

# Stone Valley: Frequently Asked Questions for New Families

Welcome to Stone Valley Middle School (SVMS)! Stone Valley's PTA and administrators have prepared the following questions and answers, to hopefully make your transition to SVMS a bit easier. If you have any additional questions, please reach out to Wendy Kano, PTA's New Families Chair at [wendykano@gmail.com](mailto:wendykano@gmail.com).

For additional information, the [Student Handbook](#) is a great resource.

## FIRST DAY / WEEK CONCERNS + LOGISTICS

### Any tips from 6th graders for that first week of school?

- Relax. Everyone is learning and figuring things out at the same time so enjoy and go meet a new friend or two! Stone Valley will have 8th-grade students called WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) Leaders who support students in learning how to navigate campus and how to get to class on time. SVMS does not issue tardy slips to students during this first week and a half of school to decrease any stress/anxiety they may have with their new surroundings. Stone Valley staff will be out supporting students throughout the first couple of weeks as well.

### Are there lockers other than PE lockers?

- Unfortunately, no. The kids carry heavy backpacks. Stone Valley teachers are aware that kids carry around a lot of materials and try to set up areas in their classrooms for students to store things that they don't need to take home.

### How do the kids manage heavy backpacks all day?

- Students handle backpacks in a variety of ways. Some carry their lunches (or other items) in a separate cloth grocery/LuluLemon type bag. You can work with your student by going through their backpack regularly with them and help ensure they only have what they need.

### What about PE clothes?

- You can order PE uniforms during Registration (shorts and a shirt), or you can bring your own uniform (meeting the color requirements of RED shorts and a solid GRAY shirt). You may want to have two sets of uniforms so that your child has a backup while one set is being washed.
- Please note that all uniform pieces (whether purchased from SVMS or brought from home) MUST BE CLEARLY LABELED with your student's name in the following manner: Last Name, First Initial.
- Students should bring their PE clothes home each week to be washed. Make sure to remind your child, so you don't end up with clothes that haven't been washed all year!
- If you need to order additional PE clothes during the school year, you can purchase them through the [SVMS Future Fund online store](#).

### How will my kid get around such a big campus?

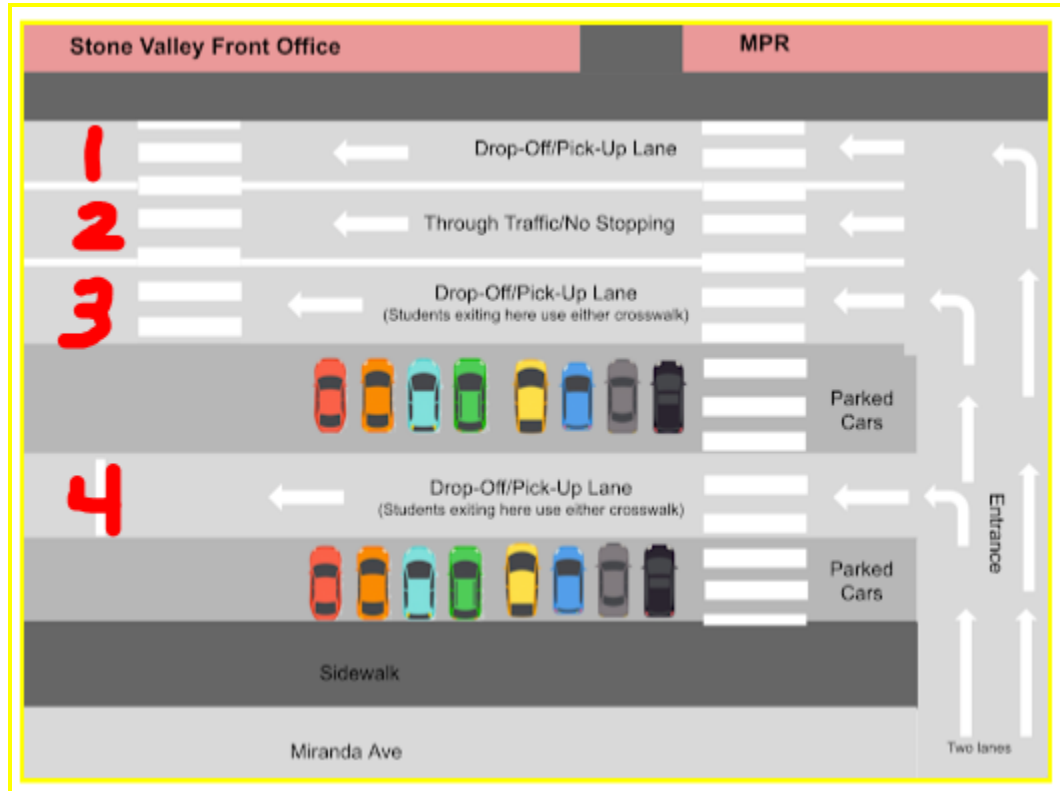
- Surprisingly well. During WEB day (see below for more information), experienced students will show them around the school and they will have a couple of days to adjust to moving between classes. In reality, the majority of classes are in one building which is two stories. If they start at the wrong end one day, they will be unlikely to make that mistake the next day. Students getting to class on time after the first week is not an issue.

