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# 2018-2019

# Student Handbook

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Brian Vannest, Principal

VALLEY WEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
10707 SOUTH GESSNER  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77071  
713-773-6151

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For the most up to date version of this handbook please visit  
[www.houstonisd.org/valleywestES](http://www.houstonisd.org/valleywestES)

# Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Hello and welcome to Valley West!

This student handbook is composed of the most important expectations that students will need to know to experience success while attending Valley West Elementary School.

Our staff will make every effort to keep students informed about their responsibilities as students. The faculty and staff of our school are dedicated to providing the best possible education for your children. It is our desire that communication between home and school is open and effective. We ask for your support as we look forward to a new and exciting school year.

Please take the time to go over this handbook with your child to verify that both of you have read through the handbook and that you both understand the expectations and regulations established at Valley West Elementary School.

The parent AND the student must sign and date the confirmation form below and return it to your child's teacher.

We appreciate your efforts to be informed of the policies and expectations we have for our students.

Thank you,

Brian Vannest  
Principal

(Return to School by September 4, 2018)

Student Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# School Overview

## Valley West Elementary School Vision

Valley West Elementary is a STEM Magnet School that provides young scholars with a rich emotional, social, and intellectual foundation by infusing science, technology, engineering, robotics, and mathematics throughout all aspects of the curriculum while preparing students to be critical thinkers which will afford them every opportunity for a successful life.

## Valley West Elementary School Mission Statement

The mission of Valley West Elementary School is to provide our students, the MANATEES, with the best possible foundation for academic, technological, and social success in a multicultural society.

### SCHOOL HOURS/OFFICE HOURS

7:15AM-3:00PM Teachers

7:30AM-2:50PM Students

### Magnet Information

Valley West Elementary is considered a School-Wide Magnet Program (SWP). The Valley West Elementary Magnet Program is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). All students that attend Valley West automatically participate in the magnet program. Students that attend Valley West on a magnet transfer must abide by all program expectations.

If you have questions or concerns about the magnet program, please contact Ms. Rudolph at one of the following listed below.

*Erica R. Rudolph*  
*Magnet Coordinator*  
*(713) 773-6151*

[erudolph@houstonisd.org](mailto:erudolph@houstonisd.org)

Students will have the opportunity to participate in several STEM experiences that are integrated into the campus ancillary rotation. The ancillary rotation consists of the following classes:

**Art, Science Lab, Engineering, Technology, Robotics, Library, Character Education, and Physical Education**

# Student Safety

## **Safety is a priority**

Valley West places high priority on safety and on the prevention of student injury. Principals and staff are responsible for the conduct and safety of students from the time they come under school supervision until they leave school supervision. The following visitor regulations will be in place at Valley West Elementary: All visitors, including parents, must sign in at the office and show photo I.D. to receive a visitors pass. Picture identification badges will be used throughout the district. Picture identification badges will also be used by District employees who visit campuses (i.e. superintendents, maintenance, and transportation/cafeteria supervisors).

## **Student Information Cards**

Student emergency cards must be kept current. All parents must complete a new student information card every year for each child. If a student becomes ill or is injured at school, we must have a phone number where we can reach the parent, guardian, or a designated substitute. Your child will not be released to an adult unless the adult is on the emergency card.

## **Accidents**

If a serious injury occurs on the school grounds or on the bus, parents will be notified and asked to pick up the child for their own observation or examination by their family physician. Parents will be promptly notified of all injuries not considered minor. It is critical that parents/guardians keep the emergency card up to date. If the accident is serious the school will call 911 and notify the parents immediately.

## **Office Telephone**

The office telephone is for *emergency* use only. Please make after school arrangements with your child in advance. Office staff is not permitted to interrupt classroom instruction to relay messages to students. Emergency situations should be communicated to the principal and necessary actions will be taken to ensure appropriate communication occurs.

## **Safety Drills**

In accordance with state law, an emergency evacuation is conducted every month. Students are expected to respond quickly and safely as directed by their teacher. If you are in your child's classroom during a fire drill or a lock-down drill, please stay with your child until the drill is over.

# Attendance Policies

## Absences

Daily school attendance is essential for student success. By law, parents are required to send their child to school daily. Parents are strongly encouraged to schedule medical appointments during non-school hours. Any student who is not present at 9:30 a.m. will be counted absent for the day.

## Types of Absences

Compulsory Attendance and Instructional (Period) Attendance take into consideration whether or not a particular absence is “excused” or “unexcused.”

**“Excusable” vs. “Excused”** While certain types of absences may be excusable, the procedures defined by the campus must be followed in order for excusable absences to be “excused”. If campus guidelines are not met, the absence may be deemed unexcused.

