

# VISTA GRANDE HIGH SC

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# STUDENT MANUAL & CODE OF CONDUCT 2024-2025

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Vista Grande High School  
213 Paseo del Cañon East  
Taos, NM 87571  
Phone (575) 758-5100

Jim Smith, School Director  
(575) 758-5100

### **Non-discrimination policy**

Vista Grande High School (VGHS) is a public charter school located in Taos, New Mexico. All students and personnel are afforded the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available at VGHS. VGHS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in the administration of its education program, admission of students, hiring of personnel, finances or other school policies.

#### NOTE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS:

Students and parents/guardians are responsible for reading and following the rules in this handbook. Additional Policies are available in the office. District policy shall be followed in cases where school policy is not defined. If you have any questions about this handbook, please call VGHS: 758-5100

### **Land Acknowledgment**

Vista Grande High School is located on the traditional homelands of the people of Taos Pueblo, the original stewards of the land. It is through their stewardship that we can all live together in peace in the Taos Valley.

# Welcome to Vista Grande High School!

Congratulations! You are now a student at Vista Grande High School, home of the Phoenix. We are excited to have you join our community of learners and we have no doubt you will add to the awesomeness that is part of VGHS!

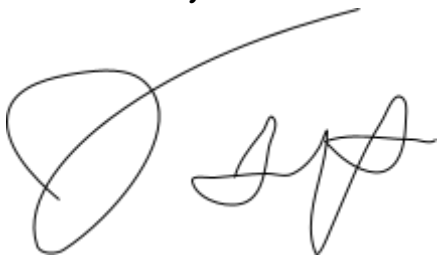
You will become a writer, a scientist, and a mathematician--using processes like professionals. At VGHS, you will look at events from many perspectives, think critically about controversial issues, and master both the basics and the ability to apply your knowledge to real-world situations. At VGHS, you will work hard and play hard, both key components to helping you learn and grow in ways that will help you throughout your life.

We will support you as you take responsibility for key aspects of your learning--developing a portfolio, defending your progress in student-led conferences, passage portfolios, and presenting evidence at Celebrations of Learning.

The community here is unique and welcoming to all. At VGHS, students learn to work within diverse groups. We work collectively to grow a community of kindness, respect and caring. You will learn to express yourself, to see another person's side of the story, to solve problems and set goals. Service and leadership are the norm here, not the exception. We care about your academic progress, and we care that during these upcoming years you learn more about who you are, who you want to be and what values you hold.

As a community-focused school, VGHS welcomes high levels of family involvement. Families play essential roles in sustaining the school's mission, supporting the work of their students, and assisting with tasks and work to make the school successful. There are significant opportunities for involvement: helping with classroom instruction and fieldwork, serving on committees, supporting the office, serving as volunteers, staffing field trips, running fundraisers, etc. Please contact the school or visit [www.vistagrande.org](http://www.vistagrande.org) to see how you can become actively involved in the VGHS community.

The staff and I are looking forward to meeting you. I know you will have a wonderful year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Smith', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the top of the first letter.

Jim Smith  
School Director

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## VGHS Mission and Vision Statements



**MISSION:** Empower the School community to create positive change in a joyful environment that embodies our shared values of compassion, authenticity, and sustainable growth.

**VISION:** We are co-creators of a community of learners who value a Holistic approach to education that develops critical and creative thinkers who are equipped to create a more equitable and sustainable world.

## **Our Values: VGHS CARES!**

### **Creative thinking**

- Encouraging ingenuity, imagination, and creative problem solving
- Pursuing Innovative approaches to education through a project-based model of school reform

### **Achievement**

- Setting high expectations to confidently motivate achievement of personal potential for every student
- Encouraging self-discovery and personal growth by fostering experiences and challenges that enable students to learn from their success and failures

### **Respect for both Cultural Diversity and our Natural World**

- Practicing compassion, inclusion, and fairness for all
- Engaging in social responsibility and environmental stewardship

### **Empowering Change**

- Encouraging teachers, staff, and students, to be change agents and make a difference through service and empathy toward others

### **Supportive Environment**

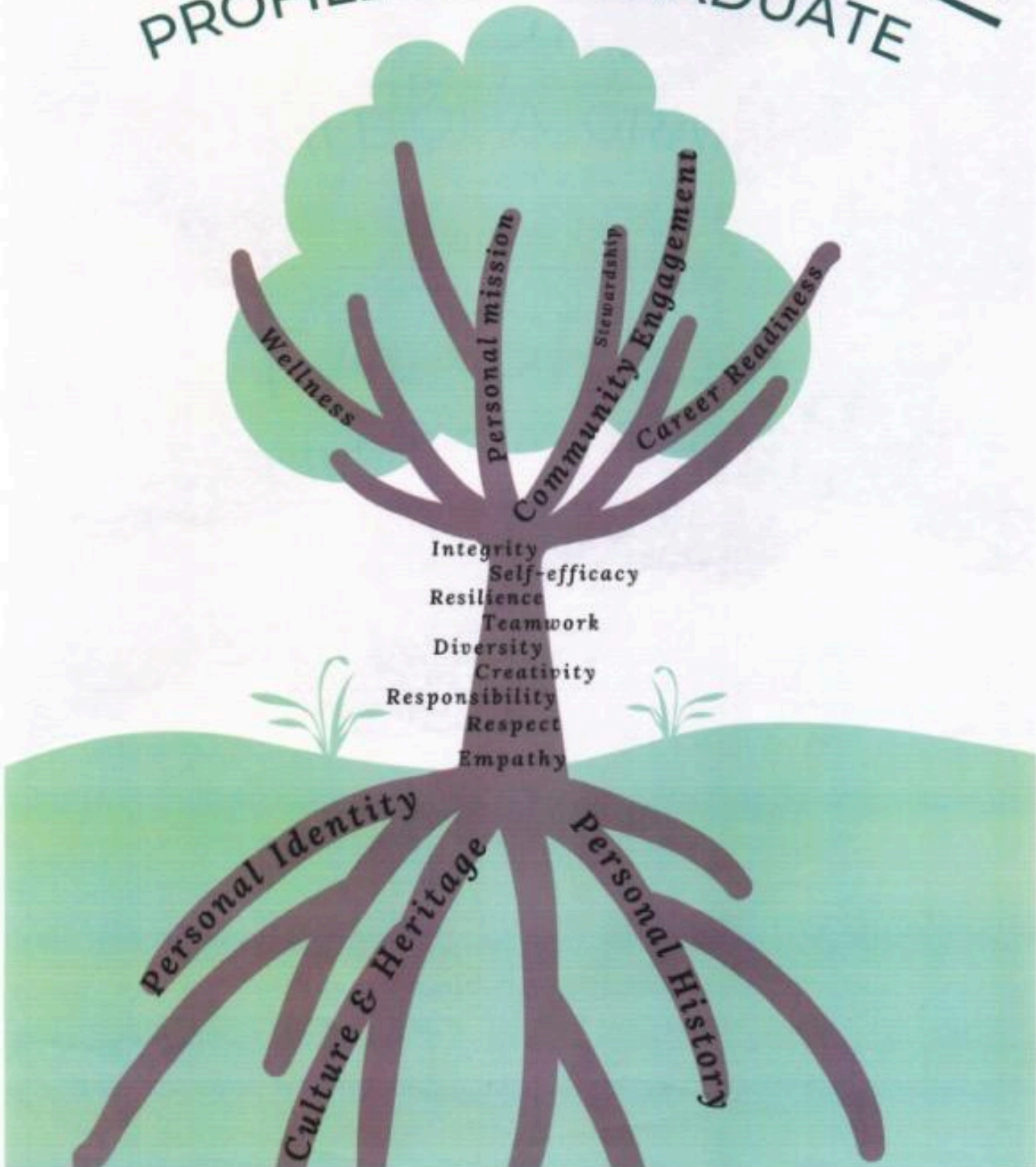
- Engaging students, parents, and community members as partners responsible for student success
- Enabling collaboration, teamwork, and open communication to foster a caring community
- Valuing relationships between all stakeholders

## **Profile of the Graduate**

The next page of the handbook includes the VGHS Profile of a Graduate. The roots of the tree represent the strengths and knowledge our students and families bring to our community. The trunk is the core values of VGHS, and the branches represent the practices the students bring to their home community.

# VISTA GRANDE

## PROFILE OF A GRADUATE



VGHS opened its doors in Fall 2006 and now enrolls nearly 100 High School students in grades 9-12. VGHS is an innovative **Public Charter School** authorized by the **NM Public Education Commission**. We moved to our current home at the **Celestino Romero Administration Building** in August 2012.

VGHS is based upon the concept of a small and highly engaged community. The school emphasizes “hands on” project-based learning, the workshop model, a culture of reflection and revision, and outdoor education as methods to motivate and engage students in their education.

VGHS is committed to providing a **rich learning environment** for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Our curriculum supports looking at the world from multiple perspectives, including diversity of voices, and preparing our students to be part of a pluralistic and diverse global society. VGHS is a **full inclusion program** to the greatest extent possible to meet the requirements of special needs students in the least restrictive environment while still providing a free appropriate public education.

## School Philosophy

At VGHS...

We know our students and each other by name, strength, and need.

Each of our students has the potential to attain success. All students can succeed when we maintain high expectations and work together to provide a safe and supportive learning environment.

Students will achieve personal and academic success when taught and nurtured by a community of highly skilled and caring professionals.

Students and their families have the right to the tools necessary to successfully navigate and participate in their education.

We give our students the necessary skills to be contributing members of society by teaching and demonstrating self-discipline and social responsibility.

We are always learning, and we are most successful when we think deeply and reflect on our actions.

The diversity of our community is an asset that has a positive impact on our learning and working environment.

## School Governance

The VGHS Governing Council is composed of members of the VGHS community who serve staggered two-and three-year terms. The Governing Council will elect a president, a vice-president, and a secretary, each of whom will serve for two-to-three-year terms or until the Council votes to change the terms. The Council

may amend or add any of its policies or directives according to the procedures articulated in the New Mexico Charter School legislation.

The Council has ultimate authority to approve all school budgets and budget adjustment requests. The Governing Council will have policy-making authority when acting as a council in regular or special meetings. The Council will make decisions by majority. No statement by an individual council member shall bind the board. No Council member shall speak on behalf of the whole board unless specifically authorized by a majority of the council. Minutes are taken at all Council meetings, and approved minutes are available to the public at the school office and on the school website.

### **Governing Board Members:**

Elizabeth Roth - President - [gb.eroth@vghs.org](mailto:gb.eroth@vghs.org)

Eleanor Romero - Vice President - [gb.eromero@vghs.org](mailto:gb.eromero@vghs.org)

Shona Mares Bond - Secretary - [gb.smaresbond@vghs.org](mailto:gb.smaresbond@vghs.org)

Harold Cordova - member - [gb.hcordova@vghs.org](mailto:gb.hcordova@vghs.org)

Mark Goldman - member - [gb.mgoldman@vghs.org](mailto:gb.mgoldman@vghs.org)

Julie Turner - member - [gb.jturner@vghs.org](mailto:gb.jturner@vghs.org)

## **Operations**

### **Liability and Insurance Coverage**

VGHS has property and school liability insurance under the umbrella of the New Mexico Public School Insurance Authority (NMPSIA). Each student attending VGHS is covered by accident insurance and catastrophic accident insurance when participating in school-sponsored activities of any kind. Further personal insurance for students is available for individual purchase through NMPSIA.

### **Transportation Services**

VGHS has a 30-passenger activity bus and a 7-passenger Suburban. Students are expected to follow all VGHS rules while riding the bus or the Suburban. The specific bus rules are listed in the Student Policies section of this handbook.

**Food Services:** This 2024-2025 year VGHS Qualifies for the National School Lunch Program which provides free meals to all students for breakfast and lunch. **We have a closed campus and students are to remain on campus during lunchtime. No food from outside vendors allowed by students or parents/guardians.**

### **Personnel Overview**

At VGHS, we strive to hire Highly Qualified Teachers. This passage serves to notify families that teachers' professional qualifications are available by request--the office will provide you with the information in a timely manner once the request form is completed. On the occasion that a non-highly qualified teacher is instructing your child for more than four weeks, the school will notify families according to NM code.

