



Vietnam Research Residency Manual

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PURPOSE	4
ABOUT THE VIETNAM RESEARCH RESIDENCY PROGRAM	4
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	4
VRR Teacher	4
VRR Administrator	4
PPS Administration	5
VDLI Teachers	5
VDLI Parents	5
Hội Phụ Huynh (HPH)	5
VRR Committee	5
VRR Parent Lead	5
VRR Student Leaders	6
VRR Chaperone(s)	6
PPS POLICIES	7
COMMUNICATIONS	7
Communications for Incoming 8th Grade Cohort	7
Communications for Early Grades (K-5)	7
PROGRAM FUNDING & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	8
VRR Funding Policy and Expectations	8
HPH Role in VRR General Financial Management	8
HPH Role in Policy and Financial Governance	8
VRR Teacher Role in Trip Budgeting and Financial Coordination	9
Direct Individual Payments	9
Financial Reporting and Balance Calculation	9
VRR Student & Family Role in Meeting Trip Funding Requirements	9
HPH Role in Trip Accounting	9
VRR Committee Role in Fundraising and Financial Oversight	10
VRR TRIP LOGISTICS & APPROVAL PROCESS	10
PPS International Field Trip Approval Process	10
Preliminary Approval	10
Final Approval	10
Trip Logistics and Requirements	11
Sister School	12
Homestay	12
TRAVEL SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	12
Food & Cultural Exploration	12
Mode of Transportation	12
Safety & Supervision Protocol	13
Independent Travel	13
Relative Visits Protocol	13
Lodging	13
Method of Communication	13

Behavioral and Academic Expectations	13
Health and Safety Preparedness	14
CAPSTONE PRESENTATION	14
Những Câu Chuyện Đi Một Ngày Đàng, Học Một Sàng Khôn	14
APPENDIX	15
VRR Manual Management	15
Contact information	15

PURPOSE

The objective of this manual is to establish the foundational infrastructure for the 8th grade Vietnam Research Residency (VRR) program, ensuring its long-term sustainability through collaborative efforts with the Hội Phụ Huynh (HPH) parent organization, parents/guardians of students in the Vietnamese Dual Language Immersion (VDLI) program, and the Roseway Heights Middle School VDLI staff members. Additionally, the aim is to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties in this partnership.

(Please note: This document is not an official policy of the Portland Public School District.)

ABOUT THE VIETNAM RESEARCH RESIDENCY PROGRAM

The Vietnam Research Residency (VRR) capstone program is an academic milestone within the 8th grade VDLI Culture & Social Studies curriculum at [Roseway Heights Middle School](#). Facilitated by [Portland Public Schools \(PPS\)](#), though not financially sponsored, this program enables students to demonstrate their language proficiency and cultural understanding through immersive, real-world experiences. The two-week immersion in Vietnam offers students the opportunity to deepen their language and cultural understanding, and hone their research skills by conducting interpersonal surveys, visiting a sister school, and engaging in field studies at historic sites. As part of the PPS social studies & language arts curriculum, students deliver both a written report and an oral presentation of their findings.

The VRR program is entirely funded by VDLI Parents through a combination of fundraising efforts and individual payments. Fundraising is intended to reduce the amount of direct payments required from participating families.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines the defined roles and responsibilities for all individuals and groups collaborating on the VRR program. Effective communication and accountability are essential for ensuring the successful implementation of our VRR program.

VRR Teacher

The VRR Teacher is the designated PPS 8th grade VDLI teacher who leads the 8th grade VRR trip. This critical role involves creating the trip's curriculum, itinerary and budget, directly leading the trip, identifying student scholarship needs, and managing all communications with students and families regarding trip financial and logistical details. The VRR Teacher follows a prescribed timeline; for instance the initial proposal should be submitted by the fall holiday, with VRR Administrator sign-off by November. Delays to these steps may limit the resources available from PPS closer to the departure date.

VRR Administrator

The VRR Administrator is the PPS middle school principal who approves and oversees the VRR program's planning timeline, curriculum, itinerary and budget as proposed by the VRR Teacher. This role also includes initiating and maintaining a sister school relationship in Vietnam and actively soliciting community input to enrich the overall VRR experience.

PPS Administration

The PPS Administration, which consists of Risk Management, Senior Leadership, and the PPS Board of Directors, reviews and approves the VRR curriculum, itinerary, & budget in order to authorize the trip. This ensures alignment with educational goals, safety and insurance standards, and district policies. It is the responsibility of the school district to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) relationship between the VDLI cluster schools and the sister school.