## Excuse Notes

Parental notes do not excuse absences; they provide a reason for campus consideration of excuse. BP FEB (Local) Excuse notes are explanations of the reason behind an absence, the campus determines if the absence is excused according to policy or decides to excuse the absence according to circumstance. Pre-notification of an absence does not automatically excuse an absence, nor does the successful completion of make-up work, either before or after the absence.

All students who are absent and are seeking to have it excused must provide an official note such as, doctor’s note, funeral program, and or court papers/documentation. The absence will be marked unexcused if the excuse note is not received within 3 days.

## Campus Policy on Unexcused Absences

Students will be assigned to one hour of after-school detention for each day they have an unexcused absence.

(Please see after-school detention policy)

## Tardiness

An emphasis is placed on students arriving to school on time. Late students often miss the focus of the day or lesson and disrupt the flow of the lesson for other students. Students need to be in the classroom by 7:30 and will be counted tardy at 7:40. When students are late for school, they must check into the office before going to class to get a tardy slip. Parents will be notified if a student has more than two tardy arrivals and the student will be assigned to a consequence such as lunch or after school detention. Repeated tardiness will result in a referral to the truancy officer.

## Missed Work

A student absent from school shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the absence. The teacher of any class from which a student is absent shall determine what assignments the student shall make up and what period of time the

student shall complete such assignments. The tests and assignments shall be reasonably equivalent.

### **Request for Homework**

If your child is ill two days or more, parents may request homework. Call the office at least one day before the day you wish to pick up the assignments. The teacher(s) will have the work ready to pick up in the office after school or the next day.

### **Appointments**

If your child needs to leave school for an appointment, please send a note with the student in the morning. Sign your child out at the school office before taking him/her out of class. In the event the appointment must be scheduled during school hours please make an effort to do so after 9:30. Children who are present for the first two hours of the school day (7:30 – 9:30) are counted present.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

### **Safe Arrival and Departures**

Our school officials work closely to plan for the safe arrival and departure of students. We are asking for your support and help in the safe loading and unloading of children. Assist us in teaching your child to use the crosswalks when coming to school and leaving school.

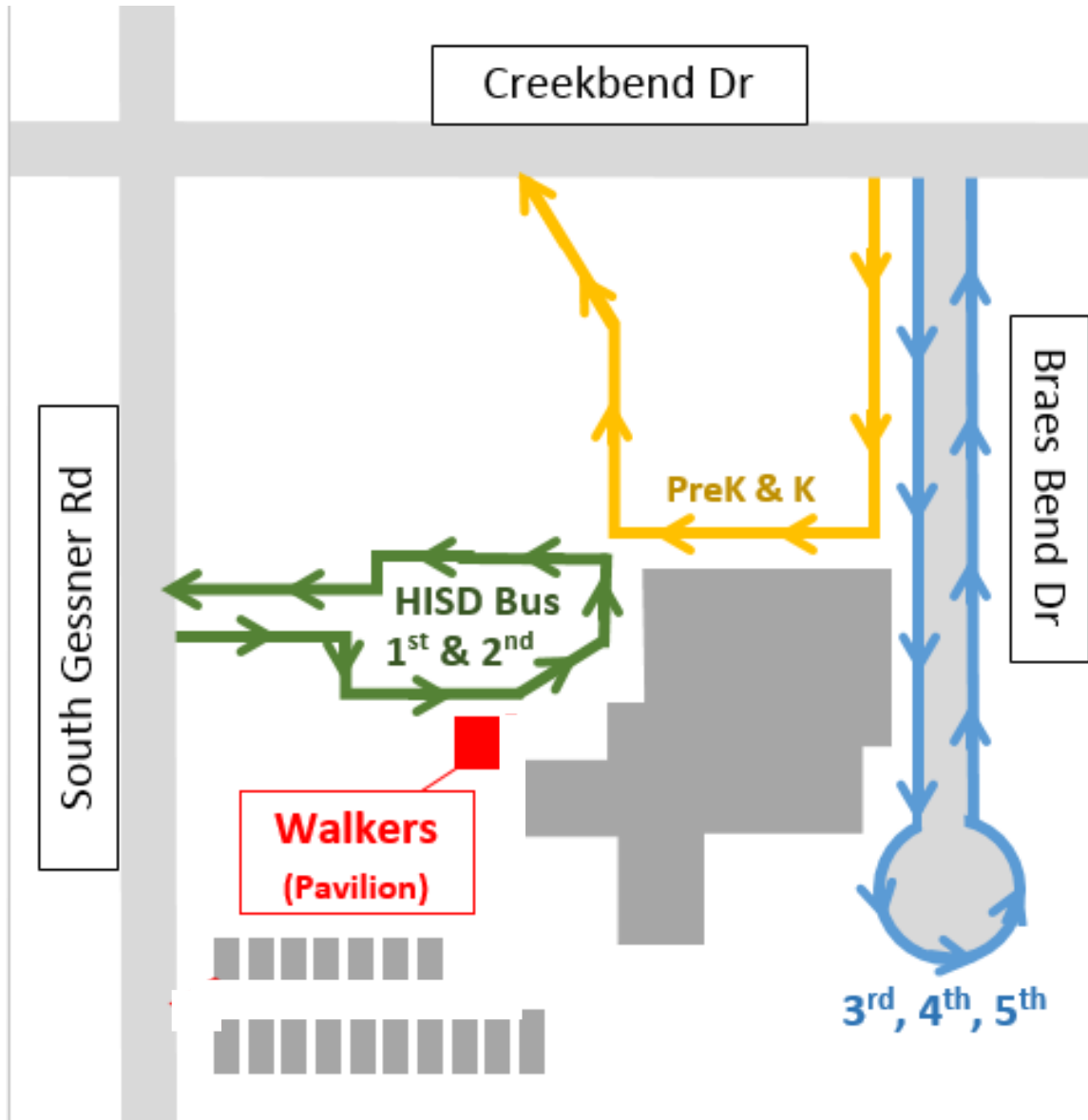
Do not stop your vehicle in the crosswalk or in front of the driveway to deliver or pick up your child. Make sure the children exit the car close to the building. Teach your child to walk, not run, in the drop off area.

