

# Blacksburg New School Handbook

(last updated 8/29/24)

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.

"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.

Decades of dreamers have kept the Blacksburg New School going, and have made it grow.

Dreams and very, very hard work."

Ann Goette, 1971 founding parent (Groundbreaking Celebration remarks, 2007)

"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, BNS Teacher during its 1<sup>st</sup> year (30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary communication, 2001)

"When I was at BNS 48-49 years ago, I had an okay entry in my CV.

Now I have an entry I will brag about to whoever will listen (including UCSD undergrads this fall!)"

Bruce Wheeler, BNS Teacher during its 2<sup>nd</sup> year (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary communication, 2021)

[Ann hosted the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in September 2021.

Both John and Bruce attended. See school website for photos!]

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.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, BNS was actively engaged in strategic planning. This work has begun to return as we pull ourselves past the immediacy of that crisis. Our 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 teachers 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.

### 2024-2025 Board of Directors

Jenny Orr (Acting President, VP)	Crystal Hazzard	Sue Santamaria
Donna Vaden (Treasurer)	Myra Leland	T.J. Stone
Cindy Smith (Secretary)	Emily Myers	Tina Witcher
Stan Harvey	Robin Sanborn	Rotating Teacher Representative

### 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 Corporation members 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 at least monthly.

### Fundraising:

Organizes fundraising projects/events. Fundraising benefits the school's operating budget and may benefit targeted areas such as playground or tuition assistance; meets as needed per event and communicates often via email.

### Personnel/Hiring:

Personnel supports teachers and handles personnel concerns when needed; reviews contracts. Hiring acts to fill staff positions; 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 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 Math Teacher (Pre-Algebra I)****BNS Computer Lab Teacher (Grades 3-8)****Julia Hall**

B.S., Biomechanical Engineering, Michigan Technological University

**BNS Math Teacher (Geometry)****Seema Dalal**

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

**BNS Spanish Teacher (Grades K-4)****Erika Gonzalez**

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

**BNS Spanish Teacher (Grades 5-8)****BNS Music Teacher (Grades K-5)****Patricia Pérez**

B.A., Music (Transverse Flute), Conservatory of Music of Alicante, Spain  
 M.A., Music Therapy, University of Vic, Barcelona, Spain  
 M.A., Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language, International University of La Rioja, Spain  
 M.A., Pedagogy, University of Alicante, Spain

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

B.S., Art, Radford University

**BNS P.E./Health Teacher (Grades K-8)****Rachel Pattison**

B.S., Human Development, Virginia Tech  
 M.A., Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Tech  
 Certification: PreK-6

**BNS Literacy Aide Teacher****Courtney Grohs**

B.A., Spanish, Virginia Commonwealth University  
 Master of Urban and Regional Planning, Virginia Tech

## 2024-2025 Blacksburg New School Calendar

Please note that additional classroom and fundraising events may be added during the year.

