL students. VCMS 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. English Learners (ELs) will have full access to VCMS's 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.

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

VCMS will hire CLAD certified, experienced teachers with full understanding of Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)¹¹ 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, VCMS 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 227.¹²

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
 - 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

¹¹ 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>

¹² 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.

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, VCMS 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

VCMS 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 program 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 music, or in the performance areas as specific as cartooning, map-making, play-writing, advertising or agricultural research. VCMS faculty 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:

1. Present content that is related to broad-based issues, themes or problems.
2. Integrate multiple disciplines into the area of study.
3. Present comprehensive, related and mutually reinforcing experiences within an area of study.
4. Allow for the in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within the area of study.
5. Develop independent or self-directed study skills.
6. Develop productive, complex, abstract and/or higher level thinking skills.
7. Focus on open-ended tasks.
8. Develop research skills and methods.
9. Integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum.
10. Encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce "new" ideas.
11. Encourage the development of products that use techniques, materials and forms.
12. 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.
13. 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 such 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. For this reason, in the middle school, VCMS reserves the right to create a more comprehensive GATE program, should a student population emerge that would clearly benefit from such courses.

VCMS recognizes that 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 gifted students will also provide a peer 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. The music aspect of our program, required for all in 6th and 7th grade with optional additional emphasis in all the grades, has been shown to be effective at engaging and developing these students,¹³ but we will not rely on our standard program alone to reach these children. 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.*

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.

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 they change 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

¹³ Rauscher, F.H. (2003). *Effects of piano, rhythm, and singing instruction on the spatial reasoning of at-risk children*. Barry, N.H. (1992). Project ARISE: Meeting the needs of disadvantaged students through the arts. *The Professional Educator*, XIV (2), 1-7. *Schools, Communities, and the Arts: A Research Compendium* (1995), compilation of research studies commissioned by National Endowment for the Arts. Falvey, M. A. , Givner, C.C. "Facilitating Learning in Heterogeneous Classrooms," *Impact*, Volume 9(2) Spring 1996. Minnesota: University of Minnesota. Gardner, H. *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

variety of both cross-age and peer tutoring models can be used successfully, and teachers can use these in our multi-age classrooms.

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.

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
- Incorporate technology-based adaptive curriculum

Methods:

- Teach to student's learning style: 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 notetaking
- Use clear and concise directions
- Provide graphic organizers (e.g. Thinking Maps) to help students create cognitive schema for new information
- 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:

- Ensure that all students understand learning objectives
- 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

VCMS will offer a whole day program: school schedule from 8:30 AM-2:50 PM, and a before- and after-care program from 7:30-8:30am and 2:50-6pm, respectively, to accommodate working families. A systematic emphasis on academic vocabulary development for all students will be particularly beneficial to students from disadvantaged backgrounds whose vocabulary has been demonstrated (by research studies) to be less than optimal for school success. In running statistical regression analysis on data from the model schools on page 13 as well as schools throughout LAUSD, we found that socioeconomic status was not statistically significant in impacting test scores when adjusted for coinciding subgroup identifications.¹⁴

While VCMS will be sensitive to socioeconomic differences and ensure all students have full access to the educational, extra-curricular, and social activities at the school, VCMS has not found systematic research that correlates socioeconomic status with school achievement in a way that can lead to a pedagogical generalization. Student needs will be met on an individual basis, using data about student learning profiles that goes beyond assumptions to identify true learning needs. If students that are socioeconomically disadvantaged are low achieving or struggle with learning differences or are identified as English Language Learners, VCMS will utilize strategies described in other sections of this petition.

5. Special Needs

Action research, which will be fundamental to VCMS teachers in formulating appropriate differentiated instruction, is of particular benefit with regards to children with special needs. Inclusion is a priority and the preferred method of educating all students at VCMS. Therefore, special needs students will be integrated into the mainstream classroom to the extent possible. At VCMS special needs students will be given consistent support for his or her unique learning style, which facilitates and nurtures learning. Special needs students will receive daily support and necessary, individual instruction on a case-by-case basis. Special needs can vary widely, and may range from classroom modifications, interventions, special instructional strategies and special programs. If teachers and/or parents determine that a student may need additional support or resources, then an IEP (individual education program) or declaration of intent process will begin. The VCMS general program of instruction for students with disabilities shall be

¹⁴ Upon further sub-dividing the subgroup identification 'economically disadvantaged' into subgroups related to English Learner and parent education subgroups, these two particular subgroups were more significant than the economic indicator itself.

responsive to the required courses and related curricular activities provided for all students in the school. VCMS shall conduct assessment and standardized testing of students with disabilities using state and district guidelines. Meetings will be arranged with parents to monitor progress and concerns. Individualized Educational Plans will be designed and revised as data from testing and assessments is gathered. VCMS 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.

I. Charter School Special Education Program

Prior to Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD") Governing Board approval, VCMS will either execute a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") by and between the Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD") and VCMS 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

HIRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF SCHOOL: Ongoing

EXEC. DIR. HIRES PRINCIPAL: Search is already occurring and will be finalized by Exec. Dir. prior to charter approval.

LOTTERY: Depending on the LAUSD charter petition review process, the lottery will happen no later than May 15th.

TEACHERS/STAFF: Upon approval of petition from LAUSD, the principal will hire teachers/staff.

SITE PREPARATION: Ongoing. Since the site is already under VCMS management, it is expected that the summer of 2010 will be sufficient time to finish all furnitures, fixtures, and equipments preparation.

FIRST YEAR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: VCMS faculty/administration will meet in early-August to ensure VCMS teachers are familiar with all curricular materials, scope and sequences, assessments, and pedagogical practices in order to ensure a smooth school opening.

