



Student Planner

2019-2020

**105 Greenleaf Drive
Ponte Vedra, FL 32081
904-547-4090**

**Sandra McMandon,
Principal**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This Handbook was developed to answer many of the commonly asked questions that one may have during the school year. Because the Handbook contains information about student rights and responsibilities, parents and students are responsible for knowing its contents. Please take the time to become familiar with the following information and keep this Handbook available for your use. It is our hope that a careful understanding of the enclosed material will lead to a rewarding and successful school year. It can be a valuable reference during the school year and a means to avoid confusion and misunderstandings when questions arise.

The school reserves the right to interpret the content of this Handbook, including the rules and regulations governing the academic and non-academic conduct of students. Our school reserves the right to modify and/or amend the content of this Handbook at any time during the year. If any written modification or amendment is made to this Handbook, a copy of such modification or amendment will be available on the school website.

If you have any questions about the Handbook or any of its policies, please contact the principal's office.

THIS STUDENT PLANNER BELONGS TO

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ Zip Code_____

Phone_____

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Welcome Students,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year! Whether this is your first day as a Kindergartener or you are starting your final year with us as an 8th grader, all of you are an important part of the VRA family.

As we start the new school year, we will look to further define what it means to be a Hawk! We will continue to use the character traits of respect, responsibility, fairness, citizenship, trustworthiness and caring as a guiding compass for each decision we make. Maintaining this strong focus on these Character Counts! Pillars will help to teach each of us how to truly soar as we work to become the best versions of ourselves.

At Valley Ridge, I hope that you will make the most of the opportunities to become part of something bigger than any one person. Here you will have the ability to spread your wings and discover the gifts and talents that are in each and every one of you. We believe that high expectations will lead to higher performance and that when given the chance, our students will reach to new heights of their own potential. All of us at Valley Ridge Academy are here to provide you with that opportunity, support you in your growth, and celebrate your successes with you!

We are so glad that you are part of the VRA family and look forward to another productive and exciting year together.

Go Hawks!

Ms. McMandon

ACCIDENTS

Every accident occurring on school grounds or at any school-sponsored event should be reported to the supervising staff member/adult and to the front office immediately.

ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL CHANGES

Please notify our office immediately if there is a change in address, telephone number, email, or emergency contact. This information is very important in case your child becomes ill or injured.

ATTENDANCE

The importance of regular attendance cannot be over emphasized. All students should be in school every day they are physically able. It is extremely difficult to successfully keep up with class work if attendance is irregular. The school requests that parents and students thoughtfully consider the effects of any absence other than one of a medical or family emergency. Families are discouraged from taking students out of school prior to a school break. Absences for vacations will be considered unexcused. Whenever possible, regularly scheduled medical appointments should be made after school hours.

Students having five unexcused absences within a calendar month or ten unexcused absences within a 90 calendar-day period shall be reported to the principal/designee to secure and determine rationale for such absences. If a student is absent more than fifteen days, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to provide a doctor's note. A student must be in school the entire day in order to be considered for perfect attendance.

Excused absences include: Personal illness, family emergency, death in the family, religious holidays of the student's established religious faith, required court or law agency appearances, public functions, state competitions, scheduled doctor or dentist appointments.

Unexcused absences include: shopping trips, pleasure trips, suspension from school, appointments without prior approval except in case of emergency.

For a complete list of excused and unexcused absences, students and parents should refer to the *Student Code of Conduct*.

A student who is ill should be checked out through the main office. Teachers will be informed of students dismissed for illness. Students who are ill or who are suspected of having a communicable disease must be removed from the classroom according to school policy. To prevent the spread of infection through direct contamination (coughing, sneezing, talking, sharing articles, etc.), students must be asymptomatic before returning to school. In other words, students must have no fever, vomiting, etc. for 24 hours prior to their return to school, or have a physician's note stating that the student is not contagious and/or is under treatment.

Absences - Parents must notify the school, within 48 hours, of their child's absence by way of a written note. The note should include the child's name, the child's classroom or homeroom teacher's name, the date and an explanation of the absence, and a parent signature.

Failure to bring in a note will result in an automatic unexcused absence. Based on district policy, any student who checks-out prior to 11:40 a.m. is considered absent for the entire day. Valley Ridge Academy has six hours and 20 minutes of academic time each day, making the half-day mark fall at 11:40 a.m. If your child is ill and absent for two days, contact our office by 10:00 a.m. to arrange for the school work your child has missed. Any student who is absent must make his/her own arrangements with the teacher to make up the missed work. Students with an extended illness may qualify for

the Home/Hospital program. For other extended absences, please notify the principal, in writing, prior to the absence. Please do not schedule vacations during assessments or quarterly exams.

