

## Day in the life (High School)

The following provides an example of what part of a day in the life at a Vista High School might look and feel like for a student. Schools are dynamic, human-centered organizations and, while schedules and basic routines will have consistency, no two weeks will look exactly alike. The following description strives to highlight unique features of a day at Vista but is solely demonstrative. Times and the actual bell schedule have been manipulated to showcase innovative programs, approaches, and signature practices.

Miguel, a tenth-grade student, hops off the trolley with two of his buddies, Jesse and Julian, and the three boys walk towards the main entrance at Vista. As they cross the parking lot that connects the trolley station with the school Miguel sees a few familiar sights. A few cars pull up and some of his classmates jump out of their parents' cars, and simultaneously wave goodbye to their parents and wave hello to Miguel and his friends. Mr. Bailey, the Assistant Principal, is there to greet the students being dropped off, as he always is, and he offers his fist for Miguel to "fist bump" as Miguel walks by.

"Happy Wednesday gentlemen. Let's make this a terrific day. Make sure you have spoken to Ms. Creed and registered for your dual enrollment college courses."

Miguel silently nods. He already has his appointment with Ms. Creed, the school's counselor, later this afternoon. Ever since beginning 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Miguel and Ms. Creed have held numerous conversations about his grades, goals and future plans. As they approach the school entrance, Miguel glances up at the school's logo. He recalls the morning over a year ago, when Dr. Felch, the Principal, addressed the entire 9<sup>th</sup> grade class—the first graduating class in Vista Meridian's history—and explained the significance of the school name. "A meridian is a point of highest development and greatest prosperity. Each and every one of you students have reached the point of highest development, which will lead to your greatest prosperity. For some of you, today begins the final step of your long time with us at Vista." Miguel smiled as he reflected on being one of the students who began at Vista in Kindergarten and made it all the way through to the high school and will be in the school's first ever graduating class in 2025. "You will be the ones who show future classes the Vista way." The message was burned into Miguel's memory. He burned to be one to show his classmates, his community, and the world "the Vista way." Miguel feels enormous pride in being in this graduating class, even if it is corny.

The boys are asked for their school lanyard by the supervision aide standing at the door. She also checks each student for proper uniform, and having no issues with his dress, Miguel enters

the school, and proceeds to the cafeteria to grab a hot breakfast. He finds a group of his closest friends, and they share gossip and laughter as Miguel eats his food. He eats hurriedly because he wants to ensure he has time to hit the gymnasium to fit in a short basketball game during morning club time before class begins. Even before he swallows his last bite, a group of the boys, Miguel included, jump up, collect their bags, toss their trash in the bin, and head towards the gym.

The gym is bustling with activity. He sees Mr. Jimenez, the PE teacher, setting up for his day while various groups of kids play soccer, or basketball. Other students sit along the perimeter of the gym, listening to music, or pointing and laughing at the students playing. Miguel and his buddies collect a basketball from the rack supplied by Mr. Jimenez. They find an empty net and play a quick, sloppy, and brag filled game of half court basketball.

At 8:20, precisely ten minutes before the start of period 1, Mr. Jimenez blows his whistle and students slowly begin to return equipment and collect their belongings. It is time for period 1, and for Miguel that means it is time for Chemistry. He says goodbye to his basketball friends, who linger in the gym, and walks down the hall towards his classes.

Late in his 9<sup>th</sup> grade year Miguel and his classmates each selected which of the three academic pathways offered at Meridian that he would pursue. He was provided information about each pathway: a Biotech Pathway, an International Business pathway, a Cyber Security pathway, and a Climate Change Leadership pathway. Although he has a strong love for technology and was tempted to select the Cyber Security pathway, Miguel's mom reminded him that he always has said that he wanted to be a doctor when he grew up. By selecting the Biotech pathway, Miguel will have the opportunity to take classes at the nearby community college, and maybe even earn his Associate's Degree while he is still in high school. Nobody in his family has yet attended college and he could earn a degree while still in high school! Miguel is determined to make that happen.