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 effective. Websites to be posted at include the school website and:

- Essentialschools.org
- Myschool.org (California Charter Schools Association website)
- Ibo.org (International Baccalaureate Organization website)
- Calwesteducators.com

Guided by the descriptions found in Element 5, the Principal will seek to hire a diverse staff that has a depth of knowledge in his/her content area as well as a commitment to problem-based learning, data driven instruction and backward design curriculum construction.

VCMS has recently secured \$30,000 in additional funding from the Walton Family Foundation. The professional development program at the middle school will be designed by the Principal in light of faculty strengths and weaknesses, and in light of student needs. The National Middle School Association will also be considered an important contributor to teacher knowledge given their valuable insights into the middle school student's developmental level. Teachers will be trained in data driven instruction and the use of action research as a tool for improving student learning. They will receive Project GLAD training during the August institute and throughout the year as needed to support English Language Learners. They will be guided in utilizing the backward design process of curriculum construction described in this charter. They will also learn about problem-based learning,¹⁵ structuring effective lessons in a block schedule,¹⁶ and implementing the semester's project.¹⁷

¹⁵ Recommended reading: Problem-Based Learning in Middle and High School Classrooms, Dr. Ann Lambros, Corwin Press, 2004.

¹⁶ Recommended reading: Teaching in the Block, Strategies for Engaging Active Learners, ed RL Canady & Michael Rettig.

¹⁷ Buck Institute for Education. Free online, comprehensive tutorial can be followed by teachers working in groups or at their own pace. <http://www.pbl-online.org/>

Other professional development activities will be provided to deepen teacher's pedagogical and curricular knowledge about their own subject area. For example, NCTM conferences for math teachers, the History Alive! program by Teachers' Curriculum Institute for social studies teachers, National Science Teachers Association conferences and National Science Foundation's Problem-Based Learning Project (<http://pbl.educ.msu.edu/>), and National Council of Teachers of English conferences. The official Professional Development calendar is below:

END GOAL	PD Topics	2010-11			2011-12		
		Summ er	1st sem	2nd sem	Summ er	1st sem	2nd sem
Data management system is on line and being used in all content areas. Data on student progress is available and being analyzed monthly to inform instruction.	Knowing the client: Analyzing CST, CELDT, and Diagnostic Data	☐	☐		☐		
	Monthly Data Conferences		☐	☐		☐	☐
	Generating and analyzing benchmark test data		☐	☐		☐	☐
All units and lessons and assessments are aligned to CA standards and at an appropriate level of rigor.	Understanding By Design: Creating standards-based units	☐		☐	☐		☐
	Aligning formative assessments		☐			☐	
	Aligning and differentiating instruction	☐		☐	☐		
	Unit and lesson Tuning			☐		☐	☐
Every parent event maximizes parent ability to support student academic success.	Parent communication strategies		☐				
	Student-involved parent conferences		☐	☐		☐	☐
All units center on student-driven investigations of essential questions designed by teachers and students. Students are able to independently use technology and other resources to complete investigation	Introduction to constructivist methods in a standards-based environment	☐			☐		
	Designing unit essential questions	☐			☐		
	Student inquiry			☐			☐
Teachers integrate high-quality standards-based projects into every instructional unit.	Introduction to problem-based learning	☐	☐	☐	☐		
	Designing problem-based assessments			☐			☐
	Unit and lesson Tuning			☐		☐	☐
All teachers are able to pace and instruction in a block to engage students from bell-to-bell, vary modes of instruction to include stations, whole group, investigations, small group, and technology.	Lesson planning in a block	☐			☐		
	Project GLAD - ELL supports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	High Impact Strategies (Marzano, Thinking Maps)		☐		☐		

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 VCMS 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 for the purpose of making the world a better place. Student outcomes are derived from the California State Standards, our definition of an educated person in the 21st century and our mission. Students will demonstrate progress toward meeting and exceeding these learning goals through their performances on subject-specific multiple assessments.

VCMS believes that standardized tests provide part of the picture in determining student achievements. While the educational strategy does not focus on testing, VCMS students will take all standardized tests required by the state as well as subject-specific benchmark diagnostic assessments (such as NWEA Maps or Pearson GMADE/GRADE) at least three times a year. 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 action research in the classroom and appropriate teacher professional development experiences will be chosen if school leaders deem it necessary. As a result of these efforts, it is anticipated that scores will rise gradually throughout the first 5 years of the charter. 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.

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 and altruistic members of society in the 21st century.

Data Management and Analysis

VCMS will be a data-driven school, and the principal will be responsible for continuous monitoring of progress toward the outcomes described above. VCMS will utilize the PowerSchools student management system ("SMS") to create a variety of reports on student achievement, including disaggregated data by content strand, student subgroup, grade-level, and classroom.

STAR data will be used at the beginning of the year to help teachers understand the baseline achievement of their students along with specific areas of strength and weakness. To correctly assess whether students are on track to make AYP during the year, we will conduct monthly assessments of each student in Reading, Writing, Math and Oral Language. The principal will generate and disseminate reports that correlate benchmark and diagnostic assessments with performance on end of year STAR and CELDT testing to correctly measure progress and give teachers detailed data about areas in which each student needs improvement.

The staff will be trained on how to interpret test data, and will be engaged in critical analysis of the data in order to determine how the school can address any performance deficiencies or negative data trends. The data analysis will be tied to professional development on instruction, so that teachers can enhance their understanding of student performance in light of normative data, and modify their instructional designs accordingly. In this way, staff will continuously be challenged to rethink current pedagogical practices to meet the changing needs of students.