VDLI Teachers

For the purpose of this manual, VDLI Teachers are defined as educators in the elementary grades within the VDLI program. Their support for early fundraising activities is encouraged to help motivate students to prepare well in advance for the 8th grade VRR trip.

VDLI Parents

VDLI Parents refer to parents and/or legal guardians of VDLI students. They are expected to actively participate in fundraising efforts to support their student's VRR trip, as they are responsible for all trip-related costs. In addition to fundraising, VDLI parents are encouraged to join the VRR Committee.

Hội Phụ Huynh (HPH)

[HPH](#), a 501(c)(3) parent volunteer organization, provides support to the VDLI program across four PPS schools. HPH manages the comprehensive financial operations and governance of all VRR funds, ensuring oversight and compliance. Through the VRR Committee and collaboration with school staff, we will develop and promote fundraising opportunities. One example is to designate a table at the Tết Festival for cohort-specific fundraising. HPH also maintains a detailed record of all funds raised and available for each grade level, assisting with trip-specific financial needs.

VRR Committee

The VRR Committee is an HPH committee made up of the VRR Parent Lead, interested HPH members, and interested VDLI Parents. HPH will establish and oversee this ongoing committee. Each year, HPH will appoint a VRR committee chair, but it is the responsibility of the VRR Parent Lead to ensure the VRR Committee is adequately staffed each year. The VRR committee chair facilitates the overall strategic management of VRR for the VDLI program and provides updates to the HPH board. A primary function of the VRR Committee is to lead fundraising initiatives, apply for grants, and manage vending booths at community events. Also, this committee provides logistical and administrative support to the VRR Teacher, including (but not limited to) assistance with research and reservations for flights, accommodations, and tours. Additionally, the committee may help communicate directly with VDLI Teachers & the younger grade level VDLI Parents, explore advocacy initiatives and foster connections with other Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs within PPS. It is a requirement for the VRR Committee to include the VRR Parent Lead and the VRR Student Leader(s) for Fundraising.

VRR Parent Lead

A minimum of one parent or guardian from the current 8th-grade cohort is required to serve as a key support to the VRR Teacher. The VRR Parent Lead will act as a liaison and facilitate volunteer opportunities among other current 8th-grade families. The parent lead is responsible for familiarizing themselves with the HPH VRR funding policies and for assisting the VRR Committee in screening fundraising proposals to ensure adherence to established guidelines. It is a requirement that the VRR Parent Lead is an active member of the VRR Committee.

VRR Student Leaders

The VRR program is supported by several student-led committees, each with a dedicated Parent Advisor. To support student involvement and leadership, these committees manage various aspects of the trip, from initial planning to on-the-ground logistics. Parent Advisors for each student committee would guide students in their tasks, offer support, advice, and ensure timely completion of the students responsibilities. (Sample of [Student Leader document](#))

- *Communications/PR*: Oversees general communications, from sharing information with parents and students to leading meetings.
- *Chaperones*: Manages the selection process for chaperones, including criteria development, applications, interviews, and creating a "survival Vietnamese" phrasebook.
- *Fundraising*: Plans, conducts, tracks, and reports on all fundraising efforts with the involved participants. Student Fundraising leaders will join the VRR Committee and conduct all fundraising efforts through that committee.
- *Purchasing & Gifts*: Responsible for acquiring study supplies and researching/purchasing group gifts for recipients in Vietnam.
- *Legal Affairs*: Oversees the completion and collection of all necessary legal forms for international travel, such as passports, visas, and immunization records.
- *Translation & Interpretation (T&I)*: Develops the program's mission statement, handles communications with sister schools, and prepares speeches for ceremonies.
- *Scheduling and Planning*: Organizes mandatory meetings, provides packing lists and tips, and assists with the capstone presentation evening.

