

# The Newton School

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August 18, 2020

Dear Strafford Community,

March 13, 2020 was the last day Strafford students walked inside The Newton School. As summer comes to a close we are working incredibly hard to make sure we are ready to open our doors and fill our school with kids. I know that the staff and I cannot wait for this time to arrive. As we get closer to this reopening there are so many plans to put into place. I would like to share some of them with you now.

Families and students in the White River Valley Supervisory Union have options for how they return to learning (1) return to in person instruction at Newton or (2) elect to receive instruction online through the Virtual Academy created by the White River Valley Supervisory Union. Students who return to in person instruction will come to school 5 days a week and follow a slightly different schedule (outlined below). Those who attend the Virtual Academy will be instructed by faculty and staff assigned to the Academy.

## **Daily Schedule for Inperson Instruction:**

Teacher Arrival Health Screenings	7:45-8:00
Student Arrival/Health Screenings	8:00 - 8:15
Advisories/ Morning Meetings - Breakfast	8:15 - 8:45
Classes Start	9:00
Lunch	TBD
Classes End	1:30 (Optional parent pick-up)
Enrichment Time with One Planet for all students	1:30 - 3:00
Extended Enrichment - One Planet (K-6)	3:00-4:30

Regardless of which option families select, **teachers will begin work on Thursday, August 27th** and complete six days of inservice training, while **students arrive for the first day of instruction on Tuesday, September 8th**. To keep our students and staff safe we are forced to limit access to the school, which unfortunately this means visitors, guests and volunteers are not allowed in our building at this time. Additionally our students will not be taking field trips anywhere off school grounds.

Recommendations from the COVID Task Force call for a great deal of outside learning time. To offer this opportunity to the students who elect in person instruction, we are setting up several large tents around the school. You will see these going up on the school grounds very soon. Many community organizations have offered tents to make this possible. Thank you so much to Annie Penfield of Strafford Saddlery, Curt Albee and Friends Of Morrill Memorial Library who have generously offered the use of tents. This will allow us to offer each classroom an indoor and outdoor space. Additionally we have been offered the use of the upstairs of Barrett Hall to use when groups need extra spaces to work. We are very grateful for all this generosity.

The tents are just one of many changes that will take place in our learning structure. We have put into place guidelines for safely transporting students on the bus, daily health screenings for all staff and students, and reorganization of the lunch program. Additionally it is very important for us to limit student contacts when in school. Some changes this forces us to make include operating in grade level configurations, limiting student movement around the school (teachers will now move to the students), assigning bathrooms to grades, co-teaching with Encore teachers and delivering snacks and lunch to classrooms. During inservice time with staff we will be creating many videos to help students with the transitions and to understand the changes that are taking place within the school. It is safe to say that as a staff we are all having to make significant changes to the way we operate.

We are working with Efficiency Vermont to update the HVAC system in the gym and preschool and purchase air purification equipment for areas of the school. All of these changes are very important steps to ensure the safety of our students. Additionally, students and staff will be wearing masks at all times when in the building, and we have greatly enhanced the cleaning routines of the school.

On a very positive note, you may have watched the taking-down and rebuilding of the playground at Newton. Last year we realized the importance of repairing this structure and began to think about how to fund a new playground, which is a large undertaking. Once again the Strafford community rose to the occasion and got the work done. Over the past month BJ Miller, Aaron Dotter, Josh Phelps, Jason Loomis and Cabot Teachout have essentially recreated the playground, and at a rapid rate. I cannot thank them enough for all the time and effort they have put into this work. What we anticipated being a heavy expense has been completed with only the use of grants funds (and many hours of volunteer labor). Please thank them if you see them around town. I am truly grateful!

Opening school will not be an easy task, however something I am fully confident in is the staff of The Newton School. I know everyone will do whatever is necessary to keep our community safe and continue the learning process for their students.

Tracy L. Thompson, Principal