All of the possible data-driven scenarios are too numerous to outline here. However, given any abnormal or unsatisfactory data trends, the principal will immediately and proactively convene the staff that have a direct impact on the relevant issue to share the data, and explore solutions (both individual and system-wide. For example, if a particular subgroup (e.g. EL's) appears to be falling behind or struggling according to the data, the principal would examine individual student information, and analyze the instructional settings and teachers who are impacting those students. If the issue is a lack of EL-appropriate instructional strategies, the principal might facilitate professional development opportunities for the teachers who need it. If the issue has more to do with the placement of students, the master schedule would be revisited to create more appropriate course offerings for students. These are but a few examples of how data analysis might inform individual practice or school-wide policy. VCMS is committed to hiring a principal and teaching staff who have the desire and capacity to examine data and make timely and effective decisions based on that data.

A. Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes

Please see Appendix 1, the appendix referenced in Element One that describes the scope and sequences for Language Arts, History, Mathematics, Science, Spanish, and non-core subjects including Study Skills, Advisory, Music, and Majors. **These tables align 'measurable student outcomes' to curricular resources, teaching strategies (in many cases), and the means and frequency of assessing students.**

Mathematics: Measurable student outcomes are completely correlated to California state standards. Formative assessments will take the form of in-class work (such as investigations) and homework assignments - to be checked closely and only graded as pass/fail indicating students attempted to solve problems and then asked questions in class to clarify any points they could not complete for homework. Summative assessments will take the form of unit quizzes and tests. All grades will have end-of-year projects. 7th grade will have a final exam that is open note and 8th grade will have a closed book, no-notes, final exam. These assessments are standard and are not described in the tables.

Science: Measurable student outcomes are completely correlated to California state standards. The curriculum resources of SEPUP include a variety of assessment forms and will be adhered to by VCMS faculty. Tables identify the SEPUP assessments to be utilized.

Spanish: Measurable student outcomes are listed in Appendix One tables under the category entitled "skills."

Language Arts: Measurable student outcomes are completely correlated to California state standards.

Social Studies: Measurable student outcomes are completely correlated to California state standards.

Additional non-core courses: Learning outcomes in Appendix One B and One C.

B. Frequency of measuring pupil outcomes and use in modifying instruction

The scope and sequence tables describing VCMS's curriculum (Appendix 1) also describe the measurable student outcomes, the frequency and form of objective assessments (both formative and summative) 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. These instructional strategies are described in detail in Element One, Sections F and H (processes are also described above in this element). Additional strategies or curricular materials may be necessary and school leaders will investigate appropriate resources and professional development activities as needed.

C. Accountability for Student Progress

Student assessment at VCMS 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 VCMS's students. The Executive Director/Head of School, however, is ultimately responsible for meeting target goals, and will be held accountable by the Board of Directors. S/He will also be accountable for meeting Adequate Yearly Progress as required by NCLB.

D. Standardized Tests

The School is dedicated to documenting student achievement of the state content standards each year through state-mandated pupil assessments. As is required by the California Department of Education Code Section 60605, students will participate in the STAR (CST, CAT6, SABE) and all other mandated accountability programs (CELDT, CAHSEE, etc.). Through these assessments, VCMS shall demonstrate student mastery of state standards. Standardized assessments allow us to compare our students' performance with the rest of the state.

VCMS considers standardized test scores to provide a limited, but important, 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 lesser 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 with a block schedule, VCMS expects student test results to exceed the local average API (720) test scores.

CST/CAT-6:

The California Standards Test/California Achievement Test will be administered in English during the Spring to all students through 8th grade. This multiple-choice test is assumed to measure student progress in Language Arts and Math Standards. Additionally, 7th 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, through 8th 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 VCMS 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 8) will be scheduled and adopted as a measurement of physical fitness for VCMS students.

E. Benchmarks to be met

The achievement of VCMS 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%

VCMS 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:** VCMS will maintain at least 96% Average Daily Attendance.
- **Teacher Retention and Satisfaction:** VCMS 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:** VCMS 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 outcomes	Local Benchmark Instruments	State-level Year-end assessments
At least 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	Standards-based diagnostic and benchmark measures of gains in core subjects (ex. NWEA MAPS, DRA in literacy as needed)	AYP Report (CST and CELDT proficiency)
Meet or Exceed federally defined Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) for ELs	Standards-based diagnostic and benchmark measures of gains in Math and ELA	Title III Accountability Report, CELDT
Make at least one level of advancement in language proficiency (Beginning, Early Intermediate, etc.) annually for ELs	Standards-based diagnostic and benchmark assessments (ex NWEA MAPS), writing rubric, DRA, SEPUP and CMP unit assessments, portfolio standards-based rubric	CELDT Individual Student Score Reports
Meet or exceed State-wide expectations for proficiency and growth on standardized tests.	Standards-based diagnostic and benchmark measures of gains in core subjects (ex. NWEA MAPS, DRA in literacy as needed). SEPUP, CMP unit assessments, portfolio	API Report

	standards-based rubric on writing and reading comprehension assignments, standards-based rubric report for social studies multiple assessments	
Meet or exceed District-wide score averages for comparable schools.	See above.	API Comparable Schools Report

Measurable Pupil Outcome Goal	Proposed Assessment Tools/ Methods
All students will demonstrate at least one year of growth towards grade-level proficiency in reading and language arts and Math. Students who are below grade level will make at least 1.5 years of growth.	• Pre-post reading/language Arts diagnostics • Curriculum embedded benchmark assessments • STAR test data • Informal classroom-based assessments
All students will demonstrate at least one year of growth towards grade-level proficiency on standards in the areas of History, Science, Art, and a Foreign Language.	• Pre-post diagnostic assessments • Curriculum embedded benchmark assessments aligned to standards (see tables in Appendix I: SEPUP, CMP curricular assessments, History multiple assessments graded against standards-based rubric, ELA writing/reading assignments graded against standards-based rubric) • STAR test data • Informal classroom-based assessments
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 strategies

VCMS will utilize a variety of assessments in order to inform instruction and facilitate student learning. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and 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.

