

2011-2012

**Parent
and
Student
Handbook**

Cottonwood Valley Charter School

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Cottonwood Valley Charter School

CVCS Governing Council

Dennis Walsh	President (Parent Member)
Britta Herweg	Vice-President (Parent Member)
Brandon Barber	Secretary
Lizabeth Clabaugh	Parent Member
Sydney Eusepi	Parent Member
Keith Cummings	Parent Member
John Benson	Community Member
Nick Smallridge	Faculty Representative

CVCS Faculty and Staff

Jill Abraham	Kindergarten
Kim Schaffer	First Grade
Miranda Gonzales	Second Grade
Aurelia Kerkmans	Third Grade
Karen Gram	4th/5th Science & Math
Kate Burleigh	4th/5th Lang. Arts & History
Nancy Engler	Science 7&8 Math 7-8, Gifted K-8
Kim Berlat	Lang. Arts 6-8, 7th Grade Homeroom
Nick Smallridge III	8th Grade Homeroom, History 7&8, Language Arts 7-8
Keith Burns	6th Science/Math, 6th Grade Hmrm.
Jack Hibbs	Special Education
Beth Crowder	Music (K-8)
Iva O'Connor	Art (K-8), History 6
Sheri Armijo	Spanish
Karen Bailey-Bowman	Reading Specialist
Eva Greenwood	Educational Assistant
Felycia Gutierrez	Educational Assistant
Patti Chavez	Educational Assistant
Mike Chavez	Custodian
Rocio Gonzales	Custodian
Mary Cox	Business Manager
Jill Urban	Librarian/IT
Karin Williams	Administrator
Joanne Bitsui	Speech Therapist
Cynthia LeClerc	Physical Therapist
Nancy Smith	Occupational Therapist
Sally Lopeman	Nurse
Eileen Comstock	Band Director

PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

Visitors

Visitors are welcome on campus and in the classrooms. For safety reasons, during school hours all visitors must sign in at the office. Please remember that an unscheduled class visit is not the time for lengthy discussion between parents and teachers as it interferes with the functioning of the class. If parents wish to have a conference with a teacher they should call the office for an appointment, or set up an appointment with the teacher before or after school. All visitors on the CVCS campus are expected to follow school policies. Anyone who disrupts school functions, threatens students or school employees, damages school property, or uses loud and offensive language will be asked to leave the campus immediately.

Web Site

Cottonwood Valley Charter School's web site is a source of information about the school. Please check the site regularly at www.cottonwoodvalley.org.

We hope that parents and students will read this handbook together, discuss it among themselves, and consult it as a reference. Not every contingency has been covered; policies and procedures may need to be changed from time to time to fit new circumstances. Nonetheless, it provides guidelines meant to produce a community in which we can grow and learn together. If you have questions about school policies, first contact the school administrator. If your concerns remain unresolved, please contact a member of the Governing Council.

History

Over the years a group of parents met periodically to discuss alternative ways to educate children. They dreamed of a school where children's individual needs would be addressed; where children would be grouped according to academic level as well as age; where children would be encouraged to be curious and to explore the world; where teachers and parents would be empowered and would actually run the school; where academic standards would be high; where children with special needs would be fully included in the academic program; where each child would benefit from a personal learning plan.

In the spring of 1999 the New Mexico Legislature passed the Charter Schools Act. The same group of parents formed a committee to begin the process of writing a charter. It took an additional two and a half years of work before the school opened in August 2001 with 112 students in grades K-6. CVCS is currently in its eleventh year of operation with 170 students in grades K-8, a staff of 20, a budget of \$1.2 million, and a campus with nine buildings, a shaded picnic area, and a playground. In November of 2009, the Socorro Consolidated Schools renewed the CVCS charter for the third time. This charter renewal allows CVCS another five years of operation.

Mission Statement

1. High academic excellence through individual student plans.
2. Strong and consistent parent involvement in the school community.
3. Meaningful integration between our students and the community at large.

The complete charter is available on our website. It includes organizational and student achievement goals which reflect the CVCS mission statement.

Curriculum

The academic program at CVCS is based on the Core Knowledge Sequence, a set of content guidelines in language arts, history, mathematics, science, and the fine arts developed by the Core Knowledge Foundation. The Core Knowledge Foundation was founded in 1986 by University of Virginia professor E. D. Hirsch, Jr. and is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization, dedicated to excellence and fairness in early education. The Sequence was first implemented in 1990 and within eight years was being used in more than 700 schools in 42 states.