BACKPACKS

Students may carry backpacks to and from Valley Ridge Academy. All backpacks must be kept in homerooms for K-5th grade students and in lockers for 6th and 7th and 8th grade students. String bags are allowed to be carried throughout the day. A doctor's note is necessary for any student requiring a rolling backpack.

BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

Snacks/treats are allowed only with permission and under the direction of the classroom teacher (**critical due to medical complications caused from various food sources**). Healthy snacks are of great preference. Food must be served in the commons area or any outdoor picnic areas, as pre-arranged with the teacher. ***Birthday treats will not be permitted in the cafeteria.*** There must be enough snacks/treats available to serve each student within a given classroom who may wish to participate. Balloons, signs, banners, flowers or gifts are not permitted at school. Photography of students during these events is **not** permitted.

Donations of books to the school library, in honor of a child's birthday or other special event, are welcomed.

BULLYING

Bullying is prohibited. According to (*s. 1006.147 F.S.*) St. Johns County's Student Code of Conduct defines bullying as systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. All cases of bullying should be reported immediately and will be handled in accordance with school district policy. Students are not allowed to tease, bother or embarrass anyone because of differences in looks, color, beliefs, size, abilities, or home country. Teasing or embarrassing a student can keep that student from being able to learn and can cause much harm to the student by making him or her afraid of being at school or school activities.

Some teasing may be embarrassing to the opposite sex. For example, boys teasing girls or girls teasing boys with improper language or touching is not appropriate. This is called sexual harassment and is not allowed. Anyone seen acting improperly in these ways should be reported. Report this behavior to a parent, teacher, or someone working at the school. The school wants to help stop any behaviors that make a student feel uncomfortable or sad.

There are reasonable expectations governing our conduct designed to help ensure that all in our community are treated with the respect so that each student here is allowed the same opportunity to achieve success without bullying, insult, threat, or harassment. These expectations apply to all forms of conduct and communications, whether physical, verbal, written, or electronic that are consistent with the values set forth above. Students who choose to ignore these policies can expect significant consequences.

BUSINESS PARTNERS

We are proud to have the support of our business partners. Local businesses support our school through donations, volunteer hours and more. We are always eager to acquire additional business partners. If you have suggestions, please inform the office staff.

BUS REGULATIONS

<http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/transportation/routes/>

Students are given the privilege of using the transportation services of the St. Johns County School District. Standards of discipline must be maintained at all times, in order to satisfy safety requirements. Whenever a driver must direct his/her full attention away from the road, danger exists. No student will be allowed to endanger the other students on the bus. Parents are not to board the bus at any time. A complete list of bus regulations is available in the Student Code of Conduct. District procedures are as follows:

1. The driver has the right to assign seats. Students must sit three (3) to a seat from window to aisle.
2. Stand away and off the roadway while awaiting the bus.
3. Students must be on time; the bus will not wait for those who are tardy.
4. Students must board and leave the bus at their regular stop location (unless written permission from the school has been received by the bus driver).
5. Wait for the driver's signal before crossing the road. Walk ten (10) feet in front of the bus.
6. The driver is in full charge of the bus and students. Students must obey the driver.
7. Keep your seat at all times when the bus is moving.
8. Keep arms and head inside of windows. No object shall be thrown from windows or at the bus.
9. Unnecessary conversation with the driver is dangerous.
10. Ordinary conversation, classroom conduct is to be observed.
11. Students must refrain from fighting, pushing, and tripping while boarding, riding, and leaving the bus.
12. Students must not use any abusive or profane language to other students or the driver.
13. Absolute silence is required at all railroad crossings.
14. No eating, drinking, or use of tobacco is allowed on a bus.
15. No animals (dead or alive), glass or glass containers, sharp objects, ball bats, cutting instruments, baton, or drumsticks will be allowed on the bus without prior permission of the driver.
16. Large objects, including large band instruments which will interfere with seating and safety of others, will not be permitted on the bus.

Due to the extensive routes, buses do not accommodate courtesy riders. It is recommended that an adult meet kindergarten students

and/or any student who is the only one at a bus stop. Parent requests or complaints regarding bus service should be directed to the transportation department at 547-7810.

CHARACTER COUNTS!

The St. Johns County School District, along with area businesses, youth organizations and civic groups, selected the national character educational program of CHARACTER COUNTS! as a county wide initiative to instill positive character traits in our young people. As adults, we are responsible for modeling appropriate behavior, which has been proven as the best way to teach character in others. Valley Ridge Academy provides character education based on core ethical values, in particular the Six Pillars of Character.

The pillars are: *TRUSTWORTHINESS, CARING, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, CITIZENSHIP, and FAIRNESS.* We also teach character lessons through operation.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

School teachers and other personnel are mandatory reporters under the Florida child abuse reporting laws. Please understand that we must take our obligations seriously and if we assess that a situation requires it, we will make a report to child abuse authorities of situations that we reasonably suspect constitute abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Depending on the circumstances, we may not be able to communicate with parents about the report until authorized by child abuse authorities to do so. We ask for your understanding as we do our best to protect the children under our care.

