



# THE HAWKS NEST

September 2019

VALLEY RIDGE ACADEMY

## Letter from our Principal

**P**arents, Guardians and Hawks,

It seems that every year, as the calendar moves into autumn, the school year really kicks into high gear! The (slightly) cooler weather always gives the students and their teachers an extra boost of energy that can be felt in all aspects of the school. This is the time of year when teachers have really gotten to know their classes, and everyone settles into the routine of high-quality instruction and learning. This is also when we begin to see an increase in the number and variety of clubs, teams and special events taking place. Please make sure to visit the VRA webpage to stay up to date with all the happenings around the school.

As a reminder, that as a result of school closing due to Hurricane Dorian, St. Johns County School District will adjust the master school calendar for this year. On the 2019-2020 school calendar, **Monday, October 14** is scheduled to be a teacher planning day, however in order to provide satisfactory instructional minutes, it will be a regular school day with students in attendance.

October 11<sup>th</sup> will mark the end of the first 9 weeks of school with report cards for the first quarter being issued on October 29<sup>th</sup>. Please make sure that you and your child are routinely checking Home Access Center (HAC) for current information on assignments and grades so there are no surprises at the end of October. If you have any questions, please reach out to your child's teacher and keep the lines of communication open.

The PTO sponsored Fall Scholastic Book Fair is coming to the VRA Media Center. The season's theme is "Arctic Adventure: Snow Much to Read!" The book fair will be open for grades 6-8 on October 2<sup>nd</sup> – October 4<sup>th</sup> and for grades K-5 on October 7<sup>th</sup> – October 11<sup>th</sup>. Classes are signing up to visit the book fair during these windows so please look for specific times from your child's teacher.



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## *In this issue:*

1. Letter from our Principal
2. From the Clinic
3. Book Fair
4. Stepping up to Middle School
5. Guidance Corner
6. VRA Business Partners
7. Resources for Student Support

## Letter from our Principal (cont.)

We are quickly approaching the kickoff for the 2019-2020 PTO Fun Run! This year's event will take place on Friday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> with grade specific times to be released as we get closer to the date. For those new to VRA, the PTO Fun Run is always one of the highlights for the entire year. Everyone has such a great time at the Fun Run either running laps or cheering the students on! It truly becomes a true community celebration that has a positive impact on all our students.

If you would like to join us for events such as the PTO Fun Run, please be reminded that St. Johns County School District policy requires anyone coming onto campus between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm be registered and cleared through the School Access Volunteer Clearance process, show a state issued ID, and wear a yellow sign-in badge at all times. Note that NO EXCEPTIONS will be made to this policy!

The School Access Volunteer Clearance Application process can be found on the school website or by clicking on the following link: <https://stjohns.keepntrack.com/apply/index.html?db=stjohns>.

Clearance is good for three years and you can check your clearance status by calling the front office at 904-547-4090.

Finally, please be reminded that all students must arrive by 8:25am. If students arrive after this time, they are considered tardy and a parent/guardian must escort them into the office to sign them in. Thank you for your continued support with this matter.

Go Hawks!

# From the Clinic

Get Your Flu Shot



**C**DC recommends getting a flu vaccine before flu season begins, ideally by October, since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu.

Flu vaccines are offered in many doctor's offices, but even if you don't have a regular doctor or nurse, you can get a flu vaccine somewhere else, like a pharmacy, urgent care

clinic, health department, and often your school, college health center, or workplace.

In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine if you have not already been vaccinated, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others.

For more information about the flu visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/p/parent/keyfacts.htm>

## Flu shots are critical to preventive care

- ✓ Protects against several flu strains
- ✓ Eases symptoms if a child gets sick



- ✓ Reduces flu-related hospitalizations & PICU admissions
- ✓ Reduces flu-related pediatric death\*



**2017-18 flu season:** 80% of pediatric flu deaths occurred in unvaccinated children according to the CDC.

# Book Fair



**T**his year the Book Fair will be held in the VRA Media Center. The season's theme is

*Arctic Adventure:  
Snow Much to  
Read!*

The book fair will be open for grades 6-8 on October 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> and for grades K-5 on October 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>.

Classes are signing up to visit the book fair during these windows so please look for specific times from your child's teacher.



# Stepping Up to Middle School

**S**tepping Up to Middle School is an opportunity for rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders and new students to VRA to get acclimated to the Middle School life.

