

THE HAWKS NEST

SEPTEMBER 2018

Parents, Guardians and Hawks,

Each year as we turn the corner into September, we all begin to settle into the routine of school. Procedures and processes are in place and it is great to see each day running smoothly so our teachers and students can put all of their focus into instruction and learning. Thank you to everyone who has attended the VRA Curriculum Chats for Grades 3-5 and Middle School over the past week. Curriculum Chats for Kindergarten – 2nd grade will take place on Thursday, September 6th from 6:00 to 7:00 pm. These informative nights are great opportunities to learn more about the grade level expectations and curriculum for the 2018-2019 school year. If you still have specific questions after attending the Curriculum Chats or the K-5 Intake Conferences, I would highly encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher to schedule a parent-teacher conference.

The School Advisory Council (SAC) is seeking participants that would like to participate in monthly meetings with the principal and an appropriately balanced number of teachers, staff, parents, and community members. The SAC is a diverse group of stakeholders of a school with the shared goal of increasing student achievement in a safe learning environment. SAC members will participate with school improvement planning, school improvement funds, and school recognition funds. Eight meetings will be held during the school year and will occur the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 3:30pm in the Media Center. Our first SAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 11. If you're interested in becoming a member or would like more information, please contact our SAC Chair, Holly Nover (holly.nover@stjohns.k12.fl.us).

Six times a year for K-8, we recognize and honor an exceptional student from each homeroom who demonstrates the character trait we are celebrating. While middle school Character Counts! celebrations do not include parents, K-5 celebrations invite parents to attend. However, this year's procedures for the K-5 Character Counts! celebrations have changed. Staff **will check identification of all adults attending the event. Each adult must also** have clearance to enter the building and attend the celebration. To be cleared to enter the building, please complete the Volunteer School Access form on the VRA main webpage. **If you already have clearance, please do not submit an application.**

If your K-5 student is nominated for a Character Counts! award, you will receive an invitation which requires an RSVP. The deadline to RSVP will be one week prior to the event. VRA staff will print badges ahead of time in order to streamline the process for you. On the day of the event you **MUST** show ID at the cafeteria annex to receive the pre-printed badge and enter the celebration.

VALLEY RIDGE ACADEMY

Those who do not RSVP will be asked to go to the front office to sign in and receive a badge to enter the building. Adults who do not meet clearance criteria will not be permitted to attend the celebration. We are looking forward to honoring many of our students this year and look forward to seeing you there!



Student safety continues to be our top priority at Valley Ridge. We have had one fire drill already and our students learned the safe way to exit the campus in case of a fire. This week, we conducted our student safety training with the St. Johns County Sheriff's office as directed by the new state law, Senate Bill 7026. Students viewed training videos through appropriate age groupings, K-3, 4-5, 6-8.

Our students listened carefully and were taught the ALWAYS rules, which are available on the below website. They are to always listen to teachers and adults in our school if there is ever an emergency. Students asked great questions and had time to process with their teachers.

Our district, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and our school is committed to the safety of our students. We discuss and practice our response to emergencies so that all of our students have the same instruction on what to do. Now is a great time for parents to reinforce this important student learning-"always listen to your teachers and the adults around you in the event of any emergency. They are here to help you."

The district's Student Support Services Department on the St. Johns County Webpage has links that can assist parents with having these types of conversations as well. You can also view the Always Rules at

<http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/schoolservices/safety/>

Thank you and go Hawks!

Ms. McMandon
Principal
Valley Ridge Academy



Many thanks to all our volunteers here at VRA, especially

Golden Guys and Gals

who recently met and readied for another great year here at Valley Ridge! Be sure to thank those as you see in and out of our classrooms. This year's volunteers are: Pat Lanifero, JoAnn Vulcano, Mandy Kirk, Cyndee Pierce, Debbie ReRemer, Sharon Kenner, Gearin Ballweg, Jane Siegle, Jill Henderson, Karen Manson, Sharon Beach, Lynn Postell, Caroline Rooney, Mary Kay Bell, Vicki Macfarlane, Lois Frank, Faye Quigley, Randy Siegmann, Joyce Reid, Kathi Hill, Linda Kracker, Joanne Brunsman, Donna McCarthy, Lynda Lewis, Ingrid Friend, JoAnn Clay. Thank you also to Meg James our GGG Volunteer Coordinator.