## **Staff Contact Info**

**Front Office**      575-758-5100

Deseree Calhoun Administrative Assistant/Attendance Clerk - [dcalhoun@vghs.org](mailto:dcalhoun@vghs.org)

### **School Director**

Jim Smith - [jsmith@vghs.org](mailto:jsmith@vghs.org)

### **Assistant Business Manager/HR**

Yvette Aguilar - [yvette.aguilar@vghs.org](mailto:yvette.aguilar@vghs.org)

### **Registrar/Student Experiences**

Ernestine Chacon - [echacon@vghs.org](mailto:echacon@vghs.org)

### **Faculty**

Jordan Alexander, Math - [jalexander@vghs.org](mailto:jalexander@vghs.org)

Michael Clayton, Social Studies, Philosophy - [mclayton@vghs.org](mailto:mclayton@vghs.org)

Angelina Fresquez, Education Fellow - [afresquez@vghs.org](mailto:afresquez@vghs.org)

Heather McReynolds, Science/ Instructional Support -  
[heather.mcreynolds@vghs.org](mailto:heather.mcreynolds@vghs.org)

Sam Starsiak, Special Education Coordinator - [sstarstiak@vghs.org](mailto:sstarstiak@vghs.org)

Aimee Lynn Stearns - English/Special Education - [astearns@vghs.org](mailto:astearns@vghs.org)

Brina Stow, English/NM History/Community Schools - [bstow@vghs.org](mailto:bstow@vghs.org)

Erick Struck, School Social Worker - [estruck@vghs.org](mailto:estruck@vghs.org)

Andrew Stuart, English - [dstuart@vghs.org](mailto:dstuart@vghs.org)

Mark Vigil, Outdoor Recreation Program/English - [mvigil@vghs.org](mailto:mvigil@vghs.org)

Nora Wicks, Sustainable Agriculture, Internship Coordinator - [corbett.wicks@vghs.org](mailto:corbett.wicks@vghs.org)

## Calendar

Closure and delay announcements can be heard on KTAO, 101.9 FM, KKIT, and other local stations. School days that are canceled (due to weather, unforeseen circumstances, etc.) will be made up by adding days on to the end of the school year, as is required by the NMPED. Changes to the calendar will be on the school website. Automated calls will be placed to families as soon as a school closure needs to occur.

## Schedule

### Monday Wednesday and Friday A

8:15 - 8:30	Vista Time	15 Min
8:30- 10:10	1	100 Min
10:10 - 10:25	Breakfast	15 Min
10:25 - 11:25	Crew	60 Min
11:25 - 1:05	2	100 Min
1:05 - 1:35	Lunch	30 Min
1:35 - 3:15	3	100 Min

### Tuesday Thursday and Friday B

8:15 - 8:30	Vista Time	15 Min
8:30- 10:10	4	100 Min
10:10 - 10:25	Breakfast	15 Min
10:30 - 11:25	Crew	60 Min
11:25 - 1:05	5	100 Min
1:05 - 1:35	Lunch	30 Min
1:35 - 3:15	6	100 Min

### Friday

8:15 - 8:30	Vista Time	15Min
8:30 - 10:10	1/4	100 Min
10:10 - 10:25	Breakfast	15 Min
10:25 - 11:25	Crew	60 Min
11:25 - 1:05	2/5	100 Min
1:05 - 1:35	Lunch	30 Min
1:35 - 3:15	3/6	100 Min

# EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS - Ways of Being, Ways of Doing

## **ATTENDANCE**

It is essential for students to attend school daily to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to become college and career ready. Regular student participation in daily classroom activities plays a significant role in student's school success. Students are expected to attend school regularly and on time. VGHS policy and state law require daily school attendance for those between the ages of 5 and 18, or until graduation from high school.

## **ACHIEVEMENT**

Students are expected to achieve academically. They are expected to:

- Strive to fulfill their academic potential.
- Actively participate in the educational process.
- Actively participate in community activities

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Students are expected to be good members of the VGHS community. They are expected to:

- Respect authority, property, and the rights of others.
- Maintain a safe school environment and in their larger community.
- Respect all community members

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

Every student is responsible for helping maintain a safe, orderly, and educationally focused learning environment. They are expected to:

- Attend school every day and be on time for every class.
- Resolve differences with others in a positive, non-violent way.
- Remain drug, alcohol, and tobacco free
- Respect fellow students and all school staff members.
- Comply with the standards of behavior for their classrooms, and school-wide norms of behavior.

## Academics & Assessment

### VGHS Graduation Requirements

See pg. 58

### Latin Honor System

VGHS believes in recognizing students who have achieved outstanding academic success through a multitude of pathways. VGHS has eliminated the traditional Valedictorian/Salutatorian awards and instead has adopted the Latin honor system meaning Vista Grande High School students with a GPA of 4.00 and above will be designated summa cum laude; students with a GPA between 3.75 and 3.99 will be designated magna cum laude; and students with GPA between 3.51 to 3.74 will be designated cum laude.

## Graduation Ceremonies

To participate in the ceremonies, all outstanding obligations must be cleared. Students must have completed all credit requirements to walk in the graduation ceremony. Any student that is suspended for a level II or level III violation during the second semester may risk the opportunity to participate in the graduation ceremony.

## Special Education

*\*For more information, please visit <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/SEB/index>.*

We have a **full inclusion program** and integrate students with special education needs to the greatest extent possible within the context of an individual student's IEP (Individual Education Plan), according to our charter and our model. The school follows the state MLSS (multi-layered system of support) guidelines, and uses the state produced documents to guide our Special Education Program, policies, and practice. The **VGHS SPED manual** is available for community review. Changes made by the state supersede VGHS policy.

## Sports

Due to the small size of the school and the provisions of our charter, VGHS does not offer an athletic program. Students have the right to participate in all athletic/extracurricular programs of Taos Municipal School district.

## Student Led Conferences (SLC)

Student and parent/guardian conferences are scheduled twice during the school year with the student's Crew Leader. Students will lead their conference and present their own learning to parents/guardians using Portfolios. These conferences are an important part of student learning at VGHS. **Student and parent/guardian attendance are required.**

## Portfolio Presentations & Alternative Demonstrations of Competency

Each senior at Vista Grande is required to present a digital portfolio of their learning at the end of the school year. A panel of community members will witness the presentation and provide feedback. Passing the presentation is a graduation requirement and can be used as an Alternative Demonstration of Competency for graduation.

All sophomores are required to present a digital portfolio in the spring. The portfolio is presented to an authentic audience. Successful completion of the presentation and portfolio is required to advance to the junior year.

Contents of the presentation:

- Personal Background
- Future Goals
- Overview of each grade in high school: classes taken, extracurriculars, highlights
- Community engagement activities
- Minimum one assignment from each class with an explanation of the learning target and reflection of their progress
- Future goals and action steps to achieve them

Individual Senior Project and Research Paper



For the second semester of senior year, seniors will select a project in an area of interest to them. For the third quarter (January to Spring Break), seniors will learn how to research a topic of their choice, create a thesis statement, and support it by citing evidence from quality sources. This research will inform a project that they will create during the fourth quarter. They will have time to create the presentation during English class fourth quarter, but it is imperative that they keep up with the timeline. The presentations usually take place the second or third week of May.

Please discuss ideas for a final project with your senior. Past projects have generally fallen into the following categories:

- A tangible product: handmade bow and arrows, traditional jewelry, dress, moccasins, or art,
- A demonstration of a skill learned: fix up a classic car or truck, learn to play an instrument, train a horse or service dog
- A proposal: ways to manage the forest with prescribed fire, wildlife management proposal, how to manage a disease or achieve specific health goals

It can be intimidating for students to arrive at a decision for such an open-ended project. When students return from the Christmas break, they will participate in brainstorming exercises to help generate ideas for their project. Parents and families can help support seniors by talking over ideas with them as well.

Each senior at Vista Grande is required to present a digital portfolio of their learning at the end of the school year. A panel of community members will witness the presentation and provide feedback. Passing the presentation is a graduation requirement and can be used as an Alternative Demonstration of Competency for graduation.

### **Celebration of Learning**

At the end of each semester, all students will present high quality products from their classes. **Parent/guardian attendance is mandatory.**

### **Portfolio Assessment**

Teachers distinguish between two kinds of portfolios at VGHS: classroom/subject portfolios that happen in content areas and a passage portfolio that is produced at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Classroom/subject portfolios store works in progress and tend to highlight student work in its formative stages. The passage portfolio stands as a permanent record of student achievement.

### **Transcripts**

Transcripts can be requested from the VGHS office.

### **Closed Campus**

Vista Grande High School has a closed campus to provide safety for all students. The only exception is that seniors may be allowed to leave for lunch if they have a lunch pass. Seniors are required to apply for the lunch pass from Ms. Chacon, Registrar, and have signed parent or guardian permission. Parents must give written permission for a student to leave early for an appointment, unless for an emergency. All students must check out from the office before leaving early and must have prior parental permission in writing. Students will not be released

unless picked up by a parent. Please schedule all appointments on non-campus school days.

### **Visitors**

All visitors to the campus must check in and receive a visitor's pass at the front desk located in the reception area. Visitors must present a driver's license or state identification to be checked through the "Raptor" background check program. Visitors are to wait quietly at the reception area. The Receptionist will contact the appropriate staff member or student who will meet the visitor in the reception area and escort him/her to the approved destination. All visitors must adhere to all traffic flow signs and parking regulations including 5mph speed limit. Safety first!

### **Reporting Absences/Tardiness**

**If a student is absent, a parent/guardian is required to notify the school *before 9 AM* each day of absence. Students arriving after 8:30 AM must sign in at the office. See attendance policy for more information.**

### **Weather Cancellation Policy**

Please be sure you have access to TV, Internet or radio broadcasts that will give you this information. We will only have a delay or full day closures. Mid day closures are at the discretion of the parent/guardian depending on safety decisions. Students will not be released early from school without parent/guardian permission. Parents/Guardians must give written permission to have students released early for any reason, unless in an emergency.

### **Student Assessments**

Assessments are included as a part of every class. However, students are also measured through a variety of alternative methods including portfolios, demonstrations, presentations, and collaborative projects. This variety of assessments allows students and teachers to identify strengths and problem areas and respond to them promptly. When problem areas are identified, teachers and learners develop strategies to correct the problem. Students and parents have access to continuous progress reports and weekly grades for every Vista Grande High school class. A Vista Grande staff member must administer all assessments.

### **Withdrawal from a Course**

Courses are assigned according to the student's "Next Step Plan" and graduation requirements. Any withdrawal from a course requires approval from the course teacher and parent and must be made before midterm to avoid penalty. Any changes may affect the graduation date and plans. All changes must be considered carefully.

### **Drop policy**

Students must have administrative permission to drop a class. If the drop is made after the midterm date, the student will receive a failing grade in the class. This policy includes summer school.

## Dual Credit Program

Students in 10th through 12th grade who carry a cumulative 2.0 GPA can take UNM classes for dual credit. Students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade may apply for the dual enrollment program; enrollment in the program is decided on a case-by-case basis.

## College Entrance Examinations

Vista Grande High school will be facilitating all 11th grade students taking the ACT and/or SAT. Information on the costs, dates of registration, test locations and dates of administration of college entrance examinations may be found on their respective websites:

ACT [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

SAT [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

PSAT/NMSQT\*

[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat)

## Summer School

Vista Grande High School offers summer school to enrolled students. Students may take online courses for credit recovery, acceleration, or summer enrichment. Summer courses are offered for credit and require a \$200 deposit, \$100 refundable upon successful completion of the class. Students may drop a class for any reason without grade penalty at/or before midterm. If the drop is made after the midterm date, the student will receive a failing grade in the class. Deposit will NOT be returned for dropped classes.

## Student Policies

*All policies and policies regarding student conduct are in effect from the time a student leaves home in the morning until the students arrives home after school. This includes lunch hours and field time. Students participating in or attending any school function at any time, on or off campus, will be held accountable for all policies and procedures regarding student conduct.*

## Student Rights and Responsibilities

### Overview

All students have the right to a school setting that is orderly and educationally efficient, free from the disruption of normal teaching-learning functions.

The following policy statement is intended to be consistent with the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, adopted May 1981, by the New Mexico State of Education. In the event that any part of it is not consistent with that Statement, the State of Education's Statement prevails.

### Educational Opportunity

Every student has the right to an education relevant to their needs and ability and a corresponding responsibility to not deny this right to any other student.