CLASS PLACEMENT

An important feature of our school is a balanced classroom. We have the freedom to place students in our choice of classroom based on achieving the necessary balance of boys and girls in each class and academic and developmental needs. Please note that the school puts a great deal of thought and care into this process. Parents are asked not to request individual teachers. Such requests will not be taken into consideration when determining classroom placement.

CLINIC

The clinic is for temporary first aid only. Students will be sent home if there is evidence of vomiting, diarrhea, or a temperature of 100° or higher. It is expected that students remain home for an un-medicated 24 hour symptom-free period, or as directed by a doctor's note. Please let our nurse know of any allergies. **PLEASE ONLY BRING STORE PURCHASED PACKAGED FOOD WITH AN INGREDIENT LABEL ON THE PACKAGING FOR SNACKS FOR CLASSES.**

COMMUNICATION

The school works very hard to keep parents informed and the lines of communication open. Parent concerns regarding individual students should be directed first to the appropriate teacher — every effort will be made to solve any issue. A weekly folder including children's work and other pertinent information and notices will be sent home each week. We do not want you to miss any important information communicated. For regularly updated news and information visit our website.

Conferences - Parent and teacher communication is vital to the success of your child. To contact a teacher or make an appointment, you may call the school to leave a message, send the teacher an e-mail, or send a note to the teacher with your child.

E-Mail - All staff at Valley Ridge Academy can be reached by e-mail, with a reply within 48 hours. Email is not accessible to staff during the school day. Should you need to contact a staff member during the academic day, call the school office at 904-547-4090.

Home Access Center (HAC) - This is a web-based application that allows parents to view their child's educational information. Parents will need to obtain their user name and password from the school. Instructions and further information can be retrieved from the district website www.stjohns.k12.fl.us under the heading "For Parents and Students". Additional information can be found on our school's website under "Home Access Center." The website is <http://parents.stjohns.k12.fl.us>.

School Closings - Local radio and television stations will carry all school closing announcements due to inclement weather or other emergencies by 6:30 a.m. whenever possible.

Teacher Websites - Teachers may maintain a website that provides specific classroom information, activities, and student assignments.

Visiting Classrooms - Parents may visit classrooms only with the pre-arranged permission of the teachers. "Drop-ins" are not permitted.

All visitors are required to sign in at the front office. For the safety of all students, parents and visitors are not allowed to go directly to any area in the building without permission. **Siblings are not permitted to accompany parents while visiting a classroom.** Because our staff has required duties and meetings, we are unable to accommodate parents who do not have a scheduled appointment. We are unable to allow unannounced classroom visitations prior to the beginning of the school day. Parents may not walk students to their classrooms.

School Website - Communication is the key to a successful school/home partnership. Our school website provides information about upcoming events: www.vra.stjohns.k12.fl.us.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The school will participate in a variety of community service projects. Each grade level will adopt an organization, with additional school-wide projects taking place.

COMPUTER AND SYSTEMS USAGE POLICY

Please refer to the **Student Code of Conduct** for details about this district policy.

CONFERENCES

Faculty are available at any time during the year for parent conferences. Dismissal or arrival time, Open House evenings, and field studies are not appropriate times for an individual conference.

Please contact your child's teacher when a conference is needed. All follow up conferences should be scheduled through the Guidance Department.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline at Valley Ridge Academy is thought of in terms of academic discipline as well as behavior. Children are expected to interact with one another in a positive, constructive manner so as not to impede the process of learning whether it be a game on the playground, a social studies lesson, or an art or music experience. Self-control, proper language, and respect for peers and adults is emphasized and expected. We want parents to reinforce these feelings as well.

Academic discipline is a realization on the child's part that classwork and homework are expected to be completed in a timely and neat manner. Incomplete assignments and failure to prepare properly, lead to the child being under considerable pressure. Parents are asked to encourage academic discipline but not to create unreasonable expectations for their child.