Volunteer Clearance

In an effort to provide safety and security to our students and staff, **we check identification for all vendors, visitors, volunteers and parents each time you enter the building.** Volunteers must have clearance to enter the building. If you have not already been cleared, please submit a [school access form](#). Please input full legal name (first, middle and last) on the application. **If you already have clearance, please do not submit an application.** Expired accounts will be rerun automatically.

What are Hawk Bucks?

Hawk Bucks are used to recognize students who demonstrate:

- Random or extraordinary acts of kindness
- Positive character traits
- Consistent effort over time to follow the Code of Conduct
- Significant self-improvements,
- Meeting stated goals/expectations, etc.

2018-2019 PBIS Reward System "Hawk Bucks"

Now, not only are the students rewarded with the Hawk Bucks themselves, but also with what they can *do* with the Bucks. Students have options to use their Hawk Bucks immediately or to save them for something they are looking forward to (*thus also helping them learn important life skills*). They have opportunities to spend their Hawk Bucks on weekly items, as well as longer-term goals like admission into a special monthly activity or to purchase items at the monthly School Store.



Are the incentives & rewards given out fairly?

With regards to distribution of the Hawk Bucks, equity is also ensured there as well. A suggested list of behaviors and how much to hand out has been established to help staff maintain the equitable distribution of the Hawk Buck. However, it is ultimately up to the teacher/staff member's discretion as to how/when the cash is handed out.

Within those guidelines, it was important to protect the integrity of the Hawk Bucks - to ensure they wouldn't be given out more frequently to students with more behavior issues just to keep them from disrupting - while making sure that *every* student has equal opportunities to earn the cash. Teachers and parents agree - rewards shouldn't be given out for "every little behavior" that meets expectations; rather, *randomly* reward **consistency** and *immediately* recognize **great acts of character**. Likewise, students are encouraged to perform such acts because it is the right thing to do, **not for the reward**.

It was also important to protect the purpose of the Hawk Bucks, which is to recognize the **positive** acts and behaviors of students. So it was impressed that the Hawk Bucks should not be taken away from students as a disciplinary measure. Doing so would essentially "take away" the positive act that earned the student that cash to start with - and that defeats the purpose of PBIS.



Aren't incentives & rewards like "bribing" kids to behave?

No. Simply put, "**bribing**" means telling someone ahead of time that if they do what you want, you will repay them with something of value. To "**reward**" is to give someone something in return, especially in thanks for help or kindness or to repay effort or attention that is given. An "**incentive**" is a motivator - something that encourages someone into action.

PBIS is about **motivating** and **encouraging** students toward positive behavior while **recognizing** and **rewarding** appropriate actions, significant displays of good character, and marked effort and improvement toward personal and academic success.

Students are encouraged throughout their school day to demonstrate the behaviors that are expected within the Code of Conduct. More often, students are praised and verbally recognized and appreciated for their actions

rather than given a tangible reward. This promotes students to become motivated more by the internal feeling of doing the right thing (*and the positive attention they will receive*) than the external feeling of "getting something out of it."

Students know that they *may* be rewarded for certain actions, but not always. Further, they are constantly being taught that they should do the right thing, not because of the **possibility** of a reward, but because of the sense of pride they will feel at knowing they did a good deed (and the good feeling it gives to those who receive the goodness of those deeds.)

Early Act Club



Early Act Club focuses on service projects for the community and school. We will be meeting usually on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:30am. Interested students should plan to attend our first meeting on September 11 at 7:30am in villa 19 for grades 3-5 and room 610 for grades 6-8. The sponsor for grades 3-5 is Mrs. Sandler (villa 19) and the sponsor for grades 6-8 is Mrs. Dresback (room 610). Please email or see the sponsors for more information and for an application.

VRA Food Drive for families in St Johns County

Sponsored by Early Act Club

October 16-19

Grades 3-5-bring food to Mrs. Sandler's villa 19

Grades 6-8-bring food to Mrs. Dresback's room 610





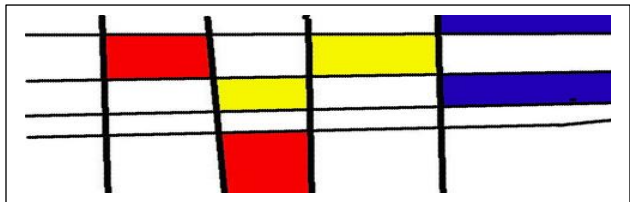
Welcome to our new middle school students and their families! The transition to middle school is different for everyone. Your child may be anxious about changing classes or remembering their locker combination. Some may feel excited about the new freedoms that come in middle school or all of the new friends they will meet. Either way, know there will be ups and downs along the way. The middle school guidance department is here to help.