No individual shall be subject to prejudicial treatment of their right to attend and benefit from public school on the basis of ethnic identity, religion, color, sex, political belief, mental or physical handicap, or for the exercise of their rights within this policy.

*Students' First Amendment Rights*

All students possess the constitutional right to freedom of speech and press, the constitutional right to assemble peaceably, and to petition the government and its representatives for a redress of grievances, subject to reasonable limitations upon the time, place, and manner of exercising such rights.

Students are entitled to orally express their opinions. Such opinions shall not interfere with the freedom of others to express themselves. The use of obscenities or personal attacks is prohibited.

All student meetings at VGHS may function only as part of the formal educational process or as authorized by the principal.

Students have the freedom to assemble peacefully. There is an appropriate time and place for expression of opinions and beliefs. Conducting demonstrations, which interfere with the operation of the school or classroom, is inappropriate and prohibited.

Commercial solicitation will not be allowed on school property unless expressly approved by the school administration.

### ***Student Expression***

Definition of a Publication:

*Any expression in writing or by pictorial representation, including questionnaires and petitions. Any publication produced or distributed by a student or students with faculty sponsorship. The making available or displaying a publication on school property, or at official school functions immediately before, during, or immediately after curricular, co-curricular or extracurricular school activities.*

Students are entitled to express in writing their personal opinions. Such written expressions must be signed by the author. The distribution of such material may not interfere with or disrupt the educational process. VGHS seeks to promote student expression as a part of the inculcation of values and habits necessary to the maintenance of a democratic political system; however, VGHS will not tolerate student expression inconsistent with its educational mission, even though governments outside the school could or would not censor such expression. The school may control production or distribution of school publications only so long as some valid educational purpose is served by such control.

The school will prohibit the distribution of any school publication that, on the basis of objective and facts, is obscene, lewd or defamatory or otherwise intrudes upon the rights of others, or that is, or is likely to be, disruptive to or impede the work of the school.

The school may disassociate itself from any publication that is biased or prejudiced, vulgar, profane, unsuitable for immature audiences, inadequately researched, ungrammatical, or poorly written; however, a publication shall not be deemed disruptive merely because it expresses unpopular or controversial views.

Production and distribution of school publications shall be under the control of the building principal or their designated faculty representative.

A student who wishes to distribute a school publication shall obtain prior permission from the building principal or designated faculty representative. A student who wishes to address the school community must submit the speech in writing to the School Director. The School Director may not censor the speech unless the speech is obscene, lewd, or defamatory or otherwise intrudes upon the rights of others, or that is, or is likely to be, disruptive to or impede the work of the school.

Such a student is entitled to meet personally with the principal or faculty representative to discuss the appropriateness of publication.

The student or their representative may support the appropriateness of distribution with relevant witnesses and materials.

The principal or faculty representative shall grant or deny permission to distribute the publication, in writing and within one school day of the student's request.

If a student's request is denied, the student may appeal the decision, within two school days of the issuance of said denial, to the School Director: the student must notify the School Director in writing, of their desire to appeal; and the School Director shall issue a written decision within three school days of the notice of appeal. In the event the student seeking permission is dissatisfied with the school's decision, the student may, within two school days of the issuance of such decision, appeal the decision to the VGHS Governing Council, by notifying the in writing of the desire to appeal; and they shall render its decision in writing within three school days of the notice of appeal.

## Controversial Issues

Students shall have the right to encounter diverse points-of-view. Under the guidelines established by VGHS, students shall have opportunities to hear speakers and view presentations representing a wide range of views in classes, clubs and assemblies. If it is **established that student and/or parent/guardian objects**, as a matter of principle, to participation in an activity assigned by school personnel, an alternative activity will be assigned without penalty or embarrassment to the student.

As a public institution, the school has a commitment to objectivity and the presentation of all sides of an issue.

## Parents/Guardians Rights & Responsibilities

**Your parent/guardian has a right to:**

- Receive regular official reports of your academic progress and attendance.

- Make recommendations and give input about educational planning.
- Participate in conferences with teachers and/or the principal.
- Receive explanations from teachers about your grades.
- Access all your school records, within appropriate guidelines.
- Obtain further clarification on student rights, responsibilities, and discipline.
- Receive discipline information in a language she/he can understand.

**Your parent/guardian has a responsibility to:**

- Assist school staff by sharing ideas for improving student learning and preventing or resolving student discipline problems.
- Provide supervision for your health, physical and emotional well-being.
- Ensure your attendance is prompt and regular while also providing the school with explanations for your absences or tardiness.
- Attend parent/guardian conferences.
- Help enforce student compliance with school rules.
- Provide appropriate supervision for you before and after school.
- Review and discuss student rights, responsibilities, and discipline with you.

- Support the school self-discipline and conflict resolution programs.

### Student Parking

Parking at VGHS is a privilege, not a right. A student may park a vehicle on school property only after submitting a parental consent form properly signed by a parent and the school director, a valid driver's license, insurance and registration for the vehicle.

If a vehicle is parked on campus without proper documentation with school administration, the following steps will take place:

- 1<sup>st</sup> offense: An attempt to contact the owners of the vehicle will be made.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: Car will be ticketed and may be towed.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> offense: Car will be towed at the owner's expense.

VGHS is not responsible for damages incurred while towing.

**\* Students are not allowed in vehicles during normal school hours! This includes the lunch hour!**

Loss of a student's driver's license or lapse in insurance or registration will result in loss of parking privileges.

### Food and Beverages

**No food or beverages other than water are allowed in classrooms.** The only place that food can be consumed is in the cafeteria. VGHS participates in the National Food School Lunch Program that includes universal free meals for all students. The National Food School Lunch Program prohibits outside food or drinks. Students are welcome to bring a homemade lunch from home but no outside food is allowed. If the food brought to school is not allowed the food will be put away until the end of the school day.

### Public Displays of Affection

It is hard to determine the fine line between what is or is not an appropriate public embrace, the school rule will be that holding hands, or a brief embrace are the limits of affection shown on the campus by students.

### Dress Code

The VGHS dress code sets the following requirements for "minimum safe attire:"

- (a) Students must wear clothing including both a shirt with pants or skirt, or the equivalent (for example dresses, leggings, or shorts) and shoes.
- (b) Shirts and dresses must have fabric in the front and on the sides (under the arms).
- (c) Clothing must cover undergarments (waistbands and straps excluded).
- (d) Fabric covering breasts, genitals and buttocks must be opaque.
- (e) Hats and other headwear must allow the face to be visible to staff, and not interfere with the line of sight of any student or staff. Hoodies must allow the face and ears to be visible to school staff.
- (f) Clothing must be suitable for all scheduled classroom activities including physical education, science labs, wood shop, and other activities where unique

hazards exist. (g) Specialized courses may require specialized attire, such as sports uniforms or safety gear.

The dress code further clarifies prohibitions on attire or grooming “depicting or advocating violence, criminal activity, use of alcohol or drugs, pornography, or hate speech;” defines parent, student, and staff responsibilities; and addresses appropriate enforcement.

**The following general standards are:**

- Clothing will not be worn that causes or is likely to cause disruption of the educational process including, but not limited to, hats that obscure a student’s face, beanies, bandanas, hoods, sunglasses or clothing that may be deemed to be provocative or offensive or which promotes illegal activity such as the use of violence, drugs, alcohol or tobacco. Clothing with implied offensive, derogatory, divisive, violent or sexualized language/innuendo and/or imagery is not appropriate. Hats, hoods, and sunglasses are permitted outside the building.
- Tattoos with any suspected gang association must be covered. This will be at the discretion of staff.
- Any manner of grooming or apparel, including clothing, jewelry, emblems, and badges, which by virtue of color, arrangement, trademark, or other attribute that is associated with or denotes membership in or affiliation with any gang is not allowed. The prohibition on gang-related apparel will be applied at the discretion of the Director as the need arises.

In cold weather, students must come to school with adequate warm clothing to allow them to be outside for up to an hour at a time. For fieldwork or outdoor activities, parents will receive notice or a phone call from teachers and be expected to prepare their students accordingly. ]

**Student Use of Staff Lounge**

The Staff Lounge is for the sole use of teachers, staff, and parents/guardians working on school-related projects. Students are not allowed in the Staff Lounge unless they are under the direct supervision of an adult.

**Plagiarism and Cheating**

Students commit plagiarism when they use someone else’s words, ideas, or creative productions as if they were their own. Assignments are plagiarized if they are completed in whole or part by anyone other than the student who claims credit. Copying homework, computer work, test answers, or creative productions of any kind is plagiarism. Submitting a paper or signing a name to a creative project that has been originated in any way by another is plagiarism. Students should correct or edit their own work. Plagiarism can occur from printed material, the internet, as well as from people, but students can avoid plagiarism by precisely quoting borrowed material and carefully crediting the source. **Students must submit their own work for credit, including a written outline with their original ideas and thoughts. When writing a research report, students will need to cite their sources of information.** Any occurrence of plagiarism or cheating will result in a zero on the assignment, and students will be required to redo the assignment. The 2<sup>nd</sup> offense will result in a parent/guardian conference. Any student who allows someone else



to copy his or her work will receive the same consequences. At VGHS, we will consistently work to provide opportunities for learning that emphasize the process of learning, including students working with their teachers and getting consistent feedback throughout the learning process.

### **Electronic Devices**

The term “Electronic Devices” shall mean all devices which accomplish their purposes electronically and include, without limitation, pagers, smart watches, electronic emailing devices, radios, tape players, CD players, DVD players, video cameras, iPods or other MP3 players, laser pointers, portable video game players, personal laptop computers, headphones, earbuds, cameras, and any device that provides a wireless, unfiltered connection to the Internet.

The use of all Electronic Devices by students during class time, whether on-campus or during a school-sponsored event are prohibited. While students are not prohibited from possessing Electronic Devices, unless otherwise prohibited by law or policies, rules or procedures, the Electronic Devices must be turned “off” and stored in the student’s backpack. This Policy does not apply to the sanctioned use of Electronic Devices by teachers, or students under the direct supervision of their teacher, for educational purposes.

### **Phone Policy**

VGHS understands that students are accustomed to always having their phones available. While it may be convenient, phones prove to be a major distraction to the learning experience. The staff at VGHS are dedicated to helping students to achieve their full learning potential, and so we expect students to keep their phones turned off and in their backpacks during class. This includes class time off-campus while students are participating in field work in a variety of our ‘non-traditional’ classrooms! In support of this expectation, parents are asked NOT to call or text students’ cell phones during the school day. Parents who need to contact students should call the front desk at (575) 758-5100.

Students must keep their phone turned off and in their backpack during class. Students understand that if they have their phone out during class, their phone will be confiscated and put into a Yondr (locking pouch) for the remainder of the school period. Repeat violations will result in a meeting to determine the proper consequence, including but not limited to not allowing the student to bring their phone to school.

### **Destruction or Theft of School-owned Property**

Current replacement price is imposed on any lost or excessively damaged equipment or educational materials. Law enforcement will be contacted in cases of theft and extreme damage to property. Grades and Transcripts may be withheld for any delinquent accounts.

### **Divisive Language**

Divisive language is language that targets a person due to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion and is not acceptable at VGHS. Divisive language can be written, verbally, and/or electronically. Divisive language happens both on and off-campus. If it occurs off-campus and has a direct ripple effect into actions on-campus, VGHS staff will follow-up on this and act accordingly.

## **Bullying**

VGHS takes bullying seriously. If you feel your child is being bullied, please contact your crew leader & the director immediately to initiate a formal report. Our detailed Bullying Prevention & Response Policy is available in the office and at [www.vghs.org](http://www.vghs.org).

## **Sexual Harassment/Misconduct**

Sexual harassment regarding student-to-student, adult-to-student and student-to-adult conduct means unwelcome or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (verbal, nonverbal, or physical). Any sexual harassment should be reported to a staff member immediately. If you feel like your child has been sexually harassed, please contact the School Director.

## **Gang-related behavior and dress**

This policy has been adopted pursuant to the requirements of state law, in recognition of the fact that gang activities at school impose a threat to the welfare and safety of students and others in the school community and cause substantial disruption to the educational process.

The term “gang” as used in this policy refers to all groups of three or more individuals who share a common interest, bond, or activity characterized by criminal, delinquent, or otherwise disruptive conduct engaged in collectively or individually.

Gang activity in schools is often marked by the prominent display of certain colors or other indicators: graffiti with distinctive symbols and the used of signals and gestures known to denote gang membership.

