

ABSENCE

When students leave home in the morning, parents assume they arrive safely at school. When students don't arrive at school, teachers assume they are at home.

In order that the school is certain of the safety and whereabouts of students, parents/ guardians must phone the school between 7:45-9:00 AM to inform the school secretary of a student's absence, the reason for the absence, and the length of time the student will be absent.

If a parent/guardian does not call the school, the school will make every effort to communicate with the parent/guardian regarding the absence. The parent is responsible for providing the school with current home and/or work telephone numbers so this communication can occur. In addition, the parent is asked to notify the school of any changes.

When returning to school, a note from a parent/guardian or doctor must be provided if a parent has not contacted the school office earlier. After five (5) consecutive days absent, a doctor's note is required for re-admittance to school. Absences of more than two (2) hours in grades K-5 will be considered a half-day's absence.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused Absences from school may be granted for all or part of a day when the parents notify the school promptly for such reasons as:

1. Absences excused by Indiana Law
 - A. Absence due to student's illness or injury.
 - B. Absence due to death in the immediate family.
 - C. Absence arranged in advance through parental contact with the principal or his/her designee.
 - D. Absence of an unusual or emergency nature that is approved by the principal or his/her designee.
 - E. Illness for which there is verification from a doctor or school nurse that states the student should not be in school for specified days.
 - F. Court appearance.
 - G. Service in the state legislature.
 - H. Recognized religious holidays.
2. In addition, a student will not be counted as absent from school for the following reasons when legal documentation is submitted:
 - A. An absence due to approved school-related field trips, rehearsals, contests, etc.
 - B. Court appearance when required by legal authorities. (A student is expected to attend school except for the time of the court appearance.)
 - C. Homebound or institutionalized student. (A student must be receiving tutoring).

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE/TRUANCY

An unexcused absence is an absence from school for all day or for any single part of the day for activities such as family errands, missing the bus, family vacation, recreation, or instances when a parent contact with the school has not occurred. In most instances, an unexcused absence

would violate the Indiana mandatory school attendance law.

Truancy is absence from school for all day or any part of the day initiated by the student without parental/guardian consent under circumstances not covered by law or recognized by the school. Truancy is a serious matter and administrative action will be taken as follows:

1. Students will be required to make up work missed; and,
2. A parent will be notified.

Excessive absences and/or truancy will be reported to Project ATTEND and appropriate services provided. Continued disregard of the Indiana Compulsory Attendance Law may result in legal action.

TARDINESS

Since punctuality is an important value for everyone, tardiness will be handled as a rule infraction and will be dealt with accordingly. A student who is late for school is to report to the school office to sign in. Parents/Guardians are requested to send a note or phone the school to explain the tardiness. Habitual tardiness will result in referral as a disciplinary matter to the principal. This includes tardiness to school in the morning. Additional instruction time may be required of students who are frequently tardy.

PROJECT ATTEND

Project ATTEND (**A**iming **T**oward **T**ruancy **E**limination and **N**on-attendance **D**ecrease) is designed to assist children and their parents in an effort to eliminate excessive full/partial day absenteeism and excessive tardiness. When the school has exhausted all options in dealing with excessive absenteeism and/or tardiness, there may be a referral to the Project ATTEND Program. This program provides a partnership between families, juvenile probation officers, a juvenile deputy prosecuting attorney, a representative from the Office of Families and Children, a representative from Family Court, and the school. This program is voluntary; however, if a student's attendance does not improve after the services offered by Project ATTEND, the child may be referred to Juvenile Court and charges may be filed against the parents for educational neglect.

APPOINTMENTS

1. Parents/Guardians are to arrange in advance for absences during the school day due to medical, dental, or legal appointments by contacting the school principal or his/her designee.
2. Students going to appointments are to bring a note to the school office from a parent/guardian stating the time of the appointment and reason for release.
3. The student will be released from the school office (not the classroom) to the parent/guardian after the child has been signed out.
4. When returning from an appointment, the student is to come to the school office to sign in before going to class.
5. An appointment of more than two (2) hours is considered an absence from class and make-up work assigned by the teacher is allowed one day for completion.

PLANNED FAMILY ABSENCE

The Valparaiso Community Schools recognize that vacations and out-of-town trips do not always coincide with school vacations. In order to be fair to both the school and the students involved, parents desiring to have their child(ren) absent from school for family trips must follow these procedures:

1. The parent/guardian should arrange with the principal at least three days in advance for the student to be out of school.
2. The student will be counted absent, and the absence will be marked unexcused.
3. The parent(s) must tell the child's teacher of the planned absence. The student is responsible for work missed during the absence. At the discretion of the teacher, homework may be provided in advance if appropriate assignments are available. The amount of time allowed for make-up work shall be one day for each day absent.
4. When the above arrangements have been met and the work is made up on time, there will be no penalty assessed for the absence.

CHRONIC ABSENTEE/HABITUAL TRUANT DESIGNATION

Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 338 defines "chronic absenteeism" as a student who is absent 10% or more of the school year for any reason. Furthermore, SEA 338 defines a "habitual truant" as a student who is absent for 10+ days without excuse or absent under parental request filed by the school. As a result of SEA 338, VCS is required to continuously monitor student attendance, reduce absenteeism and truancy, and report students who are chronically absent or habitually truant to the State, which includes a referral to Project Attend.

ATTENDANCE HONORS

Perfect attendance will be awarded recognition by each school principal.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTING

ILEARN:

The state of Indiana requires that students participate in the ILEARN Assessment as directed by the State of Indiana Department of Education. This test is given in the spring. It measures student achievement in reading, language, mathematics, social studies, and science in order to determine the progress of students and assist them in attaining school district and Indiana State Department goals. The results of these tests help determine which students qualify for remediation. Grade levels and subject areas assessed are grade 3 mathematics, reading and language; grade 4 mathematics, reading, language, and science; grade 5 mathematics, reading, language, and social studies.

IREAD-3

Third grade students in VCS will take the Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD-3) assessment. The purpose of the IREAD-3 assessment is to measure foundational reading standards through grade

three. While the educational focus for students in kindergarten through second grade is learning to read, a student's academic achievement level from fourth grade until graduation is based on that student reading to learn. Passing the IREAD-3 assessment is critical because, according to Indiana Code, beginning with the 2012 – 2013 school year, a student will be retained if he/she does not achieve a passing score on the IREAD-3 assessment during the previous school year unless good cause exemptions are available per Indiana Code.

OTHER STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Additional assessments of student progress are administered at various grade levels through standardized and criterion-referenced tests. These tests help determine the progress of students and assist them in attaining school district and State Department goals. The results of these tests help determine which students qualify for remediation.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

To ensure the safety of all students, all school day volunteers and visitors are required to complete and pass a Limited Background Check at least one week in advance of the scheduled visit. Each Limited Background Check is valid for one school year and is required to be renewed each school year. This applies to visitors to school during the school day, classroom volunteers, and chaperones on study trips. Limited Background Check applications are available in the school office as well as on the Valparaiso Community Schools website.

BEHAVIOR

The Valparaiso elementary schools establish fair, workable, consistent, and educationally productive procedures by which the classroom and other areas of learning will operate, based on an analysis of the program, the maturity level of the students, and their needs, abilities, and interests. In general, students are expected to:

1. Treat everyone with respect.
2. Refrain from fighting and using profanity.
3. Be respectful of their school and the property of others.
4. Act as responsible and cooperative school citizens.

Most of our students demonstrate responsibility and follow school rules and are, therefore, regularly recognized for their good behavior.

If a student misbehaves in school, he/she will be subject to one or more of the following consequences depending on the severity and/or frequency of the misbehavior:

1. Verbal warning
2. Loss of recess
3. Isolation from other students
4. After-school detention
5. Note or phone call to parent
6. Conference with the principal

7. Conference with the parents
8. Loss of special privileges (i.e., field trips, Intramurals, class parties, etc.)
9. Restitution
10. Removal from school bus
11. In-school suspension
12. Out-of-school suspension
13. Expulsion

Valparaiso Community Schools' Behavior Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

In order to function properly, public school education must provide an equal learning opportunity for all students. In addition to the regular curriculum, principles and practices of good citizenship (including an appreciation for the rights of others) must be taught and demonstrated. However, no school or school system can discharge these responsibilities if it permits students to act in an objectionable manner or to disregard rules and regulations adopted for the benefit of all.

