Blue Valley School

Students and their Parents Manual

2017

About this Manual

For practical purposes, in this manual we alternate feminine and masculine object pronouns to avoid gender issues.

Please read with your child(ren) this manual. Check the Addendum at the end. Only if there have been changes since last year do you need to fill it and send signed with you child.
Levels are addressed with different names, according to the situation described:

**MONTESSORI**  
Students three and a half to five and a half. When four, the students merge into mixed-age-grouping classes.

**PREPARATORY**  
Five and a half to six and a half years old students doing traditional first grade work with a preschool approach.

**PRESCHOOL**  
Both Montessori and preparatory students.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
Preparatory through fifth grade.

**GRADE SCHOOL**  
First through fifth grade.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Sixth through twelfth grades.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
Sixth through eighth grades.

**HIGH SCHOOL**  
Ninth through twelfth grades.

**MEP EQUIVALENTS**  
First to third grade.  
Fourth to sixth grade.  
Seventh to ninth grade.  
Tenth and eleventh grade.  
“PRIMER CICLO”  
“SEGUNDO CICLO”  
“TERCER CICLO”  
“CUARTO CICLO” or  
EDUCACION DIVERSIFICADA

**IB PROGRAM**  
Students may choose to opt for the International Baccalaureate Diploma when in 10B to start in eleventh grade and present their exams in twelfth grade. Students who already started the program will graduate in 12A.

When some issues in this manual are explained in Spanish, it means this is the language in which they are carried out.
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Abren las oficinas  
Orientación profesores nuevos  
Orientación todos el personal  
Segunda convocatoria de aplazados  
Anexión de Guanacaste - feriado  
Primer día de clases

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Feriado Día de la Madre  
Reportes de progreso

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<td>Sep-10</td>
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Muestra de talentos -primaria  
Semana cívica  
Desfile de faroles y acto cívico (Primaria y secundaria)  
Día de la Independencia - feriado  
Finaliza el primer bimestre (45 días)  
Entrega de notas

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Receso lluvioso  
Día de las artes (Salida a las 12:00 m)  
Concierto primaria

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Reportes de progreso  
Exámenes de bachillerato  
Musical de Montessori  
Día del maestro (medio bimestre)

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Exámenes semestrales  
Ceremonia de Incorporación a Escuela media  
Fiesta de la alegría (primaria). Salida 12:00 m  
Finaliza el segundo bimestre (45 días), último día de clases  
Entrega de notas (9:00-12:00)  
Primer y segunda convocatoria de aplazados  
Cierre de oficinas
# Students and their Parents Manual SS 2017

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| Ago 1 | Primer día de clases |  |
# BLUE VALLEY STAFF

## Administration

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<td>María Cristina Gutiérrez de Urbina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary Administrative Principal</td>
<td>Kathryn Scanlan</td>
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<td>Elementary Academic Principal</td>
<td>Ligia Fernández de Coto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle School Principal</td>
<td>Alisa Zelaya</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School Principal</td>
<td>Susana Cisneros</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Services Director</td>
<td>Irene Ortega</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Director</td>
<td>María de los Ángeles Zamora</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Lorena Jiménez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance Director</td>
<td>María Paula Tovar</td>
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<td>Esquivel, Viviana</td>
<td>Montessori C</td>
<td>Montessori Bldg.</td>
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<td>Ruiz, Rocío</td>
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<td>Sáenz, Ana Catalina</td>
<td>Enrichment</td>
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<td>Admin Bldg.</td>
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**AIDES**

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### SECONDARY TEACHERS

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## ELECTIVE TEACHERS

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<td>Art Attack</td>
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<td>British Culture</td>
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<td>Maquillaje Artistico</td>
<td>Cindy Jüttner</td>
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**TEAM LEADERS**

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<td>Rocio Ruiz</td>
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### USEFUL CONTACTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

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<tr>
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TRAFFIC SAFETY

Access permits

Every vehicle that enters the premises to drop off or pick up students must have an ID badge that identifies it as BVS related: 1. the “sticker to enter through the east gate and 2. the tag that lifts the bar for a quick pass through the west gate. Parents receive one each free of charge. The sticker goes in the right hand lower corner of the window shield of the car that transports students and the tag according to its instruction sheet. Vehicles thus identified have priority; the gatekeeper will ask those who do not have it to leave the line and wait patiently until he can properly identify them. Parents can buy an additional sticker for 1000 and a second tag for 5000. We recommend keeping them portable to use in different cars. Please remove them when selling the car.

TRAFFIC SAFETY NORMS

All movements within school premises must be carried out at 6 mi (10 km) per hour. Vehicles should never exceed this speed limit.

Please do not use your cell phone when driving within the campus.

Please use the “zipper style” when entering, leaving and driving inside the premises: yield one-on-one to the car moving in the opposite direction both when entering or leaving the campus and when driving within the campus.

As a safety procedure, to expedite evacuation in case of an emergency, we are asking drivers to park back end first. This is also important to avoid accidents, because visibility is greater when pulling out in a forward movement.

Please inform all relatives or chauffeurs driving your children of all our norms.

Always be prompt in delivering and picking up your children. No child should be dropped at school before 6:30 am or picked-up later than 3:00 pm minutes after dismissal.

There is no supervision beyond these times. Think of your child’s safety!

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES AT BVS

We have two entrances, each with specific regulations that have greatly improved transit:

1. **Sticker entrance**: gate on the east side of campus.
2. **Quickpass entrance**: gate on the west side of campus

Glossary:

**Canopy**: Roofed areas where students are dropped and picked up.

**Carpool**: More than three students with prerogatives for riding in one same car.

**Kiss & drop**: Designated areas to drop and pick up students.

**Sticker**: Distinctive BVS sticker adhered to the windshield.

**Tag**: Automatic Access tag, adhered to the windshield

**Quickpass**: Free transit since the tag automatically lifts the bar.

GENERAL RULES

1. Please defer personal convenience to give way to the collective benefit.
2. Every car must have the BVS badges attached to its windshield.
   a. Parents on appointments or short visits may use the front parking lot even if they drop off and pick up their children through the quickpass entrance (west gate).
   b. The front parking lot (against the front fence) has been assigned for visitors. Parents who find it full may proceed to the west parking lot through the quickpass entrance.
   c. Spaces for buses there may be used only between 7:30 am and 1:30 pm.
   d. When students need to leave during the school day, parents pick them at the administration building, entering through the sticker entrance (east gate). The student hands the receptionist the permission slip provided by Student Services.
   e. All students in after-school support, consulting hours, or special tutoring are dismissed through the administration building (east gate).
3. When picking up or dropping off students at either entrances, please do not stop the car at your convenience; instead, wait until your place is defined by all the cars in front of you taking their place behind the one arriving at the first space.
4. Cars without a sticker or quick pass must be patient until the guard calls to request permission to allow entrance. Cars with badges avoid this long cue.
5. Wednesday dismissal follows the same routines.
   Your children’s safety is our concern.

THE STICKER ENTRANCE serves:
1. Eleven parking spaces for the administration building and selected faculty.
2. Parents of preschool students and their siblings.
3. Short-term visitors:
   a. Assemblies
   b. Appointments
   c. Meetings
   d. People with business issues related to purchases or accounting
4. Buses for student transportation.
5. Vehicles transporting groups of three or more students:
   a. Carpool permits for daily transport are given a permanent carpool permit.
   b. Occasional groups, e.g. for parties, can request a special permit.
6. Students leaving during the day go to the front desk (secondary students request the permit at Student Services to submit it at the front desk).
7. All students staying for after-school support, consulting hours, or special tutoring.
8. Students in after-school events in the library.
9. People with business issues related to purchases or accounting.

ROUTINES FOR THE STICKER ENTRANCE
1. Parents should place a sticker in every car used to come to BVS (€1000 at front desk).
2. During rush hours, the lateral gate (east-facing, on the left when entering) is exclusively for vehicles leaving the campus. At other times, cars can use it to enter the parking lot.
3. During rush hours, buses and visitors heading for the parking lot enter through the main gate, take the first left turn, drive through the passage between parked cars, and take a left towards the parking lot, alternating zipper style with cars leaving Montessori drop-off area.
4. As you wait in line, please do not stop the car on the lanes in front of the lateral gate; they have to be free for the buses’ wide turns as they leave the parking lot.
5. There is no need to arrive and cue before the bell rings. The flow is now very efficient.
6. Cars dropping off students need to go on the roundabout. The first one must stop in front of Montessori; the rest take their places behind it to allow the students out simultaneously. Only when the car is in its place in the cue, and NOT BEFORE, the older ones can descend by themselves. In Montessori, three custodians will be helping the preschoolers out. Cars exit through the lateral gate, following the zipper style to take turns with the buses exiting the parking lot.

7. The roundabout will be closed at 7:18 am. Parents arriving after 7:17 am drive in front of the administration building to drop off the students in front of Montessori.

8. Cars picking up students may pick up preschool siblings at covered walkway and quickly move forward to pick up preschooler in front of Montessori (everyone in the covered walkway when it rains). Cars exit through the lateral gate, taking turns zipper style with the buses and with cars on the street.

9. Please do not park the car to walk your child across the parking lot to the classroom. Drive around the roundabout, drop off the student as it corresponds, and then park the car if you need something from the classroom. We insist on teaching the children never to step off the curb. When parents ask them to disobey the rule, it’s a hard-to-handle cross message for the children.

10. Please refrain from addressing a teacher informally during arrival and dismissal. Request for an appointment when needing to see a teacher. A proper time will allow proper interaction and avoid unexpectedly taking the teacher’s time.

THE QUICK PASS ENTRANCE serves:
1. All faculty and staff.
2. All students (except those in preschool and their siblings) are dropped off in this new kiss & drop area when they come to school.
3. The kiss & drop area is also to pick up:
   a. all students except preschool students and their siblings.
   b. Students sports training or in afterschool lessons (except hose held in the library).
4. Visitors who found no space in the front parking lot (sticker entrance).
5. Visiting teams or schools.

ROUTINES FOR QUICK PASS ENTRANCE:
1. Cars with a quickpass tag effortlessly enter and leave on the right lanes.
2. Each family gets one tag; parents may buy only one more tag for ¥5000. As a safety precaution, the tag must be removed to place in the new car when the old one is sold.
3. Please stop the car close to the curb. Parents who conveniently stop in the middle of the street block other cars needing to pass by and unnecessarily hold up the flow of traffic.
4. Students may be dropped off all along the canopy (the kiss & drop zone), with cars stopping only when there is no more space in front of them.
5. At pick-up time, students will wait in assigned zones. Parents may stop the cars in front of their waiting children, very close to the curb please.
   a. Single students (traveling one per car) wait in Zone 1.
   b. Elementary and middle school students travelling in groups wait in Zone 2.
   c. High school students and their siblings can wait at the west end on Zone 2.
6. Traffic flow is fluent, there is no need to arrive early and wait. It may backfire.
7. It’s unnecessary to arrive before 2:20 and it’s quite inconvenient for the rest to arrive and park at the kiss & drop. But if it should be the case: 
   a. Don’t stay there if your child is not there.
b. Cars must start to move at 2:25 pm to leave the zones.
c. We appreciate your kind collaboration with the staff helping speed up dismissal.

8. Five minutes after the bell rings, all cars must move:
   a. Students board their parents’ car from each of the zones.
   b. If the students are not ready when their parents arrive:
      i. The parent must drive down to the parking lot and leave the car there.
      ii. The parent must walk up to find the student and guide him or her to the car.
      iii. It’s forbidden to pick up a student on the other side of the street, either by
           taking a u-turn or driving out to the parking lot to pick up the student on the
           way out. A student crossing the street will be called for a major offense.

   Think of the children’s safety!

9. Assigned special supervision is over at 2:50 pm and students still at the canopy are asked
   to move into the building and wait for their parents’ instructions.

10. Dismissal of students in afterschool activities: sports training, clubs, and other lessons
    (except for consulting hour, tutoring, or in the library) must be swift. Please be prompt; the
    students will be waiting to be picked up in the kiss & drop zones, all along the canopy.

11. The students will be arriving there
    a. At 3:20 pm from the lessons
    b. At 3:50 pm from training (teams and clubs).

12. Parents who enjoy coming to watch training are very welcome. PLEASE do not park at the
    kiss & drop. You may easily leave your car in the parking lot and walk up to watch the kids.
    The kiss & drop must be free for parents to pick up their children as the students arrive.

13. When leaving the premises after picking up the students, please use the zipper style,
    taking turns one by one with the incoming vehicles.

**RULES FOR THE STUDENTS**

**ENTERING:** The bell rings at 7:17 am. At 7:20 am the students need to be at their desks
ready to start the lesson. (Corrective measures are explicit in Punctuality, p 54.) Buses park on
the bus boarding area; students get off the bus and walk directly to their respective
classrooms.

**LEAVING:** When students are not ready when their parents come to pick them up, they hold
traffic and delay everybody’s trip home. Take note that parents need to go around the roundabout
once more (sticker entrance) or to the west parking lot (quickpass entrance) if the student is not
ready to board the car as soon as it arrives at the stop.

**Safety during entrance and departure**

We must regulate entrance and departure to and from the school because we firmly endorse the
following objectives:

1. **We must guarantee our students’ safety.** All elementary students must clearly
   understand that the parking lots are off-limits. Children get used to running across the
   parking area because their parents sometimes park their cars to take them to their class or
   pick them up there to lead them to the car in the parking lot or the street. When parents
   are late, these young children may sneak to the parking lot to look for them and risk being
   hurt. It has already happened. A blue-pant-student seen walking on the parking lot will
   have Lunch Break Detention the next day.

   All parents, except those with preschool children or car-pool status, must drive around the
   roundabout (see drop & pick-up area section below) to pick up their children because
students must enter and leave the school through the assigned areas. Students can NEVER walk out of the premises, even if accompanied by an adult (seniors have a special permission only during lunch)

2. **We want to provide a swift procedure.** Each student only has a few moments to get out of or into the car. Parents of students who need extra time should plan to arrive before the rush, **before 6:45 am** when the cue has not formed, and for dismissal **after 2:40 pm** so that the traffic flow is not interrupted. All vehicles arriving at school after 6:45 am or leaving before 2:40 pm (before 1:00 on Wednesdays) should move constantly except for the briefest stop to pick up or drop off the student.

When stopping on the roundabout (preschool and siblings), please leave the walkways free. In the morning, the first vehicle should stop in front of the covered walkway to allow eight more vehicles behind it. Students will all be descending from all these nine cars simultaneously, assisted by school personnel (only to open or close the doors). As the set of nine cars drives out simultaneously, another nine cars take their places. The car that was tenth takes the lead, moving to the first place in front of the walkway. Parents should get the children ready while waiting to drive through the preschool lane or around the roundabout. It must be a quick movement: the students must be ready when the car stops so that parents can move on right after they get off. Children using a car seat (please have it ready) should be able to buckle and unbuckle it by themselves.

Cars MAY NOT park in the parking lot to wait for the students to meet them there (see “See Traffic Safety” above). Students wearing blue pants receive a sanction when seen in the paved areas either alone or in someone’s company. Parking lots and paved lanes are absolutely off limits for them. Parents may not park their cars to pick up their children personally at their classroom door.
**Definition of terms used in traffic regulations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roundabout</td>
<td>One lane circular road around the library plaza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Plaza</td>
<td>Green lawn north of the Administration/Library building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosswalks</td>
<td>Defined by yellow lines, the crosswalks connect:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. the library plaza to the central plaza (runs south-north)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. the plaza and elementary school’s building (runs east-west)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This one is the covered walkway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticker kiss &amp; drop for preschool and siblings</td>
<td>Montessori in front of their building at 12 m or 2:20 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickpass kiss &amp; drop</td>
<td>Rest of students who do not have siblings in preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zones 1 and 2 at the canopy at 2:25 pm. Wednesdays 12:10 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus boarding area</td>
<td>The sidewalk south of the preschool building (facing the street).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus parking lot</td>
<td>South border of the preschool building and west of parking lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpool pick-up</td>
<td>South-east corner of the Montessori building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpool lane</td>
<td>Between parking lines in front of the Adm/Lib parking lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Lane</td>
<td>Parallel to the curve in front of the Adm/Lib building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngsters’ play area</td>
<td>The green area located between preschool and teachers lounge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adm/Lib staff parking lot</td>
<td>Paved area in front of the main entrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors, carpool parking</td>
<td>Parking line next to the fence with Calle Mango.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and staff parking</td>
<td>Through the quickpass entrance to the west parking lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covered walkways</td>
<td>Lead from buildings to different boarding areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAP WITH NAMES FOR THE TRANSIT GROUNDS

- Preschool building
- Covered Walkway
- Canopy
- Bus and Preschool boarding lane
- East gate
- South access gate
- West gate
- Exit lane
- Boarding areas
- Roundabout
- Cafeteria
- Basketball court
- Administrators and librarians' parking
- High School and siblings pick-up
- Carpool pick-up
- The Train

First Grades
Cafeteria
Basketball court
Administrators and librarians' parking
High School and siblings pick-up
Carpool pick-up
The Train
Exit lane
Bus and Preschool boarding lane
East gate
South access gate
West gate
Preschool

In the morning, cars with preschool children and their siblings must head directly to the preschool building on the preschool lane, taking the third left turn when entering the grounds, instead of going on the roundabout. In order not to obstruct the cars doing so, they should wait on the lane until one of the two parking spaces in front of preschool’s main entrance is free and then make a wide turn to be able to stop parallel to the curb. This will leave space for cars on the roundabout to drive by on the left of the two cars parked. If a young child takes too long, drivers will be asked to use the roundabout, where they will find school staff to help the child out and take him by the hand to preschool.

Montessori children will be waiting at 12:00 m at the canopy for pick up. If they remain in the afternoon, they will be picked up at 3:10 pm along with preparatory students and all older siblings. On Wednesday, preschool students and their siblings must be ready to be picked up at 12:55 pm; as soon as the buses leave. If students are not promptly waiting, parents must drive on and start the line all over again not to hold the traffic flow.

Elementary and Middle School

Parents of elementary and middle school students with no preschool children must always use the roundabout. Elementary students with siblings in middle school will be waiting at the covered stop. Students exclusively in middle school will wait at the previous stop, except when it rains, when all these students will be picked up from the covered stop. To avoid the long lines of cars waiting for dismissal time, we strongly suggest that parents arrive at school in shifts according to their child’s grade: 3:00 pm for elementary and 3:15 pm for middle school. This will cut down on waiting time. Preschool and elementary school students that have not been picked up by 3:20 pm must wait in the meeting room in the administration building where their parents will come to find them.

High School

If any of the siblings are in Montessori, then the drop off and pick up occurs in Montessori. In the morning, high school students and their siblings (who are not in Montessori) are dropped off at the roundabout. At dismissal, parents of these high school students and their siblings (not in Montessori) should turn at the first gate to the left and pick them up at “la isla,” located diagonal to the southeast corner of the Montessori building.

Students wearing khaki pants are allowed to hang out around the premises while waiting for their parents, but they lose this privilege when seen walking around the parking lots.