### **8:30 a.m. Period 1: CHEMISTRY**

Miguel is greeted at the door by his teacher Ms. Sotero. She smiles and says, "Good morning, Miguel," as she hands him a sheet of paper, and adds, "This is the goals sheet for your group for today. Your group is here already." Miguel knows that is Ms. Sotero's way of warning him about almost being tardy, so he quietly joins his group of 4 to work on the goal sheet.

After 5 minutes, Ms. Sotero dings her bell, and calls the class to attention. She then introduces the day's teaching point, which she presents using Vista's WHAT, HOW, and WHY template. Pointing to the smart board she explains, "Okay Chemists, we've been becoming experts on the chemical processes of how viruses do their dirty work. You've all learned many things about what chemicals destroy different viruses and why. Eddie, head up please," she says. Eddie's

head pops up across the room. “Today, chemists, I want to teach you how knowledge of chemistry, and chemists themselves, can be a benefit to the general public. I am going to demonstrate that by walking your groups through how to use your computers to create an infographic for use in public spaces all around the community, which can share a great deal of important information quickly in an engaging way. We are going to learn this because globally competent scientists use their knowledge to inform the public about possible health hazards when they can.” She scans the room, and continues, “Make sure you have the essay you are writing in ELA handy because you will want to make sure that the same points you are arguing in the essay will also be on your infographic.”

Miguel reaches into his bag and pulls out his English folder. The teachers in Miguel’s 4 core classes (Chemistry, English, Integrated Math II and U.S. History) had worked together during their preparation periods and during professional development meetings to craft a multidisciplinary unit on “Infectious Disease.” Every class had spent the last three weeks learning about infectious diseases through the lenses of different courses. Miguel enjoyed learning about the topic so much that he often forgot he was really learning chemistry or math or writing. His teachers made his schoolwork feel so authentic that it was easy to get lost in the flow of his work. To Miguel, what he was doing at school felt important.

Ms. Sotero continues class with a fast ten-minute lesson where she uses her own computer to demonstrate a way the students might create their infographics. As she does so she shares her thinking. “The first thing I need to decide is what facts and information I will include in my infographic. I know this infographic will be used inside laboratories and universities where scientists work. So on this infographic I am going to make sure I am using scientific terminology. Instead of “clean” I might say “use anti-viral solutions.” I know that part of the assignment will be to create a second infographic for lay people, so I can use the informal language there.” She pauses slightly. “Now look through your essays. Each of you finds one fact or piece of information you think you must include in your infographic.” Students across the room rifle through their papers. Miguel scans his own essay and selects the fact “one virus alone killed over 675,000 Americans in 1918.”

“Now share your one fact with your team and explain why you feel this fact must be included in your infographic. What makes your fact so important? I will set the timer for 5 minutes.” She sets her timer and walks among the teams. Miguel and his team take turns sharing their ideas.

When it is his turn, Miguel shares his fact, adding, “We need to include this because it shows how bad this can get.”

“How bad can what get?” asks Ms. Sotero, who has walked up while Miguel was focused on listening to his teammate.

“How bad an...infectious...outbreak...could be?” Miguel offers hopefully.

“Well that is a little better, but I think you and your team will need to work on being very specific in your explanations. It does not help to be vague and general when you are using science to save the world.” She moves on to the next group. Miguel cannot help but smile for two reasons. The first reason is that he thinks Ms. Sotero is funny. She is firm, and she can be weird, but Miguel loves her warmth and gentle guidance. The second reason he is smiling is because the goal his group wrote down during the warmup was “Try to be as clear about what we say and mean as possible.” When he looks back at his team, he sees they are smiling too.

When the timer goes off, Ms. Sotero asks, “What questions might there be?” When no one asks a question she quips, “Oh, there will be questions. Ok. You know what to do. You have 40 minutes. Get cracking. I will come around.”