The foundation of public school education is based upon the concept of self-discipline which allows individuals to exist in a world of change and with the rights afforded them by our federal and state constitutions. Standards of conduct are necessary to assure that students seeking to express their own individual rights do not, at the same time, infringe upon the rights of others. The responsibility for the development and maintenance of self-discipline falls to the cooperative efforts of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community.

Much of the responsibility for rule making, enforcing disciplinary procedures, and other authority as reasonably necessary to carry out the school purposes of the school corporation is delegated by the Board of Education to responsible officials within the Valparaiso Community Schools. The purpose of discipline controls is to help create an atmosphere that promotes the best possible learning environment for all those involved in the education process. In all matters relating to the discipline and conduct of students, school corporation personnel stand in the relation of parents and guardians to the students of the school corporation. Therefore, school corporation personnel have the right to take disciplinary action necessary to promote student conduct that conforms to an orderly and effective education system.

An environment that permits the teaching-learning process to proceed in an orderly manner is the objective of all school personnel. School staff members will make every effort, individually, collectively, and cooperatively with appropriate available community resources to help each student gain acceptable self-discipline standards.

However, in the absence of self-discipline, the superintendent, principal, and administrative personnel, or any teacher of the school corporation is authorized to take certain actions reasonably desirable or necessary to

help any student, to further school purposes, or to prevent an interference with the education process.

Some behavior is much more serious than other behavior and requires different approaches and clearly defined actions. Verbal warnings, detention, Saturday classes (not an elementary option), reprimand, probation, referral to special personnel in the schools (counselor, assistant principal, principal), parent conferences, restitution, suspension, and expulsion are examples of devices available to school personnel in dealing with pupils who are involved in school discipline problems. Any or all the techniques may be used.

Certain acts of misconduct will subject the student to suspension or expulsion from school.

Suspension: Subject to the procedural provisions of the applicable Indiana State Statutes, a student may be suspended by a building principal for a period of not more than ten (10) school days for any conduct constituting grounds for expulsion. A hearing examiner may continue the suspension until the date of an expulsion or until the date the hearing examiner makes a report of his or her findings and recommendations of the action to be taken to the superintendent.

Expulsion: Valparaiso Community Schools recognizes that removal from the educational programs at the school by expulsion is the most severe sanction that can be imposed on a student and one that cannot be imposed without due process since removal deprives a child of the right to an education. In accordance with the due process procedures defined in this policy and by Indiana Code 20-33-8, with the exception of a violation of rule 17 listed under the grounds for Suspension or Expulsion in this policy, a student may not be expelled for a longer period than the remainder of the school year in which the expulsion took effect if the misconduct occurs during the first semester. Whenever a student is expelled during the second semester, the expulsion remains in effect for summer school and may remain in effect for the first semester of the following school year. At the discretion of the administration, an Expulsion Waiver Agreement may be offered to the student when deemed appropriate.

Grounds for suspension or expulsion: a student may be suspended or expelled for engaging in unlawful activity on or off school ground if the unlawful activity may be reasonably considered as an interference in school purposes or an educational function, or the student's removal is necessary to restore order or protect persons on school property. This includes any unlawful activity meeting the above criteria which takes place during weekends, holidays, other school breaks, and the summer period when a student may not be attending classes or other school functions.

The grounds for suspension or expulsion apply when a student is:

1. On school grounds immediately before, during, and immediately after school hours and at any other time when the school is being used by a school group;
2. Off school grounds at a school activity, function, or event; or
3. Traveling to or from school or a school activity, function, or event, including school buses.

4. Habitual misbehavior of any kind may lead to suspension and/or expulsion.

Grounds for suspension or expulsion are student misconduct or substantial disobedience. The following includes examples of student misconduct or substantial disobedience, but are not limited to:

1. Using violence, force, noise, coercion, threat, intimidation, fear, passive resistance, harassment (verbal or physical which includes but is not limited to sexual, racial, and ethnic) or other comparable conduct constituting an interference with school purposes, or urging other students to engage in such conduct. The following enumeration is illustrative of the type of conduct which may result in expulsion:
 - a) Occupying any school building, school ground, or part thereof with intent to deprive others of its use.
 - b) Blocking the entrance or exits of any school building or corridor or room therein with intent to deprive others of lawful access to or from, or use of the building, corridor, or room.
 - c) Setting fire to or damaging any school building or property.
 - d) Falsely activating the fire alarm system; setting off firecrackers or similar items.
 - e) Prevention of or attempting to prevent by physical act the convening or continued functioning of any school or educational function, or of any lawful meeting or assembly on school property.
 - f) Continually and intentionally making noise or acting in any manner so as to interfere seriously with the ability of a teacher or any other school personnel to conduct the educational function under their supervision.

However, none of the foregoing restrictions are to be construed as to make any particular student's conduct a ground for expulsion where such conduct is constitutionally protected as an exercise of free speech or assembly or other rights under the Constitution of Indiana or the United States.

2. Causing or attempting to cause damage to school property, stealing or attempting to steal school property or being in possession of stolen school property.
3. Causing or attempting to cause damage to private property, stealing or attempting to steal private property or being in possession of stolen private property.
4. Causing or attempting to cause physical injury or intentionally behaving in such a way as could reasonably cause physical injury to any person.
5. Threatening or intimidating any student for the purpose of, or with the intent of, obtaining money or anything of value from the student.
6. Possessing, handling, or transmitting a knife or any other object that looks like or can be reasonably considered a weapon or other dangerous device, including but not limited to chains, stars, numb chucks, metal knuckles, spiked bands, laser light pens, etc.
7. Possessing or attempting to possess, using or attempting to use, selling or attempting to sell illicit drugs, drug related paraphernalia,

- substances represented to be illicit drugs, prescription drugs, alcohol, stimulant, inhalant, intoxicant of any kind, or/and any product that produces an altered mental or physical state when used.
8. Providing or bartering for illicit drugs, drug related paraphernalia, substances represented to be illicit drugs, prescription drugs, alcohol, stimulant, inhalant, intoxicant of any kind, or/and any product that produces an altered mental or physical state when used.
 9. Failing in a substantial number of instances to comply with directions of teachers or other school personnel during any period of time when the student is properly under their supervision, where the failure constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function.
 10. Engaging in any activity forbidden by the laws of Indiana that constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function.
 11. Violating or repeatedly violating any rules that are reasonably necessary to carry out school purposes or educational functions and are validly adopted in accordance with Indiana law.
 12. Failing to comply with the smoking/tobacco restrictions for school buildings.
 13. Being absent; truant from school or class without the knowledge or consent of the parent or school, or absent from school when there is an attempt to evade the School Attendance law.
 14. Engaging in any speech, drawings or conduct that is lewd, vulgar, indecent, or offensive to the purposes of the Valparaiso Community Schools; including, but not limited to speech, drawings, social or digital media, or conduct that relates to cults, street gangs, skinheads, etc., that are disruptive to the educational atmosphere or that relates to acts of serious disrespect to school employees.
 15. Failing to notify school officials or to secure administrative authorization to attend Valparaiso Community Schools as a tuition student if a student's legal settlement or residency is not within the attendance boundaries of the Valparaiso Community Schools or failing to pay tuition.
 16. Aiding, assisting, or conspiring with another person to violate student conduct rules or state or federal law.
 17. Possession of a firearm or other deadly weapons.
 - a) No student shall possess, handle or transmit any firearm on school property.
 - b) The following devices are considered to be firearms or other deadly weapons:
 - Any weapon which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive;
 - The frame or receiver of any weapon described above;
 - Any firearm muffler or silencer;
 - Any destructive device which is an explosive,

incendiary, or poison, gas bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, mine or any similar device;

- Any weapon which will, or which may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and which has any barrel with a bore of more than one-half inch in diameter;
 - Any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into any destructive device described in the two immediately preceding examples, and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled;
 - An antique firearm;
 - A rifle or a shotgun which the owner intends to use solely for sporting, recreations, or cultural purposes;
 - A weapon, device, laser or electronic stun weapon, equipment, chemical substances, or other material that in the manner it is used, or could ordinarily be used, or is intended to be used, is readily capable of causing serious bodily injury; or
 - An animal that is readily capable of causing serious bodily injury.
- c) The penalty for possession of a firearm: ten (10) days suspension and expulsion from school for one calendar year.
- d) The superintendent shall notify the county prosecuting attorney's office when a student is expelled under this rule.