Do not leave your vehicle unattended in the loading and unloading zones.

Do not park in the fire zone.

### **Inclement Weather Plan**

Please remain in your vehicle while students are dismissed to their normal car pool lines. Students will not be outside during inclement weather.



**The 4 dismissal options:**

**1. Walkers**

Students who walk home will be released from the covered pavilion in the front of the school. If you wish to walk with your child, meet them at the pavilion gate.

**2. HISD Bus Riders**

Students are dismissed to their buses from the front of the building. (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> loading area)

**3. Daycare Bus Riders**

Students are dismissed to their buses from the front of the building.

**4. Car Riders**

Valley West Elementary now uses an electronic dismissal system in which teachers are notified via Google Sheets when to send your child out to the car. In order to ensure a safe, smooth, and orderly dismissal all parents must have their assigned dismissal tag that clearly displays



their child's number. In the event a parent does not have their assigned number he or she will have to park and come into the main office to present proper identification.

Dismissal tags will be issued on the first day of school during morning drop-off or your child's teacher will send the tag home on the first day.

Parents are not permitted to pick up students after 2:00 pm unless approved by an administrator

Please advise any driver who may transport your child of these regulations.

#### **Sibling groups**

Must drop off/pick-up at the location of the youngest sibling

## **Getting involved at Valley West**

#### **Classroom Teacher Requests**

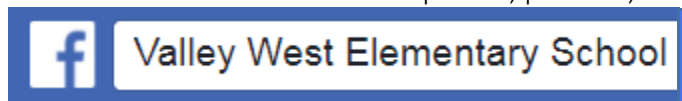
Valley West carefully considers multiple variables which determine classroom placement. In general, no parental requests will be honored in the first semester. Only for cases with extenuating circumstances will a request for a teacher change be approved by the principal.

#### **School Website/Newsletter**

Please visit our website to learn about our school as well as our upcoming events. [www.houstonisd.org/valleywestES](http://www.houstonisd.org/valleywestES). Valley West newsletter are updated on a regular basis on our website. This newsletter includes upcoming events as well as notes from the principal and our teachers.

#### **Social Media**

Please follow us on Twitter and Facebook for updates, pictures, and celebrations.



#### **School Visits**

We encourage parents/guardians and interested members of the community to visit our school and view the educational program. To ensure the safety of the students and staff all school visitors and parent volunteers must complete the *Volunteers in Public Schools* (VIPS) background check and be cleared. The background check usually takes between two to three weeks. Parents will not be allowed to visit classrooms, cafeteria, or attend field trips.

To ensure the safety of the students and staff and avoid potential disruptions, all visitors should register in the school administration office immediately upon entering the school building or grounds when school is in session and receive a visitors pass. For purposes of school safety and security, the school will issue a visitors pass to worn while on campus.

Please return the pass when leaving the school. No electronic listening or recording device may be used by students or visitors in a classroom without the teacher and principal's permission.