Formal assessments will take place in each core subject to mark the times of unit endings, middle-year, and end-of-year. These formal assessments may take the form of traditional tests, timed essays or multi-step projects.

VCMS 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.

Assessment will be ongoing and documented and fall into the following categories:

- Pre-assessment: Teachers will implement an ungraded assessment that can be an in-class task, quiz-type format, or other piece of student work in order to discern student's current knowledge and skills as related to an upcoming learning outcome-derived experience.
- Formative Assessment: Student work will be observed and/or examined over the course of a unit of study in order for teachers to discern progress and struggles in the learning process for each student. These assessments include in-class tasks, drafts of essays/papers/projects/presentations, homework assignments, and interactions during student-teacher meetings.
- Summative Assessment: The formal student work sample that allows a student to demonstrate the extent of his or her skills and knowledge as it relates to the full unit of study or pre-defined learning outcomes. This can take the form of a test, project, presentation, essay, report and will have clear, pre-determined expectations of learning outcomes.
- Benchmark Diagnostic Assessment: The school will adopt standards-aligned assessments to be implemented at least 3 times a year in all core subject areas (Developmental Reading Assessment for students below grade level in ELA, NWEA MAPS or PEARSON GMADE/GRADE for all students and all core subjects) and the Principal will lead the analysis of this data and monitor the responsive curricular/pedagogical changes made by teachers as part of Data Driven Instruction's monthly Data Conferences (described in greater detail in Element One).
- Review Assessment: In order to ensure students do not simply 'move on' after a summative assessment and never fill any remaining gaps in knowledge or skills, a post-summative-assessment task will be required of students to demonstrate they have retained, and improved upon, their abilities in a given course of study. This can include revisiting a test or assignment and making corrections or completing an additional assignment that covers the same learning outcomes.

Student Portfolios

Students will maintain a portfolio that represents their learning in all core subjects over the course of the school year. The student portfolio is a dynamic tool for encouraging habits of meta-cognition, self-management, goal setting and celebration. Work in the student portfolios should be annotated with a

student reflection indicating what the work shows, the reason for inclusion, and the date it was done. The time provided to allow for this is in the Study Skills Course.

The required entries per semester are as follows

- 1 writing sample with all stages of the drafting process included (in English)
- 1 writing sample in Spanish (and 1 recorded end-of-year speaking sample)
- 1 History assignment
- 1 Mathematics assignment
- 1 Science assignment
- Recording of instrumental music performance (6th and 7th grade)
- Demonstration of a completed competition piece from the Majors class (description of science fair project, copy of AMC Math test, or copy of a written work that was submitted to a contest)
- Reflections from a Community Service project
- End-of-term student reflections as a learner, and goal setting, from the Study Skills Course
- Other items may be included, but there should be a clear purpose as to what they show and why they were chosen

B. State Mandated Tests Assurances

VCMS 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 the charter school does not test (i.e., STAR, CELDT, CAHSEE) with the District, the charter school hereby grants authority to the state of California to provide a copy of all test results directly to the District as well as the charter school.

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.

VCMS 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 (720) currently in the alternative schools listed at the beginning of this charter: 770

VCMS values measurable student outcomes from standardized testing and reporting. Students will participate in all state sponsored testing programs and each VCMS student will be expected to show continuous improvement as measured by instruments adopted by the State of California. VCMS expects student test results to surpass levels on record at the alternative public middle 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, VCMS expects that 80% of ELL students will be re-designated by the end of 8th 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.

C. Student Progress Reporting

The principal and VCMS faculty will develop and implement an effective reporting system and grading policy to provide progress report grades in the fall and spring, and formal mid-year and end-of-year grades in January and June. For each class, students will receive a letter grade and a citizenship grade.

D. 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 VCMS.

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

VCMS will comply with the Brown Act.

Members of VCMS'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.

VCMS 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

VCMS 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 VCMS alleging its noncompliance with these laws or alleging any actions which would be prohibited by these laws. VCMS will notify all its students and employees of the name, office address, and telephone number of the designated employee or employees.

VCMS 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.

VCMS 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

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

Responding to Inquiries

VCMS 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. VCMS 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 VCMS.

Audit and Inspection of Records

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

- VCMS 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 VCMS.
- The District is authorized to revoke this Charter for, among other reasons, the failure of VCMS 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 VCMS 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.

VCMS 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 VCMS. 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 VCMS operations is received by the District, VCMS shall be expected to cooperate with any investigation undertaken by the Office of the Inspector General, Investigations Unit.

B. By-Laws

VCMS is a California non-profit 501(c)3 corporation. The non-profit benefit corporation (501c3) for VCMS will also be the non-profit benefit corporation for VCES. 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 VCMS. 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 now, and will at all times maintain, representatives with expertise in education, finance/accounting, and nonprofit and community organizations. The Board of Directors consists of at least three (3) 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. Board members may serve a one-year term renewable up to four years. 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 Google Group (that is open to the public), and in public places around the school site.