VRR Chaperone(s)

The Chaperone acts as "guides on the side," facilitating student independence and cultural immersion by encouraging interaction and stepping in only when truly needed. They must be flexible and lead by example. Key responsibilities include managing student documents, administering first aid, and dispensing essential items. Chaperones regularly check in with students on well-being and academic progress, and during field studies, they supervise tasks, provide guidance, and report issues to the trip leader. They also reinforce rules, etiquette, and offer practical advice. Before departure, chaperones attend all mandatory meetings, connect with their student group, and assist in trip preparations. (Sample of [Chaperone document](#))

PPS POLICIES

- [Field Trips, Foreign Travel, and Other Off-Campus Activities](#)
 - [Draft revision](#)
- [Professional Conduct Between Adults and Students](#)

COMMUNICATIONS

The purpose of this section is to establish a formalized communication strategy for the VRR program, ensuring clarity and consistency in conveying information to all stakeholders, including incoming 8th-grade families, early grades (K-7) families, and the broader school community. This policy defines roles, expectations, and communication timelines to facilitate the smooth implementation and understanding of the VRR program. (Sample of [Important Dates document](#))

Communications for Incoming 8th Grade Cohort

The first informational meeting for incoming 8th-grade families will be held in mid September. Specific dates will be determined and communicated by the VRR Teacher. Prior to this informational meeting, an engagement survey will be distributed to incoming 8th-grade families to gauge their interest in the VRR trip and gather initial questions and comments. The VRR Teacher will determine the scheduled timelines and ensure it is communicated to all families.

Topics to be covered include:

- Overview of the general information
- Participants expectation of the VRR capstone project
- Program timelines & important dates
- Expenses and fundraising expectations
- Review VRR Chaperone requirements
- Recruitment for the VRR committee
- Identify the VRR Parent Lead
- Review roles and responsibilities for VDLI Parents regarding fundraising efforts

Two mandatory parent meetings will be held for participating students and families before the scheduled VRR trip. The first meeting will take place one month prior to the trip. The second meeting will be held two weeks before the trip. The VRR Teacher will determine the mandatory meeting schedule and facilitate the meetings, in collaboration with VRR Administrator.

Communications for Early Grades (K-5)

(Please note: Revisions to this section will be undertaken in School Year (SY) 2025-2026, contingent upon the Rose City Park Principal's onboarding to the VRR program.)

PROGRAM FUNDING & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The VRR program is fully funded by VDLI Parents through a combination of fundraising efforts and individual payments. HPH and the VRR Committee will provide support to VDLI students and families in managing the funds raised by VDLI Parents.

This section establishes the comprehensive framework for the financial management and funding of the VRR program, specifically in coordination with HPH. It sets clear guidelines for budgeting, fundraising, and family contributions, grounded in the principle—agreed upon by the VRR Administrator, VRR Teacher, and HPH—that no interested student will be excluded for financial reasons. Each VRR trip is contingent upon the cohort collectively meeting its funding target by the established deadline and adhering to all HPH organizational policies and non-profit regulations. Additionally, this section delineates the roles and responsibilities of HPH, the VRR Teacher, participating students and families, and the VRR Committee in all financial aspects of the program.

VRR Funding Policy and Expectations

The estimated cost per student for each VRR trip is approximately \$4,000 (as of 2025). The deadline for meeting the target budget is *one month before the scheduled departure date*. If the target budget is not received by the deadline, that year's trip will be cancelled. In that event, all funds will either be refunded or reassigned to support VRR trips for future cohorts in accordance with HPH Policy. Families should be prepared to contribute direct individual payments and/or to the current year's fundraising initiatives, ensuring sufficient funds are secured by the payment deadline. The VRR Teacher is responsible for communicating this policy to participating students and their families.

HPH Role in VRR General Financial Management

HPH manages the VRR program's financial operations, including collecting, holding, documenting, and disbursing all VRR funds. They also oversee and support the VRR Committee. This includes providing regular updates to the VRR Administrator, VRR Teacher, and VRR Committee on VRR funding status and relevant HPH policies.

HPH Role in Policy and Financial Governance

HPH is authorized to establish organizational policies governing the collection, documentation, and management of VRR funds, specific to both individual cohort funds and the overall VRR program budget. It also sets policies regarding the payment and documentation process of budgeted expenses. While the VRR Committee manages fundraising proposals, HPH sets the guidelines under which these proposals are reviewed and approved, including criteria that may require escalation to the HPH Board of Directors for final approval.

Additionally, HPH reserves the right to veto a budgeted trip expense, but only in the extremely rare circumstance that the proposed expenditure violates state or federal non-profit regulations—such as instances where a current board member would be personally enriched, thereby creating a conflict of interest.

VRR funds will not be disbursed for a specific trip until full funding has been received by HPH and the trip has received complete approval from PPS.

