



CITY OF
VALPARAISO

VCS Grant Application

This 2025 Grant Application was formed in compliance with the policy statement passed by the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission on August 11, 2016 and per Indiana Code 36-7-25-7. Eligible entities must provide educational programs, work training programs, worker retraining programs, or any other programs that prepare individuals to participate in the competitive and global economy. School challenge grants are subject to available funding in the Commission’s annual budget and are provided at the sole and absolute discretion of the Commission. Grant funds cannot be used to subsidize ongoing operating expenses, staff salaries, personal expenses, or travel expenses. In granting school challenge grant funds, the Commission must find that the programs will promote the redevelopment and economic development of the City, is of utility and benefit, and is in the best interests of the City’s residents.

Please note this application is to be submitted to the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, c/o Debbie Melcic, 166 Lincolnway, Valparaiso, IN 46383 by April 30, 2025. Failure to file with the Commission in a timely fashion may render the project ineligible for funding. The Commission reserves the right to seek additional information relating to the project prior to reimbursement.

If you have any questions regarding this application or policies affecting this grant, please contact George Douglas, Director of Development at (219) 462-1161 or at gdouglas@valpo.us.

Total 2025 Funds Available to VCS: \$441,278.17

1. Briefly outline the projects VCS intends to initiate or continue in 2025 with Redevelopment Grant Funds by listing the project, intended expenditures, and an estimated cost. Please remember that expenditures must be capital-based and have a lifespan of no less than three years.

Title of Project	Intended Expenditures	Estimated Cost
1:1 Initiative	A. Purchase Chromebooks and related materials/services (e.g., Chrome licensing, setup) for grades 6 and high school (~1100 devices)	\$354,000
	B. Kajeet Renewal (~30 devices)	\$6,000
STEM Equipment	A. Elementary STEM 3D Printers (8 Elementary Schools)	\$5,000
	B. VHS Art Department - MacBook Cart	\$30,000
	C. District Site License of Adobe Creative Suite	\$4,000
	D. Anatomage Table Software Upgrade & Expansion	\$25,000
	E. zSpace VR Lab Software Update	\$18,000

2. Up to \$3,000 of total grant funds may be applied to the Arts as a match to State or private grants. If a state

grant is not awarded, the funds may be used on arts-related capital expenses with a lifespan of no less than three years. If you intend to use grant funds on the arts, please list the project, intended expenditures, and the estimated cost below.

Title of Project	Intended Expenditures	Estimated Cost
n/a	n/a	n/a

3. Briefly explain how each project will use advanced methods or technologies that offer students an education that is competitive in the global economy.

Valparaiso Community Schools is committed to the continued development of a K-12 technology integration program for its curriculum, assessment, and instruction. The ongoing innovation and expansion of our STEM programs and labs at all three levels have given our students opportunities to not only broaden their knowledge through multiple modalities but have also promoted deeper engagement through modern appeal and invoking natural curiosities through technology. VCS endeavors to supply its students with the 21st-century skills necessary to successfully compete in today's globally competitive economy.

- a. **Project 1** (1:1 Initiative): Daily, the VCS 1:1 Initiative provides every student in grades K-12 with a device for individualized learning that can transcend the bricks, mortar, and bell schedules of the traditional schoolhouse. Students can investigate, collaborate, produce, and edit their workflow anywhere and at any time of day through VCS's online classroom, Canvas, as well as Google Apps for Education. Additionally, students can interact with each other and with the instructor through the use of adopted hardware and programs. Flexible learning modes require students to use their 1:1 devices to communicate with teachers and peers, complete assignments, access critical resources, and stay connected to current events. By providing students with a viable option for a blended learning environment, Valparaiso Community Schools is realizing its community's vision for its children. In concert with other supportive community programs, mobile hotspots allow VCS to balance scales of connectivity for all students away from the schoolhouse. This technology ensures that every VCS student has online access to critical resources and content that has been curated and created by VCS instructional leaders. By equipping students with essential digital skills and fostering a culture of innovation, the program prepares them to actively contribute to an ever-expanding local and global market.
- b. **Project 2** (STEM Equipment): Promoting STEM learning opportunities at the elementary level stimulates curiosity and provides opportunities for discovery that are foundational to secondary and post-secondary education. As STEM programming continues to grow in Career and Technical Education programs via both state and local initiatives, a key component remains student access to the advanced technologies and simulations experienced in post-secondary college and careers.
 - i. Introducing elementary students to 3D printing technology offers numerous educational benefits, including enhanced problem-solving skills, increased engagement in STEM subjects, and the opportunity to bring creative ideas to life through hands-on learning. While some elementary students in Valparaiso Community Schools currently have access to 3D printing and related curriculum, it is the district's goal to expand these opportunities to all eight elementary schools. By doing so, Valparaiso aims to foster innovation and digital literacy from an early age, ensuring all students are equipped with skills essential for future academic and