### What school supplies should kids bring to school on the first day?

- During the summer and before the school year officially starts, Stone Valley's PTA works with an [outside vendor](#) that helps provide an option for parents to purchase basic school supplies that are designated for each student's grade level. Once purchased online, your box of school supplies will get shipped directly to your home so your student is all set to go for the school year! Or use the list and pick up what you need locally. Up to you.
- Since each class is different, students will learn more from each teacher about what additional school supplies they need to purchase on top of the basic school supplies. For the first day of school, bring the basics to start: pencils, pens, highlighters, notebooks, folders (one for each class), snack, paper, etc. The good news is that the first day of school (or even the first couple of weeks!) is for everyone to iron out kinks and get settled.

## How does drop-off and pick-up go?

- Similar to elementary, traffic can be an issue in middle school. Four lanes of traffic condense down to one to exit the one-way parking lot. Some drivers disregard the sign that **requires a right turn** out of the parking lot during drop-off and pick-up hours, which causes additional headaches and safety issues.
- Students must **always** use the crosswalks and are not permitted to run across Miranda Avenue for any reason unless in a crosswalk. SVMS would rather a student be a little late than to create a safety issue.
- Pro tip: Create a carpool. It makes things easier.



- **Lane #1** is the main drop-off/pick-up lane for families.
- **Lane #2** is a through-traffic lane only and is **NOT** for student drop-off or pick-up at any time.
- **Lane #3** is an alternate drop-off / pick-up lane.
- **Lane #4** is also a drop-off/pick-up lane but you are not allowed to block traffic.
- Speed limit inside our parking lot is 5 mph. Please do not be on your cell phone while picking up and dropping off students.
- Students are not to be let out to the middle lanes during drop-off.
- **All traffic exiting our parking lot must turn right** between 7:45 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Students are required to use crosswalks at all times and must be continually reminded to make eye contact with drivers prior to crossing regardless of where the crosswalk is.
- Students biking/skateboarding/scootering to school must wear a helmet (and buckle it).
- Bikes/skateboards/scooters must get off their bike/skateboard/scooter and walk through the crosswalks.

## THE SCHOOL DAY

### Is there recess?

- There is no recess in middle school. There is a small (8-10 minute) break in the day for the kids to recharge. At lunch they can play on the blacktop and fields.

### What about lunch?

- Students have about 30-35 minutes for lunch each day.

