Welcome to Virtual High School

We’re happy that you’ve chosen to add The Virtual High School (VHS) to your academic experience! At VHS, we believe all students should have access to education that meets their needs and interests. Just like each of you is unique, each VHS course is unique. At VHS, there is no one-size-fits-all model. We work closely with each school, student, and teacher, to provide a personal and custom educational experience.

In your VHS classroom, you’ll find students from across the United States and around the world. We believe having a diverse group of students in each class makes for more interesting and meaningful discussions. After all, we live in a global society, and you’ll be attending college or working with all different types of people. Preparation for your future starts now! We encourage you to explore our many VHS course options and find the ones that are most meaningful to you. Remember - we’re here to help you at any time, should you need assistance.

For more than twenty years, VHS has been deeply committed to making a positive difference in the lives of students and families. We set high academic expectations and provide supportive systems to help ensure all our students reach their fullest potential. We want to prepare you for college, careers, and life – and we’re happy that you’ve taken this first step with us.

Welcome to VHS!

Sincerely,
Carol Ribeiro
President & CEO
The Virtual High School (VHS)

Here is a picture of some of our staff at our 20th birthday party in 2017!
VHS Overview, Mission, and Beliefs

The Virtual High School: An Overview
The Virtual High School (VHS) is a nonprofit organization providing online courses to participating schools and students across the country and around the world. Course offerings include a wide variety of high school and middle school level courses, as well as professional development courses for faculty. VHS offers courses for students at all levels, including advanced placement, honors, and credit recovery courses. Courses can be customized at a school’s request. VHS also offers a fee-based summer program for student enrichment, initial credit, or credit recovery. It is each school’s responsibility to understand any local requirements for participation in online courses within their state/local district.

The hallmark of VHS courses is the collaboration among students, teachers, and administration. Students learn with, and from, their instructor and the other students within their online classroom. Districts participating with VHS receive not only courses and instruction, but also the infrastructure necessary to operate a robust online program, including ongoing professional development for on-site mentors and teachers, orientation for students, assistance with course selection and registration, and technical support.

VHS Mission and Beliefs
The mission of VHS is to provide students and teachers with collaborative and engaging learning opportunities.

Our vision is to prepare students to be successful in college, careers, and life.

OUR BELIEFS:

- VHS believes that student-centered online courses can be designed and delivered to promote a high quality, collaborative learning environment where student exchange and interaction is a valued component of the instructional process.

- VHS believes that education need not be limited by barriers of time, place or availability; and that online learning should offer students the benefits of highly-qualified faculty and an innovative curriculum made up of diverse, exciting learning opportunities in a global classroom.

- VHS believes that online teaching should enhance, rather than replace, traditional classrooms to provide solutions for schools needing an expanded curriculum, teachers seeking the latest skills, and students looking to stay competitive through cutting-edge, quality instruction.

- VHS believes that the goals of education are advanced best by putting value and service first, and that a collaborative network of schools can become part of an abundant and generous educational community that promotes the affordable sharing of professional resources.
Strategies for Success

What’s Unique about VHS
VHS is unique because we offer courses where learning with and from each other is important! In our cohort-based classes, you will have a teacher who works with you and your classmates to create a classroom community where you will have regular class discussions and opportunities to work in groups. Given this unique aspect of VHS courses it is essential that you stay on track. Coming to a class discussion after everyone has moved on is a bit like talking in an empty room. You might have a lot to say, but there isn’t anyone to hear you and respond! With that in mind, here are some tips to help you have a successful experience in your VHS semester-based class.

Pace Yourself
Former VHS students shared the most important lesson they learned from taking an online class. Almost every student gave the same advice: Don’t save all your work till the last day of the week! Often what might look like a quick assignment takes a bit of time. If you leave assignments until the last day of the VHS week, you will likely not have time to pass in high quality work. Help yourself by planning ahead and setting goals for due dates throughout the week.

Attend Class Regularly
Your VHS class has more flexibility than your regular classes so you can do your coursework in the evening or on the weekends. With flexibility comes responsibility. Though the minimum login requirement is 3x per week, students who are successful in VHS login at least 4-5 times per week. Honors and Advanced Placement students should login 5x per week to maximize success.

Plan Ahead
There are times when life is hectic – if you have a valid reason why you might not meet course deadlines, communicate with your teacher ahead of time. Often your teacher will be accommodating to your needs, but it is difficult to adjust after you’ve been absent without notice.

