



valleyinquiry

CHARTER SCHOOL



Admissions Packet 2024-25

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Salem, OR 97305
503.399.3150

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for your interest in Valley Inquiry Charter School. We are excited about the possibility of having your student join us for the upcoming school year! Before you apply to our school, we invite you to read through this application packet in its entirety in order to provide you with information about our school, its goals, our curriculum and programming, and our unique perspective and approach to the learning process. Additionally, we highly encourage you to attend our Incoming Kindergarten Open House Night to get a clearer picture of our school as you seek to make the final decision of where you would like to have your student attend school.

As always, we are available to answer any additional questions or concerns you may have. If you have a question, please feel free to call us at 503.399.3150.

You can also email us at: admin@valleyinquiry.org.

Thank you!

Background Information: Valley Inquiry Charter School is a K-5 public charter school sponsored by the Salem-Keizer Public Schools District (24J) in Oregon. We have 168 students. Our school opened in September 2005 with the intent of becoming the first International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program (PYP) World School in the Pacific Northwest. Since then, our school has been proudly offering a curriculum and program that relies on student agency, classroom inquiry, and school action as a way to make the world a better place.

School Mission: Valley Inquiry Charter School seeks to further develop a primary school where children of all backgrounds and abilities can share in the joy and discovery of each day; acquire the skills to approach new problems thoughtfully and creatively; develop an appreciation and understanding of other cultures and traditions; and become actively engaged in their communities.

IB Mission: The International Baccalaureate (IB) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

Charter School Admissions: Valley Inquiry's admissions and enrollment processes follow those outlined in Oregon charter law (ORS Chapter 338.125). Admission to Valley Inquiry Charter School is free. There is no cost to attend our school as we are a public charter school. Admission to Valley Inquiry Charter School is open to all K-8 students who reside in the Salem-Keizer Public School District boundaries. To be eligible for enrollment, students must reside within the Salem-Keizer district at the time of application. If, at any time during enrollment, a student moves out of the Salem-Keizer district, they must inform ValleyInquiry within 30 days. In this case, the student may be allowed to finish the current year as long as they stay in regular attendance.

Valley Inquiry Charter School does not limit student enrollment based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, disability, the terms of an individualized education program, income level, proficiency in the English language, or athletic ability.

Sibling Priority Admission: In accordance with ORS 338.125, Valley Inquiry Charter School may give priority admission to a student if the student has a sibling who will be enrolled at Valley Inquiry at the time of attendance and who was enrolled during the previous year.

Charter School Lottery Process : In accordance with ORS 338.125, all students who reside in the school district in which the public charter school is located are eligible for enrollment in the public charter school if space is available. If the number of applications from students who reside in the school district exceeds the capacity of a grade level, the public charter school shall select students through an equitable lottery selection process.

2023-24 Timeline

- Applications for the Kindergarten lottery will be available at valleyinquiry.org
- Our Incoming Kindergarten Open House will take place on Wednesday, February 7th from 5:30-6:30 pm. You may stop by anytime during that hour to visit the classroom, ask questions, and meet staff. Attendance at this event is recommended, though not required to submit your application.
- Applications for the Kindergarten lottery are due on March 8th by 12:00pm. Applications received after that will be added to the end of our waitlist.
- The Kindergarten lottery event will happen via Zoom this year at 11:00 am on Thursday, March 21st. You do not need to be present for the lottery to be selected for admission.

The link to join the lottery over Zoom will be posted on our school website (valleyinquiry.org) at approximately 10:45 am on the day of the lottery

Kindergarten Lottery Specifics

- Each year, there are 28 openings in the Kindergarten class at Valley Inquiry Charter School
- At the time of the school lottery, the first openings will automatically be given to students with sibling priority admission (see above for more details)
 - o If there are more than 28 students with sibling priority admission, a lottery will be conducted to award these openings first before a lottery for non-sibling applications
- After sibling priority admission has been conducted, a randomized, unweighted lottery will be conducted to assign students to the remaining available open spots in the Kindergarten class
- After all spots have been filled in the Kindergarten class, the lottery will continue to determine positions/order on the Kindergarten waitlist