Over the three half-days, the students did some team building activities, worked through schedules, practiced opening lockers, and so much more. This year we had our largest group, with over 70 participants.

When asking students if they enjoyed their Middle School prep experience they shared it was fun, positive, and helped them get an insight into what's to come.



If you have a rising 6<sup>th</sup> grader next year, look for more information after Spring Break. You don't want your child to miss out on this great opportunity.



## Guidance Corner

**T**his year our awesome school counselors are bringing the **Home & School Connection** newsletter to our school to share with all VRA parents, guardians and caregivers.

This monthly publication provides parents with practical tips so they can:

- Make learning fun with simple activities
- Boost motivation and improve school success
- Build positive character traits
- Strengthen family life and enhance parenting skills

We hope you enjoy and take advantage of this new resource included in the next few pages.



# Guidance Corner

## Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

September 2019

Valley Ridge Academy

Guidance Department

### SHORT NOTES

#### Be considerate

Family meals offer plenty of chances for your youngster to practice being considerate. As you serve yourselves food, you might say, "Make sure to leave enough so everyone gets some." Or if there's one piece of chicken left, encourage your child to ask if anyone wants to split it instead of taking the whole thing for himself.

#### Tired after school!

As your youngster gets used to the routine of a new school year, she may be more tired than usual. Be sure she's getting 9–11 hours of sleep each night. Also, try to keep evenings low-key by not planning too many activities.

#### Cardboard box "origami"

Before tossing boxes in the recycling bin, use them to build your child's spatial sense and math skills. Have him pull each box apart at the seams and lay it flat. Can he tape it back together? *Idea:* Challenge him to make a mini pizza or cereal box using construction paper and tape.

#### Worth quoting

"Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

Fred Rogers

### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** How many eggs did the farmer collect from his biggest rooster?

**A:** Zero. Roosters don't lay eggs!



## The ABCs of school success

School success begins at home! While your child is learning her ABCs, 123s, and much more, she can get the year off to a great start with these *other* ABCs.

### A Attend every day

More time in class = more learning. Help your youngster attend school regularly by scheduling doctor appointments and family vacations outside of school hours. Also, she can cut down on sick days by eating her fruits and vegetables, washing her hands often, and getting plenty of physical activity.

### B Be organized

Forgotten homework? A backpack that doubles as a black hole? Good organizational skills prevent those problems. Together, brainstorm ways for your child to get—and stay—organized. For instance, she could choose a special folder for bringing home and returning homework and use a zipper bag to store pencils and other supplies.

### C Check in daily

Designate a time each day to sit down with your youngster, talk about what she did in school, and review papers she brought home. You might read a story she wrote or look over her math test, for example. This simple routine shows her that you care about what she's learning. Plus, you'll notice where she's doing well or if she's struggling with anything so you can follow up with her teacher.♥



## Back to school...for parents

School rules keep students safe and let teachers do their job. Show your youngster that parents can help by following rules—just like he does. Here are a few examples:

- Check in at the office as soon as you enter the school building, and be prepared to show identification.
- If you drive your child to school, be familiar with drop-off and pickup procedures. For instance, stay in your car, obey staff and patrol officers, and help your youngster exit the car quickly and safely.
- Follow rules for sending food to school. Is there a no-peanut policy? Are birthday treats allowed?
- Contact the teacher to arrange visits ahead of time rather than dropping in.♥



# Guidance Corner

## Getting out the door

Mornings help to set the tone for your child's school day. Consider these ideas for a routine that will send him off to school relaxed and ready to learn.

**Add a "cushion."** Does your youngster need to walk out the door at 8 a.m.? Have him pretend he has to leave by 7:45 a.m. and adjust his routine accordingly. If he's ready early, great! The cushion of extra time will make the morning feel more relaxed—and maybe even give him time to read for pleasure or review spelling words.



**Simplify breakfast.** Make healthy, ready-to-eat breakfast items ahead of time with your child. Overnight oatmeal, hard-boiled eggs, cheese cubes with fruit, and favorite sandwiches are all good bets. *Idea:* Let your youngster eat breakfast at school. Enjoying a hot, healthy meal with friends is a nice way to start the day.

### Use a musical countdown.

Suggest that your child create a song playlist that fits the amount of time he has to get ready for school. Then, turn on the music when he wakes up. Once he's familiar with the order of the songs, he'll know how much time he has left just from listening to the music.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Basket of clues

My daughter Aisha loves that her teacher begins each morning by giving the children clues about what they'll learn that day. At back-to-school night, the teacher mentioned that this lets them practice reading and thinking logically, so I decided to try it at home.

