

# VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Code of Conduct

### Plain Language Summary

#### VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

The Board of Education (Board) is committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive, and District personnel may deliver, quality educational services without disruption or interference. Responsible behavior by students, parents, District personnel, and visitors is essential to achieving this goal. The complete Code of Conduct (Code) is available at all school sites, Central Office, and on the District webpage. Supporting Board of Education policies are available at all school sites and Central Office. Please also refer to each school's handbook for specific details.

#### PUBLICATION, DISSEMINATION AND REVIEW

##### **Dissemination of Valley Central's Code of Conduct Plain Language Summary**

The Board will work to ensure that the community is aware of the District's Code of Conduct by:

1. Mailing this Plain Language Summary to all parents of District students before the beginning of the school year and making the Summary available later upon request.
2. Providing copies of the Summary to all students at a general assembly held at the beginning of each school year.
3. Providing all current teachers and other staff members with a copy of the Summary and a copy of any amendments to the Code as soon as practicable after adoption.
4. Posting the Code of Conduct and Plain Language Summary on the School District Website.

##### **Student Discipline**

Discipline is most effective when it deals directly with the problem at the time and place it occurs, and in a way that is viewed as fair and impartial by the student. Therefore, before seeking outside assistance, teachers will first use all their resources to create a change of behavior in the classroom. When the teacher has made every effort to bring about positive behavioral change, and has been unsuccessful, the student will be referred to the administration. At that point, the administration will decide what further action will be taken. **See Board Policies 5311.5, 5312, 5313.1, 5313.2, 5313.3**

##### **1. Detention, Suspension, and Removal of Students**

Disciplinary action, when necessary, will be firm, fair, and consistent so as to be the most effective in changing student behavior. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, school personnel authorized to impose disciplinary penalties will consider the following:

- The student's age.
- The nature of the offense and the circumstances that led to the offense.
- The student's prior disciplinary record.
- The effectiveness of other forms of discipline.
- Information from parents, teachers and/or others, as appropriate.
- Other extenuating circumstances.

**See Code of Conduct D page 7**

##### **Procedures and Progressive Discipline**

##### **2. Procedures by which violations are reported and determined, and by which discipline measures are imposed and carried out**

In Valley Central Schools, routine procedures exist for reporting and investigating violations of the Code. Depending upon the nature of the violation, it is the desire of the Board that student discipline be progressive. That is, a student's first violation should merit a lighter penalty than subsequent violations.

However, individual behavior management plans or severe infractions may preclude a gradual process. Further, an early return from suspension may be conditioned upon completion of approved counseling or special classes. **See Board Policy 5313 and 5313.3R**

**See Code of Conduct D & E pages 7 & 10**

**3. Consequences for the possession and use of illegal substances or weapons, the use of physical force, vandalism, violation of another student's civil rights and threats of violence**

The Valley Central School District will not tolerate violence, threats, bullying, and substance abuse.

Students who break the law; use, possess, sell, transfer or facilitate these activities with regard to alcohol and/or drugs, tobacco products, synthetic tobacco products/paraphernalia; e-cigarettes, vaporizers or other devices used to inhale non-prescribed substances; weapons or explosive devices; attend school or school functions under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or use vulgar language; or exhibit inappropriate behavior (including sexual misconduct and/or sexting) will be held accountable not only to the District Disciplinary Code, but may also be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. This includes students who fail to report threats of danger or physical violence to appropriate school personnel.

**See Code of Conduct E page 10**

**4. Removal of individuals from classrooms, buses and school property**

Removals from the classroom, buses or school property occur when an individual is substantially disruptive or violent at school or a school function, in the professional judgment of staff or administrators. For the purposes of this Code, the following definitions apply:

**Disruptive Student**

"Disruptive Student" means an elementary or secondary student up to the age of 21 who:

- continuously interferes or substantially disrupts the educational process;
- continuously interferes with the teacher's authority over the classroom;
- demonstrates a persistent unwillingness to comply with the teacher's instructions;
- intimidates, bullies or defames others in word, action or dress;
  - bullying is generally the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse, including cyberbullying, as defined by the Dignity for All Students Act.
- harasses others on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, religious practice, weight, ethnic group, national origin, socio-economic status, or predisposing genetic characteristics; or
- makes an audio and/or video recording and/or transmittal, including photographs during any portion of the school day without the express authorization from appropriate school personnel; or fails to comply with school rules related to cell phones or other electronic devices.