Aug.	7	Start of Teacher Workdays: August 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 (W,Th,F,M,T)
Aug.	10	Parent Workday, Saturday, 10:00 am start (to get the school ready) (There will be options for summertime tasks, too.)
Aug.	12	Back-to-School Potluck at Nellie's Cave Park; 6:00 pm (Monday)
Aug.	14	First Day of School (a Wednesday) (VT and RU classes start on Mon. the 26 <sup>th</sup> this year; Montgomery County Public Schools proposed start date is Aug. 13)
Sept.	2	BNS Closed, Labor Day Holiday, a Monday (MCPS are also closed; VT no classes; RU yes classes)
Sept.	20	School Photos are scheduled for this day, a Friday (weather-dependent). Rain date = Sept. 27
Oct.	18	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference prep/reimbursement (This is a Friday.)
Oct.	21	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference prep/reimbursement (This is a Monday.)
Oct.	24	Corporation Meeting, 6:00 p.m., a Thursday
Nov.	1	BNS Half-Day; Early Dismissal Pick-Up Schedule; a Friday (first Friday in November) Teacher Workday for all teachers and supports the particular grading schedule of our Middle School Program Middle School (Grades 6-8) Pick-Up = 11:30 to 11:45 Upper Elementary (Grades 3-5 = 11:45 to 12:00 Lower Elementary (Grades K-2) = 12:00 to 12:15 [Siblings go with the oldest student's timeslot.]
Nov.	14	Fall Follies Student Performance Event; 6:30 pm (at BHS; a Thursday evening; BHS confirmation available in August)
Nov.	22	No After School Program; a Friday
Nov.	25-29	Fall Break (the full week)
Dec.	19	No After School Program; a Thursday
Dec.	20	BNS Closed as part of Winter Break: a Friday
Dec.	20-Jan.5	BNS is Closed for Winter Break (MCPS proposed break start = Dec. 21; VT last exam=18 <sup>th</sup> ; RU's= 12 <sup>th</sup> ) [Winter Break = two full weeks + the Friday before, then there is a Teacher Workday the Monday after]
Jan.	6	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday (a Monday)
Jan.	7	School resumes (a Tuesday) (MCPS students proposed resume date = Jan. 6; VT & RU classes resume on Tues. Jan. 21)
Jan.	20	BNS Closed, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday, a Monday (VT and RU—no classes. MCPS are closed.)
Feb.	8	Annual "Chocolate Party" fundraiser; Saturday at University Mall 10am-3pm
Feb.	14	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference prep/reimbursement (This is a Friday.)
Feb.	17	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference prep/reimbursement (This is a Monday.) (The Monday also happens to be Presidents' Day; MCPS are closed that day.)
Mar.	7	No After School Program; a Friday
Mar.	10-14	Spring Break (This is VT's and RU's Spring Break.) (MCPS Spring Break = March 28 – April 2)
Mar.	27	Corporation Meeting, 6:00 p.m., this is a Thursday
Apr.	4	BNS Half-Day; Early Dismissal Pick-Up Schedule (see Nov 1); a Friday (first Friday in April) Teacher Workday for all teachers and supports the particular grading schedule of our Middle School Program
Apr.	19	[Likely date for Earth Day Extravaganza fundraising event.]
May	9	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference prep/reimbursement (This is a Friday.)
May	12	BNS Closed, No Classes; Teacher Workday for Parent-Teacher Conference prep/reimbursement (This is a Monday.)
May	26	BNS Closed, Memorial Day Holiday, a Monday
May	29	Annual Arts and Graduation End-of-Year Celebration, 6:00 p.m. (Thursday)
May	30	BNS Half-Day, Last Day of School; Early Dismissal Pick-Up Schedule (see Nov 1); a Friday (MCPS's proposed last day = May 23)

BNS School Day = 9:00 am – 3:15 pm

This is a 1096+ hour calendar. VISA requirement = 1080 hours.

The 16+ hours (2.7 days) of Banked Time may be used for weather or other extenuating circumstances.  
School closings needed beyond the 16.875 hours may be handled via an asynchronous "remote learning days" plan.

## Daily Schedule

### Arrival

The school's morning drop-off times begin at 8:30 and follow the windows described below. There will be adults supervising the parking lot during arrival. Staggering the arrival times helps immensely with parking lot flow. It will be important for families to adhere to the assigned windows. Parents may drop off at the curb or, if they wish, they may park and walk their children into their classrooms via the exterior doors. Students will go directly to their classrooms upon arrival and get settled into their day.

### That drop-off schedule is:

**Grades 4-8 (Turquoise, Blue, and Purple Middle School): arrive between 8:30 and 8:45**

**Grades K-3 (Red, Orange, Yellow, and Green): arrive between 8:45 and 8:55**

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

Please be sure to adhere to a speed limit of 5 mph in the parking lot. 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.

Please note that all children must be in approved restraints at all times while in a vehicle which is in the BNS parking lot, except when the vehicle is stopped in a parking place.

