

# **Valley Catholic Middle School Parent Involvement Opportunities 2023-2024**

## **Want to get involved – Just a little or a whole lot?**

Valley Catholic Middle School invites parents to help students organize programs, activities and events to enhance the student or parent community, to address topics of interest or concern through mini classes or guest speakers, or help by volunteering to assist with school projects. Whether you can volunteer just once or more times, we hope to see you!

## **General Philosophy for Parent Involvement:**

At the middle school level, teachers begin helping students to grow into self advocates, starting in sixth grade. During this time, there is a conscious effort made to shift the primary communication from being predominantly parent driven to teaching the students to claim ownership for managing their academics and communication with staff (while understanding that parents are the underlying support structure for the students during this three-year transition.)

In light of this, roles that parents traditionally fill in the elementary school program now switch to students. Students assume leadership roles to complete these tasks. Middle school students plan assemblies, socials, recognition and spirit activities, and birthday acknowledgements. This allows them to complete required school service hours on campus during school hours. In middle school, students assume the responsibility of service hours which parents performed in the elementary school.

Since the ability and need of the parents to volunteer changes in middle school, parents are invited to become part of the middle school community in a variety of ways. Please know our staff purposely planned a variety of activities in an effort to offer something for a large range of parents. These activities include mini-classes and experiential events for parents, Family Fun Nights, attending Mass or other open assemblies during the school day, ad hoc opportunities (chaperoning for field trips, offer help or practice with students before large presentations, etc.) and through on-going, initiative-driven committee work. In addition, the Monthly Coffee Talks with the VCMS principal and administration resume this year.

## **First Quarter Parent Involvement Opportunities**

At this point, we would like to provide you with the dates for Parent Involvement opportunities in the first quarter. You can expect to hear about second quarter Parent Involvement opportunities by Parent-Teacher Conferences in October, third quarter Parent Involvement Opportunities will be announced prior to Christmas break, and Fourth Quarter Parent Involvement Opportunities will be announced prior to spring break. The Parent Involvement opportunities will appear on the Important Dates information sheet as they are announced for the quarter, on the live student Google Calendar and in the weekly parent email.

### Mini-Classes for Parents

As we begin our school-year, we would like to invite you to attend our mini-classes for parents regarding issues that directly relate to your student's life at school. Although we realize many parents will be unable to attend the mini-classes, the information provided in the mini-classes will be posted online with links provided on the live student Google Calendar as well in the weekly parent email.

The middle school offers roughly 18 -20 Parent Mini Classes a year that are offered roughly every three weeks during the first semester and monthly during the second semester. These 30 minute classes (unless otherwise noted), led by middle school staff, give the parents an insight into the curriculum their student is learning while providing the parents enrichment opportunities. The Parent Mini Classes are designed to help parents support and navigate middle school with their child.

### First Quarter Parent Mini Classes

Tuesday, September 26	Student anxiety/ stress and prevention 2:00 - 2:30	CPR/First Aid/ AED Certification 2:00 - 4:00	Mini art lesson Part 1: Using watercolor to explore some foundational art principles 2:00 - 3:00
Tuesday, October 24	Navigating Peer Interactions Relations in Middle School 2:00 - 2:30	Academic Writing: How to recognize and support your child's voice (Avoiding Plagiarism) 2:40 - 3:10	Mini art lesson Part 2: Using watercolor to explore some foundational art principles 2:00 - 3:00
Tuesday, November 14	Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution and Leadership Skill Development 2:00 - 2:30	Presentation Skills: How to help students use their voice and visuals 2:40 - 3:10	3D printing, GLoForge, and TinkerCad - Come Create With us 2:00 - 3:00

### Evening Experiences/ Events for Parents:

Starting in the second quarter we plan to offer some evening opportunities for parents. Dates and times will be announced by Parent-Teacher conferences in October. These evening opportunities will include experiences like the following:

- Ballroom Dancing - Come learn the basics of ballroom dancing
- 3D printing, GloForge, and TinkerCad - Come Create With us (evening version)
- First Aid/CPR/AED Training (evening opportunity)
- Speaker Series - Guest speakers
- Valley Catholic School Gala

### Join us for Mass (9:25 a.m.)

Friday, September 8: Mass - All school mass (PreK-12) in the Valiants Gym

Wednesday, November 1: All Saints Mass - All school mass (PreK-12) in the Valiants Gym

Tuesday, November 21: Thanksgiving Mass - MS/HS mass (6-12) in the Valiants Gym

### **Immediate Help Needed - Volunteers to help in kitchen staff**

Volunteers for the kitchen are there to support the kitchen staff in serving lunch to both the middle school and high school students and help with light prep work as needed. Parent volunteers will not be supervising students and may volunteer just once or many times throughout the year. Having a smile for the students is a must. While we would gladly accept help any day of the week but we need help on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays.

The kitchen staff will work with volunteers around the parent schedule as best as possible but in general (on a regular schedule day) volunteers should plan to arrive about 10:45 and stay through 12:45. Because the time changes based on the schedule, Mrs. Ware will contact the volunteers via text or email a day or two before to confirm the specific time.

For more details, to ask questions, or to volunteer to help, please contact Amy Ware at [AWare@valleycatholic.org](mailto:AWare@valleycatholic.org).