(Please Note: For current HPH policies governing VRR funds, contact treasurer@hphpdx.org)

VRR Teacher Role in Trip Budgeting and Financial Coordination

For each VRR Trip, the VRR Teacher plays a central role in financial planning and communication. This involves developing a detailed trip budget that accounts for all expenses, including chaperones, and calculating the per-student and per-chaperone costs. The per-student cost is defined as the total trip budget divided by the number of participating students. The per-chaperone cost is defined as the expenses directly attributable to each chaperone.

Direct Individual Payments

The VRR Teacher will determine interested families' and chaperones' willingness and ability to make direct payments for their student or themselves and set a clear payment plan schedule, with the final payment due at least two weeks before the funding deadline. The payment schedule, along with instructions for submitting payments to HPH, will be shared with all contributing families and chaperones.

Financial Reporting and Balance Calculation

The VRR Teacher shall provide the HPH Treasurer with the following financial documentation for each VRR trip: the complete trip budget; the number of participating students and chaperones; and a record of each contributing family and chaperone, including name, contact information, pledged payment amount, and the payment plan schedule. Furthermore, the VRR Teacher will collaborate with the HPH Treasurer to calculate the remaining balance required to meet the total trip budget. This remaining balance is defined as the difference between the total trip cost and the combined total of pledged direct payment amount and any pre-existing funds designated for the current cohort (such prior fundraising by the cohort or excess funds carried over from previous cohorts).

VRR Student & Family Role in Meeting Trip Funding Requirements

The current cohort of students and families is responsible for submitting all agreed-upon direct individual payments to HPH in accordance with the payment schedule established by the VRR Teacher. Cash payments may be delivered directly to the HPH Treasurer or provided to the VRR Teacher for delivery to HPH. Electronic payments must be submitted directly to HPH through the designated payment method. In addition to these individual payments, the cohort is responsible for raising the remaining balance required to fully fund the trip by the established deadline, as defined in coordination with the VRR Teacher and HPH. All fundraising efforts must be conducted through the VRR Committee within HPH, and all fundraising proposals must be submitted to the VRR Committee for approval prior to implementation. The approval process will be as provided in a written HPH policy.

HPH Role in Trip Accounting

HPH manages the financial aspects of each VRR trip. This entails tracking cohort-specific funding, providing payment submission guidance to the VRR Teacher for parents (including electronic and cash options), and issuing receipts for all funds received. HPH will collaborate with the VRR Teacher to assess the "remaining balance" and work alongside the VRR Administrator, VRR Teacher, and VRR Committee to disburse all approved trip funds. After

each trip, HPH is responsible for generating a final report detailing all expenditures for that year's VRR trip, to be delivered to key stakeholders, including the VRR Administrator, VRR Teacher, VRR Committee, and the HPH Board of Directors.

VRR Committee Role in Fundraising and Financial Oversight

The VRR Committee plays a vital role in the financial success of the VRR program, primarily by leading all fundraising initiatives, which may involve applying for grants and managing community event vending booths. The VRR Committee also collaborates with other HPH committees to plan and execute larger, multi-initiative fundraising efforts and events. In addition, they hold the authority to vet and approve VRR fundraising proposals, following established HPH guidelines, and are prepared to raise certain proposals to the HPH Board of Directors for final endorsement when necessary. Furthermore, the VRR Committee is accountable for notifying the HPH Treasurer of all approved fundraising proposals and maintaining regular communication with the HPH Treasurer in accordance with organizational policy.

VRR TRIP LOGISTICS & APPROVAL PROCESS

Planning an international field trip involves a comprehensive, two-phase approval process, primarily managed by the VRR teacher. This process entails submitting initial planning forms, followed by detailed documentation. This multi-step approval can span several months. Concurrently, the VRR teacher, supported by the VRR Parent Lead, collaborates with a local travel agent and the sister school to develop and plan trip logistics. They also maintain close communication with participating families, ensuring they receive and comprehend the document packet outlining all required travel items in preparation for trip approval.

PPS International Field Trip Approval Process

The international field trip approval process involves two distinct phases: preliminary and final approval.