career success.

- ii. The district site license of Adobe Creative Suite provides all design students with industry-standard design software (Photoshop, Illustrator, XD, and Acrobat). Similarly, the use of Macbooks in the Art program provides all Art students with the opportunity to use professional hardware and software that is representative of real-world career applications.
- iii. The Anatomage Table is the most technologically advanced 3D anatomy visualization and virtual dissection tool for anatomy and physiology education and is being adopted by many of the world's leading medical schools and institutions.
- iv. The zSpace virtual lab provides students with simulated, 3D exploration that is representative of the lab spaces and training programs found in higher education and career training programs.

4. Briefly explain how the project enhances problem solving, collaboration, and analytical skills of students.

a. **Project 1** (1:1 initiative): The VCS 1:1 Initiative project focuses on leveraging the technology (Chromebooks/Macbooks/iPads) to individualize education while providing the medium to collaborate in a meaningful way. The ability to combine Google Apps for Education with Canvas provides the virtual framework for students to conduct business as if they were in a traditional classroom. Think-pair-share, cooperative work and meaningful discussion can all take place in real-time as well as in an on-demand environment where the resources, discussions, and assessments wait for the student until that student is ready to participate. Students will also be able to conduct research, demonstrate critical thought through written form, and create presentations for others to interact with their work through their 1:1 devices as well.

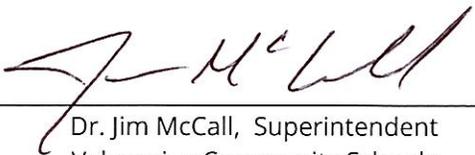
b. **Project 2:**

- i. 3D Printers: As elementary students design and refine their 3D models, they are challenged to think critically about dimensions, function, and structure, encouraging them to find creative solutions to design challenges. Collaborative projects require students to communicate effectively, share responsibilities, and integrate diverse ideas, fostering teamwork and interpersonal skills. Additionally, analyzing the outcomes of their printed models (what worked, what didn't, and why) helps students develop a reflective mindset and a deeper understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, strengthening their analytical abilities in a hands-on, engaging way.
- ii. Adobe/Macbooks: Providing students with access to professional tools encourages creativity and critical thinking. These tools allow students to design, edit, and produce high-quality digital content, requiring them to make thoughtful decisions throughout the creative process. Collaborative projects using these platforms promote teamwork and communication, as students must coordinate roles and share feedback to achieve a common goal. Additionally, the complexity and versatility of professional software challenge students to troubleshoot issues, evaluate different solutions, and refine their work, strengthening both their technical and analytical abilities in real-world contexts.
- iii. Anatomage: The primary function of the Anatomage Table allows students to visualize

anatomy exactly as they would on a fresh cadaver; however, Anatomage software developments and the functions of the table have continued to expand its programming to an even broader scope of scientific learning opportunities. The upgraded and expanded software package will add more than 100 new opportunities in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Earth & Space Science for students to explore NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) through scientific practices and application to real-world problems.