**Violent Student**

"Violent Student" means an elementary or secondary student up to the age of 21 who:

- commits, or attempts to commit, an act of violence upon a school employee;
- commits, or attempts to commit, while on school property, on buses or at a school function, an act of violence upon another student or any other person lawfully on school property, on buses or at a school function (including reckless behavior);
- possesses, while on school property, on buses or at a school function, a weapon, or an object used as a weapon;
- displays, while on school property, on buses or at a school function, what appears to be a weapon;
- threatens, while on school property, on buses or at a school function, to use a weapon, or to inflict bodily harm, or communicates acts of violent intent;
- intimidates others in word, action or dress; or
- knowingly and intentionally damages or destroys personal or school property of any school employee or any person lawfully on school property or at a school function.

**See Code of Conduct D page 7**

**5. Minimum Suspension – Disruptive Student**

When a student engages in conduct which would define that student as "repeatedly, substantially disruptive"



(i.e., engaging in conduct requiring removal from classroom on four or more occasions during a semester), a minimum suspension will be two days subject to modification on a case-by-case basis, based upon the particular circumstances present.

**See Code of Conduct L page 13**

**6. Minimum Suspension – Violent Student**

Where a student engages in conduct which would define that student as “violent”, a minimum suspension will be three days subject to modification on a case-by-case basis, based upon the particular circumstances present.

**See Code of Conduct M page 13**

**7. Notification of Parent or Guardian**

Notification of parents/guardians in parental relation that a Code violation has occurred will be accomplished in accordance with the procedure for removal of disruptive students and the due process rights of students. **See Board Policy 5311.1**

**See Code of Conduct I page 13**

**8. Safety and Security**

The Valley Central School District considers school safety an essential priority. The District will not tolerate violence, threats, bullying, and substance abuse. Students who break the law; use, possess, sell, transfer or facilitate these activities with regard to alcohol and/or drugs or drug paraphernalia, tobacco products, synthetic tobacco products/paraphernalia; e-cigarettes, vaporizers or other devices used to inhale non-prescribed substances; weapons or explosive devices; attend school or school functions under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or use vulgar language; or exhibit inappropriate behavior (including sexual misconduct and/or sexting) will be held accountable not only to the District Disciplinary Code, but may also be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. This includes students who fail to report threats of danger or physical violence to appropriate school personnel.

To promote a safe and healthy environment for all students, the provisions of this section will be addressed through board policy. The safety of students shall be ensured through close supervision of students (including surveillance cameras) in all school buildings, on buses and on school grounds. Loitering and trespassing are prohibited. Students, parents, visitors and employees must comply with all security measures including signing into buildings with picture identification. In addition, off-campus misconduct will be dealt with according to the Code. **See Board Policies 5311, 5450, 5450.1, 8111, 8115, 8120, 8414, 1240-R, 1500, 1520-R.**

**See Code of Conduct B page 3; F page 11**

**9. Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying**

The Valley Central School District recognizes its responsibility to protect students from unlawful harassment, discrimination and bullying while on school property. Students or staff who wish to report harassment, including sexual harassment, should contact the District’s Title IX coordinator. Students or staff who wish to report discrimination should contact the appropriate compliance officer. Students or staff wishing to report an incident of bullying should contact the appropriate building Dignity Act Coordinator.