The room erupts in energy and action as groups pull out their Chromebooks and notebooks and get down to work. His team begins its work by everyone assuming their previously chosen role. Miguel is the timekeeper. His job is to move the team along if it gets stuck and he is also responsible for letting the team know how much time was left. He had requested this role, because he often found himself forgetting how much time was left when he was in the middle of working with his team. By the time 40 minutes had passed, his team had chosen their 8 facts, and their visual theme and had begun laying out the infographic using the application Ms. Sotero had shared.

Ms. Sotero once again calls the class to attention and begins the routine of class progress share out. She begins, “Today I taught you how knowledge of chemistry, and chemists themselves, can be a benefit to the general public. We demonstrated this by working on creating infographics which can share a great deal of important information quickly in an engaging way. So let’s go around the room and can I have each facilitator share today’s progress with the class? Team Alpha?”

Angie, the facilitator of Miguel’s group shares, “We chose our 8 pieces of information, and then we decided on our theme. We are now in the middle of designing the first one.”

Ms. Sotero thanks her and asks the other groups to share their progress. Miguel tries hard to listen to each group but he keeps drifting off and thinking about his next class, English. He feels nervous.

As the last team finishes, Ms. Sotero says, “Today’s exit ticket is a review. Everyone should get this one. What are the 6 most common types of chemical reactions? List them.”

Miguel quickly scribbled, *combination, decomposition, combustion, single and double something* on the paper and hung his head as he handed his paper in. He is frustrated he couldn't remember the last three names. It annoys him until he bumps into Julian who asks, "Are you ready man. You go today, right?"

"Yeah, I go," Miguel says.

"I can't wait to hear your speech, bro."

By this time the boys have reached their next class.

### **10:00 a.m. Period 3: ENGLISH 10**

As Miguel and Julian enter the room, Miguel notices the shelves of books along the far wall. He has read eight full books so far this year, during his independent reading time, and Miguel has spent a significant amount of time "book shopping" in those bookshelves.

The second thing he notices is that his teacher, Mr. Chaffino, has arranged the seats in a circle, which could only mean one thing.

"Socratic Seminar," says Miguel excitedly. He loves Socratic Seminar. When teachers and students hold deep conversations about what they are reading and writing Miguel feels much more connected to his classmates. He enjoys sharing ideas about great authors, and classic books, and debating controversial ideas in the safe structure the Seminar provides.

Mr. Aguilar waits until the last student has settled into the circle before addressing the class. "Good morning Writers! One thing that strong writers do to strengthen their writing is to talk about their writing with other writers. Sharing struggles and ideas helps all writers because by sharing these things writers can gain different perspectives on their work. Other writers may have solutions to our writing problems, or they may offer a differing viewpoint which forces you to fortify your own thinking and of course writing. So if everyone looks at the agenda for the day..."

Heads turn to view the white board.

Mr. Aguilar continues, "So today we will begin class with a Socratic Seminar. I will ask you open-ended questions about your Infectious Disease Position Papers and we will see if we can't assist one another as we get ready for final edits on Friday. After Seminar we will have Independent time, where most of you will be revising your drafts, or rehearsing for round one of your speeches. During that time I will be finishing up the last couple of writing conferences. Miguel, I think we have a conference today, and Amy, Luis, and Giovanni. Then we will close

class with the first round of Speech rehearsal and feedback. Look at the sign up on the board. Today's speakers shall be Miguel, wow, Miguel, it is a busy day for you." Miguel knows that. That's why he feels nervous.

"Ok, writers, you all have been working and researching different aspects of the topic infectious Disease. We've read and analyzed parts of Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Dafoe..." A moan ripples through the room. "Yeah, yeah, you loved it. We looked at part of Pale Horse, Pale Rider by Katherine Anne Porter. We've read a few articles about COVID 19 and the Spanish Flu. All that in addition to whatever research you've done on your topics. Wow, you must really be experts on disease by now." Miguel feels like he is far from an expert but he is learning so much about this topic through the way his teachers organize their lessons. If this is what Biotech looks and feels like, he is all in.

