

# HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

## Profile of Curriculum and Programs

in the West Des Moines Community School District

### VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL (grades 10-12)

<b>Enrollment</b>	(Fall 2001)	1756
	(January 2002)	1702

<b>Projected Enrollment</b>	(Fall 2006)	1833
	(Fall 2009)	1811

<b>Class Size (01/02)</b>	Sophomores	606
	Juniors	575
	Seniors	513
	Special Education	8

**Staff** 165

- Teachers, support staff, administrators work collaboratively to guide and instruct students at Valley High School.
- The school has 122 certified staff members, with 56.6 percent holding master's degrees and beyond.

### School Day

- The normal school day begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. with the day divided into eight 46-minute class periods. That schedule is followed on Monday, Thursday and Friday. On Tuesday, periods one, three, five and seven meet for 85 minutes. Staff collaboration or student seminar is held at the end of the school day on Tuesday. On Wednesday, periods two, four, six and eight meet for 85 minutes each with weekly advisory group (PAA) meetings scheduled between periods two and four.
- In the **Personal Adult Advocate** (PAA) program, each student is assigned to a group composed of five sophomores, five juniors, five seniors and a certified staff member. They meet weekly for the purposes of relationship building, communication and education. As part of the PAA program, students develop educational plans in collaboration with their parents and their advisors in the student-led Future Planning Conferences held in the spring.

### **Curriculum**

- More than 190 courses are offered in 12 curricular departments
- Math, science, social studies and language arts form the core of the academic program, along with six world languages and strong programs in computer science, business education and technology education.
- 14 Advanced Placement classes offer an opportunity for students to earn college credit while still in high school. Courses are offered in math, English, social studies, science, computer science, foreign language, art and music.

### **Special Academic Programs**

- Extended Learning (designed for gifted students)
- Learning Lab 10 (for identified at-risk sophomore students)
- Reading and Writing: Resources for Decision Making (for students needing to improve writing skills)
- Skills for Academic Success (for students enrolled in U.S. History who need assistance in learning how to read and study independently)
- Theory and Practice in Government (for students enrolled in Government who need assistance in developing social studies skills)
- English Language Learners (a collaborative newcomers program)
- Independent Study
- Special education courses and programs are also offered to meet the needs of students with identified disabilities.

### **Cooperative Programs**

- Valley High School/Des Moines Area Community College collaboration allowing high school students to earn college credits in three subject areas
- Central Campus (Des Moines Schools) – offers courses in 24 vocational-technical areas as well as academic classes not available at Valley
- Postsecondary enrollment (limited to two college courses)
- Iowa Methodist Medical Center Corporate Academic Institute

### **Graduation**

- Valley requires 44 credits (22 units) for graduation. Credits are earned in grades 9-12. A minimum of six English, four math, four science, six social studies and one fine arts credits must be earned to graduate.
- Four physical education credits are required with ½ credit earned each semester.
- All students are required to schedule five courses in addition to physical education each semester.
- In the 2000-2001 school year, 36 students dropped out of Valley High School. Thirteen of those students pursued a high school diploma through DMACC or the GED test. A dropout rate of 1.3 percent was reported for Valley in the past school year.
- Approximately 85 percent of the class of 2001 continued their education beyond high school. More than 64 percent of Valley graduates attend four-year colleges and universities.

## **The Four A's**

### **Academics**

- 9 National Merit Finalists (Class of 2002)
- 10 National Merit Finalists (Class of 2001)
- ACT Test (Class of 2001)                      23.8 composite score  
    National Average                              21.0  
    Iowa Average                                    22.0

### **Activities**

- In a recent survey conducted at Valley, more than 65 percent of the student body reported participation in school-sponsored activities outside the classroom during this school year.
- A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are available, including speech and debate, mock trial competition, foreign language clubs, student government and publications.
- KWDM, a student-run radio station, broadcasts 18 hours a day, five days a week from Valley High School.

### **Arts**

- Strong support for visual and performing arts.
- Winner of the first GRAMMY award ever given to a high school.
- Vocal, band and orchestra students perform at national and international festivals.

### **Athletics**

- Valley fields teams in 19 sports as a member of the Iowa Conference, Central Iowa Metropolitan League. In 2000-2001, participation in athletics totaled 1447 for grades 9-12.
- Valley has a “no-cut” policy in all sports except for golf.
- Students also participate in intramural activities offered by Valley and the Walnut Creek YMCA.

### **Facility (306,000 square feet)**

Original Construction	1964, 1967, 1969, 1970
Cafeteria Addition	1984
Sports/Music Addition	1989
Remodeling upgrades	1991, 1992, 1993, 1998

## VALLEY SOUTHWOODS FRESHMAN HIGH SCHOOL (grade 9)

<b>Enrollment</b>	(Fall 2001)	643
	(January 2002)	633

<b>Projected Enrollment</b>	(Fall 2006)	683
	(Fall 2009)	651

<b>Staff</b>	73
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- Valley Southwoods has 55 certified staff members, with 41.8 percent holding master's degrees and beyond.

