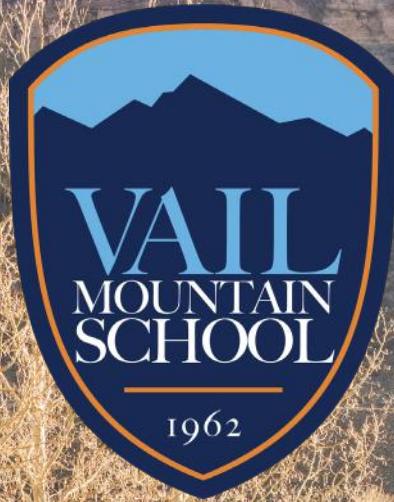




Profile for Colleges 2026-2027

Setting & Community

Founded in 1962, Vail Mountain School (VMS) is a K-12, coeducational, college preparatory independent school in Vail, Colorado. Situated in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, Vail is a close-knit mountain town of approximately 5,400 residents in rural Eagle County, surrounded by public lands and just over two hours from Denver. While the town is known around the world as a premier snow sport destination, it is also a remarkable place to learn and grow, where the natural environment is not simply a backdrop but an essential part of the educational experience. VMS sits at 8,150 feet on the ancestral homelands of the Ute Peoples, who originally stewarded this land and coined it "the shining mountains." Here, students learn in a place that invites exploration, challenges them to see beyond themselves, and connects them to a community and landscape unlike any other.

Accreditation & Memberships

- > Colorado State Department of Education
- > National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)
- > Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS)
- > National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
- > Rocky Mountain Association for College Admission Counseling (RMACAC)
- > Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools (ACCIS)
- > Independent Schools Experiential Education Network (ISEEN)

Vail Mountain School by the Numbers

Class of 2027	29
Upper School Enrollment	137
Average Class Size	13
5 yr. % of Students Attending K-12	27%
Racial/Ethnic Student Diversity	16%
Upper School Tuition	\$40,500
Families on Scholarship	46%
Annual Tuition Assistance Budget (Upper School)	\$1.5 Million
Average Tuition Assistance Award	\$25,000
Students Participating in School/Team Sport	90%

Graduation Requirements

- > Completion of a deeply introspective college search resulting in acceptance to a four-year college
- > 4 years English, history, science, and mathematics
- > 3 consecutive years of a world language or completion of AP level course
- > Completion of Senior Project and Humanities Capstone during the second semester of grade 12
- > Completion of annual Ethics and Intraterm requirements
- > Participation in interscholastic sports or fitness each year

Honor Code & Reporting Policy

The VMS Honor Code is designed to support our educational mission as well as our community values of trust, rapport, and safety. A breach in honor results in a referral to the VMS Honor Council made up of faculty members and peer-nominated upper school students. While VMS does not report student disciplinary history, it is expected that any student asked about probation and/or suspension on a college application will exhibit integrity and answer truthfully. VMS supports student growth plans and self-reporting as VMS does not welcome nor retain any student if he/she/they could be detrimental to school culture or community well-being. VMS complies with the NACAC Guide to Ethical Practices in College Admission and will respond to a college's inquiry about a disciplinary breach.

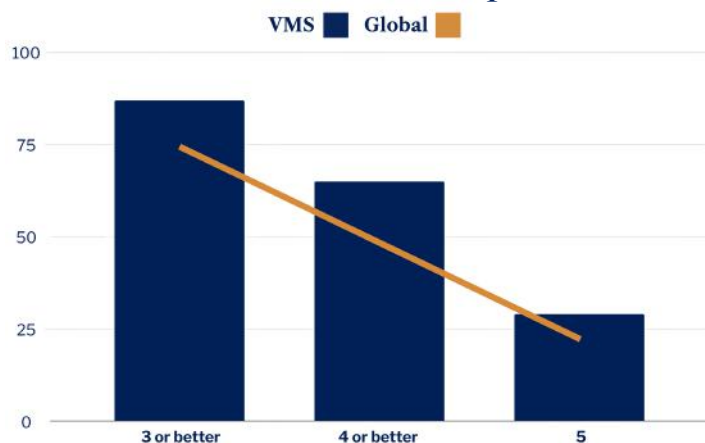
Class of 2027 GPA & Grading Policy

- > Vail Mountain School uses a 4.0 grading scale; students are not numerically ranked.
- > Advanced Placement classes, along with other select advanced courses, are weighted 1.0. The weight is only reflected in the grade point average.
- > Courses in Art, Music, and Theatre (semester-long) are graded and included in the grade point average.
- > Students earn a mark of Pass or Fail for ethics courses, Intraterm, and fitness.
- > Only VMS coursework is included in the GPA calculation.
- > The class of 2027's unweighted/weighted mean GPA after completing grade 11 is **3.48/3.70** and the unweighted/weighted median GPA is **3.56/3.78**.
- > It is rare to have a cumulative unweighted GPA of 4.0 due to the demanding nature of VMS's coursework.
- > The cumulative GPA is calculated once per year from the final grades listed on the transcript, except for grade 12, when a GPA is recalculated at mid-year for college admissions purposes.

