



VENTURE ACADEMY

School Profile
2023-2024

VENTURE ACADEMY

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CEEB SCHOOL CODE 240013

MISSION

We meet students where they are to provide a future-focused education that gives each student a personalized pathway towards success after graduation.

VISION

Venture graduates overcome whatever barriers they may face to become successful and happy adults in their chosen path.

HEAD OF SCHOOL

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HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

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DIRECTOR OF CAREER + COLLEGE COUNSELING: ALUMNI SUPPORT

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ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COUNSELING AND ACADEMIC DEAN

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BACKGROUND

At Venture we believe in inspiring passionate, purposeful innovators, entrepreneurs, makers, and leaders. While at Venture, students and staff engage in the passionate practice of innovative, entrepreneurial leadership by taking charge of their learning and taking responsibility for improvement. Blending the best digital content and tools, time-tested classical approaches, hands-on projects, and discovery learning, Venture cultivates the knowledge, skills, mindsets, and experiences of creative innovators and leaders. Collaborative, future-focused learning emphasizes entrepreneurial leadership and equips students with the communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills essential to success in 21st-century colleges and careers. Venture's educators and students seek constant improvement by tracking learning progress and adapting programs, methods, and tools, using data dashboards, and real-time feedback. Students, educators, and leaders are always encouraged to try new approaches, take risks, admit mistakes, and share lessons. Failing fast is essential to learning.

FOUR CORE TENANTS

- **Personalized Learning and Support:** Teachers and learning specialists support academic growth with a pace and learning model tailored to each student. Our staff is dedicated to removing barriers for students and families alike, focusing on community as well as individual education.
- **Emphasis on Social + Emotional Learning:** Through the SEL (Social + Emotional Learning) process, we work with our students to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.
- **Connected School Community:** We recognize that each student is an integral part of the community, and the community is an integral part of each student. At Venture students are encouraged to reach their own goals while also helping others in their school, community, and beyond.
- **Future Focused Goals:** We teach our students to set goals, learn skills and make steps to achieve their highest aims. Venture also offers post-graduation Persistence Counseling, FAFSA assistance, and additional resources.

CURRICULAR GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To receive a Venture Academy diploma, students in the Class of 2024 must successfully complete a minimum of 21.5 credits consisting of the courses below. Starting in SY 20-21, Venture moved to a quarter-based credit system. Our block schedule allows dedicated class time for content areas with year-long GPA being calculated as a result of averaging grades received at each quarter.

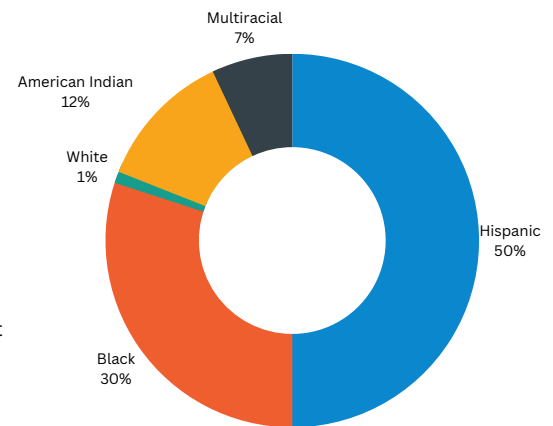
SUBJECT	CREDIT/YEARS
English	4
Math	3
Social Studies	3.5
Science*	3
Art	1
Career Readiness	1
PE and Health	0.5/0.5
Electives**	5

*Science must include Biology and either Physics or Chemistry.

** College-bound students must have a minimum of 2 consecutive years of foreign language; this area also includes PE (0.5 credit) and Health (0.5 credit)

STUDENT BODY

- Venture Academies grades 6-12: 350
- High School Enrollment: 233
- District Free and reduced lunch: >95%
- District Special Education: 17%
- District English Language Learners: 38%
- Class of 2024 Enrollment: 57



GRADING SCALE

Venture grades on a numeric scale aligned with college letter grading systems. Refer to the chart below for each number grade, letter grade, and corresponding grade point value. In calculating grade point averages, we award 1 additional point for Advanced Placement courses. Pass/No Pass grades are not factored into grade point averages. Please see the attached letter that explains Venture's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent adjustments in our grading scale.

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	GPA POINTS	LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	GPA POINTS
A	93-100	4.00	C	73-76	2.00
A-	90-92	3.66	C-	70-72	1.66
B+	87-89	3.33	D+	67-69	1.33
B	83-86	3.00	D	63-66	1.00
B-	80-82	2.66	D-	60-62	0.66
C+	77-79	2.33	F	0-59	0

Please see the attached letter that explains Venture's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent adjustments in our grading scale.



CURRICULUM

Venture is focused on accelerating student learning growth through effective, rigorous, and personalized teaching and learning. We are a middle-high school in the Twin Cities with a daily emphasis on future-focused personalized learning and community building. We offer a program that features innovative teaching methods that address student learning needs and passionately challenge our students to learn more and dream bigger.

Our mission is to meet students where they are to provide a future-focused education that gives each student a personalized pathway toward success after graduation. With this goal in mind, students take part in numerous real-world learning opportunities including internships, guest lectures, work skills classes, high-interest courses, and entrepreneurial education. We believe that school and real life cannot and should not be separated.

As part of our goal of real-world learning, Venture Academy offers students the opportunity to participate in multiple career-readiness pathways. Students can choose to progress through our internship program with the ultimate goal of students participating in an unpaid internship of up to 10 weeks at a local community business or organization. Future-focused learning can also be attained through participation in our entrepreneurship program, with the end goal of students creating their own small business that not only solves a problem but serves our school and the larger community.

