

# Blacksburg New School Handbook

Please note that many COVID-related changes are made in Red.

And usual wording about usual topics are left in via gray highlight to allow the reader to learn what procedures are in place during usual times. 😊

“Having survived more than a quarter of a century, be proud and do what you can to hand this valuable institution on to the children who will come to it in the future.”

John Gerth, via email 5/27/2001  
BNS' First Teacher

[The above statement was made on the school's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Now it's our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year!]

The Blacksburg New School was founded in 1971 by a small group of parents who wanted to establish a school where students could learn at their own pace in a stimulating and creative environment. In June 1986, at the groundbreaking ceremony for a former building (Whipple Drive), Ann Goette, a founding parent, stated:

*"We dreamed of a place where learning would be individualized and self-motivated, where the interests of the students would guide our curriculum, a school where the interconnections between math and philosophy, literature and science, music and multiplication would be encouraged, where our children would integrate knowledge and would love all learning."*

In February 2007, at the groundbreaking ceremony for our current building, Ann Goette, was again there to speak:

*"It was the dreams, or ideals, of a handful of parents and teachers that created the Blacksburg New School. We dreamed of a school where children would be respected, where they would be educated in a non-competitive, non-sexist environment. A school where children would learn to care for one another and for the earth; where they would learn to believe in the possibility of world peace, and to work toward that belief. We dreamed of a school where children would love learning. The first children of the New School are now in their forties. Hard to believe. Three and a half decades of dreamers have kept the Blacksburg New School going, and have made it grow. Dreams and very, very hard work have led to this happy day."*

At that same ceremony, past president of BNS, Susanna Rinehart—Virginia Tech Associate Professor of Theatre and Cinema—highlighted this community's dedication to providing an active education to its kindergarten through 8th grade students:

*"This school is doing exactly what is needed to prepare students to gain the most from a college education. BNS serves as a model in this university community."*

After years of marathon meetings in the 1970s, times of elation and challenge, these dreams and ideals continue. As a parent-teacher cooperative, Blacksburg New School never stagnates. It changes as the students and parents change. And yet it continues to be a place where teachers encourage students to progress in a cooperative atmosphere, thus stimulating their academic, social, and emotional growth. Welcome to a new year in this unique learning environment. You will find that your children are not the only ones to benefit from the school's philosophy. Parent involvement feels good.

## Mission Statement

Blacksburg New School is an independent K-8 school fostering high academic achievement, creative and critical thinking, and thoughtful action.

The Mission of the Blacksburg New School is to serve its students, teachers, and parents by providing a cooperative educational environment. We are committed to academic and civic excellence, to individual and community responsibility, and to the love of learning.

Additionally: Prior to the onset of COVID-19, BNS was actively engaged in strategic planning. This work will begin to return as we pull ourselves past the immediacy of that crisis. [Twelve objectives center around the three main pillars of BNS as **a happy place providing engaged learning** while investing in **long-term sustainability**.]

## Statement of Philosophy

The school wishes to instill the desire to learn in each student by:

- ◆ allowing for careful and meaningful differentiation of instruction.
- ◆ emphasizing how to work with one another and honor each other's talents.
- ◆ stressing development of critical thinking and inquiry rather than rote learning alone.
- ◆ having parents support students' educational activities and participate in the daily running of the school.
- ◆ avoiding competitive, racist, or sexist mindsets.
- ◆ making schoolwork a challenge but not a frustration.
- ◆ giving students and teachers the opportunity to set goals, develop projects, and provide evaluation jointly.
- ◆ encouraging the mixing of age levels within the school so that students can help one another.
- ◆ stressing that with freedom comes responsibility—both to oneself and to others.

The school wants to promote self-knowledge and growth by aiding each student to:

- ◆ respect oneself and others, both in language and behavior.
- ◆ learn self-discipline and take responsibility for one's own actions.
- ◆ maintain a cooperative approach.
- ◆ develop a spirit of service-mindedness by helping others and being patient.
- ◆ learn to concentrate.
- ◆ listen to and understand what others say and feel.
- ◆ consider situations from the perspectives of others.
- ◆ learn to focus on one's needs, feelings, and goals.
- ◆ learn to show feelings in appropriate ways.
- ◆ respect property and treat the environment with care.
- ◆ witness the importance of family involvement in education.

These ideals make the New School a place where a spirit of cooperation reigns; where students, teachers, and parents respect one other; where academic excellence becomes a personal goal; where creativity is nurtured; and where education is an awakening process.

## Diversity Position

The Blacksburg New School does not discriminate against employees, students, families, or applicants on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or political affiliation.

BNS is committed to creating an environment for staff, students, and their families in which each individual is valued. Similarities and differences among individuals and families are respected and diversity is celebrated throughout the curriculum.

At BNS we are committed to assisting students in learning to value, accept, and comfortably interact with diverse people. We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against students by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or excluding them from programs or activities on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or on the status, behavior, or beliefs of their parents. Exceptions to the previous statement regarding inclusion/exclusion of specified populations would include participation in programs that target historically underrepresented groups in a variety of fields (e.g., women in engineering, men in teaching, Latinx students in creative writing).

Ridicule of any type is not tolerated at BNS. It is our firm rule that teasing or rejecting a person on the basis of that person's identity is unacceptable. Students are encouraged to recognize and resist stereotypes and biases and to challenge prejudice. Our goal is to aid in the development of each student to their fullest potential.

During your interactions with students at BNS you may find yourself in many types of conversations. If you are uncomfortable with a question or you feel that a sensitive topic may be more appropriately handled by a teacher or other parent, feel free to refer a student elsewhere for more information. If at any time you observe a student being teased or feeling that their character has been attacked, please intervene and notify a teacher immediately.

BNS Teachers made the following statement to the Board in June 2020:

The BNS teachers join with the Black Lives Matter movement in the efforts to end police brutality and to dismantle white supremacy in all its forms. Our school will step up. Teachers will continue to educate themselves on the many ways in which to do this. Having race listed in our nondiscrimination statement is not enough. Being relieved that our

school's beginning was not a result of "white flight" (as is the case for several Virginia private schools) is not enough. Not nearly enough.

We are educators of children. We have a hand in mindset formation.

While we do try to talk about race in ways that matter, we need to go further and do more. We are willing to find the right words and actions even if it means stumbling awkwardly (yet carefully) while we figure out how to do this better.

We, of course, want and need and welcome input from our parent and student community, but we also know it is our responsibility to educate ourselves. We wish for our school and all its parts to be actively anti-racist. And a global pandemic will not back-burner this commitment.

## **Administration**

### **Corporation**

Blacksburg New School is run by a Board of Directors, composed of parents and elected by the full parent body at the mandatory Fall and Spring Corporation meetings. The Corporation is made up of all Blacksburg New School parents and each family has one vote divided equally between the parents. Each teacher also has one vote. The Board, its officers and committees, and the teachers administer the day-to-day running of the school. Board meetings usually take place on the second Wednesday of each month and are characterized, in general, by consensus-building conversations. All parents and teachers are encouraged to attend Board meetings. Board and Corporation meeting minutes are distributed via email.

### **2021-2022 Board of Directors**

Kiyah Duffey (President)	Cara Daggett	Jen Irish / Robert Weiss
Courtney Grohs (Vice-President)	Ashley Dayer	Ash/Tejal Raju
Donna Vaden (Treasurer)	Sarah Dunleavy	Cindy Smith
Stan Harvey (Secretary)	Julie Fox (Personnel Chair)	
Rotating Teacher Representative	Kevin Heaslip	

### **Committees**

Committee members are volunteers or members solicited to volunteer, except as noted, and are subject to approval by the Board. Anyone interested in serving on a committee may contact a Board member for more information. All parents are encouraged to participate in these important administrative processes.

Curriculum & Accreditation:	committee of teachers maintains V.I.S.A. accreditation; works directly with Lead Teacher and the Board to document curriculum, philosophy, and administrative processes; discusses school curricula.
Finance:	assists Treasurer in preparing the yearly budget; makes recommendations regarding spending and saving; meets monthly or as needed.
Fundraising:	organizes fundraising projects. Fundraising benefits the school's operating budget and may benefit targeted areas such as playground or tuition assistance; meets as needed and communicates often via email.
Personnel:	acts to fill staff positions; reviews salaries and contracts; handles personnel concerns; meets intensively when needed.
Tuition Assistance:	facilitates the collection and distribution of funds to be used to support families in need of financial aid; meets as needed.