Our faculty is a caring and supportive group of professionals. They have a very keen sense of the individual and varied needs of the children. Discipline problems are dealt with for the most part by teachers with the full support of the school administration. We hope to have very few problems because of the great support and interest of our teachers and parents in the children. All discipline communication will run through the Dean's Office.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL AND DAILY SCHEDULE

To ensure your child's safe and prompt departure from and arrival to school, please adhere to the following procedures:

1. Utilize the entrance roadway and circular drive provided, for a smooth and safe arrival and dismissal for all grade levels. Specific drop-off and pick-up locations are indicated on the arrival and dismissal information flyer. Children should exit and enter only from the right side of the vehicles. Faculty and staff will assist. Cars should not be parked and left unattended during peak hours in the morning and afternoon. Visitors to the school office should park in the parking lot.
2. Children should proceed immediately to their classrooms when dropped off.
3. Fire Department regulations require parents to remain with their cars at arrival/dismissal times and maintain a single line only.
4. All roadways in the immediate area of the campus are heavily traveled and caution is urged at all times. No children should be picked up or dropped off in the parking area.
5. Parents must utilize the car hangers provided in order to help identify cars and keep our children safe.
6. Note: Parent pick-up students, not picked up by 3:00 p.m. or by 2:00 p.m. on Wed., will be placed in our Extended Day Program. Parents will be responsible for a \$60.00 registration fee plus daily child care fees.

7. The parent drop-off/pick-up area is located at the front of the school from the EAST parking lot only. Parents may not leave a car unattended in this area.
8. Drivers are required to follow the instructions of the staff in order to keep the pick-up line moving safely.
9. Students are not permitted on campus prior to 8:00 a.m. unless they are registered with the Extended Day Enrichment Program.

Dismissal during the first weeks of school may be lengthy; however, we appreciate your patience and cooperation in the safe dismissal of all children. **The use of cellphones when driving on campus is prohibited.**

DRESS CODE

It is our expectation that the learning environment at Valley Ridge Academy remain focused on academic excellence. Dressing appropriately for school will help students remain focused on high achievement. Students should be proud of the way he/she dress. Cleanliness, good grooming, neatness and modesty are important standards of appearance. The administration has the discretion to determine what is appropriate and inappropriate any time during the school year. **Please review the dress code before planning a shopping trip for school clothes.**

- Leggings, J'eggings, tights, yoga pants, and 100% spandex garments must be covered by an approved outer garment **that covers the area from the waist to four inches above the knee.**
- No cleavage, midriff or revealing clothing
- No sleeveless clothing or muscle shirts, unless worn underneath appropriate outerwear
- No clothes with holes, rips, tears or frays above the knee
- No spaghetti strap tops, tank tops, off the shoulder shirts, strapless tops or strapless dresses, unless worn underneath appropriate outerwear
- No exposed underwear or underwear worn as outer apparel
- No pajamas worn as clothing or breakaway sports clothing
- No bandanas, gloves, dog collars/chokers, or heavy chains
- No flip-flops, house slippers or backless shoes
- No steel-toed boots, platform shoes, or roller-skate shoes
- No extreme make-up or hair styles (no shaved Mohawks, no numbers or letters may be shaved into the sides/back of heads)
- No unnatural hair color may be used to color or highlight
- No facial piercing
- Belts, overalls, and suspender straps must be fastened and worn appropriately at all times
- Shirts do not have to be tucked in, unless the shirt is determined to be a hazard or a distraction by the administration
- ALL pants must be worn on the waist
- Hats, caps, sunglasses, visors or other headgear may not be worn **in school.** These items must be placed in lockers/designated areas and may not be removed until students are dismissed to go home
- Shirts with profanity, confederate flags, or inappropriate slogans or advertising alcohol, drugs, sex, weapons, racial

and/or ethnic slurs, sadistic or violent themes will not be permitted

- P.E. clothes should not be worn during regular class time.
- Hand rings with sharp points or rings that cover more than one finger are not permitted
- Students are not to write, apply glitter or place stickers on their bodies. They should not have markings to include ink or marker
- All dresses, skirts, and shorts must be worn no shorter than four inches above the knee
- Pants must be appropriate length and not touch the floor
- Pants with words or slogans printed on the seat are not permitted
- ANYTHING not mentioned above that is considered a distraction to the learning environment by the administration will be considered a violation

Dress Code Violation Procedures:

1. The parent will be asked to bring a change of clothing to school, if the students do not have an appropriate change of clothes.
2. Students will wait in the clinic or office until the appropriate change of clothing arrives, as determined by administration.
3. If a parent is unavailable, a student will be sent to the Dean's office for the remainder of the day, as determined by administration.

EARLY CHECK-OUT

Parents must provide a written excuse for any student requiring early checkout. The time and reason for leaving school should be included. Students will turn in the request to their teacher in the morning and will stay in class until someone in the front office calls for them to be dismissed. Children will be released only to their parents or to individuals named on the Emergency Card. **Students may not be checked out later than 2:15 p.m. each day and 1:15 p.m. on Wednesdays.**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones must be **OFF** and **OUT OF SIGHT**, unless used for instructional purposes as authorized by the classroom teacher. Cell phones must remain out of sight during lunch, recess and hallway times. Please refer to the district **Student Code of Conduct** for more details on this policy.

