

# VALLEY WEST SCHOOL



## **Parent/Student Handbook 2021-2022**

269 Moore Street  
Chicopee, MA 01013  
(413) 592-6069



# Valley West School

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**Overview**

Valley West School is an affectively based program designed to serve students who are experiencing social/emotional challenges and whose alternative programming within a public school setting has been unsuccessful. We are committed to providing a safe, secure environment within which a student can reach his/her academic potential.

Valley West believes that every child is entitled to appropriate educational opportunities that foster intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development. Every student entering Valley West School will have an educational plan in place that addresses behavioral, emotional, and academic needs. Our concerns are primarily directed towards improving the overall academic and behavioral functioning of each student. A low student to staff ratio of approximately 3:1, permits personalized attention and helps pupils meet their affective and cognitive needs. Staff is dedicated to enhancing each student's self-esteem, creating a positive attitude towards school, and developing long-range goals.

**Our Staff**

Our teaching and educational support staff include teachers with special education certification, regular certification and special subject certification.

The clinical staff consists of masters level clinicians, and behavioral counselors.

**Admissions**

Valley West School will not enroll students under the provisions of Chapter 766 unless the admission process is initiated and approved by a public school's Department of Special Education.

As a prerequisite of admission, Valley West School requires parents or legal guardians along with the student, to visit the school's campus. During the interview process, a school official will explain the school's purpose, services, policies and procedures. The interview will allow the student and parents/guardian to tour the facilities and observe the school in operation. Parents/guardians and the student will sign an Admission Agreement, a release of information form, appropriate medical forms, an emergency pick up form, and other informational forms. In addition, a copy of the student's school health record including immunization history will need to be furnished to our school nurse before the student may attend classes.

If Valley West School is deemed to be an appropriate educational setting, as determined by the school's admission committee and the parents/guardians, the referring school system will be notified of this decision. Enrollment of a student at Valley West School will be made when an opening exists in a classroom setting that is appropriate for that student. As a requisite of enrollment, all necessary forms (I.E.P., admission agreement, release of information, medical and immunization records, and recent physical examination) need to be complete and in Valley West School's possession.

**Discrimination**

Valley West School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, natural origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness.

**Student Characteristics**

Students are referred to us with social-emotional concerns including but not limited to the following:

- anxiety and depression
- markedly poor/limited social skills
- oppositional/defiant behavior
- tantrums
- inappropriate attention seeking
- impulsivity and hyperactivity
- poor attention
- post-traumatic stress
- low self-esteem
- poor academic motivation and responsibility
- rigid thinking
- idiosyncratic behaviors

**Confidentiality**

To assure confidentiality, the release of information on a student will not be made available without the written consent of the parent/guardian. Exceptions to this would be situations where we are legally obligated to provide information regarding a student to appropriate authorities.

A request to observe a particular student or class must be presented to the director or principal for approval.

**Custody Laws**

*Access Procedures for Non-Custodial Parents.* As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 34H, a non-custodial parent may have access to the student record in accordance with the following provisions.

- (a) A non-custodial parent is eligible to obtain access to the student record unless:
  - the parent has been denied legal custody based on a threat to the safety of the student or to the custodial parent, or
  - the parent has been denied visitation or has been ordered to supervised visitation, or
  - the parent's access to the student or to the custodial parent has been restricted by a temporary or permanent protective order, unless the protective order (or any subsequent order modifying the protective order) specifically allows access to the information contained in the student record.
- (b) The school shall place in the student's record documents indicating that a non-custodial parent's access to the student's record is limited or restricted pursuant to 603 CMR 23.07(5)(a).



- (c) In order to obtain access, the non-custodial parent must submit a written request for the student record to the school principal.
- (d) Upon receipt of the request the school must immediately notify the custodial parent by certified and first class mail, in English and the primary language of the custodial parent, that it will provide the non-custodial parent with access after 21 days, unless the custodial parent provides the principal with documentation that the non-custodial parent is not eligible to obtain access as set forth in 603 CMR 23.07 (5)(a).
- (e) The school must delete the electronic and postal address and telephone number of the student and custodial parent from student records provided to non-custodial parents. In addition, such records must be marked to indicate that they shall not be used to enroll the student in another school.
- (f) Upon receipt of a court order which prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to G.L. c. 71, §34H, the school shall notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent.

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum at Valley West School is aligned with the Massachusetts State Standards, which describe reasonable expectations for learning. The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks provide teachers, students and families with clear and shared expectations for what all students should know and be able to do at the end of each year. They represent a promise of equitable education for all students.

Valley West School provides instruction at a pupil's instructional level with emphasis on disciplinary content and skills in accordance with the learning standards set forth in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

At the high school level, our Program Director schedules a student's academic program in conjunction with the referring school. This assures that the course credits earned by the student are acceptable in fulfilling graduation requirements.

### **Programming**

Instruction is provided at a pupil's instructional level with emphasis on disciplinary content and skills according to the learning standards set forth in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for each grade level.

The staff at Valley West is invested in developing a strong rapport as a basis for individual student progress. Primary emphasis is placed on dealing with those affective issues that impede a student's ability to be successful. To effectively address the diverse needs of our student population, Valley West School utilizes various levels of programming.

### **Clinical Services**

Valley West School's clinical component may be accessed by students and parents. Clinical services provide diagnostic evaluations, individual, group and family therapy, mediations for students in conflict, and facilitate working with teen and pre-teen groups on social issues that impact upon their lives. Our clinical staff consists of clinicians, counselors and behavioral specialists. The treatment philosophy of the Clinical Department is to provide

the most appropriate level of intervention that will insure that the clinical needs of the child are being met. In order for our staff to accomplish this, we depend on the input and involvement of the most significant people in the child's life, the parent or guardian. Family involvement in treatment planning and treatment review helps to establish carry-over and consistency in the care and treatment of the child. We work closely with community providers and clinicians who may already be involved with our students. We strive to provide a positive and nurturing clinical environment which enhances clinical work being done at home and with community therapists.