The Core Knowledge Sequence is based on the belief that among the characteristics of a society is the “core of knowledge” shared by members of that society. Children incorporate this information as they grow and mature through the natural interactions with their family and community and through their formal schooling. To be “literate” in one’s world is to be fluent in that set of shared knowledge. The Core Knowledge Sequence is designed to fulfill about half of the school’s curriculum, allowing teachers the time and flexibility to meet the state curriculum requirements as specified in the NM Standards and Benchmarks.

CVCS also uses Everyday Math K-5 and Connected Math 6-8, and Reading and Writing Workshop for all grades. All students receive Spanish, PE, Art, and Music classes.

Sports

Students in 7th and 8th grade may try out for the interscholastic sports teams at the Socorro District Schools. Please contact the CVCS office or the Socorro Consolidated School Central Office for details.

Student Assistance Team

CVCS has established a Student Assistance Team to support students who are experiencing difficulties that are preventing them from succeeding academically or socially. The SAT addresses problems found through general screening or brought up as concerns by parents, teachers, or other staff. It then suggests interventions that may alleviate or resolve the situation prior to referral for a multidisciplinary evaluation.

Tardiness

Students who arrive after 8:15 are expected to check in at the office. Teachers may not admit tardy students to their classrooms without an admit slip issued by the office.

Telephones

Students are allowed to use the office telephone for emergency reasons only and may not use cell phones on campus during the school day. Visitors are asked to turn their phones off while on school grounds.

Textbooks

CVCS provides textbooks and related educational materials for the students. Students are responsible for all books and materials checked out from CVCS. If a student checks out a duplicate textbook of one he/she already has, the student will be responsible for replacement fees if the second (or third) book checked out is lost. Students are responsible for replacement fees for lost/damaged textbooks regardless of how the book was lost/damaged.

Religious Holidays

We encourage the members of the school community to observe their respective religious holidays. Teachers will work with students who miss school because of religious commitments. Please be sure to discuss religious requirements and commitments with your child's teacher.

Skateboards and Scooters

The use of skateboards and scooters will not be permitted on school grounds. Students who ride scooters or skateboards to school should park them in the bicycle parking area.

Smoking

Cottonwood Valley does not allow the use of any tobacco products on campus at any time. No tobacco slogans or materials containing tobacco advertising or mascots are allowed on school grounds.

Snow Policy and Inclement Weather

We will close or delay school according to the decision of the Socorro Consolidated Schools. Watch channel 7 or 13 or go to their websites for the most up-to-date information regarding school delays. If school is in session, but parents think the roads are too dangerous to travel, their children will not be penalized for missing school, provided the parent calls the school as soon as possible.

Special Education

CVCS offers special education services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and assistance with specific learning disabilities to students who qualify. CVCS complies with all federal and state laws regarding special education. CVCS also identifies students who qualify for Gifted and Talented services and insures that their needs are met by the development of appropriate Individual Education Plans (IEP).

Governing Council

The Governing Council is the governing body of the school and comprises eight members: six parents, one teacher, and one community member. Members serve staggered terms and are elected by the entire Socorro community, except for the teacher representative who is elected by the teachers. Governing Council meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm in the school library, are open to the public, and are conducted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. All parents and the community are welcome to attend. Copies of the Governing Council by-laws and monthly minutes are available at the school office and on the website, cottonwoodvalley.org.

Family/School Compact

It is the school's philosophy that full parental participation in the education of their children is vital to the educational success of their children. Each family and student is asked to sign the CVCS Family/School Compact annually. This compact describes expectations for the family, the student, and the school.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Admission

CVCS is a free, public school. Admission to CVCS is by lottery except for those students who are already in attendance. Siblings of enrolled students must also go through the lottery but will be given priority over other new students. There are no registration fees or tuition charged and all New Mexico residents are eligible to apply for admission. Students entering kindergarten must have reached their fifth birthday before September 1st. All students must provide a birth certificate and immunization record at the time of enrollment. CVCS does not discriminate in any way on the basis of race, disability, creed, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special services. The enrollment policy is available in the school's office and on the website.

Attendance

Consistent, punctual attendance is considered by Cottonwood Valley Charter School to be an essential component of good education. Absences adversely affect the academic performance of children and also adversely affect the ranking of our school by the Public Education Department.

For safety reasons, if your child will be absent from school, please call the school office (838-2026) before 8:30 am. This phone call does not replace the note that is required when your child returns to school. All students who have been absent from school must bring a written note from home and check in with the office before going to class.

