

# Voyager Academy Elementary School

4210 Ben Franklin Boulevard, Durham, NC 27704

919-433-3301

[www.voyageracademy.net](http://www.voyageracademy.net)



## Mission

The mission of Voyager Academy is to provide students in kindergarten through grade twelve an academically challenging and supportive learning environment. Staff utilizes experiential and traditional learning strategies so that students become responsible, engaged, and innovative members of society. The school's expectation is that all students, working with dedicated faculty and family, will excel academically and socially.

## Overview

Voyager Academy Elementary School is a Project Based Learning (PBL) school in Durham, NC. We offer a unique academic program that exemplifies the best in collaborative, real world learning, while preparing our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- Voyager Academy opened in August 2007 as a NC Public Charter school serving students in 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade
- Voyager Academy High School opened in 2010
- Voyager Academy Elementary opened in 2011 with 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and in 2012, K - 3
- 420 students in grades K - 3
- 105 students per grade level
- Class size: 21 students
- School Hours for 2017 – 2018: 7:45 AM – 2:45 PM
- Every Monday Early Dismissal at 12:45 PM
- 2016 NC School Performance Grade: B (Exceeded Growth)
- VAES is on a trimester schedule to coordinate with the reading and math assessment schedule – report cards are completed 3 times per year – every 12 weeks.
- Title I Targeted Assistance Program

## Features

**Project Based Learning:** At VAES Project based learning is an integral part of Voyager Academy's philosophy and mission. Students are presented with interesting, relevant, and meaningful problems to solve. Students complete 3 projects per year/1 per quarter, K – 3. We follow the NC Essential Standards in Science and Social Studies to determine each project.

**Reading Workshop:** We use the NC Standard Course of Study in Reading and follow the Reading Workshop Model from Teachers College at Columbia University. Reader's Workshop helps all K – 3 students develop strong reading skills through the use of: Mini-lessons, Small guided reading groups, Read aloud, Conferencing, Independent reading, Literature response, Purposeful share, and Literacy workstations.

**Writing Workshop:** We use the NC Standard Course of Study in Writing and follow the Writing Workshop Model from Teachers College at Columbia University. In Writer's Workshop, students are invited to live, work and learn as writers. Students learn writing craft techniques and to observe their lives and the world around them while collecting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Students are given time to write, applying the skills and strategies they've learned to their own writing projects. As students write, the teacher provides feedback. Feedback is given through one-to-one conferences and small group instruction, and includes instructional compliments and teaching.

**Math Workshop:** We use the NC Standard Course of Study in Math and follow a Math Workshop Model. We pull from multiple resources to meet these standards, such as Math in Practice, math talks, math tasks, and the NC DPI Math Wiki and resources. First, students have a math mini-lesson. Next, K – 3 students rotate through math workstations, including a small-guided math group on the student’s level.

**Responsive Classroom/Morning Meeting:** We use a system of classroom management called Responsive Classroom. The main goal of Responsive Classroom is to promote optimal student learning and create a caring community of students and staff. It is a research-based program that shows students learn best when they feel safe, challenged, and happy. The main components of Responsive Classroom are Morning Meeting, Hopes and Dreams, Rule Creation, Guided Discovery, and Logical Consequences. During the first six weeks of school, we spend time learning the rules, routine, procedures, etc. that will foster our students as independent learners and will make our classroom run smoothly. Every day, K – 3 children gather in morning meeting to greet each other, start the day, and learn social skills like respect, responsibility, and empathy.

**Technology:** VAES offers a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment in which every student has access to computers, Chromebooks, iPads, or Learnpads within their classrooms. Students use these devices in math and literacy workstations and for project research. Each classroom also has an interactive whiteboard to enhance the learning experience.

**Specials:** VAES offers 5 specials. They are PE, Art, Music, Science, & Lego/Engineering.

**Extracurricular Activities:** Extracurricular activities enhance the school experience. We offer a variety of experiences for our elementary students to enjoy, such as Science Olympiad, Science Night, Spelling Bee (3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade), Viking Troupers (chorus), and after school Enrichments. Some Science Olympiad events are reinforced during the school day with the extra Science special and a K -3 VAES Science Olympiad competition.

**Before/After School Care and Enrichments:** Before/After School Care and Enrichments are offered for students in Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. For more information regarding cost, times, etc., please contact Latia Boney at [lboney@voyageracademy.net](mailto:lboney@voyageracademy.net).

**Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO):** Voyager Academy is fortunate to have an active and involved Parent-Teacher Organization. Their responsibilities include hosting hospitality luncheons for Voyager faculty, fall and spring carnivals, and eliciting parent volunteer opportunities that enhance the educational experience for our students.

## VAES Empathy Initiative

**Ashoka Changemaker School:** In 2014, Voyager Academy Elementary was chosen as an Ashoka’s Changemaker School. The Ashoka School Network provides Voyager Academy Elementary School with opportunities to access like-minded schools across the country; influence the greater education discourse through media and presenting at conferences; collaborate on projects that impact education; and access to partners in the Ashoka network like universities, social entrepreneurs, and companies. The Ashoka network is a national growing community of leading elementary schools that serve as models for cultivating students as changemakers, leading the way to ensuring every child develops agency, empathy, and voice. Ashoka, the world’s largest network of social entrepreneurs, strives to create an “Everyone a Changemaker” world in which more and more people respond proactively to social problems, and where each person has the confidence, skills, and support to drive effective change.

At VAES, 15 minutes of service is built each day into the daily schedule to promote empathy and community service. All grade levels and classes will work on a project that encompasses building community and empathy (this connects with Responsive Classroom & the first six weeks of school). Some projects have included students collecting gift cards for a school in Houston impacted by Hurricane Harvey, a second grade Buddy Bench; a third grade Peace Path; singing at the local nursing home; Kindergarten random acts of kindness (K giving treats to HS students during exams; leaving kind notes for staff, etc.), and the K – 3 “Only One You” Rock Path.