Standardized Testing

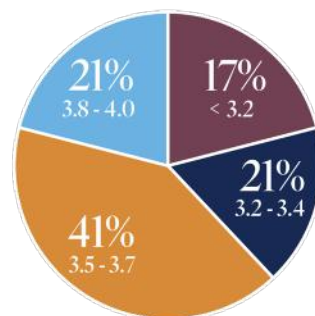
- > ACT 3 yr. average: middle 50% composite 23-29; mean 26 (*not superscored*)
- > SAT 3 yr. average: middle 50% 1110-1360; mean 1232
- > AP 3 yr. average of 3 or higher: 87%
- > May 2026: 52 Upper School students in grades 10, 11 and 12 took 104 AP exams. **87% of the exam scores are 3 or higher.**
- > VMS students score **nearly 20% higher** than global averages on APs.

Advanced Placement Score Comparison



College Trends: Five-Year Overview

5 yr. % of Seniors Submitting ED App.	30%
5 yr. % Matriculating Outside CO	81%
5 yr. % First Generation College Students	8%
5 yr. Avg. Applications Submitted Per Senior	7
5 yr. % of Graduates Taking a Gap Year	9%
5 yr. % of Graduates Transferring After 1st Year of College	9%
5 yr. Avg. Admit Rate	69%



A	93-100	(4.00)
A-	90-92	(3.67)
B+	87-89	(3.33)
B	83-86	(3.00)
B-	80-82	(2.67)
C+	77-79	(2.33)
C	73-76	(2.00)
C-	70-72	(1.67)
D+	67-69	(1.33)
D	65-66	(1.00)
F	below 65	

Class of 2027 Collective Values Related to the College Search



Academic Calendar & Course Load Balance

- > Semester system.
- > All students engage in a college preparatory course of study.
- > Only students in grades 11-12 may take AP courses, unless uniquely accelerated in STEM and/or world language.
- > Students must gain AP course registration approval and are encouraged to consider interests and strengths over the sheer number of APs alone.
- > The curriculum limits students to three AP courses in grade 11 and three in grade 12. Enrolling in two or three AP courses in one year is considered a “most demanding” program. In the rare event a student is accelerated and believes taking more than three APs in one year is appropriate, he/she/they must submit a petition.
- > Students enrolled in AP course(s) are required to take the corresponding AP exam(s) in May.
- > Due to the school’s small size, some student course selections may be unavoidably impacted.

Upper School Philosophy

At Vail Mountain School, the guiding philosophy for providing a dynamic, academically challenging education is experiential learning. We implement experiential learning alongside a variety of pedagogical approaches in a college preparatory environment in order to clarify values and develop students’ knowledge, skills, and capacity to contribute to their communities. We utilize direct and individualized academic instruction, collaborative seminar-style discussion, project-based and service learning, and place-based outdoor and expeditionary education to express our mission.

Curricular Highlights

Senior Project

An experience in true project-based learning, seniors work with small cohorts to ideate, research, create, exhibit, write, and present. Following their interests, studying a topic of choice, and doing extensive research guides their real-world learning experience. Students must defend their research to their faculty leader, cohort, and outside advisor, as well as present their authentic research and product to the community of parents, students, teachers, and external community constituents at Academic Symposium in May.

Humanities Capstone

Students grapple with essential questions central to the human condition. Students explore core topics related to happiness, ethics, and purpose through diverse and interdisciplinary sources - literature, psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Questions include, but are not limited to: What is truth? Is there such a thing as right and wrong? What is our duty to others? In answering these questions, students will author a Credo, in addition to being assessed through response papers, analytical essays, and facilitation of group discussions.

Harkness Table

The utilization of Harkness tables, oval wooden tables, allows discussion to be the primary method of egalitarian learning, ensuring that many voices are heard and appreciated and strong speaking and listening skills are built in all humanities courses.