Please also be aware of your surroundings and keep the car line moving (e.g., not stopping for phone calls and texting during this time) and watch in all directions for kids, teachers, and parents. Thank you!

And please, please observe the arrival window for your time.

### Departure

Classes end at 3:15 for all students and their grownups may pick them up by parking and walking through the lobby to sign-out before heading to the playground (or classroom) to retrieve their child(ren). Our After School staff members and parent pick-up helpers will be supervising the playground departure routine. Please remind your children that they are never to go into the parking lot or exit the playground without an adult. They will not be allowed to exit the building or playground without an adult escort. [This means they will not be allowed to meet their grownup "at the car."]

Students who are not enrolled in ASP **MUST** be picked up by 3:45. At 3:45 the bell will be rung. Parents may stay longer on the playground with their children if they wish. Just note that there will be a quiet roll call right at 3:45 for ASP kids and that the building will be locked (aside from ASP entrance) at that time.

### 3:45 to 5:45: After School Program:

Parents may choose to enroll their child(ren) in the After School Program ("ASP"). The payment agreement for this program is \$40 per week with a commitment to pay for the entire semester. The After School Program is a state-accredited program that lasts from 3:45 to 5:45 on every full day that school is in session—with the exception of the school day prior to one of the long breaks. Families will be billed monthly when billed for tuition. This program is directed by T.J., staffed by VT Human Development students, and closes at 5:45 sharp. It takes place primarily on the playground, as well as in the Red and Art Rooms during rainy or very cold weather.

### Academic Program

Teachers prepare units of study that are often integrated throughout the curriculum. A social studies unit, for example, may include activities in math, art, and music. Teachers, parents, university students, and community members participate in the development and implementation of the curriculum. Teachers will provide families with copies of the classroom curriculum and schedule during the first two weeks of school. Class size is limited to 14 students. Please note that Blacksburg New School receives state-recognized accreditation from the Virginia Independent Schools Association.

The core curriculum includes:

Math	Spanish	Computer Lab (3-8)
Language Arts	Art	Life Skills (6-8)
Science	Physical Education	
Social Studies	Music (K-5; 6-8 elective)	



**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 ASP (for some families) and tuition charges 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 for tuition. 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 payments sent directly from their banks. There is also an option for an ACH (direct bank to bank) transfer through your QuickBooks invoice.

Additional Note: There are many ways to make donations to BNS. Oftentimes donations are made via the NRW GiveLocal page. Checks are also certainly acceptable. BNS is a non-profit organization which makes giving tax deductible. Contributions can be directed to the Operating Fund, Tuition Assistance Fund, and Endowment Fund. Contributions to the Endowment Fund are held by the Community Foundation. And perhaps there will soon be a Multipurpose Building Fund.

**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 their account is paid in full. Also, no student will be allowed to re-register for the coming year unless their 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, will occasionally need to be supplemented. Major indoor/outdoor clean-up efforts are organized near the start of the school year. Each family is asked to help with these summertime tasks as a way to collectively get our school ready. It is a very nice opportunity to get to know the building and the community. Some additional grounds/gardens 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 TRO).

## Interaction with Teachers and Parents

In a parent-teacher cooperative school, there is usually ample opportunity for frequent communication between parents and teachers. The school has strong values centered around respectful communication and the fostering of positive long-lasting relationships among parents, teachers, and students.

Adults are, of course, asked to maintain a kind, thoughtful, and positive interaction style when engaging in all forms of communication—including in-person discussions, classroom chat apps, email exchanges, written statements, and social media. We want our students to learn healthy communication skills, and we lead by example.

When we encounter differences of opinion, we always proceed under the assumption that everyone involved is sincerely interested in what is best for the school and the students, and we will strive to resolve any differences of opinion in a way that is polite, friendly, cooperative, and respectful.