PERMISSIONS FOR IMMEDIATE EXIT

Parents can request special permission to pick up children who need to leave at three o’clock sharp for extracurricular lessons right after school. They need to present a corresponding certification and will receive a special ID card when the privilege is approved. They must park to wait at the preschool approach lane (between “the train” and the buses) to leave immediately so that the bus exodus can begin. If the student does not show up promptly at 3:00, the car must leave to wait in line with the rest of the cars.
CARPOOL

A vehicle carrying three or more children regularly to and from school is entitled to apply for a special car-pool ID at the front desk. Before having the ID, vehicles should follow regular procedures. Authorized carpool-vehicles park on the assigned spaces and students on a carpool will wait to board the car at the carpool pick up corner south-east of preschool building.

CANOPY ON RAINY DAYS

On rainy days, to speed up transit parents may pick up their children under the canopy, provided they have instructed them to move to that area when it is raining. They should respect these priorities: cars with 3:00 pm special permission leave first, followed by the students who ride the buses (they will be in line at the covered walkway waiting for them, longer routes first). At 3:10 pm preparatory students (who have been waiting in their classrooms) will be taken to the canopy to wait for their car, followed by with the rest of the students summoned by their parents.

OFF-CAMPUS PICK UP

After school, free school bus “shuttles” drive a limited amount of students to stops at Volvo (close to Multiplaza), and the Gelateria at Multipark.(close to Construplaza), where parents pick them up to avoid entering the premises during the rush hour. Students have to register for at least four days a week to qualify for the privilege. Under no circumstances can they use the service only occasionally. If there is nobody is waiting for the student at the stop, the driver will bring him back to school. Interested parents may call the person in charge at 2215-2204 x 123 to ask for “shuttle” service.

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THE Y LIVE

If a child lives with criticism . . . He learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility . . . He learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule . . . He learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame . . . He learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance . . . He learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement . . . He learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise . . . He learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness . . . He learns justice.
If a child lives with security . . . He learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval . . . He learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship . . . He learns to find love in the world.
PHILOSOPHY

Blue Valley students will learn in such a way that they become lifelong learners. To accomplish this, they will not only be exposed to a body of knowledge that will allow them to make the best use of their intellectual capacities, but to the skills necessary to become independent learners. They will understand that learning can help to justify one's existence because it leads to improvement as a human being. As a result, Blue Valley students will find joy and satisfaction in learning that will not end upon graduation.

If our goals are to be fulfilled, Blue Valley students must be self-confident and have a critical mind. This will lead them to make the right choices and assertively defend their principles, guided by a strong moral conscience. Our students will not only develop their individual voices but will also learn to exercise them wisely.

Besides becoming well-rounded individuals, Blue Valley students will be a reflection of their culture and members of a global society. They will show solidarity with others and recognize that the welfare of every individual is the responsibility of each one of us. They will pursue the prosperity of society and see it as an opportunity to achieve their personal happiness by internalizing the notion that being a good citizen is the best contribution they can make to their country and to the world. They will show a responsible attitude for this world by caring for the environment and appreciating its relevance to the wellbeing of mankind.

Blue Valley School's philosophy is based on three fundamental principles¹:

1. Respect for the individual
2. A quest for excellence
3. Service

Respect for the Individual

Respect for the individual is found at all levels: students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. It is a persistent aspect of the "hidden curriculum," present in all of the interactions between members of the school community. For instance, students are addressed as individuals, not patronized as children. We expect them to conduct themselves in a manner best suited for the optimal functioning of the whole school, not by making them follow strict rules but by giving them choices. When they are very young, we offer three basic guidelines or questions which students must ask themselves before taking any action: "Is it safe?" "Is it kind?" and "Is it fair?" A negative answer to any question should preclude the action. As they grow older, they must bear in mind that while they have choices, whatever they choose should not harm themselves or others, and that it would authorize everyone else to make the same choice. They must also be ready to accept the consequences of their choices. Lastly, individuals must first respect themselves to be able to act responsibly towards others.

Each of our students should develop a social conscience. As responsible citizens, they should be open to other cultures and not only tolerate the differences but appreciate them as well. In their own culture and immediate surroundings, they must avoid judgment of others by focusing on the

¹ Adapted from IBM's principles, established by Tom Watson when he founded the organization
offense, not the offender, understanding that it’s the action that hurts and not the person who commits it. They can strive to correct that action, but it is not in one’s prerogative to expect the other person to change according to our will. This is true especially when dealing with new people from other cultures (peers or adults): students must strive to learn from them and gently demonstrate their own mores, in order to help the others ease into their new environment.

At Blue Valley we emphasize empathy as one of the most important values for a human being to possess. Our students learn that happiness is more easily achieved if one derives it from giving rather than from receiving. Giving is within one’s power; receiving is not. As frequently as can be done effectively, our classes are taught through the cooperative learning methodology. Just as those who have more are encouraged to help those who have less, those who are more capable must learn to help those who are less so.

**The Quest for Excellence**

The quest for excellence extends to all areas that influence the most advantageous development of the child. Besides expecting a well-rounded individual, self-confident and able to exercise self-control, the entire staff makes sure that students distinguish right from wrong based upon universally recognized values. However, we must share with the families, and society in general, the responsibility for the development of physical, psychological, and moral values. Therefore, the school focuses primarily upon the academic aspects of the students' needs, since this area is considered our main responsibility.

Extensive and intensive learning not only provides the students with an accumulation of information but also gives them a body of background knowledge to make the proper associations for future learning and the application of their knowledge. Teachers question students at higher cognitive levels requiring them to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate using inferences. They stimulate and encourage creativity and “out of the box” thinking.

Our academic programs are designed to sequentially increase the conceptual demands in order for students to learn more and internalize it better. Our mainstream courses prepare students well for college admissions, but we also provide demanding options for those who wish to take higher-level courses. Four principles support the implementation of our rigorous academic demands: time on task counts, students are addressed at their level of understanding, concepts should be meaningful, and proper learning resources will be available and utilized.

Special subjects (art, music, technology, and physical education) complement the students' cultural instruction. In art in elementary, we focus on the importance of creativity and participation using a “hands on approach,” but also expose the children to art appreciation through the study of other artists’ works. Our students participate in national and international art contests and actively participate in the school's annual art exhibition. Starting in middle school and especially in high school, art appreciation becomes more important and theory complements the art courses. Music includes singing, playing an instrument, and music appreciation. In elementary, a singing program prevails based on the children's possibilities according to their level. It culminates with a choral concert at the end of the year. They also have percussion practice that intensifies in secondary. Physical education includes physical fitness and sports, also focusing on the importance of a balanced diet for a healthy life. After school, the students have the option to participate in co-curricular clubs and lessons.

Presently, technology plays a significant role. We want to empower the student to use the computer: it should be his instrument, to be used at its maximum potential and efficiency. This is why we discourage computer-assisted instruction (CAI); we prefer to emphasize that students
learn how computers work for them by exposing them to coding. We encourage teachers to utilize technology as often as possible. Digital communication between teachers, students, and parents is increasingly important.

Blue Valley also offers a variety of elective courses at the high school level to allow students to design a program that better fits their specific needs and interests. Electives are designed to assist those interested in an academically intensive program, and to meet the needs of those interested in a general course of study that will broaden their horizons and expose them to different career paths.

**Service**

We approach service in two directions: service to the students and service by the students towards their fellow human beings and to their environment.

The best service to the students is teaching them at their level of understanding. As early as three and a half years old, students attend a Montessori classroom where they are given the opportunity to work on the constructive activities of their choice. Besides the obvious advantage of training themselves to choose, to evaluate activities, and to feel that their opinions are important, experience has shown that children choose activities where they can be successful. Thus, they grow with a feeling of accomplishment, avoiding a message of ineptitude when they have to do what they are told and perhaps cannot always handle at that time. Nevertheless, limits and routines are quite important. Learning to choose within set limits is another habit we pursue. Once fundamental life skills are acquired, the system evolves, gradually incorporating more traditional methodologies.

Aside from academic issues, and because we are intent on educating well-rounded individuals, developing their commitment to service has become increasingly important in our philosophy. As important as service to the students, directly or thorough their parents, evident in the above paragraphs, is educating the students to assume a growing responsibility towards their fellow human beings and their society as a whole – to learn to give and not only expect to receive. Our students, because of the instruction they are receiving and their socio-economic status (parents that can pay an excellent service) are bound to become executives in their professional life. As leaders in their field, the country and the world expect them to be compassionate people; conscious that they can and should leave a footprint that will ensure that the world has become a better place than the one they found. Blue Valley has identified work in two areas: community service and ecological environmental education. Community service projects begin in elementary and culminate in secondary with global and individual humanitarian projects, like the one-on-one relationship helping less privileged students.
VISION

Become the school of choice for parents who expect and appreciate an excellent bilingual, holistic\textsuperscript{2} education for their children.

SAPERE AUDE
DARE TO THINK

MISSION

To offer cutting-edge academic preparation and ensure that our students become individuals guided by a strong moral compass. A proper balance between the Humanities and the Sciences will support our academic goals, guided by the principle of “a sound mind in a sound body.” Blue Valley School models and teaches students to become architects of their destiny, wise decision makers, prudent risk takers, and active participants in local and global communities, safeguarding individual and collective rights and responsibilities inherent to a free society.

Blue Valley is accredited by the Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica (MEP) and its programs are recognized and equivalent with the demands for the national baccalaureate. It is also part of the Asociación de Centros Educativos Privados (ACEP), the Costa Rican association of private education institutions.

Blue Valley offers the option to obtain the International Baccalaureate Diploma and is accredited by New England Association of Schools and Colleges: NEASC.

\textsuperscript{2} (Holism= the theory that whole entities, as fundamental and determining components of reality, have an existence other than as the mere sum of their parts). German Gestalt (“wholeness”): “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”
HOW WE ACCOMPLISH OUR ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES

SCHOOLS ARE FOR LEARNING

The first aspect of our vision pertains to cognition, so we will expand on the principles stated in the philosophy.

A. Time on task counts.
B. Students are addressed at their level of understanding.
C. Concepts should be meaningful.
D. Proper didactic resources will be available and utilized.

Time on task counts

“The more time you spend learning the more you learn.”

At Blue Valley, students attend school 185 days a year.

1. Time spent at school:

   a. We have a seven-hour school day to allow enough time to accomplish our objectives without extending beyond the limit of time most students can focus on learning. A shorter day would mean reducing academic hours or reducing time for art, physical exercise, or leisure important in a child’s development. Our carefully planned academic curricula require that students have breaks with non-directed activities.

   b. Efficiency in time spent in learning is achieved by integrating subjects so that one subject contributes to the mastery of the other. For instance, we assign interdisciplinary papers (e.g. science or social studies papers may also be part of the language arts course, graded for applied grammar). Also, we have distributed science topics per semester, which allows more in-depth learning.

   c. Our schedules are carefully designed for optimal use of time.

2. Time for homework.

   a. It is a school’s responsibility to teach, so parents should not be required to explain the new concepts to their children. However, we do assign drill practices for homework because repetition develops clarity of ideas and stability of the concepts learned (to be retrievable at will by the learner). It begins with token, non-graded homework in preparatory and increases gradually over the years. Also incremental is the requirement of daily reading (beginning in first grade) of chosen or assigned books.

   b. We also assign interesting homework, spaced throughout the year, which requires parental support, especially in the lower grades. As early as first grade, students have at least one special assignment per quarter, such as oral presentations on topics of their choice in Spanish and in English, an experiment for the science fair, book reports, and research papers. As students move on to high school, requirements in quantity and difficulty increase.

Students are addressed at their level of understanding.

“Different students learn in different ways.”

"The same student has different ways of learning according to age.”
Our program addresses the students’ gradual level of comprehension and respects their individual needs and possibilities.

1. Students enter Blue Valley at the age of three and a half. For four semesters students attend a Montessori environment where they mostly learn from observation (teachers mainly demonstrate, imparting very little oral instruction) and are allowed to choose the activities of their interest, all of them concrete activities.

2. Since Blue Valley offers its program with both school calendars: one from southern countries (especially Costa Rica) and one from northern countries (notably the United States), the double schedule has the advantage that children born after the cut-off date for admission to preparatory (elementary school’s first year of formal education) will not have to wait unnecessarily even more than one year to start their schooling. They can enroll six months earlier and take part in those activities for which they are maturely ready. Children are entitled to receive instruction when they are ready and eager to accept it. Besides, the reduced range of age and maturity within a class facilitates instruction. In addition, it allows promotion by semesters, a definite advantage for the students.

3. English is formally introduced in preparatory, when the ability to learn a language is still very strong. At this point, academic objectives traditionally meant for first grade are taught using preschool methodologies: students learn to read, write, and work on math problems normally regarded as first grade level.

   Learning English by immersion continues through the school years. Academic subjects (except Spanish and Costa Rican social studies) are taught in English.

   Exposure to the culture is emphasized as an imperative in properly learning a language. Our students are constantly exposed to United States and Costa Rica’s cultural affairs. One of the events that promote this exposure is our elementary school morning assembly (whole school gatherings one to three times a week according to grade level) where we sing anthems of different countries and discuss current affairs or patriotic celebrations. In addition, the curriculum for literature is designed around the Spanish and the English cultures.

4. Students for whom Spanish is a second language learn it from constant exposure to the language through peers and special subject teachers (like music, art, physical education, and computers). Formal learning of the language begins in first grade. Students entering in higher grades receive individual help from a Spanish as a second-language teacher (in groups of students at similar levels) to ease their transition into regular Spanish lessons.

5. From first through fourth grade, new concepts are presented through hands-on activities. Scientific knowledge is acquired through experiments until they reach the fourth grade, in the middle of which students begin using science textbooks. As students mature, they are ready for abstract thought; so deductive reasoning is increasingly encouraged. Students will have to study for their tests on their own for the first time in third grade social studies. They begin to use textbooks to learn science in the fourth grade.

6. For students with learning differences, such as dyslexia or attention deficit, Blue Valley offers support, structure, and behavior modification programs to be implemented in cooperation with the parents.
At all levels, preschool through high school, students are exposed to knowledge above and beyond normal expectations. Our curriculum allows interactions where students and teachers discuss higher-level topics; our students have an open forum to share their interests. Teachers are not required to have a major in education. Although many do have them, we accept undergraduate degrees in many fields. These teachers bring to the classroom experiences from their areas of expertise; thus, widening their students’ perspectives.

In elementary and middle school, students with a natural aptitude for math or a special interest in reading may be selected for enrichment programs (as long as it is determined that they are capable of catching up, on their own, all work which is completed by their classmates when they are away from their regular class). Out of an average of twenty-two students per class, three to six students attend “Mind” twice a week, a math program that challenges their mental ability. The students who remain in the classroom also benefit because the teacher works with a smaller group with a narrower range of ability. The same applies for reading: not over six students in each class withdraw to the library to do critical analysis of books that they will read at home.

Grouping by ability also happens (with great benefits for the students) four periods a week, when one half of the class leaves for the computer lab. The teacher keeps an average of eleven students with a similar level of performance, for a math period one day and for reading lessons another day (or writing lessons, when the need is perceived). In middle school, these “splits” happen for different subjects. The teacher can then address the needs of each group more accurately.

In high school, students can choose to go into:

- The “Bachillerato” track. “Bachillerato” is the Costa Rican high school degree, which students receive when they take and pass the government’s tests at the end of the eleventh grade. It qualifies them for college in the United States as well as in Costa Rica.

- The high school track. Blue Valley recommends completing our high school program when students expect to enter colleges in the United States.

- The International Baccalaureate track. Their Diploma is internationally recognized, so students who obtain it do not have to complete the traditional European thirteenth year if they want to attend a European university. In North America, colleges often give credit for IB subjects: in some cases for up to a full freshman year, in other cases only if the grades are superior.

- Starting in ninth grade, high school students complement their program with elective subjects, some of which are academic intensive and others academic supportive. This entitles them to design a heavier or lighter workload.

Concepts should be meaningful.

“To learn well, new concepts must be associated to previously learned concepts.”

In Montessori, we address children in their native language because they must be able to relate outside experiences to knowledge learned in school. Students must begin their formal instruction with the sense that what they learn in school and what learn from life is part of the same process. When this is achieved, they will be more likely to use the knowledge learned in school for solving practical problems and making the right decisions.
2. Every week, new vocabulary is introduced through interactive lessons. The students do not learn definitions; they incorporate words as concepts associated to their own frame of mind (schemata).

3. Traditional lecture methodology is interspersed with the Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach. This method encourages group discussions (collaborative learning) that give rise to contributions based on experiences and prior knowledge. Enthusiasm for the issues ensues, provoking a deeper understanding.

4. We have defined the contents per level for each subject and have documented the students’ mastery of the objectives and progress so the information is available to teachers. Homeroom teachers stay with a class from one to two years, so it is important for them to know what the previous teacher has accomplished. This is especially important since teacher turnover is high due to the fact that homeroom teachers are usually native English speakers who accept two-year contracts.

5. The teachers meet every week with the principal or team leader for planning sessions. They state the content to be learned as behavioral objectives (what the student is actually supposed to do) and express the way they are going to teach it. Textbooks serve as reference and reinforcement. Teachers have one planning period for every two periods they teach because their work is so intensive: not only careful and creative planning but also personally checking the students’ work to monitor it properly.

6. Evaluation is an important part of a teacher’s workload and constant assessment of the students’ work, quizzes and tests is frequent. In the earlier grades, tests are used mostly to evaluate our performance; in upper levels, these also determine mastery of topics and proper courses of action (special help and make up tests). Final exams, usually weighing 20% of the semester promotion average, are applied every semester in middle and high school.

Proper didactic resources will be available and utilized.

“Supplementary resources complement an education.”

At Blue Valley School, students and teachers have access to human and material resources to provide interesting lessons. Besides providing fiction and factual books, the library is equipped with Macintosh computers where several students at the same time may access the Internet. The librarian and the computer teacher help students and teachers on research projects. Research is increasingly a very important part of our programs.

In middle school, students and teachers receive an iPad to gradually substitute heavy textbooks, provide the students with audiovisual media that should help them envision and better internalize concepts, and have at a touch research possibilities ever more necessary for them to achieve their full potential, individually and as a group. In elementary, teachers can check out 25 iPads for especially planned lessons.

For the academic demands in "high school", the iPads still don’t fulfill all the requirements for the students to complete their assignments. So upon entering ninth grade, they must have a laptop to bring to school when their teachers request it.
Occasionally we incorporate instances of a "flipped classroom" model, which consists of reversing the paradigm of explaining in class and leaving practice as homework. Taking advantage of technology, students are asked to read, watch, or listen to articles, conferences, research, experiments, etc. on the theory in order to come to the classroom for practice (application of knowledge) with the supervision of the teacher. One advantage is that it allows individualization (adjustment of the pace of learning: a student who understood in twenty minutes is done and one who gets distracted or does not understand can rewind to devote the time necessary to understanding.) In addition, the teacher can individually supervise the application of the concepts, correcting doubts when necessary and, if determining that they are the product of negligence, indicating that the homework needs to be done again.

We have three computer labs (preschool, elementary and secondary school in the library) for computer science lessons and investigation. Every classroom is equipped with a computer and a video beam to activate an interactive board (with a mimio device), maximizing learning with attractive teaching possibilities. There are seven computers in the teachers’ lounges, nineteen for research in the library, fifty-eight laptops distributed in caddies for class groups to use upon demand, and thirty-three units for administrators. Fiber optics and broadband expedites the WiFi system for Internet across the campus. Students, staff, parents, and visitors can request connection for their devices (except mobile telephones, that usually have their own access).