### **Mandated Reporting**

All staff members at Valley West School are mandated reporters. A staff member suspecting abuse or neglect may elect to report his/her suspicions directly to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (D.C.F.) or to the Principal, who will in turn file a child abuse/neglect report with D.C.F. if appropriate.

### **Discipline Code**

Valley West School staff is committed to the development of skills that will enable our students to become successful participants in society. We recognize that the school community must foster a supportive environment which encourages effort, responsibility, individuality, problem-solving and social skills that will enable the individual to continue learning independently long after classroom instruction has ended.

The guidelines in the Discipline Code are issued as a general model. The school reserves the right to deviate from the general guidelines based on the specific facts and circumstances of a given situation.

### **Behavior Support**

Valley West School provides behavioral support to its students through a variety of interventions and programming. We are focused on addressing students' emotional self-awareness, emotional control, self-esteem, positive social skills, social problem solving, conflict resolution and teamwork.

#### *1. Violence Prevention*

Valley West School is committed to preventing student violence. This commitment starts with our attempts to create a general culture of nonviolence throughout the school. This is accomplished by: staff constantly modeling nonviolent behavior, all direct care staff continuously reminding students that violence is not an option for solving problems, physical prompts in the classes and hallways (bulletin boards, etc.) promoting alternatives to violence and mediations for student's who have experienced conflict with one another. Whenever a student does act in a violent manner, they go through lengthy post-processing with clinical and behavioral support staff as well as school administration to discuss ways the conflict could have been handled in a nonviolent manner.

Valley West School implements social skills groups which teach cooperation skills and healthy social problem solving. In addition, every student receives individual in-school





therapy which teaches students to use healthy coping strategies when managing frustration and social conflict.

## *2. Preventing Self-Harm*

Valley West School is committed to keeping students safe. One means to this end is using therapeutic approaches. All students at Valley West School receive individual counseling therapy to help address their emotional and social needs. During these therapy sessions students are taught coping strategies for managing grief, anxiety and frustration. One of the functions of these coping strategies is to serve as a replacement for self-injurious behavior. If students are expressing suicidal ideation, then Valley West School will arrange to have them assessed by a mobile crisis team if appropriate or call Emergency Services if necessary. If student's become self-injurious to the point of being a safety risk to themselves, then physical restraint will be implemented according to 603 CMR 46.00 (9.4). Students in need of physical restraint for self-injurious behaviors will be assessed by their in-school clinical therapist to determine the need for mobile crisis screening or Emergency Services support.

## *3. Physical Restraint/Alternatives to Physical Restraint*

Valley West School will only administer physical restraint in accordance with the requirements of 603 CMR 46.00

Prone restraint shall be prohibited in public education programs except on an individual student basis, and only under the following circumstances:

1. The student has a documented history of repeatedly causing serious self-injuries and/or injuries to other students or staff;
2. All other forms of physical restraints have failed to ensure the safety of the student and/or the safety of others;
3. There are no medical contraindications as documented by a licensed physician;
4. There is psychological or behavioral justification for the use of prone restraint and there are no psychological or behavioral contraindications, as documented by a licensed mental health professional;
5. The program has obtained consent to use prone restraint in an emergency as set out in 603 CMR 46.03(1)(b), and such use has been approved in writing by the principal; and,

6. The program has documented 603 CMR 46.03(1)(b) 1 - 5 in advance of the use of prone restraint and maintains the documentation .

Restraints lasting longer than 20 minutes require the approval of the school principal.

Staff will employ other means of redirecting a student (e.g. verbal redirection and prompting, de-escalation techniques including offering coping tools and calming strategies, offering breaks or time-outs) away from potentially risky behavior before a decision to employ physical restraint is made. Physical restraint will be the intervention of last resort, circumstances permitting, after other means have been exhausted.

Valley West School uses a **Standing Basket Hold** (staff and student are standing) as its first level of restraint. If a Standing Basket Hold is insufficient to maintain safety, then other holds may be employed as follows depending on the situation:

**Modified Basket Hold** - Student is seated on the ground with feet facing forward

**Modified Side Basket Hold** - Student forces him or herself to their side or against staff

**Side Leg Block** - Student who is on his or her side and is kicking staff

**Two Person Arm Control** - A student who is standing requires two staff to hold

Valley West School does not employ seclusion, mechanical or medication restraint. Valley West School will not employ prone restraint unless permitted under CMR 46.03(1)(b).

#### *4. Training Requirements*

Valley West School requires an annual physical restraint training program, conducted by a certified agency/trainer, to be attended by appropriate staff every year. Only staff who have received certified restraint training will be deemed qualified to engage in a physical restraint.

Training shall occur within the first month of each school year and, for all employees hired after the school year begins, within the first month of their employment. The training shall include:

The role of the student, family and staff in preventing restraints.

- The school's restraint and prevention and behavior support policy and procedures.
  - Interventions that may preclude the need for restraint, including de-escalation of problematic behaviors and other alternative to restraint in emergency situations.
  - When behavior presents an emergency that requires physical restraint, the types of permitted physical restraints and related safety considerations including information regarding the increased risk of injury to a student when any restraint is used, particularly for an extended period of time.
  - Administering physical restraint in accordance with medical/psychological limitations, or known or suspected trauma history and any IEP applicable to the student.
- Identification of program staff who have received in-depth training in the use of physical restraint.

The principal shall identify staff that is authorized to serve as a school-wide resource to assist in ensuring proper administration of physical restraint. Such staff must participate in in-depth training that is competency-based, be at least 16 hours in length with refresher training occurring annually thereafter. This in-depth training shall consist of:

Appropriate procedures for preventing the use of physical restraint, including de-escalation or problematic behavior, relationship building and use of alternatives to restraint.