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 and they will respond to you at their earliest convenience. Note that teachers are often available for a quick chat between 3:15 and 3:45.
- If you have a serious concern, please request a conference to discuss the problem face-to-face with your child's teacher(s). The Lead Teacher, President, Chair of Personnel, or our Ombudsperson will mediate as necessary or as requested.

The Ombudsperson is elected by the Board, as a mediator and facilitator between parents and teachers and between parents and other parents, if resolution is not achieved after direct communication between the parties. The Lead Teacher, President, Chair of Personnel, or Ombudsperson can 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. The Ombudsperson will consider serving as mediator only after the parties have first tried discussing their differences on their own. Parents are always asked to meet with their child's teacher first about anything involving academics, their child's experience in class, or the school day in general.

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 with parents three times a year to discuss each student's progress. 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 from the request. Upon the teacher receiving these evaluations or test results, parents will accept the teacher's recommendations including grade-level placement, tutoring, regular counseling, classroom aide, 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, Spanish II, Art I, and Earth Science.

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 as part of the three-year rotation of science classes at BNS. Students will receive high school credit for the class after taking an elective course to complete the required classroom hours.

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 a time determined at the start of the year based upon staffing availabilities. Possible times include 8:30 a.m., 3:15 p.m., or a time during the school day. 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 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 strongly encourage parents to monitor students' health carefully and stay home when sick.**

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 a 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 to a minimum. Please note that math classes start at 9:00. Arriving late to school three times would result in an absence from math class. Keep in mind that late arrivals (even one minute past 9:00) can be very distracting for the entire class. We strongly encourage all students to arrive by 8:55 and to be ready for class right at 9:00.

### **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 the 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.

BNS relies upon parents and teachers to work together to educate the children. As part of their employment, teachers agree to prioritize positive and appropriate communication. We ask that parents also commit to constructive communication. If ever a parent's communication becomes uncomfortable for a teacher, a third person (e.g., another teacher, the chair of personnel, or other school official) may be asked to join in all future communications (including face-to-face meetings and email exchanges).

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 a consequences guideline 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, responsible, 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 of 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 reviewed with the students by all-school presentation, classroom discussions, or most recently via video-message sent to families in the days prior to school starting. These are the nuts and bolts of the “do and don't” guidelines 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 lunch duty and pick-up helper 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 (not bossy reminders).

### **Indoor Guidelines**

- Walk while inside the building.
- Indoor masking is optional (aside from conditions stipulated by evolving policies—which are distributed via email from the board president). Kids with cold symptoms may be asked to mask especially if coughs are not being effectively caught in the crook of elbow, etc.
- Teachers and students are asked to have masks at school in case of onset of illness.
- 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.
- Respect classroom property all the time in all spaces (e.g., musical instruments, microscopes)
- Wash hands regularly (after bathroom, before eating, 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. Wash for 30 seconds. Use one or 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 storage containers on backs of some toilets unless you need menstruation supplies.
- Keep your hands out of your mouth...and nose...and pants.
- Catch your sneezes and coughs in the crook of your elbow.
- No kissing at school (due to germ management; personal space).
- Toys from home are only for after 3:45 pm.
- 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 sounds.
- 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.

### **Lunch-time and Snack-time Guidelines**

- Recycle and compost whatever you can.
- Eating is enjoyed outside most of the time—at the table areas assigned to each classroom.
- If the “feels like” temperature is below 45 degrees, students may choose to eat indoors or outdoors.
- If the weather prohibits eating outside (heavy rain, thunder), students will eat indoors.
- We don't bring candy or soda to school.
- A bucket for compost scraps is kept on the back porch. Students are encouraged to use this.
- Students should take home any recyclables from their lunch—and recycle them at home.
- Students may not share the food from their lunchboxes with other students (other than siblings).
- Students must stay seated for 15 minutes at lunchtime. Keep your lunch open in front of you. Your body needs food. [Eating snack and lunch are now almost always outside activities.]
- Do not ask lunch duties how much longer to stay seated while eating lunch for 15 minutes.
- Basic table rules = sit on the sitting part (e.g., no sitting on the eating part; no standing on any part).
- The two little red chairs are only for Red Room kids (even during non-lunch time)
- Close and put away snack/lunch containers before going out onto the playground to play.