- 6th-grade students are expected to eat lunch in the cafeteria. 7th and 8th graders eat outside.
- Students can check out a ball with their ID card during lunch.
- Stone Valley provides sports equipment (about 40-50 pieces of sports equipment are checked out each lunch by students daily during lunch) to play games like soccer, basketball, volleyball, frisbee, kickball, spike ball etc.

#### **Can I have lunch delivered to school for my student?**

- Bringing lunch to school for your child is allowed but not encouraged. If you do deliver lunch, your child will need to get a slip to come to pick it up (SVMS will not interrupt classes for any deliveries like this). Doordash, Uber Eats, etc., deliveries are not permitted and will be turned away. No delivery services are permitted at SVMS.

## **SCHEDULES & COUNSELORS**

#### **What do Stone Valley's counselors do?**

- Counselors guide SVMS students in developing current and future educational and career plans; interpret assessments to assist students in career and educational planning; guide students in areas of academic achievement, career and college planning, and personal and social development. Stone Valley Middle School counselors also support student friend groups with social dynamics through discussion and restorative practice. Please check the school website to find out which counselor is assigned to your student.

#### **What does a "typical" schedule look like?**

- 6th-grade students are automatically registered for the following classes: math, science, PE, three periods of Core (language arts, reading, and social studies), and one period of an elective.
- 7th & 8th grade students are automatically registered for the following classes: math, science, PE, two periods of Core (English and history), and two periods of electives.
- If your family chooses to opt-out of taking an elective, your child will only attend school for six periods a day.
- Please click [here](#) for a more detailed view of the daily bell schedule.

#### **What is Access period, and how often does it happen?**

- Two Access periods are provided each week so that students can schedule time with teachers who can provide additional help. Students who need extra support or reteaching will be invited by teachers to an Access period. Teachers also use this time for reassessment of essential standards and skills. Students who are not pulled into an access class by a teacher sign up on their own for a study hall or other support class.

#### **What is a Block Period?**

- SVMS is on a rotating block schedule (referenced above). Block schedule days provide students with close to double the time for learning with an extended class period of 83 minutes. This allows our staff to provide more Project-Based Learning opportunities as well as more involved lessons including but not limited to labs, learning stations, and/or whole class discussion/debate.

#### **How/why do schedules change during the year?**

- Some elective classes only last one semester, so students will take one class first semester and a different elective the second semester.

#### **What do we do if my child wants to change classes?**

- There is a small window to change classes, usually during the first week of the term. There are no guarantees for transfers. Typically, schedule changes only occur if there is a missing course or a duplicate course.
- Schedule change requests based on social concerns or teacher choice requests are not accepted.

## **ACADEMICS & SUPPORT**

#### **How much homework is assigned?**

- Stone Valley follows the [district-wide homework policy](#). Homework often consists of completing work that wasn't finished in class. Independent reading is usually a homework component as well.

### How are Chromebooks used at school/in class?

- Chromebooks are generally used in classes throughout the day, so students should always have their charged Chromebook and power cord with them.

### Why do the kids have to bring their Chromebooks home?

- Students are encouraged to bring their Chromebooks home to charge overnight so they are ready for the next day. Also, if students do not complete their assignments in class or have homework, they will need their Chromebooks to complete the work. School-issued Chromebooks should be used only for school-related activities whether used at home or at school. There are district monitoring systems that alert administration if students visit inappropriate sites or engage in potentially concerning behavior.

### What is Infinite Campus? What is Schoology?

- **Infinite Campus:** This is our Campus Portal for the district, through which parents are able to view important information about their children (grades, assessments, GPA, etc.) as well as make updates/changes to their own household/emergency contact information. Information is for the current year only, and changes can only be made for students who are currently in the system.
- **Schoology:** Schoology is the main communication tool between classrooms, students, and families for all grade levels at all schools. It is a tool that is used to post class and course materials, curriculum and reports of student progress as well as current grades for all middle and high school students and most 2nd - 5th-grade students, depending upon the school site. Schoology helps parents stay informed about their child's classes and progress in school. It is the main platform that students use to manage their classwork and connect with teachers.