## **BNS Staff**

### **BNS Red Room Teacher (Kindergarten), After School Program Director, BNS Lead Teacher**

#### **T.J. Stone**

B.A., Psychology, Southern Methodist University  
 M.S., Child Development, Texas Woman's University  
 Ph.D., Family and Child Development, Virginia Tech  
 Certification 1-6  
 Licenses: Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC); Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)

### **BNS Orange Room Teacher (1<sup>st</sup> Grade)**

#### **Linda Pospichal**

B.A., Elementary Education and English, College of William & Mary  
 Certification K-8

### **BNS Yellow Room Teacher (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)**

#### **Sarah Coleman**

B.S., Human Development, Virginia Tech

### **BNS Green Room Teacher (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)**

#### **Carla Liversedge**

B.S., Human Development and Early Childhood Education, Virginia Tech  
 Certification PreK-5

**BNS Turquoise Room Teacher (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)****Myra Leland**

B.A., Sociology, Mary Baldwin College  
 Certification PreK-8

**BNS Blue Room Teacher (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)****Bina Bentley**

B.S., Interdisciplinary Studies (Math & Science), Radford University  
 Certification PreK-6

**BNS Math Teacher (Pre-Algebra I) Teacher****Seema Dalal**

A.B., Chemistry, Bryn Mawr  
 Ph.D., Chemistry, Yale University

**BNS Middle School/Purple Program Lead Teacher (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Grades)****Molly Lucier**

B.A., English, University of Massachusetts  
 M.A., Curriculum & Instruction, Virginia Tech  
 Certification K-8

**BNS Middle School/Purple Program Teacher (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Grades)****Jared Bond**

B.A., Anthropology, College of William & Mary  
 B.A., Literary and Cultural Studies, College of William & Mary  
 M.A., History, Virginia Tech

**BNS Middle School/Purple Program Teacher (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Grades)****Ann Heaslip**

B.A., Political Science, Virginia Tech  
 M. Ed., Secondary Education (Social Studies), University of Massachusetts Amherst

**BNS Computer Lab Teacher (Grades 3-8)****Christine Guseman**

B.S., Technology, Design, and Engineering Education, North Carolina State University  
 M.A.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Tech  
 Certifications: Technology, Engineering, and Design Ed.; Tech Ed - Scientific Visualization

**BNS Spanish Teacher (Grades K-3)****Erika Gonzalez**

B.S., Industrial and Systems Engineering, Universidad de Ingenierias y Ciencias del Noreste

**BNS Spanish Teacher (Grades 4-8)****Karen Lichtman**

B. A., Spanish; Psychology, Williams College  
 M.A./Ph.D., Linguistics, University of Illinois  
 Certification: Second Language Acquisition

**BNS Art Teacher (Grades K-8)****Patti Rowland**

B.S., Art, Radford University

**BNS Music Teacher (Grades K-5, Middle School Music Elective)****Dan Richards**

B.A., Music Education, Wheaton College

**BNS P.E./Health Teacher (Grades K-8)****Reagan Whelan**

B. A., Music Education, Southern Methodist University  
 Certification EC-6

## 2021-2022 Blacksburg New School Calendar

Please note that several "usual" indoor events such as:  
 Thanksgiving Performance Celebration, History Nights, Science Fairs, and Authors' Teas are not listed for this year.  
 Some of these events could possibly be added in if we see kid vaccines, controlled variants, and other positive trends.  
 It is also possible that modified versions of some of the events will be developed individually by teachers as the year progresses.

Aug.	4	Start of Teacher Workdays: August 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 (W,Th,F,M,T)
Aug.	11	First Day of School (a Wednesday) (VT and RU classes start on Mon. the 23 <sup>rd</sup> this year; Montgomery County Public Schools begin Thurs. Aug. 12.)
Sept.	6	Labor Day, BNS is CLOSED (MCPS are closed; VT no classes; RU yes classes)
Sept.	17	School Photos are tentatively scheduled for this day ? (weather-dependent).
Oct.	7	Corporation Meeting, 7:00 p.m., a Thursday [Probably via Zoom]
Oct.	15	BNS Closes at 12:00, Teacher Work Time for Parent-Teacher Conferences prep/reimbursement; a Friday
Oct.	18	No Classes, Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement; a Monday
Nov.	5	BNS Closes at 12:00, Teacher Work Time compensation (first Friday in November) [This provides needed support to the grading schedule of our Middle School program.]
Nov.	19	No After School Program [if there is an ASP]; a Friday
Nov.	22-26	Thanksgiving Break (the full week)
Dec.	17	No After School Program [if relevant]; a Friday
Dec.20-Jan.3		BNS is Closed for Winter Break; (MCPS break begins with early release Dec. 21; VT last exam=15 <sup>th</sup> ; RU's=9 <sup>th</sup> ) Winter Break = two full weeks + the Monday after
Jan.	3	BNS Closed as part of Winter Break; a Monday
Jan.	4	School resumes (a Tuesday) (MCPS students resume on 6th; VT and RU classes resume on Tues. Jan. 18)
Jan.	17	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a Monday, BNS is CLOSED (VT and RU no classes. MCPS are closed.)
Feb.	12	Annual "Chocolate Party" fundraiser; Saturday at University Mall 10am-4pm
Feb.	18	BNS Closes at 12:00, Teacher Work Time for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement
Feb.	21	No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement (This is a Monday and it also happens to be Presidents' Day; MCPS are closed.)
Mar.	4	No After School Program [if relevant]; a Friday
Mar.	7-11	Spring Break (This is VT's and RU's Spring Break.) (MCPS Spring Break = April 14, 15, and 18)
Mar.	24	Corporation Meeting, 7:00 p.m., this is a Thursday [Possibly via Zoom]
Apr.	1	BNS Closes at 12:00, Teacher Work Time compensation (first Friday in April)
May	6	No Classes, Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference preparation (This is a Friday.)
May	9	No Classes, Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference preparation (This is a Monday.)
May	26	Annual Arts Festival and End-of-Year Picnic Dinner Celebration, 6:00 p.m. (Thursday) ?? MAYBE?
May	27	Last Day of School; Graduation Ceremony at 10:00 a.m.; BNS Closes at 12:00 noon ?? MAYBE? HOPEFULLY! (This is a Friday. MCPS's last day = May 20 - May 27—depending upon their snow days)

BNS School Day = 9:00 am – 3:15 pm

This is a 180 day calendar as required. This is a 1065 hour calendar; state requirement = 990 hours.  
 The 75 hours (12 days) of Banked Time may be used for any weather delays or closings.

## Daily Schedule

The school opens at 8:30 a.m.; classes begin at 9:00 a.m. The school day ends at 3:15 p.m. (for all classrooms) with an optional, state-licensed after-school program provided until 5:45 p.m.

During at least the fall semester, due to Covid prevention precautions, students will arrive and depart following the procedure outlined below:

Drop-off and pick-up in the parking lot (rather than "bring into the building") needs to continue since students under 12 are not yet able to be vaccinated. There will be adults supervising the parking lot during arrival and departure. [Note that only vaccinated parents with lunch or cleaning TRO jobs will be allowed in the building.] Staggering the arrival times helps immensely with parking lot flow.

That drop-off schedule is:

**Middle School (Grades 6, 7, 8): arrive between 8:30 and 8:40**

**Upper Elementary (Grades 3, 4, 5): arrive between 8:40 and 8:50**

**Lower Elementary (Grades K, 1, 2): arrive between 8:50 and 9:00**

[Siblings arrive with the oldest BNS kid in the family.]

And the pick-up schedule will be:

**Middle School (Grades 6, 7, 8): depart between 3:15 and 3:25**

**Upper Elementary (Grades 3, 4, 5): depart between 3:25 and 3:35**

**Lower Elementary (Grades K, 1, 2): depart between 3:35 and 3:45**

[Siblings depart with the oldest BNS kid in the family.]

[Students registered for the After School Program may remain. The ASP closes at 5:45 sharp.]

The weekly fee for ASP will be \$40 per child. Contact T.J. for more information.

### Drop-off/Pick-up Policy For Fall 2021, see procedure described above.

Students may be dropped off at the school beginning at 8:30 a.m. but no earlier. Students arriving prior to 9:00 report to a "Sunshine Parent" on the playground or in the designated classroom(s). Every effort should be made not to disturb the teachers, who arrive early in order to prepare for the day. If you arrive at school before 8:30, please stay with your child until 8:30—even if a Sunshine Parent is present—unless a special arrangement has been made with another adult.

Please note that our parking lot has remained rather limited in size over the years while our enrollment has grown. We may be able to increase parking someday, but not this year. Families are asked to please consider carpooling to school.

All parents are encouraged to escort their children from the car into the building. We ask that only parents of older students—4<sup>th</sup> graders and older—allow those students to walk into the building on their own. All students are asked to enter through the main building each morning. PLEASE be certain to watch your child enter the front door. Elementary students 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and younger should be escorted into the building by an adult. Please do not leave younger siblings in parked cars unattended—and please be careful not to leave unattended car engines running in the parking lot. A parent will be on duty to supervise the students as they arrive. If, for some reason, that person is running late, parents must wait for a supervising adult before leaving their children at BNS.