Get to Know Your Site Coordinator
Your site coordinator is the person at your school (or at the VHS office, for individually enrolled students) who can help you sort out any problems you may encounter. Check-in with your site coordinator regularly and ask them for help prioritizing your work or for tips and strategies for success. Don’t wait until you are really struggling before you ask for help!

Suggested Plan: How you might approach your week
- Check the News area for messages from your teacher, such as reminders or important updates.
- If it is the first visit of the week, review the Weekly Overview to check the table of assignments and activities for the week. Print the table to create a plan and track your work.
- As you begin the week’s activities pay close attention to due dates. Although most activities are due at the end of the week, some (in particular, discussions) have mid-week due dates.
- Check your Private Topic daily to see if you have messages from your teacher!
- Focus on your goals of the day: participate in class discussions, complete a written assignment, check in with a group. Your work will vary each week, so tackle assignments consistently and be sure to read and post to discussions at least a few times during the week!
Getting Help

Self-advocacy
In addition to time management skills and strong work habits, VHS students often learn about self-advocacy as part of their VHS experience. Self-advocacy means taking responsibility and initiative to get what you need – not waiting for others to take action for you. For some students this skill comes naturally, while for others it takes effort to improve in this area.

One way to be a strong self-advocate is to ask questions of your teacher and site coordinator. It is natural to have lots of questions. The answer to some will be clear, but when the answer is not, communicating with your teacher or site coordinator is key. **We can’t answer a question or solve a problem if we don’t know the question or problem exists!**

Tips for Requesting Help
Here are some tips for getting help from your VHS teacher or site coordinator:

- Don’t be shy! Other students probably have the same question as you.
- Make your questions specific – providing detail helps your teacher solve your problem or provide information that will help you understand the concept more fully.
- Ask questions in the right area – read below about different areas for questions in your course.
- Be patient! It might take a little while to hear from your teacher. VHS teachers are expected to respond to your question within 1-day, Monday to Friday. Many teachers do respond faster than this, but you should be aware of this expectation.
- Don’t be afraid to ask your site coordinator for help. If you are struggling to get answers to your questions, ask your site coordinator to call our office or file a service ticket. VHS staff is always happy to help provide you with additional support.

Asking Questions
Each class has discussion boards for specific types of questions. Students will be provided with additional information in the course. **We ask that students not use email to communicate with teachers.** When students post questions within the course VHS staff can assist as needed.

- **Have a Question?** – In this discussion board, students post questions about course navigation, problems locating or posting assignments, or more details on assignment expectations.
- **Private Topic** – Each student has a private topic (PT) – this is where the student can communicate privately with the teacher if there are questions about grades, information about absences, or other private matters.

Additional Suggestions
- Complete assignments in a word processor, then cut/paste the work into the assignment. This is helpful in case a technical issue creates a problem for posting work.
- Don’t forget to click “Post” when you upload assignments, and for dropbox work, check to make sure your files have uploaded before submitting your work.
- Don’t be afraid to use the help link in your course to file a service ticket for technical support.
- If all else fails, call the VHS office for support. We can be reached at 978-897-1900 between 8AM and 6PM Eastern Time Monday - Friday.
Academic Calendar
Virtual High School offers two semesters of study (fall and spring) per academic year. Semester courses are 15 weeks long and full year courses are 33 weeks long, with a break between weeks 15 and 16. Semester calendars are available on the VHS web site prior to the start of each academic year.

All students must follow the VHS academic calendar unless extenuating circumstances exist. If your school calendar differs you or your site coordinator must inform your teacher in advance to discuss options for completing work.

VHS Flex and summer courses have different schedules. Summer courses are offered in two four-week sessions and one eight-week session. Flex courses are fifteen-week courses with rolling start dates.

Grading and Late Work
Grade Scale
VHS courses use a numerical scale with a grade of 60% indicating a passing score. You may receive an "I" for an Incomplete if you are not able to finish the course within the semester. See Incomplete Grades for additional information on this policy.

Your teacher will submit grades in numeric format (i.e. 100, 99, 98, etc.). The grading system will generate equivalent letter grades (i.e. A+, A, A-, etc.). Here is a conversion table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97 - 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 - 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 - 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 - 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 - 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 - 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63 - 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 - 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>00 - 59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade Periods for Term and Semester Grades
Grade periods for semester-length courses (Fall and Spring):
Term 1 Grade: The Term 1 Grade represents student work from weeks 1 through 8.
Term 2 Grade: The Term 2 Grade represents student work from weeks 9 through 15.
The Final Grade represents an average of the Term 1 and Term 2 grades.
Grade periods for full-year Courses:
Fall Term 1 Grade represents student work from weeks 1 through 8.
Fall Term 2 Grade represents student work from weeks 9 through 15.
Spring Term 3 Grade represents student work from weeks 16 through 26.
Spring Term 4 Grade represents student work from weeks 27 through 33.
Final Grade: The Final Grade for full-year classes is the average of Term 1, 2, 3 and 4 grades.