Valley Ridge Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged cell phones/electronic devices.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Emergency drills will be conducted throughout the school year. We conduct monthly fire drills as required by the Florida Fire Prevention Code. We will also practice drills for the following scenarios: severe weather, bomb threat, lockdown, and shelter-in-place. Our severe weather drill relocates students to safer areas of our buildings. A bomb threat may require a building evacuation and/or an off-site evacuation. Our emergency off-site evacuation location is Nease High School. A lockdown procedure is used to secure the campus from a potentially dangerous intruder or other threatening or hazardous condition. The shelter-in-place drill is a short-term solution to a

short-term problem. This short-term measure is designed to use a facility and its indoor atmosphere to temporarily separate people from a hazardous outdoor environment. Our school district also requires bus evacuation drills for our bus riders. Safety is of the utmost importance.

EXTENDED DAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

The Extended Day Enrichment Program is operated for the convenience of working parents. It provides an extended day that compliments and coincides with the philosophy of our school.

The Extended Day Enrichment Program is closed on all days that school is closed. Children who are unable to participate in outside activities or play due to runny noses or recent colds should not be sent to school or the Extended Day Enrichment Program. Staffing does not allow for individual or small group supervision inside.

Children in Grades 1-5 will have an opportunity to get a head start on their homework during the Extended Day Enrichment Program.

We wish to assist parents in their important job of parenting. We appreciate being made aware of special situations which may cause a child to need extra support and nurturing. All children will be provided with an afternoon snack.

A fee schedule and program handbook is available on the school website.

FIELD STUDIES

Educational field study trips are planned by grade levels and by certain clubs and organizations. When a child's history suggests that he/she is likely to present a discipline problem which jeopardizes his/her safety or the safety of others, that child may be denied permission to participate in a field study.

No children, including siblings, relatives, or friends, may attend a field study unless they are part of the group for whom the trip was arranged. Only parents and guardians of children for whom the trip was arranged may serve as chaperones and must be approved and cleared through a criminal record check. All participating students must ride the school bus to and from those field study trips that begin and end during the regular school day. Parents may elect to transport their own children to a field study or an event if it occurs outside of the hours for a regular school day. Administration reserves the right to revoke field study privileges, deny refunds, or approve alternative means of transportation on an individual, case-by-case basis.

FOOD ALLERGIES

The school cannot guarantee that a student will never experience an allergy-related event while at school but we are committed to student safety, and therefore have created this policy to reduce the risk that children with allergies will have an allergy-related event.

The school recognizes that allergies, in some instances, may be severe and even occasionally life threatening. For children with severe allergies, it is the family's responsibility to notify the School, in

writing, of the allergies at the time of admission or immediately following diagnosis; whichever is first. The school nurse and campus administrators will work with parents to determine the feasibility of protocols and to create an action plan. The School is not a “peanut free” school; however, we will notify classmates of children with severe allergies and request that parents not send snacks or lunches to school that contain peanuts, tree nuts, or nut oil products. We cannot however, guarantee that this will never occur. In addition, we cannot guarantee that products with nuts will never be present as we cannot monitor products sold at athletic events or special student sales, products brought for potlucks or celebrations, or served on off campus trips. Therefore, persons with severe food allergies must carefully monitor their food in these situations.

FORGOTTEN MATERIALS

The front office will be happy to place forgotten homework, PE uniforms, band instruments, laptops, school supplies, or projects in the teacher’s box. Students are responsible for bringing these items to school therefore class will not be interrupted. The only exception to the policy is a student’s lunch or lunch money.

GRADES

Grades reflect the skills a child gradually develops to become a student. These include self-discipline, learning to study, responsibility, ability to question and reason, and comprehension. Please do not let your child’s grades reflect your ability as a parent. Parents should give support, direction, and concern to their child; however, a “finished-for-them” project or assignment is not productive and frustrates a teacher’s attempt to pinpoint specific difficulties a student may have.

GRADING SCALE

The Governor and Legislature of the State of Florida has set the following grading scale for all students in public schools in the state:

A.....90-100%.....Outstanding Progress
B.....80-89%Above Average Progress
C.....70-79%..... Average Progress
D.....60-69%.....Lowest Acceptable Progress
F.....0-59%.....Unacceptable Progress

Grades K-2 report cards reflect a different model. Please refer to the St. Johns District County School website for more information.

GUIDANCE

The school counselors provide guidance services. The primary function is to assist students with their educational and personal development. This is carried out through classroom programs, individual and small group counseling with students, conferences with parents and teachers, individual educational testing, and working with the MTSS/RtI Team.

Valley Ridge Academy will have two Guidance Counselors to serve our students.