Preliminary Approval

The "[Approval to Plan a Field Trip](#)" form initiates the request for an international field trip. The VRR teacher is responsible for filling out and submitting this form, along with a tentative itinerary, by mid-September as part of the preliminary approval process. The VRR Administrator reviews and endorses the form before forwarding it to the PPS Senior Director of Schools (SDS) for approval. This initial approval typically has a week-long turnaround time. Once the SDS approves the form, the VRR Administrator submits it to the PPS Risk Management team. (Sample of [Tentative Itinerary](#) document)

Final Approval

The VRR Teacher must provide all required supporting documents, including a detailed itinerary, by the end of October to meet the established timeline. The final approval process is comprehensive and can take up to six months, given the necessary communication among the VRR Teacher, VRR Administrator, and Risk Management. The following information and documents are required for this step:

- Budget breakdown
 - Travel costs
 - Per student costs
 - Per chaperone costs
 - Per PPS teacher and administrator costs
- Detailed Itinerary
 - Daily schedule
 - Hotel locations and contact information
 - Planned airfare (international and domestic)
 - Sites to be visited
 - Sister school schedule
- Chaperone Name(s)
 - To prevent delays in the district's approval review, parent chaperone(s) must have their background checks cleared before submitting to Risk Management.

After receiving final approval from Risk Management, the request is forwarded to the PPS District School Board members for their authorization. Once Risk Management grants final approval and the total funds have been received one month prior to departure date, the VRR Teacher and VRR Parent Lead may proceed with booking the trip through the travel agent. All submitted dates and itinerary details are subject to change based on unforeseen circumstances. Should this occur, the VRR Teacher can resubmit a revision to Risk Management, a process that typically receives prompt approval.

Trip Logistics and Requirements

Families must finalize their decision to participate in or opt out of the trip no later than October 31st, to ensure the accuracy of the documentation required for Risk Management's final approval.

The VRR Teacher, with the VRR Parent Lead's assistance, designs the trip's itinerary and logistics. The objective is to schedule the two-week trip for early spring. They collaborate with a local Vietnamese travel agent to develop an immersive, culturally enriching, economical, and efficient travel plan.

Additionally, the VRR Teacher coordinates directly with the current sister school to secure recommended services, such as transportation and tour groups.

Families opting to participate will receive a VRR information packet from the VRR Teacher. It's important to note that any costs associated with obtaining required travel documents (e.g., passports, visas) are not included in the provided budget and will be the direct responsibility of the families. However, travel insurance for PPS staff and students is covered by the district and does not need to be obtained independently.

Required documents include:

- Two copies of Passport & Tourist Visa. Families are responsible for reviewing and meeting the [U.S. Department of State's international travel requirements for Vietnam](#), including ensuring passports have at least six months of validity remaining upon departure.

- PPS Behavioral Contract Form, which requires signatures from all legal guardians. (Sample of [Behavioral Contract](#) document)
- PPS Medical Health Form (Sample of [Medical Form](#) document)

Sister School

The current sister school is [The Olympia School](#) in Hanoi. Through the VRR program, VDLI students will visit The Olympia School for a two-day immersion experience. They will spend time with eighth-grade students, teachers, and staff, directly engaging with the school's routine. This hands-on opportunity is designed to strengthen students' language development, build cross-cultural connections, and cultivate their growth as global citizens.

Homestay

(Please note: While a homestay program is currently being designed with our sister school and not ready to be implemented, its core aim is to offer participants the unique opportunity to live with a local family in their home. This arrangement is intended to provide an immersive experience into the local culture, language, and daily life, thereby fostering authentic cultural and personal growth enrichment.)

TRAVEL SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

To ensure the safety, health, and well-being of all participants during the VRR trip, this section details the relevant policies and procedures. These comprehensive guidelines cover critical aspects such as food, travel, lodging, communication, academic and behavioral expectations, and health protocols.

Food & Cultural Exploration

The program recognizes the deep cultural significance of food in Vietnam, particularly the immersive experiences provided by local markets and street food. PPS policy does not restrict consuming food from street vendors abroad, and students will be encouraged to explore Vietnam's diverse cuisine responsibly.

Group dining arrangements will encompass both traditional restaurant settings and supervised opportunities to experience street food. During the mandatory pre-trip meeting, the VRR Teacher will conduct specific inquiries regarding any food allergies or health concerns. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring all necessary medications are packed for their students; this requirement will be explicitly detailed on the provided packing list.

Through these measures, the program aims to provide culturally rich culinary exploration while prioritizing the well-being and safe immersion of all participants.