In addition to career-readiness opportunities, we offer student activities, clubs, and Unions during portions of advisory in the mornings. Each student has the ability to participate in various clubs of interest throughout the year during school hours compared to traditional schools that offer after-school extracurriculars. Due to our student demographic, and wanting to be mindful of equity, we have included time in our students' day to allow them the chance to participate in various aspects of our Venture community. The purpose of these clubs and Unions is to allow students to explore areas of their own interest. Their exploration provides an opportunity for students to engage in future-focused learning and skills while providing access in school to students who would not otherwise have the chance to participate in extracurricular opportunities.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND POST SECONDARY ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Venture offered its first Advanced Placement course in the 2017-2018 school year. Between their freshman and senior years, we offer our students the following AP Courses:

- AP Statistics
- AP Studio Art: 2-D Design
- AP Studio Art: Drawing
- AP Art History
- AP Computer Science Principles
- AP Seminar
- AP Research
- AP Psychology

Venture students that meet the college PSEO admission requirements have the opportunity to enroll in college courses beginning in their Junior year. Venture has students receiving college credit at the following institutions:

- Saint Paul College
- Minneapolis College
- The University of Minnesota: Twin Cities

ENRICHMENT

Enrichment at Venture Academy is intended to give students multiple mediums through which they can pursue their passions. Rather than focusing on content-specific courses, we offer skill-based courses that focus on giving students access to makerspace, woodshop, art, and music tools. Students can use their newfound skills to continue driving their own interests and education.

- Beginner Spanish
- Design
- Heritage Spanish
- Internship
- Model UN
- Robotics
- Forensic Science
- Music Production
- Theater Performance
- Youth in Government

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Since Venture Academy's inception in 2016, many clubs and organizations on campus have been conceived and founded by students, with support from staff. These have evolved over the years and offerings change based on what students are interested in. Students are strongly encouraged to become involved in offerings such as

CLUBS

- Art Club
- Anime Club
- Chess Club
- Cooking Club
- Debate Club
- Film and Theatre Club
- Finance Club
- Gaming Club
- Gender and Sexuality Alliance
- Plant Club
- Sewing Club

STUDENT UNIONS

- Native Student Union
- Black Student Union
- Hispanic Student Union

JV and Varsity Sports

- Baseball
- Boys and Girls Basketball
- Football
- Soccer
- Wrestling
- Beyond Walls: Urban Squash Twin Cities

COLLEGE MATRICULATION

Of Venture Academy's first three graduating classes 90% were accepted to a college or university. Overall, 60% of Venture graduates are enrolled in a two-year or four-year college program, and 40% of our alumni chose to enter the workforce following graduation.

The following are some of the colleges and universities our graduates have attended or are attending:

- Albion College
- Augsburg University
- Barry University
- Bates College
- Beloit College
- Carleton College
- Denison University
- Dougherty Family College at St. Thomas University
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Hamline University
- Macalester College
- Minerva Schools
- Minneapolis College
- Minneapolis College of Art and Design
- Normandale Community College
- Pitzer College
- Saint Catherine's University
- Saint Cloud State
- St. Olaf College
- Saint Paul College
- Trinity College
- University of Minnesota: Duluth
- University of Minnesota: Twin Cities



To Whom It May Concern:

This letter serves as an explanation of Venture Academy's response to COVID-19 and the interim changes we made in our grading system to best serve our students.

During the 2019-2020 school year, our third trimester coincided with Venture moving to distance learning at the request of the Minnesota Department of Education. Venture adopted a Pass/No Pass grading system for all students during that third trimester. Student GPA for SY 19-20 was calculated using the final grades students received in the first and second trimesters. Pass grades earned during trimester three received credit; however, no GPA points were given for Pass/No Pass grades.

Given the demographics of our students and families, as a school, we acknowledge how challenging the logistics of online learning were. Ninety-five percent of our student body receive Free or Reduced Lunch, in addition to a third of our population receiving special education support and 40% of our population being English Language Learners. These combined statistics make access to reliable internet and technology a significant barrier and caused us to move to a proactive model to help support staff and students. We want our students to learn while maintaining high standards; however, first and foremost, we wanted to ensure that our students were healthy both physically and mentally and that they felt unconditionally supported by the Venture community. Lastly, we wanted to ensure that students were not penalized due to this disruption in their education outside their control.

Due to the spread of COVID-19, Venture remained in our distance-learning model through the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year. We believe that an equitable assessment and grading system created for distance learning had to account for the complex ways the closure of physical school buildings was a more significant obstacle for some students than others. As such, we adjusted our grading scale. Per MDE recommendations, a student should not be reported as a failure and retained or given an F during this unprecedented situation. Therefore, students earning 59% or lower earned a grade of "I" (incomplete) at the end of a semester and were enrolled in a Credit Recovery contract. Upon completion of credit recovery, an "I" will be replaced with a "P" for grades 60% or higher, and credit will be conferred, but no GPA points were given. Respectively, in credit recovery, if a student did not receive a grade above 59%, an "I" was replaced with an "NC" (no credit), no credit was conferred, and no GPA points were given. While we were in a distance learning model, we used "P" to represent all passing grades at 60% or higher to confer credit. At the broadest level, our policy was that no grades earned during this academic year affect grade point average. However, to convey excellence, we recorded As, and Bs earned by students during each quarterly marking period for grades 90% and above and grades 83%-89%, respectively. Those As and Bs do not impact a student's GPA; they are recorded on the transcript to serve as indicators of student growth during the pandemic. For all other grades, we elected to use "Pass" and "No Credit" during distance learning so that the extenuating circumstances due to COVID-19 do not have a detrimental and lasting impact on a student's cumulative GPA.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions regarding our response to COVID-19.

Sincerely,
Venture Academy
Career & College Counseling Department
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