HEAD LICE

Please do not be overly alarmed if your child develops head lice. Any child with head lice or nits may not attend school by order of St. Johns

County Health Department. Students with head lice are permitted three excused absences. Our procedures are as follows:

- Any child found to have head lice or nits will be isolated and sent home. A call will be made to a parent to pick up the child immediately. The child will be excluded from school until he/she is completely free of live lice and nits (eggs).
- The school nurse will examine the child prior to admission back to school. A parent must accompany the child for this examination. Should the child still have lice or nits, he/she MUST leave the school premises for treatment.
- A letter will be sent to parents of all children in the classroom to inform them of how to detect head lice and its treatment. Other children in the class may be checked for lice.

HEALTHY INITIATIVE

Valley Ridge Academy Healthy Initiative Plan provides students with healthy options in our lunchroom by providing fruits and vegetables. Cafeteria items are always baked and never fried. Cookies, ice cream, and other high sugar /high fat products are not available to students through the lunch program. For safety reasons, please do not send sodas or other drinks in glass containers. In addition, students in grades K-5 will participate in 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Please partner with us to instill and develop healthy habits in our children.

HOMEWORK

Homework presents an opportunity for the teacher to reinforce or review material covered during the day. Assessments in the form of tests, quizzes, and projects are also part of the homework process. Children should be encouraged to do their homework at a regular time and in a place free of distractions. Please assist your child as needed in organizing his/her time to complete assignments and to prepare for periodic tests, quizzes, and projects.

Children in Grade 1 should expect on average approximately ten minutes of homework on Monday – Thursday night. The amount of the work increases by ten minutes for each grade culminating with eighty minutes nightly in Grade 8. This should be in addition to reading and practicing math facts. Homework is not assigned on weekends or during vacations; however, reading, journal writing, and academic review are encouraged. Occasionally long-term projects will require additional time or appropriate planning.

Parents are asked to communicate closely with their child’s classroom teacher anytime assigned homework appears excessive or particularly challenging for their child.

ILLNESS

If a student is not feeling well, he/she should inform the classroom teacher and will be sent to the nurse, as needed. Every effort will be made to contact the parent. Students will be released for medical reasons only with permission from the parent/guardian or from the person designated on the Student Emergency Information Form.

Students who are absent from school for the following reasons require a physician's statement confirming the student's ability to return to school and any necessary limitations or restriction:

1. Measles, mumps, chicken pox, ringworm, scarlet fever, strep infection, mononucleosis, hepatitis, pink eye.
2. Absence due to an extended illness or surgery.
3. Students who may not participate in sports or gym classes following an extended illness or surgery.

ITEMS BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

Animals- Animals should not be brought to school.

Aerosol Cans or Pump Sprays- Students are not permitted to have aerosol cans or pump sprays at school to include those containing food or used for personal hygiene.

Balloons- Having balloons delivered or brought to school is not allowed.

Bicycles- **Students riding a bicycle (or skateboard) to school must wear a helmet. (s.316.2065 F.S.).** Once on campus, bicycles and skate boards must be walked, parked, and locked in the bike rack. Please note that skateboards may not have lockable access, however, they will remain outside in the bicycle rack areas. Roller blades are not permitted on school grounds.

Cards- Playing or trading cards are not allowed at school.

Chewing Gum- Students may **NOT** chew gum at school.

Personal Electronics Devices- Radios, tape recorders, CD players, MP3's, electronic toys, laser pointers, video games, beepers, cameras, t.v.'s, head sets and hand held games are **NOT** to be brought to school.

Valley Ridge Academy is not responsible for any personal electronic devices that are lost, stolen, or damaged in the event that any device is brought to school.

*****NON-SCHOOL ISSUED CAMERAS OR RECORDING DEVICES ARE NOT PERMITTED*****

Wheeled devices- Heelies, or roller blades may not be brought to school for any reason.

Toys- Toys should not be brought to school. Bringing a toy gun or any other toy weapon to school without the permission of the principal will result in suspension.

Water Bottles- While juices may be consumed in the cafeteria, only water may be brought into classrooms due to the rooms being carpeted. Energy drinks are never allowed on school campus, including before and after school.

LOCKS AND LOCKERS

Lockers will be assigned at the beginning of the year to all middle grade (6-8) students. All students must use a combination lock(s) provided by Valley Ridge Academy. A deposit of \$5.00 will cover PE, band, and homeroom lockers. Parents may ask for the deposit returned through a written request received by the school's bookkeeper no later than twenty days prior to the last day of school. Only locks provided by Valley Ridge Academy are permitted. Students are REQUIRED to use a school issued lock on homeroom, band, and PE lockers at all times. It is very important that students keep their locker combination confidential so locker contents are secure. If a student should misplace his/her lock, another lock will need to be replaced at the cost of \$10.00 per lock. We recommend that students

do not leave valuables in their locker. These lockers are for a convenience, but are school property, and the administration reserves the right to inspect the contents of a locker. Lost or stolen items will not be investigated if this procedure is not followed.