Here are a few important suggestions for parents: Communicate with your student every-day about how things are going, the areas where they may need your help, and encouraging him or her to stay engaged and on top of the workload from day 1. Celebrate their accomplishments. Cheer them on and praise their efforts. Reach out to teachers at the first warning flag concerning academics. Get to know your child's middle school friends. Monitor their after school free time. Middle school years are the beginning of the struggle for independence and independence is best earned through demonstrating responsibility.

We are looking forward to a great 2018-2019 school year and appreciate you trusting us to partner with you in our student's education.

Resources for Parents Talking With Children About Tragic Events

<http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/gpc/guidance/resources/>



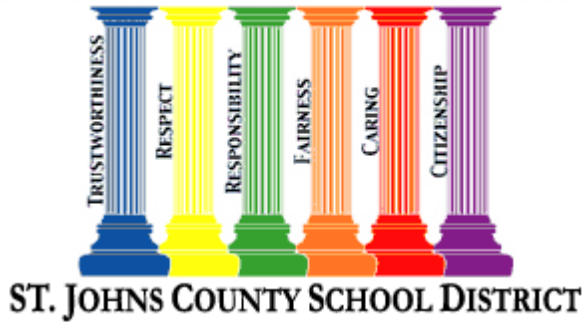
The Elementary Art room at VRA is buzzing with creativity. Kindergarten and First grades are completing their Piet Mondrian inspired wind socks, and these will be flying home shortly.

Second and Third grade rock stars have already completed their Abstract Line Color Mixing Project and are now beginning their Square 1 fundraiser projects. These will be available for purchase in the Fall and make great holiday gifts for family.

Fourth and Fifth graders have already blown my mind with their Continuous Line Owl Drawings and are also beginning their Square 1 Art fundraiser projects. If you haven't checked out our Instagram page please follow and get inspired @ VRapicassos. I feature student artists every week!

Also, an additional thank you to all of the families that were able to donate large scissors, sharpies, and fabric! Thank you for supporting the Art program at VRA. Go Hawks!

CHARACTER COUNTS!



Character Counts! At VRA

We at VRA take pride in celebrating the six pillars of character designated by the St. Johns County School District.

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Self-Control
Excellence
Responsibility
Courteous
Honesty
Respect

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM!

Girls 7/8 GR. team:

Kathryn Archer, Aubrey Bedwell, Hanna Dulka, Maddison Graham,
Makenna Pollock, Savannah Preik, Mary Slowick, Allison Zaiser,
Brenna Beaulieu, Avery Brown, Skylar Kurtz, Ellie Mirgeaux,
Emily Pickee, Wynter Whitehead

Boys 7/8 GR. team:

Connor Angst, Connor Bourke, TY Gebauer, Khalid Jama,
Noah Mayers, CJ Miller, Austin Stewart, Aiden Taylor,
David Ulmer, William Dec, Austin Hernesman



Girls 6 GR. team:

Jordynne Comeau, Lauren Hughes, Maya Johnson, Christine Lowry, Chloe McConnell, Catherine Schaeffer, Addyson Temple

Boys 6 GR. team:

Andrew Cotto, Landon Gebauer, Colton Hedge, Nash Kersting, Fernando Perez, Brent Rueppell

Welcome our new volleyball coaches Hugh Hernesman and Steph Hernesman



**Please be sure to join us at
our Home Volleyball games!**

\$3 admission for all



VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

9/11 vs. Landrum, 7/8 GR teams
9/13 vs. Liberty Pines, 7/8 GR teams
9/18 vs. Murray, 7/8 GR teams
9/25 vs. Freedom Crossing, 6 GR teams
9/27 vs. Liberty Pines, 6 GR teams
10/2 vs. Pacetti Bay, 7/8 GR teams
10/9 vs. Mill Creek, 6 GR teams
10/11 vs. Swiss Point, 7/8 GR teams
10/16 vs. Patriot Oaks, 6 GR teams