### **Volunteers**

We strongly encourage and welcome parents at our School!  
Following is a list of various programs in which you can help:

- Parent Teacher Organization
- Classroom Volunteers Teacher Appreciation Day
- PTO Membership Drive
- Room Volunteers (Room Mothers/Dads)

### **Parent/ Teacher Conferences**

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice during the year for all students. In the fall they are held at the end of the first semester and again in the spring at the end of the second semester. Valley West schedules 2 late conference days during conference week so teachers may have sufficient time to meet with the parents. These late conference days end at 7:00pm. The average length of a conference is 20 minutes and involves reporting progress and creating goals for students. Parents and teachers are encouraged to set up additional conferences as the need arises during the year.

### **School Feedback Procedures**

The school follows the procedures outlined below to address parent concerns and complaints. Please use the following steps if you have a concern:

1. Classroom concerns should first be brought to the attention of your child's teacher. Please call the teacher to explain your concern. Small concerns may be addressed by a phone call; larger concerns are better addressed in a conference.
2. If the classroom concern is not satisfactorily addressed with the teacher or the concern is a school level concern, please call the school administrator. Small concerns may be addressed by a phone call; larger concerns are better addressed in a conference.

## **Staying Healthy**

### **School Lunch Program**

A quality, nutritionally balanced hot lunch is available in the cafeteria daily free of charge to all students. Menus are sent home with the student at the beginning of each month or can be viewed on the school web site. One entrée or a choice between two entrees which include a protein and a bread/grain serving is offered along with a selection of vegetables and fruits. Students must choose at least three out of the five components

offered to meet the standards for a healthy meal. Valley West Elementary is participating in school-wide free lunch program. Lunch applications have been replaced with the socioeconomic forms. The new forms will be sent home on the first week of school and must be returned to the front office as soon as possible.

### **Lunches from Home and Snacks**

We strongly urge parents to incorporate healthy food choices in packed lunches from home. Please save any candy or sodas to be consumed after school at home.

### **Health Office Information**

The school health office is staffed by a full-time nurse. The school health office provides care to students who are sick at school, until the parent can be contacted to pick up the student. Students will only be released to persons listed on the Student Information Card.

### **Medications**

The school health office also supervises students who are required to take medication during the school day. A written authorization from the student's physician and parent or guardian is required before designated school staff can assist the student in taking any medication, whether prescribed by the physician or over-the-counter (Aspirin, Motrin, cough drops, etc.). These medication forms are available in the school office.

All medication must be in the original container and placed under lock and key in the health office for the safety of all students. **Students are not allowed to carry any form of medication (prescription or over-the counter) at any time while on campus** except those medications that a physician requests the pupil be allowed to carry (e.g., inhalant for asthma, Auto-injector Epi-Pen for severe allergies). Regulations for medications accompanying students on field trips must also be followed. Medications shall be in possession of a teacher and in a locked container.

Prior to the beginning of school, please notify the school health office in writing of any chronic health issues such as heart problems, diabetes, severe allergies, hearing loss, chronic pain, asthma, seizure disorders, etc. This enables the school to communicate the necessary accommodations to appropriate staff to ensure that student health needs and safety are cared for.

## **Academic Information**

### **STAAR**

The STAAR program includes annual assessments for grades 3-5 in reading and mathematics, in writing at grades 4, and in science at grade 5.

### **Homework**

Homework is a teacher-planned learning activity which takes place largely outside of a student's regular school hours. As such, homework reinforces classroom learning and

expands on a student's school experiences. If you ever feel that your child is spending extremely long amounts of time on completing homework, set up a teacher conference. Homework assignments are not factored into a student's grade however a student may earn up to 5 extra credit points for satisfactory completion of homework each semester.

### **Standards Based Grading**

Instruction is focused around the standards identified for each subject in each grade level. Students are provided with information about how their work will be evaluated and how their level of proficiency will be determined. Teachers modify instruction to meet a wide variety of learning styles and levels of ability. The grading scale is listed below:

90-100	A
80-89	B
75-79	C
70-74	D
0-69	F

### **Promotion / Retention Information**

The purpose of retaining students is to provide additional opportunities for a student to learn grade level skills. Students are required to demonstrate that they have mastered grade level expectations in order to be promoted to the next grade. For more information on guidelines visit the [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org) website and search "school guidelines."

### **Special Education/Speech Language services**

Valley West provides special education and speech language services to qualified students. If you have questions about the services for your student contact the main office.

### **Gifted and Talented Education**

We are dedicated to provide the structure, support, training and resources necessary to ensure that students receive the highest quality education to become happy, healthy, productive members of society. Parents may fill out applications to have their child tested for the gifted and talented program.