LOST AND FOUND

Please check the "Lost and Found" area for lunch boxes and clothing. Articles such as glasses and jewelry, etc. will be placed in the front office. Unclaimed articles are periodically donated to organizations that support those in need. Please put your child's name in all clothing brought to school.

LUNCH

Students may purchase a hot, balanced meal, from the cafeteria daily, or they may bring lunch. Milk is sold separately. Ala carte contains pizza and other items which can become costly. If you do not want your child to use the a la carte line, please notify the cafeteria manager. If you plan to buy lunch on a regular basis, it is preferred that lunches be paid on a weekly or monthly basis on Monday mornings. Breakfast is also available each day. Alternate sandwiches and milk will be provided if students do not have lunch money. Please make checks payable to Valley Ridge Academy, put the student's name and lunch account number on the check, and have the student give the check to his/her teacher. Please note that students are unable to charge lunches. Parents are encouraged to establish a PayPams online lunch payment account found at www.paypams.com. Parents will be required to know his/her child's four-digit ID (pin) number which is assigned to each student at the beginning of the school year. This ID number remains the same for grades PK-8. Parents will be able to make payments, track purchases, and view student balances. Email notification for low balances will also be received. A transaction fee is associated with this service.

Free/reduced lunch applications are sent home during the first days of school and are available throughout the school year in the school office. Please note that this is an annual application and must be completed each year.

The cafeteria is a vital part of our school. A well-balanced breakfast and lunch are offered at a reasonable price. All students are expected to display acceptable decorum by:

- Talking quietly
- Using good table manners
- Treating all employees and volunteers with respect
- Walking carefully
- Leaving the tables and floor around one's space in a clean condition for others

MEDICATION

If a child needs to take a prescribed or over-the-counter medication during the school day, a parent or guardian must bring the original bottle of medication to the office with a completed medical authorization form signed by the doctor. **Both prescription and non-prescription medication are not to be transported to and from school by students.** A medical authorization, signed by a doctor, is required for dispensing over-the-counter drugs such as

Tylenol or cough syrup. **Please note: all medication must be picked up in the clinic by the last day of school, otherwise it will be destroyed.**

PARENTS AND THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

Parents play an essential and positive role in the life of a child's education. Not only are parents advocates for their children, they also support the faculty and administration through extensive volunteer activities and events.

Trust and mutual respect are the most essential underpinnings of effective working relationships between parents and school employees.

Parent's best support a school climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns openly and constructively to the teacher or administrator closest to the problem.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

The PTO offers parents the opportunity to become involved in the life of the school. Parent volunteers work together to coordinate school-wide events and projects.

Parent involvement is essential to the continued success and growth of the school, and parents are encouraged to actively participate in the PTO. For more information about the PTO and opportunities to volunteer, visit our website.

PE UNIFORMS (6-8 grade students only)

Students in grades 6-8 will be required to purchase a PE uniform at the beginning of the school year. PE uniforms are available as a shirt/short set or individual items.

All middle school students enrolled in physical education classes will dress appropriately and participate in activities, unless they have a medical excuse. Excuses for a day's absence will be honored with a note from the parent, but if more than five days are missed, a doctor's excuse will be required.

PLANNERS AND DAILY SUCCESS

This planner should come home every night. Parents should check this assignment book and review papers and projects brought home. Please help your child to develop a timetable for projects. Let your child know he/she is responsible for assignments, not you as the parent and not the teacher. Students should read and practice math facts every day. Middle school students should use their planners to write down daily assignments. Also, Schoology is utilized daily by middle school teachers/students for communication and posting of assignments. **PLANNERS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE MANDATORY AS THEY ARE USED AS THE STUDENTS' HALL PASS.**

PUPIL DETENTION, SEARCH and SEIZURE

Administration, teachers, or any other members of the staff are authorized to temporarily detain and question a student when circumstances indicate that such student has committed, is

committing, or is about to commit a violation of law or a regulation of the school board.

1. If at any time reasonable suspicion arises that the student is unlawfully concealing any stolen or illegal property, an alcoholic beverage, illegal drugs, or any weapon as prohibited in these regulations, a member of the instructional staff may search for the presence of the items.
2. If a search of a student's locker or other property reveals stolen or illegal items as prohibited by law or school board regulations, such item or items may be seized and such action taken as provided by law or school board policy.

RAINY DAY

Please note that on rainy days arrival and dismissal procedures may vary from normal days. Please stay informed of policies as communicated.

REPORT CARDS AND INTERIMS

Report Cards and Interims are issued each nine weeks via the Home Access Center (HAC) for students in grades 3-8. Report Cards and Interim reports are issued in hard copy for grades K-2.

SAFETY PATROLS AND PREFECTS

The Safety Patrols (5th) perform a valuable service to our school by assisting students. Respect for these students while they are on duty is expected from all students and adults. Parents are asked to follow directions from Safety Patrols and staff while at school.