F. Stakeholder Involvement

The governance of VCMS 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 VCMS 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 elections of grade level representatives [GLR] (corresponding to the grade of their child) to the Site Council. In April, parents of current 6th and 7th graders who are interested in being GLRs 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 answer questions and all parents/guardians present will vote. Parents of incoming 6th graders 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.*

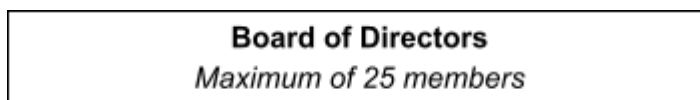
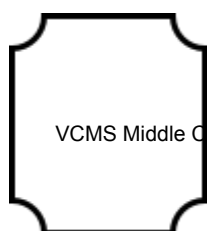
Furthermore, all parents can also join any family committee in which they have an interest. These committees will be formed at the request of the Principal or at the suggestion of parents, pending the approval of the Executive Director. Possible committees include:

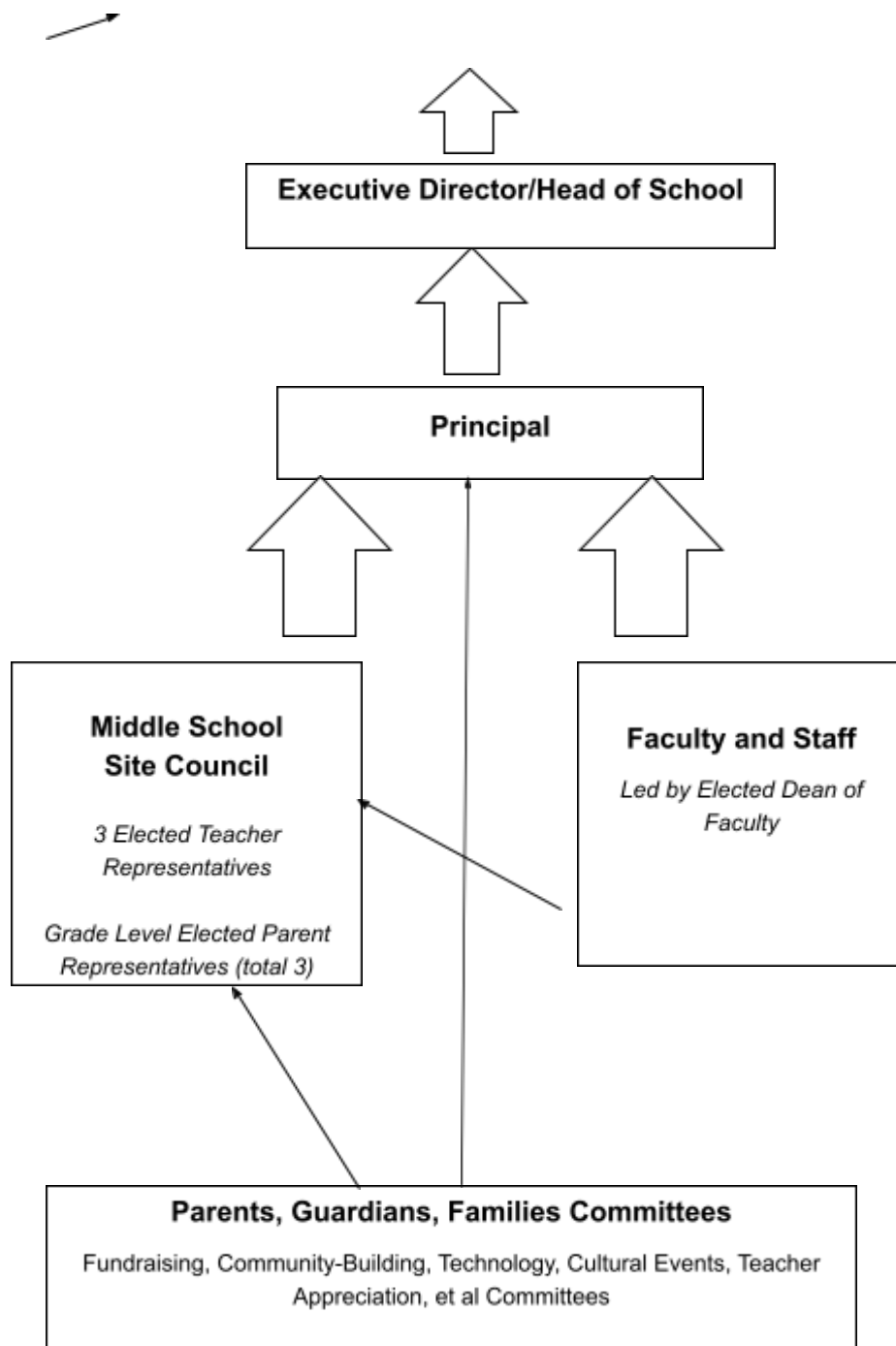
- Fundraising
- Technology Support
- Teacher Appreciation
- Cultural Events
- After School Program

Faculty will elect a Dean of Faculty who will sit on the Site Council and up to two 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 Middle School Site Council will bring 3 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. VCMS 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 VCMS. 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.

The Executive Director/Head of School hires the principal and the principal hires staff and faculty. A personnel committee will be formed as needed by either the principal or Head of School in order to make recommendation on hiring employees for any vacant positions.

VCMS is committed to recruiting and hiring a community of professionals who are dedicated to the best practices education of all students. Regardless of their role in the school, every person hired by VCMS 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 VCMS include:

- Executive Director/Head of School
- Middle School Principal
- A Dean for each grade of the middle school will hold both teaching (a maximum of 2 classes) and administrative responsibilities related to academic advising, family/school communication and discipline.
- A Department Chairman for each of the 5 core subjects who also teaches a minimum of 3 classes (to be chosen by principal with input from all relevant subject-specific teachers). Depending on the specifics of the chosen non-core program, there will also be a Department Chair of Music, Study Skills, Advisory, each Major, and Physical Education.