### **Field Trips**

Students must have written parental permission in order to participate in trips requiring transportation. Students who do not have written permission may not be allowed to participate in a particular field trip. Only students who are members of the class may attend the field trip activity. Parents that would like to accompany their children on field trips must have passes a background check at least 3 weeks prior to the event.

## **Miscellaneous School Information**

### **Skateboards and Bicycles**

Skateboards are not allowed at school. Bicycles may be ridden to and from school with the understanding that they will be maintained and operated in a safe manner. This includes:

1. Using the crosswalk

2. Locking your bicycle inside the designated bike area
3. After parking your bicycle and locking it, please stay out of the bicycle area
4. Walking your bike while on the playground or school sidewalks
5. Wearing a helmet
6. Parents-make sure your child has capable riding skills and knows the rules of the road before allowing him/her to ride to school.
7. The school cannot be responsible for damaged or stolen bicycles

### **Birthdays**

If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday with his/her class, please make arrangements with the teacher prior to bringing in food as some children have food allergies. This celebration should be held during the last period of the school day.

### **Cell Phones on Campus**

Grades K-5 students are allowed to have cell phones and other electronic signaling devices in their backpack while at school. However, cell phones and other electronic signaling devices must have their ringers or alarms turned to silent during school hours, shall not visible, and shall not be used during school hours. If the cell phone rings and it is collected by the teacher, parents will be required to pick up the phone in the main office and complete a cell phone return form. If you should need to get in contact with your student, for any reason, during school hours you should contact the main office and avoid texting or calling your child.

### **Gum**

Gum is not allowed at school.

### **Lost and Found**

Parents are strongly encouraged to label jackets, sweaters, and lunch boxes with their owner's name. "Found" articles will be kept in the lost and found bins located in the cafeteria. If items are not claimed, they will be donated to a charitable organization in December and June.

### **Personal Property**

All students should mark personal belongings with first and last name before articles are brought to school. This includes lunch boxes, backpacks, coats, sweaters, umbrellas, gloves, binders, etc.

Valuables, expensive items, radios, iPods, iPads, eReaders, CD players, and other electronic items other than cell phones should be kept at home and are also **not allowed on field trips**. All toys, including playground equipment such as basketballs, baseballs, bats, and gloves, etc. should be left at home. An item can be specifically approved to be at school by the teacher, but the school or district is not responsible for loss or damage to personal items. If an item is brought to school without permission, it will be confiscated and returned only to the parent. Dangerous or illegal items are not allowed at school and in some cases suspension or expulsion of the student can occur if such items are brought to school.

## **Student Uniform Policy**

**Valley West has a school uniform policy. All students must wear uniforms daily.** We also believe that appropriate dress and grooming contribute to a productive learning environment. We expect students to give proper attention to personal cleanliness and to wear clothes that are suitable for the school activities in which they participate. Students' clothing must not present a health or safety hazard or a distraction which would interfere with the educational process. The major responsibility for dress and grooming is placed upon the student and the student's parents. The administration reserves the right to decide the appropriateness of the student's attire. Inappropriately dressed students will be expected to change clothing. The following guidelines are intended to define appropriate student attire and personal grooming and shall apply to all regular school activities:

- All garments must fit and be worn in the manner in which they are designed. Pants must be worn at or above the hip point and must be worn with a belt.
- Footwear must be worn at all times. At all elementary schools, for safety reasons, thongs or backless shoes/sandals are prohibited.
- Clothes shall be sufficient to conceal undergarments at all times. See-through or fish-net fabrics, halter tops, off-the-shoulder or low-cut tops, tank tops, torn off sleeves, bare midriffs, and skirts or shorts shorter than knee length are prohibited.
- Inappropriate lettering, printing, message patches, or messages on clothing, hats, backpacks, binders or other personal items are prohibited.
- Clothing and jewelry shall be free of writing, pictures, or any other insignia which are crude, vulgar, profane, or sexually suggestive or which advocate racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice or the use of drugs or alcohol. Only stud earrings are to be worn. Dangling earrings are unacceptable.
- Hair shall be clean and neatly groomed. Hair may not be sprayed by any coloring that would drip when wet.
- Any apparel, jewelry, accessory, school materials, or manner of grooming which by virtue of its color, arrangement, or any other attribute denoting membership in a gang is prohibited.
- Hats are not allowed to be worn in the classroom (district-wide) with the exception of classroom curriculum activities. If baseball caps are worn outside, they must be worn forward facing.

**Polo Tops** – Kelly green, white, royal or navy blue

**School Spirit Shirts**- Manatee, Valley West or STEM t-shirts

**Bottoms** – Khaki or Blue Pants, shorts, knee length skirts, dresses