18. Gang prevention.

The presence of gangs and gang activities can cause a substantial disruption to school and school activities. A "gang" is defined as any group of students who are perceived as a distinct group (not an approved school organization), which prompts a disruptive response in the school community.

The following rules act to prevent disruption and to prohibit gang activities by restricting those actions which foster such activities or which, because they may be performed in relation to gang activities, endanger even those students who do not intend to show gang membership or affiliation.

No student on school property or at any school activity:

- a) Shall wear, possess, use, distribute, display, or sell any clothing, jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol, sign, drawing, graffiti, or other items which may be viewed by school officials as evidence of membership in or affiliation with a gang.
- b) Shall commit any act or omission, or use any speech, either verbal or nonverbal (gestures, handshakes, drawing, graffiti, other written communications, etc.) showing membership or

affiliation in a gang.

- c) Shall use any speech or commit any act or omission in promoting the interests of any gang or gang activity, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Soliciting others for membership in any gangs;
 - 2) Intimidating or threatening any persons;
 - 3) Violating any other rules as stated in the student handbook;
19. Engaging in any kind of aggressive behavior that does physical or psychological harm to another person or urging of other students to engage in such conduct. Prohibited conduct includes coercion, harassment, bullying, hazing, or other comparable conduct.
20. Failing to report the actions or plans of another person to a teacher or administrator where those actions or plans, if carried out, could result in harm to another person or persons or damage property when the student has information about such actions or plans.
21. Failing to completely and truthfully respond to questions from a staff member regarding school-related matters including potential violations of the student conduct rules or state or federal law.
22. Bullying, Harassment and Threats (see Bullying section)

BOOK RENTAL FEE

Book rental fees are due in full at the beginning of each school year. Those unable to pay in full are required to sign a promissory note to have completed payment by the beginning of the second semester. Any amount still outstanding at this time will be referred for collection unless the parent has contacted the school office to arrange for a deferred payment schedule. Applications for free / reduced price meals and textbook rental assistance are available through the Parent Access online. If you believe your family is eligible for assistance, please complete the application as soon as possible. For those who qualify for free / reduced price meals, the State will pay a portion of the textbook rental and consumable costs due. **A new application must be submitted each school year.**

Bullying, Harassment, Threats

Valparaiso Community Schools is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. Valparaiso Community Schools encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the school community. Bullying behavior toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes physical, verbal, social/relational, and psychological abuse, electronic or written, as provided herein Valparaiso Community Schools will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or

actions which cause or threaten to cause bodily harm or personal degradation and/or create an objectively hostile learning environment. This policy applies when a student is on school grounds immediately before or during school hours, immediately after school hours, or at any other time when the school is being used by a school group; off school grounds at a school activity, function, or event; traveling to or from school or a school activity, function, or event; or, using property or equipment provided by the school. In accordance with Indiana state law, bullying prevention rules may also be applied regardless of the physical location in which the bullying behavior occurred as long as the actions take place between students of the same school district.

Bullying as defined in state law means overt, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal, written or digital/electronic communications transmitted, physical acts committed, or any other behaviors committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or substantially harm the other student. This type of behavior is a form of harassment, although it need not be based on any of the legally protected characteristics, such as sex, race, color, national origin, marital status, or disability. It would include, but not be limited to, such behaviors as stalking, intimidating, menacing, coercion, derogatory name-calling, taunting, making threats, and hazing.

If a student is the target of bullying or any unwanted sexual, gender, religious, racial, ethnic, or physical disability-related conduct or derogatory communications, the student should report such behavior to the office. All reports shall be kept confidential and shall be investigated in a timely manner. All threats of any nature will be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly. Threats of disrupting the educational process, administering bodily harm, damaging property, or committing acts of violence will all be dealt with severely. School board policies and administrative guidelines are in place stating that a student threatening others or threatening suicide may be required to be professionally evaluated before being allowed to return to school. "I was only kidding" is not a justifiable defense or excuse.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

In order to bring about safe and orderly transportation of pupils to and from the Valparaiso Community Schools, all parents/guardians should share the following information with students before each school year begins. (It is important for students to know that the safety of all

students may be directly connected with **their** individual behavior.) **The driver is in complete charge, and for the safety of all, must be obeyed.**

Expected school bus behavior:

1. Arrive at the bus stop before it is due. This common courtesy is appreciated by all.
2. Stay off the road at all times while walking to and waiting for the bus.
3. Line up single file off the roadway to enter the bus.
4. Wait until the bus is completely stopped and the driver has opened the door before moving forward to enter.
5. Do not cross a highway until the bus driver signals it is safe.
6. Go immediately to a seat and be seated. Standing or moving from seat to seat while the bus is in motion is not permitted.
7. Keep head, hands, arms, and legs inside the bus at all times.
8. Windows and doors are opened or closed only when the bus driver gives permission.
9. Do not litter in the bus or throw anything from the bus.
10. Do not throw books, caps, or other articles of clothing back and forth in the bus.
11. Keep books, packages, coats, backpacks, and all other objects out of the aisle.
12. Students shall not intentionally cause or attempt to cause damage to the school bus.
13. Refrain from loud, boisterous, or profane language. Be courteous to the driver and bus riders. Teasing, wrestling, or shoving is not allowed.
14. Cross the road when leaving the bus at least ten (10) feet in front of the bus, but only after the driver signals that it is safe.
15. Students should only depart from the bus at their regular stop or at school unless they have proper authorization from home (a parent note) or a school official.
16. Students are never to go between parked buses. Vehicles cannot react quickly enough if students emerge from between parked buses.
17. Students who ride with any person other than their parents or on a bus other than their own must first submit a note from their parent and are granted approval through the office.

Severe or repeated offenses may result in the issuance of a bus conduct form. The bus driver will complete this form and the principal will decide on appropriate consequences. A copy of the form is mailed to the parent.

A student who becomes a discipline problem on the bus may be deprived of the privilege of riding on the bus. If a student is suspended from the bus, the student's parent(s) shall be required to furnish transportation to and from school during the entire period of suspension.

CAFETERIA AND SCHOOL MEALS

Food and Nutrition Services serves healthy school meals every day in the cafeteria. School Breakfast is available in the cafeteria before school. School Lunch includes one main choice and two vegetarian choices. School meals include fruits, vegetables, and whole grain-rich foods; only fat-free or low-fat milk; less saturated fat and sodium; and are trans-fat free. Parents are welcome to join their child for lunch at school. Please call the school office by 9:00 am to make a reservation. Adult lunches must be paid in cash. Menus, prices and nutrition information are available online at www.valpo.k12.in.us.

Cafeteria Account

Every student has a cafeteria account. Their PIN is their student ID number and will remain the same throughout their years in Valpo Schools. Parents make deposits into their child's account and the amount of their purchase is automatically debited. Less cash handling in line means quicker service! Parents can make deposits and monitor their child's purchases online through Skyward's Family Access. Cash or checks (payable to VCS School Nutrition) sent to school for deposit must be attached to a Prepayment Form (available online).

Charge Policy

We understand that life is busy and it may be necessary for elementary students to charge meals. We will never discuss account financial information with elementary children, parents must monitor balances and make deposits when necessary to avoid negative balances.

Middle school students in grades 6-8 are allowed to charge two lunches. Once an account has gone negative below that limit, students will not be able to receive meals without cash payment.

High school students are not allowed to charge any purchases.