1. Any manner of grooming or apparel, including clothing, jewelry, hats, bandanas, emblems, and badges which by virtue of color, arrangement, trademark, or other attribute is associated with or denotes membership in or affiliation with any gang will not be allowed in school buildings or on school grounds, at school sanctioned activities and events and while being transported in school approved vehicles.
2. Gestures, signals, or graffiti which denote gang membership or activities are prohibited in the school building and on school grounds, at school-sanctioned activities and events, and while being transported in school approved vehicles.
3. Gang graffiti on school premises will be quietly photographed, removed, washed down, or painted over as soon as discovered. The photographs will be shared with local law enforcement authorities and used in future disciplinary or criminal actions against the offenders.
4. Any student wearing or carrying overt gang paraphernalia, making gestures, or tagging that symbolize gang membership will be written up for disciplinary action.
5. Disciplinary action for violation of these standards will include notification of the violation, where applicable; the requirement that the apparel be changed before reentering class; and, at the discretion of the Director, a parental conference. More severe disciplinary consequences, including suspension or recommendation for expulsion will result from repeated or serious violation.
6. The Director will establish open lines of communication with local law enforcement regarding this policy to further its purposes.

### **Tobacco Use/Possession**

Use or possession of tobacco products or paraphernalia within sight of school property is prohibited. The smell of tobacco on a student is cause for reasonable suspicion for possession and a search may be conducted. **E-cigarettes and nicotine containers should be included in the definition of "tobacco" under Title 6, Chapter 12, Part 4 NMAC, and the use of such products or items in school buildings, on school property, and by students at school-sanctioned functions away from school property should be strictly prohibited.**

### **E-CIGS/VAPOR POLICY**

Electronic cigarettes or any similar vapor devices are strictly prohibited on school grounds or at any school sanctioned activity. Any such device will be confiscated immediately, and the school will reserve the right to turn said device over to a parent or guardian, or to turn the device over to the school resource officer. Any liquids or other additives that go in e-cig devices will be confiscated and turned over to the Taos Police School Resource Officer to determine what the substance is. Vista Grande will not be responsible for any financial claims resulting from the confiscation of any electronic vaping device regardless of whether it is returned to the rightful owner. Students in violation of the e-cig policy will be subject to the application of the school's drug and alcohol policy and procedures.

### **Alcohol/Drug Use**

Student use, possession, distribution, or sale of alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs is prohibited at VGHS, on school grounds, at any school-sanctioned activities, when students are being transported in school sponsored vehicles, or at any time or in any place where the student's conduct interferes with or obstructs the educational program or operations of VGHS or the health, safety or welfare of students or employees. Students that exhibit signs of being "high" or smell of an illegal drug will be subject to searches. This policy shall be enforced according to VGHS' Student Search and Seizure Policy. Illicit drug use is the use of illegal drugs and the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, including anabolic steroids. For this policy, illicit drugs include, but are not limited to, opiates, narcotics, marijuana, and intoxicants of any kind, in addition to counterfeit drugs, and drug-containing paraphernalia. A violation will subject a student to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including recommendation for expulsion and referral for prosecution. Recommendation for expulsion will be mandatory for any distribution, trade, exchange, or sale of a drug or other controlled substance in a school building or in or on school property.

If it is determined by the director or other VGHS authority that a student is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the appropriate law enforcement agency will be called, and the student will be subject to the following provisions:

#### **First Offense**

Authorities may be contacted, and a police report may be filed

- A. The student will be suspended according to the school policy regarding suspensions and expulsions.
- B. The director will attempt to develop with the parents/guardians and the student a procedure that will outline the responsibilities of the parent, the student, and the school to keep any further offenses from occurring.

- C. Information on available drug or alcohol counseling and rehabilitation programs and recommendations for chemical dependency assessment, diagnosis, and possible treatment will be given to students and parents. The costs of these programs are to be incurred by the parent/guardian.
- D. When appropriate, students and parents will be asked to follow up with assessment, diagnosis or treatment as a condition to readmission to school. Evaluation of any such participation will be made at the parent conference at the time the suspension is reviewed, and the student is considered for readmission to school. Costs of the programs are borne by the family, though the school will provide a list of community resources upon request.

### **Second Offense**

Authorities will be contacted, and a police report may be filed

Withdrawal from VGHS and a recommendation for expulsion may be made.

If the student participates in an appropriate rehabilitation program and receives significant treatment, the school will consider such factors in determining if re-admittance to VGHS will follow the rehabilitation/IR program.

### **Weapons**

For the purposes of school board policy, a “weapon” is any firearm, knife, explosive, or other object, even if manufactured for a nonviolent purpose that has a potential violent use. Additionally, defined as a “weapon” is any “look-a-like” object that resembles an object that has a potentially violent use, if, under the surrounding circumstances the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.

### **Financial Responsibility and Borrowed Equipment**

Any student participating in a school activity is fully responsible for equipment, books, outdoor gear, tools, computers, and other school gear entrusted to him or her. If equipment used by a given student is not accounted for in a satisfactory manner—for example, in the case of theft, loss or damage—participation and clearance to participate in other activities will be withheld until restoration satisfactory to the school is achieved. When a student is issued equipment, the student as caretaker has both the freedom and responsibility to use and take care of the items. Expected wear and tear due to normal use is expected; abuse, damage, loss, or defacement will require the student to replace or repair the item in question.

### **Defiance of school Personnel/Authorities**

Refusing to comply with any reasonable request by any school official or sponsor at places and times where school personnel have jurisdiction.

### **Language, Profane and/or Abusive**

Using language, which is crude, offensive, insulting, or irreverent; using coarse words to show contempt or disrespect; swearing. Students are encouraged to refer to the VGHS Student Code of Conduct before using language or drawing something that is obscene or inappropriate

## Searches

For the protection and security of individuals and property on the VGHS campus, the search of individuals, including students, their personal effects, desks, and vehicles on school property, as permitted under federal and state law. Such searches may be conducted without prior parental consent or the presence of a parent. In certain circumstances random searches of personal effects, school property (such as lockers and desks) and vehicles on campus may occur, including random searches with the assistance of canines. Suspicion of intoxication is grounds for a search to be conducted. Any illegal or unauthorized objects found in any search are subject to seizure. Anything found during a search can be used as evidence. Backpacks will be searched prior to any Wilderness trip or extended day fieldwork.

Vehicle Searches - Search of a student's vehicle while parked on school property may be conducted if there is a reasonable suspicion that a crime or breach of the disciplinary is being committed by the student.

Searches such as emptying of pockets, searches of student backpacks and purses, removal of hats, socks and shoes may be conducted by the school director or designated administrator

## Discipline of Habitually Disruptive Students

Any student who is suspended for disruptive behavior, as defined previously, for a second time during any school year may be declared habitually disruptive and a recommendation for expulsion can be made at the discretion of the Director. A behavior contract will be developed after the first suspension. The plan will be reviewed and modified to support student success. In such cases, the student and his/her parent/guardian will be notified in writing.

A student may be recommended for expulsion from school based on grounds outlined in the Vista Grande High School Policy, in addition to any laws or regulations for the State of New Mexico. Additionally, a student may be recommended for expulsion if he/she has been suspended three times in one school year.

Expulsion, after an official hearing, is mandatory under state law for:

1. Carrying, bringing, using, or possessing a deadly weapon without authorization of the school or the district. A deadly weapon includes, but is not limited to, a loaded or unloaded firearm, a knife, a bludgeon, or any other weapon/instrument which, in the manner in which it is used or intended to be used, is capable of producing death or serious bodily injury.
2. The selling of, including the exchange, distribution or gift of drugs or controlled substances, as defined by state law, including anabolic steroids and prescription drugs.

## Corporal Punishment / Physical Restraint

Corporal punishment is defined as action taken by school employees to spank or otherwise physically handle a student in any way to purposely inflict punishment. No corporal punishment will be administered to students by anyone in the school. Physical restraint is reasonable and appropriate physical intervention or force by staff as necessary for the following purposes:

1. To restrain a student from an act of wrongdoing.

- 2.To quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to others.
- 3.To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects upon a student or within the control of a student.
- 4.For self-defense.
- 5.For the protection of persons or property.
- 6.For the preservation of order.
7. To keep the student from self-harm or danger.

In general, VGHS will not use physical restraint except in issues of student or staff safety. For students who are emotionally escalated, non-compliant to reasonable staff requests, or disruptive of the learning environment--parent will be contacted for student pick-up. If parents cannot be contacted, the police may be brought to the scene to ensure the safety of student and staff, and to minimize disruption of the educational environment.

Any such acts are not in conflict with the legal definition of child abuse and will not be construed to constitute corporal punishment within the meaning and intention of this policy.

### **Prohibition of Racialized Aggression:**

VGHS prohibits racialized aggression involving student or school personnel. Any incidents of racialized aggression can be reported using the ARAO.

## **HOTLINE PURPOSE**

The Anti-Racism/Anti Oppression (ARAO) Hotline is a resource created by the Black Education Act (House Bill 43) that is available for students, families, staff, community members, or any stakeholder to report school-based incidents of racism, injustice, or discrimination against anyone.

The hotline provides a variety of ways to file an incident report and operates under IPRA and FERPA guidelines.

There is no expectation for anonymity when reporting to the ARAO Hotline. The Hotline utilizes the information reported to encourage communication, and positive engagement of all parties during the follow-up process.

## **ARAO HOTLINE GUIDELINES**

**IPRA - The Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA)** is a New Mexico state law that provides the public and media access to public information. The law requires open access to almost all public records in state and local government, with few exceptions. Under IPRA, the public has the right to take legal action if they are denied access to public records, an important mechanism to empower the public.

**FERPA - The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive

funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. (2.ed.gov)

## FILING A REPORT

The Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Hotline is available for students, families, staff members, community members, or any stakeholder to report school-based incidents of racism, injustice or discrimination against anyone. Callers will reach a trained department employee from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; if calling after hours, they can leave a message. The hotline was established as a requirement of the Black Education Act, passed in the 2021 General Session of the Legislature.

Callers will reach a trained department employee from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; leave a message if calling after hours.

### To report an incident:

Call (833) 485-1335

Email [ARAO.Hotline@state.nm.us](mailto:ARAO.Hotline@state.nm.us)

Fill out the online form at [bit.ly/ARAOhotline](https://bit.ly/ARAOhotline)



ARAO HOTLINE

Scan the code to submit an incident report

# ANTI-RACISM ANTI-OPPRESSION HOTLINE



To report an incident of racism,  
injustice, or discrimination against  
anyone in New Mexico Schools:



**(833) 485-1335**



**arao.hotline@state.nm.us**



**<http://bit.ly/ARAOHotline>**

The hotline is open 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.  
If calling after hours, leave a message.

## SPEAK UP

**WE CAN'T AFFORD TO STAY SILENT.**

*This hotline was established as a requirement of the Black Education Act,  
passed in the 2021 General Session of the Legislature.*

No school employee who in good faith reports any known or suspected violation of the school discipline policy or in good faith attempts to enforce the policy, shall be held liable for any civil damages because of such report or of the employee's efforts to enforce any part of the policy

**Student Responsibilities/Rules for riding the bus requirements while riding the VGHS bus.**



For safe riding on school buses the following are student's responsibilities:

- Students will exhibit safe and appropriate behavior when waiting for and boarding the bus.
- Students must follow the drivers' and/or attendant's instructions promptly. When the principal/designee is on the bus, he/she is authorized to enforce student discipline, also.
- Students will not get on or off the bus while it is in motion. Students must remain seated and keep
- The aisle and exit are clear.
- Students will occupy the seat assigned to them by the driver. If the bus is equipped with seatbelts, students must wear them.
- Students will not be permitted in the driver's compartment while the bus is in motion. Students will not tamper with any equipment on the bus.
- Students are not to engage in unnecessary conversation with the driver while the bus is in motion.
- Students will exhibit respect, act responsibly, be trustworthy, practice fairness, have a caring attitude, and display good citizenship while on the school bus.
- Students will not use profane language or make obscene gestures while on the bus.
- Students will cooperate with the bus driver in keeping the bus clean.
- Rough or boisterous conduct will not be permitted in the bus. Students will be absolutely quiet when the bus is approaching a railroad crossing and will remain quiet until the bus is safely across the tracks.
- Students will not eat any food or drink any beverage while being transported to or from school (with the possible exception of special needs students with IEPs).
- Students should remember that misconduct and/or carelessness endangers not only their own safety, but also the safety of the other students on the bus.
- Students will not extend their hands, arms, heads, or any objects out the bus windows.
- Weapons, explosives, breakable glass, or other dangerous objects are not permitted on the bus. Animals, except those animals authorized by an IEP or a 504 Accommodation Plan, are not permitted on the bus.
- No item that will block the aisle or is unsecured will be carried on the bus.
- Students will not open or close the bus windows without the permission of the bus driver.
- Students will not throw any item inside or outside the bus while boarding, riding or leaving the bus.
- The use, possession or distribution of tobacco, drugs, alcohol or any other controlled substance will not be permitted while on the bus.
- Students will not ride on the outside of the school bus at any time or attach any item to the bus.
- Students and parents/guardians will be held responsible for malicious destruction to the bus.
- Damage to the bus from any cause will be reported by passengers to the driver, and the driver will, in turn, report it to the proper school official

### **Discipline/Behavior Management**

**VGHS is committed to working with our students and families to continue reviewing and updating our behavioral expectations to reflect our community's cultures and values.**

The 2024-25 school year is the third year of the VGHS 5-year charter authorized by the Public Education Commission. Throughout the year VGHS community members will be asked to become involved in selecting VGHS's culturally responsive behavioral expectations.