### School Day

- The normal school day begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. with the day divided into eight 46-minute periods. Students spend four of eight periods with their interdisciplinary teams for required classes. The other four periods are reserved for physical education and elective courses or study hall. On Tuesdays, classes are dismissed at 2:09 p.m. with staff collaboration following at the end of the day.
- Student lunch schedules are rotated each quarter to provide social interaction among all students.

### Curriculum

- Thirty-nine courses are designed to meet the specific needs of ninth grade learners. The curriculum features an integrated, personalized, student-centered approach to learning, involving a variety of assessment strategies.
- Students are required to register for general science, language and literature, mathematics, geographic cultural studies and physical education. In addition, each student must register for at least one elective class each semester.
- Interdisciplinary teams allow groups of students and their teachers to work together throughout the school year. A team of teachers provides instruction to the same group of students in core subject areas – language arts, science, mathematics and social studies. The teacher and student teams are located together in the Southwoods building.

### Special Academic Programs

- Extended Learning (designed for gifted students)
- English as a Second Language
- Reading Resource
- Learning Lab 9 (for identified at-risk freshmen students)
- Special Education courses and programs
- Peer Partner Physical Education
- Healthy Dimensions Physical Education

**Additional Programs and Opportunities**

- Community Service Learning is an important part of the educational program at Valley Southwoods. Teams, disciplines and the entire school participate in service activities throughout the school year.
- Students can choose from a variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in fine arts, clubs, student leadership positions and athletics. Ninth graders can also be a part of Valley High School athletic teams and selected activities. In 2000-2001, participation in activities and athletics totaled 1090.

*During the 2000-2001 school year, one student dropped out of Valley Southwoods. Since the school opened in the fall of 1997, a total of four students have dropped out.*

**Facility** (167,000 square feet)

Original Construction 1996-97

WALNUT CREEK CAMPUS (grades 9-12)

*An alternative school: different service delivery, flexible, individualized, caring; a different way of teaching and learning; a school where students who haven't been successful have flexible, individualized opportunities*

<b>Enrollment</b>	(Fall 2001)	196
	(January 2002)	244 (includes 40 Night School students)

<b>Projected Enrollment</b>	(Fall 2006)	199
	(Fall 2009)	199

<b>Class Size (01/02)</b>	Freshmen	44
	Sophomores	57
	Juniors	75
	Seniors	49
	Special Education	19

<b>Staff</b>	29
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- Walnut Creek Campus has 16 certified staff members, with 62.5 percent holding a master's degree and beyond.
- Three full time caseworker/therapists are also on staff, providing a family-centered service component to all students who attend Walnut Creek.

### **Admission**

- Students are most often referred by their home high school. In some instances, parents or students themselves request admission to Walnut Creek.
- After completing an application packet, students and parents must complete an interview. Questions are asked to determine why the student wants to attend an alternative high school and what his or her specific needs are.
- At the end of the interview, parents and students sign a contract agreeing to meet the expectations of the school. Students also write a commitment statement indicating what they will do to be successful at Walnut Creek.
- Before beginning classes, students must successfully complete a comprehensive orientation.

### **School Day**

- Classes are offered in four 80-minute blocks between 8:45 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Night school is offered from 3:30 to 5:10 p.m. Monday through Thursday. On Friday, students are required to be at Walnut Creek for advisory and large group activities.
- Students participate in First Class Advisory/Advisee Group every day.

### **Curriculum**

- Students at Walnut Creek may choose from 56 courses in language arts, math, science, social studies, art, business, and family and consumer science.
- Special electives include community enrichment, service learning, peer tutor, personal psychology, life skills, DMACC courses, driver education and “finding her voice.”

### **Graduation**

- Students can earn a Walnut Creek Campus diploma or a home high school diploma. Students also have the option of earning a Des Moines Area Community College diploma.
- To graduate from Walnut Creek Campus with a WCC diploma, students must earn a minimum of 40 credits in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and fine arts.
- Between 40 and 60 students graduate annually from Walnut Creek. Graduates go on to the military, two and four-year colleges, apprenticeships and the workplace.
- During the 2000-2001 school year, 37 students dropped out of Walnut Creek. Eight of those students pursued a high school diploma through DMACC or the GED test. A dropout rate of 7.9 percent was reported for Walnut Creek Campus in the past school year.

### **Facility**

In the fall of 1995, Walnut Creek Campus opened its doors at 1001 Fifth Street. By 1996, the school expanded next door, using Upper Iowa University classroom space. In the fall of 1999, the school moved to a building that was once a church. After extensive remodeling, the warm, non-institutional feel of the building has been preserved, offering a unique setting for education.