We will provide a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with milk (for a limited number of times) so that middle school and high school kids who come to school without money or a lunch from home will not go hungry.

Free and Reduced Price Meals

Free and reduced price family meal applications are available online and in every school office. During registration, parents will be prompted to complete an application online if they would like to receive meal benefits and textbook rental assistance. Because situations change, parents may apply at any time during the school year for benefits. The reduced price of School Breakfast is .30 and .40 for School Lunch. School Breakfast and School Lunch are free to those who qualify. Need help or have

questions? Call (219) 531-3050. Families must submit a new application every school year.

Food Allergies

Parents must complete an Allergy Action Plan and Dietary Prescription form with the school nurse before any meal substitutions can be made. Allergen and Nutrition Information is posted online to help parents and students make appropriate choices.

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM

Beginning at Grade 3, any student that submits work (tests, homework, projects, etc.) that is not his/her own or assists in submitting dishonest work engages in cheating. (Examples of assisting in submitting dishonest work include allowing others to use his/her work before, during, or after class, passing of test information, etc.)

1. The student will receive a letter grade of "F" or numerical grade of zero for the work.
2. The teacher will notify the parent of the dishonesty.
3. Repeated acts of dishonesty will be referred to the principal.

CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, & MOLESTATION

The statutes of the State of Indiana (IC-31-6-11) mandate that all public employees report to an authorized agency (The Department of Public Welfare Child Protective Services) any suspected physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse of a child. Under Indiana Law, failure of any school employee to report child abuse, neglect, or molestation is a class misdemeanor (up to \$1000 fine and/or 180 days in jail).

Procedures and guidelines have been developed to provide direction for staff members to meet these responsibilities and obligations under the law.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND NETWORKS

Computers are provided for staff and student use. The purpose is to provide Network (electronic mail and electronic bulletin board), electronic library services, and Internet access, herein after referred to as Network, for educational purposes. As such, this access will (1) assist in the collaboration and exchange of information, (2) facilitate personal growth in the use of technology, and (3) enhance information gathering and communication skills. Any misuse of a password access or Network will result in suspension or revocation of computer and/or Network privileges and/or other disciplinary actions determined by Valparaiso Community Schools. Misuse shall include using a home computer to interfere with the educational process.

Student E-locker Policy:

1. Students must have a signed Network and Internet Access Agreement

- on file in order to use their E-lockers.
2. The E-lockers are the property of the Valparaiso Community Schools.
 3. Students may not download any unauthorized programs such as software, music, mp3s, etc. to the E-lockers.
 4. Students are responsible for their E-lockers and their contents. Students should not share their E-lockers or give out their passwords to others.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

The Valparaiso Community Schools have established the following information about each student as "directory information": This includes a student's name, photograph, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, height and weight, if a member of an athletic team, dates of attendance, date of graduation, awards received, or any other information which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory information will not be provided to any organization for profit-making purposes.

Parents/guardians may refuse to allow the Valparaiso Community Schools to disclose any or all such "directory information". This may be done through written notification to a child's school within twenty (20) business days after distribution of this handbook.

DISSEMINATION-SOLICITATION ADVERTISEMENT

The Superintendent or his designee must approve a request for dissemination of any materials or advertisements or for the solicitation of funds.

DRESS AND APPEARANCE

Students are expected to observe ordinary standards of good grooming, with attire appropriate to a comfortable, but professional and working atmosphere keeping in mind the activities for the day and the weather. Students are expected to wear their clothing and to manage their appearance in a manner which does not disrupt the education process or promote vulgarity.

Students may wear shorts to school. These shorts should be loose-fitting dress or walking shorts of sufficient length with a finished hem. Cutoffs, running shorts, bathing suits, and short shorts are not allowed.

Students are not allowed to wear clothing advertising or promoting alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or other substances which, if used by a minor would be illegal; clothing promoting gangs or clothing with inappropriate language; attire that poses a threat to student health and safety or is a distraction to the educational process such as tank tops, short tops that expose the midriff, skin tight clothing, excessively short skirts, biking and athletic shorts, exposes the student's underwear, or is of a see-through nature, clothing which contains holes or fringes, outer jackets/coats, and hats. Clothing which may be deemed not in the best interest or harmful to the well-being of our students, a safety hazard, or disruptive to the learning process will not be allowed.

Students not following these guidelines will be asked to change their clothes. Refusal to change clothes or repeated problems will require a contact with the parent and a possible suspension or other disciplinary action.

When there is snow on the ground, students who do not have boots will be asked to stay in designated areas. Students are not allowed to walk around the building in their socks, so shoes must be provided when students wear boots to school.

Winter Dress Policy

In cold weather, please send your children with an appropriate combination of hats, gloves, coat, etc so they are comfortable playing outside. While discretion is exercised by staff, students normally go outside for recess if the "feels like" temperature is above zero (0) degrees. Students must wear boots and snow pants in order to play in the snow. Otherwise, they will be required to play in a designated area relatively free from snow. Hats and gloves/mittens are also needed every cold day and to play in the snow.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are discouraged from bringing electronic devices such as cell phones, camera phones, smart watches, radios, MP3 players, iPods, pagers, **digital cameras, video cameras**, etc. to school. The school will **NOT** be responsible for these lost or stolen items. Students must leave these items in their book bags and **NOT** carry them on their person. If these devices are used or visible during school hours or disrupt the educational process, the student may face disciplinary consequences. Violation of this policy can result in discipline up to and including suspension or expulsion, and notification of law enforcement authorities. In addition, if a student violates this policy, his/her cellular telephone or electronic device may be confiscated. Under such circumstances, the cellular telephone or electronic device will be released/returned to the student's parent/guardian after the student complies with any other disciplinary consequence that is imposed. ***There is to be no unauthorized videotaping or photographing of any part of the building, grounds, students, and staff without the prior written consent of the Valparaiso Community Schools. This section is not intended to prevent parents or other interested parties from videotaping extracurricular activities.***

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSIONS

"Sexting" or using a cell phone or other personal communication device to send text or email messages or possessing text or email messages containing images reasonably interpreted as indecent or sexually suggestive while at school or at a school related function is prohibited. In addition to taking any disciplinary action, phones will be confiscated and students should be aware that any images suspected to violate criminal laws will be referred to law enforcement authorities. I.C.35-42-4-4

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

If severe weather or other circumstance causes cancellation of the school program, school officials will use the school messenger system to send notice to announce the closing. Likewise, local radio stations will be contacted as soon as possible. The following local radio stations will announce closings:

WAKE AM 1500 WLJE FM 105.5

In addition, parents may access the following website for school closing information:

<http://www.cancellations.com>

Parents should instruct their children in advance where to go in case of an emergency school closing. Please do not call the school, school personnel, or the Administration Building on severe weather days. The phones need to be used to make the necessary cancellations on these days.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Parents/guardians must complete an emergency information card at the beginning of each school year. In order to provide emergency care to students in case of illness or injury, it is imperative that the following information be on file:

1. Names and telephone numbers of the employers of both parents/guardians;
2. Name and telephone numbers of two additional LOCAL residents (grandparent, neighbor, uncle, aunt, sister, brother) who are authorized to act on your behalf if a student needs to be sent home or there is an emergency;
3. Name and telephone number of the family doctor; and,
4. Parent signature, which authorizes emergency medical care.

Please be sure that accurate information is given to the school and that it is updated whenever changes occur.

ENTRANCE PROCEDURES

Students who qualify for admission to Valparaiso Community Schools must submit the following documents:

1. A birth certificate or other appropriate documentary evidence;
2. Court orders or placement papers, if applicable;
3. Proof of residency;
4. A home-school report, if applicable; and,
5. Immunization requirements as identified in Board Policy. (Available from the Principal)

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

KINDERGARTEN

Children shall be eligible for kindergarten provided they have attained the age of five (5) on or before August 1. If a parent or guardian is interested in applying for early entrance in kindergarten for his/her child, he/she should register in the spring during Kindergarten Roundup in his/her school. In addition, early entrance students must meet the following guidelines:

1. The child must be five years of age on or before September 1.
2. A written request for a waiver must be submitted by the legal guardian(s) to the Superintendent before July 17.
3. Early Prevention of School Failure and Slosson screening instruments will be administered.