Flex and Summer School courses are graded in a single term containing all 4 or 8 weeks of work.

**Grade Over 100%**
VHS does not allow teachers to confirm grades over 100% in the VHS Student Information System. If your grade is greater than 100% for a term, that grade will be confirmed as 100% in the system. Additional points may not be rolled over to a later term.

**Incomplete Grades**
Teachers may allow you additional time to complete course work following the close of the VHS marking period by issuing an Incomplete (I) for Term 1, 2, 3, or 4. If an extenuating circumstance exists please talk with your site coordinator so that your teacher can decide if additional time is warranted.

**Late Work**
The policy outlined below describes the approach to late work in VHS semester and full-year classes. Summer and Flex policies are outlined in a separate chapter at the end of this handbook. If questions about late work arise, please communicate with your teacher and site coordinator.

- Late work will not be accepted more than two weeks after the due date.
- Late work will be penalized by 10% up to one week late; 20% if submitted up to two weeks late.
- The late work policy does not apply to course discussion and group assignments. Since course discussions and group work rely on communication during a given week, these assignments must be posted on time and will not be accepted late.
- Please also note that the late work policy applies only when the work is infrequently late. Consistently handing in late work is not acceptable. Do not assume the teacher will repeatedly accept late work, even with the penalties outlined above, without prior approval.

At times circumstances out of your control, such as illness, weather-related events, family issues, or other major events, would require an exception to this policy. If this is the case, talk to your teacher in your private topic. Make every effort to contact your teacher before work will be late or as soon as possible after.

**Course Level and Requirements**

**Advanced Placement Tests**
If you enroll in an AP® course you are expected to take the AP® exam, and are required to report AP® exam scores to VHS. Students who are failing need not take the AP® exam. It is the responsibility of your local school to order and administer AP® exams for VHS students.

Individually enrolled students must contact their local school or use the College Board process for homeschooled students to locate a testing site. Be aware of the timeline for this process; the College
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Board recommends contacting their AP® Services for Students number (888-225-5427 or 212-632-1780) prior to March 1st to obtain names of local testing sites.

By enrolling in an AP® VHS class, you authorize your site coordinator or school administration to report AP® examination scores to VHS. Students should use Online Provider Code 021 on their exam forms so their scores are reported directly to VHS.

Advanced Placement Summer Work
Some VHS Advanced Placement courses have recommended summer reading or other activities. Summer work assignments are found in the course descriptions in the VHS Catalog.

Course Levels
The level of each course is indicated in the VHS Catalog. The catalog also contains prerequisite skills and course grade level. Here are some guidelines for what to expect in different VHS courses:

- A standard (college preparatory) level class requires approximately 6 - 8 hours per week.
- An honors level class requires approximately 8 - 10 hours per week.
- An AP level class requires approximately 10 - 12 hours per week.
- A middle school course is intended for enrichment and requires 3-5 hours per week.
- Summer and flex credit recovery commitments vary, described in detail in a future section.

Proctored Exams
Some VHS courses have proctored exams. If you are enrolled in a course with a proctored exam you must comply with the exam process or you will receive a grade of zero on the proctored exam. Your teacher will provide details within your course.

Waiver Requirements
Some VHS courses, including lab science courses and physical education courses, require waiver documentation to be uploaded to VHS. Waiver requirements are outlined in a course’s description in the VHS Catalog. Waivers must be returned to VHS at or before course start. If you do not return the required waiver within established timeframes you will not be allowed to continue in the course.

Student Responsibilities/Code of Conduct
Acceptable Internet Use Policy
The VHS web site and VHS system shall be used in a manner consistent with the purpose of the VHS system, the administrative rules for using the system, and according to The Virtual High School policies. Communications using VHS system resources will be considered publications and will be governed by administrative policies and VHS policies regarding publications.

You are expected to conduct yourself in a responsible, ethical, and polite manner while using VHS systems. You must not access material that is contrary to prevailing community standards or inappropriate for classroom use. If such inappropriate material is accidentally encountered, you must immediately stop use of that site or resource.