"So my first question is what part of writing up your findings in your position paper is challenging you the most? Share your specific topic and then share what you find most challenging."

Following an engaging Socratic Seminar discussion, the class is given time to work on their writing.

"We have three speakers today. I want to remind everyone about our Rules for the Audience. These are not finished speeches. After each speech we will provide 3 pieces of feedback. Miguel, are you ready?"

Miguel slowly walks to the front of the class. He fights the butterflies off and clears his throat. Then he begins, "In an increasingly interconnected world, the issues of global health and infectious disease have a real impact on us all. Malaria kills more than half a million children each year. The most frequent cause of death in developing nations are infectious diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, which are virtually nonexistent in developed nations. Millions of children under five die from preventable infectious diseases. This is why, although the economy was harmed, closing down businesses and forcing people to stay home was the right thing to do, because it saved lives and prevented our hospitals from being crowded ..." As Miguel continues, his breathing becomes more steady.

Miguel finishes his speech and takes a deep breath. Public speaking always makes him nervous, and almost every class requires some kind of speaking. He knows that even though he is not the best speaker, he is getting better each time. Mr. Aguilar asks the class for feedback.

"Slow down. You speak quickly," one student offers.

“Towards the end, when you stumbled, you almost let it throw off the rest of the speech. The audience does not know when you make a mistake. Just keep going.”

“Eye contact. You never looked up from your paper.”

Miguel thanks the class for their polite applause and returns to his seat to listen to the next two speakers. Miguel feels jealous that they seem to be so comfortable, but he knows he can get to the same place if he keeps on working. It worked in Math when he struggled, and it will work here.

Once the speakers receive their feedback, Mr. Aguilar reminds them what is due Friday when they meet again and dismisses the class. Miguel collects his belongings and as he leaves, Mr. Aguilar says, “Miguel, your speech was so much improved. I can tell you have been putting effort into this.” Miguel thanks him. He has been working hard on this.

As he steps into the hall, Miguel realizes that he is hungry. Good thing it is lunch time. He waits for his boys outside their class before heading to the gym for pre-lunch recess. At Meridian, students are given their recess before they eat. It helps them build an appetite, and more students seem to eat healthy and tasty school lunches when they aren’t rushing off to play.

### **11:25 a.m. Lunch**

When he arrives, the gym is already alive with activity. He sees the campus supervision team stationed around the gym watching the games of soccer, basketball, and volleyball being played. Scattered around the gym are clusters of students. He finds his buddies and joins the basketball game already in progress. Miguel hopes that by next year, when he is a Junior, he will be able to play on the school’s basketball team. He badly wants to represent his school as a Vista Eagle by playing his favorite sport. If he continues to practice, and listen to Coach Jimenez, he knows he will improve in basketball just as he has improved in Math and Writing.

Fifteen minutes pass too quickly, and the whistles blow alerting the students that it is time to join the cafeteria line. He grabs his lunch, chicken quesadillas, his favorite, and sits in his usual spot. He gobbles his food down and spends the remainder of lunch time chatting and laughing with his friends. Once the signal is given to dismiss by table, Miguel and his table throw out their trash and head on to their next class. For Miguel, that is Integrated Math II.

### **12:45 p.m. Period 5: Integrated Math II**

Miguel knows the routines of Math class like the back of his hand. Upon being greeted by his teacher Ms. Penate, he joins the other students at his assigned table, as they all take out their Chromebooks and log in to Google classroom. There he finds his Math Goals Tracker form. On this form he reviews the work he accomplished during the last class, this past Monday. He

reminds himself that he was in the middle of practicing translating the information included in word problems into an appropriate equation that Ms. Penate had taught him and his group at the teacher's table.