Classes begin promptly at 9:00 and end at 3:15 for all students. Please have your children at the school and ready for class **by 9:00 a.m.** Students may be picked up (by authorized adults) between 3:15 and 3:45 p.m. Students in attendance past 3:45 will be "checked in" to the After School Program (ASP). A bell rings at 3:45 and students gather for a "roll call." Please do not ask an ASP staff member to extend this grace period for you. They have been instructed to enroll students at 3:45 sharp. Please note that **all** students must be signed out at the end of their day. The "book" is in the lobby until **3:45** and then moves to the ASP location. Remind your children that they are never to go into the parking lot without an adult. They will not be allowed to exit the building or playground without an adult escort.

Please be mindful of traffic flow in the parking lot especially during the busy times of drop-off and pick-up. When you enter the parking lot, *slowly* drive to the **right** and go around. And be sure to take it slow as you exit the parking lot as well. We also ask that families with older children (who are more experienced walking in parking lots) park in the spaces further from the building thus allowing closer parking spaces to be available for those with younger students and toddler siblings.



**Fundraising:**

Fundraising is one of many opportunities available for families to get to know, and become more involved in, our school community. In addition, it is a vital source of revenue for BNS: the funds generated by our annual fundraising events are a standing component of our annual operating budget. Participation in fundraising efforts is mandatory, and a variety of options for participation exist. An agreement of fundraising intent is part of every family's annual registration process.

**After School Program:**

**[For Fall 2021, billing for ASP = \$40 per month per child; flat fee; pre-registration required.]**

The fees for the ASP are \$6 per student for half-afternoon (student picked up before 4:45 pm) and \$12 per student for full-afternoon (student picked up after 4:45 pm). These charges appear as a separate item on the monthly statement. A reduced rate of \$42 (reflecting a cap of 7 hours) per week is available for families who utilize this program on a regular basis.

Parents are asked to observe the closing time of our After School Program. A late fee of \$1 per minute (per child) will be charged after 5:45 p.m. If a family repeatedly disregards the 5:45 closing time, the ASP option will no longer be available to them. Please show respect to our staff and your children by arriving on time.

**Extra Events/Field Trips: [Not likely to be relevant for at least the fall semester.]**

While most extra-curricular events and/or field trips are covered by the annual supply and activity fee, some may be organized on a voluntary basis. Charges and payments for these activities may also appear on the monthly statements of those who choose to participate. Some events may require advance payment. Overnight field trips (for older students, grades 5-8), for example, typically require additional payment.

**Parent-School Contract:**

Parents agree to a parent-school contract each year upon registration. This contract makes explicit each parent's commitment to the financial, organizational, and physical health of the school.

## Payment Policies

**Tuition Due By 1<sup>st</sup> of Month:**

On or about the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month, an invoice will be distributed to each family via email. This invoice will reflect the charges (for ASP, etc.) that have accrued through the third week of the month plus the usual tuition charge for the coming month. All charges are considered due by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, each month, September through June (the ¼ month charge for August will be included in the September invoice; the June payment will be for ¼ month). The first invoice showing August and September's tuition and the semi-annual supply/activity fee will be sent during or before the first week of school.

As outlined in the parent-school contract, families are obligated to pay monthly tuition throughout the semester in which they enroll (or re-enroll, e.g. January) even if they choose to withdraw their child from BNS during the semester. [If a child is asked *by BNS* to leave due to incompatibilities, the family will not be held responsible for tuition for the remainder of the semester.]

**Payments:**

Make all payments by check payable to Blacksburg New School or "BNS." To ensure proper crediting of your account, please note your invoice number on your check. For your protection and the school's, cash cannot be accepted as payment. If a particular check fails twice to clear, the BNS Treasurer shall insist that subsequent payments be made by cashier's check or money order for a period of 3 months or until the account is in good standing. Checks are to be mailed to the school or placed in the tuition box on the side of the family mailboxes. Some families have payment sent directly from their banks. There is also an option for an ACH (direct bank to bank) transfer through your QuickBooks invoice. .

**Overdue Accounts:**

Timely payment of tuition and fees is vital to the smooth operation of our school. Families are expected to keep their accounts current. The following policy and procedure for delinquent accounts has been approved by the BNS Board of Directors.

- a) The Assistant Treasurer shall notify, in writing/email, each family whose account is overdue by more than one month. The purpose of this notification is to remind the family that their account is overdue and to request immediate payment. In the event that immediate payment is not possible, the family must submit to the Assistant Treasurer, in writing, a plan for paying off the delinquent amount including proposed payment dates. This written plan must be signed and returned to the Assistant Treasurer within 7 days of receipt of the notification of an overdue account. A minimum payment per month of 25% of the monthly tuition is expected on all delinquent accounts.

- b) The Treasurer shall report to the Board at each regular meeting the number of accounts which are one month or more overdue. Names of families with overdue accounts shall be held in strictest confidence by the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer and shall not be reported at Board meetings.
- c) The Treasurer shall notify the President of any family whose account is two or more months overdue and who has not submitted a written payment plan. The President may then contact the family to arrange a satisfactory payment schedule and notify the Enrollment Coordinator (Lead Teacher). Any family whose account is overdue for two or more months may be asked to leave the school, and the President may meet with legal counsel to initiate action to recover monies owed to BNS.
- d) Academic records will not be released for any student unless his/her account is paid in full. Also, no student will be allowed to re-register for the coming year unless his/her account is paid in full or they have made satisfactory alternative arrangements.
- e) Individual families may appeal to the Board for an exemption if they wish to waive their confidentiality.

### **School Cleaning and Maintenance**

BNS utilizes a professional cleaning service. The professional cleaning schedule, however, must be supplemented. Keeping our school clean is our responsibility. Several vaccinated parents will be providing regular cleaning as part of their TRO duties. Additionally, a major indoor/outdoor clean-up effort is organized near the start of the school year. Each family is asked to help with these tasks as a way to collectively get our school ready. It is a very nice way to get to know the building and the community. Some grounds clean-up and outdoor maintenance activities are announced throughout the year depending upon need.

If you notice any safety hazards or items in need of repair, please let a teacher or the President know and/or contact the appropriate maintenance parent (Building/Indoor or Grounds/Outdoor).

### **Interaction with Teachers and Parents**

In a parent-teacher cooperative school, there is usually ample opportunity for frequent communication between parents and teachers. In fact, the teachers and the Board encourage parents to visit the classroom and to observe **[within the Covid mitigation protocols]**. Parents are asked not to disrupt teachers during their preparation time or during their time working with the students. While this disruption is usually unintended, it can be very distracting to the students as well as the teacher. **During these covidtimes most communication between teachers and parents occurs via email when it is needed.**

To facilitate communication between parents and teachers, please follow these guidelines:

- If you need to discuss something with a teacher, you may send an email or leave a note in their mailbox and they will respond to you at their earliest convenience. **[Communication will be best done via email at this time.]**
- If you have a serious disagreement with a teacher, make an appointment to discuss the problem face-to-face. The Lead Teacher (T.J.), President (Kiyah), Chair of Personnel (Julie Fox), or our Ombudsperson will mediate as necessary. Ombudsperson, Lauren Catherwood-Ginn may be reached at: [ombudsperson@new-school.org](mailto:ombudsperson@new-school.org)

The Ombudsperson is a parent elected by the Corporation as a mediator and facilitator, to assist with communications between parents and teachers and between parents and other parents. The Lead Teacher, President, Chair of Personnel, or Ombudsperson would typically be contacted by parents who are having trouble communicating concerns to a teacher, by a teacher needing help communicating with a parent, or by a parent having difficulty communicating with another parent or student. The Lead Teacher, President, Chair of Personnel, or Ombudsperson will arrange and facilitate a meeting between the parties involved. When such a meeting is requested, it is imperative that all parties attend.

As the school year progresses, problems of various types and sizes may arise. Conflicts can develop between students, between parents, between parents and teachers, and between parents and students. Generally, if you have a problem, it is most constructive to contact the person involved. If the problem is between two students, parents are encouraged to work it out with their children. Teachers can help with this when appropriate. Under certain circumstances, the parties involved may feel a need for the input of a larger group in resolving a problem. In such cases, the President, the Vice President, the Personnel Chair, the Lead Teacher, the Ombudsperson, and the teaching staff can be brought together as a group to address the problem, and any issue can be taken to the full Board of Directors for final resolution.

It is appropriate and pedagogically sound for the classroom to include balanced teaching and discussion of the sometimes complicated events and issues that create and shape our culture, history, and shared human experience. We, as a community, recognize that every day, educators everywhere address information in their classrooms about which they may well have particular personal opinions. We, as a community, start from a premise of trust and respect for our teachers' ability to manage that reality, and successfully present any and all information in an appropriately balanced manner. We also recognize that this is not always easy. Although the school thrives on open discussion, clearly the authority given to teachers may not be used to advocate partisan or controversial political views. We encourage our teachers to inform parents when potentially sensitive and/or controversial issues have been or will be discussed. We also encourage parents to communicate with teachers regarding topics that might be sensitive to their individual child.