Mode of Transportation

Transportation for the VRR group is organized based on travel area and distance. For intra-city movements and short-distance destinations, the primary mode of transport will be Grab, a ride-hailing service. Longer regional excursions will utilize a rented bus or van, operated by a local, professionally licensed driver, arranged through our sister school, Olympia. Additionally, domestic flights will be secured for inter-city travel.

Safety & Supervision Protocol

To ensure students safety, a buddy system will be strictly enforced, requiring students to travel in pairs at all times. Staff and chaperones are mandated to maintain line-of-sight supervision. While visual contact is expected in structured environments (e.g., museums), unstructured settings (e.g., night markets) will necessitate predetermined meeting times and check-in locations due to visibility challenges. Under no circumstances will staff or chaperones leave any student unsupervised or separated from the main group.

Independent Travel

During designated 'rest days', students may engage in independent exploration exclusively under the supervision of an adult chaperone, maintaining a 1:5 chaperone-to-student ratio.

Relative Visits Protocol

For students intending to visit relatives in Vietnam on a designated rest day, prior arrangement is mandatory. This includes submitting written authorization from their U.S.-based family to the VRR Teacher. Furthermore, the designated relative responsible for the student's pick-up must provide an ID and a photograph to the VRR Teacher. On the agreed-upon meet-up date, the VRR Teacher will facilitate a direct handover of the student to the authorized relative. All familial visits are limited to day excursions; overnight accommodations with relatives are strictly prohibited.

Lodging

To ensure adequate supervision and safety, all travelers of the VRR group will stay in the same hotel. While students may be on different floors, a sufficient chaperone-to-student ratio will be maintained on each floor throughout the lodging arrangements.

Method of Communication

All internal communications for the VRR group will be conducted via WhatsApp, which will also serve as the primary channel for the U.S. based families to connect with students and receive daily updates from the VRR Teacher on the group's status and activities.

To ensure essential mobile network access abroad, local SIM cards will be distributed to all staff, chaperones, and designated student leaders, facilitating seamless communication among trip participants. Other students have the option to purchase their own SIM cards if desired. Looking ahead, the program plans to assess incorporating SIM card costs for all participants to ensure consistent communication access on future trips.

Behavioral and Academic Expectations

Participation in the VRR trip is contingent upon both students and their parents/guardians reviewing and signing a comprehensive behavioral contract prior to departure. This agreement establishes clear expectations for student conduct, emphasizing active participation in all program activities, punctuality, and demonstrating respect and open-mindedness towards diverse cultures and perspectives.

Eligibility also requires students to maintain a passing academic grade (D or higher) in their coursework. During the trip, students are expected to complete all assigned academic work

and actively engage in their capstone research project. These expectations are reinforced with students in the classroom throughout the year and communicated to parents/guardians during the mandatory VRR meetings.

Furthermore, a separate parent agreement details parental responsibilities, including the crucial understanding that parents/guardians will be responsible for picking up students in Vietnam if egregious behavior warrants their dismissal from the program.

Health and Safety Preparedness

Families are encouraged to consult their physician regarding recommended travel vaccinations and to ensure they have sufficient prescription medication for the entire duration of the trip. VRR staff must complete and maintain certifications in CPR/First Aid and medication administration (e.g., Epi-pen). Chaperones are encouraged, though not required, to hold similar training, but all must complete a background check before participation. Both VRR staff and chaperones will receive training to effectively identify, manage, prevent, and treat common health symptoms, and to recognize when professional medical intervention is necessary.

CAPSTONE PRESENTATION

Những Câu Chuyện Đi Một Ngày Đàng, Học Một Sàng Khôn

As a component of the capstone curriculum, all 8th-grade students in the VDLI program must present their inquiry-based research projects and personal narratives from their Vietnam trip to families and the community. Students have a preparation period of approximately one month for their presentations.

Incoming 8th-grade students from the 7th-grade cohort are particularly encouraged to attend this presentation for an introduction to the VRR experience through the lens of their peers.

APPENDIX

VRR Manual Management

- The official version of the document is located in the HPH Google Drive.
- A designated member of the VRR Committee will be responsible for the annual updates and for ensuring the Roseway Heights Middle School and Hoi Phu Huynh websites are updated with the most recent version.

Contact information

- Roseway Heights MS 8th grade VRR teacher - Ms. Lien Tran email: ltran1@pps.net
- Hoi Phu Huynh email: hoiphuhuynh.vdli@gmail.com

Adopted 8/25/2025