FIRST GRADE

Unless a child meets the eligibility standards for early admission established in the superintendent's administrative guidelines, a child should have attained the age of six (6) years on or before August 1 to be eligible to enter first grade. Although it is not required, the Board strongly recommends that a child has attended a bona fide kindergarten program before entering first grade. No child shall be denied admission to first grade solely on the basis of age.

EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

The Board of Education declares it to be the policy of the Valparaiso Community Schools to provide an equal opportunity for all students. Any person who believes that the school or any staff person, student or agent of the Corporation has discriminated against or harassed a student on the basis of race, color, creed, disability, religion, gender, ancestry, national origin, place of residence within the boundaries of the school corporation, or social or economic background, has the right to file a complaint. Questions regarding Equal Education Opportunity should be directed to:

Human Resources
Valparaiso Community Schools
3801 N. Campbell Street
Valparaiso, IN 46385
Telephone: (219) 531-3000

FUND RAISING

In accordance with Board Policy, all fundraising activities must be approved by the principal if occurring on school district premises and by the superintendent if occurring within the boundaries of Valparaiso Community Schools.

GRADE SCALE

The Valparaiso Community Schools grading scale is as follows:

98-100	A+	77-79	C+
93-97	A	73-76	C

90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
59 & below	F		

When calculating a student's grade at the end of a marking period, percents ending with 0.5 or higher are to be rounded to the next higher percent. For example, 87.5% should be rounded to 88%.

HEALTH CARE

WELLNESS

The Valparaiso Community Schools has implemented a student wellness policy that supports increased emphasis on nutrition as well as physical activity at all grade levels. We value the health and well-being of every child and will plan activities and policies that support personal efforts by students to learn and maintain a healthy lifestyle. In planning for classroom parties, snacks, and birthdays, please make healthy food choices.

IMMUNIZATION

When a student enrolls into VCS at any grade level, the parent/guardian must provide record that their child has been immunized or that a religious or medical objection is on file. Your child may register, but school attendance will be denied until state immunization requirements are met. Failure to provide the required information beyond the date of the student's enrollment shall be just cause to deny attendance. Failure to adhere to the schedule for completion will cause denial of student attendance. Parents who object to immunization for religious or health reasons must complete an immunization waiver, available in the school office. In addition, a doctor's signature is required for any health reason. The school nurse must verify the waiver information annually. Required immunizations meet the Indiana State Department of Health school requirement guidelines.

MEDICATION

To safely administer medication/treatments required for a student's health and well-being while at school and to abide by Indiana law, the following guidelines shall be followed (includes ALL medications at the elementary school level both over-the-counter and prescription):

1. Dispensing medication or administering treatment at school without written instructions from both the parent/guardian and physician is prohibited. Verbal instruction does not meet legal requirements.
2. Written instructions should include date, student name, reason for giving, medication dose, time, duration, and signature.
3. All medications must be sent in the original labeled pharmacy or manufacturer's container.
4. All medications are kept under lock and key or in tamper proof containers. (An exception would be when a student has authorization

to carry medication for emergency/chronic health needs.) Refrigeration is available.

5. The school nurse or her designee has the sole responsibility of giving or dispensing all medication. When a medication is prescribed which will be administered at school, the opportunity will be provided for the school nurse to discuss medication, its side effects, and the benefits with the student.
6. When a medication is delivered during the school day by a parent, the student will be called from class so the parent, student, and school personnel may review instructions. (If the medication does not meet current policy, the parent may administer the medication.)
7. All medications no longer used or needed are either returned to the parent/guardian or destroyed. Destruction of the medication is done in a manner that ensures no other person can obtain possession of it. For a parent's/guardian's convenience, a guide for medication which includes Medication Authorization Forms may be requested from the school office and is also available on the VCS website. For special needs related to emergency medications (i.e., allergies, diabetes) or treatments that need to be administered during the school day, it is suggested that parents/guardians communicate directly with the school nurse.
8. Medication that is possessed by a school for administration during school hours or at school functions for students in K-5 may be released only to the student's parent or to an individual who is eighteen years of age or older and who has been designated, in writing, by the student's parent to receive the medication.

COMMUNICABLE ILLNESSES/PROBLEMS

Communicable illnesses/problems are a part of school life. Every effort is made to keep parents/guardians informed of possible exposure through notices sent home when a grade level is exposed. If your child is diagnosed with a communicable problem, such as strep throat *, chicken pox or head lice, please inform the school immediately. With everyone's cooperation, the spread of these health concerns can be limited.

It is school health policy to exclude from school any child who has:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or over*
- Any inflammatory eye condition
- Cough associated with fever or continuous unrelieved cough
- Cold symptoms associated with other signs of illness
- Sore or inflamed throat **
- Discharge from ears
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Undiagnosed skin eruptions or rashes
- Childhood diseases (chicken pox)
- Head Lice (student removed for live lice; must be checked by nurse BEFORE classroom readmission)

*The student must be fever free (without medication) for 24 hours before returning to school.

** Students with strep infections may return to school after they have been on Antibiotic treatment 24 hours minimum AND are fever

free.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

The Indiana State Department of Health mandates health screenings at the following grade levels:

Vision: Grades 1, 3 and 8

Hearing: Grades 1, 4, 7, and 10

Screenings are performed by school nurses and grade 1 vision by volunteer optometrists. VCS completes vision and hearing screenings on new students to the district and by teacher or parent request. Heights and weights are collected each year on each child.

Parents/guardians who have a religious/ philosophical objection to these screenings should contact the school nurse. Parents/guardians are informed if screenings are not passed and doctor follow-up is recommended.

SPECIAL NEEDS

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to keep the school informed regarding any health concerns that may need special consideration in the child's activities or educational program during the school day. If such a health concern does exist, a written statement from a licensed medical doctor is required. The statement should explain any special problems and the consideration to be given by the school in the child's activities and educational program. Providing documentation, you then have the right to request an assessment to determine if school accommodation or assistance is needed to ensure appropriate educational opportunities for your child.

If you have been advised by your doctor that your child should stay inside for recess, you will need to send a note to that effect. After five days, a note from your doctor will be necessary.

TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENT EMERGENCIES

When a student becomes ill or injured at school, it may be necessary for the student to be taken home, to a doctor, or to a hospital. The parent/guardian should assume this responsibility, except in an emergency when it is apparent that an ambulance or emergency medical service should be called immediately. Ambulance and emergency medical service cost is the parent's/guardian's responsibility. The final responsibility for securing the safe transportation of a sick or injured student from school to home, hospital, or to emergency medical care rests with the principal or his/her designee. No seriously sick or injured student will be allowed to go home unless there is a responsible adult to provide for the student's care. The student will remain in school when all measures available to locate a responsible adult have failed. When school is dismissed and no adult is available, the Child Protective Services will be contacted.

HOMEWORK POLICY

It is recognized that time devoted to study is a key part of mastering a skill or completing a learning task. The goal of homework assignments is

to develop self-discipline, responsibility, and the ability to study independently. Assignments normally include reinforcing concepts taught in class, gaining new information, working on independent projects, completing tasks, and making up missed assignments. Parents can help by seeing that their children have a place and a specific time to study. If other help is needed, the teacher will contact the home.

INSURANCE-ACCIDENT

Information concerning the purchase of student accident insurance is available early in the year. If your child is not covered by a family medical plan, you may want to consider this insurance coverage. Schools do not carry general medical or accident insurance on students.

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

The Valparaiso Community Schools are all members of a student services interagency agreement, which allows for information to be shared with other agencies. These agencies include police, probation, juvenile court, and other community agencies working with the youth of Porter County. This sharing was made possible through a court order by the Honorable Judge of the Porter County Circuit Court and signed by the Superintendent of the Valparaiso Community Schools.

INTRAMURALS

After school intramural programs are offered for fourth and fifth grade students. A parental permission slip must be on file with the school's intramural director. Students are expected to complete their assignments and follow school rules in order to participate.