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

Teachers offer formal one-on-one conferences three times a year with parents to discuss each student's progress. **[Via Zoom last year, we'll see about this year.]** If you would like to discuss your child at any other time, please make an appointment with the teacher(s). In order to maintain the philosophy of individualized and differentiated studies, the BNS teachers have the responsibility of determining the composition of the classrooms based on their professional observation of the readiness skills and social-emotional development of the individual students. The classroom composition is open to changes throughout the year as necessary to meet the needs of the students. The teachers reserve the right to place the students within groups or rooms according to the skills and needs of those students. If a teacher believes that a student needs additional or special testing (including professional educational or psychological evaluations) or special services (e.g., tutoring, counseling), parents will comply with such a request as soon as possible and not longer than 30 days. Upon the teacher receiving these evaluations or test results, parents will accept the teacher's recommendations including grade-level placement, tutoring, regular counseling, or transfer to another school, among other options, with any financial liability being assumed by the parents of the student.

## Academic Evaluation

The teachers will gather, throughout the year, a collection of each student's work, as well as careful assessments of progress. This information will be shared with the parents throughout the year with a written evaluation provided at the May parent-teacher conference. This documentation will be forwarded as part of the student's academic records when they leave BNS. Although BNS does not administer standardized tests, students in the upper grades will be provided experiences with such written examination materials to familiarize them with the process of standardized testing. Please note that our school's state-recognized accreditation, from the Virginia Independent Schools Association, allows for a direct transfer of BNS coursework credit.

## High School Credit Courses

BNS currently provides the following courses for possible high school credit: Algebra I, Geometry, Spanish I, and Spanish II. The additions of Art I and Earth Science are new possibilities for high school credit (see below).

Please note that high school Spanish I is taken across 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades and that high school Spanish II is taken across 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

High school credit may be offered for Art I to students who attend BNS for both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. High school credit may be offered for Earth Science to students who take the course in 8<sup>th</sup> grade as part of their three-year-rotation of sciences classes at BNS. Students who take it in their 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade years will receive high school credit for the class *if* they take a spring elective refresher course in their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.

Students and parents may choose whether or not to include the completed course and final grade on the transcript for high school credit transfer. If a middle school student joins BNS without previous Spanish instruction/proficiency they will take a beginner/intro Spanish class at 8:30 a.m. ("Sunshine Spanish"). If a student is ready for a more advanced high school level class than those listed above (a very rare situation to be addressed on a case-by-case basis), parents may wish to coordinate a separate course in addition to BNS (e.g., an online course).

## Attendance Policy

Students are generally expected to attend school regularly. Excessive absences and tardiness could result in difficulties in peer interactions and decreased learning—which may result in a student's being unprepared for the next grade level. Being a participating student at BNS means attending school regularly and arriving to class on time. **That said, we wish to strongly encourage parents to monitor students' health carefully and stay home when sick—especially during these covidtimes.**

Consequences for excessive absences are outlined below:

- If a student has 10 absences, the teachers will notify the President of the school. The President will offer a meeting with the parent(s) to discuss the situation and to strategize ways to improve attendance.
- If a student has 15 absences, they will not receive credit for any high school level classes. The President will call another meeting with parent(s).
- If a student has 20 absences, they will be required to repeat the grade.
- Parents may bring attendance issues to the school's Board of Directors for discussion and/or to request an exception to the above policy. The decision of the Board will be final.

Students are expected to attend school for the entire day. Three occurrences of not attending the full day of school (e.g. arriving late, leaving early, missing class for an appointment) will be counted as the equivalent of one absence. It is understood that such appointments (and absences) may be necessary, but parents are asked to keep them at a minimum. Please note that math classes start at 9:00. Arriving late to school three times would result in an absence for math class. Keep in mind that late arrivals (even one minute past 9:00) can be very distracting for the entire class. **There may be more flexibility during the months prior to full student vaccination.**

### **Discipline Policy**

BNS believes in the basic goodness and cooperativeness of each individual. Teachers work with each other, the parents, and the students to determine the cause of any persistent discipline problems. Strategies for discipline always show respect for the individual. Appropriate discipline strategies at BNS are a change of pace, eye contact, empathy for a frustrating situation, a cool down period, and the writing of formal letters of apology. If a student's behavior is excessively disruptive to the group, physically violent, involves unwanted physical contact, involves unacceptable language (e.g. curse words), or is beyond any other means of discipline, the teacher may ask the parents to take the student home. A parent-teacher conference may be scheduled to discuss possible strategies. Unacceptable discipline methods include verbal or physical abuse, verbal threat of physical abuse, yelling, sarcasm, ridicule, and embarrassment. This discipline policy is to be followed by all adults while interacting with students at BNS, including parents disciplining their own children. Please see Code of Conduct section.

### **Dismissal Policy**

BNS is designed to be a student-centered educational environment. The student-teacher ratio is low and each student receives a maximum of individual attention. While BNS provides a nurturing environment for learning, it is also a very small organization in terms of staffing and it depends on extensive parent involvement to accomplish its objectives. The school is limited in its capacity to address special needs. We can only address a narrow range of learning problems and are limited in our ability to effectively help with behavioral challenges, particularly violent or overly disruptive behaviors. Neither the student nor the school is helped when we take on a task for which we are not equipped. This does not mean that students who have found their previous educational experiences frustrating for one reason or another cannot be successful at BNS. It does, however, mean that from time to time it will be necessary for the school to reevaluate its decision to accept a particular student and that some students will be directed to more appropriate learning environments.

Each new student is carefully observed during their first 30 days for academic, emotional, and behavioral readiness. If, at any time before, during, or after this period, problems arise that cannot be handled within the school setting or with the help of referrals, the family may be asked to withdraw from the school. As soon as the problem presents itself, the teacher or appropriate school official will call a meeting with the family to discuss strategies and procedures to deal with the situation. A follow-up conference will then be arranged to determine whether there has been sufficient improvement. If not, appropriate referrals and/or testing may be suggested. If the family fails to cooperate with either referrals or conferences, the President will be informed, at which point the family may be asked to leave the school. If the situation does not improve within a reasonable amount of time, the family may be asked to leave the school upon the recommendation of the teacher or appropriate school official.

Every effort is made to work with the student, the parents, and other professionals to solve problems. The BNS community is very successful at addressing such problems and creating reasonable solutions or alternatives. Please see the Code of Conduct section below.

### **Code of Conduct**

The following code of conduct will be distributed and reviewed with all students during the first week of school. Older students will be asked to sign the agreement, take the document home for discussion with parents, and gather parent signatures. Please note that the consequence guidelines for violations of this code will be reviewed with older students.

The Blacksburg New School is a community of learners. All members of this community are expected to uphold the values of the school. There are clear expectations for student conduct and it is important that we hold each

other responsible for meeting those expectations. This code of conduct is based on a premise of mutual respect. Students are expected to be honest, respectful, kind, and hard-working.

I agree to honor the following code of conduct.  
I understand that there are consequences for violating this code.

#### **I agree to be honest.**

- \* I will speak truthfully in all matters and will be honest in all my actions.
- \* I will meet my academic requirements honestly and with my own work.
- \* I will not lie, cheat, or plagiarize.

#### **I agree to be responsible, respectful, and kind.**

- \* I will be respectful of myself and others.
- \* I will speak to others in a respectful manner.
- \* I will respect people's personal space, differences, and beliefs.
- \* I will follow and I will remind others to follow BNS rules.
- \* I will respect people's personal property and the property of the school.
- \* I understand that property includes nature as well as human-made items.
- \* I will not misuse, deface, or remove the property of others without their consent.
- \* I will maintain kindness as a goal when using words or actions.
- \* I will not intimidate, tease, or bully others.
- \* I will treat others the way I would like to be treated.

#### **I agree to be hard-working.**

- \* I will do my best at all times.
- \* I understand that being a student means completing assignments and being prepared for class.
- \* I will do my part to make sure I attend school regularly and arrive on time. [see attendance policy]
- \* I will accept the consequences of mistakes.
- \* I will use mistakes as learning opportunities.

Consequences for violating the above code of conduct may result in any or all of the following: the issuance of a warning; meetings with teachers, parents, and/or students; reduced academic credit; additional assignments; lunch detention; omission from school field trips or other school events; suspension; expulsion. A Code of Conduct Committee will be formed as needed to determine consequences for violations.

## **Computer/Technology Use**

BNS recognizes that access to technology in school gives students, parents/guardians, and teachers greater opportunities to learn, engage, communicate, and develop skills useful in navigating continued schooling, work life, and responsible citizenship. We are committed to helping students develop 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and communication skills in a safe environment. As students enter 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and begin regular computer lab classes, their families will be provided with a user policy and agreement document to be signed by the student and parent/guardian(s). The document will outline appropriate conduct with regards to technology use. It will also document parental permission for student participation in technology-related programs and activities. Specific programs in use will be listed in teacher blogs, classroom curricula, and/or other updates. Parents are asked to discuss specific questions with their child's classroom teacher and/or computer lab teacher.