A description and identification of specific dangerous behaviors on the part of the student that may lead to the use of physical restraint and methods for evaluating the risk of harm in individual situations in order to determine whether the restraint was warranted.

The simulated experience of administering and receiving physical restraint, instruction regarding the effect(s) on the person being restrained, and monitoring physical



signs of distress and obtaining medical assistance.

Instruction regarding documentation and reporting requirements and investigation of injuries and complaints.

Demonstration by participants of proficiency in administering physical restraint.

Instruction regarding the impact of physical restraint on the student and family.

Valley West School currently uses *Crisis Prevention Solutions* to conduct this training.

### 5. Reporting Requirements

Program staff shall report the use of any physical restraint as specified in 603 CMR 46.06(2). The program staff member who administered the restraint shall verbally inform the principal of the restraint as soon as possible, and by written report no later than the next school working day. The written report shall be provided to the principal for review of the use of the restraint. If the principal has administered the restraint, the principal shall prepare the report and submit it to an individual or team designated by the superintendent or board of trustees for review. The principal or director or his/her designee shall maintain an on-going record of all reported instances of physical restraint, which shall be made available for review by the parent or the Department upon request.

The principal shall conduct a weekly review of restraint data to identify students who have been restrained multiple times during the week. If such students are identified, the principal shall convene one or more review teams as the principal deems appropriate to assess each student's progress and needs. The assessment shall include at least the following:

- (a) review and discussion of the written reports submitted in accordance with 603 CMR 46.06 and any comments provided by the student and parent about such reports and the use of the restraints;
- (b) analysis of the circumstances leading up to each restraint, including factors such as time of day, day of the week, antecedent events, and individuals involved;
- (c) consideration of factors that may have contributed to escalation of behaviors, consideration of alternatives to restraint, including de-escalation techniques and possible interventions, and such other strategies and decisions as appropriate, with the goal of reducing or eliminating the use of restraint in the future;
- (d) Agreement on a written plan of action by the program.

If the principal directly participated in the restraint, a duly qualified individual designated by the superintendent or board of trustees shall lead the review team's discussion. The principal shall ensure that a record of each individual student review is maintained and made available for review by the Department or the parent, upon request.

The principal shall conduct a monthly review of school-wide restraint data. This review shall consider patterns of use of restraints by similarities in the time of day, day of the week, or individuals involved; the number and duration of physical restraints school-wide and for individual students; the duration of restraints; and the number and type of injuries, if any, resulting from the use of restraint. The principal shall determine whether it is necessary or appropriate to modify the school's restraint prevention and behavior support policy, conduct additional staff training on restraint reduction/prevention strategies, such as training on positive behavioral interventions and supports, or take such other action as necessary or appropriate to reduce or eliminate restraints.

When a physical restraint has resulted in an injury to a student or program staff member, the program shall send a copy of the written report required by 603 CMR 46.06(4) to the Department postmarked no later than three school working days of the administration of the restraint. The program shall also send the Department a copy of the record of physical restraints maintained by the principal pursuant to 603 CMR 46.06(2) for the 30-day period prior to the date of the reported restraint. The Department shall determine if additional action by the program is warranted and, if so, shall notify the program of any required actions within 30 calendar days of receipt of the required written report(s).

Every program shall collect and annually report data to the Department regarding the use of physical restraints. Such data shall be reported in a manner and form directed by the Department.

#### *6. Complaints Regarding Behavior Support Requirements*

As a general guideline, all parent/guardian or student complaints regarding behavior support requirements should be directed to the principal (John Dziel 413-592-6069). Complaints will be processed and responded to in a prompt fashion (within 48 hours). At the request of the parent/guardian, a meeting will be held to discuss the complaint within 10 school days of the complaint.

#### *7. Procedures for reporting requirements*

The program staff member who administered the restraint shall verbally inform the principal of the restraint as soon as possible, and by written report no later than the next school working day. The written report shall be provided to the principal for review of the use of the restraint. If the principal has administered the restraint, the principal shall prepare the report and submit it to an individual or team designated by the superintendent or board of trustees for review. The principal or director or his/her designee shall maintain an on-going record of all reported instances of physical restraint, which shall be made available for review by the parent or the Department upon request.

#### *8. Informing Parents*

The principal or director of the program or his/her designee shall make reasonable efforts to verbally inform the student's parent of the restraint within 24 hours of the event, and shall notify the parent by written report sent either within three school working days of the restraint to an email address provided by the parent for communications about the student, or by regular mail postmarked no later than three school working days of the restraint. If the school or program customarily provides a parent of a student with report cards and other necessary school-related information in a language other than English, the written restraint report shall be provided to the parent in that language. The principal shall provide the student and the parent an opportunity to comment orally and in writing on the use of the restraint and on information in the written report.

The written report required by 603 CMR 46.06(2) and (3) shall include:

- (a) The name of the student; the names and job titles of the staff who administered the restraint, and observers, if any; the date of the restraint; the time the restraint began and ended; and
- (b) A description of the activity in which the restrained student and other students and staff in the same room or vicinity were engaged immediately preceding the use of



physical restraint; the behavior that prompted the restraint; the efforts made to prevent escalation of behavior, including the specific de-escalation strategies used; alternatives to restraint that were attempted; and the justification for initiating physical restraint.

(c) A description of the administration of the restraint including the holds used and reasons such holds were necessary; the student's behavior and reactions during the restraint; how the restraint ended; and documentation of injury to the student and/or staff, if any, during the restraint and any medical care provided.

