

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a free school?

A free school is a learning environment that fosters autonomy, choice, and personal agency among students. Like Sudbury, Montessori, and Waldorf schools, free schools are an alternative to mainstream, traditional school models. Village Free School is a democratic free school, which means that along with individual freedom, students work together to create their community and shape their daily lives.

What are the advantages of a democratic environment?

At VFS, each person's voice matters as much as another's, which enables students to gain skills in communication, empathy, compromise, and understanding. During All School Meetings, our community makes decisions small and large that affect daily life: students debate and discuss things such as screen time, clean up responsibilities, gun play, and school traditions. This practice prepares them to be active participants in the world.

How do children learn anything if you don't make them?

Children are learning all the time, whether through play, interaction, or direct instruction. At VFS, one of the first things students learn is that the adults in the space trust them. We are academically non-coercive, which means that we don't force students to study subjects they aren't ready for or interested in, and we promote self-directed education, which means that learning is directed by students' passions, curiosities, and questions. Students are able to learn skills at their own pace. Given that freedom, and knowing they have the support of their peers and staff, each child creates a curriculum that meets their educational needs.

Are students able to go to college when they leave VFS?

Staff work closely with students to prepare them for their next steps, whether it's college, traveling, working, internships, or a trade. Each student has one-on-one support in filling out applications, taking any necessary tests, interview preparation, and hands-on life skills. Our graduates are happy, healthy, and successful in the lives they have chosen to lead.

If there are no requirements, how does a school like VFS prepare students for "the real world"?

Our students know that "the real world" is right now and are empowered to engage with it in the present moment, no matter their age. As the world's economy changes, skills such as adaptability, initiative, creative thinking and problem solving, and communication are increasingly valuable. VFS fosters these natural abilities already within each child and gives them space to discover their unique strengths and talents. At Village Free School, students learn who they are and what they want from life; there is no better preparation for what the world has in store.

Are there books I can read to help me better understand?

Yes! To start, we recommend:

"Making it Up as We Go Along" by Chris Mercogliano

"Summerhill" by A.S. Neill

"Educating for Human Greatness" by Lynn Stoddard

"World Class Learners" by Yong Zhao