Team leaders and area facilitators contribute to frequent use of didactic material. In elementary, math manipulatives are used at least one period a week to concretize math concepts and to help with their visualization, allowing a true assimilation of knowledge. The science labs in elementary, middle, and high school are constantly refurbished.

Fieldtrips are frequent because two school buses are readily available, and, therefore, additional transportation fees are usually not required (the school covers most costs).

Experts visit the school frequently to give lectures on different topics.
OUR PROGRAMS

ENGLISH

Language Arts areas (spelling, grammar, reading, and writing) are graded independently according to level to determine which area needs reinforcement or reflects excellence. For transcript purposes they are averaged and reported as one single grade under English.

Reading and Literature

In Montessori (students three and a half to five and a half years old), students become acquainted with the sound/letter concept through the Spanish phonetic system.

In Preparatory A, we interrupt practice with Spanish sounds to avoid confusion, since learning English becomes the top priority. The English phonetic system is introduced, one sound a week as the initial sound in words. Sight words are also introduced, because our curriculum contemplates both approaches to teaching reading: decoding and sight word recognition. Students learn to read sight words, which allows them to increase their vocabulary while they master their reading-writing acquisition, as they increase their vocabulary.

In Preparatory B, students learn digraphs (two letters to express one sound: e.g. /ck/ as in duck or /ee/ as in bee) and clusters (two sounds blended together: e.g. /bl/ as in black) and by third grade applied grammar objectives become more important than phonic objectives.

The Journeys (Houghton Mifflin Hartcourt) series is started in Preparatory AB using other complementary resources which support our program. Our students do not depend on the textbooks to learn to read but rather read those texts as a direct result of their learning and first-grade, but the textbooks are used as support for the school's own program: students read the books as a consequence of their learning, not as a departure for learning.

In first grade through fifth grade, Journeys units become the guide for our program, the textbooks define the program. Each weekly language arts unit (one week's work) consists of a story around which students learn vocabulary, phonics, writing, spelling, and grammar. In addition, each unit theme relates to aspects that imply connections with social studies, science, fantasy, creativity, and moral development. The theme of the book's unit is used as an extension for social studies, science, moral development, or imagination-related activities.

In elementary, an hour long weekly period is assigned for a hands-on, creative vocabulary introduction lesson, one of the most important components of the reading unit. After making sure the students are able to understand and use the new words, the story is read for oral reading and comprehension evaluation. The "computer split" (half of the class goes to computers) is used for the teacher to read with one half of the class, allowing a more personalized attention. The teacher observes and notices if the student uses appropriate reading strategies: use of phonetic cues to decode, recognizing sight vocabulary, fluency and correct pronunciation, punctuation and intonation to show oral dexterity. To perceive the student’s ability for both literal and inferential comprehension, the teacher evaluates the student’s interpretation of picture cues and context cues, association to background knowledge, and utilization of structural analysis. He also notes if the student corrects himself when what he reads doesn't make sense. The teacher’s grade book allows her to record those areas in which the student needs help in order to improve reading skills.
— At least every two pages, the teacher asks comprehension questions, making sure each student is evaluated weekly. The teacher’s edition provides pertinent questions and teachers include their own, according to the students’ outspoken interests. At the lower levels, answers usually can be found by referring back to the text; in the higher levels, the questions address higher levels of thinking (according to Bloom’s taxonomy) and the students must analyze, synthesize, evaluate by using inferences to provide an answer, and offer creative alternatives. Students are also required to answer written comprehension questions on the selection read and in doing so they practice composing grammatically correct sentences. The teacher will also evaluate this skill.

— Reading is also stimulated with a daily ten-minute period of DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read). All elementary school children, from Montessori to fifth grade, and their teachers, read during the first ten minutes of the day with background classical music in the background. “Story time” (when the teacher reads a book of her choice and other library books to the class) and library books, chosen by the children in their weekly library period, which helps instill in the students a love for reading. The teacher monitors that the students select appropriate reading material and are able to read for a sustained period of time. Teachers are also alert as to how their students respond to literature in a variety of ways, including discussion, making connections, and showing appreciation. The librarian collaborates with the teacher in all these endeavors when they are in the library. During the semester, students must present two book reports: in one bimester, a formal analysis of one book; in the other bimester, an assignment suggested by the teacher on another book. For example: “Pretend you are the main character in your book and, from this perspective, write a summary of the story in the first person singular.” The students present these report using diverse modalities, incorporating sometimes the use of technology (iMovie, Power Point, Prezi, amongst others).

— Students develop a unit called Independent Reading Unit that can last two to four weeks which usually takes place at the end of the semester. Teachers have the liberty to freely apply their creativity, planning strategies with different methodologies in which learning is based on projects (PBL) and activities in accordance with the design of the particular planning that characterizes these units. They entail an essential question around which a series of activities are woven, related to the inherent idea of the question. Teachers turn to use novels and supplementary material to develop reading skills previously established. Cooperative learning is the common denominator in all activities. Literary circles and related routines encourage the students’ creativity, curiosity and innovation, contributing to making the learning experience significant, collaborative, enduring and successful... because it leaves a footprint.

— The Journeys series include informational reading (non-narrative structures) that focus on reading skills needed to learn from the science textbook in 4B. To complement with Journeys, students read and analyze science informational texts through ThinkCentral (digital platform), and in fourth and through fifth grade, students use some reading periods for science read informative articles in the last units of Journeys (informational magazine, Unit 6). They learn to bring forth their background knowledge on the subject by reading subtitles; they analyze words in bold letters, identify main ideas, and formulate questions to develop a discussion. This helps them establish the paragraph’s main ideas, and synthesize their research and discuss about a specific topic, information to fill index cards.

    Starting in middle school, literary appreciation and the interdependence of language and the culture within the context becomes fundamental. Teachers select works from the BVS anthology
of works selected by our own teachers (fiction and non-fiction; different literary genres) thematically connected for interdisciplinary study from primary sources. They are analyzed in literary circles, Socratic circles, concept maps, PBL (Project Based Learning) assignments, passage analysis, oral commentaries, debates, and presentations with technological resources.
Writing

In Montessori, students begin to write by placing letters from the movable alphabet of sounds they can identify, next to each other, in sequence, to form words. As early as Preparatory A, students are encouraged to express themselves in writing using invented spelling: students using their phonics knowledge to form words. Writing about experiences, feelings, and fantasy is commonplace throughout the younger grades. Eventually, students also start writing in their journals as an additional writing practice when they answer questions, which we describe as a diary of ideas. Writing the answers to questions from their readings provide good practice; the teachers grade them for applied grammar as well as for correct content.

Gradually, their written expression becomes more complex. Teachers observe the degree of the students’ involvement in their writing. Are they actively writing? How elaborate are their ideas? Do they use a coherent story structure (setting, characters, sequence of ideas, beginning, middle, end, etc.) appropriate to their level? Creative writing, which has been a spontaneous activity, is complemented by formal instruction in writing skills. The 6+1 Traits of Writing Approach (a model that provides vocabulary to teach and assess writing) is implemented from at two levels: preparatory through second grade and third through fifth grade, with extensions into middle school. Through their writing, students by then show their viewpoint, organization, clear ideas, correct syntaxes and adequate style, have to use standard spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. In this approach, instruction is based on assessment, which allows for individual development of their writing skills. The paper must show focus, organization, and clarity of ideas, as well as correct syntax and style. While working on their creations, teachers reinforce the habits of Mind that students have been contemplating in their daily tasks, such as "Thinking Interdependently" (when working in groups), "Responding with Wonderment and Awe" to the source of inspiration presented, "Gathering Data Through All the Senses", "Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision".

By the time they are in high school students are ready for formal essay writing (brainstorming for ideas, a clear focus based on informed criteria, thesis outline, draft, peer revision, editing, final version.) Essays (as well as oral presentations) will show an analytical and critical approach, at the IB level, and will be evaluated by the parameters mentioned above.

Grammar

Blue Valley considers grammar an important subject not only from the language point of view, but also because it is a discipline that encourages analysis and logical thinking. Learning morphology (patterns of word formation including inflection, derivation, and composition) expands the vocabulary. Learning the parts of speech provides a code to improve writing skills (e.g. "include more adjectives"). Learning syntax (the structure of grammatical sentences) induces an optimal use of the language (e.g. Spanish encourages the use of subordinate sentences; in English they can become run-on sentences.)

As early as preparatory, students learn new words categorized as “words that name,” “words that describe,” and “action words.” In second grade, they start recognizing inflections (root words and endings) to identify meanings of words (e.g. –ly means in a way that is: swiftly means in a way that is swift). They will name the corresponding parts of speech as they progress through the elementary grades. Through grade school, grammar objectives often run parallel in English and in Spanish. The middle school grammar lessons are combined with a method where students edit a text of a story created for that purpose. That allows them to apply the grammar concepts learned in previous years. In high school, applied grammar is evaluated in the student’s writing.
Students by now understand the professor’s technical indications and correct their work accordingly.

**Spelling**

—Spelling lessons in elementary introduce one rule and phonetic pattern per week. Students study ten to twenty words that follow the rule and the pattern *and-which* feed the weekly dictation.
MATHEMATICS

We emphasize the difference between understanding the procedure (concepts) and computation. At the early age of three and a half years, the children come in contact with mathematical concepts through concrete (hands-on) activities. The concepts of cardinality (number/symbol relationship) and place value are well presented in Montessori. The students can then learn to add and subtract mentally, without counting on their fingers. Our program focuses on teaching procedures and strategies for problem solving.

In Prep A, we introduce the program enVisionmath2.0 starting with a basic introduction for one bimester, taken from Level K to prepare the students for G1 (grade one) which is the content taught in Prep A and B. In the second bimester of Prep A, addition and subtraction up to 20 topics are presented to continue with the rest of the curriculum using enVisionmath2.0 as a basal up to fifth grade.

The program enVisionmath2.0 pursues to help students develop an understanding of math concepts through PBL (problem-based instruction), cooperative learning centers, flexible grouping, visual learning, and technology with an emphasis on mathematical reasoning and modeling. Differentiated instruction and ongoing, formative assessment are used to meet the needs of students at different ability levels. This program is organized in clusters of connected topics and lessons, which help students see relationships, ask questions, and try different strategies and approaches to solve problems. In other words, PBL stimulates students to engage in productive struggle to deepen their understanding as they connect ideas.

enVisionmath2.0 has also proven to have positive effects on teacher attitudes and thus, design enhanced instructional practices. Teachers prepare better to carry out various math strategies and activities. It allows the teacher to customize content accordingly as the students progress to attain knowledge and improve their abilities.

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In sixth grade, Blue Valley’s program is contained in thematic booklets designed for middle school’s first level to review elementary school’s concepts and skills, and prepare for pre-algebra.

Beginning seventh grade, the school has its own program with very definite, incremental math objectives for Algebra I and Geometry in eighth and ninth grade that also include basic elements for probability and statistics.

In tenth grade, students choose a math track that they will follow into eleventh: regular math or advanced math. Courses in both tracks prepare for the national baccalaureate.
### Study \& Advanced Math

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Regular Math</th>
<th>Advanced Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 A</td>
<td>Algebraic principles: Algebra II, pre-calculus, trigonometry</td>
<td>Pre-calculus A + probabilities &amp; statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 B</td>
<td>Algebraic principles: Algebra II, pre-calculus, trigonometry</td>
<td>Pre-calculus B + probabilities &amp; statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 A</td>
<td>Math principles: + probabilities and statistics</td>
<td>CALCULUS A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 B</td>
<td>Math principles: + elements of mathematical logistics</td>
<td>CALCULUS B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12°</td>
<td>Math studies for International Baccalaureate (IB)</td>
<td>Math standard for IB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-calculus (college level pre-calculus) is M:125 and Calculus is M:1001 at the Universidad de Costa Rica. Students taking these courses get college credit when they pass exams at the UCR. IB students selecting math standard take these courses. Those who opt for IB math studies take the regular math track. Both tracks address national baccalaureate content in Eleventh B. IB students finish their Math program in twelfth grade.

### SCIENCE

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The ultimate objective in elementary is to cultivate the students’ natural awe and inquisitiveness while developing a scientific mind: a **curious analytical approach to knowledge** following a systematic method for analysis of information that we call the **scientific method**. 

*Instruction in all units focuses on a central idea.* We distribute life, earth, and physical science topics into semester units to allow a deeper acquaintance with the subject. Up to fourth grade A, the students learn the cognitive objectives through experiments with no formal evaluation (i.e. no tests demanding to write definitions) that might discourage their enthusiasm for science. Each level emphasizes one of the steps of the scientific process. In preparatory they learn to observe. In first grade they focus on comparing and categorizing; in second grade, on recording data; in third grade they learn to predict or propose a hypothesis. By fourth grade they are acquainted with the usefulness of a control variable in their experiments and are ready to draw a conclusion or establish a generalization.

After these years of inductive reasoning in life sciences (preparatory and first grades) and physical sciences (second, third, and first part of fourth grade) the students move into deductive reasoning with earth science in Fourth B. From this moment on, science lessons include learning from using a textbooks as supplementary and supportive material found in a digital platform called ThinkCentral which provides informational reading and written tests, without -and taking tests. Without neglecting the emphasis on the experimental component, Science lessons are closely related to reading lessons, since the students are learning comprehension skills for informational reading.

Through the end of middle school, the science program, in digital format, fosters skills, abilities and knowledge in the three main scientific branches (biology, chemistry, and physics) and finishes in 8A. Biology begins in 8B and ends in 9A. Students must take introductory courses to Physics and Chemistry in 9B and 10A to prepare for the IB program. This begins in 10B and the students can choose following either subject. Even students who did not opt for IB follow the same pattern, although they do not take IB assessments. Students who need to complete a full year in the branch not selected have the option to enroll in an online IB course (in chemistry, if they had chosen to follow the physics track, or vice versa.) In 11B those in “bachillerato” or high
school tracks can choose to take the government science test in either subject (according to their previous choice) or biology. In this case, they will take another semester of biology to review what they learned in ninth grade.

For graduation, high school students must complete seven semesters of science credits that include two laboratory periods a week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II Semester. Eighth Grade B</td>
<td>Biology A</td>
<td>These are “bachillerato” and high school subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Semester. Ninth Grade A</td>
<td>Biology B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Semester. Ninth Grade B</td>
<td>Chemistry A or Physics A</td>
<td>These are “bachillerato” and high school subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Semester. Tenth Grade A</td>
<td>Physics A or Chemistry A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Semester. Tenth Grade B</td>
<td>Chemistry B or Physics B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Semester Eleventh Grade A</td>
<td>Chemistry C or Physics C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester in Tenth B or Eleventh A</td>
<td>Online course upon demand</td>
<td>Five-credit elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Semester Eleventh Grade B</td>
<td>Biology MEP or Chemistry D or Physics D</td>
<td>Choose for MEP Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Semester twelfth grade</td>
<td>Chemistry E or Physics E</td>
<td>Choice for the IB Diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPANISH

—Spanish is amply used in Montessori to encourage communication (although teachers transmit information and read stories in both English and Spanish), but children are addressed in their native language (Spanish or English), so they can communicate their feelings and relate what they learn at school to their personal activities.

—In preparatory, English becomes the dominant language and Spanish is reduced to three weekly periods. Initially, the auditory and visual skills necessary for language development are reinforced through pre-reading and pre-writing activities. Hearing and telling stories contribute to reading comprehension and introduce the fundamentals of written and oral expression.

—In first grade, students begin their formal learning of the Spanish language in three forty-five minute periods and two one-hour periods a week. In second and third grade, five lessons a week are then distributed into literature (reading appreciation and comprehension), spelling (very formal learning of the Spanish language rules starting in third grade), grammar, and composition. In fourth grade, students begin literary analysis focusing on basic concepts (setting, characters) that expand in fifth grade and are reinforced with the introduction of the literary spaces (moral, ethical, social, psychological and economic). The poetry workshop that begins in fourth and ends in fifth includes lyric knowledge: lyrical object, and lyrical person. The students enjoy the personal and individual production of their own poems and recite them to their parents in a closure activity we call Poets Café.

Middle school focuses on reading comprehension and textual production (which are considered fundamental tools for the performance of students in any field of knowledge) in two weekly lessons that also include a spelling review. Refining these skills expands the lexicon and cultural background without neglecting the aspects of written production. Another two lessons are dedicated to literature, with a program mounted especially for secondary school, taking into account the interests of the students and the proximity of the texts in time and space. Grammar takes the other two weekly lessons.

Starting in third grade, parts of speech are gradually introduced. By middle school, students should consider the conceptual function that defines each part of speech. In high school, students are doing syntactic analysis. Our program amply surpasses the government’s program that the students need to fulfill for the “bachillerato nacional.” At this stage students should be capable of producing, orally and in writing, their own analyses with fluidity and depth, especially those in the IB program, who must write essays that will be evaluated internationally.

Oral expression is reinforced through presentations of research papers or projects.

In secondary school, Spanish receives individual grades for literature, grammar, and composition except for IB students. These students totally follow the IB guidelines.
SOCIAL STUDIES

In elementary school, social studies lessons begin in third grade, with basic map skills experienced on the globe, the world map, a map of the American Continent, and the map of Costa Rica. Fourth through fifth grade social studies is taught in Spanish, because the program focuses mostly on geography and history of Costa Rica, its conditions and problems. Cognitive objectives are developed through investigation and discussion of chosen topics, according to the students’ inquiry.

The middle school program expands to world geography in sixth grade to prepare for world history in seventh through ninth grades including regions in Asia, Africa, Europe (ancient and medieval), and contemporary studies on Latin America.

The methodology for all secondary school courses is meant to develop critical thinking and stimulate research, following a train of thought within the topics that allows students to internalize skills inherent to the subject. They must use different sources to identify political, economic, social, military, and religious contexts of the historical process. They must understand and relate cause and effect of those processes to the history. Students will learn to differentiate between primary and secondary sources and identify different perspectives and biases in historical interpretations.

In high school (ninth grade and above), weekly Wednesday lectures by specialists in selected topics complement the program. At this level, social studies subjects become elective offers (including US History, psychology, philosophy, economics, business and management). Courses in Spanish in preparation for the government tests (two semesters for the government’s social studies program in eleventh grade and four semesters for civics in tenth and eleventh grade are required for the “Bachillerato” track.) United States History is required for the high school diploma but all students are able to take it as an elective course. This is recommended for those who wish to prepare for the SAT college entry exam.

“CIVICA”

Civics is part of the tenth and eleventh grade program to prepare for “Bachillerato” (students exclusively in the high school track may take it as an elective), two lessons a week with specific evaluations for the government-mandated tests. It is complemented with a weekly lecture by a guest speaker who addresses the students on a contemporary perspective of the issues in the course. Parents are invited to the lecture through the Tuesday bulletin. We also appreciate when parents volunteer to deal with specific topics.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS, EXPERIMENTS and REPORTS

In elementary, at least once in every semester, students have a longer assignment in which parents usually contribute. Students give presentations on books they have read. In Spanish, they give oral presentations on topics of their interest not included in the curriculum. In Science or Math, they may be asked to perform an experiment or participate in the Science or Math Fair. They also write book reports.