B. Key Personnel Qualifications

Executive Director/Head of School

The Executive Director is the chief executive of the school. The ED holds responsibility, accountability and authority for the school's overall performance and success in fulfilling the VCMS 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:

- Secure permanent site(s) for school
- Extend fundraising beyond the school community to include outside sources of funds
- Facilitate strategic planning with the Board of Directors
- 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 VCMS 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 reputable organization, 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.

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 have experience forming, cultivating, and expanding partnerships within the public and private sectors.

Passion for Educational Excellence: While experience in educational leadership and, specifically, in the charter school movement are pluses, they are not required. However, the candidate must demonstrate an ability to raise funds, communicate a genuine passion for advancing educational achievement in diverse communities and embody the mission and vision of VCMS. Knowledge of the California and LAUSD education, government, and nonprofit funding environment would be valuable in this position.

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. The ideal candidate will demonstrate significant past success with fundraising.

Principal

The Middle School Principal of VCMS will be the educational and instructional leader and will also oversee school finances, budget, operations, communications, and compliance under ED guidance.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the principal include:

1. Educational Leadership:

- Provide hands-on guidance to teachers as they create and implement a curriculum that utilizes problem-based learning and integrates California state standards;
 - Provide hands-on guidance to teachers in data driven instruction: the development of multiple assessments and use of multiple sources of student achievement data that influence pedagogical and curricular decisions
 - 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 faculty evaluation process;
 - Develop partnerships with university researchers to support teacher's action research endeavors;
 - Develop partnerships with Global Learning Portals, as much as funds allow
 - Lead the design and implementation of the school's programs for Special Education, EL, and GATE students;
 - Hire and retain high quality faculty;
 - Promote the school's values 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:
- Support the Executive Director/Head of School in all aspects of Charter renewal, review and compliance;
 - Lead the Site Council;
 - Schedule and participate in regular family and community meetings;
 - Encourage and develop parent/guardian involvement/partnerships;
 - Support fundraising activities;
 - Maintain positive relationships with LAUSD and its related entities;
 - Actively participate in Charter organization activities (CCSA, CSDC, IC-LA, etc.) and become an active leader in the Charter community;
 - Maintain a positive, collaborative relationship with our landlord;
 - Work effectively with the media, under the direction of the Executive Director/Head of School.

Qualifications

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. ***It is essential that the principal be able to lead faculty in implementing Data Driven Instruction linked to action research and be able to guide faculty in implementing the backward design process to ensure standards-aligned, problem-based learning with multiple assessments.***

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

- Teaching experience in grades 6-8 at a high achieving program whose graduates (at least 40% of students) excel on Advanced Placement exams in high school and attend top 20 colleges across the country;
- A Master's Degree in Education and/or Administrative Credential (prior administrative experience desirable);
- Track record and experience in ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff;
- Knowledge of or experience with diverse populations, English learners and GATE;
- Strong computer skills;
- Excellent communication skills, experience fundraising and/or grant writing, and experience motivating and working with parent volunteers; and
- A track record as a successful and progressive educator.

Teaching Staff

VCMS 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 VCMS and made available to LAUSD upon request.

The department head, deans, and department teachers will interview and provide formal feedback on teaching candidates. The principal will provide the final answer on hiring but will not hire a teacher if the department head does not approve, since the department head is the official supervisor of the teacher. 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 school will actively recruit credentialed teachers to minimize the use of teachers holding emergency credentials.

The ideal teaching candidate will have:

- 2+ years experience teaching the subject to middle school students
- Experience at a high performing school whose graduates excel on A.P. exams in high school and ultimately attend top 20 colleges
- Enthusiasm for the school's values, mission and educational philosophy
- Proven commitment to constructivism, multiple assessments, data driven instruction and a collaborative approach to teaching and learning

Responsibilities will include:

- Backward design curriculum construction and implementation of subject-specific lessons that incorporate the school's definition of an educated person and emphasize active learning strategies and problem-based learning
- 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, VCMS will hire California CharterWorks, or a similar vendor. The accounting systems VCMS plans to adopt will adhere to generally accepted accounting principles, giving VCMS strong internal controls within the system.

Office Personnel: Clerical staff will be selected by the Principal 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

VCMS will not discriminate against any applicant or employee on the basis of race, color, age, gender, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, 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.

VCMS will require each employee to submit to a criminal background check as required by Education Code Section 44237. VCMS 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. VCMS 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 Principal and/or administrative designee will monitor and be responsible for maintaining records of tuberculosis and criminal investigation clearances, according to California and federal law, for all VCMS employees.

E. Child Abuse Reporting

In accordance with state law, all teachers and staff at VCMS will be mandated to report any suspected child abuse. The procedure for the mandated individual will be to immediately make a call to the 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. VCMS 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. This requirement is a condition of employment.

Also, employees hired by VCMS 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

VCMS will occupy either a site to be designated in cooperation with LAUSD or another site that we are currently in negotiation for.

VCMS will comply with the Uniform Building Codes, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), access requirements, and fire, health and structural safety requirements. The site will always be in full compliance with all current codes and requirements including updated fire alarm requirements for E-1 occupancy. The Certificate of Occupancy and other pertinent records will be kept on file by VCMS.