We strive to help students feel a sense of belonging in a community where their voices are heard. We will include students and families in setting culture and problem solving. We will inform families of both their student's positive behavior and of behavior-related concerns. Communication with families will be adequate, timely, and culturally appropriate. VGHS will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families in a language they understand.

Generally, members of our community will attempt to use conflicts and issues as a springboard to teach new behaviors and develop communication and leadership skills, even as students learn logical consequences. In dealing with conflicts, a toolbox of strategies is used at VGHS including (but not limited to):

- Mediation
- Behavioral Plan (developed with student/teacher/School Director/Social Worker/Parent or Guardian)
- Behavioral Contract
- Crew Discussions
- All School Meetings
- Restorative Justice

### Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs)

#### CHARACTER

I am ready to learn.

I am an active participant in my learning.

I am responsible for my behavior.

I am kind to others.

I am collaborative with anyone, whether they are friends or not.

#### CRAFTSMANSHIP

I persevere in all tasks.

I revise my work so that it represents my very best abilities.

I do everything, big and small, with integrity and quality

## Ways of Being, Ways of Doing

### Disruption of the Educational Process

School is a place to learn and to be a part of a community. If a student is behaving in a way that does not allow other children to learn, school staff will need to intervene with the students. Students, whether receiving general or special education services, may need to receive interventions for disruptive behavior. Acts of misconduct are subject to disciplinary action by appropriate school personnel. Unacceptable conduct is defined as whether it disrupts or has the potential to disrupt the educational process. Consequences will result for cases such as bullying, fighting, harassment, inappropriate use of cell phones or other electronic devices, use or possession of e-cigarettes and other forms of disrupting the Education process or violation of laws, rules, and regulations. This handbook follows VGHS, State, and Federal guidelines.

VGHS is a community, and the rules and regulations of VGHS are the laws and expectations of our community. The right to a public education is not absolute; it may be taken away, temporarily, or permanently, for violation of school rules.

## Disciplinary Procedures (NEW for the 2024-25 School Year)

With a new School Director for the 2024-25 School Year, the VGHS Disciplinary Procedures will be updated. However, this will take time as the new School Director comes in and evaluates the needs of the school as it pertains to behavior, interventions and supports. While the new plan is being developed and finalized, students can expect to be held accountable for their behaviors. Consequences for disciplinary offenses may range from a verbal warning for minor offenses to detention, suspensions, Friday School, parent meetings and behavioral contracts. The behavior management plan will be designed to serve as a guide when the staff or school director determines consequences. Staff will evaluate situations and assign disciplinary consequences in a fair and consistent manner, often working with the student to take ownership and decide on reasonable restitution. The disciplinary procedures represent the guidelines in the dispensation of consequences at VGHS. However, depending on the circumstances of the behavior, responses may vary from situation to situation.

The following is a **non-exhaustive list of disciplinary offenses**, broken out into three levels. As a general proposition the higher the level, the more serious the misconduct. Please refer to the glossary of terms at the end of this handbook.

**Level I** – When possible, these types of behaviors will be handled daily and according to the in-class/whole school policies and norms for each teacher. These responses may include, but are not limited to, verbal redirects, assigned seating, and group discussions/interventions. Repeated Level I violations will have consequences.

- General Disruptive Conduct (rudeness, dishonesty, causing distraction, etc.)
- Electronic Devices (see electronic policy)
- Out of class, tardy, wandering
- Inappropriate use of technology (see electronic policy)
- Lack of respect for the physical environment (creating messes, littering, etc.)
- Violation of class norms or academic environment
- Food or Beverage in class (see policy)
- Public displays of affection (see policy)
- Profanity
- Non productivity or sleeping in class
- Possession of incendiary device
- Dress Code violations
- Mild play fighting
- Destruction of school property
- Disruption of the educational environment

**Level II** – These behaviors are more serious; they generally require more intervention so students can engage in a productive learning environment.

- Tech Use policy violation
- Disrespect or defiance
- Public displays of affection
- Wandering hallways
- Leaving campus (no pass)
- Insubordination
- Possession of inappropriate materials
- Leaving campus without being properly signed out

- Failure to comply with discipline policy
- Falsifying official documents
- Defiance of school authorities
- Dress Code Violations
- Failure to comply with Tardy policy
- Intentional lying and/or making a false report
- Language, profane and/or abusive
- Cutting class
- Destruction of school property
- Disruption of the educational environment

A student may be recommended for expulsion from school based on grounds outlined in the Vista Grande High School Policy, in addition to any laws or regulations for the State of New Mexico. Additionally, a student may be recommended for expulsion if he/she has been suspended three times in one school year.

Expulsion, after an official hearing is mandatory under state law for:

1. Carrying, bringing, using, or possessing a deadly weapon without authorization to the school or the district. A deadly weapon includes, but is not limited to, a loaded or unloaded firearm, a knife, a bludgeon, or any other weapon/instrument which, in the way it is used or intended to be used, is capable of producing death or serious bodily injury.
2. The selling of, including the exchange, distribution or gift of drugs or controlled substances, as defined by state law, including anabolic steroids and prescription drugs.

## Academics

### Attendance and Truancy

#### Attendance for Success

Vista Grande High School complies with the NM Attendance for Success Act, which requires that school attendance data be reported to the NM Public Education Department. Students are expected to attend daily. For more information about the Attendance for Success Act, visit: Attendance for Success – New Mexico Public Education Department ([state.nm.us](http://state.nm.us)).

VGHS will be focusing on **chronic** (*10 percent or more of class periods*) and **excessive student absences** (*20 percent or more of class periods*). The new School Director will work with the School Social Worker to develop the framework for this attendance plan during the 1st Quarter of the 2024-25 school year. When the plan is finalized, it will be shared with students, staff and families. Attendance is a huge focus and key component to student success (academics, socially, emotionally).

VGHS policy allows for at least 10 days of excused medical absences for the birth of a child, and at least 4 days for pregnancy or parenting.

Excused medical absences, including medical absences for students on 504 plans and students who are expectant or parenting, are included when determining students' attendance intervention tiers.

However, for students who are excessively absent (students missing 20 percent or more of class periods or school days), additional excused medical absences are not considered when determining whether a student must be referred to the probation services office.

**Students are not allowed to sign themselves out of school. If a student leaves without being properly signed out they will be considered unexcused.**

Habitual tardiness and/or leaving early may be used in determining attendance rate.

VGHS policy requires students to be in attendance the day before a school event to be able to participate in the event. (i.e. A student must be in school the Friday before prom to be able to attend)

If your student will be out of school, please call and inform our front office at 575-758-5100.

### **Remote or Homebound Learning**

When it is determined that a remote or homebound placement for a student is necessary and appropriate, the School Director may approve such a placement. Students are ultimately responsible for ensuring they are receiving, completing and submitting any and all assignments. In order to qualify for a 'Remote' or 'Homebound' placement, the student will need a letter from a licensed Medical Doctor (M.D.). The letter needs to state the reason for the student's medical need and why the student needs to have a 'Remote' or 'Homebound' placement. **This letter cannot be from anyone other than an M.D. (ie. NOT from a Physician's Assistant).**

### **Tiers of Support**

Every student falls into one of four tiers of support, based on their percentage of classes or days absent for ANY reason. (See chart, pg. 59)

**Tier I** – Whole School Prevention, less than 5% of classes absent

**Tier II** – Individualized Prevention, 5% of classes absent

**Tier III** – Early Intervention, 10% of classes absent (Chronically absent)

**Tier IV** – Intensive Support, 20% of classes absent (Excessively absent)

In each tier the VGHS attendance team has identified specific interventions to support the student and/or family in improving the student's attendance.

### **VGHS respects the Sovereignty of Native Tribes**

While Native students are still subject to the same attendance laws as other students, VGHS is committed to working with families and tribes to understand specific tribal customs, practices, and laws as well as any specific communication needs of tribe or family. VGHS would like to encourage the inclusion of tribal representatives/suggestions in any attendance contract to ensure the inclusion of culturally relevant support, additional resources, and to deepen the understanding of needs specific to the tribe, family, and/or student. Tribes or Native Families are encouraged to request this in the implementation of the attendance policy. Absences due to traditional activities must be excused by the Governor's Office. Parents are responsible for requesting and providing the documentation to the school.

## **Facts & Information**

### **Emergency Information**

In case of emergency each student is required to have on file at the school office the following information:

- Parent(s) or guardian(s) name(s).
- Complete and up-to-date address.
- Home phone, parent(s) work phone and mobile phone if available.

- Emergency phone number of three (3) friends or relatives.
- Physician's name and phone.
- Medical alert information.

### Fundraising Activities

Plans for fundraising must be presented to the Director in advance. These plans must include the appropriate provisions for safety in the implementation of all activities and must be in line with the overall fundraising strategies and activities of the school.

### Leaving campus due to illness

Any student needing to leave campus due to illness must be signed out by a parent/guardian. If a student returns to campus that day, s/he should sign back in at the office returning to VGHS. Leaving campus without checking with VGHS faculty is considered truancy.

### Lost and Found

The school's lost and found is in the lobby. Items will be donated to charity or kept in the school's loan closet at the end of each semester.

### Protocols for After School and Evening events sanctioned by VGHS

Students may organize after school and evening events. To do so, they must proceed according to the following protocol: At least four weeks before the event, students must:

- Discuss plans with their Crew leader – set a date far enough in advance in order to assure that the students can properly plan the event. They must have approval from their crew leader before proceeding.
- Before requesting permission from the VGHS office, students must be certain that they have at least one VGHS staff person who will supervise the event and enough parents to serve as chaperones.

Three weeks before the event:

- Request permission from the administrative assistant in the VGHS office. They will check with the custodial staff to see if the event can be scheduled on the date requested.

Two weeks before the event:

- Give the custodial staff directions as to how the room is to be set up.
- Finalize staff member(s) and chaperones for the event
- Plan for decorations and for clean up

Chaperones are responsible for supervising and disciplining students at these events. At the conclusion of the event, students and chaperones are responsible for cleaning up and returning the spaces used to their original state.

### Responsibility for Students at All-School Events for Families

Parents and guardians are responsible for monitoring and supervising their children at all school events. Children who are not behaving in an appropriate manner will be brought to parents by school staff. Students may be removed from events due to disruptive behavior (see Matrix).

### Responsibility for Personal Property

All personal property brought onto school property is brought at the owner's risk. **VGHS cannot assume responsibility for any property belonging to students.** Distracting or inappropriate objects will be taken from a student and returned at the end of the day. Repeated violations will require a parent conference. Students should not bring large sums of money to school.

### School Supplies

It is the responsibility of students to come to school with appropriate materials. A yearly list of supplies will be provided to parents. Please contact the school office if your family needs support in obtaining these supplies.

### Skateboards/Rollerblades/Scooters/Roller-shoes/Bicycles

Because of concerns for safety and security, skateboards and rollerblades are not to be used at anytime on campus. Bicycles shall be dismounted once on campus. Bicycle and skateboard use to and from school requires use of a helmet (effective July 1, 2007 new state law). Parents can be cited by CYFD for failure to have their students comply with this statute.