LEAVING SCHOOL DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Families are encouraged to establish one dismissal plan to be followed by students every school day. Principals or their designee may release a student from school before the end of the school day when presented with a written or face-to-face request from the child's parent/guardian. These requests for early dismissal must be submitted at the start of the school day.

Students may be released only to a parent, or to a properly identified person authorized to act on behalf of the parent. Parents and/or their designees are required to sign the children out from the school office.

No student will be released to any government agency without proper warrant or written parental permission except in the event of an emergency as determined by the principal.

LUNCH PROGRAM

Nutritious lunches are served daily at all schools. Parents will be notified

of lunch prices each fall. Milk is also available to students who bring their lunch or to those who want an extra milk with their meal. Children may pay cash daily or participate in our meal card prepayment program. Advance deposits in any amount may be made to the child's account. Meals are charged against the account using the meal card. Deposits may be made by cash or check. Checks should be made out to "Valparaiso School Lunch". The child's name, teacher's name, and account number (available from the school cashier) should be on any envelope containing lunch money.

Parents are welcome to join a child for lunch at school. We ask that a parent call the school office by 9:00 AM to make a lunch reservation. Adult meals cannot be charged to a child's account.

MAKE-UP WORK

Students may need to make up work as a result of an unexcused absence, extended vacation, negligence in not completing the work on time, and/or excused absences. It is the responsibility of the student to complete assignments given by the teacher. Failure to complete this work prohibits the teacher from effectively evaluating the student's progress.

If a student is on an extended vacation, some homework may be provided in advance at the discretion of the teacher, if appropriate assignments are available. The student is responsible for all work missed during the absence, and the amount of time allowed for make-up work shall be one day for each day absent.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

If one (1) parent has been awarded custody of the student by a court order, the parent of custody shall provide to the principal of the school a copy of the custody order and inform the school in writing of any restrictions and/or limitations in the rights of the non-custodial parent.

A non-custodial parent, unless restricted by a court order, will be given access to all student report cards, student records, and disciplinary actions. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a non-custodial parent will be permitted to participate in school conferences related to the student.

The non-custodial parent may not visit with the student during the school day, nor may the student be released to the non-custodial parent unless written permission is given by order of the court or by the custodial parent.

Notification of Rights Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

PPRA affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas ("protected information survey") if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) –

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parent; or
8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of –

1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

Inspect, upon request and before administration or use –

1. Protected information surveys of students;
2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
3. Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

PARENTAL CONCERNS

Most parental concerns can and should be handled at the most immediate level, which is between the parent and teacher. Parents are encouraged to ask for a conference to discuss problems or concerns they have with the teacher at any time during the year. If a parent feels there is a need to involve the principal, the principal will discuss the concern with the teacher. If the principal, teacher, or parent feel the concern is of such a nature as to warrant a conference, a conference with the parent, teacher, and principal will be arranged.

PEST CONTROL AND USE OF PESTICIDES

The school district is committed to providing a safe environment for students. It seeks to prevent children from being exposed to pests and pesticides. While pesticides protect children from pests that may be found in the school and its surrounding grounds, under some circumstances they may pose a hazard to children. Therefore, pest control practices may involve a variety of chemical and non-chemical methods that are designed to control pests effectively while minimizing potential pesticide exposure.

The District will post a notice on several exterior doors of the building at least two (2) school days prior to the date and time the pesticide application is to occur unless an emergency is declared. The notice will include the date and time of the pesticide application, the general area where the pesticide is to be applied, and the telephone number to contact for more information.

In case of emergency pesticide applications, because of immediate threat to the public health, the school shall post written notice in a reasonable time after the application.

Physical Education Participation/Attendance

1. Students will dress and participate every day even if participation is limited due to a minor medical problem (ex. cold, flu, sore throat, asthma, etc., students will still dress and participate to the best of their ability). A parent's note for limited activity will be accepted for one or two days only. The note must be dated and signed.
2. Any student who needs to be excused for more than two days should be under a doctor's care and will need a note, stating the medical problem and restrictions/accommodations, signed by the doctor.

PROMOTION, PLACEMENT, AND RETENTION

Promotion or retention of students is essentially a matter of suitable placement of pupils in a group where a student can learn most effectively. Students will be placed at the appropriate level of instruction at which they can function with due consideration being given to their educational, social, and emotional needs. Promotion occurs when a student is doing the caliber of work (grade level) that indicates the student has met the curriculum requirements.

Retention occurs when a student is not doing the caliber of work that indicates the student should be promoted to the next grade. Early in the second semester, teachers will contact parents regarding the possibility of retention if a child is producing work that is below grade level. In some cases, an additional year of reinforcing the academic skills can give a child confidence, maturity, and a sense of well-being that is necessary for the child's educational achievement.

Final decisions on student promotion, placement, or retention rest with

the building principal.

GRADE PLACEMENT

Placement of students is based upon academic achievement, social and emotional maturity, and information received from classroom teachers. Grade level placement decisions are made by the building principal in cooperation with parents and teachers. Grade placement of special education students is based on the decision of the case conference committee and the student's Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.).

CLASSROOM PLACEMENT

The building principal assigns students to appropriate grades, classes, or groups based on consideration of the needs of the school, the students and the administration of the school. The previous year's teachers and the principal spend considerable time in assigning students to classrooms. The goal is to balance classes according to boy/girl ratio, academic ability, social-emotional issues, work habits, and special learning needs.

If a parent/guardian feels there is information the principal should have about his/her child, such written communication should be provided the principal in the spring no later than May 1. This communication should identify specific educational concerns, not a request for a specific teacher.

RECORDS

To protect the rights of privacy of students and parents, the school system has adopted a policy that regulates dissemination of student education records that pertain to health records, academic grades, and test scores. The policy that lists persons, who have access to a student's records, as well as information on requesting records, is available in the principal's office of each elementary school and at the Valparaiso Community Schools Administration Building for any student or student's parent who wishes to see them. Questions concerning student records should be directed to the building principal.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS and PRIVACY ACT

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) afford parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. They are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education record within 45 days of the day the School Corporation receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate or misleading.

Parents or eligible students may ask the principal to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want

changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading.

If the principal decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the principal will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception that permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interest. A school official is a person employed by Valparaiso Community Schools as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School Corporation has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, Valparaiso Community Schools discloses educational records without consent to officials of another school corporation in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Valparaiso Community Schools to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

REPORTING TO PARENTS

Reporting student progress serves many purposes, the most important of which is helping students and their parents understand how well the student is achieving program objectives and accomplishing the educational goals of the school district.

At the beginning of the school year, each classroom teacher informs students and parents of the specific requirements necessary to attain each grade. The specific grade scales and symbols are noted on each grade level report card.

REPORT CARDS/progress REPORTS

Report cards are issued four times a year at the end of each nine week

grading period.

Parents should regularly check their child's progress online. If parents desire a conference concerning progress reports or report cards, they should contact the teacher.

If a parent is concerned about a child's progress at any time, he/she should contact the teacher. Please encourage your child(ren) to bring home graded papers and homework on a regular basis. This will help greatly in keeping you current on your child(ren)'s progress.

PARENT/STUDENT RIGHTS IN IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION, AND PLACEMENT

In compliance with the procedural requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Valparaiso Community Schools shall utilize the following notice of parent/student rights in identification, evaluation, and placement. Requests for a 504 Conference can be made to the building principal or the 504 Representative at the School Administration Building (Phone 219-531-3000).

The following is a description of the rights granted by federal law to students with disabilities. The intent of this article is to keep parents/guardians fully informed concerning decisions about their children and to inform them of their rights if they disagree with any of these decisions.