(d) Information regarding any further action(s) that the school has taken or may take, including any consequences that may be imposed on the student.

e) Information regarding opportunities for the student's parents to discuss with school officials the administration of the restraint, any consequences that may be imposed on the student, and any other related matter.

name of the principal or designee who was verbally informed following the restraint; and, as applicable, the name of the principal or designee who approved continuation of the restraint beyond 20 minutes pursuant to 603 CMR 46.05(5)(c).

### *9. Time Out*

Time-out involves removing a student from a negative or disruptive situation and putting them in a supervised area, staffed by behavioral counselors, where they can receive the supports they need to regain composure. Valley West School utilizes support rooms in order to meet these needs.

When a student's behavior becomes disruptive and interferes with the rights of the other students to learn, they may be referred to the support room. A referral to the support room involves removing the student from a negative or disruptive situation and providing them a quiet space free from outside distractions where they can regroup. Students who are in a support room shall be continuously observed by a staff member. The staff member shall be with the student or immediately available to the student at all times.

If it appears that a student may need to be in support for more than 30 minutes due to continued agitation, then the staff who is supervising the student will alert the principal, or his designee at least 5 minutes prior to that time to gain approval to extend the time in the support room.

Any student who requires time in a support room will be able to process the situation with support and/or clinical staff. Once a student can demonstrate that they are definitively calm and safe then they shall return to class.

Meals will not be withheld as a form of punishment or behavior management.

**Behavior support policies shall be reviewed annually and be provided to program staff and made available to parents of enrolled students.**

Search and Seizure: Students are not to bring into school any items that could be considered dangerous or inappropriate. Valley West School retains the right to search students and seize any inappropriate materials.

Respect: Students are expected to respect all people they encounter during the school day. This includes fellow students, staff members, and other people who may be on or in the

vicinity of school grounds. Part of being respectful means using appropriate language which is free from swearing, insults or obscenities.

Students are expected to follow the rules of the school and those of their individual classrooms. This includes responding appropriately to teacher direction and asking permission to leave an assigned area.

*Smoking:* Smoking is not allowed on school grounds. Any smoking materials found will be confiscated and thrown away.

*School Grounds/Runaway:* Students are not to leave school grounds without permission. A student is considered a runaway if he/she leaves school grounds without permission and without a staff member in viewing distance and is not able to be located in the immediate area of the grounds (within 100 yards) after ten minutes. If a student is located off of school grounds, a return to school will be encouraged. If a student is located on school grounds, then the student will be encouraged to report to an appropriate area in the school. If a student refuses to report to the appropriate area while on school grounds, then if safety permits, a physical escort will be used. Once a student has been deemed a runaway, the police and parents/guardian will be notified by the school principal/designee. In addition, the local school district and other involved agencies will be notified by phone and written incident report. A report will also be sent to the Massachusetts Department of Education (Form 2).

If a student leaves a designated area while under staff supervision, the supervising staff will either radio into the building to notify the principal and to request for appropriate staff back-up or will alert the nearest staff member to go inform the principal and obtain appropriate staff back-up. Staff will not shadow a wandering student until it is ensured that there is appropriate staff supervision for the students who will be left behind. The supervising staff member(s) will then, if safe to do so, attempt to follow the student, communicate with the student and encourage a return to an appropriate area in the school to discuss the matter further. If a student leaves school grounds while being shadowed by staff, then the staff member(s) will continue to follow the student, if safe to do so, until ten minutes have passed or a distance of approximately 500 yards has been traveled away from the school. At this point the student will be considered a runaway and the police and parent/guardian will be notified by the school principal/designee. If possible, staff will attempt to keep the student in sight while waiting for the police to arrive. In addition, the local school district and other involved agencies will be notified by phone and written incident report. A report will also be sent to the Massachusetts Department of Education (Form 2).

When a runaway returns to the school during the school day, he/she will be checked by the school nurse for medical well-being. In addition, the student will be interviewed by the school principal/designee to process details of the incident. If it is considered a possibility by the principal/designee that the runaway student obtained contraband during the time away from school, then a proper search of the student's belongings will be conducted. Also, if the student returns to school without the assistance and/or knowledge of the police or parent/guardian, then the principal/designee will notify these parties to notify them of the condition of the student after return. In addition, if a student is determined by the clinical director and principal to be a continued runaway risk, then appropriate safety measures will be put into place including restricting student's access to certain areas of school grounds and one-to-one supervision of the student if necessary. These safety





measures will be reviewed daily and adjusted as necessary. When a student is no longer determined to be a runaway risk by the school clinical director and principal, then any restrictions and extra safety precautions may be lifted.

**Dress Code:** Students are expected to wear appropriate clothing to school. Dress which causes a safety risk or an interruption of the educational process will not be allowed. Students may not wear clothing with language or designs that are explicitly violent, gang-oriented, obscene, sexually suggestive, offensive to individuals, and/or groups, or that promote alcohol or illegal materials. Students are expected to dress appropriately for Physical Education classes, including wearing proper attire and footwear.

If a student's clothing is in violation of the dress code, the student will be asked to change clothing. Valley West maintains a collection of tee shirts, sweatshirts, pants and shoes that students may borrow in order to bring them into compliance with the dress code. Refusal to change may result in disciplinary action, which may include being sent home or spending the day with support staff.

This policy is not meant to be exhaustive of every type of clothing which may be prohibited. Valley West School's administration may establish additional guidelines when necessary or appropriate. Each situation will be assessed individually and respectfully.

**Physical Contact:** As a general rule, physical contact between students is prohibited. Students violating this policy are subject to disciplinary action. Simple and appropriate greetings such as handshakes are permissible if kept within reason. Examples of inappropriate contact include but are not limited to: any intimate contact, kissing, hugging, hand holding, fighting, hitting, pinching, kicking, hair pulling, wrestling, play fighting, grabbing, and tickling. Valley West School staff retains the right to determine of the appropriateness of any contact between students.