### **“BNS Rules”**

The following *detailed* descriptions and lists for proper behavior—both indoors and outdoors—are usually reviewed with the students on the first day of school in our all-school “Outdoor Classroom Talk” and “Hall Talk.” **Since all-school gatherings like this are tricky to do with distancing requirements, “BNS Rules” will again be sent to families via video-message in the days prior to school starting.** These are the nuts and bolts of the do's and don'ts at BNS. We recognize that new students may need a couple of friendly reminders about these expectations as they become familiar with the school. Please note that these rules should be respected even during off hours (e.g. if you bring your children up to the playground while you do some yard work, etc.) We ask that all morning and lunch duty parents become very familiar with these rules. We try to impart to the students that these guidelines/rules are designed to keep things feeling safe and happy.

#### **General Guidelines**

- Follow the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated. (Be kind. Be nice.)
- Tell the truth. Be honest.
- Don't make work for other people. Clean up after yourself.
- Keep an eye on each other. Let a teacher know if someone seems “not okay.”
- Respect the decision of the adult in charge. Then feel free to follow up with a teacher later.
- Use words to work things out. Get help from a grown-up whenever you need it.

- Get in the habit of saying “Yes, please” and “No, thank you.”
- Acknowledge a reminder with “Okay” or “Okay, Carla” or a thumbs-up.
- Apologies matter if they are meaningful.
- Give each other friendly reminders.

### Indoor Guidelines

- Walk while inside the building.
- **Wear a mask while inside the building if you are not vaccinated. [Subject to VDOE mandates.]**
- **Lunch duty parents will be vaccinated and masked.**
- **Teachers (all vaccinated) will usually be unmasked for teaching. [Subject to VDOE mandates.]**
- **Teachers and vaccinated students should have mask in pocket or nearby in case needed.**
- **When inside, we are going to ask that you be quieter than the usual times (before COVID). It might feel like walking into a library. It will be important not to yell or sing (even with masks on).**
- Middle-schoolers are asked to walk through main building at morning arrival. **[Not this year.]**
- Maintain a regular speaking voice while inside the building.
- Don't pick at things...at bulletin board borders, rug edges, labels, decorations, etc.
- No need to touch the walls. Or bulletin boards. Or things on classroom doors.
- No need to touch the glass parts of windows and doors.
- Maintain personal space—like when lining up. **[As in 3-feet for now.]**
- Respect classroom property all the time (e.g. musical instruments, microscopes)
- Wash hands regularly (after bathroom, before eating, perhaps after eating, **and more**).
- Flush. Every time. And close the lids before flushing.
- Leave lights on in the bathroom at all times. We realize rules like this might be different at home.
- Use one squirt of soap. Use one maybe two paper towels. No need for more. Pull down with two hands. Put in trash can. Don't make work for other people by leaving it on the ground.
- No need to open the containers on backs of toilets unless you need menstruation supplies.
- Keep your hands out of your mouth...and nose...and pants. **[Easy to comply during masked times.]**
- Catch your sneezes and coughs in the crook of your elbow.
- No kissing at school (due to germ management; personal space).
- Recycle and compost whatever you can.
- We don't bring candy or soda to school.
- Stay seated for 15 minutes at lunchtime. Keep your lunch open in front of you. Your body needs food.
- Do not bother the lunch duties about how much longer to stay seated while eating lunch for 15 minutes.
- Toys from home are only for after 3:45.
- Help your parents get you to school on time.
- Never leave the building without an adult. Be respectful while waiting for a parent to be ready to go.
- Be kind to your parent at pick-up time. Wave or say hello.
- Don't try to learn the door code! Never touch the punch locks!
- Do not open the main green outside doors for anyone. Get a grown-up.
- Don't hang on the door bars or bother the locking mechanisms.
- The handrails out front are for hands.
- We will sometimes practice fire drills and shelter-in-place drills. Look to adult when you hear alarm.
- You might hear directions over a walkie-talkie. Important to stop and listen whenever you hear it.
- We want everyone to know that there is an AED located in the kitchen.
- Repeatedly rung whistles or bells = an alert. Gather and observe an adult for instruction.

### Playground Guidelines

Note to lunch duty parents and substitutes:

**For at least the fall, student cohorts (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) will be assigned a specific tri-section of the playground each day.**

During playground recess times (e.g. early morning, snack time, and after lunch), students should remain outside the entire time (following their 15 minutes of **outdoor** lunch-time prior to lunch recess). They may go inside to their assigned bathroom if needed. **Most classes will have an outdoor spot for water bottles and masks to be kept.**

**Drinking water and refilling water bottles is encouraged.** In very cold weather the play may be shortened as determined by the temperature and supervising adults (see temperature policy for outdoor play at end of handbook). **If it is raining, teachers will set up a rotation on the covered porch. If there is thunder/lightning, teachers will set up a careful indoor rotation for eating in the classrooms (a few students unmasking at a time).**

Students well enough to come to school are considered well enough to be outside. If the weather is very wet or very cold the entire class may stay indoors. Lunchtime for Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Turquoise, and Blue Room students is typically from 12:00 to 1:00. Purple Program lunchtime is typically a 45-minute period between 12:00 to 1:00. While supervising students during playground times, please keep in mind the following guidelines which are reviewed with all students by the first day of school:

- Positive, creative, active play is fun and good for you and we encourage lots of it.
- Stay seated for 15 minutes at lunch time.

- Close snack/lunch containers before going out into playground to play.
- Students may leave their masks off while outside (but kept nearby in pockets, on wrists, or with water bottles).
- Students must maintain social distance from each other. Imagine airplane arms. 3+ feet.
- Use outdoor shoes (vs. indoor shoes) and keep those shoes tidy on shelf when not on feet. [Not this year.]
- Use your classroom's assigned bathroom (if available) when needed.
- Ask an adult before going into the building.
- Again: Positive, creative, active play is fun and good for you.
- Teasing, hitting, throwing of sticks or stones, or violent play of any kind is not fun and will not be tolerated.
- We don't do weapon play at BNS. There are so many other things to pretend.
- Two or more students playing together must include others in their play if it is requested. (The Including Rule)
- Students are to remain in the fenced area unless other arrangements have been made.
- Only one supervised student is to fetch a ball that has gone over the fence.
- If you see the "cat stop" thing still in the sandbox, tell a grown-up.
- Adults will position themselves as to provide supervision to all play areas during morning and lunch recesses. Lunch duty parents will establish and assign themselves to "zones." They will be easy to find whenever you need help. [During this fall (until all students are vaccinated) students will have assigned "cohort zones" to play in during recess times. They will be grouped in these cohorts: K-2, 3-5, 6-8. Each cohort will have a tri-section of the playground assigned to them for the day. This will rotate. And it will leave the field available for PE.]
- Teachers will usually be at the teacher look-out area during snack recess. Please do not cross that look-out area, but rather go around it. Stand at the edge of it to speak to teachers or pick chips for games. [Big group games will not likely be an option during the fall semester.]
- Most first aid supplies are in the kitchen, but there is a container of band-aids up on the shelf near Red bathroom (the "ASP shelf"). And we sometimes keep band-aids available down low near the ASP shelf. Please leave the wrapper trash in the basket or in paper recycling.
- Emergency medications (inhalers, Epi-Pens) are above the sink in the particular students' classes.
- Get teacher for administration of any emergency meds.
- Adults: An Incident/Accident Form (on shelf near Red bathroom) should be completed for any significant injury (e.g. that involves the head or leaves a scrape, mark, or bruise). Notify teacher.
- Digging is confined to the sandbox areas.
- Sand should not be thrown...and it should be kept down low (not scooped into air when digging).
- Don't bother something that someone else created. "Enjoy. Don't destroy."
- Harvesting (e.g. picking berries, pulling leaves off tree) is not allowed. (The No Harvesting Rule)
- Rocks should be kept in the creek bed and not rearranged.
- Take care when running toward the creek bed. Slow down on the rocks.
- Touching (or poking or carrying) bugs is not allowed. Nor is it okay to build things around a creature. Let them do their thing and enjoy watching that. A bug in need of relocation (e.g. a worm on the basketball court) may be helped once a student has asked an adult about it.
- Any needed (if a teacher requests it) pencils, paper, or other writing equipment must stay on the porch.
- Certainly, no writing or drawing on anything other than paper or other proper material.
- Chalk drawing (if allowed) is to be done on the sidewalks or black-top only (not on covered porch).
- The climbing structure is to be enjoyed carefully. A student should not be touched while climbing up the walls or sliding down the slide. Once a student has reached the top platform s/he should slide down the slide or climb back down the wall. The top platform is not to be used as a gathering place. Students may not jump from the top platform. No chasing up or on the climbing structure.
- No fence, tree, or basketball pole climbing is allowed, nor is hanging/pulling on tree branches or basketball hoops. Students may, however, sit carefully along that long branch under the big tree.
- The sides of the small "stage" are not meant for climbing.
- The mushroom drums ("fungi phones") may be played anytime. Please do not climb or lay your body across them. And do not push them around. Use them with care.
- The basketball nets will stay as one high and one low, except for during PE classes. Only BNS PE teacher may adjust/crank the nets.
- Leave the soccer nets (if out) for catching balls. Don't play with or play in the nets.
- Don't bother stuff on the porch (e.g. PE stuff, etc.). Watch out for science experiments and things like that.
- Students may not use PE equipment from PE box or PE shelf during regular recess times or ASP.
- Students may not climb on or sit on the PE box. Rolling a ball across it is fine.
- If there are decorations (e.g. wind chimes, scenery) outside—please enjoy without disturbing.
- Immediately tell an adult if you see cat poop in the sandbox...or any kind of poop anywhere.
- Legs may be buried in the sandbox, but not torso and/or head.
- Tires must stay out of sandbox and care should be taken when rolling them.
- Do not roll tires down the walkways. They pick up too much speed. Creek bed with care is okay.
- The very large tire may not be relocated at all.
- Students must not stand in the middle of a tire stack that is higher than their waist.
- The butterfly garden is a calm area and the logs are not to be relocated.
- Students are to walk (not run) on the walkways to the outdoor classroom and on the porch.
- Students should not hang out on the side porch or near the air conditioning units.