Waitlists

- If a student withdraws from Valley Inquiry Charter School, our Office Manager will call the first person on the waitlist to offer the spot
 - o Three attempts will be made to contact a family on the waitlist. This can be done by phone or e-mail
 - o Families have 72 hours from the time of first contact attempt to accept/reject the offer of admission
 - o If a family does not respond within 72 hours from the time of first contact attempt, the position on the waitlist is automatically forfeited, and the spot will then be offered to the next person on the waitlist
- Waitlists carry over from year to year. Once you have applied to our school and are on a waitlist, you do not need to reapply the following year
- Please do not be discouraged if you are high on the waitlist for a particular grade. There have been several instances of the waitlist shortening rapidly for an opening as families before you may have had a change in circumstance and are no longer interested in attending Valley Inquiry Charter School

Non-Kindergarten Admissions: Because our waitlists carry over from year to year, there is not a lottery for other grade levels unless a spot opened up in a grade in which there was no waitlist, and then more than one application for the open spot was received at the same time. Additionally, applications for non-Kindergarten grades are accepted yearround. Students who apply for a non-Kindergarten grade will be automatically added to the end of the desired grade level's waitlist.

What is an IB Education? Valley Inquiry Charter School is one of thousands of IB World Schools across the globe that aligns with a shared mission to empower young people with the values,

knowledge, and skills to create a better and more peaceful world. The IB Program aims to provide an education that enables students to make sense of the complexities of the world around them, as well as equip them with the skills and dispositions needed for taking responsible action for the future. It provides an education that crosses disciplinary, cultural, national, and geographical boundaries; which then champions critical engagement, stimulating ideas, and meaningful relationships. There are five key elements of an IB education:

1. **International Mindedness** : The aim of IB is to develop internationally minded people who recognize their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet. This is a multifaceted concept that captures a way of thinking, being, and acting characterized by an openness to the world and a recognition of our deep interconnectedness to others.

This is done by:

- a. Providing students with opportunities for sustained inquiry into a range of local and global issues and ideas
- b. Helping students reflect on their own perspective, culture, and identities, as well as those of others
- c. Enhancing international-mindedness through multilingualism (which requires all IB schools to study in more than one language)
- d. Challenging students to critically consider power and privilege
- e. Recognizing that students hold this planet and its resources in trust for future generations
- f. Focusing on moving beyond awareness and understanding to engagement, action, and bringing about meaningful change to make a more peaceful and sustainable world for everyone

2. **The IB Learner Profile** : The IB Learner Profile places the student at the center of an IB Education. There are ten (10) attributes that reflect the holistic nature of an IB Education. These attributes highlight the importance of nurturing dispositions such as curiosity and compassion, as well as developing knowledge and skills. They also highlight that, along with cognitive development, IB World Schools are concerned with students' social, emotional, and physical well-being, and with ensuring that students respect themselves, others, and the world around them. These ten (10) attributes of the IB Learner Profile are all attributes Valley Inquiry Charter School expects to see from all staff members, parents, families, and students as they engage with the school and within our broader community:

- a. Inquirers: We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.
- b. Knowledgeable: We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.
- c. Thinkers: We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.
- d. Communicators: We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.
- e. Principled: We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.
- f. Open-minded: We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.
- g. Caring: We show empathy, compassion, and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.
- h. Courageous: We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.
- i. Balanced: We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.
- j. Reflective: We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

3. **A Broad, Balanced, Conceptual, and Connected Curriculum:** The IB-PYP World School Program aims to transcend traditional boundaries between subject areas. This means that the state mandated content standards for each subject is not taught as individual and separate subjects. The IB-PYP program instead asks that English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Arts, Health, Physical Education, Spanish, and Music be taught within

six (6) Transdisciplinary Thematic Units. These themes provide IB World Schools with the opportunity to incorporate local and global issues into the curriculum and effectively allow students to “step up” beyond the confines of learning within subject areas.