The next Saturday morning, I left a basket of clues on the coffee table about what our family would do in the afternoon. It included a finger puppet, a tote bag, and a bookmark. I added a message: "We will have fun at this place and bring some of the fun home in the bag." Aisha figured out that we were going to the library to watch a puppet show and check out books.

Now on Friday nights, Aisha asks me to make a clue basket. Sometimes, she even thinks of an activity she'd like to do and writes clues for me.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Time out for nature

Time spent enjoying nature has been shown to reduce stress and improve children's—and adults'—mental health. The outdoors is a great place to learn, too. Enjoy these five activities with your youngster.

1. Search for spiderwebs, and let her "collect" them by taking photos with your phone.
2. Find a place to sit quietly and listen to the birds. Can your child spot the birds that make each sound you hear?
3. Take a few deep breaths, and tell each other what outdoor scents you smell (pine trees, flowers).
4. Look for different types of rocks. She can sort them according to size, shape, or color.
5. Explore favorite outdoor places in all kinds of weather. Splash in puddles on a rainy morning. On a sunny afternoon, observe the shadows that leaves make on the ground as the breeze blows them around.♥



## Q & A

### Persistence pays off

**Q:** My son is always eager to try activities, such as karate or student council. But then he'll ask to drop out because they're "too hard" or "too much work." How should I handle this?

**A:** Many youngsters are surprised when something that looks easy turns out to take hard work. Learning to find ways to overcome challenges will help your son stick with activities—and develop persistence.

When he mentions that a karate move or a student council job is taking too much effort, ask him what, specifically, is challenging. Then together, think of solutions. For example, if he's struggling with karate moves that

involve balancing on one foot, brainstorm fun ways to improve his balance.

Over time, your child will get in the habit of looking for solutions instead of giving up.♥



## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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# Guidance Corner

September 2019

Guidance Department

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Take good risks

Encourage your tween to try an activity that appeals to her, even if she's a little nervous. Maybe she wants to join the cross-country team but hasn't run longer distances. Or perhaps she's interested in the improv club but is hesitant about public speaking. Stepping out of her comfort zone will stretch her abilities and build confidence.

### Agree to disagree

If your usually agreeable child starts poking holes in your opinions, that's a sign his reasoning skills are developing. Try not to take it personally, and ask him to share his views respectfully. He'll learn that it's okay to disagree, as long as he's polite about it.

### Puzzle me this

Crossword puzzles boost your tween's vocabulary. Have her print free puzzles she finds online or get crossword books from a dollar store. Or she and her friends could make crosswords for each other on graph paper or with a website like [puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com](http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com).

### Worth quoting

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing." *Walt Disney*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the bird build a nest on the car?

**A:** She knew they would be moving soon!



## A good attitude = more learning

Starting the year with a positive attitude about school goes a long way toward a student's success. Inspire your tween to develop a winning outlook with these strategies.

### Look for positives

Your middle grader can find something interesting about every class. Suggest that he start a list of fun facts, one from each class every week. After a biology lesson on genetics, he might write, "I had a 50 percent chance of having blue eyes since Mom's are brown and Dad's are blue." Encourage him to share his discoveries with you.

### Celebrate achievements

Tell your tween to congratulate himself on a job well done. Maybe he earned a higher score on this week's vocabulary quiz than he did on last week's. Or perhaps he picked a topic for his history paper, even though he was tempted to



put off getting started. Saying "I did it!" will make him feel good about himself and motivated to keep working hard.

### Seek help

Successful students know how to get help when they face challenges. For example, your child could post a schedule of teachers' office hours or homework-help sessions in his locker. Then if he's struggling, he can sign up for a slot. Having a plan in place will help him stay upbeat. 👍

## Fall family fun

Strong parent-tween relationships help kids resist risky behaviors and make family life more enjoyable. Try these ideas.

■ **Outings.** Ask your child to find outings that sound fun, such as a fall festival or a paint night. For ideas, she could look in the newspaper or check library and community center websites. *Tip:* Suggest that she ask classmates where their families like to go on weekends.

■ **Projects.** Let your middle grader plan family projects. Perhaps she'll suggest a garage sale. Work together to gather books, housewares, and toys you don't need anymore. She can help to advertise the sale, price items, and greet customers. 👍



## Wanted: Involved parents

What does parent involvement look like in middle school? While you probably won't be volunteering in your child's classroom, she still wants your support (even if she doesn't act like she does). Consider these tips for being a partner in her education.