- Debris must not be placed in the air conditioning units.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- The boundaries of raised beds and dirt box are to be respected—no walking on the wood frames.
- No running among the plants bordering the outdoor classroom. Also, bouncing a ball on the outdoor classroom is fine, but no kicking balls up there.
- Only one student at a time may be on the monkey bars. No hanging from legs or climbing on top of monkey bars nor playing under the monkey bars while people are using them. Start at the first bar. It is dangerous to try to jump out to a bar further away.
- Students may sit at the picnic tables—but not stand on them nor on their bench seats.
- If students are eating outside (or inside) they must sit down while eating. Red Roomers should utilize the small picnic tables; older kids may sit on porch benches or outdoor classroom or picnic tables. **Each class will have an assigned area to eat lunch outdoors each day.**
- Remember to bring water bottles outside...and drink *plenty* of water.
- A bucket for compost scraps is kept on the back porch. Students are encouraged to use this.
- Students may not share the food from their lunchboxes with other students (other than siblings).
- Students may not carry each other or give “piggy-back rides.” Also, no hanging on or pulling each other.
- Only balls and saucers may be thrown and only in open spaces.
- Soccer and similar field games should be played on the field.
- No “heading” of soccer balls. Protect your head.
- Be sure to go *around* any games that are in play.
- Balls are to be played with *away* from the porch.
- **The following rules are important, but probably N/A during the fall semester when group games will not be compatible with covid prevention protocols:** Teams (for “Capture the Flag,” for example) are determined by “picking chips.” An adult should put an even number of red and yellow chips in the bag. The total number of chips in the bag should not exceed (by more than one) the number of students wanting to play at a given time. Students use the corresponding color 3-foot “capture noodle.” Students are asked not to quit until a game is over. Flags *must* be brought back to noodle area when recess ends—even if this is before the game ends (and flags were still hidden).
- When/if “capture” is played, students should not pick at or crumble the “capture noodles.”
- Swings are for one student at a time. Students must swing in upright position while holding on with both hands. And no jumping off.
- People not swinging should keep a safe distance from swings in use. Certainly, swingers should not be disturbed—no grabbing the chains, no tossing balls nearby.
- We don’t push each other on swings. This includes adults. We want to make sure you don’t go higher than you are ready to handle. You’ll learn to pump your legs and get it going.
- A waiting line for swings should be off to the side. Get grown-up help if needed re: swing turns.
- Mulch and sand must stay in their designated areas—not carried to other areas of the playground.
- Students are asked to advise adults of poison ivy, black widow spiders, and ticks on people.
- Muddy shoes are never to be worn into the building. **Students must wipe shoes off in the grass before entering the building. And they should avoid getting too muddy—particularly during this year of just one set of shoes.**
- Students should brush off sand and empty sand-filled shoes (away from porch) before entering the building. A little “tick shake” is also a good idea prior to coming inside.
- Cooperate with parents wanting to sunscreen or bug spray you before school.
- If you get a ball out, be responsible for putting it back or checking to see that it has been put away.
- Those teacher chairs are for teachers...only.
- The sidewalks, mulched bench area, and playground grass area nearest the Middle School addition are for Middle School students only (“Purple Property”).
- We have a “buddy bench.” If you notice someone sitting there, consider asking them to play. If you are wishing for someone to play with, have a seat on the buddy bench and take a look around at the choices of things to do and people to play with...then consider joining in.
- Again, when given a verbal reminder of a guideline, students are encouraged to verbally acknowledge the reminder (“okay” or a thumbs-up).
- Things at BNS stay at BNS. Students may not take anything (sticks, rocks, caterpillars, leaves) home from the playground.
- **These rules are set up to keep things safe and kind. They are the rules all the time...even if no one is watching you. Abiding by these rules allows us to trust you to play freely on this big, beautiful playground.**

In addition:

Please note that as an “adult in charge” you are representing the school to our students, guests, and the public. We are together because of our commitment to academic and civic excellence, to individual and community responsibility, and to the love of learning. It is essential that we are sensitive to the variety of cultural, religious, and lifestyle choices of individual families in our community.

Also—as an “adult in charge” or “adult in the room” you may become aware of rather personal information. Parents volunteering around the school are, of course, asked to consider the information that may be learned from and about students (as well as teachers, other parents, college interns/staff) confidential. Parents often observe (in the course of a lunch duty hour or while helping on a field trip, for example) a variety of learning abilities and styles and they may also overhear conversations among children or among adults (other parents, teachers, college interns). Such information about particular people should be treated with highest respect and confidentiality. Please feel free to discuss something troubling or confusing with the classroom teacher—but not with other parents, interns, or students.

## Illness

**In addition to this usual info, see info (following below) regarding COVID-19 symptoms and community responsibility.**

The Blacksburg New School has adopted the following policy regarding illness for students attending the school. It is important to the overall health of the school community that EVERY family follow these guidelines:

A student having a fever of one hundred (100 F) degrees or greater must be picked up from school immediately. The student may not return to BNS until they have been without fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

Any student with chicken pox may not attend school for at least 5 school days. All blisters must be “scabbed over” prior to the student’s return.

If a student has more than one episode of diarrhea or vomiting during a school day, they must be picked up from school and may not return to BNS until well (24 hours recommended since last episode). See proposed rewrite below:

If a student has more than one episode of diarrhea or vomiting, they should not attend school until 24 hours after last episode.

A signed note from a physician stating that a student is well (non-contagious) and can return to BNS prior to the timelines stated above will be honored.

If a teacher determines that the student should not be in school, and a parent cannot be reached, then one of the people designated as an emergency contact is required to take the student home. In case of a serious accident, the student will be taken to the hospital emergency room and the parents will be notified immediately. Other illnesses for which a student may be asked to leave school for a period of time include, but are not limited to, head lice, “pink-eye,” or impetigo.

Parents are asked to inform the school within 24 hours, if their child or any member of the immediate household has developed any reportable communicable disease (as defined by the State Board of Health; [www.vdh.state.va.us](http://www.vdh.state.va.us); “Reportable Disease List”).

[http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/13/2018/11/Reportable\\_Disease\\_List.pdf](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/13/2018/11/Reportable_Disease_List.pdf)

**In response to the COVID-19 pandemic parents will be expected to assess their child’s health prior to bringing them to school. Parents shall take the student’s temperature each day and screen for the following symptoms:**

In the last 24 hours, has your child or any member of your household/immediate caregiving circle had any of the following:

- A fever (100.4°F or higher)?
- Any of the following that cannot be attributed to another health condition? -- A new cough; New shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; New chills or sudden feelings of cold with shivering accompanied by a rise in temperature; A new sore throat; New muscle aches (not related to recent physical exercise or activity)?
- New olfactory (smell) or taste changes, including loss of taste or smell?
- Have you administered an agent such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) to your child to reduce fever or suspected fever?

*If the answers are “YES” to any of the screening questions before arriving, then the student and all members of the household should stay home in accordance with the school illness absence policy.*

**By bringing their child to school, parents are indicating that the above-listed symptoms have been assessed and that the child is free from all of them.**

## Medication Policy

Due to intense state regulations and liabilities, the school asks that parents administer medication to their children. If a child needs a mid-day dose of medication (e.g. an antibiotic or pain reliever), parents are asked to come to the school and administer the medication. Such medication may not be stored at the school. The school may consider

an extenuating circumstance and in that case the parent must meet the extensive regulations with regards to the storage and paperwork associated with the medication. Please note that the school does not administer behavioral medications. Please note that students may never have medication (not even a vitamin or lozenge) in their pockets, backpacks, lunchboxes, or cubbies.

In the event that a child has a condition that necessitates the storage of an emergency or immediate “when needed” medication (such as an EpiPen, inhaler with spacer, or liquid Benadryl), the parent must complete the paperwork for the medication administration at the start of each school year (and obtain the required physician signatures) and maintain that the medication is clearly labeled in its original container and has not expired. These emergency medications will be kept above the sink in the classroom of the individual student.