A. Excused Absences

An excused absence is an absence due to illness, injury, or death in the family, medical appointments, bad weather, and religious holidays. When returning to school, the student must provide the office with a written note signed by a parent or guardian in order for the absence to be considered an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to ask teachers for missed assignments and to complete all make-up work in a reasonable amount of time.

B. Official Absences

An excuse from a doctor, dentist, or other health provider allows the student to receive an official absence, which does not count against the school in the ADS, but does count on the child's attendance record as reported on the school report card. Please provide the office with the official note from the provider.

B. Planned Absences

If a student has a unique educational opportunity and needs to miss school, a parent/guardian needs to fill out a **planned absence** request and return it to the administrator for approval **prior** to taking days off.

Parent-Staff Communications

If a parent has a concern about an issue that occurred in the classroom, the parent needs to talk with the classroom teacher. If the parent does not feel the issue is resolved after discussing the incident with the classroom teacher, the parent may call the administrator and set up an appointment to review the issue with the classroom teacher and the administrator. If the concern still has not been answered to parental satisfaction, contact a CVCS Governing Council Parent Liaison.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences for all students will be held during the first quarter during which Personal Learning Plans will be developed for each student. A second conference will be scheduled for the middle of the third quarter. If parents wish to meet with a teacher at other times they should make arrangements directly with the classroom teacher.

Personal Items

Personal educational items are allowed at school. All other items, including MP3 players, CD players, Blackberries, toys and trading cards, should be left at home. Any personal item brought to the school is the student's responsibility, and the school does not assume responsibility for loss or damage.

Personal Education Program

Each CVCS student has a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) developed by the student, the parent/guardian, and the teacher. The PLP is a written document that specifies the student's academic goals for the year. Parents and teachers may revise the student's PLP at any time if they feel that the goals and objectives are no longer appropriate. A student with special needs also has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) as required by state and federal law.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued four times a year at the end of each marking period. After each marking period CVCS has the right to hold a report card until lunch bills are paid and library books are returned or paid for if lost. End-of-the-year report cards are not given out until students have returned all school-books and materials or have paid for any items that have been damaged or lost.

Lunch Program

Students may bring a bag lunch from home or purchase a hot school lunch tray. CVCS offers a hot lunch program through the Socorro Consolidated Schools. Families whose students are eligible for free or reduced meals should request the appropriate forms from the school office. Parents will be billed through the CVCS office and all checks can be made out to Socorro Consolidated Schools. Advanced payment is appreciated, but not necessary. Students with large unpaid lunch balances may be required to pay for all meals in advance. Due to state health guidelines, **sodas are not allowed at school**. Sodas brought by students will be held in the office until school is over for the day.

Medical Forms

All students must provide evidence of immunization as required by state laws and regulations. Records must be on file in the office before a child can be enrolled. The school nurse will communicate with parents about any necessary immunizations students are lacking. Parents are expected to get their children immunized in a prompt manner. Parents may request an exemption from required immunizations by completing the necessary paperwork.

Newsletter

CVCS publishes a weekly newsletter which is sent home with the students on Monday afternoon. Please check your child's backpack for this note, since it lists all upcoming events and any changes in the school schedule. This newsletter is also available on the school's web site, cottonwoodvalley.org.

Nurse and Medication Policy

CVCS does not employ a full time nurse. A qualified nurse will review immunization records and screen students for vision and hearing. If your child requires medication during school hours, parents must make arrangements with the school administrator. This policy applies to prescription as well as non-prescription medicines.

C Unexcused Absences

Any absence that does not meet the criteria for an excused absence is considered to be an unexcused absence. An absence not followed by a written note when a student returns to school is also considered an unexcused absence. When an absence is unexcused, teachers are not required to provide the student with the assignments that were missed or to give credit for incomplete assignments.

D. Excessive Unexcused Absences

CVCS follows the truancy program adopted by the Socorro Consolidated Schools. A copy of the entire policy is available in the school office. The main points are summarized here.

1. After a child has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences a notice will be sent by certified mail to the child's parents or guardians notifying them of their child's unexcused absences. The administrator will make an appointment to meet with the parents or guardians to discuss the situation.
3. After a child has accumulated seven (7) unexcused absences a notice will be sent by certified letter to the parents or guardians and the case will be referred to the Juvenile Probation Office.
4. After a child has accumulated ten (10) unexcused absences a notice will be sent by certified mail to the child's parents or guardians, and the case will be referred to the District Attorney's office for prosecution of the parents for violation of the Compulsory School Attendance Law 22-12-2 NMSA.