- iv. zSpace/VR Labs: Through virtual simulations in subjects like science, engineering, and anatomy, students can manipulate objects, test hypotheses, and observe cause-and-effect in real-time. This active learning environment encourages students to think critically, ask questions, and experiment with solutions in a low-risk setting. By engaging in these experiences, students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and strengthen their analytical thinking and problem-solving skills in ways that traditional instruction often cannot provide.
5. Provide evidence of the Board of Directors approval of the grant application. Minutes from a board meeting approving grant submission to the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission will suffice.

This application was filed by Valparaiso Community Schools as its formal application to the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, stating its intended uses for 2025 grant funds. I understand the Commission's right to seek additional information relating to the project prior to reimbursement.



Dr. Jim McCall, Superintendent
Valparaiso Community Schools

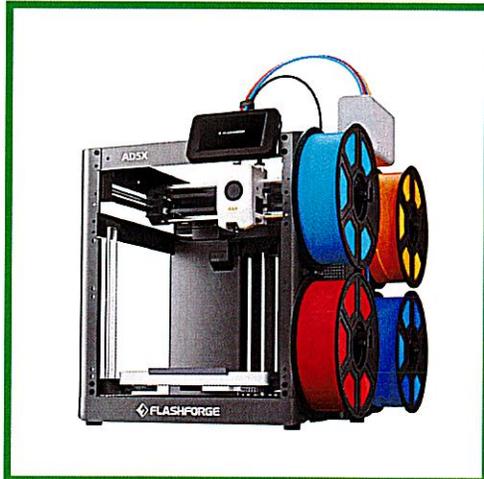


VALPARAISO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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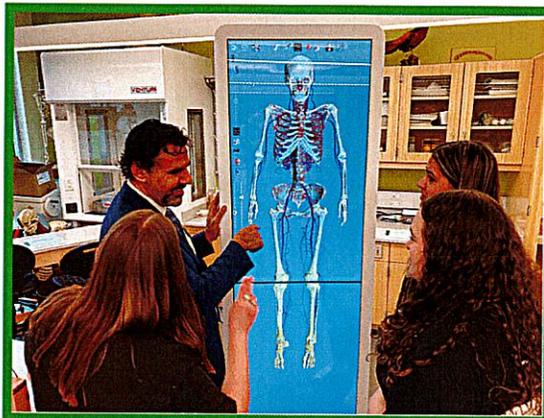
Proposed 3D Printers for Elementary STEM

All 8 elementary schools will integrate 3D printing into the STEM curriculum using Flash Forge 3D Printers



Proposed Anatomage Table Software Expansion

Anatomy & Physiology, Biomedical, Human Body Systems, Exercise Science, Veterinary Careers + **Biology**, **Chemistry**, **Physics**, **Earth & Space Exploration & Experimentation**



<p>32 </p> <p>BIOLOGY EXPERIMENTS</p> <p>Our digital simulations deliver accurate models of various biology</p>	<p>28 </p> <p>CHEMISTRY EXPERIMENTS</p> <p>The virtual chemistry experiments provide an exceptional opportunity for</p>	<p>32 </p> <p>PHYSICS EXPERIMENTS</p> <p>Fun, engaging, gamified experiments allow students to observe</p>	<p>9 </p> <p>EARTH & SPACE SCIENCES</p> <p>Engage in exciting space and geology experiments</p>
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#WEAREVALPO



Grant Approval Request

April 2025

OSE Behavior Grant

The Office of Special Education Grant is a state-sponsored grant. VCS has been awarded \$51,247.70 in funding to support behavior interventions for students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

RDC Challenge Grant

The Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission's annual School Challenge Grant will provide a pupil-based award of \$441,278.17 to support Valparaiso Community Schools' (VCS) commitment to delivering high-quality STEM learning experiences for all students, while also advancing the district's 1:1 technology initiative. This funding will help ensure equitable internet access and connectivity while enhancing STEM learning environments that foster problem-solving, collaboration, and analytical thinking (skills essential for future success). This year's grant will support the addition of 3D printing technology in all eight elementary schools, provide MacBooks and professional design software for the Valparaiso High School Art Department, expand the use of the Anatomage table to include lab opportunities in Chemistry, Physics, and Earth & Space Science, and enhance the virtual reality labs at both middle schools.