SCHOOL MESSENGER

School Messenger is a rapid phone notification system provided by our school district to communicate important or emergency information efficiently and rapidly to our parents. This system will be used primarily to provide accurate information to parents about scheduled events and any safety issues. We will also use the system to report student absences as applicable.

SNACKS

Children in grades K through 5 may bring a mid-morning snack from home each day. We ask that this be a nutritious item (apple, celery, orange, etc.) and never candy, the latest pre-sweetened breakfast cereal, or soft drinks.

SPIRIT WEAR

The PTO will sell spirit wear t-shirts, other articles of clothing, and various items to foster school spirit and generate funds for student materials and school activities. Grade levels may design t-shirts to be sold and worn on field trips and other class/grade level activities.

STUDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please make sure to complete all forms that are requested. It is imperative for our records to be as complete as possible on each child. Please include all emergency numbers, as well as cell phone numbers, and remember to notify the school office immediately if any information changes during the school year.

Students will not be released to anyone who is not listed on the emergency information card. If you would like a neighbor or friend to be eligible to pick up your child from school, please list his/her on the emergency contact card. Please make sure this information is updated whenever necessary.

TARDINESS

School begins at 8:25 a.m. Students are considered tardy when they are not in their classrooms ready to receive instruction at that time. Any student arriving at school after 8:25 a.m. must report to the front office to receive an admit slip before going to the classroom. Tardiness is disruptive to the learning environment and has a negative impact on student achievement. Studies have shown that students who are tardy have a higher risk of poor performance.

Tardy Consequences –

1. Excused tardies are granted only upon receipt of a note issued by a Professional Care Provider. Notes must be received on the day of the tardy or prior to the student's lunch period the following day. (Notes may be faxed to 904-547-4095.)
2. Parent notes are not acceptable in determining an excused tardy.
3. Students will serve a lunch detention for each unexcused tardy beyond his/her third unexcused tardy per quarter. Students are required to serve lunch detention without parental assistance.
4. Five unexcused tardies per quarter will result in a parent conference.
5. Students having more than five unexcused tardies per quarter will be referred to the RtI Team for development and execution of an action plan.
6. Tardies may result in exclusion of one's extra-curricular activities (i.e. school dance, sporting events).

Tardy Procedures –

1. Parents must escort his/her child to the main office when tardy for school.
2. Students are considered tardy any time they are not in their classroom ready to learn at 8:25 a.m.
3. Parents will receive a letter outlining the tardy policy each time their child is tardy for school.
4. Teachers and supervisors will be notified of those students serving lunch detention each day.
5. Students will serve lunch detention within two days of their tardy date.
6. Parents will be informed of such lunch detention.
7. Parents will have until the next day's lunch to provide a Professional Health Care Provider note.

VISITORS/VOLUNTEERS

Anyone entering the building during school hours must have an approved school access application on file and a valid drivers license. If a grandparent, aunt, friend, etc., wish to attend an event or field trip, volunteer in the classroom, or have lunch with a student he/she must follow this procedure. To complete the form, go to the VRA website: www-vra.stjohns.k12.fl.us. Click on school access, complete the application, and submit. Please allow no less than four weeks for the application to be approved. Teachers determine and pre-approve volunteer duties within their classroom. School-aged visitors, such as cousins or friends are not permitted to

join a student for the day. Only children who are registered at VRA may attend classes. It is the expectation that volunteers abide by the students' dress code when volunteering at VRA.

The Parent and School Partnership Agreement

The school emphasizes high academic achievement, good study skills, and positive character development. We set high standards for each child with whom we work, and then give support to enable him/her to meet these expectations. We expect our students throughout their years here to achieve success in becoming self-motivated and in assuming responsibility for their actions.

We value an atmosphere of genuine respect and courtesy between student and student, adult and student, and adult and adult.

In partnership, we mutually agree to:

1. Promote the school mission as an inclusive, diverse community of learners and educators.
2. Treat all members of the school with respect and civility.
3. Help support a home environment that encourages the development of positive learning attitudes and habits including, among other things, consistent, on-time drop off and pick up, regular sleeping routines, and disciplined access to electronic media.
4. Create a culture of mutual respect and high social and academic expectations.
5. Resolve conflicts and questions in the spirit of partnership and objectivity and assume that there are at least two sides to every disagreement.
6. Respect the school's responsibilities to do what is best for the entire community and for the promulgation of itself as an educational institution.
7. Respect the confidentiality of all aspects of the children's experience, including grades, assessments, and the experiences of his or her peers.
8. Communicate effectively, efficiently, and truthfully with each other about all aspects of the child's experience.
9. Nurture all children towards an evolving and developmentally appropriate independence.