VCMS 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 VCMS must be fully usable without conditions. The VCMS 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 VCMS is located. These code requirements shall also apply to the construction, reconstruction, alteration or addition to any charter school building. In the event VCMS 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 VCMS to use and occupy the site 45 days prior to the date the school is scheduled to open. A temporary certificate of occupancy will be acceptable as long as there is a plan to complete the work to obtain the final Certificate of Occupancy.

VCMS 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 VCMS will use to comply with the Healthy Schools Act)
- Utilities

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

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 VCMS 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 \$6.00 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 VCMS 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 VCMS, 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 VCMS by the District under any of the District's self-insured programs or commercial insurance policies. VCMS 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 VCMS from claims which may arise from its operations. Each Charter School location shall meet the below insurance requirements individually.

It shall be VCMS'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 VCMS'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 VCMS does not operate a student bus service. If VCMS 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 VCMS to cover all VCMS employees who handle, process or otherwise have responsibility for VCMS 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 VCMS's insurance shall be primary despite any conflicting provisions in VCMS's policy.

Evidence of Insurance

VCMS 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 inceptions, 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 VCMS 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 VCMS.

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, VCMS 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. VCMS 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 VCMS, and their officers, directors, employees or volunteers. Moreover, VCMS 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

VCMS 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 VCMS 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 VCMS moves or expands to another facility during the term of this charter, VCMS 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. VCMS 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).

G. Child Abuse Reporting

In accordance with state law, all teachers and staff at VCMS will be mandated to report any suspected child abuse. The procedure for the mandated individual will be to immediately make a call to the 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 #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."

Diversity is a core value of VCMS. We will 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. VCMS 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, VCMS 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)¹⁸, 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 VCMS 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.¹⁹ 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."²⁰ Why such mixed SES can have such a profound effect is up for debate.²¹

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

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

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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 Lefty, 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% or 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."

²⁰ 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

²¹ 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.

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 public elementary schools and private schools that end at middle school: 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 VCMS'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
Chabad of North Hollywood	Sherman Oaks, CA	(818) 989-9539
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
	Northridge, CA	(818) 368-3231
YMCA		
Thai Community Development Center	Los Angeles, CA	(323) 468-2555
YMCA	Northridge, CA	(818) 363-7414
Immanuel Presbyterian Church	Los Angeles, CA	(213) 389-3191
Greater Community Missionary Baptist Church: Multi-Purpose Building	Pacoima, CA	(818) 899-5400
YMCA	Woodland Hills, CA	(818) 348-8284

Outreach Update

An internal document from the school's Outreach Committee demonstrates current efforts:

The founders of Valley Charter Elementary and Middle School believe they will successfully recruit a student body that is at least 50% Title I based on a number of factors:

- 1) The school location will be in a neighborhood in which the families residing are predominantly Title I, as defined by income level.
- 2) Outreach efforts to date and moving forward (see below) are almost exclusively focused on reaching a Title I population.

Over the past few months, and continuing with greater urgency, Founding Parents have been following a very explicitly defined outreach plan. The steps are as follows:

- 1) Call identified organization that serves the intended school population in order to set up an in-person meeting to discuss the school
- 2) Meet with high level representative in the organization to describe the school and hear/answer questions/concerns regarding the school and its intention of serving families with students in grades K-2 and 6th grade by fall 2010.
- 3) Outline steps with organizational representative for ensuring all families served by their organization will be invited to an orientation meeting closer to charter approval.
- 4) Plan the orientation meeting with both Valley Charter and said organizational representatives. (for example, identify

- 5) Hold orientation meeting, field questions from potential families, take note of all concerns and questions to report back to school leaders and the Board, hand out lottery/enrollment forms, hand out school 'brochure', place additional enrollment forms and brochures in public, easily-accessible location on organization's property.

The most recent update (12/1/09) of our contacts to potential partner organizations and schools, is outlined in the excel spreadsheet below.

Date	Donor Name	Don Name	Title	Children Served	Transaction in US	Transaction in IN	Transaction in 2	Transaction in 3	Name	Details	Next Steps	VGR Rec Name
05/01/09	Ed of Veto, YMCA	Jake Stevens	Senior Program Director	Assisted Children from 5PM to 8PM Saturday at southern Pkwt. Church High School	Amount: credit: 40	-	0	0	Edna Tyle 1300000	Received - When we get done in our show bring app so if we will schedule an upcoming program	Assess with theme refresh the planning and set up upcoming program for families	Alexis Evans
05/01/09	Ed of Veto, YMCA	Wendy Swanson	Senior Program Director	Assisted Children from 5PM to 8PM Saturday at southern Pkwt. Church High School	Amount: credit: 40	-	0	0	Edna Tyle 1300000	Received - When we get done in our show bring app so if we will schedule an upcoming program	Assess with theme refresh the planning and set up upcoming program for families	Alexis Evans
11/20/09	Edna Tyle Family Center	Janice Dorman	Family Services Specialist	000	400	-	2.5	20	Canada	Received 11/10/09 5:00 PM Program on North Hollywood and San Francisco 2/10/09 received message from Janice Dorman re: meeting with the Family Advancers	Will discuss our meeting in the next program's meeting Will schedule our Family Advancers when we have lunch about the same	Claudia Nelson and Robin Baulhardt
11/20/09	Edna Tyle Family Center	Queen Tamiya	Family Services Specialist	000	400	-	2.5	20	Canada	Received 11/10/09 5:00 PM Program on North Hollywood and San Francisco 2/10/09 received message from Queen Tamiya re: meeting with the Family Advancers	Will discuss our meeting in the next program's meeting Will schedule our Family Advancers when we have lunch about the same	Claudia Nelson and Robin Baulhardt
11/20/09	YMCA	Jake Stevens	St. Program Director	-	-	-	-	-	-	Received message from Jake Stevens	Call back in a few days	Sam Thayer
11/20/09	YMCA West Valley	Jake Stevens	St. Program Director	-	-	-	-	-	-	Received message from Jake Stevens	Call back in a few days	Sam Thayer
11/20/09	YMCA Northridge	Wendy Swanson	Senior Program Director	-	-	-	-	-	-	Received message from Wendy Swanson	Call back in a few days	Sam Thayer
11/20/09	YMCA Northridge	Wendy Swanson	Senior Program Director	-	-	-	-	-	-	Received message from Wendy Swanson	Call back in a few days	Sam Thayer
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Public School Choice Traveling Students