### **Playground Guidelines**

Note to lunch duty parents and substitutes:

During playground recess times (e.g., after snack time, and after lunch), students should remain outside the entire time (following their 15 minutes of eating-time prior to lunch recess). They may go inside to their assigned bathroom if needed. Most classes have an outdoor spot for water bottles 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 (e.g., below 20 degrees with windchill factored in) and supervising adults. 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- to 60-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.
- Use outdoor shoes (vs. indoor shoes) and keep those shoes tidy on the designated shelf when not on feet.
- 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 sticks or stones, or violent play of any kind is not good for you, 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—with permission.
- Adults will position themselves to provide supervision to all play areas during lunch recesses. Lunch duty parents will establish and assign themselves to "zones." They will be easy to find whenever you need help.
- Teachers will usually be at the teacher look-out area or porch corner during snack recess. Please do not cross their supervision areas, but rather go around them. Stand at the edges to speak to teachers or to pick chips for games.
- Most first aid supplies are in the kitchen, but there is a container of band-aids inside the Red Room door near the shelf outside the Red bathroom. Please leave the wrapper trash in the basket or in paper recycling.
- If you get a cut or scrape you may wash it with soap and water or just water.
- Emergency medications (inhalers, Epi-Pens) are above the sink in the particular students' classes.
- Get a teacher for administration of any emergency meds.
- Adults: An Incident/Accident Form (on lunch-duty shelf or 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 trees) is not allowed. (The No Harvesting Rule)
- Rocks should be kept in the creek bed and not rearranged. Also, no banging rocks against rocks.
- 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, they 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.
- There are several new "baby" trees around the property. Treat them with extra care.
- The sides of the small "stage" are not meant for climbing.
- The mushroom drums ("fungi phones") may be played any time. 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 the BNS PE teacher may adjust/crank the nets.
- Leave the soccer nets for catching balls. Don't play with or play in the nets.
- Don't bother stuff on the porch or side of building (e.g., PE stuff, etc.). Watch out for science experiments and things like that.
- The wooden blocks under the table at the Red Room end of porch are for ASP use. Same re: porch Legos.
- Students may not use PE equipment from PE shelves during regular recess times or ASP.
- Some games have designated balls (Gaga Ball and Four Square), so they may only be used for those games.
- 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.
- The butterfly garden is now the Zen garden and it has rules from the BNS Gardening Group:
  - Please don't mess with the plants or stones, and please do not disturb people in the Zen garden.
  - Please don't run; please walk!
  - Do not move the chairs, just sit.

- The Garden is for quietness, calming down, and other things. Please enjoy this peaceful place!  
You may go to the garden quietly and talk out problems there!
- 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. Gaga ball is okay—provided the rules are being followed.
- Gaga balls may only be used for gaga ball and they will have their own storage location.
- 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.
- Remember to bring/keep water bottles outside...and drink *plenty* of water.
- 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 (not toward outdoor classroom, fences, trees).
- 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. (No bouncing balls on the porch.)
- Let’s take care of the balls by putting them away properly after use (every use), by not sitting on them, by not kicking them at random, by not throwing them up into the trees, and by not kicking them close to fences.
- 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. [For now, we are using only 4 chips to determine teams—to minimize the possibility of teams accidentally becoming uneven.] Students use the corresponding color pinnie. Students are asked not to quit until a game is over. Flags *must* be brought back to pinnie area when recess ends—even if this is before the game ends (and flags were still hidden).
- Swings are for one student at a time. Students must swing in upright position while holding on with both hands. And no jumping off. Also, no twisting.
- 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.
- Do not touch people while they are walking on the balance beams. Use them one person at a time. And no running around in the area of the beam area.
- 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. Aside from a quick trip into Red bathroom, students should change to indoor shoes before entering the building.
- Students should brush off sand and empty sand-filled shoes (away from porch) before changing to indoor shoes and 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”).
- Students should refrain from talking to people walking the path outside the fence and from distracting drivers.
- 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 the 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.