**At school.** Make it a priority to attend school events like curriculum nights and school plays. Also, look for ways to help that are related to your tween's activities. If she plays in the band, you could volunteer to set up for a concert. If she belongs to a book club, you might offer to shelve library books and talk to her afterward about

books you noticed. Or if she's an athlete, maybe you'll work at the concession stand during sporting events.

**At home.** Offer to quiz your middle grader on material she's studying or to look over a paper she's working on. To stay in the loop about what's happening in school, read the website regularly and sign up for email or text alerts. Mention the announcements to your child so she knows you're interested in her school. 👍

## Getting started with community service

**Q** My son is required to complete community service hours this year, but he can't decide what to do. How can I help him?



**A** Doing community service will let your son help others and gain work experience. The main office or his school counselor may have a list of places where he can volunteer. He could also ask friends, relatives, and neighbors for ideas.

Then, suggest that he choose a job that matches his interests—he'll get more out of it that way. For example, he might participate in a beach cleanup if he's concerned about the environment. Or if he likes working with younger children, he may play games or read with little ones at a homeless shelter while their parents attend job training.

Finally, encourage him to keep track of his work, including names of supervisors, so he'll receive credit—and even have references for a job someday. 👍



## Everyday engineering

From shoes and clothing to appliances and electronics, just about every product your tween uses was designed by engineers. Help him discover how engineering affects his daily life with this activity.

**1.** Encourage your child to consider the engineering involved in his favorite products. Maybe his running shoes absorb impact, the smoothie maker purees big chunks of fruit, or his jacket repels rain.

**2.** Now let him pick a product to redesign. He could decide to add another layer of foam to his shoes. First, he should run a block and rate his comfort on a scale of 1–10. Then, he can add foam, run another block, and rate his comfort again. What happens if he adds even more foam? How much might be too much? 👍



## Parent to Parent

### The "elevator speech"

When I was looking for a job, I discovered an interesting technique for "selling" yourself in an interview: the "elevator speech." I shared the idea with my daughter Susan, thinking she could use it to write summaries or make points during class discussions.

I told Susan to pretend she was going to ride an elevator with me and summarize the novel she's reading in

30 seconds or less—about the time it would take to ride from the ground to the top floor of a building.

Susan jotted down what she wanted to say. At first, it took her almost 3 minutes to read it. But she kept trimming her summary until it was about 30 seconds long.

Then, she read it aloud to me. She got to the point quickly, and now she plans to try the strategy in class. 👍



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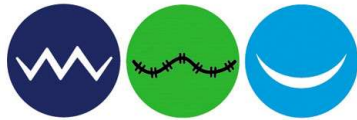
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# VRA Business Partners

A big **THANK YOU** to our 2019-2020 VRA PTO Business Partners! Here are few things the PTO has been able to provide this year thanks in part to the generous support of these community sponsors:

- ✓ Reflex Math subscription
- ✓ Scholastic News subscription
- ✓ Art Smart Program funding
- ✓ Character Education Program funding
- ✓ Computer mice for kindergarten
- ✓ iPad covers for third grade



THE BRACE PLACE  
ORTHODONTICS



# VRA Business Partners



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# Resources for Student Support



FLORIDA DIAGNOSTIC AND LEARNING RESOURCES SYSTEM (FDLRS)  
NORTH EAST FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM (NEFEC)

Serving Baker, Bradford, Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns and Union Counties and  
The Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind

## We Want to Find Some Very Special Children!

Do you have any concerns about your child's:

- Speaking
- Understanding
- Moving or Playing
- Seeing or Hearing
- Getting Along with Other Children
- Learning and Paying Attention
- Self-help Skills including:  
Feeding, Dressing or Toileting

## FDLRS/NEFEC CHILD FIND PROVIDES:

- Information about community programs for children with special needs
- Professional consultation for parents
- Screening in the areas of communication, motor development, vision, hearing, and preschool readiness skills
- Assistance in connecting children with special or unique needs to appropriate early intervention or exceptional student education services

If you have questions or concerns about a child  
birth - 5 years of age, contact:

**FDLRS/NEFEC CHILD FIND**  
(386) 329-3811 or Toll Free 1-800-227-6036

Email: [ChildFind@nefec.org](mailto:ChildFind@nefec.org)

Website: [www.nefec.org/fdlrs](http://www.nefec.org/fdlrs)