The District and VCMS 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"). VCMS 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 VCMS shall have the right to continue attending VCMS until the highest grade level of the charter. However, the obligation of the District to provide transportation for a PSC student to VCMS shall end in the event the PSC student's resident District school exits Program Improvement status.

VCMS 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. VCMS 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 VCMS under the PSC program increases in subsequent years, VCMS 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 VCMS is a recipient of federal funds, including federal Title I, Part A funds, VCMS 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. VCMS 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.

VCMS 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

VCMS 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

VCMS 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).

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

VCMS 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. VCMS 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 (2010, post charter approval, future years in March) 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 us post, phone call or email. Parents of students who are not offered spots will receive an email. 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 will be required to 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.

VCMS hopes to offer busing to our students, but finances may not permit. VCMS 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

VCMS'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 VCMS's fiscal year. The audit will verify the accuracy of the school's financial statements as well as attendance and enrollment accounting practices. Thus far, LCS has used the services of Hill, Morgan, and Associates, LLP, Certified Public Accountants and has been deemed by them and LAUSD oversight to be financially responsible by every measure. We expect VCMS to be equally transparent and sound in its financial matters.

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 (potentially California 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. VCMS'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 supervisorial oversight of VCMS not to exceed 1% of VCMS's revenue, or the District may charge for the actual costs of supervisorial oversight of VCMS not to exceed 3% if VCMS is able to obtain substantially rent free facilities from the District. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the District may charge the maximum supervisorial 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 where there are clear expectations about behavioral and community norms that allow them to feel safe. In order to maintain a positive learning community, VCMS 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 LCS will be the first draft of this school's policies. Administration will also be examining the handbooks from the Model Schools listed in Element One in order to cull best practices from high performing middle schools. The VCMS handbook will then evolve, 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. VCMS 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 VCMS'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 VCMS.

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 VCMS. 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. VCMS will strive to schedule the hearing to accommodate the parents presence.

In the event of a decision to expel a student from VCMS, 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 VCMS shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by VCMS'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 VCMS for readmission.

F. Readmission

VCMS'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, VCMS's governing board shall readmit the pupil, unless VCMS'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

VCMS will collect and produce data regarding the suspension and expulsion of special education students as required by the Modified Consent Decree. VCMS 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 *Chandra 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 by the Executive Director, Principal and founding staff. Appendix 8 presents drafts of our Faculty, School, and Volunteer

handbooks. The school has and will continue to review the list of offenses and procedures that apply to non-charter public schools. It is essential 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 VCMS 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. VCMS 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, VCMS 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 VCMS will contribute the employer's portion (currently 8.25%) required by STRS. All withholdings from employees and VCMS 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.

VCMS has contracted with California Charter Works to handle our payroll and accounting services. The Executive Director 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 VCMS. 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 VCMS, just as no employee with the district can be required to work at VCMS. Students who reside in the attendance area but who choose not to attend VCMS 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.

Job applicants for positions at VCMS 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 VCMS will not be covered by his or her respective collective bargaining unit agreement, although VCMS 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 VCMS 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.

VCMS 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 VCMS alleging its noncompliance with these laws or alleging any actions which would be prohibited by these laws. VCMS will notify all its students and employees of the name, office address, and telephone number of the designated employee or employees.

VCMS 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.

VCMS 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 VCMS for resolution.

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 VCMS and the Los Angeles Unified School District

Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to the charter agreement between the District and VCMS, 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 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

VCMS 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." VCMS shall promptly respond to all inquiries and requests for documents from LAUSD and shall consult with LAUSD regarding any inquiries. Furthermore, VCMS 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 VCMS 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 VCMS 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 VCMS'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. VCMS 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."

VCMS will be the exclusive public employer of all employees of the charter school for collective bargaining purposes. As such, VCMS 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 VCMS 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 VCMS 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 VCMS if VCMS commits a breach of any terms of its charter. Further, the District may revoke the charter if VCMS 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 VCMS on any of the following grounds:

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

Prior to revocation, and in accordance with Cal. Educ. Code section 47607(d), the District will notify VCMS in writing of the specific violation, and give VCMS 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

VCMS 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 VCMS close for any reason. The decision to close VCMS either by VCMS 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 VCMS will be issued by VCMS 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 VCMS by registered mail within 72 hours of the decision to Closure Action.
5. VCMS 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 VCMS be paid for by VCMS to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of VCMS, 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 VCMS will be the responsibility of VCMS and not LAUSD. VCMS understands and acknowledges that VCMS will cover the outstanding debts or liabilities of VCMS. Any unused monies at the time of the audit will be returned to the appropriate funding source. VCMS 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 VCMS 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 VCMS 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, VCMS 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 VCMS is operated by a nonprofit corporation, and if the corporation does not have any other functions than operation of VCMS, 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 VCMS's right to operate as a Charter School or cause VCMS to cease operation. VCMS 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 VCMS 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.