### **Middle School Night at the VCHS Football Game - 10/6 and 10/27**

There will be a VCMS middle school student social (pizza feed or ice cream social- TBD by students - and spirit other activities) starting at 6:00 PM. Once the game begins, students and staff will head over to the football game. Staff will be on site to supervise students until half-time.

At half time, we invite parents to come join their students, get to know other middle school parents in a relaxed setting as you cheer on Valley Catholic High School's football team. Otherwise, middle school students will need to be picked up at half time. Members of the middle school staff will not be supervising middle school students and in some cases, staff will no longer be in attendance once half time begins (many staff members have young children and will need to leave in order to care for their own families).

Students should meet in front of the ES/MS building between 5:45 and 6:00 PM or join us at 7:00 PM at the game.

### **Parent Help - Specific Projects**

At parent-teacher conferences in October, we will send out a Google Form to parents asking for volunteers to help with the following activities. If you are interested in helping with these specific projects, we would be grateful for parents who want to offer a little support/help or parents who would be willing to chair/organize these special projects. Either way, various staff members will be the advisor/driver of each project.

**Religious Activities** - Parent support for help with Religious Activities involves working with Mr. Hegwood, Vice Principal and Religion Department Head, planning and organizing activities such as helping with community outreach programs for VC families (illnesses, deaths, arranging meals, etc.), parent prayer services, retreats, Bible study, support VCMS student retreats, prayer boards, helping find a variety of school-wide morning prayer/reflections/inspirational stories that follow the Catholic faith while also exposing students to other cultures and practices, organize volunteer/service programs (e.g. Soup's On, Food Bank)

**Spirit Activities** - Parent support for help with Spirit Activities involves working with the advisors for the student leadership teams (Student Activities Board, VCMS Senate, and Advisory) with executing **student** plans by helping prep needs (purchasing items, making kits, gathering items needed using the shopping list and budget as determined by SAB, etc.) for students to compile, for the student-planned events such as Middle School socials (Halloween, Christmas, Student Mini-Concerts/Art Fairs, Valentines, Mardis Gras, Spirit week, Rejuvenation week, end of year), any additional gatherings, special recognition programs for student and staff birthdays (locker signs, bulletin boards), posters for events, VCMS CYO playoffs.

**Multicultural Exposure and Activities** - We greatly appreciate parent support in helping to find ways to integrate the heritage and cultural norms of our students within our school calendar. VCMS is looking for purposeful ways to exchange some of our traditional approaches to activities, assemblies, Mass, and prayer services to include the richness of our community. One example is helping Mr. Hegwood work with priests from different Catholic parishes to infuse some of the cultures and customs associated with different Catholic Masses into the different VCS Masses. So while the Mass remains a Catholic Mass, the other components reflect the culture of the parish. Another example would be ensuring we have a middle-school appropriate assembly (in time, topic, and cost) for significant calendar events within the cultures of our students - such as Children's Day.

**Ecology** - Parent support for help with ecology efforts as identified by the students through their classes and clubs. Parent help would be welcomed in helping to create and organize a Stewardship of the Earth program on campus, as well as organizing Earth Day events/activities. In addition, parents can help research ways to implement eco-friendly practices within the MS school community so student leaders could review the research and make educated decisions about a short-term ecological goal (while staff continues to concentrate on the overall sustainability).

**Outdoor Education** - Parent support with our Outdoor Education program would include helping VCMS staff organize the outdoor education events that include other Catholic schools in an effort to build Catholic school comradery as the students from various schools intermix on local hikes, or engage in activities located at places such as Sandy River Bottoms, Camp Howard and Camp MacGruder. Parent help is needed in offering general chaperone support and/or transportation to locations, and to offer general support on these outings.

**Women in STEM** - We are looking for female volunteers in traditional and nontraditional STEM fields to present throughout Women in STEM Day on March, 20, 2024. Women in STEM day provides an opportunity for all students to see successful and culturally diverse women speak about their careers in STEM fields. This unique experience includes all women speakers focused on inspiring a new generation to explore careers or hobbies with STEM principles. Students will have opportunities to learn about various careers and make connections between the STEM curriculum and design process and real-world careers. In addition, we will have hands-on STEM activities created by teachers or brought in through OMSI or other local STEM organizations. The goal of the Women in STEM day is to open up a world of possibilities for the students. Many students associate engineers, doctors, or researchers as the only fields that use STEM. We hope to expose students to both traditionally recognized STEM careers but also careers and hobbies where elements of STEM are used in unexpected ways. In doing so, we hope to inspire students

to continue coursework in STEM throughout their educational journey. The Women in STEM day is made possible through the Marie Lamfrom Charitable Foundation STEM grant.

**Practice Partners** - Parents who volunteer as Practice Partners will be asked to offer expertise for students as they prepare for one of their summative assessments (such as Capstone, Mars Project, Social Studies Fair, Future Cities). In addition to the feedback the students receive from VCMS staff members, we would like parents who can offer feedback for the students' written work (for example, is the excerpt that is being used for a presentation clear, concise, and easy to read), research (is the research balanced and supportive of the excerpt used for the presentation), Verbal Presentation (allow students to practice and give feedback on oral presentations) and Visual Presentation (feedback on the materials used in conjunction with the verbal presentation) and product (Does the product - diorama, slides, poster - convey an expertise? Does the final product look professional and meet the rubric, regardless of art ability?).

**And more opportunities** - specific to individual teachers - will be included in the Google Form we will send to parents at parent teacher conferences (in October).