Parents/students have the right to:

1. Have their child take part in and receive benefits from a public education program without discrimination because of his/her disabling condition;
2. Have the Valparaiso Community Schools advise them of their rights under federal law;
3. Receive notice with respect to identification, evaluation, or placement of their child;
4. Have their child receive a free, appropriate education in academics, non-academics, and extracurricular activities. This includes the right to be educated with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate. An appropriate education provides regular or special education and related aides and services that are designed to meet the individual needs of handicapped persons as adequately as the needs of non-handicapped persons are met. This provision is based upon adherence to procedures that satisfy the requirements and implementation of an individualized education program developed in accordance with the Education of the Handicapped Act;
5. Have their child educated in facilities and receive services comparable to those provided non-disabled students;
6. Have their child receive special education and related services for which he/she is found to be eligible under the Education of the Handicapped Act (PL 94-142) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act;
7. Have education, evaluation, and placement decisions made based upon a variety of information sources, and by persons who know the

- student, the evaluation data, and placement options;
8. Have transportation provided to and from an alternative placement setting at no greater cost to the parent than would be incurred if the student were placed in a program operated by the district;
 9. Have their child be given an equal opportunity to participate in non-academic and extracurricular activities offered by the district;
 10. Examine all relevant records relating to decisions made regarding their child's identification, evaluation, educational program, and placement;
 11. Obtain copies of educational records at a reasonable cost unless the fee would effectively deny the parent access to the records;
 12. A response from the school district to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of their child's record;
 13. Request amendment of their child's educational records if there is a reasonable cause to believe that they are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy of rights of the child. If the school refuses this request for amendment, it shall notify parents within a reasonable time, and advise them of the right to a hearing;
 14. Request mediation, and/or impartial due process hearing related to decisions or actions regarding a child's identification, evaluation, educational program, or placement. Parents and the student may take part in the hearing and be represented by counsel. All hearing requests should be made to:
The Office of the Superintendent
Valparaiso Community Schools
3801 N. Campbell Street
Valparaiso, IN 46385
 15. Ask for payment of reasonable attorney fees if they are successful in their claim; and,
 16. File a grievance.

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT

Students are expected to attend the school in their attendance area. However, the superintendent may assign a student to a school other than that designated by the attendance area when the exception is justified by extraordinary circumstances due to enrollment concerns and/or other situations that may be that are in the best interests of the child.

SCHOOL PROPERTY

All desks, and other student storage areas (such as closets and cabinets) made available for student use on the premises, including physical education classrooms, music and the art classrooms are the exclusive and sole property of the Valparaiso Community Schools.

These desks and other student storage areas are made available for student use in the storing of school supplies and personal items necessary for use in school. However, desks and other student storage areas are not to be used to store items that cause, or can reasonably be

foreseen to cause, an interference with school purposes, or an educational function, or for some purpose that is forbidden by Indiana State law, school rules, or school board policy. The students' use of the desk or other student storage area does not diminish the school corporation's ownership or control of the desk or other student storage area.

The Valparaiso Community Schools retain the right to inspect the desks and other student storage areas and their contents to insure that the desks or other student storage areas are being used in accordance with their intended purpose; and to eliminate fire or other hazards; maintain sanitary conditions; attempt to locate lost or stolen materials; and to prevent the use of any desk or other storage area to store prohibited or dangerous materials. The inspection of a particular student's locker or storage area will not be conducted unless the building principal or his/her designees have reasonable cause for a search.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

If the school principal or his/her designee has reason to suspect that an illegal or dangerous substance or object or stolen property may be in the possession of a student, search and seizure of that illegal or dangerous substance or object or stolen property will be conducted according to Board Policy. It is the responsibility of the principal to protect persons and property in the school while keeping clearly in mind the student's rights.

Reasonable suspicion for a search means grounds sufficient to cause an adult of normal intellect to believe that the search of a particular person, place, or thing will lead to the discovery of evidence that the student:

1. Has violated or is violating a rule or behavioral norm contained in the student handbook;
2. Has violated or is violating a particular law; and/or
3. Possesses an item or substance that presents an immediate danger of physical harm or illness to students and staff or school district property.

SKATEBOARDS, SCOOTERS, AND ROLLERBLADES

The use of skateboards, scooters, or roller blades on school property is strictly prohibited. Therefore, skateboards, scooters, and rollerblades should not be brought to school.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Before and after school child care is provided for elementary students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Fees are on a sliding scale, depending on family size and income. To sign up for Kid Stop, contact the Boys and Girls Club office at 464-7282. To sign up for the YMCA program call 462-4185. Check with the school office to see which of these programs is offered in your building.

FLUENT READING OUR GOAL (F.R.O.G.)

The F.R.O.G. program provides remedial reading, writing, and math

problem solving instruction. Students in grades identified as having the greatest need as determined by classroom and test performance receive services. Class size is purposely small to allow for a low pupil/ teacher ratio. Additional repetition of skills using remedial techniques aids students toward mastery of reading, writing, and thinking.

SOCIAL WORKER

A school social worker is available at each elementary building. The social worker helps to assess social and emotional difficulties of children that interfere with their attendance, adjustment, or achievement at school. He/She refers parents to the appropriate community resources and/or school programs. Referral can be made through the principal, teacher, child, or parent.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

The speech pathologist provides services to those children having communication (speech, hearing, and/or language) deficiencies. These services are delivered in each elementary school.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST/EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN

The school psychologist and educational diagnostician who are employed by the Porter County Education Services provide psychological services to the school on an as needed basis. The main function of this multi-diagnostic team is to help evaluate students who are experiencing behavioral and/or academic problems in school. For further information, contact your child's teacher or principal.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Valparaiso Substance Abuse Plan

I. Mission Statement

The mission of the Valparaiso Community Schools is to create and maintain a safe learning environment to ensure that all students reach a high level of achievement as determined by local, state, national, and international standards. Valparaiso Community Schools will provide the necessary foundation for a safe learning environment through an ongoing system of preventions and interventions.

II. Statement of Purpose from the Board of Education

The Board of Education of the Valparaiso Community Schools recognizes that the use of drugs and alcohol will interfere with a student's ability to reach a high level of achievement and will compromise the safe learning environment that parents and students expect when students attend school. For the purpose of the Valparaiso Substance Abuse Plan and the administration of that plan, drugs will include but not be limited to the following: illicit and prescription drugs, drug related paraphernalia, substances represented to be illicit drugs, stimulants, inhalants, intoxicants, and/or any other product that produces an altered mental or physical state when used. To protect students and the learning environment, the Board prohibits the use, possession, concealment, and/or distribution of any drugs and/or alcohol at any time on school district property or at any school-related event, and students who violate this

policy will be subjected to school disciplinary procedures and consequences. The Board further delegates the responsibility to the superintendent or designee (henceforth will be referred to as the superintendent) to develop guidelines that will discourage student drug and/or alcohol usage, and/or will detect student drug and/or alcohol usage at the earliest possible stage.

III. Drug Usage in Valparaiso and Porter County

In 2005, the Community Action Drug Coalition and Porter-Starke Services jointly commissioned Roosevelt University to study drug availability and usage in Porter County. The Roosevelt Study determined that drug problems are no longer confined to the inner city. The close proximity of Porter County to the Chicago metropolitan area has increased the availability and usage of drugs. Particularly alarming was the fact that, per capita, Porter County ranked in the top five (5) in the United States in the use of heroin. This increased availability and usage of drugs, combined with a growing concern that drug usage is a more accepted behavior by students, led the study to conclude that young adult lives will be dramatically affected by drug and alcohol-related problems over the next decade.

The Valparaiso Community Schools has seen the number of referrals for drug/alcohol related problems and/or symptoms spiral upward as the Roosevelt Study predicted. The focal point of the Valparaiso Substance Abuse Plan, since its inception in 1988, has been student assistance. Although some aspects of the Plan require punitive measures, identifying students in need of assistance and providing that assistance for them is the primary goal of the Plan. Parents, teachers, and students may refer anyone including themselves to the Student Assistance Team without fear of punishment. The Student Assistance Team has had 45 initial drug referrals during the first semester of the 2006-2007 school year. This number encompassed athletic violations, self-referrals, parent referrals, peer referrals, and other situations under the purview of the Valparaiso Community Schools Substance Abuse Plan.

Enhancing the awareness of the drug and alcohol issues within our community will certainly be one step towards eliminating the devastating effects drugs and alcohol have on the lives of the Valparaiso youth. This plan will outline strategies to prevent students from using drugs and/or alcohol, to detect drug and/or alcohol usage at its earliest stage, and to provide the school district an opportunity to intervene before the young adult progresses to the more highly-addictive drugs referenced in the Roosevelt Study.