The Dignity Act Coordinators are as follows:

Berea Elementary, Student Assistance Counselor Katherine Gusmano, 845-457-2400 x11647  
East Coldenham Elementary, Student Assistance Counselor Alexandra Lerman, 845-457-2400 x12006  
Montgomery Elementary, Student Assistance Counselor Melinda Sulzbach, 845-457-2400 x14645  
Walden Elementary, Student Assistance Counselor Diane Smith, 845-457-2400 x15645  
Walden Elementary, Student Assistance Counselor Lydia Pabon-Genovez 845-457-2400 x15650  
Middle School, Student Assistance Counselor Catherine Heil, 845-457-2400 x16241  
High School, Student Assistance Counselor ~~James Hession~~ TBA, 845-457-2400 x17647

**See Code of Conduct B6 page 6**

#### **10. Provisions for Students with Disabilities**

The Board recognizes that it may be necessary to suspend, remove, or otherwise discipline students with disabilities to address disruptive or problem behavior. The Board also recognizes that students with disabilities have certain procedural protections in disciplinary matters. The Board is committed to ensuring that the procedures followed for suspending, removing, or otherwise disciplining students with disabilities

are consistent with the procedural safeguards required by applicable laws and regulations. **See Board Policies 5310, 5311.**

**See Code of Conduct F & G page 11 & 12**

#### **11. Provisions for Students, Parents, Employees and Visitors Conduct, Dress and Language**

All students are expected to give proper attention to personal cleanliness and to dress appropriately for school and school functions. Students, their parents, staff members and visitors have the primary responsibility for their own conduct and for acceptable student dress, conduct, and appearance as outlined in the Code. **See Board Policies 5311.5, 5312, 5313, 5450, 5450.1, 8111, 8120, and 8414.**

**See Code of Conduct A & B pages 1 & 5**

Each building principal or his or her designee shall provide information to all students and their parents of the student dress code at the beginning of the school year through the student handbook and /or an assembly.

#### **12. Involvement of Law Enforcement Agencies and Criminal Investigations**

In consultation with local law enforcement, the District understands that the following types of conduct are generally considered criminal offenses and referable to law enforcement as crimes:

- disorderly conduct
- forcible sexual offenses
- use or possession of weapons
- drug offenses
- assaults resulting in serious physical injury
- serious credible threats which a reasonable person would perceive as placing a person or persons in danger

The usual contact between the District and law enforcement agencies will be the School Resource Officer (SRO). The SRO program is a collaborative initiative between the District and local law enforcement agencies. An SRO is a police officer assigned to the school campus who helps to create a healthy and safe environment for the school community. **See Board Policy 5313.**

#### **Objective of the School Resource Officer Program**

- To maintain a safe campus environment that is conducive to learning.
- To create a unity between law enforcement and school officials.
- To improve relationships between youth, law enforcement and community.
- To serve as consultants to school, staff, parents and youth on safety matters.
- To serve as role models to students.

**See Code of Conduct H page 12**

#### **13. Referrals to Human Service Agencies**

When any student need is beyond the scope of the district's resources, a referral to appropriate human service agencies will be made. All administrators, faculty, pupil services personnel, and other support staff will serve as mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect. They will communicate these and other referrals through the principal or his/her designee.

**See Code of Conduct K page 13**

#### **14. District Cooperation with Criminal Court, Juvenile Delinquency Petition, or "PINS" Petition**



The District will observe all applicable procedures under the Family Court Act for the filing of PINS petitions, Juvenile Delinquency petitions. It will follow the appropriate sections of Penal Law and Criminal Procedure Law and other statutes for filing criminal complaints. **See Board Policy 5161.**

**See Code of Conduct J page 13**

#### **15. Dress Code**

Students are expected to attend school in appropriate type apparel. Standards for student dress are set forth in the Code of Conduct. The standards of dress will prevail at all times including examination periods and other activities planned for inside the building. Be advised that administration reserves the right to challenge any student's dress or appearance which, in the judgment of a school administrator, may cause a material or substantial disruption to the educational process and/or create a health and safety hazard.

**See Code of Conduct N page**