In secondary, term papers are assigned for every course. The oral presentation, as well as its content, is considered to contribute to the final grade. Also for a grade is their participation in the
yearly fairs, which have included Science Fairs, Invention Convention, Renaissance Fair, Math Fair, Spanish Fair, Social Studies Fair, and Technology Fair.
RESEARCH

Research projects begin in elementary and are common practice through graduation. Working with the librarians, students are taught research skills, bibliography writing, parenthetical referencing, effective use of information found on the Internet, etc. In eighth grade, students participate in a yearlong-guided research project on a self-selected topic. The objectives covered in this class (plagiarism, bibliographical references) have become increasingly important in the technological age students live in today. Students are taught all the rules and regulations of using information, especially information found on the web. This project is a catapult for the type of research required in high school, including the extended essay for IB and even for their college productions. At the end of the project, the students convey their research findings in a presentation before a selected panel of judges.

ART

The art program at Blue Valley seeks to build children's confidence, familiarity and skill in working with a wide variety of materials in many disciplines. The children work from life and from their imaginations, using the principles of design to make their artwork more visually compelling and meaningful. Usually, experience in a particular discipline is revisited multiple times within the school art experience, strengthening each student's understanding and ability in that area. The IB offers art for a period of two years ending with the presentation of a research portfolio they have developed parallel to the artistic production and the subsequent public display of their artistic creations.

During the Day of the Arts, students, under the guide of the art and music teachers, develop a joint thematic project that honors the legacy of well-known international artist, e.g. Quijoteando, Mozarteum, Amighettiando, amongst other themes.

MUSIC

— The music program is characterized by active involvement in creating music through voice, body, movement, and practice on especially designed instruments. It recognizes the many doors through which a child can enter the musical world and provides opportunities for aural, visual, and kinesthetic learners to feel successful in music via a multi-dimensional approach. The nurturing of the whole musician who can hear, feel, understand, and physically express music contributes to the child's ability to synthesize the intellect, senses, emotions, and physical body in ways that have important implications in their total educational experience.

— Students can join the chorus club and talented music students may opt to participate in our band and musical group (Blue Note). In middle school, sixth and eighth graders may choose to take percussion and music for art credit.

In secondary, students participating in formal programs (e.g. the Youth Symphony) may use their art periods to practice their skill at school, take the time for other elective courses, or even leave to attend their extramural lessons in an academic institution (if it includes tests and grades). They will get their art credit when they present grades or documents for attendance. See p 68.
DRAMA

ELEMENTARY: The aim of this program is to give the fourth and fifth grade students the opportunity to live the dramatic arts as a life experience that enables them to use their interpreting skills using their sense, emotions, bodies, and sense of humor in a safe environment, free of criticism, and guided by a teacher. Once a year, students present a musical show that involves singing, dancing, and acting.

SECONDARY: At least for one of the six middle school semesters, students need to take a drama course. Ninth through eleventh, students may enroll in drama as an elective course.
ART

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During the Day of the Arts, students, under the guide of the art and music teachers, develop a joint thematic project that honors the legacy of well-known international artist, e.g. Quijoteando, Mozarteum, Amighettiando.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The goal of physical education is to equip the students with the knowledge, skills, values, and capacity to lead a life-long healthy lifestyle. Students will develop individual sport skills, cardiovascular fitness, strength and speed. In addition, students will gain knowledge on fitness, nutrition, and sport tactics. They will have access to participate in a variety of traditional and non-traditional activities and develop social skills through an assortment of team sport activities.

In two periods a week (three in the lower grades) students also have the opportunity of socializing with students from other levels, in a pleasant and more informal situation, and venting the energy repressed during class time.

In secondary, students may opt to be excused from P.E. under certain conditions, but they should discuss with their parents that outside activities serve only part of the above purposes.

P.E. periods as well as ART periods (music, drama, and plastic arts) are meant to:

a. Ensure that students do weekly physical exercise and creative work.

b. Have them appreciate the benefits of practicing a sport and expressing themselves through art.

c. Provide a space for them to liberate the energy that progressively accumulates during academic lessons.

d. Facilitate a space for social interchange, even with students from other levels in a more informal and pleasurable environment.

Love of sports is stimulated with free of charge clubs after school where teams train to represent the school in tournaments and competitions.
TECHNOLOGY

—Our main goal is to motivate the students to a constant acquisition of technological knowledge through interesting courses, with the best technology and qualified teachers. This groundwork allows us to successfully incorporate the challenging academic programs described above.

—Students start their computer science lessons while in preschool (Montessori) and lower grades. They receive an introduction to programming using Micro Worlds (Logo) that encourages them to be analytical, critical, and creative. Students design, build, and animate ideas using the Logo language. Using drawing programs and didactic games they become acquainted with mouse and keyboard and the process also improves their fine motor skills.

We encourage the learning of Coding as a fundamental skill to be developed just as reading or writing. We guide the students in the development of the pillars of computational mind and the learning of basic concepts of programming using logical blocks to carry out concrete actions such as to move a character in a scenario or to draw a shape. For this purpose, we use platforms like studio.code.org, which allow the teacher to apply the curriculum plan (K-12) supported by foundations and corporations such as Microsoft, Google, and Omidyar Network.[4]

—Throughout the school years, students learn to appropriately use the keyboard, position their hands correctly, and type confidently and swiftly. They develop their typing skills from an early age, being proficient at the end of the primary. They progress into proper use of the essential Office applications. In interdisciplinary academic subject projects students apply word processing, spreadsheets, and multimedia presentations with music, videos, animations, graphics, pictures and tables. Another important tool that they apply to the full extent of the courses is CMap Tools, the program that allows them to create concept maps.

—From fourth to seventh grade students daily spend fifteen minutes on the Progrentis digital program that develops proper reading skills such as speed and comprehension. In middle school each student receives an iPad as a learning device increasingly incorporated into the lessons.

—We join the wide world of the web using applications provided by "clouds", allowing them to publish, organize and share their documents, schedule their activities, communicate through "chat" tools, and organize remote working groups. In elementary school, Weebly is a powerful class platform that allows students to use new technologies and services when they execute their assignments. In secondary we use Edmodo, allowing everyone involved in the learning process to connect with the resources and necessary contacts to achieve the maximum of their potential. This network weaves together the best tools that give sustenance to a high quality education.

We also integrate Adobe that includes Illustrator, Photoshop, Flash, and Dreamweaver.

PROGRAM FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS IN SECONDARY

Students in secondary school who practice a sports, artistic or musical discipline in an intensive manner may request to substitute Physical Education or elective periods for study periods. The objective of this program is to provide these students with more time during the day to progress with their school work. Students submit a form to a committee. It will review all documentation and make a decision on the time allotted for the study periods. The principal’s assistant informs students of the decision and makes the necessary elective schedule changes. Each student who
is approved for the program receives a form to register the hours dedicated to the discipline, which needs to be submitted to the respective coordinator at the end of the semester.

FIELD TRIPS

As an important part of our philosophy, we provide students with opportunities to associate their learning experiences in school with their everyday lives. Thus, field trips are an integral part of our curriculum; they make school learning more meaningful and help students internalize the information they are studying.

Our trips are not picnics or parties; they have definite academic objectives and important follow-up activities. They are carefully chaperoned (usually by two members of the staff and, if necessary, one or more parents), and they can be quite frequent. In order to avoid the hassle of notification for every field trip (students very frequently forget to return the written permission slips), we suggest that parents give a general authorization for trips in the form in the Addendum (that must be returned for our database.) Parents can also indicate their need to know about every field trip in order to authorize the student's participation. We announce the trips, grade, destination, and time, in Tuesday's bulletin so that parents can call school for the information they need. If we have not received said authorization, or if the trip was spontaneous and we cannot reach the parents, the student will remain in another class for the duration of the trip.

Complete regulation uniform must be worn to participate in a field trip unless otherwise instructed by the teacher.

For overnight or extended trips, parental notification and request for consent are essential. Fees may be required for these trips since they are not only during school hours; attendance is therefore not mandatory.

Students in Fourth B take a three-day trip during the Costa Rican geography course with the social studies teacher, the principal and a couple of room parents. The homeroom teacher is invited and parents share costs. Students in Fifth A take a two-day trip to Guanacaste to complement the science energy unit. Fifth B also takes a two-day trip to complement the unit on plants. The science teacher, a counselor, and another teacher accompany them.

In secondary, field trips are organized to combine academic issues (mostly science and geography) with team building and community service activities. In this case, parents will always receive information beforehand, including costs, to authorize or not the student's participation.
HIGH SCHOOL

Our students have completed twelve years of formal instruction upon finishing eleventh grade because of our mandatory preparatory year of school (taken prior to the first grade in elementary school). They begin working toward high school credits in eighth grade by taking: algebra I (two semesters: thirteen credits); biology (one semester: seven credits); and an annual world literature/research/composition course (twelve credits). A weekly 40-minute-period attended throughout the semester grants one credit; for example, two P.E. periods a week account for two credits; electives credits are based according to number of lessons. In eighth grade they have already accumulated 32 credits. In order to graduate from BVS, students must accumulate 284 credits by Eleventh B.

Beginning in ninth grade, students may follow one of three programs, each with special subjects. The first two have the same graduation requirements.

1. A “BACHILLERATO” DIPLOMA is obtained when passing the government (Ministerio de Educación Pública) mandated exams at the end of eleventh grade.

2. A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA is obtained when fulfilling Blue Valley School’s requirements at the end of the eleventh or twelfth grade. The one-year U.S. history course may be taken as an overload at any level from ninth to twelfth.

3. An IB DIPLOMA is obtained after four semesters with the international program, which has special requirements. It begins in Tenth A, with some preparation prerequisites, and final tests are taken at the end of one semester in twelfth grade.

In all three programs, students are required to take the five core courses passing them in the respective semester.

CORE COURSES

For the first two programs: MATH (specific subjects per level), SCIENCE (idem), ENGLISH (specific curriculum per level), SPANISH (idem), and SOCIAL STUDIES (Bachillerato or high school requirements). These courses are needed to fulfill graduation requirements and are complemented with required credits in art, sports, technology and a variety of elective courses, which students can choose to be work intensive or work supportive, according to their interest and abilities.

OTHER REQUIRED COURSES IN HIGH SCHOOL

A. Academic courses:

1. One semester of psychology (5 credits) and one semester of philosophy (e.g. History of religions in FS16) (5 credits). Courses in economics, business and management, and programming (coding) may substitute one of those two requirements. All these courses qualify as the social studies core course for the semester.

2. One credit for one semester of College Prep, one for one semester of EXCEL for science and one credit for each of two semesters of Environment.

3. For Bachillerato: four semesters of civics (two lessons and one lecture a week.)

4. For the high school diploma: two semesters of U.S. history.
B. Complementary courses:

1. Twelve sports credits (two credits per semester)
2. Six formative credits (1 credit per semester)
3. Five technology credits (one 5 credit course or combinations of 2-credits and 1-credit technology courses)
4. Five art credits (combinations of 2-credits and 1-credit art courses). IB art courses fully qualify.
5. Five community service credits (100 hours of internal and external undertakings).

C. Five credit elective

To complete graduation requirements, the student must take additionally two five-credit elective in any of their six high school semesters. She can choose from the core academic subjects or from the complementary courses. Required courses above may also be enrolled as an elective course (i.e. U.S. history, current issues).

D. "Pamoja” Education

International Baccalaureate students may extend their options for IB courses. We have joined forces with Pamoja Education, a company that collaborates with the International Baccalaureate Organization to offer online courses for the Diploma Programme. The parents pay for the course (an additional charge not included in the IB fee) and support for the students comes from the international teacher, not from BVS teachers who must concentrate in their own courses. The school is in charge of the logistics and follow-up.

ELECTIVES

Elective program objectives:

A. Academic objectives:

1. To allow students to complement the five core courses (math, science, English, Spanish and social studies) with more (or less) academically demanding subjects.
2. To offer courses on diverse topics which aren’t necessarily part of the regular program.
3. To offer students the possibility of taking courses addressing topics in the career they are presently considering.

B. Formative/Affective objectives:

1. To challenge students with alternatives and empower them to make wise decisions.
2. To allow bonding among students across levels, as they share with different classmates.
3. To practice course selection and schedule design, in order to prepare students for their undergraduate studies.
4. To assume responsibility for choices. Students must be informed about course offerings and make decisions according to their graduation requirements or future career choice.
5. To begin the semester with a positive and creative exchange between students and the Student Services department.

For some electives, such as philosophy (e.g. history of religions) and psychology, the decision is when to take them (see high school program above); for others, it is what to take (e.g. for art, technology or community service). Elective offers include 5-credit courses; 3-credit courses; and 2 or 1-credit courses. (See Attachments for description of electives offered.)
EXAMS

Since we are accredited and recognized by MEP, students can obtain Costa Rican diplomas in sixth grade (Certificado de Conclusión de Segundo Ciclo de Educación General Básica), ninth grade (Certificado de Conclusión de Estudios de Educación General Básica) and eleventh grade (Certificado de Conclusión de Enseñanza Media). For the latter, students must pass required government’s exams. This diploma is commonly known as the “Bachillerato” diploma. Recognized as the equivalent of a high school diploma, it entitles to admission in colleges abroad as well as local universities.

THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAURATE PROGRAM

Blue Valley School is authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) to offer the program that prepares students to obtain the IB Diploma. The IBO mission statement, (November 2002) states: “The IB Organisation (IBO) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes (sic) of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.” (IBO mission statement, November 2002)

Students prepare for the IB program in Tenth A, with a pre-IB course in art (two weekly periods), a one-credit course on extended essay production, and psychology (a requirement to also obtain the national diploma). In Tenth B, they must decide whether to take the IB program for a diploma or only take certain courses for certificates. This involves selecting one or more courses that follow the IB norms, including internal and external evaluations, and the final external assessment to get the IB credential.

For the diploma, the students must take specific courses, graded in a scale of one to seven. They need to choose three or four courses at higher level and the rest in standard level. The BVS IB offer includes: Spanish literature A1 (higher level), English literature A1 (higher level), chemistry or physics (higher or standard level), math studies (standard level) or mathematics (standard or higher level), art (higher or standard level), economics (standard level) and business and management (standard level). These two last courses are offered in anticipated format: evaluated at the end of their first IB year. Additional requirements for the diploma are a final essay for theory of knowledge and an extended essay on a topic of their choice that, if accepted, can give them zero to three points. For graduation, students must add a total of twenty-four points or more, with no higher-level courses under three (and only one with a three) and no standard level courses under two (and only one with a two). Higher-level courses must add up to, at least, twelve points. Finally, students must justify 150 hours of CAS (Creativity, Action, and Service).

Universities abroad give credit for IB courses, some only for those with high grades and others enough that can sometimes account for a full year of college. In Europe, students with an IB Diploma do not have to take the additional year that students with a national baccalaureate or high school diploma are required. Students who have worked for the IB Diploma IB find the transition to college much easier, on account of their previous academic experience.
STUDENT COUNCIL

The students elect their representatives in yearly elections to choose the student council. During the process, they learn about democracy as a form of government. As citizens, they experience that commitment to their causes can accomplish their objectives.

Secondary school homeroom teachers appoint a representative from each level for the electoral committee; they, in turn, vote for the president of the committee. These students need to be very responsible students because they will be in charge of the procedure for the duration of the campaign and in charge of law and order during election week. It is an honor to be part of the electoral committee. After the student council is sworn in, the electoral committee continues meeting to consider school concerns.

Secondary school students join to form a party and select their candidates. They submit, for approval by the electoral committee, their nominations for the five positions (one per level) in the ballot (president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and one officer). Participating actively in the process is not only rewarding, but also enhances the students’ résumé for college applications.

Elementary students choose a class representative who will attend the debates and share ideas and proposals with his classmates. On Election Day, they will go to secondary to vote for the candidate that has the approval of the majority of his class; according to the discussions they have held.

The Student Council participates in appeals for disciplinary sanctions and the administration calls them in for their opinion in student matters that need a resolution.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Students in the second semester of eighth grade and beyond may apply to receive half tuition for the following semester provided they meet the following conditions:

- Have a grade average of 95% in academic subjects with no grade under 85%
- Be fluent in English and Spanish
- Exhibit moral behavior according to traditional value
- Enthusiastically participate in school’s curricular and extracurricular activities as well as extramural undertakings
- Commitment to the school community’s welfare must be significant

The student’s perception on academic achievement and personal integrity is also evaluated.

Upon receiving grades that entitle them to a scholarship, the students must request at student services the form to fill in and hand over to the principal. Once reviewed, the student will be notified and accounting will be instructed to adjust the fee.
GRADUATION

At Blue Valley we only hold commencement exercises for seniors. Students finish elementary school in fifth grade and we celebrate it with a "moving up ceremony" where they receive the Blue Valley Elementary School Diploma. At the end of sixth and ninth grades, they are handed their MEP certificates.

Writing a thesis

When finishing the high school or national programs students may choose to write and defend a thesis to opt to graduate with honors, higher honors, or highest honors. They have to:

1. Submit recommendations by two professors that support the suitability of the student.
2. Show academic performance good enough so that the additional load can be handled.
3. Demonstrate with a previous essay writing ability in the language chosen for the dissertation.
4. Comment on an article at the investigation’s level to show proper comprehension.

GRADUATING WITH HONORS

The essay is a worthy contribution to literature on the subject, well defended before a jury. It might be an extended version of the extended essay they are preparing for the IB.

GRADUATING WITH HIGH HONORS

This distinction is awarded when the thesis contributes to knowledge of the matter:

• The investigation includes original data, supported by empirical experiences beyond data collected from different sources.
• The investigation provides a conclusion that will be useful for the institutions involved.

GRADUATING WITH HIGHEST HONORS

The investigation and experiments are so thorough, the written report so explicit, and the final presentation so comprehensive that the panel finds it to be at the level of a good college thesis.
EVALUATION

TESTING

We frequently evaluate the efficiency of our programs and the students' mastery of the concepts taught. In first through third grade students are not advised of the testing dates (except for spelling dictation in English and Spanish and for social studies, which begins in third) since we want to evaluate what has been learned in class. Parents who deem it necessary may request testing dates from the teachers.

Beginning in third grade, our social studies program requires a more traditional approach to teaching. Students are expected to memorize facts and review class material at home. By Fourth B, students are expected to study from their science textbooks at home. Progressively, they assume responsibility for their own learning. From fifth grade on, our pedagogy becomes increasingly more traditional. Quizzes (not always previously announced) and tests are frequent. At this point, working at home definitely enhances the learning process, so students should concentrate on studying each subject daily.

In secondary, quizzes are usually at the end of the week and tests at the end of a unit. When on account of a justified absence a student has not taken a test, the teacher decides whether to let him take it sometime later, sometimes just to see if he has learned the matter but if needed also to grade it. The teacher may give a different test or, if it is the same, grade it on lower scale since the student could already have obtained peer information on the questions. In high school, Friday after school has been assigned for replacement tests. At times the student may take the test during the teacher's consulting hour, provided it does not interfere with students there for consultation.

A final exam that includes all the content of the semester weighs 20% of the final semester grade (except in middle school science, where it only counts as a bimester test because it includes only the contents from the book in use.) Final tests cannot be given earlier or later than the assigned dates, so the students not at school to take them need to take them on the make-up tests date.

GRADING SYSTEM

Montessori

Parents receive their children's progress report twice a year, halfway through each semester and in Montessori A the end of the semester. They are issued throughout the day on the date announced for report cards to parents. Parents may call for an appointment (and have priority) or show up and wait for their turn. Those who cannot come may request in writing that it be sent with the child, never in advance of the delivery date and now without an interview.