IV. Prevention

The Board of Education believes the best way to solve drug-related issues in the Valparaiso Community Schools is to develop a strong prevention plan that will discourage the use of alcohol and other drugs. The Valparaiso Community Schools Substance Abuse Plan focuses on class instruction, counseling, school climate, family and community, and a reasonable suspicion based drug testing procedure.

A. Classroom Instruction

1. All schools will have instructional programs which are designed to assist students in making responsible decisions about the use of alcohol and drugs. Current and accurate information about the effects of drugs on the body is only one component of an instructional prevention program. Other components include instruction and skill development related to self-esteem, setting goals, making responsible decisions, understanding feelings, managing conflicts, solving problems, learning refusal techniques, and improving communication.
2. Training in prevention strategies and new curriculum materials will be available to staff.

B. Counseling

Counseling and student assistance team personnel will assist teachers with the implementation of classroom instruction on alcohol and drug prevention activities. Counselors will work with students, individually and in groups, to supplement prevention instruction and skill development. Counselors will also work with staff and families to maximize the prevention efforts of the school.

C. School Climate

1. Prevention efforts will emphasize effective communication throughout all levels of the educational environment. Communication requires an audience ready to receive information. A receptive audience is dependent upon maintaining a positive and healthy school environment that daily encourages the student's positive self-concept, enthusiasm for learning, outlets for self-development and creativity, responsible decision-making, and problem-solving. Recognition of the needs of high-risk students and families is important.
2. The Valparaiso Community Schools is committed to the principles of the Creating a Safe Social Climate in Schools (CASS) program as a means to promote civility and a positive climate in all schools and the community.

D. Family and Community

Valparaiso Community Schools program for prevention of alcohol and other drug use will include a plan to involve families and community resources to increase awareness and knowledge of services available to them. Students, families, and community members should be actively involved in community and school partnerships.

E. Drug Testing Procedures Related to Reasonable Suspicion

The purpose of this program is to enhance the health and safety of all students and to deter the use of drugs and alcohol by Valparaiso Community Schools students.

The administration shall have the authority to require any student to submit to a chemical test if the administration has reasonable suspicion to believe the student is using or under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

Reasonable suspicion may arise from but is not limited to the

following:

1. A student's physical appearance, odor, and/or behavior indicate the use of drugs and/or alcohol.
 - a. unusual drowsiness and/or sleepiness;
 - b. alcohol or chemical odors on clothes or breath;
 - c. slurred, incoherent speech;
 - d. difficulty in comprehending conversation and/or being confused;
 - e. change in speech or difficulty in expressing himself/herself;
 - f. disorientation and/or difficulty in concentrating;
 - g. use of eye drops or sunglasses to hide redness of eyes;
 - h. frequent nosebleeds and/or constant redness of nasal membranes;
 - i. unusual swings in emotion or inappropriate behavior for the situation;
 - j. hyperactivity or euphoria;
 - k. unusually aggressive behavior;
 - l. lack of manual dexterity;
 - m. lack of coordination;
 - n. inability to stand relatively motionless, without leaning;
 - o. unexplained excessive absenteeism or tardiness;
 - p. unusual accident or injury; and
 - q. unusually rapid and marked increase in weight and/or strength.
2. Possession of drugs and/or alcohol.
3. Credible information communicated to an administrator by a teacher, parent or other adult, or student indicating that a student is using, possessing, or under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
4. Violation of the Closed Campus Policy.

If the school administration determines that a student has violated any or all of parts of Section IV, Subsection E, Numbers 1-4 of this document, the parent or guardian (henceforth will be referred to as parent) of the student under suspicion will be contacted and asked to immediately attend a meeting with the principal and/or his/her designee (henceforth will be referred to as the principal). The parent will be informed of the evidence related to the facts connected to the reasonable suspicion and will be given an opportunity to respond to the facts and evidence presented. The principal will ask the parent to sign a release form to allow school personnel and/or a service provider to administer a breathalyzer test, an oral mouth swab test, and/or a urine test. A refusal of the parent to sign the release form will be viewed the same as a positive drug and/or alcohol result. The cost of the test(s) will be borne by the Valparaiso Community Schools. The principal will notify the parents of the test results within a reasonable time frame.

SUICIDE INTERVENTION PROCESS

For your child's protection, a specific suicide intervention process is in place in compliance with local and state guidelines. Should it be necessary to use this process, parents are notified as soon as possible. Two school staff members, parents, and when possible, the child, are involved in the cooperative effort to help the child. School Board policies and administrative guidelines are in place stating that a student threatening suicide may be required to be evaluated before being allowed to return to school. "I was only kidding," is not a justifiable defense or excuse. If parents refuse to follow the school's recommendations, the school must contact Child Protective Services. Parents are requested to keep the school informed about any outside treatment.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Smoking and the possession of cigarettes or other related products (electronic cigarette, electronic vaping device, matches, lighter, cigar, pipe snuff, or any other matter or substance that contains tobacco) is prohibited at school and while attending school activities. Violators are subject to suspension or expulsion.

TRANSFER OUT OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Parents should notify the school secretary as soon as they know the student is transferring out of the school district so as to make the transition as smooth as possible for the child.

TRESPASS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

Trespass on school property will not be tolerated. All school officials are authorized to request any person to leave school premises if that person is interfering with the lawful use of school property. If the person does not leave the premises as requested, school officials may request assistance from law enforcement officers.

VISITOR POLICY

The visitor policy is intended to help the school educate children in a safe environment free from unnecessary distractions and interruptions. The purpose is to create the best environment for learning possible.

During student arrival time, 8:30 – 8:45 and student dismissal time, 3:00 – 3:30, parents are NOT to go to the classrooms to drop off or pick up children.

During the school day, 8:45 AM to 3:15 PM, all parents and visitors MUST register in the office when entering the building and receive the

proper visitor's badge.

Sometimes students forget to bring necessary materials or equipment to school. In such cases, parents are asked to deliver the items to the office when bringing these items to school. Only essential items for class are to be delivered to school for students. The school office will not accept balloons, flowers, or other gift deliveries for students. Please save these gifts for home for they are not appropriate at school.

All school visitors/volunteers will be required to show a valid government-issued photo identification (driver's license/State I.D) upon entering the building at every visit during the school day. **All visitors/volunteers must report to the office first after entering the building.** The I.D. will be scanned against state and national sex offender registries. After the scan, a visitor's badge will be produced, which should be worn for the complete visit.

Parent visitation to a classroom is outlined in the Valparaiso Community Schools Administrative Guidelines (#9150). Parents who wish to observe learning activities taking place in the classroom are to confer, in advance, with the principal and the teacher and state the purpose of the visitation. A classroom visit should be no longer than one class period. Unplanned and surprise visits are not permitted.

If a child needs to leave school during the school day, please inform the office personnel and they will contact the child's classroom teacher. It is necessary to sign a child out of school so that the school is able to account for all children. When picking up students at the end of school, parents are requested to wait for children in the area designated by school officials.

No student guests will be permitted at school.

Any person not abiding by the regulations governing visitors may be subject to trespass as defined by state statute.

WELLNESS

Snacks served during the school day or in after-school care or enrichment programs will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health, and as such, students should be served snacks that are balanced in nutritional value. Items such as fruits, vegetables, and water should be offered to students as a "healthy choice" option. Schools will assess which snacks are acceptable and when to offer snacks based on timing of school meals, children's nutritional needs, children's ages, and other considerations. Fast food items and soft drinks are not permissible in the lunchroom. No outside "fast food meals" or soda will be permitted to be brought into or eaten in school café during meal times. Food items for meals must originate from home.

It is recognized that parents may want to celebrate special days such as birthdays for their child by sending in an item for each student in the class. If a parent chooses to do so, non-food items are recommended and in some cases required. Any food treat that is offered to students must be a "healthy choice", store prepackaged food with an ingredient label, and be approved by the principal or designee.