### Solicitation

Students are not to be solicited for money unless a project has been approved by the Director. No sale of items is to be conducted at the school by students for community drives.

### Student Medications

Students are not allowed to carry any medication without school staff knowledge and following school Medication Procedures. If it becomes necessary for a student to receive a prescription medication during the school day:

- Medication must be prescribed by a licensed medical provider
- Written permission of parent/guardian and Doctors Order signed by student's medical provider must be given to school office or school staff member prior to bringing medication of any kind on to school grounds.
- Medication must come to school office in the original prescription container filled by a pharmacy, and must include
  - Name of patient
  - Name of medication
  - Dosage, and time to be given.
- The medication will be stored in a locked cabinet at school unless student's medical provider gives written permission for student to carry and self-administer.
- Students are never allowed to carry controlled substances including Ritalin, Tylenol with Codeine, Hydrocodone, Lortab, etc. If a controlled substance is needed at school, it must be brought to school by a parent or guardian and given directly to a school staff member.

If students are found with medication that has not been prescribed to them, or they have not followed school medication procedures, then the school Drug and Alcohol Policy will apply. If there are any questions about the procedures for medication in the school, please contact school staff or the director.

The only exception to the above is that students are allowed to carry and self-administer asthma medication and emergency anaphylaxis medication that has been legally prescribed to the student by a licensed health care provider under the following conditions:

- (1) the health care provider has instructed the student in the correct and responsible use of the medication.
- (2) the student has demonstrated to the health care provider and the school nurse or other school official the skill level necessary to use

the medication and any device that is necessary to administer the medication as prescribed.

(3) the health care provider formulates a written treatment plan for managing asthma or anaphylaxis episodes of the student and for medication use by the student during school hours or school-sponsored activities, including transit to or from school or school-sponsored activities; and

(4) the student's parent has completed and submitted to the school any written documentation required by the school or the school district, including the treatment plan required in Paragraph (3) of this subsection and other documents related to liability.

The parent of a student who is allowed to carry and self-administer asthma medication and emergency anaphylaxis medication may provide the school with backup medication that shall be kept in a location to which the student has immediate access in the event of an asthma or anaphylaxis emergency.

Authorized school personnel who in good faith provide a person with backup medication as provided in this section shall not be held liable for civil damages as a result of providing the medication.

### **Telephone Policies**

To limit disruption to the classroom, students will not be called to the telephone except in cases of emergency. Messages may be left. Students **may not** use the telephone in the cafe without permission from the school office nor may they use the classroom phones without permission. Personal cell phones are never allowed in class.

### **Telephone Directory**

VGHS will publish an annual student directory that contains a listing of students, parents/guardians, home addresses and phone numbers who have released their information to the community. Please contact the office if you wish to be excluded from the directory.

### **Visitors**

For the protection of all members of the VGHS community there is a doorbell at the front door of the school. Please be patient if we are delayed answering the door. While VGHS welcomes visitors, it is important to plan--visitations should be set up a week in advance. Staff reserves the right to deny requests, depending upon the academic needs of the classroom. Parents are always welcome on our campus, but for the safety of students, please sign in at the office. Any student visiting VGHS with a VGHS student must obtain permission in the principal's office the day before the visit. High school students are not allowed to bring younger children to school at any time.

### **Student Enrollment**

VGHS enrolls students by lottery. There are no admissions requirements. Interested students are selected by randomly choosing names from among all of those registered on our list until the limit of enrollment is reached. Once the available slots have been filled, waiting lists will be maintained. When a space becomes available, the next student on the list and his or her family will be notified and invited to enroll in the school. Current students and children living in the same household as current students are given priority over the lottery system when VGHS makes enrollment decisions for the following school year.



Each new student interested in enrolling will have the option to visit while VGHS is in session as long as arrangements have been made ahead of time.

### Enrollment Priority

1. Returning students
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students
3. Lottery participants who will be entering 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades
4. Siblings of newly selected students will be moved to the top of the waiting list of their grade at the time of his/her sibling's enrollment provided they have an application already on file.

### Definition of a Sibling

- Must share at least one biological parent AND a household at least 50% of the time.
- If siblings are not biological siblings, proof of guardianship must be provided. Foster children may be considered as a sibling with legal proof of guardianship.

#### **Step-siblings may qualify if they meet these requirements:**

- They must share a household with the enrolled sibling at least 50% of the time, and proof must be provided (court/custody order). AND
- Parents are legally married OR
- The biological parent of the enrolled sibling must adopt or take legal guardianship over the applicant with proof (court documents).

#### **Acceptable forms of proof (VGHS may request notarization):**

- Court/custody orders
- Affidavit/acknowledgement of paternity
- Copies of Birth Certificates
- Marriage licenses

### Sibling Policy

- It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school and fill out an enrollment application for siblings applying for the lottery by the deadline announced.
- When two siblings are in the lottery and one wins a spot, the other goes to the top of the waiting list for his/her grade, as mandated by state law.
- If there is a mid-year vacancy, and a new student is enrolled who has a sibling on the waiting list, that sibling goes to the top of the waiting list for his/her grade, as mandated by state law.
- Siblings do not have automatic entry into the school until there is an opening in their grade, provided they have an application already on file.

### Enrollment

- The parent or legal guardian of the child or children who are applying for enrollment must make all applications for enrollment.
- Applications will be accepted for one grade only. Students must reapply every year, unless the child is already enrolled.
- Current students must submit a re-enrollment form by a specified date to maintain a space.
- The lottery for enrollment will be held in mid-April. The exact date will be announced on the radio and in the newspaper each year.
- Selected students will be notified with an acceptance letter and a registration confirmation form that must be returned by the deadline stated. Students will be considered enrolled if VGHS receives the signed registration confirmation within the stated time frame. If the form is late, the student will be placed on the waiting list for his/her grade.

- If there are more siblings interested in enrolling than the total room allowed, there will be a separate lottery among them.

### **Enrollment after the 40th day of school**

All students enrolling after the 40<sup>th</sup> day will be given the opportunity to attend a “shadow day” at VGHS. The student and parent will participate in a social conference with all staff at the conclusion of the shadow school day. At the social conference it will be determined if the student will attend VGHS. If the student will attend VGHS the student and parent will meet weekly with the School Director to ensure that the student will be successful at VGHS.

### **Waiting List**

Waiting lists do not transfer from year to year. VGHS will not maintain a waiting list for a student who wishes to be admitted in future years. Applicants must reapply every year. Students who are not initially selected for enrollment will be placed on the VGHS waiting list according to grade.

### **Separate waiting lists will be maintained for each grade.**

If necessary, separate waiting lists will be maintained for each grade for siblings of enrolled students. All children who apply for enrollment after the lottery are added to the waiting list in the order in which their applications are received. If an applicant from the waiting list is offered a position and does not accept it within the allotted time, s/he will be placed at the bottom of the waiting list for his/her grade, or if requested, dropped from the waiting list.

### **Lottery and Enrollment Practice**

The lottery will take place mid-May of each school year to draw students for the following year. It is a public drawing and all community members are welcome. The lottery will take an equal number of students from each grade to make the grades as close to 24 students as possible.

If a parent/student refuses their spot but want to remain on the waiting list, his/her name automatically goes to the bottom of the list for his/her grade.

### **Confirmation of Enrollment**

- Parents/guardians must confirm their child’s enrollment by returning the completed registration form by the date and time indicated.
- When moving from the waiting list to admittance, applicants must verbally confirm enrollment within three (3) school days from initial contact from the school at which time non-confirmed students will be dropped from the admissions or waiting list.
- The parents or legal guardians who do not properly confirm their child’s enrollment will be dropped from the admission list and placed at the end of the waiting list.
- If the school cannot make positive verbal contact with an applicant after three attempts within two weeks to confirm enrollment or notify them of an opening, the applicant will be dropped from the admission list or the waiting list.
- Parents or guardians of the applicant are responsible for maintaining the information on the enrollment application and must notify VGHS, in writing, of any change of address, telephone number, or other information necessary for VGHS to contact the applicant. VGHS is not responsible for maintaining information or continuing any search.

### **Information Required for Enrollment**

Upon acceptance of enrollment, the parent/guardian will be required to provide the following information prior to admission:

- o Original birth certificate, legal copy of birth certificate, or other legal proof of birth.
- o Copy of social security card.
- o Current immunization and health records  
*Note: No child will be admitted without current immunization records and a legal proof of birth.*
- o Information release form authorizing the VGHS to share or request any and all records, information, or data determined by VGHS to be relevant to the student's attending VGHS.
- o Individual Education Plan (IEP) or other special education requirements.
- o Parent Packet forms signed and returned.
- o Meeting with a VGHS representative to discuss the handbook and other information to help set up the new students for a positive VGHS experience.

## Other Key Policies

### Policy for Communication with School Personnel

Here are some key points to remember when you are communicating with school personnel about your child's educational needs:

- Please schedule meetings with your child's teacher in advance. Please understand that a teacher's responsibilities may prevent accommodation of a request for an immediate meeting. Please request the meeting within one week of the concern, issue, or incident, so that the discussion may be timely.
- It would be helpful to be prepared for the meeting by writing down your issues, what you want to say, and questions you would like answered. Write down your solutions and recommendations as well.
- Your child's educational needs are best met when you and your child's teacher work together, and acknowledge each other's efforts toward your mutual goals.
- Stay positive and calm throughout the conversation. Avoid blaming or becoming defensive. All parties are expected to be respectful and courteous. Any teacher or school employee reserves the right to terminate a meeting in the event of inappropriate or abusive behavior.
- Listen to the staff's point of view and suggestions with an open mind.
- Ask the teacher to clarify any school "lingo" – language used by educators that you might not understand.
- Agree together on an appropriate, informal intervention plan or resolution. Share responsibility for the success of the plan. Make a note of this plan. Be clear about commitments and next steps – yours and the teacher's.
- If you feel a follow up meeting or phone call is necessary, and this has not already been scheduled as part of the plan you and the teacher created, you are welcome to initiate the meeting or call.
- The parent, teacher, or Director may request a Student Assistance Team (SAT evaluation – child study for educational, emotional, social, behavioral needs) if it is felt that a more formal plan is necessary.
- If the situation is not resolved through meeting with the teacher or SAT process, please use a Parent/Guardian dispute Resolution Request Form available in the school office to provide information regarding the issue and to request a meeting with the Director.
- The Director is available to mediate issues between the parent/guardian and teacher. Any party may request mediation as part of the process. In case of the needs for a parent/guardian Director mediation, another mediator will be made available.
- If the situation is still not resolved through an in-person meeting with the Director, then and only then, request in writing to be placed on the Governing Council agenda. Individual personnel issues will be addressed in executive session only, rather than open session. Any Governing Council member approached by a parent will respectfully redirect the parent to this process.

- After the Governing Council has addressed the issue--and their recommendation has been followed by the school, director, or staff member--the issue will be considered resolved by the school. While the goal is to identify and execute a positive solution, if the parent/guardian is still in disagreement, reflection on school placement is the family's prerogative and responsibility

### **Civility Policy**

The VGHS is committed to: treating all persons including parents, employees, students and other members of the public with respect and expects the same in return; and maintaining orderly educational and administrative processes in keeping schools and administrative offices free from disruptions and preventing unauthorized persons from entering school/district grounds and facilities. All members of VGHS will treat all persons including parents, teachers, students and other members of the public with respect and expects the same in return.

This policy promotes mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among employees, parents and the public. This policy is not intended to deprive any person of his/her rights to freedom of expression, but only to maintain, to the extent possible and reasonable, safe, harassment-free schools and workplaces for students, staff, and parents. In the interest of presenting district employees as positive role models to the students of the District as well as the community the Board encourages positive communication and discourages volatile, hostile or aggressive actions. The District seeks public cooperation with this endeavor, and reserves the right to restrict access to school facilities or activities to any and all individuals who disregard this requirement for civil behavior on school property.

### **Retention and Acceleration of Students**

Grade retention or acceleration may increase the likelihood that students will succeed in meeting challenging academic expectations at the next grade level. Retention provides a second opportunity to master skills, while acceleration increases the likelihood that academic expectations will be challenging.

Grade retention or acceleration of students will depend on several factors, including all of the following:

1. Academic skills
2. Maturity
3. Satisfactory completion of work
4. Likely success in completing the academic work at the next grade level
5. State standardized test scores
6. Parental input
7. Lacking credits

Grade retention or acceleration will be based on the best interests of the student and his/her educational success. A student will be retained or accelerated if the Director and the student's teacher agree that grade retention or acceleration is in the best interests of the student based on the general considerations above.