To provide the best protection for students with conditions such as serious allergies and acute asthma, a list of those students' names (and their conditions and emergency medications) will be distributed to all parents and staff—and will be posted at the school.

### First Aid

BNS provides continual First Aid and CPR training to teachers. After School Program teachers are required to keep such training and certifications up to date. Parents on duty at morning or lunch time are instructed to get a teacher for injuries beyond typical scrapes and bruises. For typical scrapes please ask and/or help the student to wash the wound with soap and water. Band-aids are near the ASP shelf near Red door to playground. Frozen cold packs are in the freezer in the kitchen. More first aid items are in the cabinet in the kitchen marked with a first aid symbol. There is also a first aid bag and AED hanging in the kitchen. Incident/Accident forms should be completed for all injuries. Also note that BNS disallows heading of soccer balls in PE or playground play. If a student suffers a blow to the head (falling off playground equipment; fall while running; colliding with another student) they are observed for signs of concussion and restricted from rigorous play. Their parents are called to come observe the student and determine further treatment.

### Sunscreen

Parents are encouraged to sunscreen their children each morning throughout the fall and spring. Please do this before school starts and consider using a sunscreen that will last the school day without needing reapplications. Keep in mind that any sunscreen sprays should be done outside and away from other children. You may also wish to consider using hats as additional guard against sun. IF your child stays for ASP there will be a sunscreen application time after roll call around 3:45/4:00. Sunscreen application is regulated by the Department of Social Services and requires that a special form be completed and signed by a parent. Please see T.J. for the form if you need one. If your child will be doing 3:45/4:00 reapplication, please provide sunscreen that is clearly labeled with your child's name. Keep in mind that children under the age of 9 may not apply their own sunscreen. A staff member or other adult must do it for them. Children age 9 and older may apply their own sunscreen, but must be supervised by an adult while doing so. These are DSS regulations. **Note: Distancing regulations prohibits teachers and ASP staff from applying sunscreen. Please instruct students to wear hats and seek shade in the late afternoon.**

[Please note that insect repellent has even more regulations and forms that are time-consuming for the school. If you feel your child needs insect repellent, please find ways to apply this prior to school. You may, of course, come to the school at snack/recess times to reapply if you wish.]

### Health and Immunizations

The Virginia State Department of Health requires that we have a health form listing your child's immunizations and inoculations. It is important that this form be on file by the first day of school for incoming students. Immunization and inoculation requirements change periodically. Please consult your doctor regarding current standards for the state of Virginia and please provide the school with documentation of additional immunizations following original enrollment paperwork.

Please note the school's recently adopted Immunization Statement:

As a policy, BNS strongly encourages every child to be immunized as recommended by the CDC regardless of personal or religious belief. However, BNS understands that under current Virginia law, BNS must recognize religious exemptions to vaccinations. BNS hopes that Virginia, like many other states, eventually will do away with all non-medical exemptions to childhood vaccination. When that happens, BNS will adopt a policy requiring that all children who attend BNS be vaccinated.

If a parent is concerned about the safety of an under-vaccinated infant or toddler, they may contact T.J. to arrange an alternate method of pick-up that allows such siblings to remain in the car with their parent.

For the safety of its students and teachers, BNS wishes for all of its people to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Teachers at BNS are fully vaccinated. We ask that all parents supply the school with a copy of their child's Covid vaccine as soon as they receive the full dose. And parents must be vaccinated in order to enter the building. Please send proof of vaccination status to: [files@new-school.org](mailto:files@new-school.org) using the subject line (written exactly like this, which is very important): "Proof of COVID Vaccine - [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]."

In the event of an outbreak or epidemic of any kind, the school would follow guidelines provided by the Virginia Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control.

Please also note that teachers are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. This means they are legally required to report a child's disclosure of abuse—or any suspicious behavior, markings, or statements—to Child Protective Services.

## General Information

**Mailboxes [Mailboxes will not be in use at this time as most parents will not be entering the building.]**

Each family and all teachers are assigned a mailbox at the school. Communications from teachers, the Board, and other parents may be placed there, so it is essential that each family check its mailbox on a daily basis.

### Email

Blacksburg New School relies heavily on email as a convenient and expedient means of communication among and between teachers, administration, and parents. It is assumed that all parents have regular access to email. If this is not the case, an arrangement may be made with the President for a parent to briefly use a school computer. All community members are reminded that email does not take the place of scheduled meetings and direct, face-to-face communication. Appropriate use of school and classroom listservs is for announcements, dissemination of important information, or requests/questions that need to be posed to the school community (or to a particular classroom). In the event of a difference of opinion or conflict, you are encouraged to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the appropriate persons.

Please note that we all try to use our best judgement with regards to the information sent to the all-school parent and teacher email list. When an email is not directly related to BNS business (like a local kid-friendly chemistry carnival or a house for sale perfect for new faculty) we try to note that in the subject line: "Non-BNS: Kid Chemistry Carnival Information." We try to keep those announcements to a minimum and encourage parents to use the *classroom* lists for things like "pet care needed" or other similar requests. Please check in with a teacher or board member if you are uncertain about a message.

The school communicates regularly through the parent email list, as well as through the teacher and classroom lists posted in your directory. Email address changes may be sent to Kiyah Duffey. Again, all parents and teachers are assumed to have regular access to email.

### School Telephone

The school number is 540-552-6693. The telephone will be answered via voice mail when the teachers are unavailable. If you need immediate access to the school and are unable to get through using the regular phone number, you may call T.J.'s cell phone: 540-230-3964.

The school President's (Kiyah Duffey) cell number is 919-360-2127.

The school's fax number is 540-552-5115.

### Security

Please see Kiyah or T.J. for the code to the building if your family needs access after school hours—e.g. cleaning TRO. Only a very limited [even more limited at this time] number of COVID-trained people will know the punch code [or enter the building] and it is essential that students never learn the punch code combinations. Students are asked to turn away from an adult entering the punch code. And we ask that adults cover the lock plate with their body or other hand when using the code near other people. Do not pass the code along to any person. Members of the school community asking about the code may be directed to Kiyah or T.J. The front door to the lobby will be locked when classes begin in the morning. Visitors may ring a doorbell for assistance. If you are at the school during off-hours, please **be sure** to lock any unlocked doors along the back porch and to check that the front and side doors are in their locked positions. Please note that children (students or siblings/friends of students) should not touch the locking mechanisms on either the outside (punch code mechanism) or inside (hanging latch mechanism) of the main exit doors. Please enforce this with children at all times.

### Parking

To restate, please observe the directional arrow of our parking lot, as well as the handicapped spaces. In the interest of safety, during the busy morning drop-off period, drivers are encouraged to yield the parking spaces directly adjacent to the front walk to carpools and families with multiple young children. **Note: You will not be parking in spaces this year, but rather pulling around the circle and up toward the mailbox area.**

Note the previously described drop-off (and pick-up) routine for this year/semester. Arrivals and departures will be staggered by classroom.

All-school functions can be quite crowded. During the Art Show and Graduation we have permission to park along the drive (but never on the grass) of the cemetery (Memorial Gardens) across the street. These are absolutely the *only* times that we have permission to park along cemetery road. [Hopefully we will be able to have these in-person all school functions by spring 2022!]

### Snow Days

School closing will be announced via email as soon as the decision is made. The decision to close is not related to Montgomery County Schools, so please check email on questionable mornings. These decisions are always difficult and not too much fun to make. The President tries to make this decision early, but with as much information as possible. A general target time is 7:30 a.m. If driving is considered a hazard, if most of the teachers cannot make it to work, or if the school is without power, we will likely close or delay our opening. A delayed opening typically means 10:00 a.m.

If there is a serious warning of dangerous weather during school hours, please pick up your child(ren) as soon as possible and plan on no After School Program. This type of closing will also be announced via email as soon as possible. If teachers need to call parents on such days, they will utilize our second line and cell phones, so that incoming calls can be received. Your flexibility and patience during the winter months is greatly appreciated. Please remember, if too many of our teachers are unable to drive their routes to school safely we do not open. The BNS calendar allows for weather closings due to “Banked Time”—accumulation of hours in excess of the 990 hour minimum. Discussion of excessive closings (if needed or applicable) will take place at the Corporation meeting in March.

Finally, the school decision to open or close is based upon Blacksburg weather and the condition of the main roads—in Blacksburg. If the school opens, parents must make their own decision with regards to the safety of road travel from their homes to the school. Students will not be penalized for missing school when the weather conditions at their home are questionable.

Note: Emergency procedures (including severe weather, fire, human-caused disasters) are outlined in the Emergency Preparedness Plan which is reviewed by the teachers and posted on the ASP bulletin board.

### Alternate Schedules for Specific Closings

Please note the following alternate schedules that are sometimes used for the specified reasons. Staggered releases, as well as half-hour arrival/dismissal periods help to keep our parking lot flowing efficiently.