Access to VHS systems is a privilege, not a right. You have the responsibility to respect and protect the rights of other users in the VHS community and on the Internet. Please act in a responsible, ethical and
legal manner, in accordance with VHS policies, in conformance with the purposes of the other sites, and in compliance with state and national laws. If you commit a violation your access privileges will be revoked, as well as whatever other disciplinary action may be assigned by local and VHS administrators.

This policy cannot describe all possible behaviors by users of the system, so in any specific situation, you must exercise good judgment of appropriate conduct. To assist in such judgment, the following guidelines are offered:

• Any use for illegal purposes, or in support of illegal activities, is prohibited.
• Any use for political, religious, or commercial purposes is prohibited.
• The use of electronic mail in any manner that is contrary to VHS policy is prohibited.
• Any use that disrupts the educational and administrative goals of VHS is prohibited.
• Any use of VHS systems or a VHS account by anyone but the authorized owner of the account is prohibited. Sharing account credentials is prohibited.
• Any reproduction of copyrighted material without explicit permission is prohibited.

System storage areas may be inspected at any time. System administrators or other staff may review communications to maintain integrity system-wide and ensure that students are using the system in a responsible manner.

You should not download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware unless you have written permission from the system administrator or other appropriate staff. Do not create or keep other people's work or intrude into other people's files.

No profane, abusive, impolite, or inappropriate language should be used to communicate within VHS systems and/or on the Internet.

Access or upload of material that has been deemed inappropriate for educational use is prohibited. Should you encounter such material by accident, please disengage immediately and report it to your teacher. In addition, creating and/or uploading any material that is inappropriate for educational use (text, video, images or other) is prohibited.

**Anti-Harassment / Cyber-Bullying Policy**

The Virtual High School (VHS) is committed to safeguarding the right of all individuals involved in the school to work and learn in an environment that is free of harassment.

**Anti-Harassment Policy**

Harassment, intimidation or bullying and acts of cyber-bullying for any reason, including but not limited to race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, age, gender, gender expression, or disability in any form is strictly prohibited. If your behavior is found to be in violation of this policy you will be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion. Violators may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

“Cyber-bullying” is the use of electronic information and communication devices, to include but not be limited to, e-mail messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephone communications, internet blogs, video or internet chat rooms, internet postings, and defamatory websites, that:
1. Deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual or group of individuals; or
2. Places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual or damage to the individual’s property; or
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the course.

Copyright Notice
Please understand that your course might contain copyrighted materials that are used in compliance with U.S. Copyright Law. Under that law you cannot save materials to your computer, revise materials, copy materials, or otherwise distribute them without permission. Materials accessed in this course are to be used in support of instructional activities for this course only and shall be limited to the duration of the course, unless otherwise specified by the instructor or owner of the material. You may only download or print materials if given permission by your teacher or site coordinator, who know which materials are copyrighted and which are not.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty
Submitting work that you claim as your own but derives from a source other than yourself without properly citing the source is considered plagiarism and is not allowed in VHS classes. There are serious consequences for students who plagiarize their assignments or discussion contributions.

VHS uses TurnItIn, a plagiarism detection tool, to detect if your work has been copied from another source. TurnitIn doesn’t just search the Internet – it also checks work against current and former VHS student work in any course section.

To learn about how VHS approaches consequences to plagiarism cases, review the policy on plagiarism and academic honesty here: VHS Plagiarism/Academic Honesty Policy.

Respectful Discourse
Tone of voice and attitude can be difficult to convey in writing, but they are extremely important in an online class. It is important to say what you mean and mean what you say in your VHS class! We expect that you will treat your VHS teacher and classmates with the same respect as you would treat your teachers and peers in your face-to-face school. Students who are disrespectful will be reported to their school and will be subject to consequences aligned with their school’s Code of Conduct. Individually enrolled students may be removed from a course for lack of respect, in accordance with the VHS Acceptable Use Policy. Here are some specific reminders about respectful posting in an online course:

Use proper English: It is easy to fall into the habit of using texting shorthand. This is a classroom, just like any other classroom. Use proper English and do not use unusual screen names, slang, or abbreviations in your posts.

Choose words carefully: When we talk to someone in person they can hear our words and see our faces. In classroom discussions it is easy to be misunderstood. Read your post back to yourself to make sure your word choices convey your feelings.

Don’t make it personal: Expressing your opinion is encouraged, but don’t make disagreements personal.

NO YELLING: Refrain from using all capital letters – it is like yelling at your teacher or classmate.

Keep it clean: No profanity, links to inappropriate websites, or inappropriate images.
Don’t forget: all things you post in the course are recorded and saved, including edit history on discussion posts.