Miguel understands that he still needs to practice this skill today, because on Monday he did not reach his goal: *I will select the best equation to solve a problem, based on the information contained in the word problem in at least 4 out of 5 tries.* Shaking his head, Miguel remembers how he struggled on Monday. He reassures himself by recalling what Ms. Penate said to him then, when she saw his scrunched-up face. "Remember, Miguel, what I always say. Fail early and fail often. As long as you keep your Growth Mindset, you will get better. Don't give up on yourself. I'm here when you need my help." Smiling with confidence, Miguel decides he will continue to work on the same goal. He is not going to give up on himself.

"What's your daily goal, Miguel?" asks Anahi, his elbow partner.

"I'm still going to practice word problems," he responds. He glances at Anahi's tracker and sees that she has a completely different goal. Anahi will be using Khan Academy for independent practice on inequalities. Miguel practiced his inequalities last week and feels the pride that comes from accomplishing a goal one sets for oneself. He submits his daily goal tracker online and finds the Word Problem practice that Ms. Penate has uploaded.

Just as he is about to begin, Ms. Penate calls the class to attention. "By now, you all should have submitted your daily goals...Anahi, it looks like I still don't have yours." Miguel notices Anahi quickly hit a button on her keyboard. Soon after Ms. Penate says, "Ahh, there we go. Thank you, Anahi, my friend.

"I noticed on Monday that a few of you still had some questions about how to pick the proper equation for word problems. So today I will start by meeting with you at the Teacher's Table. So can I see Eduardo, Miguel, Daniella, Hector and Estrella up here with me? In the second rotation I would like to see Angel, Ashley, Raymond, and Sissi at the teacher's table, and we will review ratios, okay? Raise your hand if you would like to begin with continuing working on your Cost-Benefit analysis of the COVID 19 shutdowns." Miguel sees the hands of seven classmates go up in the air. He is anxious to work on his analysis, but he knows he must meet the teacher at the teacher table first. "Great. You all start the rotation at the back tables. Who is ready for an assessment?" Only two hands go up. "Okay, Jesse and Maribel, do you know what standards you are assessing?" They nod in the affirmative. "Okay, all the assessments are already in Google classroom listed by standards. Take your time. I suppose the rest of you are looking to begin with peer study partners?" Many head nods. "Ok then, get to it."



The classroom explodes with movement as students pack and stack their belongings and move to the appropriate table. The students in the back at the independent practice table pop earbuds in and begin intently watching the Khan Academy videos their teacher had linked to their accounts. Other students paired off and began to hold quiet “six-inch voice” conversations about their Math assignments. Jesse and Maribel transitioned to the assessment corner. Miguel was impressed as he looked at Jesse, who had an eager and determined look on his face. Miguel could remember a time where Jesse hated Math class and would spend most of his time misbehaving or checking his cell phone. However, ever since joining Ms. Penate’s class, her way of teaching Jesse has changed completely. It seems to Miguel that Jesse actually enjoys Math class.

Miguel knows why. In the past, the entire class had to sit quietly while the teacher would speed through practice problems on the board, assign the same practice problems for homework, and give the same exam to everyone on Friday. Now, in Ms. Penate’s class, students are given the choice to work on the things that they want and need to work on. No longer is the Math lesson one-size-fits-all. Ms. Penate meets with small groups of students and teaches them the standards they still have to Master. Miguel finds it much more exciting and fun because he knows he is learning exactly what he needs to know, and he is ready to learn it, and eager to demonstrate when he masters a new idea.

By the end of this class, Miguel has revised his weekly goals for word problems and he has collaborated with Anahi on his COVID Cost Benefit analysis. Again, class was dismissed before he knew it. Miguel was very satisfied with the work he had completed. Ms. Penate refers students to today’s exit ticket on google classroom. Miguel types in his reply and waits to be dismissed.

The hallways are bustling, as Miguel walks towards his final class of the day, Physical Education. That means he is headed back to the gymnasium.

### **2:15 p.m. Period 7: PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Most students entered the gym and walk immediately to the appropriate locker room to change into their PE uniforms, with “Meridian Athletics” boldly printed across the front, with a small Eagle on the sleeve. Miguel instead walks to Coach Jimenez, who is laying out traffic cones at each corner of the gym in preparation for the mile run which is held every Wednesday.