Homebase/Advisory

Homebase is a daily meeting with a small group of peers and a dedicated faculty advisor. These gatherings offer students time to reflect, plan, and connect in a supportive, family-like environment. Members build character through open conversations—often called “dinner table discussions”—on topics that range from ethical dilemmas to personal values.

Senior Seminar: Living Ethically Beyond Graduation

All seniors participate in a year-long, life-skills seminar designed to help students transition to the independence of life in college and beyond. Topics include: financial literacy, self-defense, sexual health, CPR, college offices/resources.

Service Learning

Students lead Philanthropy Service Group to encourage leadership through service to others. Eagle Valley Community Foundation awarded VMS with the 2025 Volunteer Group of the Year Award for the vital work done in integrating academic learning, service and community relations in the Vail Valley.

Cross-Age Experience

Our K-12 building, curriculum, and traditions are all designed to foster organic relationships and cross-age learning opportunities. A hallmark experience is the Senior/Kinder Buddy Program. These connections cultivate empathy, leadership, and a strong sense of belonging within the community.

Intraterm

Intraterm is a week-long course, often faculty-designed and student-driven, allowing space for creative exploration beyond the traditional curriculum. Students engage in meaningful, real-world learning. Many offerings include travel or field-based components broadening students’ perspectives and deepening their connection to the world around them. Past courses include: Wolves of Yellowstone, Space Camp, Shakespeare in London

Outdoor Education

Experiential learning is a core element of our curriculum and student life. From hut expeditions to ski days to field studies, we use our local setting and community to cultivate self-reliance, collaboration, and environmental awareness. As a result, students find balance, sound judgment, and resiliency both inside and outside the classroom.

Upper School Course Offerings

All courses are college-preparatory unless indicated in the course title as the following: Advanced, Accelerated, Advanced Placement.
* denotes weighted courses

English

- Grade 9** English 9: Perspectives
- Grade 10** English 10: Identity
- Grade 11** English 11: Mystics & Misfits
AP English Literature*
- Grade 12** **Advanced Seminar: The Wild West***
Advanced Seminar: Dystopian Literature*
Senior Project & Humanities Capstone (2nd semester)

World Language

- Mandarin I, II, III, IV
Advanced Mandarin V*
- Spanish I, II, III, IV
AP Spanish Language*
Advanced Spanish Through Service Learning*

History & Social Science

- Grade 9** World History
- Grade 10** United States History
- Grade 11** **AP Human Geography***
Vietnam: A Cultural & Political Legacy
Conflict Analysis and Northern Ireland: History, Politics and Culture
Border Studies
- Grade 12** **Advanced Seminar: Origin and Evolution of the Cold War***
Advanced Seminar: Women in United States History*
Advanced Seminar: Geopolitics Through Hollywood: Understanding the G77 Nations*
Senior Project & Humanities Capstone (2nd semester)

Ethics

- Grade 9** Ethics in the Digital World
Ethics of Relationships & Sexuality
- Grade 10** Environmental Ethics
Personal Finance & Investment Ethics
- Grade 11** Ethics of Diversity & Equity
Ethics of the Mindful Individual
- Grade 12** Living Ethically Beyond Graduation

Mathematics

- Algebra I, II
- Geometry
- Algebra II/Trigonometry
- Trigonometry/Introduction to Pre-Calculus
Advanced Pre-Calculus*
- AP Statistics***
- Calculus
- AP Calculus AB***
- AP Calculus BC***

Lab Science

- Grade 9** Foundations in Chemistry & Physics
- Grade 10** Biology
Accelerated Chemistry/Cellular & Molecular Biology*
- Grades 11-12** Environmental Chemistry
Neurobiology & Psychology
AP Environmental Science*
AP Chemistry (every other year)*
AP Biology*
AP Physics C: Mechanics (every other year)*
AP Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism (every other year)*

Technology

- AP Computer Science A (2026-2027)***
- AP Computer Science Principles (2024-2025)***
- 3D Modeling & Animation (2025-2026)
- Design, Engineering & Coding (2025-2026)

Visual Arts

- Grade 9** Foundation Studio
- Grades 9-12** Ceramics I, II, III
Drawing
Photography I, II
Printmaking
Sculpture
Fiber Arts
Mixed Media
Painting
Portfolio Development
AP Art and Design*