We are seeking the Board's approval for these grants.



Regular Meeting of the Board of School Trustees
VCS Administration Building
Thursday, April 17, 2025
6:00 p.m.

A. Meeting Opening - Dr. Robert Behrend

1. Call to Order—This meeting is a public meeting of the School Board to conduct the school district's business and is not to be considered a public community meeting. There will be time for public comment as indicated on the agenda.

Board Members in Attendance: Dr. Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, Ashley Kruse.

Staff Members in Attendance: Dr. Jim McCall, Superintendent; Dr. Nick Allison, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education; Dr. Erin Hawkins, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education; and Mr. Jim Holifield, Chief Financial Officer.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - Dr. Robert Behrend

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Student and Staff Recognition - Dr. Jim McCall

Dr. McCall and the Board welcomed Stacy Adams, VHS Athletic Director, who took a moment to introduce the VHS Gymnastics coaches and express gratitude for their dedication. Coach Juergens gave an overview of the team's success throughout the season and introduced the VHS Gymnastics Team, which earned the Runner-Up title at the State Gymnastics Meet. Additionally, Megan Garibay was recognized as the State Champion on vault, and Ione Skafish who received the 2025 Mildred M. Vall Mental Attitude Award.

Team members include Ava Burress, Emma Creekmore, Megan Garibay, Madelyn Haro, Coe Krischke, Olivia Magiera, Ava Moe, Danyelle Peres, Fiona Skafish, Ione Skafish, and Camryn Smith. The coaching staff consists of Becky Juergens, Kristin Ripley, Megan Nellesen, and Chloe Ochman.

TJMS Principal, Mr. Mark Maudlin, spoke about the history of Science Olympiad success at TJMS and introduced Coach Kate Sanders. Coach Sanders provided details about the achievements of the Science Olympiad team, including their impressive 2nd-place finish at the 2025 State Tournament. The team members include Aeesha Al-abachee, Nathan Allred, Cora Barger, Ahana Bhardway, Adelaide Cram, Hunter Fandrei, Liberty Laughner, Izalia Lawley, Emmy Letta, Caleb Riegle, Charlie Rowe, Blake Siegrist, Resse Taylor, and Adam Warren.

B. Public Comment Pertaining to Agenda Action Items - Dr. Robert Behrend

1. Open Public Comment - Dr. Robert Behrend

Brian Williams discussed the donation made to the VHS Girls Basketball Team for mental fitness training. He feels the idea of offering mental fitness training is an excellent idea and would like to see a forum in the district focused on addressing mental fitness, mental health, and wellness. Public comment was closed.

C. Consent Agenda - Dr. Robert Behrend

1. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Action (Consent) Payroll Claims 03/28/2025

Action (Consent) Payroll Claims 04/11/2025

Action (Consent) Vendor Claims 03/21/2025 through 04/17/2025

Action (Consent) Minutes Regular Meeting 03/20/2025

Action (Consent) Personnel Reports

Action (Consent) Overnight Fieldtrips

Action (Consent) ECA Equipment Request

Dr. Behrend recommended approval of the Consent Agenda.

Motion: Karl Cender, seconded by Ashley Kruse.

Discussion: There was none.

Yea: Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, and Ashley Kruse.

Final Resolution: Motion carried.

2. Recommendation for employment of candidate pursuant to IC 20-26-5-11.2 - Dr. Jim McCall

Dr. McCall recommended approval of the recommendation for employment of candidate pursuant to IC 20-26-5-11.2.

Motion: Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, seconded by Erika Watkins.

Discussion: There was none.

Yea: Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, and Ashley Kruse.

Final Resolution: Motion carried.

D. Financial Reports - Dr. Robert Behrend

1. Performance of Budget Funds - Mr. Jim Holifield

Mr. Holifield reviewed and recommended approval of the Performance Budget Funds.

Discussion: There was none.