**Electronics:** Use of personal electronic devices is prohibited during instructional time. The use of these devices shall be at the discretion of Valley West staff. Failure to comply with staff directives regarding the use of electronic devices may result in disciplinary action. Valley West staff may, at their discretion, hold the device until a parent/guardian is able to retrieve it.

**Skateboards/bicycles:** Skateboards and bicycles are not allowed on school grounds without prior approval from Valley West School's administration.

**Cafeteria/lunch:** Students are required to follow cafeteria rules and guidelines. We expect everyone's cooperation in:

- Depositing all lunch litter in the appropriate receptacles
- Leaving the table and floor around one's place in a clean condition for others
- Not breaking into a waiting line
- Being respectful and courteous to the lunchroom staff
- Sitting at staff designated areas
- Making sure that no food is taken from the cafeteria into other areas of the school

**Energy Drinks:** Energy drinks and caffeinated soda, coffee, tea, etc. are not allowed in school. Exceptions must be approved by school administration.

**Vandalism:** Students who destroy property in the school will not only be subject to disciplinary action including suspension, but will be held responsible for making payment to fix what was damaged.

**Selling of items:** Students are not allowed to make personal transactions in school. This includes any type of selling or trading.

**Gambling:** Gambling or betting in any form is not allowed. Games that are traditionally used for the purpose of gambling are not permitted.

**Bus behavior:** Students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the bus company which transports them. Students who violate the rules of the bus are subject to disciplinary action in school. In addition, students who exhibit major or consistent behavior problems on the bus may be suspended from their bus by the special education office of their sending school system.

**Bullying:** As defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Acts of bullying, including cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school--related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school--related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or





witnesses.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website.

Please see the *Valley West School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* for all information regarding the school's bullying policy.

Questions, concerns and complaints regarding the policy may be directed to: John Dziel, Principal, Valley West School, (413) 592-6069.

**Hazing:** *Hazing* as defined in Chapter 536 of the Acts of 1985 will not be permitted in Valley West School.

Students who are guilty of organizing and/or participating in hazing other students may be suspended from school. Less severe disciplinary action may be taken by the principal.

**CHAPTER 536**  
**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the Year**  
**One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty-five**

**An Act Prohibiting the Practice of Hazing**

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 269 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following three sections:

SECTION 17. Whoever is a principle organizer or participant in the crime of hazing as defined herein shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one hundred days, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

SECTION 18. Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars.

SECTION 19. Each secondary school and each public and private school or college shall issue to every group or organization under its authority or operating on or in conjunction with its campus or school, and to every member, plebe, pledgee or applicant for

membership in such group or organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen. An officer of each such group or organization, and each individual receiving a copy of said sections seventeen and eighteen shall sign an acknowledgement stating that such group, organization or individual has received a copy of said sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each secondary school and each public or private school or college shall file, at least annually, a report with the regents of higher education and in the case of secondary schools, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with the provisions of this section and also certifying that said school has adopted a disciplinary policy with regards to the organizers and participants of hazing. The board of regents and in the case of secondary schools, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

### *Sexual Harassment:*

#### **I. General Statement**

All persons have the right to be free from sexual harassment; therefore, sexual harassment in any form is strictly forbidden in school, on school grounds, or at school-related activities.

#### **II. Definition**

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical conduct or other verbal or physical conduct of communication of a sexual nature when 1) submission to that conduct or communication is made a condition of obtaining or used as a factor in decisions affecting one's education; or 2) that conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's education, or creating and intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive educational environment.

Sexual harassment is not, by definition, limited to prohibited conduct by a male toward a female. Rather a male as well as a female may be victim of sexual harassment, and a female as well as a male may be the harasser. Further, the victim does not have to be the opposite sex from the harasser. The victim does not have to be the person to whom the unwelcome sexual conduct is directed. Finally, an adult may be the victim of sexual harassment by a student.

#### **III. Examples**

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: demanding sexual favors whether or not such demands are accompanied by threats; engaging in reprisals as a result of an individual's refusing to engage in sexual behavior; contact with any sexual part of another's body (e.g., touching, patting or pinching); touching any nonsexual part of the body (e.g., shoulder, etc.) after that person has indicated that such touching is unwanted; displaying sexually suggestive pictures or objects; calling a person an endearing, demeaning or sexualized term, or making reference to a person's physical characteristic when that person has indicated he/she does not wish to be addressed or referred to in that manner; leering (i.e., prolonged staring) at a person's body; and language or conduct in another's presence, even if not directed to said individual, once it is known that he/she objects.

**IV. Reporting**

Any student who believes he/she is a victim of sexual harassment should talk to his/her building principal or another adult in a position of authority in the school as soon as possible. Students should avoid trying to solve the problem of sexual harassment alone.

All persons shall promptly report knowledge of actual or reasonably suspected sexual harassment to the building principal or his/her designee and others in a position of authority in the school.

All reports and complaints shall be held in strict confidence.

**V. Investigation**

All complaints of sexual harassment shall be thoroughly investigated by the building principal or his/her designee, including notifying the person who has been accused of harassment and permitting a response to said allegation(s). The investigation shall consist of personal interviews with the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and others who may have the knowledge of the alleged incident(s) or circumstances giving rise to the complaint. The investigation may also consist of any other methods deemed pertinent. In addition, the building principal or his/her designee may take immediate steps, at his/her discretion, to protect the complainant, students and employees pending completion of the investigation of alleged sexual harassment.

**VI. Disciplinary Action**

If there is reasonable grounds to believe that sexual harassment has occurred, the person accused of sexual harassment will have a confidential disciplinary hearing before the building principal or his/her designee.