Preparatory

Students' progress is reported formally twice a year, at the end of each semester. Parents must pick up the report card on the day specified on the calendar. They may make an appointment with the teacher beforehand or show up to be received on a first come first served basis. Parents with appointments have priority.
Elementary and secondary

Students receive their quarter report card at mid-semester (after nine or ten weeks of lessons). They will take their report cards home at 12:045 pm (except those with grades lower than 70% or have pending fees), on the day specified in the calendar. Teachers will be available for conferences with every parent, and to hand out report cards to those who did not receive them, from 1:030 to 3:030 pm of the same day. Parents call for an appointment with the teacher beforehand (and have priority), or wait for their turn.

At the end of the semester, since report cards are issued after school has closed for vacation, parents are asked to pick up the report cards on the day stated in the calendar. Teachers will be available during the morning or the afternoon of a Wednesday, as indicated. Report cards left behind will be delivered when the school reopens for the following semester.

Parent appointments with teachers are highly recommended. Beyond third grade, students and parents can check grades through PowerSchool (p 72), but numbers do not convey insights that contribute to the proper education of the student. Before fourth grade, access for parents or students to PowerSchool is not available as grades are not numeric; assessments are more qualitative than quantitative, which could lead to erroneous conclusions.

Only in secondary

Progress Reports: Secondary school students (sixth through eleventh grades) receive a report on their progress in the middle of each term. They are not asked to return it signed because we believe in empowering students over their learning (which will define their future). Nevertheless, some parents like to share the progress report with their children, so they can ask for it when we announce the date issued in Connect the bulletin. Progress reports do not include the conduct grade average, but the respective counselor will notify parents if their child needs to modify certain behaviors. Parents may call the counselors for information.

Semester exams: In secondary school the average of the two bimesters accounts for 80% of the semester grade and the semester exam 20%. For bimester grades, each teacher assigns weights to the different assignments (tests, quizzes, homework, classwork, etc.) to obtain the final average. Each teacher can assign the weight that best suits the learning process, considering the interest of the students. Teachers can also decide if which students can be exempt from taking the semester final exam (not over 15% of the class) and set the grade required for the privilege. If the teacher decides students can be exempt, they must achieve a minimum semester average of 91% to obtain this benefit.

PROMOTION

Since cognitive objectives are distributed by semesters, promotion from level to level happens by semester. This is a definite advantage for the students because, if they need to take make-up tests, these will be on a less amount of subject matter. Students will also be better prepared to begin the following semester when they have caught up on the previous one.

In elementary, students are rarely retained and few ever need to take make-up tests after the semester ends. During the year, when a child needs extra help, parents, teachers, and specialists design a strategy to help him overcome any difficulties. This study program may need to continue through the holidays.
In preparatory, the children’s performance is assessed with S (satisfactory, including S+ or S-) or N (not at this moment: the child is not up to the level of his peers but will be able to catch up.) Only in exceptional cases will the student receive a U (unsatisfactory, which means the child is not responding to our strategies) after discussing the issue at length with parents, teachers, counselors and principals.

First through third grade students are graded, in most academic subjects, with letters: A (very good), B (good), C (sufficient), N (not yet), NA (not applicable). Subjects like penmanship are graded with S or U. An "N" on the report card means the student is not yet accomplishing minimum requirements (usually due to transfer from another school or to a learning difference) and requires after school tutoring. A student who receives "C-", (less than sufficient) is not working at class level either, but should be able to do so. He also requires tutoring to avoid failing the subject. We monitor these students' progress carefully.

From fourth grade on, students are graded with percentages, to comply with government norms. A passing grade at Blue Valley is 70%. Students who receive a lower grade as a semester average must take a make-up test (or complete a required assignment) during the first week of vacation. For the student to be promoted to the next level, the test grade is averaged with the semester grade and should render 70% or more. If it doesn't, the student has a second chance at the end of the vacation. If the first test improved the semester average, the student will need a lower grade in the second make-up test. A grade that would lower the average will be discarded. The grade for the semester though will only show 70%. If the student still does not achieve the required grade, he will be retained in his level.

If a student fails a one-credit elective subject, he or she can replace the credit with another alternative such as hours of community service.

For seniors to qualify for “bachillerato” exams, they can only take make-up tests in two subjects. A special exam session will be held the day before the official starting date for MEP tests. The exams will be graded immediately to determine the students’ inclusion in the Act of Graduates required by MEP naming the students ready to take the tests in the regular session. Students that fail three subjects will not qualify for “bachillerato” in the regular session but can still take the three make-up tests later, during the regular session for the rest of the school, to pass eleventh grade. They will then be ready for “bachillerato” on the date assigned for extraordinary tests by MEP. Government tests have their own promotion norms decreed by MEP.

RETENTION

According to the government, a student is retained in his present level when he receives a failing grade (less than 70%) in more than three subjects. A student retained for a second time is asked to find an academic offer more suitable to his needs. He cannot repeat a grade twice.

In elementary, although a student is officially held back when he has not obtained above a 70% average in more than three subjects, in Blue Valley this is not the only circumstance. Each case is considered individually before taking action. If the student's present situation is causing him obvious harm, we may decide, for his benefit, and after consulting with parents and specialists, to hold back the child even though he has passing grades.

A student failing in conduct (a semester average of less than 70%) also fails any subject in which his semester average is less than 80% (see p 62 for deductions in conduct grade). If all the academic grades are equal or superior to 80%, the student will be required to perform an explicit program of institutional or communal interest, and his final promotion will be subject to full and
verifiable compliance. According to the law, a student having over 15% of unjustified absences may not be promoted. It’s critical to attend classes every school day and required civic holidays. (See Excuses from lessons p 87).
Exceptions in secondary

In exceptional cases (a serious illness, for instance) a student may continue unto the next semester on conditional enrollment even when not achieving the 70% minimum average in one or two subjects. This condition implies that the student does not have the benefit of a makeup test if again failing a subject. Also, the following semester’s average must be high enough to average a 70% with the previous (failing) one; if not, repeating the grade is warranted.

MAKE-UPS FOR MISSED TESTS

—Quizzes or tests missed during a justified absence should not harm a student’s grade.

Students must make arrangements with a peer to collect handouts and lists of contents learned to be able to prepare for future evaluations, if the teachers deems necessary to assign them.

Teachers can decide on their own norms; they have autonomy in these decisions because they need to adapt them to their teaching approach.

• Some teachers will require the student to take the test because there are only two tests a bimester, so they can’t afford a student missing one of them.
• Some teachers allow their students the benefit of having one “drop quiz or test” so that it doesn’t affect the bimester’s average; this could be applied to the missed test. Students are warned that they must carefully handle the benefit because they will not have the option a second time: the student would then receive a 40% on the evaluation.
• Sometimes teachers want to give the test at a later date only to check for the student’s understanding but not for a grade since the student may already know the questions from a classmate. The average will be based on the rest to the evaluations. Or they may give a different quiz or test for a grade at a later date (usually if more grades are necessary). This doubles the teachers’ work, so it is not school’s policy but a teacher’s option.

In secondary, if the teacher decides the test is necessary it will be given after school on Fridays. It is the student’s responsibility to schedule the test with the teacher and the counselor. The test will be graded over 90%, depending on the nature of the absence.

When the absence has been so long that the student must make up several tests or quizzes, permission is given for him to take a make-up test on a day other than Friday. In this case, the counselor helps distribute them between Friday and other weekdays after school.

If the make-up test was assigned and the student did not follow-up on scheduling or taking it, a one (1) will be assigned for the missed test.

Quizzes or tests missed during a justified absence should not result in harming a student’s grade. Students must make arrangements with a peer to collect handouts and lists of contents learned to be able to prepare for future evaluations, if the teachers deems necessary to assign them.

—Teachers can decide on their own norms; they have autonomy in these decisions because they need to adapt them to their teaching approach (e.g. they might only give two tests a bimester, so they can’t afford a student missing one of them.) Some teachers allow their students the benefit of having one “drop quiz or test” so that it doesn’t affect the bimester’s average; this could be applied to the missed test. Students are warned that they must carefully handle the benefit because they will not have the option a second time: the student would then receive a 40% on the evaluation. Sometimes teachers want to give the test at a later date only to check for the student’s understanding but not for a grade since the student may already know the questions from a classmate. The average will be based on the rest to the evaluations. Or they may give a different quiz or test for a grade at a later date (usually if more grades are necessary).
doubles the teachers’ work, so it is not school’s policy but a teacher’s option. When the teacher is able to make a new quiz or test, it will be graded over 100%.

— In secondary, when a make-up test is deemed necessary (the teacher may decide not to give a quiz or test), it will be given after school on Fridays. It is the student’s responsibility to schedule the test with the teacher and the counselor. The test will be graded over 90% instead of 100%, depending on the nature of the absence. Students can only take a make-up test on a day other than Friday, when the absence has been so long that he must make up several tests or quizzes. In this case, the counselor helps distribute them between Friday and other weekdays after school.

— If the make-up test was assigned and the student did not follow-up on scheduling or taking it, a one (1) will be assigned for the missed test.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

In tenth grade, all students take the PSAT (the school covers the cost). In tenth and eleventh grades, students who want to apply for college in the U.S. should register for the SAT, a test for college admission to be taken at assigned dates. Students should see the college counselor about the application deadlines for college entrance. When taking it, students need to make sure they write the school’s code number for the College Board: 834170.

Blue Valley is evaluating the use of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) achievement tests in second through fifth grade.
RULES AND REGULATIONS

RIGHTS AT BLUE VALLEY

Our students know they have rights, based on universal values (explicit in the United Nation's Declaration of Children's Rights). They have the right to receive the services of the school on an equal basis and to be assisted individually when learning differences hinder proper performance and achievement of desired results. We demonstrate our respect for students by constantly offering our love and consideration. From this love stems our responsibility to not only instruct them but also to correct and redirect unwise attitudes. Their misdeeds are considered mistakes and not felonies (a mistake is not wrongdoing unless there is an unwillingness to correct it). We advise and counsel our students to help them modify unruly behavior.

Corresponding with the school's philosophy, we accept what students say when they give their side of a story (although we discourage finding excuses when misbehavior has been accepted). When students perceive unfair treatment, they have the right to explain and defend their cause, but should not interrupt the lesson to do so. They will wait until the teacher can give them time in private to calmly present their point of view. They will avoid arguments to deflect their responsibility and will not lie about the matter at hand (“Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”) We emphasize accountability as the first step before behavior modification is initiated. If proper manners are not observed, the parties lose the right to defend their thesis. The guidance counselor may be invited to participate in the conference for a third opinion.

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN PARALLEL LEVELS

In levels where there is more demand, we temporarily exceed the customary class size to later be able to duplicate the grade level in our process of expansion. Students welcome the possibility of more social alternatives with an increased number of classmates. In time, the level is split into two parallel classes with our preferred number of students in each class.

When we have parallel levels, BVS applies the following policy regarding student placement: Student placement is at the discretion of the school administration. Student placement meetings are held each year by an interdisciplinary team including teachers, counselors, and administrators. This team carries out a careful analysis considering, but not limited to, the following criteria: age, gender, academic performance, guidance reports, and constructive versus non-constructive friendships. All final placements are approved by administration and are not normally subject to change, except in extraordinary cases at the end of the semester. Although we highly value and welcome input from our families, we do not necessarily honor parental requests for placement or transfers.

BEHAVIOR

The best motivation for proper behavior is the firm belief that following school routines results in a personal, as well as a collective, benefit. For that purpose, Blue Valley has established a frame of reference for expected behavior to help students decide on a positive course of action and make the correct choices for adequate behavior. We also define procedures to help resolve cases of minor offenses that students need to learn to avoid. Lastly, a disciplinary process for major offenses provides progressive penalties for attitudes which students seem reluctant to modify. It considers specific steps geared to achieve the modification of negative behavior. We expect students to follow universal norms of safety and courtesy so they contribute to the efficiency of the learning process. They can be summarized in these three principles:
1. Respect for one-self and for others
2. Respect for property
3. Accountability for one’s actions

**Personal Respect**

a. The student will respect himself, avoiding circumstances where his health might be endangered. He will also show respect in the way he dresses and conducts himself, expressing his convictions and arguments with dignity and consideration.

b. The student will respect all those around him. Any action that hurts others through word or deed is inadmissible and will receive an appropriate sanction. Passive-aggressiveness, as well as outright aggressiveness, is unacceptable.

**Respect for Materials**

It is the student's duty to care for the environment, also avoiding damage to the physical plant or the equipment. Students must care properly for textbooks and learning supplies, aware that waste hurts not only the immediate economy but also the future of humanity.

Students should take pride in their own classroom, distributing among themselves the various responsibilities for ensuring to maintain it clean and attractive.

Students should not use the bathrooms as meeting places and should observe proper bathroom etiquette. They must visit them before and after lessons, during breaks or lunch periods, and only ask permission to leave the class in case of an emergency. They are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness and order of the bathrooms. School detention will be assigned to students who violate these expectations or waste paper, water, etc.

**Accountability**

To develop accountability as a habit, students frequently require a joint effort of school and parents. Our foremost objective is that students develop intrinsic motivation for proper behavior, but many require a disciplinary process to help them develop the adequate manners for an enriching social life.

**ROUTINES**

We have defined three basic aspects that contribute to an efficient implementation of the activities designed to carry out our objectives:

1. School and class behavior
2. Promptness
3. Homework

**School and Classroom Behavior**

The students contribute to an environment conducive to learning by actively participating in activities and discussions and avoiding actions that distract them or their classmates. In each class, students and teachers define norms (within the school's philosophy) that will govern their interactions, and rewards for positive behavior. Teachers and exemplary students are the best role models.
The teacher is responsible for discipline in the classroom and will intervene in the modification of student behavior. This includes handling minor infractions as they occur (the teacher will take corrective measures such as calling his attention, writing his name on the board, removing him to a quieter place, or, in secondary, reporting him to lunch break detention (LBD)). He or she keeps record of minor infractions, making sure that they are reflected in the subject's conduct grade that forms part of the final bimester conduct average. The accumulation of repetitive minor infractions results in a major infraction, with the expected consequences.

The teacher may decide to send the student directly to the respective counselor if the disruption continues. The counselor becomes involved and may decide to keep the student. When the teacher is free, all three will analyze the situation and define a course of action.

Besides behavior that affects harmony in class, other offenses can justify sending a student to the counselor. The respective counselor keeps record of these referrals and monitors the consequences, which may eventually involve placing the student on the discipline process.

The following are some infractions, besides disruptive behavior, which are considered minor infractions, and may justify sending the student to the counselor.

**Minor infractions include**

- Ignoring the teacher's or responsible adult's instructions
- Passive aggressiveness (such as not including another student in an activity, or influencing others to do likewise)
- Ridiculing others
- Rough treatment of others
- Use of bad or loud language
- Eating or drinking inside the classrooms, without permission
- Less than ten minutes late to lessons
- Wandering around the school during or between lessons
- Running in the hallways
- Lying or trying to cheat during tests or in homework
- Minor damages to property (taking, "borrowing", littering, breaking)
- Entering off limit areas (parking lot, construction sites, etc.)
- A disheveled appearance: incomplete uniform (e.g. non-regulation sweaters, caps, shoes with colors); piercing, excessively long hair (touching the shirt’s collar or, in secondary school, not gathered in a pony tail) or earrings on boys; unkempt hair on girls

Several minor infractions become a major infraction; the student enters the disciplinary process.

**Promptness**

Students who arrive late to class are interrupting the lesson, and those who arrived early have the right to enjoy their classes without interruption. The bell rings at 7:17:57 to let students and parents know they have to be at school before this bell in order to make it to their class on time. The teacher closes the door at 7:28:00 sharp and will not allow a student in. If the student hears the 7:28:00 am bell (official time) without being in his seat:

- In elementary, once she remains for DEEAR time has started at 7:20, she sits in the front hallway bench with a teacher until silent reading is over and heads for her class at 7:30:10. The teacher reports late arrivals to the secretary, who records it for sanctions. During the day, the bell doesn't govern student transitions so teachers have the flexibility to capitalize on the interest of the students. Therefore, teachers and students must assume the responsibility to comply with the
lessons’ starting time.
• In secondary school, the student has to go directly to the Student Services secretary and record his name and time of entrance in the appropriate log. The secretary will stamp his wrist, which will allow him to enter the class. If the student brings a proper written justification the following day, it is accepted and the record cleared.

Students often change classroom at the end of the lesson. The bell rings three minutes before the other class (not if it’s before the start of recess or lunch). Students must hurry because they will have two minutes to reach the other classroom, which can be distant. Teachers may give up to two minutes more after the ring; the student who arrives later will remain attentively outside to avoid interrupting the lesson. Teachers report to the counselors the students whose late arrivals are repetitive. As all the minor faults, delays become serious offenses when they are customary.

In elementary, when students accumulate four “unjustified lateness” slips at the beginning of the school day, they will be requested to complete a detention from 6:50-7:20 am 7:30-8:00 a.m. In secondary, a student arriving late four times to the first period in the morning loses one point in conduct. Lateness of less than 5 minutes counts as one tardy; between 5 and 10 minutes counts as two tardies; between 10 and 15 minutes counts as three tardies; and students late more than 15 minutes immediately lose a point in conduct because it will count as four tardies.

Homework

In elementary, homework (duties that the student needs to work on after school) has two main objectives: first, develop responsibility and work and study habits; second, provide drill practice to be done at home so that time at school is more efficiently used in interactions between teacher and students. It should be a load that students can handle, the size gradually increasing with the grade level.

In early grades (preparatory and first) children receive only token homework, like bringing specified material (e.g. magazine cutouts of pictures with the initial sound they are studying during the week). Starting in second grade, students are expected to spend increasingly more time on homework, an hour by fifth grade and all the time necessary in secondary. The student does not have to complete the homework he can’t do by himself, but must turn in proof that he has tried sufficiently. Parents do not have to explain, but they should supervise. Teachers explain in the initial parent-teacher conferences their homework routines to enable the supervision.

Students are also expected to read every night, either assigned readings (progressively longer) or library books for book reports. In secondary, not complying with assigned reading will affect the grade average.

In elementary, students are not expected to do homework over the weekend. For students who like having more time, the teacher may assign work on Friday but it will be collected on Tuesday or later, or assign work on Thursday to be collected on Monday. Other assignments to be done at home, like conferences, research projects (e.g. Science Fair), and book reports, are assigned with ample time so that students can work on them when the homework load is smaller. From third to fifth grade, students who miss homework must report that same day for study hall (SH, 30 minutes out of their forty-five minute lunch period).
In secondary, the importance of complying with every assignment increases. At this level, it is preemptory that students study their subjects gradually to avoid an overwhelming load of work on the day before a test (this does not allow proper learning). In many cases homework serves as introduction to the next day’s topic. If a student fails to do his homework, learning becomes difficult and is not the responsibility of the teacher. Students are expected to work hard on their homework and come to school next day with specific questions on what they did not understand. Students may have homework every day of the week. They may also be assigned to do unfinished class-work at home. Teachers assign the weight of the homework average in the final grade according to its importance for the course. A one (1) goes on record for assignments not turned in on time. Some teachers may decide to accept the assignment for a lower grade on a later date. The criteria will be based on the student’s learning benefit.

CHEATING

Students should understand that the teacher requires their original answers in order to check and correct their work to be able to guide their learning. Therefore, we expect that students will always conduct themselves in an honorable manner. If a teacher determines that homework has been copied it is graded with a one (1). The student, who uses a “cheat sheet” or copies from his classmate to cheat on an exam, will also receive a one on her test. The student who allows another student to copy from her work or test receives a grade of 50%. Parents acknowledge these situations by signing the test and returning it to the teacher. The deed is a major offense, placing the student in the next step according to his discipline history.