Bicycles & Scooters

Students who ride bicycles or scooters to school are expected to wear protective helmets. Bicycles and scooters must be walked when on campus unless riding on the bike path, and are to be locked up during the day in the designated racks by the front office.

Busing and Transportation

Busing for CVCS students is provided by the Socorro Consolidated Schools using the district's school buses and established routes. If you have questions about bus routes, please call Socorro Consolidated Schools Bus Director Annabell Romero at 838-3117.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are allowed on campus, but must not be visible and cannot be used during the school day. Cell phones or MP3 players that are visible during the school day will be held in the office until after school is dismissed. Students may pick it up after the first incident. After that, parents will be required to pick up electronics from the school office. A student may use a cell phone at the discretion of authorized personnel while on field trips or while attending school functions sponsored or authorized by the school.

Cheating

Students are expected to conduct themselves honestly and with integrity in their work. All forms of cheating and plagiarism are prohibited. Violators will be referred to the administrator who will have a conference with the child and his/her parents to discuss the severity of such an offense and will be disciplined on a case-by-case basis depending on the seriousness of the violation, prior violations, and other factors.

Child Custody Policy

The names of each child's legal guardian(s) must be on record at the school and only those persons authorized by these records are allowed to make decisions regarding that child. This includes transporting the child. If one of the student's parents has a court order stating he/she cannot have contact with his/her child, CVCS must have a copy of all legal documents in order to deny a parent rights to the child.

Civility Code

All visitors (including parents) on the CVCS campus are expected to follow the discipline policies of the school. Anyone who disrupts school activities, threatens students or school employees, damages school property, or uses loud and offensive language will be asked to leave the campus. If a disruptive visitor refuses to leave, law enforcement will be notified.

Walking Field Trips

Parents sign a permission form in the enrollment packet which covers all walking field trips. Teachers will notify the office, in writing, when they take a class off campus.

Field Trips

During the school year, students will have opportunities to go on field trips. Signed permission forms are required and all school rules apply while on field trips. Parents will be given adequate notice of upcoming field trips and parents/guardians who do not want their child to participate should request an excused absence from the school administrator; otherwise a student's absence will be deemed to be an unexcused absence.

Fundraising

All fundraising activities require prior approval. CVCS students are not allowed to raise funds by selling door-to-door. Fundraising money is earned from Smith's Earn-n-Learn, BoxTops, Labels for Education, Book Fairs, student pictures, and other activities organized by the CVCS Fundraising Committee.

Homework

The amount of homework assigned is at the discretion of the individual teacher, and will be appropriate to the age and ability of the student. It is the responsibility of the students and their parents to ensure that homework is completed.

Library

Students are encouraged to use the school library and to sign out books for use in the classroom and at home for a one week check-out period. Students are responsible for the replacement costs of books that are lost or damaged. Please help your child be responsible about caring for books. Be especially careful to avoid water damage and carrying CVCS books in a full backpack!

Lost and Found

Mark all of your child's possessions. Items found will be brought to the lost and found in the library. All items left in the lost and found will be donated to charity.

attend CVCS, they choose to abide by these rules.

The following clothing and accessories are not appropriate:

- Untied shoes, flip-flops, high heels, stocking feet or bare feet.
- Gang-related attire.
- Pants with low-hanging crotches, or those worn below the hip bones.
- Tight or see-through clothing.
- Hairnets.
- Excessive piercing or tattoos.
- Spandex shorts.
- Visible undergarments.
- Hats, caps or bandanas may not be worn indoors except for religious or medical reasons.
- Spiked jewelry or chains.
- Earrings that extend more than 1.5 inches below the lobe.
- Shorts or skirts shorter than fingertips when arm is held straight down.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Weapons

Illegal drugs, alcohol and weapons are not allowed on school grounds. Offenses will be handled in conjunction with law enforcement agencies.

Driving and Parking

The drive entrance to the parking lot off Neel has a yellow curb, which designates no parking. When dropping off or picking up your children, use the drop off turnaround on West Place, by the park. Please DO NOT drop off your children on Western Avenue, at the BUS lane, or in the school parking lot. If the lot at CVCS is full, please park in the empty lot across the arroyo and walk to campus using the bridge. We encourage children and staff to walk or ride bicycles to school!

Early Release Days (Wednesdays, 12:15 dismissal)

CVCS has many of the same early release days as the Socorro Consolidated School. Please see the calendar insert in the middle of this handbook for exact days. The early release afternoons are used for school-wide parent teacher conferences or for professional staff development.