“Hi Coach.”

“What is going on, Miguel? Go get your uniform on.”

“I have an appointment with Ms. Creed at 2:10 and I wanted to tell you first. I am not ditching.”

“Thank you for telling me. When you get back you are still doing the mile.”

“Yes, coach.” Miguel walks to the front office, and speaks to Ms. Ruth, the office manager. “Hi Ms. Ruth, I have a meeting with...”

“...Ms. Creed. I know, Miguel. You can go in. She is waiting for you.” Miguel is always amazed that Ms. Ruth seems to know everything that is going on at Meridian. She knows every student, and most of their parents by name.

Miguel enters Ms. Creed’s office and already she has a few documents spread out on the table. She welcomes Miguel and closes her door.

“Thanks for coming on time, Miguel. There are a few things I would like to run through with you. The first thing I want to do is make sure you have registered for your dual enrollment courses for next semester. Have you registered yet?”

“No ma’am. I’ll finish it by the end of the day.”

“Great. Now let’s go over your Individual Graduation Plan. I was reviewing this earlier, and I am impressed. You are all caught up on your credits, and so far your grades look good for this semester. I do want to ask what is going on in English class?”

Miguel’s lowest grade was in English. It was always the lowest in English. “Yeah, I am not a great writer, but Mr. Aguilar and I have been really working to improve it. I should raise that to a B with my next project.”

“I am glad to hear that you and Mr. Aguilar are working on it, but how would you feel if we could get you some additional support? If I can arrange for a tutor in the morning, would you be open to work with them?”

Miguel understood that hard work and practice pays off. That is the Vista way. He agreed to working with a tutor to raise his grade.

“Excellent. Now let’s talk about your progress in your Pathway. How is that going?” Miguel says it is going well, and that his family is so proud of him for being the first in their family to earn college credits.

Miguel's time at Vista had taught him how to maintain a Growth Mindset. He had learned over time to relish challenges. He understands that growth comes through hard work and discomfort.

“Ok, Miguel. Good meeting. Let's schedule our next meeting. How about one month from today? Does this time work for you?”

Ms. Creed smiles her warm smile, as he leaves her office. Miguel wonders if he would be doing as well as he is without the support of his counselor. Miguel was grateful for all the adults at Meridian who care so deeply. Teachers come early and stay late to offer additional support and practice. The counselors maintain regular meetings with all students to monitor their progress. Even the Principal, Dr. Felch, runs the school with a kind heart, and tremendous pride in all his students.

Miguel could no longer delay. He changes in the locker room and walks to the starting line. By now the rest of the class are split off. Some are working with the Teacher's Assistant on plyometric exercises. Others are huddled around Coach Jimenez who is demonstrating the proper grip on a golf club. Coach Jimenez sees Miguel on the starting line, and calls, “Miguel, 25 laps. Hit it!” Miguel is off and running.

As he runs, he goes through the day's events in his mind. Dismissal time is coming soon, and it does not even feel to Miguel as though he has been doing schoolwork all day. He is proud of his infographic, glad his speech went well, and is satisfied with the progress he made in Math today, and happy with his time with Ms. Creed. He then thinks ahead to tomorrow and what it will bring. He will engage in a debate in U.S. History over the U.S. response to the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic. One more challenge: 23 more laps and he takes off.

Coach Jimenez dismisses the class at 3:30 to change back into their school clothes.

When his mother arrives to give him a ride home from school, Miguel is shiny with sweat, and exhausted from the day. She asks him, “So how was your day? I know you were nervous about your speech?”

Miguel thinks for a minute, then replies, “Oh you, know, it was a regular day at Vista.”

“So, was it good?” Mom pushes.

“It was a great day,” Miguel says, looking out at the school logo as they drive away home. *Tomorrow I get to do it again*, he thinks as the school recedes in the distance.