Plagiarism and cyber-cheating

Students at Blue Valley are aware that plagiarism is unacceptable. However, advances in technology have allowed for a new form of plagiarism to emerge: cyber-cheating. Some websites make it possible for students to download an entire research paper or essay. Students must understand that plagiarism is:

• using an entire downloaded document and turning it in as an assignment.
• presenting a downloaded document even if some words have been changed (very easy with the thesaurus.)
• combining several paragraphs (cut and paste) from different downloaded documents and putting them together without considerable personal input.

Students must understand that many colleges and universities view plagiarism, in any of its forms, as a serious offense, and will not hesitate to consider this an act that justifies a permanent expulsion from school. They can certainly use the Internet to access information, but must always quote the source when doing so, in such a way that the teacher may consult it if needed. Students may also quote an author’s words literally, but must give him credit by using endnotes. In addition, when using the Internet, and all other sources, to retrieve information, students must show their ability to analyze, synthesize, and defend a position concerning a specific topic (see Cheating above).
DISCIPLINE PROCESS

An excess of repetitive mistakes or minor offenses, or a single major offense will place the student in the discipline process, which has increasingly serious consequences. This will not only induce the student to react positively but will set an example for the rest of the school community. The same school rules apply for inappropriate behavior on the bus.

Major offenses include:

- disrespect for national symbols
- disrespect for a teacher or someone in authority
- ignoring the explicit orders of an adult in authority
- disrespect for oneself or for peers
- belligerence towards others in either word or deed (any kind of bullying)
- deceitful actions: cheating on homework, tests or forging of a signature or document
- public displays of affection (hugs, kisses)
- truancy (skipping classes)
- use of profanity
- damage to school property, physical plant, or equipment
- improper use of electronic devices
- bringing dangerous instruments or substances to school, for example weapons (even matches, knives or slingshots), unconventional literature (magazines, CDs, videos, music, texts, messages), and drugs (including cigarettes and alcohol)

First step: Oral Warning

Two circumstances account as the first step of the process:

1. When the student has committed a serious offense or has not respected rules. For example, the professor who has exhausted all intermediate approaches meets with the counselor (or even the director) to analyze possible causes for the student’s inappropriate behavior. The student is heard, counseled, may receive chores to compensate unacceptable actions, and enters the discipline process.

2. When the teacher has issued an ad hoc rule, alerting the students specifically. If she doesn’t follow it, the student is placed in the second step of the discipline process.

Second Step: Internal detention for the rest of the day

If the previous step has not accomplished behavior modification or in case of a very serious offense, once the misdeed has been objectively established, the student is pulled out of class for internal suspension. He spends the rest of the day in the respective student support room (at least four periods), working on his own class work sent by the teacher. If the misdeed happens at the end of the day, the suspension will be carried out for half a day (four periods) the following day. Academic grades do not suffer because her work is checked and graded. The offender writes a note explaining her action and its consequences, takes it home, and brings it back signed. It should establish the warning that next time it will be full day internal suspension.
Third Step: Full day internal detention

If the previous step has not accomplished behavior modification (or in case of a very serious offense), once the misdeed has been objectively established, the student must attend the respective support room the following day entirely, doing classwork sent by the teacher on his own. Academic grades do not suffer because his work is checked and graded. The offender writes a note explaining his action and its consequences, takes it home, and brings it back signed. It should establish the warning that next time it will be external suspension.

Fourth Step: External suspension for the rest of the day

Parents are called to remove the student from the school for a minimum of four periods (forty-minute) or three hours. The student waits with the respective counselor until his parents arrive. If time does not allow for the student to complete her four-period suspension that day, she will fulfill it the next day. The student receives a one (1) in all work graded being done by his classmates when he is away from the class, and will catch up with his work upon returning, taking a missed quiz or test only to evaluate progress in the subject matter and identify weak areas. When the parents are called, the reason for the suspension will be discussed.

Fifth Step: External Suspension for a full day

The student is requested to stay at home for a full day (returning to school the following day to the period after the one in which she had to leave). This suspension has the same academic consequences as above, but now the student receives a failing grade (60%) in conduct for the bimester (keep in mind that if the student does not have at least a 70% semester conduct average, she must take make-up tests in all academic subjects with less than an 80% semester average), unless the teachers indicate that there has been a substantial behavior modification that merits another grade. Upon returning to school the next day, a conference is held in the office with the student and her parents or legal guardian, before the student joins his class.

Next Steps: Other suspensions or dismissal

Two-day and three-day suspensions are assigned before deciding that Blue Valley's system might not be the best for the student. She remains in conditional enrollment until the end of the next marking period, in order to facilitate transfer to another school. At this stage, any misdeed will deserve a suspension.

The magnitude of the offense may precipitate the implementation of the steps.

To appeal

The student may question a decision before the discipline committee, composed of members of the faculty and the student council.

REMOVAL FROM THE INSTITUTION AS A CAUTIONARY MEASURE

In exceptional cases in which the presence of the student at the school may seriously jeopardize the order or endanger the physical integrity of any member of the community, the director of the institution may, as a precautious measure, order the immediate external suspension of up to ten school days, to allow time for the investigation and grant the student the right of defense.
Noon detention (SH for Study Hall; LBD for Lunch Break Detention)

SH and LBD are 20 to 30 minute periods that referred students spend when the lunch period begins, working in either the elementary or the secondary student support room. If perfect behavior is not observed, even in the absence of the supervisor, the penalty is duplicated. If referred students don’t show up, they will explain their excuse and serve detention on the next day. It will be registered as a minor infraction. If there is no valid excuse, the sanction will duplicate, serving SH or LBD on the two following days.

In elementary, missed homework in third through fifth grades is the only reason for Study Hall. They take missed homework to finish in the student support room and do other assignments for the rest of the period. Parents of the student reported for the fourth time will be contacted to discuss reasons for the student finding it so difficult to comply with homework.

Students are sent to LBD exclusively for conduct matters (when they hamper fulfillment of BVS’s objectives). They must take enough work to keep themselves busy. In secondary, each LBD is considered a minor offense and takes one point off the bimester conduct grade. A fourth LBD places the student in the discipline process.

Point deductions for discipline infractions

The respective counselor keeps track of infractions and, by the end of each quarter, submits a list to each homeroom teacher indicating the number of points that need to be subtracted from the final conduct grade for each quarter.

Late arrivals: Corresponding deductions (p. 58)
Lunch break detentions: 1 point each
Minor infractions: 1 point each
Oral warning: 2 points
Internal suspension (4 periods or full day): 3 points
External suspension rest of day: 5 points
External suspension for full day: Student receives a failing grade (60%) grade for the quarter.
STUDENT SERVICES

YEARLY AND DAILY SCHEDULES

The Blue Valley School year is divided into two semesters, and students are promoted on a semester basis. The spring semester begins in February and ends in June, while the fall semester runs from late July to early December. According to age, students begin their school year in the spring or fall. Everyone, in both schedules, has the same vacation and holidays.

The school day begins at 7:28:00 am and ends at 2:23:00 pm, except on Wednesdays, when all the students are dismissed at 12:04:50 pm so the staff can attend development workshops. Montessori students attend school from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm except 12:04:50 pm on Wednesdays.

MORNING ASSEMBLY

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at 7:35:40 am (after DEAR - individual reading time), students through fifth grade meet for a fifteen-minute assembly (thirty minutes on Wednesdays for class dramatizations) at which they sing the pledge to the flag and national anthems. The students and teachers also celebrate birthdays, share important news, and personal or group accomplishments. It is a time for togetherness.

Middle and High school students meet on Tuesday and Thursday respectively for fifteen minutes of the period that matches the week of the month. For example, they meet on the third period when it is the third Tuesday of the month and the second period if it is second Thursday of the month. Assemblies are an opportunity for students and staff to express and discuss thoughts and concerns with the administration.

AFTER SCHOOL SUPPORT

Each teacher will stay an extra hour after school (2:20:30-3:24:00 p.m.) once a week to work with students who are falling behind in a particular class or need help studying for an upcoming test. This time can also be used for students to make up any tests missed due to an excused absence. The consulting hours schedule is announced at the start of every semester in the first Connect. Occasionally, teachers can use this period to let a student with a justified absence take the make up test (especially when he had other tests to take on Friday, the afternoon assigned for this purpose.) Each student will have to make transportation arrangements to be picked up after the support time; buses are not available during this time.

COUNSELING

In an effort to meet the needs of its students, Blue Valley provides guidance personnel ready to aid students in anything from personal and academic problems to scheduling and college placement. As a matter of policy, their homeroom teachers counsel secondary school students, at least once each semester. In elementary, homeroom teachers constantly communicate with counselors (one psychologist and one learning specialist) in order to analyze the children’s specific needs. Parents of elementary school children are usually called for appointments more often than those with students in secondary school, since these students are expected to increasingly assume the responsibility for their actions. In secondary, counselors provide support to students and their teachers. The director of the department has an open door policy for students, teachers, and parents.
COUNSELORS

At Blue Valley, a student does not need to make a formal appointment with a counselor in order to speak about a situation. The students can approach the counselor freely during lunch or recess. Counselors also talk to the student when he is at academic risk. The teachers can involve the counselor if the student shows patterns of behavior that are not appropriate and might affect class dynamics or if they show a degree of emotional distress that does not allow them to remain in class. One of the most important roles for all counselors is to act as mediators. Therefore, when a conflict between a teacher and student arises, counselors often try to reach a solution that satisfies all parties. Parents might also reach counselors, either by phone or a formal appointment, if they have any concerns regarding their child’s academic performance or emotional stability.

The elementary and secondary school counselors have weekly encounters with students in their Values and Ethics courses, which have formative purposes. In general terms, both seek to promote the students’ social conscience and empathy toward others’ needs. Four of the school’s guidance counselors teach the Peers Together and Ethics courses.

SPECIAL NEEDS SERVICES

Special support is provided within school hours to students, especially to those recently admitted students that need assistance to catch up with their class in either language (ESL for English as a second language or SSL for Spanish as a second language, and MSL, math as a second language, which explains basic mathematical concepts or offers stimulating problems for advanced students). They are assigned to a language specialist during selected periods during the school day. This free service is provided for one year with the objective of mainstreaming these students as soon as possible.

Blue Valley’s mainstreaming policy for its special needs students is addressed by having all our students ready to carry out the academic program. The Student Services Department works with students and teachers to ensure that the needs of the students are being met, but no significant adjustments are made to a student’s course-load. Rather, specific adjustments are made to address the students’ specific needs. The guidance staff collaborates with parents of children with learning difficulties such as dyslexia or with attention deficit disorder by offering them support, structure, and behavior modification strategies. For example, the counselor or the teacher might read the test to a student, give a student more time during exams, or give them the test in a more private setting. But if students need remedial help they must receive it after school, at their parents’ convenience and expense. We do not provide diagnostic testing or special programs within the school to avoid children being labeled by their peers and eliminate additional costs to parents whose children do not require the service.

Every teacher offers, free of charge, one consulting (not tutoring) hour a week after school for students with specific questions about a concept they did not understand that week. Secondary school students who receive below a 70% on their Progress Report should attend a mandatory consulting hour on that subject every week until the following marking period.

We suggest outside private tutoring for students with specific gaps in their learning that prevents them from properly following the academic program.
CHARACTER BUILDING

VALUES AND ETHICS

Appreciating our traditional values and following an ethical life are two of the most precious habits we hope our students can internalize. Mostly, we transmit this aim through example, the teachers and staff as role models in a constant application of our philosophy. Blue Valley is nondenominational, but conscientiously emphasizes universal values.

In elementary:

PEERS TOGETHER is a thirty-minute weekly period of Peers Together; counselors work constructively with values through activities that involve group work. Our objective is to develop group cohesion through activities that encourage positive interaction among students. We also address everyday circumstances that merit adult intervention. Conflicts are arbitrated through group discussions and skits. These lessons might soon alternate with the VYDA approach.

PEACE KEEPERS in fourth and fifth grade: During “Peers Together,” a different group of four or five students meets each week with the Student Services Director. The objectives of the program are: 1. To facilitate small group interaction in a safe space and thus strengthen the sense of community within the classroom. 2. To familiarize students with the application of restorative practices in their daily interactions. All fourth and fifth grade students participate in this program.

HEALTH: In Fifth B, all students receive a weekly 45 minute lesson on health (physical, emotional, social). The objective is to prepare them for middle school in topics pertaining to pre-adolescence, including: nutrition, eating disorders, exercising, personal hygiene, physical/emotional changes, drugs/alcohol and digital citizenship.

In secondary:

In the forty minutes for ETHICS in secondary, our guidance counselors discuss with students either their preplanned topics or a critical issue of interest to the students. Students are allowed to express their feelings or concerns in their native language (either English or Spanish), because their counselors claim it is more convenient for emotional matters. Topics range from myths that illustrate the origin of our civilization’s values and reinforce qualities such as friendship or tolerance, to sex education in the higher grades.

CHARACTER TRAITS

In high school, students come to understand that the character is manifested in our attitude, our way of thinking, speaking and acting. The decisions we take are carried out according to the values, ethics and morals in which we believe. Character defines, builds, or destroys our reputation. The advantage of developing a positive character is that, while making us a better person we will be contributing to make the world a better place. In middle school students receive character formation lessons once a week. Each grade is assigned a specific trait (respect, solidarity, responsibility, justice, citizenship and reliability) as a positive trait to reflect upon throughout the entire semester.
RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative practices originate in the concept of restorative justice, whose objective is to repair the harm that took place and mend relationships among people, instead of only punishing the offender. One of its main principles is that students respond better when authority figures do things with them, and not for or against them.

The main objective of applying restorative practices in Blue Valley is to contribute in repairing or building relationships and to strengthen the sense of community.

Implementation of restorative practices in Blue Valley can take the following forms: Circles, small impromptu conference, or restorative conference.

1. Circles to facilitate expression of feelings, to obtain information about a situation and strengthen bonds among students.
2. Academic circles (sequential), so that students can give their opinion about an academic topic, or to find out how much they know before introducing it.
3. Small impromptu conference, used to solve conflicts at the precise moment they occur.
4. Restorative conference, the most formal of all, requires planning and preparation of the participants. It is used to address specific incidents in which there is a clear offender/s and victim/s. Its goal is to restore the relationship and repair the harm.

Circles are part of daily life at Blue Valley. Depending on the severity of the situation, it is up to the guidance counselors to decide if parents are communicated of their use in their child’s class. In the case of restorative conferences, parents are always informed before they take place.

HABITS OF THE MIND

In elementary, we are interested in teaching students how to act when they don't know an answer to a new conflict that they encounter in life. Habits of Mind provide a pattern of intellectual behaviors that intelligent people choose when they are confronted with problems the resolutions to which are not immediately apparent. Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick have identified 16 habits that we will be reinforcing in school: persisting; managing impulsivity; listening with understanding and empathy; thinking flexibly; thinking about thinking (metacognition); striving for accuracy; questioning and posing problems; applying past knowledge; thinking and communicating with clarity and precision; gathering data through all senses; creating, imagining, innovating; responding with wonderment and awe, taking responsible risks, finding humor, thinking interdependently, remaining open to continuous learning.
CHARACTER TRAITS
In high school, students come to understand that the character is manifested in our attitude, our way of thinking, speaking and acting. The decisions we take are carried out according to the values, ethics and morals in which we believe. Character defines, builds, or destroys our reputation. The advantage of developing a positive character is that, while making us a better person we will be contributing to make the world a better place. In middle school students receive character formation lessons once a week. Each grade is assigned a specific trait (respect, solidarity, responsibility, justice, citizenship and reliability) as a positive trait to reflect upon throughout the entire semester.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES
Restorative practices originate in the concept of restorative justice, whose objective is to repair the harm that took place and mend relationships among people, instead of only punishing the offender. One of its main principles is that students respond better when authority figures do things with them, and not for or against them.

The main objective of applying restorative practices in Blue Valley is to contribute in repairing or building relationships and to strengthen the sense of community.

Implementation of restorative practices in Blue Valley can take the following forms:
5. Circles to facilitate expression of feelings, to obtain information about a situation and strengthen bonds among students.
6. Academic circles (sequential), so that students can give their opinion about an academic topic, or to find out how much they know before introducing it.
7. Small impromptu conference, used to solve conflicts at the precise moment they occur.
8. Restorative conference, the most formal of all, requires planning and preparation of the participants. It is used to address specific
incidents in which there is a clear offender/s and victim/s. Its goal is to restore the relationship and repair the harm.

Circles are part of daily life at Blue Valley. Depending on the severity of the situation, it is up to the guidance counselors to decide if parents are communicated of their use in their child’s class. In the case of restorative conferences, parents are always informed before they take place.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

From preparatory through third grade students spend, during the school day, three hours a semester on one fundraising project for elementary school’s general undertaking. In fourth and fifth grade they also have a three-hour visit after school (Wednesday or Saturday) for direct contact with the community they are serving.

In secondary, each class has one outing per semester, for community service that also contributes to team-building purposes. High school students need to account for 100 community service hours as graduation requirement (150 for IB Diploma, in combination with action and creativity). Fund raising activities are a constant endeavor.

DARE

(Drug Abuse Resistance Education)

Every other year, students in fifth grade benefit from this program, which centers on drug abuse prevention, the resistance to peer pressure, and living a violence-free life. It consists of a one-hour officer-led classroom lesson per week, during one entire semester.

PECES (effective parents with systematic training)

To respond to the need implicit in the complaint that "no one teaches us how to be parents!", Blue Valley offers, upon demand, a nine-session course, based on the theories of Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay with these themes:

• To understand what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in children.
• To understand how children use their emotions to get the attention of their parents ("good" dads and moms).
• Stimulation.
• Communication.
• How to explore alternatives and communicate their ideas and feelings to the children.
• A method for developing responsibility.
• Decision that parents should take.
• Family.
• To develop confidence in ourselves and learn how to use our potential.

**VYDA**
(Valores y desarrollo de autoestima. Values and development of self-esteem)

The VYDA program, based on the same philosophy as PECES, is designed to promote values essential for adequate social interaction, as well as increasing the student’s potential for making choices. It consists of eleven forty-five minute lessons distributed throughout the entire school year. Alternating with Peers Together lessons, the counselors will implement the program during school hours with help by chosen parents who have received the training.
ABSENCES

REGULATIONS TO JUSTIFY ABSENCES

(See Addendum: Request for justification of absences)

Appointments

We have cancelled Wednesday afternoon lessons so that students can set up doctors’ appointments and other necessary errands at that time. They should not request leaves as justified absences at other times. We demand a real justification before giving an absence a justified absence status. A simple excuse from a parent will allow the student to leave, but the absence will be deemed unjustified: one (1) in all graded work. Teachers will give a simple pop quiz on such occasions to allow a good mark for the people present. We discourage calculated absences because they discourage conscientious students. The common good should prevail over individual needs.

During the day

If a student needs to leave school during the school day, parents are required to send a note to the administration indicating the date and time, description of the emergency, and with whom the student will leave. The corresponding secretary will register the departure in PowerSchool and hand the student a slip to be signed by the person authorizing the dismissal. It must be presented to the security guard at the gate before leaving the school grounds. The student is responsible for making up any work missed due to his absence.