Community Service

CVCS encourages children to participate in community service. Throughout the year, we will offer opportunities for students and families to participate in activities that will contribute to the local and world community.

Computer Policy

CVCS has computers in every classroom, a computer lab, and its own server. All students will have access to the computers as long as they use them in an appropriate manner.

Daily Schedule

The school day begins at 8:15 and ends at 2:55 pm. The playground is supervised from 7:40 to 8:15 in the morning, during lunch recess, and from 2:55 to 3:15 in the afternoon. CVCS is not responsible for children who come to school before 7:40 am. All students remaining on school grounds after 3:10 will be detained in the office until a parent picks them up. Office hours are from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Individual class schedules are posted on the school website at cottonwoodvalley.org and are available from classroom teachers.

Disciplinary Policy

The Cottonwood Valley Charter School recognizes the importance of a safe learning environment. In accordance with the school's philosophy, CVCS strives to teach students acceptable behavior. It is the intent of the school to safeguard the dignity of each individual and to give teachers and students a pleasant working environment. Each classroom has its own discipline policy developed by the teacher and students in that classroom. A school-wide discipline policy has been developed by parents, teachers, and the administration and is used to determine the outcome for unacceptable behavior once it has surpassed classroom management. A copy of this policy can be found in the school office.

In discipline cases where parents need to be involved, the school will either call the parent or use a three-part discipline notice (one copy to the parent, one copy to the administrator, and one for the teacher's files). If a three-part notice is sent home, it must be returned to the administrator signed by the parent. If a parent or guardian has difficulty understanding a discipline procedure he/she should make an

appointment to discuss the situation with the student's teacher. If that does not adequately resolve the problem, an appointment should be made to meet with the administrator.

All students, parents, faculty, staff, visitors, and Governing Council members shall abide by the school's discipline policies.

A. Bullying

Bullying behavior by any student in the Cottonwood Valley Charter School is strictly prohibited and such conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion from school. Bullying means any aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated, and pervasive that is intended to cause distress or harm to another student in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop or at a school sanctioned event. Bullying includes, but is not limited to: hitting or punching (physical); teasing, belittling or name calling (verbal); or derogatory comments through email or text messages (electronic). Bullying has the effect of causing or creating fear of physical harm or damage to property and can include insulting or demeaning a student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.

B. School Property

Students are expected to respect the property of the school. The destruction or defacing of school property is not allowed and will be handled in accordance with state law. Students may face criminal and/or civil damages for property they have damaged or lost. Students are responsible for all textbooks and library books checked out to them. If a book is lost or damaged, the student is expected to pay full replacement value plus a replacement fee. Students are encouraged to care for all CVCS books, keeping them away from water at all times.

C. Agendas and Teacher/Parent Communication Folders

Children in grades K-5 will bring home teacher/parent communication folders each day. Grades 6-8 will use an agenda book for daily communication between teachers and families. The school will provide one folder or agenda for each student, but families will be expected to pay for replacements: \$5.00 for a

folder or \$10.00 for an agenda.

D. Personal Property

Students are required to respect the property of others.

E. Other Rules of Conduct

- Children may not leave the School grounds without adult supervision that has been approved by school authorities.
- All students must readily identify themselves to, and cooperate with, school personnel.
- Lying to school personnel is not tolerated and will be addressed with discipline if encountered.
- Throwing rocks or other dangerous objects is not tolerated.
- No pornography or sexually explicit material is allowed on school grounds. Any such material will be confiscated and turned over to a parent/guardian.

Dress Code

Wearing appropriate clothing to school promotes a positive, productive learning environment. Students are expected to follow the Dress Code updated in June of 2009. The plan calls for all shirts/blouses to have sleeves and a collar. The shirts/blouses must be solid color, striped, or plaid. The pants/shorts/capris/skorts/skirts/jumpers can be of any solid color or plaid. No blue or black denim. No sweat pants. Pants must be hemmed above the bottom of the shoe. Limited resources are available for families who need financial assistance with the purchase of clothes to comply with the dress code. Please address all questions about the plan to the administrator.

The first time a student comes to school wearing improper clothing he/she will be provided with appropriate clothes to wear for the day and a note will be sent home to the parents. Subsequent violations of the dress policy will result in a phone call to parents requiring them to bring appropriate school clothes to school. Continued violations may result in expulsion from CVCS. We expect students and parents to take the dress policy seriously. CVCS has chosen to enact a school dress policy, and if a family chooses to