

Newport City Elementary School
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Newport, Vermont 05855
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August 10, 2018

Dear Parents,

After a very humid, hot summer, it's hard to believe that we are almost ready to come back to school! I hope everyone has had time to rejuvenate, with plenty of time to enjoy your families. I was able to spend some time with my ever-growing family this summer which is always a lot of fun. I wanted to write you with some updates about our goals from last year, goals for our upcoming school year, and to let you know about some changes.

I think it's important to share work that we did on last year's priorities so that you can see the progress that we made. The three focal areas were continuing to build stronger systems, making our climate more positive, and becoming trauma-informed as a staff. The updates:

- We are doing some minor changes to our behavior management system. Please notice those changes in the student handbook this year, primarily around the way that Office Discipline Referral (ODR) forms will be handled. Essentially, even though we will track data here at school, we won't be asking you to sign each of the ODR forms. Classroom teachers will be making contact when a student gets to the level of needing an ODR and explaining the situation.
- Last year, we added the ACE (Access to Classroom Education) Program, for students who are struggling with behavior. We will continue with this program but have expanded and revised our work a bit. We have a full-time behavior specialist, a full-time behavior team assistant, an intensive case manager, and a paraeducator in order to support the 27 students who accessed this program on a regular basis last year. We have increased a half-time guidance counselor to .80, to help students who need this support.
- We worked hard to reestablish a positive climate at the school and to strength the tie with our internal and external community. We did a lot of intentional work on this, including professional learning:
 - o We focused on a Resilient character trait of the month for students to learn about in their individual classrooms and then partnered the younger students with older students to continue this learning about the word. We focused on the traits of resilience because all kids benefit but it is especially important for students who have had any kind of difficult experience in their past. The first and best thing we can do for all of our kids, but especially kids who are struggling, is to help them with making meaningful connections and relationships with people at school. Our positive working culture works for everyone and helps all students to be ready to learn.

- We continued to have community members join us for special presentations and learning opportunities. We also continued to try to be out in the community learning from our larger NCES family.

The big goals that we have for this school year is to continue, add to, and strengthen the work that we have done for relationship-building and climate, but also to become a resilient system. Our staff will engage in a lot of professional development to strengthen this part of their practice. Academically, we will be firming up our literacy instruction in grades K – 2 and adopting a literacy program called Expeditionary Learning in grades 3 – 6. We have had wonderful literacy instruction happening at various grade levels, but it has been very different both among and between grade levels. Having more consistent and cohesive literacy instruction will help our students become better readers, writers, and communicators. We have also hired a full-time literacy coach to help with the implementation of this new program.

Because we had five retirees last year and several people moving out of the area or moving on, we have some new teachers here this year. We are very pleased to welcome Kim Germain and Jenn Gilson in grade 1; Claire Daggett as a long-term substitute in second grade; Kailey Schulze in third grade; Pat Hunt as a long-term substitute in sixth grade ELA; Erin Dailey, a additional .80 guidance counselor; Michelle Smyth in special education; and Aaron Larsen, assistant principal. Further, some teacher assignments have changed: Thyra Monaghan is moving from first grade to preschool, Christina Tetreault is going to be the intensive case manager of the ACE (Access to Classroom Education) Program to help students access their mainstream classroom; Dennis Royer will be teaching fifth and sixth grade science; Patti Ovitt will be teaching fifth and sixth grade social studies; Aaron Larsen will be moving from the ACE Program intensive case manager to the assistant principal; Sherry Montminy will be moving from preschool to Reading Recovery/Intervention; Amy Riendeau-McCoy will be our full-time literacy coach; and Eileen Baker will be teaching both vocal and instrumental music. We currently have a full-time primary grades math intervention position open and several paraeducator positions open. We will keep you updated as to those changes in our first newsletter of the year.

Please come to meet our new folks as well as to get reacquainted with everyone else during our open house on September 19th. There will be a change in our Book Fair. Normally, we have the Book Fair open during Open House. We are going to try to have it open during the week of student-led conferences (October 8th – October 12th). We are hoping this will make the book fair more manageable while still making it available to children and their families.

Our beginning and ending times will remain the same for K – 6, and we will continue to have separate bus runs for preschool. If you have questions about the drop off/pick up times for your child(ren), please call the school to talk to Theresa Perrault, administrative assistant.

August 10, 2018

Beginning letter to parents

Our goal was to expand the parking lot over the course of this summer. Because of a hold up with the civil engineer and permitting process for this, the parking lot has not been done as of the writing of this letter. We are hoping to get it done before the beginning of the school year, but it is likely that we will have to wait until next summer to complete this project. Parking is always an issue here at the school. We have a drop off point at the bottom parking lot and one at the back of the school. Every staff member has a numbered parking spot, so please avoid parking in a numbered space. With the exception of the handicapped parking spots, all of the spaces at the top parking lot (near the bus turn around) will be filled with staff members' cars. Please try to avoid quick drop offs in this area as it is a real safety issue. While I have been on bus duty in the mornings, I have witnessed innumerable "almost-accidents," so this is to help drop-offs to be safer for everyone. Please be understanding if Mr. Larsen or I ask you to move to a different spot or place as we will be monitoring drop offs in the morning.

You will receive a note from the superintendent of schools regarding some changes to our reporting document (formerly called a report card). Please look for a copy of this in your child's classroom at Open House. If you have any questions or concerns about this as we go through the process, please feel free to share them.

We are working to develop a "Volunteer Corps" for any parent who is interested in volunteering for certain projects or for upcoming events. Our school is truly striving to be a partner with our community and would love to have your support as much or as little as your schedule allows. Please give me a call if you are interested in reading with a child, helping with a project, teaching Four Winds, or helping with a fundraiser.

Finally, please find a copy of your child's score sheets (grades 4 – 6) for the SBAC test. This is a test that is given in the spring and we don't get the results until after school is done for the year.

Thank you for the opportunity to continue to work with your children. My whole life has been happily consumed by children and I feel genuinely blessed to work at NCES. If there is anything that you have questions, comments, or concerns about as the year progresses, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Elaine Collins, Principal