Schoology can also be used to:

- Communicate with your child's teachers
- View your child's courses
- View your child's upcoming, current and past-due assignments
- View course calendars and tasks
- Access classroom resources from any device
- Engage in a secure and safe, easy-to-use, way for teachers, students, parents, and administrators to seamlessly communicate and collaborate to enhance student learning and success.

### How can I see my child's assignments and grades?

- Throughout the year, Schoology is a great resource for viewing your child's current assignments and grades.
- Infinite Campus is still the official source for final grades.

### Will my student bring home a report card?

- Students do not bring home a hard copy of a report card since you are able to access your child's report card directly in the Infinite Campus portal.

### How do conferences work?

- At SVMS, conference week works a little differently from elementary school. Your student will not have a conference with his/her teachers unless: 1) the teachers identify the need to meet with the student and/or 2) the student or caregivers request a conference with the teachers. There are two conference weeks in a school year (one in October and one in March). Please note that parents can always request a conference with their student's teachers if they have concerns to discuss.

### How do I communicate with the teachers?

- Caregivers and students are encouraged to communicate with teachers via email. Teacher email addresses can be found on Stone Valley's website.

### Is there a tutoring program?

- For academic support, **always** begin your search for academic help/support **by contacting the teachers and discussing your concerns**. Communicating directly with your child's teacher is the best place to begin. Access periods are built into every week so students can schedule time with teachers who can provide additional help.

Students who need extra support or reteaching will be invited by teachers to an Access period. Teachers also use this time for reassessment of essential standards and skills.

- Other **academic support** options include:
  - **Schoology (Students and parents/guardians MUST have their own account)**
    - Students and parents can monitor weekly progress, to make sure all work has been submitted.
    - Email access to teachers - write them directly and ask questions. They will respond!
    - Explanations and details of daily and long-term assignments. Note: some teachers still write down assignments instead of posting them on Schoology.
  - **Peer Tutoring**
    - Peer tutoring is located in the Library after school on Mondays from 2:45 - 3:30 p.m. and provides an opportunity for Stone Valley students to help other students study, manage their assignments, and complete their homework. Please reach out to Ms. Balough at [CBalough@srvusd.net](mailto:CBalough@srvusd.net) with questions.
  - **Conferences**
    - If your student is having trouble in a particular class, you can arrange to have a meeting with the teacher. The best way to contact a teacher is through email. **It is important that you contact the teacher first** if there is an issue within the classroom as many issues can be resolved this way.
  - **Outside support/help**
    - Contra Costa County Library Homework Help: The Contra Costa Library has one-on-one, online homework help at [www.ccclib.org](http://www.ccclib.org) with a valid library card.
    - Homework support and tips for parents and students: [www.homeworkclub.org](http://www.homeworkclub.org)
    - Support for children and families with learning and attentional differences: [www.abilityrc.com](http://www.abilityrc.com)

#### **Is there a mentor program with an older student?**

- WEB, which stands for “Where Everybody Belongs” is a middle school orientation and transition program that welcomes 6th-graders and new 7th and 8th-graders and makes them feel comfortable throughout the first year of their Stone Valley experience. Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, the program trains mentors from the 8th-grade class to be WEB Leaders. As positive role models, WEB Leaders are mentors and student leaders who guide new Stone Valley students to discover what it takes to be successful during the transition to middle school and help facilitate success.

#### **Does taking a language in middle school count toward high school credit?**

- Students who are interested in taking a language are encouraged to take two full years (in 7th and 8th grades) of the same language so that it is transferable to high school as one year of foreign language credit.

#### **What is “testing out” of 6th-grade math?**

- In the spring of 5th grade, students have the opportunity to “test out” of 6th-grade math. If they meet district requirements, they can choose to take 7th-grade math (known as Course 2) during 6th-grade. For more information on math pathways and instruction in SRVUSD, please visit the [district's math webpage](#).