Performing Arts

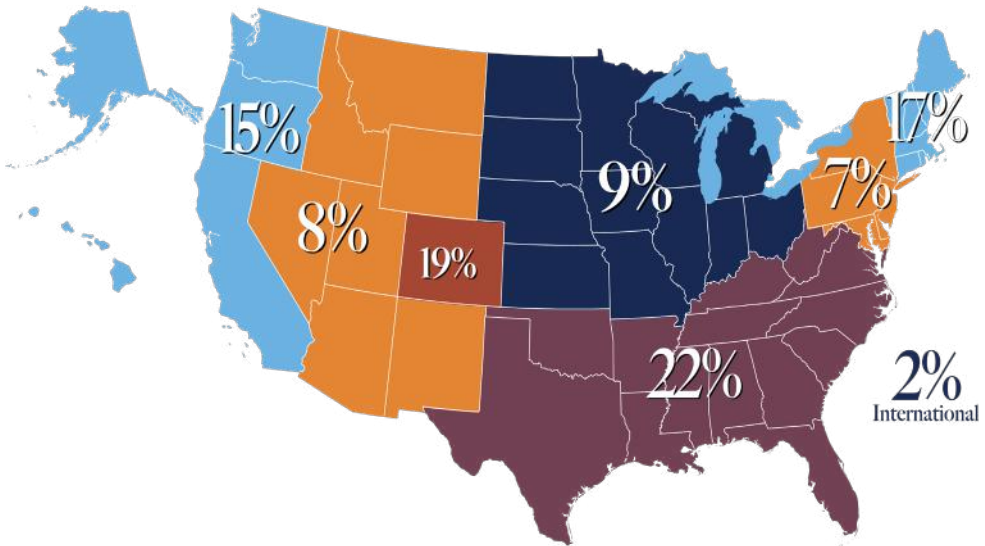
- Music Appreciation
- Instrumental Music/Ensemble
- Performing Arts Appreciation
- Theatre Dance
- Theatre Appreciation
- Standard Theatre Performance
- Musical Theatre Performance
- Backstage Theatre I, II, III
Advanced Music Theory*

Mission

We inspire tomorrow's ethical leaders by developing character, seeking knowledge, and building a community of lifelong learners from the heart of the Colorado mountains to the world beyond.

College Choices 2022-2026

VMS is proud to share this matriculation list as a compelling testament to the wide variety of students who are the heart of our extraordinary community. It is a celebration of each student's journey, the excellent colleges to which our students are admitted, and their choice college—a fit that will nurture their academic and personal goals. The list is also presented with the understanding that the decision of where to enroll is a very personal one made for a number of reasons, and is as varied as the students' life stories in their applications.



American University
Arizona State University - Tempe*
Bates College
Baylor University*
Boston College*
Boston University
Bucknell University
Butler University
Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo*
Chapman University*
Clemson University*
Colby College*
College of Charleston
Colorado College
Colorado Mesa University*
Colorado School of Mines*
Colorado State University*
Columbia University
Cornell College
Curry College
Dartmouth College*
Dean College
Denison University*

Dickinson College
Duke University*
Endicott College
Fashion Institute of Technology
George Washington University
Harvard University*
High Point University*
Kansas City Art Institute
Lafayette College
Loyola Marymount University
Miami University-Oxford
Middlebury College*
Montana State University - Bozeman*
New York University
North Carolina State University
Pepperdine University
Regent's University London
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rollins College
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
San Diego State University*
Skidmore College
Southern Methodist University*

Stanford University
Texas Christian University*
Trinity University
Tufts University*
United States Naval Academy
University College Dublin
University of Alabama
University of Arizona*
University of California - Berkeley
University of California - Santa Cruz
University of Colorado - Boulder*
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs
University of Connecticut
University of Denver*
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Miami
University of Michigan*
University of Mississippi*

University of Missouri*
University of Nevada - Las Vegas
University of Oregon*
University of Richmond*
University of San Diego*
University of San Francisco
University of Southern California
University of St. Andrews
University of Tampa
University of Utah*
University of Vermont
University of Virginia*
University of Washington - Seattle
University of Wisconsin - Madison*
University of the Arts London
Wake Forest University*
Washington and Lee University
Wesleyan University*
Williams College*
Xavier University

*Denotes more than 1 enrollment

Vail Mountain School

3000 Booth Falls Road, Vail, Colorado 81657
(970) 476-3850 Phone (970) 476-3860 Fax
ACT/CEEB School Code: 061384
www.vms.edu

Follow us on social media:

@vail.mtn.school @vailmountainschool

Head of School

Steve Bileca, sbileca@vms.edu

Assistant Head of School

Maggie Pavlik, mpavlik@vms.edu

Director of Upper School

Donny Pyles, dpyles@vms.edu

Director of College Counseling

Marisa Ferrara, mferrara@vms.edu