Delayed opening at 10:00 due to weather: This means that students may be brought to school between 10:00 and 10:30, but no earlier (the parking lot and walkways will need time to either get plowed/shoveled or to melt). Teachers will be in their classrooms right at 10:00 and students may report there directly upon arrival. Typically, there are no math classes on delayed days.

Early closing at 12:00 noon due to teacher work times: More specifically this means an elementary release between 11:30 and 12:00; and a middle school release between 12:00 and 12:30. Families with children in both programs may arrive between 12:00 and 12:30.

### Proper Clothing

Students must have proper seasonal clothing at BNS. Boots, hats, gloves, and winter coats are needed in the winter months. Wet weather means more clothing changes. Please label everything and ask your child to check the Lost and Found as needed. When weather dictates, parents are encouraged to sunscreen their children prior to the school day. *Students must wear appropriate footwear for P.E. classes.*

**[Please note that unvaccinated students will be wearing face-coverings/masks while indoors.]**

### Dress Guidelines

The following “Dress With Respect” guidelines were developed by the middle school students and teachers—with Board support.

Blacksburg New School is a professional atmosphere and dress guidelines have been designed with this in mind. We value and respect the individuality of each student, but ask them to dress with respect for their school environment. There are certain clothing items that are considered distracting or inappropriate attire for school. Some specific guidelines are listed below, although this is not a comprehensive list:

- Any attire that inappropriately exposes undergarments, excessive skin, or areas of the “private” anatomy. (i.e. undergarments showing, low-cut shirts, skirts or shorts that are less than mid-thigh in length) should not be worn to school.

- T-shirts, or other clothing, that display messages or symbols that are considered to be inappropriate, offensive, distracting, or in any way disruptive of the educational process should not be worn to school.

Students wearing clothing that disregards these guidelines will be asked to either adjust clothing (when possible) or change/add clothing to meet the guidelines. If this is not possible, parents will be called to provide a change of clothing.

### Temperature Policy for Indoor/Outdoor Time

**Note that BNS is utilizing outdoor space as much as possible during this time of COVID risk mitigation. Parents will be notified of any reconsidered thresholds re: outdoor time.**

Please note that the temperature thresholds listed below are to include the wind chill factor or “feels like” temperature. (Rain will, of course, necessitate staying indoors regardless of the temperature.) The weather.com website is the Board-approved source to be used.

During Snack, Lunch, and P.E. times: students will go outside when the temperature is 32 degrees [this will probably be dropped to a lower temperature] (including wind chill) or above. When the temperature is between 25 degrees and 32 degrees (including wind chill), the students will go outside for 15 minutes [this may change to a longer period of time]. When the temperature is below 25 (including wind chill), the students will remain indoors [or maybe still go out for at least a bit of time]. [Teachers may occasionally determine (for a variety of reasons) that an indoor snack-time or PE-time is beneficial even when the temperature is above 32 degrees. Not likely during covidtimes.] Lunch-time recess, however, should always be determined by the board-approved temperature guidelines.

[Note that length of time outdoors during ASP—even with temperatures above 32—will be determined by the ASP staff with input from students, staff and student comfort levels, and observation of overall quality of play.]

### Food

Students must bring a lunch (including beverage—or water bottle) and a morning snack each day. BNS does not provide either food or beverages, although water is always available. Those who stay for the After School Program should bring additional snacks. BNS encourages nutritious, low-sugar snacks. A healthy diet is essential to a student’s physical, intellectual, and emotional development. Families are responsible for providing a nutritionally balanced lunch for their child. Foods such as potato chips, cakes, most cookies, and fruit drinks with less than 100% fruit juice are not considered to have sufficient nutritional value. Please consider limiting foods and beverages containing artificial flavors and colors. Soda and candy should not be sent to school. Nor should beverages containing caffeine. Sometimes special occasions are celebrated with a light snack, so please remind your child’s teacher of any food allergies or dietary restrictions. The sharing of lunches and snacks among the students is not permitted, so please be certain your child has enough food for the day. Uneaten food is returned to the parents. Please talk to your child about their appetite and preferences. All lunches and snacks should be ready to eat with no additional preparation necessary. There is no student access to microwaves until middle school—a rite of passage of sorts. Please do not send glass containers of any kind as they create a hazard if broken. Please note that state regulations require that all food containers should be clearly labeled with your child’s name. This includes reusable water bottles and lunch containers.

### Recycling and Composting

There are mixed paper receptacles in all classrooms and in the lobby. Teachers and other adults may place plastic, glass, and aluminum recyclables in the kitchen bin. Students are asked to rinse recyclables and return them home in their lunchboxes. Students are also asked to place compost materials (apple cores, banana peels) in the bucket(s) on the back porch. Again, students are encouraged to take their recyclable plastics (#1 and #2) back home to recycle. It is not a manageable endeavor to start a recycling system at school for things that come from home. Parents are asked to remind their children about this effort. Teachers and parents on duty for snack and lunch will disallow recyclable plastics (such as many applesauce cups and drinkable yogurt containers) from being thrown in the trash. They will ask the students to rinse such items and put them back in their lunchboxes to recycle at home.

### Birthday Parties

Since the class sizes are small, please be sensitive to students’ feelings when inviting students to birthday parties and other gatherings (even via Zoom) outside of school.

### Field Trips [Not happening at this time—other than possibly meet-at-the-designation trips.]

Parents will be notified of field trips and asked to assist with driving when necessary. Please be aware that *all students must wear seatbelts whenever riding in an automobile*. If your child uses a booster seat, please bring it to the school on field trip days—and place it properly in the van or field trip car if possible. Note that all children under 8 must use a booster seat. Also note that attendance for some field trip opportunities are determined by student behavior and responsible academic participation.

### Photographs and Internet

Students (and their work) are often photographed and/or filmed both at the school and on field trips. In addition to lobby displays and scrapbook compilations, these photographs/recordings are sometimes used in print ads,

newspaper articles, our website, and brochures. **Please notify the President and your child's teacher if you do not wish for photographs or recordings of your child (or your child's work) to be used for such purposes.** Additionally, parents are asked not to post photos/recordings of—or information about—BNS students on the internet (e.g. Facebook, other social networking sites, online photo albums, etc.) without their parents' knowledge.

### **No Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited in the school building and on the school grounds. Additionally, clothing that has been exposed to cigarette smoke should be changed before entering the building. Cars exposed to cigarette smoke may not be used for transporting students on field trips.

### **No Firearms**

Firearms are prohibited, by law, in the school building or on the school grounds.

### **Absences**

We are always concerned when students are absent. Please be sure to notify the teacher when your child will not be in school. After 8:00 a.m., teachers may not see email messages, so please call the school and leave a voice mail. Please see Attendance Policy section for more information about attendance. Students are expected to attend school regularly when well.

### **Children at School Outside School Hours [N/A at this time. No children should be at school on off-hours.]**

Childcare is provided for some meetings, but not all. Please note that parents are responsible for any necessary cleaning and tidying of the area in which their children played during a meeting or during a parent's TRO job. This allows our teachers to enter clean classrooms the following morning.

Additionally, it is important that children accompanying their parents to the school during TRO jobs or meetings (not these days) never be out of sight and/or sound supervision of their parents. There have been instances in the past of children (e.g. a younger sibling during pick-up time; a student during evening cleaning time) unlocking an outside door—or even repositioning the bar locks of the main exits to the "unlocked" position. It is very important that parents double-check the security of the entire building(s) if their children leave their sight for even a brief moment.

### **Toys and Other "Things from Home"**

Due to the likelihood of distraction and competition, students are asked not to bring toys or other items to school. Teachers will indicate when it may be appropriate to bring in certain items from home. Students staying for the After School Program may bring items from home (although no weapon-focused toys/materials and no electronic/video games) to be played with *after 3:45 p.m.* Also note that trading of any items (cards, toys) is not permitted.

Please note the following policy with regards to cell phones and middle school students:

- Cell phones should remain "off" during school hours and kept in backpacks, not pockets.
- Cell phones may be turned on after 3:15 (for those staying in ASP) in order to receive incoming calls/texts from parents—*not* for making outgoing calls, social chatting, texting, or for any other use (such as music or games).
- Students may make outgoing calls on the BNS land line with permission from a teacher.
- Cells phones that are brought to school must be "clean." This means that no inappropriate media should be stored on them. The teachers and president of BNS reserve the right to check students' cell phones for inappropriate media.
- Violation of this policy will result in cell phone being kept in teacher work room until parents arrive for pick-up.
- No media players of any kind (iPods, e-books, etc.) may be used at BNS. Any items of this nature brought to school should remain in the students' backpacks.

### **Backpacks**

Many students find it helpful to bring backpacks to school to help carry lunches and homework. Parents are asked to know and monitor what their children are bringing to school. Inappropriate or potentially dangerous objects—such as medications, pocketknives—or offensive language (e.g. music, literature) are not to be brought to school by students. The BNS community greatly appreciates your attention and support with this.

**Welcome to a new year at the New School.  
Please direct questions about the Handbook to T.J. Stone or Kiyah Duffey.**