These six units include:

a. Who We Are: Inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; person, physical, mental, social, and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; and what it means to be human

b. Where We Are in Place and Time: Inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal

histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations, and migrations of humankind; the relationship between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives

c. How We Express Ourselves: Inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs, and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend, and enjoy our creativity; and our appreciation of the aesthetic

d. How The World Works: Inquiry into the natural world and its laws, the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and the environment

e. How We Organize Ourselves: Inquiry into the interconnectedness of humanmade systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment

f. Sharing The Planet: Inquiry into the rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and other living things; communities and the relationship within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution

4. **Teaching & Learning:** Grounded in contemporary educational research, the IB’s six approaches to teaching and five approaches to learning guide and focus educators and students in all IB World Schools. They play a crucial role in ensuring that the aspirations of an IB Education become a reality in the classroom.

Approaches to Teaching

a. Based on Inquiry: A strong emphasis is placed on students having agency and finding their own information and constructing their own understandings.

- b. Focused on Conceptual Understanding: Concepts are explored in order to both deepen disciplinary understandings and to help students make connections and transfer learning to new contexts.
- c. Developed in Local and Global Contexts: Teaching uses real-life contexts and examples, and students are encouraged to process new information by connecting it to their own experiences and to the world around them.
- d. Focused on Effective Teamwork and Collaboration: This includes promoting teamwork and collaboration between students, but it also refers to the collaborative relationship between teachers and students.
- e. Designed to Remove Barriers to Learning: Teaching is inclusive and values diversity. It affirms students' identities and aims to create learning opportunities that enable every student to develop and pursue appropriate personal goals.
- f. Informed by Assessment: Assessment plays a crucial role in supporting, as well as measuring learning. This approach also recognizes the crucial role of providing students with effective feedback.

Approaches to Learning

- a. Thinking Skills: Including areas such as critical thinking, creative thinking, and ethical thinking
 - b. Research Skills: Including skills such as comparing, contrasting, validating, and prioritizing information
 - c. Communication Skills: Including skills such as written and oral communication, effective listening, and formulating arguments
 - d. Social Skills: Including areas such as forming and maintaining positive relationships, listening skills, and conflict resolution
 - e. Self-Management Skills: Including both organizational skills, such as managing time and tasks, and affective skills, such as managing state of mind and motivation
5. **Agency & Action:** In an IB World School, agency is defined as a philosophical, sociological, and psychological idea that acknowledges humans as active participants in their own lives with the capacity to initiate intentional action. Action is defined as the act of engaging individually and/or collaboratively with local, national, and global challenges and opportunities. At Valley Inquiry Charter School, this means:

a. Students have agency and decide upon the direction of the Transdisciplinary Thematic Units for their classrooms. They work together to decide what their central lines of inquiry are, develop the essential questions they would like to answer within the unit, and plan any action they would then be prepared to take in order to help those in their community

b. Teachers are required to adapt and flex their curriculum and activities to the direction(s) students wish to take within their units. This agency over the curriculum allows for student voice, choice, and ownership over their learning. Teachers are then required to include the relevant Oregon State Standards that may apply within each unit to ensure students are receiving instruction in all required subjects

c. Students, staff, parents, and families at Valley Inquiry Charter school are committed to taking action within the broader and global community to make the world a more peaceful place

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d. Lessons are likely to include topics that may be polarizing, controversial, political, and connected to world/current events. As this occurs, a focus on the IB Attributes will guide learning for all to ensure a safe place for varying perspectives and experiences

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does Valley Inquiry Charter School stand for?

Aside from our school's mission, IB's mission, our IB attributes, and our Transdisciplinary Thematic Units, our board of directors adopted the following declaration of values that also helps to guide our school:

o Taking Action: As an IB World School, we are committed to taking action as leaders, educators, students, and families that help to solve problems and make the world a better place.

o Fostering Agency: As an IB World School, we acknowledge that students are more engaged and motivated to learn when they have agency over what they are learning.