If the building principal or his/her designee, after the above hearing, determines that sexual harassment has actually taken place, disciplinary and corrective action will occur to prevent any further incidents. The range of discipline and corrective action may include one or more of the following: change in student's programming, apology to the victim, mandatory counseling, detention, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or recommendation for expulsion.

**VII. Reprisal**

Reprisals, threats, or intimidation of the victim or a person who provides information regarding a claim of sexual harassment will be treated as a most serious offense, and may result in a recommendation of permanent separation from the school community through expulsion from school.

**VIII. Notification to/by Parents/Guardians**

After investigation, if there is reasonable grounds to believe that sexual harassment has occurred, the building principal or his/her designee shall notify a student's parents/guardians if the student is the victim of or is accused of sexual harassment.

Parent/guardians are strongly encouraged to report incidents of sexual harassment to their son's/daughter's building principal.

**IX. Frivolous Complaints**

When a complaint of sexual harassment is unfounded, frivolous, or maliciously fabricated, the complainant shall be subject to disciplinary and corrective action. Depending upon the circumstances, the complainant may be subject to suspension/expulsion.

**X. Report to the Police**

Depending on the seriousness and frequency of incidents, the Chicopee or Massachusetts State Police may be contacted by the school administration.

**Suspension**

Students may be suspended from Valley West School for the following reasons:

- Drug or alcohol possession
- Use or possession of dangerous weapons
- Physically aggressive or assaultive behavior toward peers or staff including fighting
- Vandalism
- Harassment of students or school staff
- Bomb threat
- Setting off the fire alarm
- Threatening to harm others
- Disrupting the educational process
- Leaving school grounds without authorization
- Smoking in school or on school grounds
- Willful destruction of school property
- Stealing
- Other behaviors deemed by administration to be dangerous or markedly inappropriate for the school setting

**Due Process****Disciplinary Action Relative to Special Needs Students**

Students with special needs, as defined by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71B, shall be subject to the provisions of the Discipline Policy except as otherwise provided in this section.

Federal and Massachusetts laws, regulations and policies do not prohibit the suspension of special needs students in all cases. However, when it is permitted, the removal of a student from the program which is prescribed in his/her Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be preceded by a more deliberate review of the causes and reasons for the proposed suspension and the development of an alternative program, consistent with Federal and State law.

With respect to the suspension of special needs students for more than ten (10) cumulative days, Federal law [see 20 United States Code Section 1415 (e) (3)] requires parental consent or, where the parent does not consent, the securing of a judicial order authorizing the exclusion.



## Suspension Procedure

1. The student will be informed of the specific violation of the Discipline Policy and given opportunity to express his/her side of the story.
2. The parent/guardian will be notified of the reason for, and time frame of the suspension.
3. Notify the Administrative Supervisor or his/her designee of the misconduct for which the suspension is proposed.
4. Follow the modified discipline code, if any, which appears in the student's IEP.
5. Record the number and duration of the suspension on the student's records.
6. When it is known that the suspension(s) will accumulate to ten (10) days in an academic year, the TEAM, consisting of parents/guardians, the student (if 14 or older), school officials, LEA officials, and appropriate service providers, will determine the following:
  - a. What is the student's current performance level?
  - b. Has the student achieved the goals set forth in the IEP?
  - c. Has the student met the criteria which indicate readiness to enter a less restrictive program?
  - d. Should the student's IEP be amended to more adequately and appropriately meet the student's special needs.
  - e. Is referral for a re-evaluation desirable?
  - f. Is the Student's misconduct related to his/her special needs? Did the misconduct result from an inappropriate special education program or placement? Did the misconduct result from an IEP that was not fully implemented? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes", the student may not be suspended. A new program must be designed and implemented immediately or the IEP must be fully implemented.  
(Note: If an amended IEP is not consented to by the parent and a hearing or mediation is requested, the student is to remain in his/her last placement pending the decision of the hearing officer unless the school has secured a court order temporarily enjoining a "truly dangerous" student with special needs from attending his/her special education program).
  - g. If the school wishes to suspend a special needs student for more than ten (10) days during the academic year and the TEAM concludes that the student's misconduct is not related to his/her special needs and is not the result of an inappropriate program or placement and that the IEP has been fully implemented, the school must:
    1. amend the IEP to provide for the delivery of special education services to the student during the period of suspension;
    2. secure the approval of the alternate plan as outlined in the amended IEP from the Department of Education (Form SPED 766 -18);
    3. present the alternative plan to the parent accompanied by written notice of the procedural safeguards required by Federal Massachusetts law; and

4. secure the agreement of the parent or if the parent does not consent, petition the Court for an order permitting the suspension.

### **Termination**

In cases where a student fails to comply with school rules and/or disrupts the learning process on a consistent basis or represents a danger, Valley West School may seek to terminate the student's placement. In such cases, a meeting of the TEAM will be held to discuss the circumstances, and an alternative placement will be sought. The TEAM will develop a plan that will describe the student's specific program needs, short and long term educational goals, and current staff recommendations. The written termination plan shall be implemented in no less than 30 days unless all parties agree to an alternate termination date.

In an emergency termination where a student presents a clear and present threat to the health and safety of himself/herself or others, Valley West School will immediately notify the LEA and parents/guardians of the need for an IEP review meeting. Notice of this meeting shall be given 10 days in advance of the intended date of the meeting and shall be sent to the parent/guardians, the student (if over 14 years of age), the Administrator of Special Education and appropriate human service agencies. The outcome of this meeting will be a termination plan as described above. Valley West School shall not terminate the enrollment of any student, even in emergency circumstances, until the enrolling public school district is informed and assumes responsibility for the student. At the request of the public school district, Valley West School shall delay termination of the student for up to two calendar weeks to allow the public school district the opportunity to convene an emergency TEAM meeting or to conduct other appropriate planning discussions prior to the student's termination from Valley West School's program. With the mutual agreement of Valley West School and the public school district, termination may be delayed for longer than two calendar weeks. Emergency terminations will be reported to the Department of Education.