Motion: Erika Watkins, seconded by Kaye Frataccia-Seibert.

Yea: Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, and Ashley Kruse.

Final Resolution: Motion carried.

2. Contract Considerations - Dr. Jim McCall

There were none.

3. Grants - Dr. Judy Barbknecht

Dr. Allison reviewed and recommended approval of the Grants presented.

Discussion: Mrs. Frataccia-Seibert stated that the grants help provide incredible opportunities for VCS.

Motion: Erika Watkins, seconded by Karl Cender.

Yea: Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, and Ashley Kruse.

Final Resolution: Motion carried.

4. Donations and Gifts - Dr. Jim McCall

Dr. McCall reviewed and recommended approval of the Donations and Gifts.

Discussion: The Board thanked the community for their continued generosity.

Motion: Ashley Kruse, seconded by Erika Watkins.

Yea: Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, and Ashley Kruse.

Final Resolution: Motion carried.

E. Old Business - Dr. Robert Behrend

There was none.

F. New Business - Dr. Robert Behrend

1. Board Consideration: Permission to Advertise for Bids for Elementary Playground

Dr. McCall reviewed and recommended Permission to advertise for Bids for the Elementary Playground.

Discussion: Mr. Holifield clarified that the bids are for the civil work portion of the playgrounds.

Motion: Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, seconded by Erika Watkins.

Yea: Robert Behrend, Erika Watkins, Karl Cender, Kaye Frataccia-Seibert, and Ashley Kruse.

Final Resolution: Motion carried.

G. Public Comment For Non-Agenda OR Informational Agenda Items

Mr. Brian Williams acknowledged the high school students who attended the meeting and encouraged them to return in the future. He proposed eliminating the requirement for community members to sign in before the meeting if they wish to speak to the board. Mr. Williams expressed gratitude to the Board for listening to his comments during last month's meeting and requested that they revisit these issues with the public once they have had time to consider the comments and concerns raised.

Mr. Williams thanked the Board for the informative school board agendas, which provide a clear view of the topics that will be discussed at each meeting. Additionally, he encouraged those who watch online to attend the meetings in person.

Lastly, he urged the Board to inform the community about the potential effects that Senate Bill 1 may have on the VCS budget.

Mr. Jason Solomon was highly complimentary of Dr. Allison and his assistance in the past and requested a meeting with Dr. McCall and Dr. Allison.

H. Superintendent / Board Comments

Dr. McCall was excited to celebrate the achievements of students in academics, athletics, and the arts at VCS today.

Dr. Allison recognized the VCS students who participated in the 2025 SkillsUSA Indiana State Championship held in April. Tessa Stearns won a gold medal in Technical Drafting, while Kat Daly and Chris Cimoch earned silver medals in 3D Visualization and Animation. Mr. Bill Guinee teaches both Technical Drafting and 3D Visualization and Animation and are part of the VCS CAD Program. Additionally, VCS Graphics Arts teacher Amy Jones had a student from Washington Township who received a gold medal in Advertising Design, which is also part of the VCS Graphics Design Program.

Dr. McCall emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities to connect with their interests. One such opportunity is the VHS Career Fair, which will take place on April 23rd at the high school fieldhouse. This event will help connect students with community partners, allowing them to explore various career options. It is another avenue for students to engage with what they are passionate about and discover ways to pursue these interests further.

The Board discussed Senate Bill 1 and emphasized the need for additional information before making any decisions regarding VCS. Based on current knowledge, drastic changes will not be

necessary at this stage. Mrs. Watkins concurred and expressed the importance of ongoing dialogue with the community. It is necessary for VCS to find a way to maintain the same level of quality while also reducing costs.

Mrs. Kruse discussed the idea of creating a legislative liaison for the board and would like to pursue this initiative further. While change can be challenging, she believes this position can be developed over time and that it is the Board's responsibility to inform the community about upcoming developments, mentioning several proposed bills.

Adjournment

The next VCS School Board meeting will be held on May 15, 2025, at Valparaiso High School. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.