## **ELECTIVES**

#### **How does my student sign up for electives?**

- Electives are selected towards the end of the school year for the next school year.
- Depending on your student's grade level, s/he can select 1-2 electives for the school year and some electives are broken out by semesters or for the entire school year.

#### **What different band opportunities are there?**

- Band consists of the following programs:
  - Cadet Band (6th grade)
  - Symphonic Band (7th & 8th grades)
  - String Orchestra (6th - 8th grades)
  - Jazz Band (requires tryout and is an after-school club)

### Does the band really go to Disneyland?

- In years past, the band has typically taken a trip to Disneyland over President's Day weekend. Usually, this is only for 7th or 8th-grade band members as the trip happens every other year.

### What is the Wheel?

- Wheel is an elective that will consist of the following subjects in 2022-2023: art, living skills (cooking), intro to world languages, study skills, and intro to speech & debate. Students start in one of these five classes and rotate every six weeks.

## SCHOOL PROCEDURES & RULES

### Who do I call for absence?

- Call the Attendance line for Stone Valley Middle School and leave a message as instructed: (925) 855-5899.
- For additional information, visit the [attendance webpage](#).

### What is the process to check your child in and out of school if they're leaving before the end of school or arriving after school starts? How do I pick my child up early for an appointment?

- Go to the school office to sign out and sign in your child if leaving before the end of school or arriving after school starts. If you are signing your child out early, the office appreciates advance notice; please give them a call or send an email the day before.
- When checking out your child for an appointment, make sure to sign out from the office and bring back a doctor's note to the office if missing school for a doctor/dental appointment.

### Is there a dress code?

- Students and parents need to be aware of the importance of appropriate dress and its effect upon the learning environment. Appearance and dress must be within the limits of safety, cleanliness, decency, and appropriateness for school and shall not interfere with any aspect of the total school program. The following dress and grooming requirement are to be followed:
  - The law requires that appropriate and safe footwear be worn at all times.
  - Undergarments shall not be worn as outerwear. Clothing must conceal undergarments at all times.
  - Tank top style shirts may be worn only if they have shoulder straps and no undergarments are showing. No bare midriff can be showing.
  - Clothing, hats, and jewelry shall be free of writing, pictures or any other insignia which are crude, vulgar, profane, or sexually suggestive or which advocate racial, ethnic or religious prejudice, gang identity, or the use of drugs or alcohol.
- A student whose dress/attire is not appropriate for school will be asked to change his/her clothes. Repeated violation of dress code will result in a parent, student, and administrator meeting. Further violations may lead to suspension.

### What are the rules for cell phones?

- Stone Valley's Cell Phone Policy can be found [here](#).
- Students may not have their cell phones out during school hours (8:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.).
- **Use of personal devices in class is based on teacher discretion and only allowed with teacher permission.**
- Students are not allowed to call/text their parents using their cell phones and instead must go to the office to use the office phone.
- If a student is caught using his/her phone, the phone will be given to the office staff and a parent/guardian would need to pick it up.
- Personal Electronic Device (PED) Policy is as follows:
  - Phones must be turned off and put away while school is in session (Bell to Bell). Use of PEDs at lunch, snack break, and passing periods is not allowed. Additionally, it is a violation of school district policies for students to record videos, take pictures or to post to any social media sites with any device.
  - Headphones and wireless headphones are prohibited, unless specifically allowed by the teacher in a particular class.

- PEDs may be brought to school and used exclusively for teacher-directed instructional purposes, as determined by teachers.
- Not following the PED policy may result in confiscation of devices and/or disciplinary action. The PED will be confiscated and must be picked up by a parent or guardian at the front office at the end of the day. Education Code 48901.5 Multiple PED infractions may ultimately result in students losing privilege of student bridging PED to school.
- *All use of devices are subject to the terms of the SRVUSD Acceptable Use Policy.*
- **Communication During School Hours**
  - Students: In the event of an emergency, students may use the office phone to notify parents. Examples are: illness or a schedule change of a school-sponsored activity.
  - Parents: If you have an emergency and need to reach your student, please call the main office number (925) 855-5800 and every effort will be made to get your emergency message to your child as soon as possible.

## AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

### Are there after-school sports?

- Throughout the year, there are rotating after-school sports opportunities where students are able to stay after school and participate in the selected sport for that quarter. In the past, a teacher has offered after-school badminton, volleyball, and even dodgeball. Parent permission slips and waivers need to be completed ahead of each sport. Notice will go out in the weekly newsletter and possibly emails from the administration.

### Are there after-school clubs?

- Stone Valley staff offers the after-school sports activities noted above.
- Other after-school clubs/activities include: Math Counts, Jazz Band, and peer tutoring.
- Students can submit a proposal to SVMS Administration for a new club provided they have an SVMS staff member as the club supervisor.

## SPECIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

### Will there be any school dances?

- Stone Valley traditionally has a dance, or two, during the course of the year. Dances give the students an opportunity to let loose and socialize with their peers in a different environment. The 7th and 8th Grade Leadership classes typically plan, organize, and decorate for the event.

### Is there a Washington DC trip for 8th graders?

- This is an optional program for 8th-grade students and families pay out of pocket. A teacher organizes a trip to the East Coast (Washington DC, or multiple cities) with a student travel company during spring break. **This trip is not sponsored by the school or the district.** Parent chaperones may also sign up, space permitting. The trip is a busy one from start to finish. Kids walk many miles a day and don't get enough sleep, but it's a wonderful opportunity to gain some independence and make learning come to life.

### Is there a calendar of activities to expect? (Red Ribbon Week, Reflections, Words Matter Week, Band Concerts, Drama Performances, etc.)?

- For the most up-to-date calendar of all the happenings at SVMS, please check out the [school's website](#).
- The district calendar is located on the [San Ramon Valley Unified School District website](#) and is where you can see Bell Schedules, Instructional Calendars, and additional district-wide information.

## PARENT ORGANIZATIONS, VOLUNTEERING & STAYING CONNECTED

### What is PTA and what do they do?

- PTA is the "community building" arm of our Stone Valley families. PTA does its best to build bridges between our families, the Stone Valley teachers and staff, and our students. PTA supports a variety of activities throughout the

year, including Red Ribbon Week, Reflections Art Program, Words Matter Week, Stock the Staff Room, Staff Appreciation events, and Field Day.

**What is the Stone Valley Education Fund (SVEF) and what do they do?**

- Stone Valley Education Fund is the “fundraising” arm of Stone Valley Middle School and its mission is to enhance the quality of education at our school. By contributing to SVEF, you affect the school’s ability to provide:
  - More personal 1:1 student support throughout the school day
  - Smaller class sizes in math, language arts and social science
  - Increased flexibility for student elective choice
- For the 2022-2023 school year, SVEF is funding an additional 12 class sections at Stone Valley.

**What caregiver volunteer opportunities exist at middle school?**

- Not as many as we’d like! Many of the fledglings are definitely ready to leave the nest and really don’t care for caregiver supervision. PTA sponsors a Holiday Bake and other Staff Appreciation events where adults are needed to collect and organize donations.
- Having said that, there are opportunities in some classes (like Band) that do ask for volunteers to help drive and chaperone students. Please make sure you are registered and cleared via the [volunteer system](#) so that when the volunteer opportunities arise, you will be ready!

**What is the weekly newsletter?**

- The ROAR weekly newsletter (via email) is another way to keep you informed of what is going on at Stone Valley: upcoming minimum days, notes from the principal, celebrating Stone Valley award recipients, volunteer opportunities, dances, etc. Sign up [here](#) for the newsletters for each of your student's schools.