When the school calls parents to pick up a student, he will show up at the front desk, and will wait there for his parents. No student should ever leave the school without permission.

On account of illness

A sick student should not attend lessons. These are justified absences when a doctor legally certifies the illness. Student Services might need to ratify the justification with the respective professional. Sickness is considered an unjustified absence if a valid excuse is not submitted within three working days or if it does not offer real justification. We accept parental excuses for an occasional absence but for repetitive absences Student Services might require a doctor’s excuse.

For trips or cultural events

The calendar very rarely changes during the school year. Parents should consult it when planning trips; otherwise, they need to assume full responsibility for their child’s catch-up work. Blue Valley justifies absences due to trips (which may be very formative), but they must not involve more work for the teachers. Please do not ask them for lesson plans or tests in advance.

Undeniably, teachers’ plans are disrupted when students leave before the end of the school day or for whole days, especially if several in one class do it (and we need to remember that everything we do is also permissible for the rest to do).
However, Blue Valley justifies inevitable absences just as emphatically as it discourages avoidable ones. Blue Valley encourages our students to participate in extra-curricular activities such as special courses, sports, cultural events, or educational trips. But we accept no responsibility for catching up these students. When planning trips, parents should consult the calendar included in this manual to take them during vacation periods. If at all not possible, in order not to have the leave constitute more work for the teachers, the parents agree to the following terms:

a. Permission will be granted after reviewing the completed form included in the Addendum (an extra copy may be requested at the front desk), which must be submitted at least a week in advance.

b. Tests missed will be taken when the student returns, but their grade will be based on a 90% and not on 100% (we may consider some exceptions when the student is representing the school or the country.)

c. In “Edmodo” (social educational platform p 44), parents will find the pacing for the subjects’ cognitive objectives (an approximation of the content that will be missed) and, a posteriori, the weekly plans for actual work missed. Please refrain from taking the teachers’ time to give further explanation due to the trip. Teachers should also not be required to take their planning time to explain to the student or the parent the work missed for being on vacation during school time.

d. Upon returning, the student will meet with the counselor to schedule make up tests or assignments missed necessary to catch up. Parents will then proceed to help the student work at it at home.

**EXCUSES FROM P.E. OR ART LESSONS**

Parents must consider, when advising their children on foregoing our regular lessons, that outside activities only accomplish part of our objectives (p 38). Students qualify to be excused from physical education or art lessons under the following conditions:

1. They are training for an international sports competition in which they will represent Costa Rica, presenting certification of the previous one attended (if applicable) and the official invitation for the future one.
2. They are attending rigorous extramural art lessons (symphony, dance academies).
3. Every month, they must submit to Blue Valley’s P.E. instructor or music or art teacher, an attendance log sign by their extramural instructor. They must not expect Blue Valley’s teacher to request it: it is the student’s duty, not the teacher’s, to contribute to attendance control by submitting it for our records.
4. They must make optimal use of the periods that would have been assigned to P. E. or music or art lessons. They must agree to report to the library and work there consistently without supervision. In case of high school, they can also take other elective courses.
5. Upon returning from the international competition, they must present certification of their attendance, which should include the dates they were on duty. Some of those hours can count as IB CAS hours.
ADMISSION POLICY

When applying for student admission, the parents must fill in an application, present birth certificate, passport photocopy, two recent photographs, updated vaccination certification, transcript from the last two years’ grades, and behavior reference and account clearance report from the previous school. For high school, transcripts from foreign countries must be certified by the respective Costa Rican consulate because those grades will be included in the averages requested by the “Ministerio de Educación Pública” (MEP) to qualify for government’s tests leading to the bachillerato nacional.

Students with siblings in the school have priority, but must also meet the requirements for all applicants. Outside parents are encouraged to visit the school and schedule an appointment with the admissions department.

The admissions committee evaluates the application once these requirements are observed and uses these criteria to screen student applicants:

Montessori Preschool: To enroll, children must be between three and a half and five years old. Instead of taking a test, students visit the school a couple of hours so that the teachers take note of their actions as they see them participate in the normal activities of the environment. They assign points to different skills, from fine and gross motor to memory and social skills and set the score that will define the cut to fill the quota for new students. At this age, no evidence can indicate the level of maturity and much less the intellectual quotient, but at least the admission is based on the performance of the child and not in other factors.

For preparatory (U.S. kindergarten level, five and a half years to six and a half years): The candidates take a skills evaluation test similar to the traditional ABC, but quite improved to meet our needs. Readiness is evaluated against the standards of future peers who have attended our preschool and also took the test. When appropriate, the candidate is invited to attend regular lessons for a maximum of three days. We observe if he or she seems able to perform comfortably within the school’s environment and demands. The student’s opinion weighs heavily and ensures a decision in his best interest.

For grade school and above: To make sure we respond to their needs, an interview with the parents initiates the admission process. If parents find our vision agreeable, we jointly discuss the candidate’s skills and previous experience to define if she has a chance of performing successfully at Blue Valley, before building in the student any hope for admission. If such is the case, we start what we informally call “the three hundred points analysis.” We inform parents and candidate that we expect three aspects of difficulty in the transition to Blue Valley and we assign up to one hundred points of difficulty to each. A brief description of the three aspects follows:
a.1. Difference in school programs (without implying one is better than the next). We mostly focus on Spanish and English grammar and writing skills and, especially, on math. In high school, science requisites are also an important factor.

b. 1. Level of English, which is the language of instruction at Blue Valley. It includes oral and written expression besides reading comprehension.

c. 1. Level of learning ability or difficulty of the student.

a. 2. Our knowledge of the schools in Costa Rica helps. Performance in placement tests determine placement. Mathematics is the main difference, since our programs are quite demanding. Grammar in both English and Spanish is another area of difficulty.

b 2. b. 2. Determined by an interview with the student in English as well as an essay and a written reading comprehension test.

c. 2. Determined by grades in previous schools, participation in programs for talented students, or psycho-pedagogic reports.

We add up the points of difficulty for each aspect, which allows a difficulty in one area to be cancelled by a strength in the next, e.g. a brilliant student can be expected to catch up with the expected level of English, especially in the lower grades. A student with too many handicaps should not be exposed to a frustrating situation. Our experience shows that average students can handle up to one hundred compound points of difficulty and a studious student with lots of parental support can manage up to one hundred and fifty points of difficulty. Over that, it would be unfair to expose the student to a situation beyond her possibilities.

We then consult behavior statements from previous schools and, in a joint session with administration, guidance, and involved teachers make the final decision to accept the student or to recommend that the parents visit other schools.

When parents decide on enrollment, they must pay an admission fee. Once enrolled, the student belongs to Blue Valley School student body, and, thus, receives all the benefits it implies. At this time, the semester fee must be paid. It can be distributed into a maximum of six monthly installments (in which case fees are paid twelve months a year) but if the student leaves before the end of the semester, the balance of the semester fee must be paid in full.
COMMUNICATION

Reception at the front desk

Parents are always welcome to visit the school. When doing so, they should park in the visitors’ parking and even in the bus boarding area (see Traffic Safety p 21) provided it is not within one hour of the entrance and dismissal times. They should immediately go to reception (the front office at the library’s main entrance), where the receptionist will answer their immediate questions and help make contact with the appropriate person. They then receive a visitors’ badge to wear at all times during their visit. Please refrain from entering a classroom in an unannounced way.

“BVS Connect!” Tuesday’s Bulletin

Parents should keep in mind that we issue Connect a newsletter EVERY TUESDAY, so that members of our community, students, parents and teachers, learn about our events and read our announcements. It is sent by e-mail in English and Spanish, and is also updated on our webpage, unless parents requested it by fax or in print (to be sent with the student parents designate.) Our responsibility is to publish it (the bulletin); it is the parents’ responsibility to read it. In it we state important information that we assume parents have read once we have issued the newsletter. The printed version will be in English but parents can request it in Spanish. The electronic version comes out in both languages and includes documents sent as attachments. The digital versions avoid paper waste and are our most efficient means of communication.

School Ambassadors, Delegates, and Volunteers

The BVS Ambassador team is formed with names suggested by teachers of mothers or fathers who share our vision and appreciate our mission and express enthusiasm for contributing to broadening our horizons. A maximum of eight parents are assigned as ambassadors. They will work with class, delegates, and volunteers for special projects. The ambassadors define the group’s organization (board of directors, committees, activities) and act as liaisons with the school’s administration. The administration gets involved in the yearly designations.

We expect each class or level to elect one parent as their delegate to facilitate expedite communications between the school and our families. Those who resign should be replaced by the respective parents to keep open the line of communication.

The fundamental role of the ambassadors is to increase productive communication and promote a positive school image. At the same time, ambassadors assume specific projects with goals and management appraised collaboratively with the administration through the liaisons.

Parents may contact the ambassadors at ambassadors@bluevalley.ed.cr

E-mail addresses and FAX

Please update in the questionnaire in the Addendum the e-mail address if different from the one on the registration sheet and include both parents’ addresses if they do not share the same residence.

Parents can use mail communication@bluevalley.ed.cr @bluevalley.ed.cr or patricia.gallardo@bluevalley.ed.cr and Fax 2215 - 2205 as efficient channels to address their concerns or requirements to the administration.
“Push & Pull” Communication

For our communication with parents and have classified two types of messages:

1. For the “push and pull” messages, where we issue notifications and welcome parents’ feedback or respond to their inquiries, we are receiving expert advice on how to synchronize all our present paths into one efficient system. In the meantime, we will continue as present: sending our bulletin by email and using Facebook, Weebly, and Edmodo for those “push and pull” messages.

2. “Push” messages: massive communication messages to all parents (such as “No school tomorrow because of the earthquake” or to specific groups for related issues: “The game against St. Jude, soccer, 2006-7 boys varsity, May 2nd, ACEP, has been cancelled”) we are implementing a “push” system using a WhatsApp application that we expect to be working in two weeks. For this purpose, we need a valid cell-phone number for every BVS parent. Every parent must add this number to their contact list:

   89 89 89 08

The system will allow sending the message only to the parents who need to receive it. Numbers will be kept private because the system does not allow parents to address one another or to respond.

PowerSchool

PowerSchool is the digital educational platform that students and parents can access through the Internet (even on different electronic devices provided special apps are downloaded) for general and specific information on school activities.

Through the PowerTeacher module, teachers periodically enter their grades for students from fourth grade and above. Their parents can revise them provided they have an account requested from barney.ross@bluevalley.ed.cr

Grades for younger children (through third grade) are not accessible because evaluations are qualitative, entered in letter grading, and it may cause inconsistencies in the averages.

Weebly and Edmodo (see Technology p 45).

Elementary school uses Weebly, an educational platform that allows teamwork and interaction among parents, students, and teachers. General information such as events, assignments, videos, and calendars are routinely posted there. Students and parents should frequently consult Weebly (for which they receive an access code) to be properly informed about what is going on in the class.

In secondary school, Edmodo connects students, teachers, parents, and administrators in a secure environment to share content and utilize applications for the students’ benefit, personalizing their learning. To access the platform, type bvs.edmodo.com. For more information, go to http://help.edmodo.com/
**Mobile Telephones**

Cell phones are allowed within the institution and students can use them in the classroom as learning devices exclusively with the permission of the teacher. For personal issues, they can only use them before or after lessons or during breaks (recess, lunch, or class changes). It is absolutely forbidden to keep them active during the lessons and, if seen or heard, they are withdrawn immediately to return them after fourteen days. The cell phone is also retrieved if a student requests permission to leave class (for example to go to the bathroom) to make or receive personal calls during the lesson.

**Telephones**

When requested, we provide parents with the list of telephone numbers for their child’s peers. It is convenient, for instance, to invite over the telephone when giving a party that only selected members of the class will attend (to avoid hurting those who are not invited). Parents who wish to keep their telephone private, please let us know so in the data base form in the Addendum.

Only for emergencies will the students be able to use the school’s phone, either for incoming or outgoing calls, paying $200 unless they are calling at the school’s request.

**WE NEED AN EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER, DIFFERENT FROM THE HOME PHONE**

**Messages**

Parents must plan ahead to notify a change in routine through a written note that the student submits upon arrival in the morning. If parents have an unavoidable, justified emergency message for the student, they should call before noon. In elementary, the secretary needs to leave her desk to notify the student and may not be able to do it on time. In secondary, the message is written on the board outside guidance and the student is likely not to see it, especially if late in the afternoon. Messages like “Tell him not to take the bus because I will be picking him up” can be avoided by being at school before the student takes the bus.

**Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parents and students may request a conference with the professor, guidance counselor or principal whenever they feel the need. Please avoid informally addressing teachers on school matters in hallways, parking lot, or outside the campus. Conferences requested by parents or teachers must be scheduled through the office: reception in elementary (ext 12501) or student services in secondary (ext 106). Arrangements for a conference will be made as quickly as possible without disrupting the instructional day.

**Ads and announcements**

We are not allowed to place ads or announcements from outsiders at Blue Valley. We display brochures that might be of interest to our families at the front desk. When our families want to transmit information to the whole school community, all announcements and information must be approved by the administration.
UNIFORMS

All students must wear the regulation uniform (shirts, shorts, pants*, and skirts or culottes) sold at school, through ASEBVS (employees association). Parents must order next year’s uniforms in November, to pick them up before the start of the spring semester. ASEBVS will have a limited supply of items (availability not guaranteed) for those who didn’t place their orders on time the previous year. During the school year, they will have some items for replacement purposes. We emphasize the importance of wearing regulation uniform (for secondary students, pants of their choice are allowed but they must be the exact color of the ones we have in ASEBVS). Only solid navy blue sweaters or jackets are allowed with the regulation uniform.

*In secondary school, students may wear pants of their choice similar in shape and color to the ones sold at school (for example, not as different as cargo pants.)

REGULATION UNIFORM

In Montessori

Boys and girls always wear blue short pants and a white polo shirt. Everyone must bring, for emergencies, an extra change of clothes in a bag labeled with the child’s name. Since the clothes will probably remain in school the whole year and the child will outgrow them, we recommend sending items the child seldom wears.

In elementary

Through fifth grade: white polo shirt with embroidered school emblem, blue shorts or long pants and blue culottes for girls, blue socks, solid black shoes, moccasins or black tennis shoes (white accents are accepted). Students who belong to a sports club can wear their sports uniform all day when they have training or games after school.

In secondary

White polo shirt with embroidered emblem, khaki pants or khaki bermuda shorts, white socks, and solid black or solid white shoes. Students in eleventh grade design and use their distinctive polo shirt.

Student Services will perform random checks, and students not wearing regulation uniform will wait with the behavior counselor for someone at home to bring it.

Physical Education days

Through second grade, students wear their regular uniform for P.E.: polo shirt, blue shorts, and tennis shoes. Third, fourth and fifth grade students wear a special P.E. uniform, white t-shirt with the school emblem, blue shorts, white or black sport socks and black tennis shoes. In secondary, a special white t-shirt with the school emblem is permanently required but we allow students to wear navy blue shorts of their choice provided they have no design (except perhaps a white trim.) Girls may wear blue shorts, blue sweat-pants, or blue lycras to the waist sold at Blue Valley. We do not allow sweat pants or lycras bought elsewhere because the low cut at the waist does not allow properly executing the required exercises. Students lose the right to choose their own shorts and have to buy the school’s shorts when they don’t heed the solid navy blue requirement. Students who have P.E. on free dress Fridays must bring full P.E. uniform and tennis shoes to change into before class. Points will be deducted from the P.E. grade of students
who do not comply with the uniform regulations. Recurrences will be reported to the respective counselors and entered in the discipline process.

**Students lacking a written justification for repeatedly failing to wear full regulation uniform will be requested to return home.**

**OUTGROWN UNIFORMS**

Parents may donate uniforms in good condition. We will keep some at school for emergencies and send the rest to public institutions.

**FREE DRESS**

Free dress means that students omit wearing uniform but wear clothing appropriate for school. Free dress is automatic for Montessori and preparatory students every other Friday. In grade school, students who have earned the right to wear free dress because they have promptly turned in all their assignments are notified the day before by a note sent home. In secondary, free dress is not related to homework (except in consuetudinary offenders who lose the right for the whole semester). In middle school students can wear free dress every other Friday; in high school every Friday.

We emphasize the use of clothes which may be casual but not informal: no sandals, lycra material, shorts, faded or torn jeans, low rise jeans or pants, old T-shirts, either faded or displaying inappropriate messages. Definitely avoid clothes that would normally be worn at the beach, such as spaghetti-strap T-shirts, or those that expose a bare midriff, or any sort of attire which may distract others: styles that may create a classroom disturbance are not allowed.

A student wearing free dress to which he was not entitled will be warned that he has to wear uniform the following Friday and will have to call home to ask to bring the uniform if she forgets. Students fail to comply with these regulations will lose the right for free dress for the semester.

**DRESS CODE**

- Jewelry and accessories worn by students must be discreet, not flashy. Boys may not wear earrings. Piercings are not allowed.
- Caps are allowed during recess and physical education class. The teacher will retrieve a cap worn at other times and return it the following Friday.
- In elementary boys’ hair must not touch the shirt’s collar.
- In secondary, boys may opt for longer than conventional hair length (falling on the shirt’s collar), but it must be kept groomed and neatly worn permanently in a ponytail fashion. A boy, who does not comply with these requirements, will be asked not to return to school until the hair has been cut not to touch the shirt collar.
- Non-compliance with these regulations will be considered a minor infraction, which becomes serious if it is repetitive.
VALUABLE ITEMS AND TOYS

Students are not allowed to wear or bring valuable things to school: intelligent watches, jewelry, toys, collections, iPods, or any electronic device. The students tend to misplace them and the teachers are asked to spend valuable teaching time looking for them all over the school. Blue Valley is not responsible for lost items. Students assume full responsibility for their mobile phones, iPads, and laptops. Valuable items required for specific assignments should be kept at the office for the remainder of the day. Clothing and shoes should be kept in a locked locker.

Montessori students may only bring toys to school for show and tell periods established in their schedules (only on Fridays). Older students may bring selected toys as long as they assume full responsibility for them.

USE AND CARE OF THE IPADS

If a student neglects the iPad or breaks the policies he accepted:

First step: The student cannot take the device home for two days. It checks it out in Student Services at the beginning of the school day and returns in the evening, taking an hour or more after school to do tasks that require the iPad to complete them.

Second step: A one-week suspension of iPad privileges.

Third step: A two-week suspension of iPad privileges.

If the situation escalates, director and counselors will seek the right solution.

SKATEBOARDS ET AL IN ELEMENTARY

Many children enjoy their skateboards, ripsticks, scooters and such. They exercise, take the sun, socialize, and become accustomed to obeying traffic laws. The off-limits areas and hours are:

a. The corridors are off limits for wheeled vehicles.
b. Students should not skate in the preschool area (observe ASEBVS store as the limit).
c. Secondary school is also off-limits.
d. Do not take the vehicles to the class; leave them instead in the respective parking wall.
e. Do not use them before 8:00 am or after 3:00 pm, when pedestrians have the right of way.

Parents decide if they require their children to wear a helmet while skating or if they do not consider this essential. It is the responsibility of the children to comply with their parents’ instructions.
HEALTH

FOOD

CAFETERIA

Starting in preparatory, students can buy food in the cafeteria with cash or money previously deposited in their accounts by their parents.