- o Ensuring Equity: We are committed to ensuring every student has what they need to be successful and to work in solving disparities in achievement for underrepresented and vulnerable population groups.
- o Maintaining Equality: Everyone is welcome in our school regardless of race, gender identity, gender expression, sexuality, religion, immigration status, country of origin, ability, needs, or other factors.
- o Promoting Inquiry: As an IB World School, we are rooted in student inquiry as the process by which students will learn. We will not shy away from sensitive or charged topics. Instead, we will encourage students to formulate opinions that allow for varying perspectives and viewpoints.
- o Assuring Diversity & Inclusivity: As an IB World School, we recognize the assets, value, and learning every student brings to our classrooms based on their unique backgrounds and experiences. We do not just acknowledge diversity and inclusivity. Instead, we *embrace* diversity and inclusivity as a critical component of what makes us an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School.

2. What is a Charter School?

According to Oregon law ORS 338.015, the intent of public charter schools is to create a legitimate avenue for parents, educators, and community members to take responsible risks to create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system. The hope is to create an atmosphere within Oregon's public school system where research and development of new learning opportunities are actively pursued. It is also hoped that public charter schools may serve as models and catalysts for the improvement of other public schools and the public school system.

3. Is Valley Inquiry Charter School a private school?

No, we are a public charter school sponsored by the Salem-Keizer Public Schools District (24J). As such, we are subject to federal, state, and district policies as specified in our charter agreement with Salem-Keizer Public Schools.

4. Is Valley Inquiry Charter School a "district school" of Salem-Keizer Public Schools?

No, we are a semi-autonomous public charter school that is sponsored by Salem-Keizer Public Schools. While we exist as a separate entity and have the rights to embark on an educational program that stands apart from SKPS, we still collaborate in partnership with SKPS as our sponsoring district.

5. Is tuition charged at Valley Inquiry?

No. We are a public charter school. Admission is free.

6. Do you have school bus transportation provided for your students?

No. Families provide their own transportation and often form carpools with other families.

7. Does Valley Inquiry offer childcare services before and/or after school?

Yes, for the most part. During the pandemic, we were unable to offer childcare due to spacing requirements. Valley Inquiry is working towards offering its own before and after school program starting in Fall 2021. This program would contain

IB components and opportunities for students to engage in additional learning and

activities. There will be a fee charged to access these services that is comparable to other before/after school programs. Some need-based scholarships will also be available.

8. Does Valley Inquiry offer special education services?

Yes. As a public school, we are able to accommodate most individualized education plans for students with special education services.

9. Do your students have to take state assessments or meet state standards? Yes. Our students are required to meet all state testing and standards requirements as a public charter school.

10. Do you offer breakfast/lunch services and free/reduced meals?

Yes. We offer breakfast and lunch through Salem-Keizer Public Schools for students. We also offer free/reduced lunch for students who qualify.

11. What are some advantages of attending Valley Inquiry Charter School?

There are countless advantages of attending our school. Here are some top reasons:

- a. We are a small school with a family-like atmosphere. Our staff have connections with students and families in all grade levels
- b. We offer Spanish in all grades and embrace the idea of multilingualism as a crucial component of our IB programming
- c. We offer a variety of clubs for students, including robotics, soccer, and drama
- d. We are the only IB elementary school in the Salem-Keizer district
- e. We embrace the concepts of student agency, taking action, our school's values, and IB's mission to embrace diversity and perspective as a mechanism to create a better and more peaceful planet
- f. Our curriculum flows across thematic units rather than be isolated to specific subjects and activities
- g. Our teachers flex learning to ideas and lessons students wish to learn more about
- h. Our classes do not shy away from controversial, political, or polarizing topics. Instead, we embrace the diverse perspectives and seek to understand each other with empathy

12. What are some disadvantages of attending Valley Inquiry Charter School?

- a. Being a small school, we sometimes lack the supports, finances, and/or resources that might be readily accessible and available in larger district schools
- b. We are not able to offer transportation for students at this time
- c. Our school does not have a school counselor to support students