### **Accumulative Infractions**

All disciplinary infractions are accumulative and will be dealt with accordingly. For example, if a student is continually involved in fighting, his/her second disciplinary action will typically be more stringent than was the first. Additional infractions will each be equally more stringent than was the first, with the possibility of termination becoming a reality.

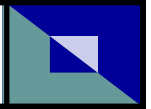
### **Review of Discipline Code**

No discipline code can specify all infractions. The previous list is not inclusive of all possible infractions. Any disciplinary infractions not mentioned are subject to administrative review and action. It is preferred that students utilize good, common sense in their behavior and avoid the need for disciplinary measures.

### **Grading Policy**

It is Valley West School's general policy to grade students on academics and classroom performance according to the following breakdown:

- High School: 60% classroom performance, 40% assessments
- Middle School: 70% classroom performance, 30% assessments



- Elementary: 80% classroom performance, 20% assessments

Grade equivalents are as follows:

A	-	94-100
A-	-	90-93
B+	-	87-89
B	-	84-86
B-	-	80-83
C+	-	77-79
C	-	74-76
C-	-	70-73
D+	-	67-69
D	-	64-66
D-	-	60-63 (60 is the minimum passing grade)
F	-	below 60 (Failure)

*Valley West School reserves the right to adjust this policy.*

### **Attendance Policy**

It is the policy of Valley West School to hold students accountable for learning through effort and attendance. Students must be in school to learn, and benefit from consistent attendance. It contributes to the continuity of the learning process and of the class by eliminating the frequent need for review to get a student caught up.

**Students with 10 or more unexcused absences in one quarter may be subject to loss of academic credit.**

### **Excused Absences**

Students may be excused from school attendance for the following reasons:

- Hospital admittance
- Medical, dental appointments which cannot be made at a time other than during the school day (documented)
- For serious contagious medical conditions, a doctor's note is needed indicating that it is safe for the student to return to school
- Religious holiday
- Death in immediate family (includes parents, sibling, grandparent, child, aunt, uncle)
- Mandated court appearances (documented)
- D.Y.S., D.S.S. obligations (documented)
- External suspension
- Special or unusual occasions allowed by the Attendance Review Committee



The Attendance Review Committee, made up of teachers, administration, and clinical staff will meet regularly to review the student's individual situation. The Committee may allow or deny full credit or partial, or assign grades of incomplete. Certain requirements may be made of the student in order to regain the lost credit. As a general rule, students may regain credit by requesting make-up work from their teachers. This work must be handed in four weeks after the close of the marking period.

### **Notification**

When a student is to be absent from school, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify us. It is requested that the school be notified by 9:30 AM to verify an absence. Valley West School will investigate suspected cases of truancy.

### **Complaint/Appeal**

As a general guideline, all parental/guardian or student complaints should be directed to the principal (John Dziel). Complaints will be processed in a prompt fashion. An appeal hearing will be convened upon the request of the parent/guardian to review any cases involving extenuating circumstances.

Parents/guardians with concerns specific to the educational aspects of their child's program should file a written complaint with the Educational Administrator. The educational administrator will meet with the parents and student to review, discuss, and attempt to satisfactorily resolve the complaint. If the parents are not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, they may submit a written appeal indicating the nature of disagreement and the reasons underlying such agreement to the school principal. The school principal will meet with the parents and provide them with a written decision as expeditiously as possible after the meeting.

If a student is not comfortable going directly to the principal with a complaint/ grievance he/she may take the complaint/grievance to another staff member who will promptly notify the principal.

### **School Hours**

Our school hours are 7:45 A.M. to 2:10 P.M.

Students who ride buses that arrive at the school prior to 7:45 A.M., are asked to remain on their buses until our school doors open at 7:45 A.M.

Students are dismissed in shifts beginning at 2:10 P.M. Dismissal typically reaches completion by 2:20 P.M.

### **Early Dismissal/Alternate Transportation**

Any student leaving school or being picked up during the school day must present to the office a written reason and authorization for the dismissal. Valley West School will not release any student to anyone other than the legal guardian or the appropriate bus without the written permission of the parent/guardian.

It is requested that any plans for alternative transportation (i.e. going home by means other than the normally designated bus) be submitted for approval by Valley West School at



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**Notification**

When a student is to be absent from school, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify us. It is requested that the school be notified by 9:30 AM to verify an absence. Valley West staff will attempt to confirm all unreported absences, and will investigate suspected cases of truancy.

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It is requested that any plans for alternative transportation (i.e. going home by means other than the normally designated bus) be submitted for approval by Valley West School at least one day in advance.

Students are not allowed to bring automobiles or motorcycles to school. Under special circumstances, exceptions to this rule may be approved by Valley West School's administration.

### **Phone Policy**

Students are not allowed access to school phones without the permission of administration. Students will not be allowed to use the phone unless there is a valid and necessary reason. Valley West staff will make fair judgment in determining whether a student's request for phone use is reasonable. In addition, students are not to receive any calls unless from parents/guardians, probation officers, KEY trackers, or other relevant service providers. Use of cell phones is prohibited unless authorized by a staff member.

### **Visitors**

Visitors are not allowed as a general rule. Exceptions may be allowed by the administration as long as there are valid academic or clinical reasons for a guest to visit.

Classroom observations by parents need to be approved by administration.

**Valuables**

Students are advised not to bring large sums of money or valuables to school. Students are responsible for taking care of any money or valuables that they bring to school. Valley West School is not responsible for the loss or theft of any items of value.

**School Cancellation**

In the event of school cancellation or delay, Valley West School will submit notice to the following stations: W-W-L-P (channel 22 television) and W-G-G-B (channel 40 television).