Procedural guidelines for retention or acceleration of a student are as follows:

1. The teacher and or Director will confer with the parents at the spring student led conference before the end of the school year about the reasons that grade retention or acceleration may be recommended.
2. The parents, Director, teacher, and other appropriate staff will confer about the student's educational needs at least two months before the end of the school year. If retention or acceleration is to be a consideration, academic interventions to address the student's needs will be developed and implemented.

3. The Director, teacher, and parents will confer prior to the end of the school year about the student's progress. Based on this, the student will be retained or accelerated if the Director decides that it is in the best interests of the student. Strong consideration will be given to the parental concerns; however, the Director will make the final decision.

In such instances, an academic plan will be prepared that includes the following:

- A summary of the school's interventions during the current year to meet the student's academic needs.
- The interventions to be implemented during the next school year to meet the student's academic needs.

### **Graduating Seniors**

If a senior does not have all of the necessary credits and graduation requirements to graduate at the end of the first semester, parents will be notified in January that their student will not be allowed to walk in the spring graduation ceremony. Students who have attended four years at VGHS are eligible to walk in the spring graduation and receive a certificate of attendance.

### **Rights Under Title IX**

VGHS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap in its educational program or activities as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, respectively.

### **Section 504 Accommodations**

Under the provisions of Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, public schools must make sure that all students, regardless of disability, have equivalent opportunities to participate in a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This provision applies to qualifying disabled students whose disabilities are not so severe as to create IDEA eligibility. The 504 compliance with the provisions of Section 504 and for investigating complaints will be attended to by the director. For further information, contact the Director.

### **The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

FERPA is a Federal law that governs the maintenance of student education records. Under that law, parents of students or students who are at least 18 years of age ("eligible students") have both the right to inspect education records kept by the school about the student and the right to correct inaccuracies in the record. Access to these records by persons other than the parents or the student is limited and generally requires prior consent by the parent or the student. The school has adopted a written policy governing all the rights of parents and students under FERPA.

The VGHS Governing Council hereby gives its annual public notice to all parents and eligible students that:

- VGHS maintains the following education records directly related to students and subject to the limitations on disclosure provided in FERPA: academic records, personal information records, disciplinary records, attendance records, health records, progress reports, and standardized testing records.
- Access to education records is limited to: parents of students under 18 and parents of students over 18, if such student is dependent as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, the student, officials of this school who have a legitimate educational interest, federal, state, and local officials to whom information is required to be reported, certain test organizations, accrediting organizations, appropriate persons in connection with an emergency, pursuant to subpoena or court order, to any person, with the written consent of the parent or eligible student.
- VGHS policy requires that education records be kept to an essential or relevant minimum. Records are reviewed at the end of each school year and non-essential and irrelevant material is deleted.

- VGHS policy limits the right of access to education records to the persons and circumstances indicated in the second paragraph above. VGHS requires that copies be made available to persons entitled to receive copies. VGHS policy provides that explanations and interpretations of records are available upon reasonable advance notice. Some records, such as standardized test scores and other material of a technical nature, may only be reviewed with a person qualified to interpret and explain such material and records. VGHS policy provides the right to request in writing an amendment of the student's educational records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. If records contain information on more than one student, the right to inspect relates only to that portion of the records concerning the particular student in question.
- FERPA classifies certain types of information that generally would not be considered to be an invasion of privacy or harmful if released as "student directory information." Unless the parent or eligible student objects in writing as described below, school officials may release directory information, as defined under VGHS policy, to any person, including but not limited to colleges, and the media, without the consent of the parents or the eligible student. Parents/students who object to the release of any or all of this information without consent must notify, in writing, to the director within fifteen (15) days following the date of the publication of this notice (or the enrollment of the student, if after the beginning of the school year). The objection must state what information the parent or student does not wish released. Written objections may be filed at the VGHS office. In the absence of timely notice objecting to its release, the listed information will be classified as directory information until the beginning of the next school year. "Directory information" as defined includes: the student's name; grade in school; name of school; eligibility and participation in officially recognized activities, including but not limited to fine arts exhibits, performing arts programs, other performances, graduation programs and sports events; weight and height of members of athletic teams; honors and awards received; yearbooks; and identification in visual media, including photographs, videotapes and video images, depicting school programs or activities.
- Questions regarding education records shall be directed to the school's director, the custodian of records. Complaints about the failure of VGHS to comply with FERPA may be made in writing, to FERPA Office, Department of Health and Human Services, 330 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20201.

### Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) 20 U.S.C. § 1232h, requires schools to notify you and obtain consent or allow you to opt your child out of participating in certain school activities. These activities include a student survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns any of the following eight specific areas ("protected information surveys"): Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent; mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family; sexual behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships; legally-recognized privileged relationships, such as with doctors, lawyers, or ministers; religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; and income, other as required by law to determine program eligibility.

This requirement also applies to the collection, disclosure, or use of student information for marketing purposes ("marketing surveys") and certain physical examinations and screenings ("activities").

VGHS does not currently plan to administer surveys that seek any of the "protected information" detailed above. Should a situation arise where such a survey needs to be administered, the school will provide notification to parents within a reasonable period of time prior to the administration of the surveys and activities. Parents will be provided with an explanation of the activity and will have an opportunity to review the surveys and any instructional materials used in connection therewith. Parents will have the opportunity

to consent to or opt their child out of participation. The rights granted by PPRA, as well as the opportunity to consent/opt out, transfer from parents to any student who is 18 years old or is an emancipated minor under State law. Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with: Family Policy Compliance Office, U. S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-5901.

### Special Education Procedures

VGHS will provide special education services in accordance with mandates of law, the Public Education Department, and the VGHS Charter.

Prior to enrollment, we will meet with parents to discuss the needs of individual students. EL encourages differential instruction within the mainstream classroom, a model which can support many students with special needs. However, it is important to meet with the Special Education teacher or IEP team to determine how VGHS can be a supportive environment for the student. Incoming students with IEPs will have a transition meeting so specific services can be provided in the least restrictive environment. Services include but are not limited to:

- Support to educators in order to make accommodations in the general classroom environment.
- Direct consultation with a student (e.g. reminders, checking on progress).
- Effective support to help students adjust to learning difficulties and become an advocate for their learning styles.
- Monitoring of the IEP and annual reviews.
- Communication with school administration, teachers, school personnel and a parent/guardian.
- Working with community partners to provide support.

The referral process for special education begins with the general education teacher providing and documenting interventions and completing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) through the RTI model. If a student does not respond to interventions the case is escalated to the Student Assistance Team (SAT) where intervention specialists are involved who may suggest additional interventions. The SAT team will follow the New Mexican RTI process. For details on this process and your rights, visit the PED website: For details on this process and your rights visit <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/SEB/index>.

*\*For more information regarding Special Education at VGHS, please contact the VGHS special education teachers.*

### Student Emergencies

If a student becomes seriously ill or injured at school, parent/guardian contact will be made as specified on the school emergency card. A parent/guardian must keep the school informed of any changes in work, home, or emergency phone numbers. Every effort will be made to inform a parent/guardian quickly. A parent/guardian must notify the school regarding child custody information that affects the release of health and academic records, or the release of the child from school. Students will be released only to their parent/guardian, unless the school has received written notification of changes.

### Student Records/Paperwork

Mandatory paperwork is sent to students each year and must be on file by the first week of school. Failure to turn in paperwork may prevent your child from participating in fieldwork and other activities. In accordance with state law, VGHS cannot allow students who do not have the proper immunization records on file to attend school. **The following information is required for all students:**

- Immunization Records
- IEP/504 (if applicable)

- Transcripts
- Confidential Medical Form
- Family & Emergency Contact Info
- Release of Liability Form

### **Withdrawal from School / Transfer of Records**

If a parent/guardian and student move to another school district during the school year or summer months, the student's records will be sent to the appropriate school at the request of that school. Parents must submit a withdrawal form prior to departure. This form is available in the school office. On the last day of withdrawal, students should have in their possession all books and materials in order to return those items. A parent/guardian should be certain that there are no fees due to the school at the time of withdrawal. Forwarding of transcripts and records may be delayed pending the payment of such fees.

### **Students Staying with Another Family**

If a student is staying with another family in the absence of the parent/guardian for a short term, the office must be notified with a note stating the dates the parent/guardian will be away and the name and number of the designated responsible person. This information will be used in case of an illness or an emergency.

### **Procedures for Suspension/Expulsion Hearings**

In compliance with Title Six, Chapter Eleven, Part Two of the Public School Administrative Code for Primary and Secondary Education in New Mexico, a particular process must be followed in severe disciplinary cases such as long-term suspension or expulsion. Until this process is followed, a student can only be suspended due to alleged misconduct for less than 10 school days. The process below comes from 6.11.2.12 of the New Mexico Administrative Code, "Procedures for Detentions, Suspensions and Expulsions."

### **Parental Notification of a Hearing**

A letter must be mailed or hand delivered to the parents of the student in question, and a formal hearing must be scheduled 5-10 days after the parents receive the letter. The letter must include the following:

- I. A description of the disruptive behavior, a concise statement of alleged act on which charges are based and statement of possible penalty.
- II. Hearing Date and Time: Both the student and the parents are encouraged to attend.
- III. Delays/Waivers/Failure to Appear: The hearing will take place as scheduled unless the hearing authority grants a delay, or the student and parents agree to waive the hearing and comply voluntarily with the proposed disciplinary action or with a negotiated penalty. Warning: A failure to appear will not delay the hearing and may lead to the imposition of the imposed penalty by default.
- IV. Right to Representation: The student has the right to be represented at the hearing by legal counsel, a parent or some other representative. This representative must be designated in a written notice, filed at least 72 hours before the hearing with VGHS.
- V. Description of the procedures of the hearing: The formal hearing is not a trial. It is an administrative hearing designed to ensure a calm, orderly determination by an impartial hearing authority of the facts of a case of alleged serious misconduct. Technical rules of evidence and procedure do not apply. For further information regarding the procedure of the hearing, please see attached.
- VI. Contact Person: Director, VGHS, 213 Paseo del Canon East, Taos, NM 87571. Student and family may request a delay, assign a representative to speak, discuss the evidence to be presented, or seek further information from this contact person.

### **Specifics of the Hearing Process**



Waiver of Hearing: Voluntary Compliance or Negotiated Penalty: A student and his or her parent(s) may elect to waive the formal hearing and review procedures and comply voluntarily with the proposed penalty, or may waive the hearing and review and negotiate a mutually acceptable penalty with the designated disciplinarian. Such a waiver and compliance agreement shall be made voluntarily, with knowledge of the rights being relinquished, and shall be evidenced by a written document signed by the student, the parent(s), and the appropriate school official.

Right of Review: A student or parent aggrieved by the Hearing Authority's decision after a formal hearing shall have the right to have the decision reviewed by the VGHS Governing Council if the penalty imposed was at least as severe as long-term suspension or expulsion, an in-school suspension exceeding one school semester, or a denial or restriction of student privileges for one semester or longer.

Conduct of Review: The school board shall be bound by the Hearing Authority's factual determination unless the student persuades the Review Authority (VGHS Governing Council) that a finding of fact was arbitrary, capricious, or unsupported by substantial evidence or that new evidence which has come to light since the hearing and which could not with reasonable diligence have been discovered in time for the hearing would manifestly change the factual determination. Upon such finding, the Review Authority shall have discretion to receive new evidence or conduct a new hearing.

Effect of Review Authority's Decision: The VGHS Governing Council's decision shall be the final administrative action to which the student is entitled.