## **Health and Illness**

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 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit 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, they should not attend school until 24 hours after the 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 someone 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, “pinkeye,” 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 Virginia Board of Health; [www.vdh.state.va.us](http://www.vdh.state.va.us); “Reportable Disease List”).  
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/134/2023/03/VIRGINIA-REPORTABLE-DISEASE-LIST.pdf>

Some infectious illnesses will result in a notification being sent out to the community or to particular classrooms as determined by the school President and/or Board.

### **Respiratory Illness (including COVID-19) Health Policy**

We go by the latest CDC guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/precautions-when-sick.html>).

- Students should stay home for 24 hours (after onset of symptoms).
- If the student’s symptoms improve and they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine), they may return to school.
- It is recommended that they mask, distance, and wash hands diligently for five days after returning.

These same policies apply to our teachers and lunch duty/pick up helpers.

## **Health and Immunizations**

The Virginia Department of Health requires that we have a health form listing your child’s immunizations. It is important that this form be on file by the first day of school for incoming students. Immunization 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. In the event of an outbreak or epidemic of any kind, the school will follow guidelines provided by the Virginia Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control.



Please take note of BNS's recommendation regarding immunizations, including regular flu and COVID19. As a policy, BNS strongly encourages every child to be immunized as recommended by the CDC. Vaccines improve the overall health of the community and also decrease risks of illness to individuals. Decreased absences due to illness result in a more robust educational experience.

## **Medication Policy**

Due to intense state regulations and liabilities, the school must ask 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 (if there is a teacher trained and certified for the particular medication) 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 also 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. Many teachers and ASP staff members are trained in Emergency Medication Administration.

## **First Aid**

BNS provides continual First Aid and CPR training to teachers. And our After School Program teachers are required to keep such training and certifications up to date. Parents on duty at lunch and/or pickup times 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 (or just water if preferred by the student/family). Band-aids are on the lunch-duty shelf and near shelf near Red door to playground. Frozen cold packs are in the freezer in the kitchen (to be used when ice is actually needed—and then also returned). 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. 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. You may also wish to consider using hats as an 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. 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 applying their own sunscreen should be supervised by an adult while doing so. All students are encouraged 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.]

## **General Information**

### **Mailboxes**

The lobby mailboxes have made a return—and your child(ren)'s teacher(s) will let you know how often they should be checked. Much of your child's schoolwork will be transported via homework folders or weekly folders, but there may be the need for occasional communication to happen via family mailboxes. Each teacher and some board positions have assigned lobby mailboxes that may be used whenever needed/helpful.

## 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. 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 people. Please do not use school email listservs or classroom chat groups as the means for that communication.

Please note that we all try to use our best judgment 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 a school directory that will be made available in the fall. Email address changes may be sent to Robin Sanborn, our registration records coordinator (robin@new-school.org). Again, all parents and teachers are assumed to have regular access to email.

## School Telephone

The school number is 540-552-6693. The telephone is usually answered via voice mail.

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 or Molly's cell phone: 540-357-1656.

The school President's (Jenny Orr) cell number is. 540-239-8619.

## Security

Please see Jenny or T.J. for the code to the building if your family needs access after school hours—e.g., indoor maintenance TRO. Only a very limited number of people will know the punch code 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 Jenny or T.J. The front door to the lobby will be locked during the school day. 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.

The school has recently formed a **Threat Assessment Team**, as required by state law for accredited schools. Two teachers (T.J. and Molly) lead this team of staff members and have received **Behavioral Threat Assessment Training from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice** (Dr. Gene Deisinger). We refer to elements in this agency's "Model Policies" document when proactively reviewing situations at risk for violence and determining steps for threat management vs crisis management. Communicating about such situations is key: "You cannot connect the dots if you do not collect the dots."