The cafeteria opens from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm for those who remain in activities after school. During breaks, the cafeteria offers food and beverages for snack but preparatory through fifth grade cannot buy sodas or junk food. For lunch (forty-five minutes in elementary and forty minutes in high school), they can choose a complete meal as a menu of the day or alternate choices. Parents receive the week’s menu in the school’s Tuesday Bulletin or can see it as early as Sunday night in the cafeteria’s Facebook page.

Snack

Preschool children don’t bring snack (except those who have special dietary needs) because they receive it daily from the school. Montessori children go home for lunch, but on Wednesdays, when their school day ends at 12:45, they must bring a light lunch that they take at 12:00 o’clock to help them through the wait. First through fifth grade students may bring their own snack or buy it at the cafeteria but will not be able to buy sodas or “junk food”.

Lunch

Elementary students have a forty-five minute break for lunch; secondary’s is forty minutes. They can buy lunch at the cafeteria; bring a cold lunch or one to heat up in the microwaves. If they bring this to the cafeteria during snack, the assistant will have it ready for them when they come out to lunch. If not, they will have to wait their turn. To buy food at the cafeteria, students may use cash or debit from their pre-paid account. Parents may ask for weekly or monthly contracts in the cafeteria. Plates and silverware may not leave the cafeteria, students using them can only eat there. Students who have brought their lunch from home can eat in the immediate outside area; all other areas are off limits.

BAKE SALES

Students from preparatory through high school are allowed to buy in bake sales. These are organized by students to raise funds for a specific event. They must request permission at Student Services, who will grant it according to the agreement with the cafeteria. Only baked goods are allowed: no sodas, candy or pre-packed food.
PREVENTION, AILMENTS, ILLNESSES, AND ACCIDENTS

Vaccination Cards

The “Ministerio de Educación Pública,”, according to law # DM-9549-00, June 22nd, 2000, requires that parents submit a photocopy of their children’s vaccination cards upon enrolling in a school. If we have not received one for your child, please send a copy for our files as soon as possible. Otherwise, we will have no way of keeping the government’s delegates from giving your child the shots required by the government’s programs for all children in Costa Rica. They visit the school regularly.

Hearing and Sight Tests

Every student in preparatory through second grade must have a hearing test (audiometry) and a sight test from an accredited specialist in our files. Students submit it when entering preparatory and newcomers when they enter a higher level.

A selected clinic periodically tests the students at school, when parents request this alternative. The description of the tests, reports, and recommendations, along with the Authorization Slip may be found at the front desk. Parents may, of course, choose to send an audiometry and optometry by their own doctor.

MINOR AILMENTS

Students sometimes come to the office for help with minor ailments. The school tries to avoid giving medication to a child but, since they turn to us when they are uncomfortable, we try to help them in the following way:

a. On our pediatrician's advice, we give them acetaminophen for pain or a slight fever. For insect bites and minor cuts, we wash the cut with soap and water and apply a pain reliever, antiseptic, and antipruritic spray. Aside from that, we call the parents.

b. Many parents approve and request homeopathy for their children. Homeopathy is, as we understand, a natural medicine diluted to infinitesimal proportions and seems to work well with children.

c. The school will not give medication to a child without signed permission, so please call the front desk to indicate how you would like us to care for your child with the medicine you send. At times, we have not been able to reach the parents and have no instructions upon which to act.

WE NEED YOUR EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER

ILLNESS AND ACCIDENTS

If students have a chronic illness (e.g. asthma), a frequent affection (e.g. nose bleeding) or are somewhat ill (e.g. runny nose) but can still come to school, parents should send whatever medicine they might need and indicate the dose that we should administer.

We insist on reaching parents or an emergency alternative for children who seem truly sick. Therefore, we need to make sure we have an emergency telephone number different from the home’s phone number we already have. Parents should have indicated, for the database, who is going to answer our emergency call when we don’t get an answer at home.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND A SICK CHILD TO SCHOOL
**Allergies**

We have some children with an acute reaction to peanuts, very serious symptoms even through indirect contact. In their benefit, we are requesting parents not to include peanuts, peanut butter, and such in the students’ lunchboxes.

**Accidents**

Blue Valley has a contract with “Emergencias Médicas,” a company that provides service for health emergencies that happen within the school grounds. A doctor, paramedic or ambulance promptly answers our calls.

**Accident Insurance**

All BVS students are covered by an accident policy. Blue Valley pays this insurance with a basic coverage of $1,000,000 for accidents happening any time, twenty-four hours a day and 365 days a year. Parents interested in increasing the insurance coverage for their children should request the upgrade and pay the difference during the first week of school in the respective semester (according to the date of enrollment.) Contact Lorena Jiménez at 22 15-22 04 x114 or 83 81 45 86 to request an increase in benefits. Those not responding will automatically be assigned to the basic coverage policy.

For new students, the policy will cover them only after the second week of school, when the list of beneficiaries has been updated to include incoming students at the insurance company.

When the accident happens outside our facilities, parents must call the Seguro del Magisterio’s "call center", 22-96-94-71, to report that they are going to the hospital of their choice. The company will call the hospital to alert them of the arrival and endorse the expense. Emergency room service and treatment will be fully covered (100%) by the policy. If the case requires a specialist, the father or mother must pay the doctor and request him or her to in situ help fill out a form provided by the hospital. They must add it to receipts of hospital, medicines, and physician fees and bring everything in an envelop to school. We will present the papers to the insurance company that will reimburse 95% of the fees or respective coverage for expenses, permanent disability, or death. Insurance starts when the final list of student names is sent, in February or August depending on date of entry.

**EARTHQUAKES AND ASH EMERGENCY**

We drill periodically to evacuate the buildings in emergencies. The students in respective classrooms know how they should leave and, where to go. The end destination differs if it’s an ash emergency. On account of a tremor, the students meet in open air spaces, grouped for expedient dismissal to their parents. On account of ashes falling or air contamination, the students meet, identically grouped, in specified enclosed quarters. These practices, recommended by experts, also apply to fire emergencies. Administrators are in charge of checking common areas like bathrooms.

**In an emergency**

A. Obviously, parents can come for their children after any earthquake or heavy ash fall.
After a major earthquake (we judge by the intensity: possibly VI in Mercalli’s Scale, which means objects fall from shelves, pictures fall from the walls, windows may break):

1. The Principals will stay at school until the last child has gone home with parents or an authorized person.

2. No child will be placed on a bus after a major earthquake; THE BUSES WILL NOT RUN.

Communication

A. We will immediately send a message to all parents through our official “Push” system, 89 89 89 08 with the status at school and instructions to follow. E.g. Please come for your children.

B. We also have another communication system. After any earthquake, tune in to Radio Dos 99.5 FM for news from Blue Valley. Mr. Rolando Alfaro (alumni parent) has kindly offered the service for us to reach the parents and the parents to reach us.
   a. Since after an earthquake telephone lines are quickly overloaded (or go down), we will try to give a brief statement through Twitter and get one call in to Radio Dos. If our line is down, someone will take the message to the station. We can expect it will take some time before the message is out (messenger can be delayed or the emergency generators’ time to warm up). We will inform parents of our situation, if lessons will be resumed or if we want all parents to come for their children.
   b. For parents who have an urgent message for us, we have been allowed to use Radio Dos’s private phones: 283-4849, 224-7272 that do not go through the switch board (since it fails when the power fails). We will have a portable radio on.

A strategy

Parents should plan their own strategy for picking up their children, e.g. is it the father or the mother; a relative or friend who lives closer to the school; another parent in charge of several children? Please make sure your children are very sure about what you expect.

Injuries

Should anybody be injured, we will NOT take the person to the hospital without the family’s consent. We request doctor-parents to volunteer to come to the school to provide first aid following an earthquake.

Not during school hours

If an earthquake happens when the students are at home, please tune in to Radio Dos 99.5 FM to hear if lessons have been suspended or if the buses are doing regular routes. We will also go through the social networks.
OTHER SERVICES

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES
Through fifth grade, students are provided with textbooks and supplies such as workbooks, notebooks, pencils, pen, erasers, binders, paper, etc., but must bring a pencil case and their own pilots and trapper-keeper if they do not want to use the school-provided binder. Middle and high school students get a list of supplies to acquire and bring on the first day of school. It also includes literature books sold in Costa Rica and textbooks for government’s programs. These can also be bought at school, thorough ASEBVS outlet. They have packets prepared by levels.

Students are responsible for safekeeping their books and supplies. Parents are asked to cover the textbooks their children receive with a clear, strong plastic paper (NO CONTACT PAPER, PLEASE). Blue Valley does not require a textbook deposit, but students who lose or damage a book during the school year must pay courier charges besides the replacement fee. If missing at the end of the semester, the student will only pay the replacement price. Lost or damaged library books are also charged.

When it is evident that a student does not take care of his books, because they are repeatedly lost or show damage, the following semester he will be charged a rental fee.

For digital novels, teachers will tell the students which titles and editions to buy for their courses and where to buy them through the Internet. For paperbacks, the students may rent them from the school or buy them on their own.

The teachers indicate applications that they require for their course, usually free download.

Printing texts at school
Students must print their homework or papers at home. In exceptional cases, students may request printouts at ASEBVS but can’t expect immediate service. We discourage abuse.

STUDENT ID
Our students from preparatory grade and up have to obtain their ID card at school for a fee paid in advance. It is issued every two years but needs to be replaced if lost. It provides identification and allows to receive discounts at the movies, museums, and cultural events. The Ministry of Education now requires eleventh grade students to present a “cédula de menores” (the official ID card) or passport for international students when taking government’s exams. Service is available at the start of each semester for newcomers and for replacing lost IDs.

LOCKERS
At the beginning of the school year, secondary students receive a locker that must be kept locked to protect personal belongings. Each student is responsible for bringing a lock. We will charge a fine for forcing the lock when they forget the key and the price of fixing any damage to their assigned locker. Students are also responsible for neatness in their lockers and can expect periodic locker inspection. The school is not responsible for personal belongings left in an open locker. At the end of the semester, students must clean up their lockers. For safety and hygienic reasons, lockers must remain open during vacation.
EXTENSIONS TO THE SCHOOL DAY

Various activities take place before school (6:00 am) and after school, ending at 4:00 or 4:30 pm.

No buses run at these hours: students must organize their return home.

Academic sessions

Each teacher has their respective consulting schedule one hour after school one day a week. It is not individual tutoring. It is an opportunity to evacuate the students’ doubts on an specific point that they have not understood during the lesson of the week.

Academic activities such as training for the Olympics, Model United Nations or make up lessons can be assigned after school.

Clubs and varsity teams

P. E. teachers inform the students which sport they will offer at no cost considering the students’ requests. Clubs prepare students for interschool tournaments. Tryouts are held twice a year for students to qualify for the varsity teams that will represent the school at official competitions. The clubs train after school and have friendly games with other schools. School varsity teams train before and after school. Membership on a varsity team may be suspended due to low grades or disciplinary infractions.

Afterschool lessons

From 3:00 to 4:00 pm, optional after school classes (for a fee established by the instructor) are also available (e.g. chess, French, embroidery, cooking, religion, sports, juggling etc.). The instructors are in charge of the students’ supervision and safety during these lessons.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Blue Valley promotes international experiences for our students. Traditional ones are our student exchange with Charlotte Country Day School in North Carolina and the Model United Nations program in Harvard University during our long vacation. Our students participate in a variety of programs that we endorse:

• CISV Summer Camps.
• International sports camps and tournaments
• Student Exchange with the American Field Service.
• Summer courses for seniors at US universities.

FUND RAISING

Fund raising is only authorized for educational or charitable purposes. Both must have the principal's approval prior to initiating the actual fund raising.

PARTIES

We do not allow birthday parties at school. For their children’s birthday, parents can bring a cake to share with the class during snack or lunch, but please do not bring candy or soda pop. In Montessori, children have a special celebration ritual for their birthday. Teachers will contact their mothers to tell them about it. Parties planned by the students, e.g. a farewell event for a classmate’s departure, should not take place during school hours.
BUS CONTRACTS

Parents may contract bus service for the students from routes recommended by the school. There are bus routes at 8:00 am and 3:00 pm (12:45 pm on Wednesdays) to most suburbs in San José. According to demand, we have opened door-to-door service at 12:00 pm to some areas for Montessori children.

Travao S.A., a company founded by our drivers (who have earned our trust through years of service to Blue Valley) is now in charge of transportation of students and teachers. General information may be found in travao.s.a@gmail.com. Information about contracts and payments is published every semester in Tuesday’s Bulletin. Routes are designed with a digital system that allows changes (even during semester) so necessary due to the conformation of our population (frequent address changes). Bus fees, adjusted yearly, are paid in full nine months: February through June and August through November. July and December are paid at half fee. No bus service or fee in January. If a student does not have a contract but occasionally wants to ride the bus, he must bring a written permission and pay a fee directly to the driver, who will accept the student as long as seats are available.

Mrs. Vicky Molina, 2215 2204 ext 123, continues as our intermediary and our bus norms persist.

Students who ride the bus are expected to:
• Wait for the bus at the bus stop. The driver will not honk or wait. A one-minute delay per student implies arriving at school fifteen minutes later.
• Obey all instructions given by any adult riding the bus.
• Occupy the seats assigned by the driver, wearing the seat belt, refraining from standing.
• Keep hands, arms, and heads inside.
• Refrain from eating or drinking inside the bus.
• Avoid littering the bus and the streets.
• Avoid calling out to pedestrians.
• Have somebody waiting for them (especially young children) at the bus stop on the return trip. Otherwise, the bus driver will continue with the route and bring the child back to school to call the parents.
• Bring a written permission when not riding the bus or taking a different one.
• Pay the bus fee to the driver before the fifth day of the month. On the sixth, the bus will skip the bus stop of students who have not paid the fee.

The school administration anticipates behavior that is not disruptive to the welfare and safety of others. If a student's behavior is contrary to the expectations above, the driver will report it to the counselor and the student will receive a discipline referral (see routines) and might even be forbidden from riding the bus, according to the seriousness of the offense. The parents would then be responsible for providing transportation.

Secondary school students who ride the bus board the buses directly and occupy assigned or back seats. Preparatory students remain in class until they are picked up for the bus, upon which the teacher takes the rest of the students to the canopy to wait for their parents. First grade students are led by their teachers to the bus platform and board their respective buses immediately. Buses signal departure with a honk two minutes before closing the doors to depart at 3:10 pm (at 12:55 pm on Wednesday). Students who miss the bus go to the office to call their parents, who must come to pick them up.
SCHOOL PAYMENTS

A. An entrance fee per student is valid for the student's school life but is **non-transferable** and **non-refundable**. From Montessori through ninth grade, the fee is $1700, for tenth grade it is $1350, and for eleventh grade, $850. Checks should be made payable to Colegio del Valle S.A.

B. Blue Valley does not charge a yearly matriculation fee. As commitment for enrollment, an **advance** on the following January fee, is collected in October to ensure space for next semester.

C. Fees are usually adjusted for the following semester.

D. Tuition is paid in semester fees (although it may be distributed in up to six months). Parents who pay the semester in advance during the first month obtain a discount.

E. Parents who choose to pay the fee in monthly payments will:
   1. Pay monthly fees in January and July even though there is no school.
   2. Pay within the first two weeks of the month.
   3. Pay a fine if fee is not canceled by the 15th of the month.
   4. If at the beginning of the next month a bill is overdue, it must be paid so that the student can attend lessons instead of doing his work in the office.
   5. If at the start of the next semester there still is an overdue bill, it must be paid immediately so that the student can initiate the term.
   6. Lose the prerogative to pay in monthly installments and be requested to pay the following semester’s fee in advance if they are consistently late paying their monthly installments.
   7. If a student withdraws before the end of the semester, pending months must be paid, since it is a semester contract.

F. We have alternatives for monthly installments. For security reasons, we do not receive monthly payments at school. Our banks receive payments under the code assigned for each student. They all charge a fee per transaction.
   1. Pay at the Banco Nacional in any of its branches and BN Internet Banking or BN Services.
   2. Pay at any of Scotiabank branches or online.
   3. Those with an account with BAC San José may pay online through “Páguelo Personal”.
   4. BCT has an agreement with Banco Nacional for online payments, so parents can use this bank in spite of BVS not having an account there.

For exceptional payments, please contact mariajose.rodriguez@bluevalley.ed.cr

FINES

An accumulative fine will be charged on bills not paid by the 15th of the month. All banks automatically calculate and charge these fines.

Parents who pay promptly resent when some of our programs are withheld due to cash-flow problems on account of some parents not paying on time. They have requested that the benefit of distributing semester tuition into monthly installments be withdrawn from parents who systematically do not pay by the fifteenth. We would prefer that every parent acknowledges the importance of paying promptly and does so.
ADDENDUM
DATABASE

Name and two last names of student 1: ________________________________  Level ______
Name and two last names of student 2: ________________________________  Level ______
Name and two last names of student 3: ________________________________  Level ______
Name and two last names of student 4: ________________________________  Level ______

Please keep my phones private.  YES _____  NO ______

My children’s photograph should never appear on a public message ______ (Check if so)

Father ___________________ e-mail ___________________ Hobbies ___________________
Profession ___________________ Work place______________________________
Telephones : home ________ office ________ cell ________ fax__________

Mother____________________ e-mail _____________ Hobbies ________________
Telephones : home ________ office ________ cellular ________ fax___________

In case of emergency call:
Person ________________ relationship with student ________________ Telephone: ____________

AUTHORIZATIONS

A. FIELD TRIPS
Write YES or NO in the blank spaces:

___  1. May attend all field trips that are carefully chaperoned.
___  2. May attend all field trips only if we have been especially informed.
___  3. Please indicate if the trip is going to be in private cars.
___  4. We are willing to help chaperone the field trips.

B. MEDICINE
Write an X in the blank space. You may choose more than one.

___ Never give them any type of medicine. Just have them rest until we arrive.
___ They may have acetaminophen.
___ They may take homeopathy for a minor ailment.

Please explain in the back of this page any allergy or restrictions that we should be aware of for
one or more children:

Having read and accepted the Manual’s information, I sign

______________________________  _________________________
name of father, mother or person in charge  signature

Escazú, Costa Rica, September 2016
REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Dear Counselor:

Please excuse my child______________________________________________________
(Name of student)

in ______ Grade, during: (chose “a.” or “b.” accordingly)

a. Periods, missing on (date) _____________ from ________ to _________.

b. Days, from (dates) ___________________ to _____________________.

The reason for the absence is _____________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

We understand that, although the school supports these types of activities, they need to be
controlled. Therefore, we accept the following norms:

1. The permission should not result in more work for the teachers.
2. In elementary, upon returning we will request from homeroom and special subject teachers
   the learning objectives our child needs to catch up with peers.
3. In secondary, we will consult Edmodo to identify the topics taught during the absence.
4. We will not ask the teachers to take their planning time to explain to us (nor to the student
   upon his/her return) the concepts that the student has missed while taking time off for
extracurricular activities during school hours.
5. We will coordinate with a classmate to pick up any worksheets completed during the
   student’s absence.
6. In case of prolonged absence, we will help our child to catch up with the help of
   classmate and/or private tutoring.
7. The tests taken during the absence will be given a grade over 90% instead of 100%,
   depending on the nature of the absence. (When the absence is due to internal, national or
   international sports, tests are graded over 100%. The teacher may decide not to give a
   quiz or test).

Sincerely,

________________________________________
Parent’s signature

Date requested _______________________

Approved by counselor: ____________________

If this request is not approved and the student still leaves, the absence will be unjustified.

For secondary students, please complete the teachers’ notification form in back.