Any student who has had school cancelled in his/her town will not be required to attend Valley West School for that day.

**Field Trips**

Written notification will be sent home describing the details of any major field trip. However, there are times that staff may take students off school grounds without written notification to visit local attractions (e.g. Chicopee Public Library, Dana Park, etc.).

**Meetings**

Valley West School arranges TEAM meetings to discuss a student's progress and any possible changes in a student's program whenever necessary based on a student's performance or whenever mandated (quarterly/annual review). In addition, parent/guardian-teacher conferences can be initiated by either the guardian or Valley West School staff to discuss issues of concern.

Transition to less restrictive programming is a Team decision. Once the decision to return a student to a less restrictive environment had been made, changes will be initiated in conjunction with the student's public school district.

Valley West School will notify the public school and parents in writing when a student is ready for or whenever the I.E.P. needs to be revised to reflect a change in goals, placement, or a return to a less restrictive program. A team meeting will be scheduled to facilitate transitioning to a new program or any changes that may occur to a student's Individualized Education Program. Documentation of notification may be found in each student's file.

**Gifts and Gift Exchanges**

Elaborate and/or expensive gifts by students or parents to school personnel are discouraged. Letters to staff members from students or parents expressing gratitude and



appreciation are always welcome and considered more appropriate than gifts.

Any action or comment by an individual, student or staff member, which might be interpreted as an invitation for a gift of any nature is highly unethical and not allowed. At no time should a gift, or offer of a gift, be used in any way to bring embarrassment to students, parents, or staff.

### **Medication**

Under no circumstances should students bring medication to school. Any student who is approved to be taking medication in school must have the medication transported to school by a parent/guardian or their adult designee. All medication taken in school is to be done so with the supervision and permission of the school nurse (please refer to the school nurse's medical forms packet for further information about in-school medication).

Valley West School requires written documentation when a medication is discontinued. An initial documentation for discontinuance from the parent or guardian will be accepted. A discontinuation order will need to be sent to the school from the prescribing doctor.

### **Internet Use Policy**

Valley West School includes an inventory of Chrome books, laptop computers and tablets which allow for class computer instruction and research. In order to provide access to the most current, comprehensive, and diverse information available, our computers are connected to the Internet.

Internet access through Valley West School is a privilege, not a right. Student access may be limited or revoked by school officials at any time if this privilege is abused or violates acceptable use in any way. Students engaged in unacceptable use will also be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Valley West School *Discipline Code*.

All student use of the Internet is to be conducted under staff supervision. Nonetheless, students are responsible for acceptable use of computer networks just as they are responsible for their behavior in other areas of the school.

Students should not assume that their use of Valley West School's Internet access will be private. All student computer and Internet files is monitored and may be accessed and examined by school officials to ensure that this Internet policy is being adhered to. Pursuant to local, state and federal laws, administrators and staff may provide access to student Internet files and records to law enforcement authorities.

Valley West School, in our commitment to maintain a safe and secure learning environment, cannot screen our computers from all inappropriate Internet contacts. Therefore, students must use sound judgment when visiting websites and must neither post personal information nor arrange personal meetings in their use of the Internet. In addition, students should immediately inform their teachers or school administrators of any on-line communication that is threatening, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate.

Students are expected to respect and follow procedures and guidelines that are issued in order to ensure the security of Valley West School's computer system and to respect its resource limits. These include, but are not limited to, downloading guidelines and virus protection procedures.

Students are expected to take proper care when using our computers. Any deliberate destruction, mutilation, modification and tampering of computer hardware, software, or our network system will be subject to disciplinary action and/or involvement of law enforcement authorities. Any activity which inhibits or interferes with the normal operation of the hardware or software which comprise Valley West School's computer network system is also subject to disciplinary action.

### Unacceptable Uses

The following are examples of unacceptable internet use at Valley West School:

- Fostering private or personal information about yourself or others.
- Attempting to log in through or to access another person's files.
- Accessing or transmitting obscene or offensive material.
- Posting chain letters or sending annoying or unnecessary messages to large numbers of people (spamming).
- Engaging in racial or other forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment, hazing, plagiarism, cheating, or interfering with the rights of others to pursue an education.
- Participating in any communications that facilitate gambling, the illegal sale or use of drugs, alcohol or weapons, gang activity, or that threatens, intimidates, or harasses any other person, or that violates any local, state, or federal law.
- Infringing upon copyrights. Infringing upon copyrights is the inappropriate reproduction or transmission of material that is protected by copyright. Copyright laws will be respected.
- Participating in commercial or any activities that are not directly related to the educational purposes of Valley West School.
- Using e-mailing list services.

### Disclaimer of Liability

Valley West School disclaims all liability for the content of material that a student may access on the Internet, for any damages suffered in the course of or as a result of the student's Internet use, and for any other consequences of a student's Internet use.

Valley West School reserves the right to change this policy at any time.

### **Policy and Procedures Manual**

A complete copy of Valley West School's policy and procedures manual is kept in our Human Resources Office and will be made available to parents/guardians for review upon request.



### **Asbestos Management Plan**

This notification is required by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA, 40 CFR part 763 of title II of the Toxic Substances Control Act). An Asbestos Management Plan has been developed for Valley West School and is available and accessible to the public at our receptionist's desk. If you have any questions regarding the Valley West School Management Plan please feel free to contact our Designated Person.



# ***Valley West School***

*269 Moore St.*

*Chicopee, MA 01013*

*(413) 592-6069*

## **ADMISSION AGREEMENT**

I have read, understand, and agree to all of the policies and procedures contained in the ***Valley West School Parent/Student Handbook*** as they pertain to my child \_\_\_\_\_.

I understand and agree that my child is responsible for following the rules, regulations, and policies of Valley West School.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*I understand and agree to the hazing policy contained within this handbook.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date