Rules Governing the Conduct of the Hearing:

- (i) The school shall have the burden of proof of misconduct. The school's representative shall be a VGHS teacher or an appropriate individual enlisted by the VGHS Governing Council Board.
- (ii) The student and his or her parent shall have the following rights: The right to be represented by legal counsel or other designated representative, however, the school is not required to provide representation; the right to present evidence, subject to reasonable requirements of substantiation at the discretion of the hearing authority and subject to exclusion of evidence deemed irrelevant or redundant; the right to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, subject to reasonable limitation by the hearing authority; the right to have a decision based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and the applicable legal rules, including the governing rules of student conduct.
- (iii) The hearing authority shall determine whether the alleged act(s) of misconduct have been proved by a preponderance of the evidence presented at a hearing at which the student and/or a designated representative have appeared. The hearing authority will be designated by the chief administrator of VGHS, and may be one or more persons. Persons qualified to serve in the position of hearing authority include the chief administrator of VGHS, individual VGHS Council Members, or appropriate third parties enlisted by the VGHS Council. Any individual Council Member serving as hearing authority in a hearing cannot serve with the rest of the Council as a hearing authority in a subsequent review of that same case.
- (iv) If no one has appeared on the student's behalf within a reasonable time after the announced time for the hearing, the hearing authority shall determine whether the student, through the parent, received notice of the hearing. If so, the hearing authority shall review the schools' evidence to determine whether it is sufficient to support the charges(s) of misconduct.
- (v) The disciplinarian shall be the VGHS Director or designee. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian shall impose an appropriate sanction if (s)he finds that the allegations of misconduct have been proved under the standards of either Subsection G, Paragraph (4), Subparagraph (1), Sub-subparagraph (iii) or Sub-subparagraph (iv) of Section 6.11.2.12 NMAC. A hearing authority who is not a disciplinarian shall report its findings, together with any recommended sanction, to the disciplinarian promptly after the hearing.
- (vi) Arrangements to make a tape recording or keep minutes of the proceedings shall be made by the administrative authority who scheduled the hearing and prepared the written notice. A verbatim

written transcript is not required, but any minutes or other written record shall fairly reflect the substance of the evidence presented.

- (vii) The hearing authority may announce a decision on the question of whether the allegation(s) of misconduct have been proved at the close of the hearing. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian may also impose a penalty at the close of the hearing.
- (viii) In any event, the hearing authority shall prepare and mail or deliver to the student, through the parent, a written decision within five (5) working days after the hearing. The decision shall include a concise summary of the evidence upon which the hearing authority based its factual determinations. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian shall include in the report a statement of the penalty, if any, to be imposed, and shall state reasons for the chosen penalty. A hearing authority who is not a disciplinarian shall forward a copy of his or her written decision to the disciplinarian forthwith. The disciplinarian shall prepare a written decision, including reasons for choosing any penalty imposed, and mail or deliver it to the student, through the parent, within five (5) working days of receipt of the hearing authority's report.
- (ix) The hearing authority's decision shall take effect immediately upon notification to the parent, either at the close of the hearing or upon receipt of the written decision. If notification is by mail, the parent shall be presumed to have received the notice on the fifth calendar day after date of mailing.

### **Glossary of Terms**

#### Absences, Excessive

Attendance, which falls below 95% in a grading period.

#### Arson

Maliciously, willfully and/or neglectfully starting, by any means, a fire or causing an explosion on school property or at any school-related activity. Arson I: less than \$200 damage; arson II: \$200 to \$999 damage; Arson III; \$1,000 damage or more.

#### Assault

A verbal threat or physical attempt of bodily harm.

#### Assault Aggravated

Unlawfully assaulting or attempting to strike at another person with a weapon, instrument or any means of force likely to produce bodily injury. Assault on staff members are included in this definition.

#### Battery Aggravated

An actual and intentional touching or striking of another person against his or her will with the use of a weapon or intentionally causing bodily harm to an individual.

### Battery/Fighting

Unlawful, intentional touching or application of force to another person, when done in a rude, disrespectful or angry manner.

### Bullying

Using power aggressively in which a person/group is subjected to intentional, unwanted and unprovoked hurtful verbal and/or physical actions. The aggression is repeated on more than one occasion and can include either: physical, verbal, emotional, racial, sexual, written, electronic communication that targets a specific student/group with intent to harm; is published with the communication that targets a specific student/group with intent to harm; is published with the intention that the communication be seen or disclosed to the targeted student/group; is in fact seen or disclosed to the targeted student/group; and creates or is certain to create a hostile environment on the school campus that is so severe or pervasive as to substantially interfere with the targeted student's/group's educational benefits, opportunities or performance. Those who encourage bullying in a digital or cyber environment may be subject to corrective action on any occasion.

### Bus Disruption

Deliberately or inadvertently interfering with the safe operation of school bus, which is stopped or moving; behaving in a manner adversely affecting an individual or a property on or near the bus itself, at bus stops or at pick-up areas.

### Controlled Substance, Paraphernalia Possession

Possessing any paraphernalia, such as but not limited to rolling paper, pipes or bongs.

### Controlled Substance, Possession

Possessing any substance capable of producing a change in behavior or altering a state of mind or feeling; having a 'look-alike,' a substance that looks like a controlled substance.

### Controlled Substance, Sole or Distribution

Selling or distributing a substance capable of producing a change in behavior or altering a state of mind or feeling; including a "look-a-like." or an item sold as a controlled substance.

### Controlled Substance, Use

Absorbing a substance capable of producing a change in behavior or altering a state of mind or feeling, including a look-a-like or an item sold as a controlled substance.

### Dress Code Violation

Non-compliance with specific school dress codes.

### Expulsion

The removal of a student from VGHS for a period exceeding one ( 1) semester. In some cases expulsion may be a permanent removal from this school system.

### Extortion

Using intimidation or the threat of violence to obtain money, information or anything else of value from another person.

### False Accusations

False Accusations are defined in accordance with New Mexico Criminal Code Statute; falsely reporting crimes or purposely giving false information to a School administrator or other investigator during the process of an investigation.

### Firearm, Possession/Use

Possession or use of any weapon, which will propel a projectile by the action of an explosive, and other weapons as defined in the United States Code: Title 18, Section 921 This definition does not apply to items such as toy guns, cap guns, bb guns, and pellet guns, but does include bombs, grenades and some explosives. (Also, see weapon possession.)

### Functional Behavior Assessment

A procedure by which problematic behavior is examined to determine the cause, consequences and nature of the behavior, in order to develop effective interventions to address that behavior.

### Gang-Related Activity

Gang-related activity can be intimidating to students, faculty and staff and is disruptive to the educational process. Although this list is not all-inclusive, examples of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviors are such things as gang graffiti on school property, intimidation of others, gang fights and/or initiation rituals, wearing gang attire or 'colors.' A 'gang' could be any group of students and/or non-students whose group behavior is threatening, delinquent or criminal. Since gang behavior, markers and colors are variable and subject to rapid change, VGHS staff must exercise judgment and their individual discretion based upon current circumstances in our community when evaluating gang-related activity. Gang-related indicators that will be considered should include:

- The student associating with admitted or known gang members.
- The student wearing attire consistent with gang dress.
- The student displaying gang logos, graffiti and/or symbols on personal possessions.
- The student displaying gang hand signs or signals to others
- The student talking about gang activities to others.
- Hostile contact with others in which two or more students have contributed to a situation causing bodily harm on another.

### General Disruptive Conduct and/or Defiance

Any behavior or conduct that disrupts or interferes with the operation of VGHS, including individual classes. This can also be behavior that leads a school authority to reasonably forecast that such an interruption or interference is likely to occur unless preventive action is taken. Refusing to comply with any reasonable demand or request by any school official or sponsor at places and times where school personnel have jurisdiction is included in this definition.

For example: use of cell phone during instructional time; misuse of cell phones and other forms of technology (see the Policy and Procedural Directive, 'Student Acceptable Use of Personal Electronic Devices, for more information); failure to provide school identification upon request; dress code violation; inappropriate display of affection; making false accusations regarding staff or students; and so forth.

Note: It is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian of the student to retrieve confiscated cell phones or other electronic devices according to the school procedures. The school may keep items for extended periods of time for repeat offenses.

### Harassment

Any gesture or written, verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability; which has the effect of harming another individual/group, damaging his/her/their property, placing the individual/group in reasonable fear, or has the effect of causing a disruption to the educational process.

- Disability: Conduct including but not limited to the following: mocking, taunting, intimidating, criticizing, or punishing a student/group with a disability because of his/her/their disability. (See Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act).
- Sexual: Gender discrimination as defined in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

Examples include but are not limited to the following: sexual assault, unwanted touching, inappropriate comments or conversation, certain non-verbal behaviors, and gestures, which threaten or belittle others on the basis of gender. (see Title IX, Students' Rights)

### Interim Alternative Educational Setting

Off campus IAES options are for students with disabilities whose continued presence on campus poses a safety risk. Off campus IAES settings are typically used when a student with a disability carries a dangerous weapon; uses, or is in possession of illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of controlled substances (not including alcohol or tobacco); or has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person.

### Language, Profane and/or Abusive

Using language that is crude, offensive, insulting or irreverent; use of coarse words to show contempt or disrespect; swearing.

### Materials, Obscene

Displaying material that is indecent and has the potential of being disruptive.

### Parent Involvement Contract

Student/Parent and the VGHS staff will participate in a contract to support a change in student behavior.

### Physical Management

Physical management is defined as any means of attempting to control, touch or otherwise manage a student through the restriction of movement. It does not include the use of touch for guidance or instructional purposes.

### Restitution

Compensation for loss or damage.

### Robbery

Taking of property of another through means of force or fear.

### Search, Minimally Intrusive

Emptying of pockets, searches of student backpacks and purses, removal of hats, socks and shoes, conducted by any certified school employee, school security officer, campus security aide.

### Search, More Intrusive

Pat downs and/or frisks, conducted by an authorized person of the same sex as the student being searched.

### Search, Most Intrusive

A strip search shall be conducted only upon reasonable suspicion of a serious crime or a safety concern and shall be conducted by a school administrator or designee of the same sex and in the presence of another authorized person of the same sex.

### Student in Need of Early Intervention (Truant)

A student who has accumulated five unexcused absences within a school year.

### Suspension, Long Term

The removal of a student from instruction and all school-related activities for more than ten (10) days and up to the balance of the semester.

### Suspension, Short Term

A suspension, not to exceed five school days, which is at the discretion of the administrator and will address behaviors that disrupt the educational process.

### Tardy

Student is not in the class or assigned activity when it is scheduled to begin.

### Theft

Unauthorized possession and/or use of property of another without consent of owner.

### Threats of Violence against the School and/or False Alarm

Threats of Violence against the school in any form, verbal, written or via social media. False Alarm - Interfering with the proper functioning of a fire alarm system or giving a false alarm, whether by means of a fire alarm or otherwise.

### Tobacco Possession

Possession of tobacco, including e-cigarettes, anywhere on a school campus or at a school related event is prohibited. In addition, students found in possession of tobacco products are subject to the provisions of the Substance Abuse and Tobacco Policy. Cessation Programs available: Tobacco Education Program (TEG), Brief Intervention Motivational Interviewing (BIMI), Tobacco Cessation Program Referral (TAP), and Parent Involvement Program (PIP). Contact the school social worker for information.

### Tobacco Use

Using ANY form of tobacco is prohibited. Students using any form of tobacco are subject to the provisions of the Substance Abuse and Tobacco Policy. 'Tobacco' means any product made or derived from tobacco that is intended for human consumption, including any component part, or accessory of a tobacco product. Among other products, e-cigarettes are included in this category.

Trespassing/Unauthorized Presence

Entering or being on school grounds or in a school building without authorization.

Vandalism

Deliberately or maliciously destroying, damaging and/or defacing school property or the property of another individual. Vandalism I: less than \$200 damage; Vandalism II: \$200 to \$999 damage; Vandalism III: \$1000 damage or more

Weapon Possession

Possessing a weapon 'such as but not limited to a firearm, any type of gun, knife, club, firecracker, explosive, spiked Wristband, chains or other item that may cause or is intended to cause injury or death. This specifically includes 'look-alike' guns and knives, such as toys. (Weapons covered by the Gun-Free Schools Act are defined under Firearm, Possession/Use.)

Weapon Use

Use of any weapon to threaten, intimidate, attack, injure or kill any person.

**Useful Resources**

- Vista Grande High School..... www.vistagrande.org
- New Mexico Public Education Department .....ped.state.nm.us
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ..... www@.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html
- New Mexico Public School Insurance Authority ..... https://nmopsia.com
- The Dream Tree Project ..... www.dreamtreeproject.org
- CYFD ..... www.cyfd.org
- JPO ..... www.cyfd.org
- Rocky Mountain Youth Corps.....www.youthcorps.org
- Taos Pueblo Teen Wellness center.....www.taospueblo.org
- Taos Pueblo Governor’s office .....www.taospueblo.org
- Taos Pueblo Red Willow Education Center .....www.taospueblo.org