Student Participation
You are expected to attend and participate in your courses as fully as you would attend and participate in a face-to-face course. All work should be completed by course due dates. At an absolute minimum, you are required to log-in and perform work in your VHS courses three times per week. Ideally, you will access your VHS classes each week day.

If you are absent due to illness (five days or more), you or your parent/guardian, may either contact the teacher directly to notify the teacher of any delay in completing assigned work, or contact your site coordinator for assistance in coordinating make up work. It is your responsibility to make up work missed due to absence. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, work should be made up within one week of your return to school. Credit for make-up work is at the discretion of your teacher. It is your responsibility to be familiar with late work and attendance policies and to adhere to them.

If you do not participate in your course for two weeks you will be considered truant and will be dropped from the course at the discretion of VHS.

Summer school and flex participation requirements are outlined in the summer/flex addendum to this handbook.

Privacy Statements
Please visit http://vhslearning.org/privacy-policy to view the most current VHS Privacy Statement.

FERPA Statement
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law enacted in 1974 that guarantees the confidentiality of a student's records. Virtual High School (VHS, Inc.) strictly adheres to FERPA policies and regulations.

Summer and Flex Courses
Overview
The VHS summer school and flex courses provide students with opportunities to complete courses in a more flexible manner. It is important that students consult with their local schools before enrolling into a flex or summer course to ensure the school will accept credit from the class. Summer and flex courses are typically taken for credit recovery, though there are enrichment options available (such as the Criminology and Digital Photography summer options).

Flex Course Pacing and Credit
Flex courses are designed for students that require flexible credit recovery and are motivated, independent learners. Courses are taught by licensed online teachers and enrollment is available on a rolling basis and students progress through the coursework independently and at their own pace.

Students can take up to 15 weeks to complete a flex course, though many students complete the courses within an 8-week timeframe. Flex courses earn 0.5 or 1 credit, based on the amount of content covered. Visit the Flex Program Page on the VHS website for additional details about Flex offerings.
Summer School Course Pacing and Credit
In contrast to Flex courses, the VHS summer school program is a paced, cohort-based course experience that provides students with the opportunity to explore new material or earn credit recovery in an NCAA approved credit recovery program.

Courses are either 4 weeks long (0.5 credit course) or 8 weeks long (1 credit course). There are two sessions to choose from for the 4-week courses (late June and late July start) while the 8-week courses begin in late June and end in mid/late August. Students are required to login to the class daily and participate in weekly class discussions. Summer school courses are taught by licensed teachers who assess student work and interact with students regularly in class discussions and the student’s private discussion.

Visit the VHS Summer School page for additional details about the summer program and course/registration information.

Summer School Late Work Policy
Due to the abbreviated schedule for Summer School courses, late work will only be accepted for ONE week from the due date. There will be a 20% penalty applied to late work submitted within that week. Work submitted after one week will not be accepted without prior approval from the course instructor.

Parent Information
Welcome
Welcome to the VHS program! We are excited that your student will be joining us in a VHS course and look forward to helping them achieve their educational goals. We hope you have read the student handbook, so that you can understand the policies that guide our program. If you, or your student, have questions about the handbook, please do not hesitate to call our office at 978-897-1900.

Benefits of VHS
In our 20+ year history of working with students we have found that there are many benefits to completing a VHS course. Students can explore course content they may not be able to access in their local school – many students have used their VHS course to take a possible field of interest for a “test drive,” to see if it might appeal to them as a future career.

In addition to the self-regulation, self-advocacy, and time management skills students gain, we have also found that students are able to be more reflective of their work. Our class discussion boards give students time to think before posting their response and they offer an opportunity for all students to be heard. Exposure to students from across the United States and from a variety of International locations is also enriching, especially in courses that explore content where global perspective is critical.

Last, but by no means least, VHS courses are a safe way for students to take online courses. Our rigorous, but supportive classrooms give students exposure to online classes, which will benefit them in their post-secondary pursuits. Many colleges are using blended or online courses as part of undergraduate programs – learning the ropes in the high school setting is a benefit many of our former students share.
Tuition Refund
If you have purchased courses on an individual basis and need to withdraw, you will receive a tuition refund according to the following schedule:

1. Full refund prior to start of class.
2. 75% tuition refund will be granted if withdrawal occurs during the first week of the course.
3. No tuition refunds will be granted after the first week of the course.
4. Withdrawal date is the date the enrollment is dropped within the VHS Registration system, or the date the drop is requested through VHS (whichever occurs first).

**Note:** This refund policy does not apply to seats purchased in bulk through a VHS membership or package discount.