The school is periodically assessed for overall safety and security. The commitment to a communal sense of collective supervision and the easily accessible exits to the outdoors (from every single classroom) have been cited repeatedly as security strengths.

## Mandated Reporting

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.

## Parking Lot

To restate, please observe the directional arrow of our parking lot, as well as the handicapped spaces, and maintain a very slow speed. Note that morning drop-off (see previously outlined time windows) occurs by pulling around the circle and up toward the mailbox area

All-school functions can be quite crowded. During the Graduation and Arts Show we have permission to park along the drive (but never on the grass) of the cemetery (Memorial Gardens) across the street. This is absolutely the *only* time that we have permission to park along "cemetery road." It is totally fine to take a walk over there, though.

## Snow Days

School closing will be announced via email and Remind app as soon as the decision is made. The decision to close (or to delay) is not related to Montgomery County Schools, so please check email or the Remind app on questionable mornings. These decisions are always difficult and not too much fun to make. The President (or designated person) 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 (in the winter), we will likely close or delay our opening. A delayed opening typically means 10:00 a.m. (with arrival happening between 10:00 and 10:30), although sometimes a delay is best with an 11:00 start.

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 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 1080 hour minimum. Discussion of excessive closings (if needed or applicable) would 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 a.m. (or 11:00 a.m.) due to weather: This means that students may be brought to school between 10:00 and 10:30 (or between 11:00 and 11:30, 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 mid-day (noonish “half-days”) due to teacher work times: This means the following pick-up schedule with everyone utilizing the drive-up “pick-up service.”

Purple = 11:30 to 11:45

Green/Turquoise/Blue = 11:45 to 12:00

Red/Orange/Yellow = 12:00 to 12:15

## 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 all students are asked to have a mask with them at school (kept in backpack or desk) in case needed.]

## 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 environment 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 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 disrespectful 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.

### Temperature Policy for Indoor/Outdoor Time

COVID-living moved us toward a stronger tolerance for outdoor weather. And we have developed a love for the quieter, calmer experience of eating outdoors. While rainy weather will likely move us under the porch or indoors and thunder will definitely move us indoors, we will otherwise eat outside (at designated table areas) unless temperatures drop below 45 degrees (with windchill/ “feels like” factored in). When the “feels like” temperature is below 45 degrees students will have a choice of eating indoors or outdoors.

### Food

Students must bring a lunch (including 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 omitting or limiting foods and beverages containing artificial flavors and colors. Soda and candy should not be sent to school (although a few chocolate chips in a granola bar or baked good is fine). 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 label all food containers 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, etc.) 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 outside of school.

### Field Trips

Parents will be notified of any field trips and asked to assist with driving when necessary. The number of field trips each year increases a bit by age/grade—with the younger grades going on 1-2 field trips annually. Please be aware that *all students must wear seatbelts whenever riding in a car*. Note that all children under 8 must use a booster seat. Also note that attendance for some field trip opportunities is determined by student behavior and responsible academic participation.

### Field Trip Driving

Parents and teachers who choose to volunteer as field trip drivers have the following expectations: to have an active driver’s license and vehicle registration, to be insured with at least the minimum limits established by Virginia, to follow statues for seat belts and child restraint in Virginia, to have safe driving records, to drive at safe speeds in a safe manner, and to maintain alertness while driving at all times. Parents may always request to drive their own child on field trips. We often ask that drivers participate in the entire field trip (and help with supervising the students)—as specified by the teacher.

### 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, social media, 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 in addition to email. Please see the Attendance Policy section for more information about attendance. Students are expected to attend school regularly when well.

**Children at School Outside of School Hours**

A child accompanying their parent to a meeting or TRO job at the school outside of school hours is not ideal unless direct supervision can be provided. If it is necessary, please check in with a teacher or the board President about it first. 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 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 maintenance job 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 may indicate, however, when it may be appropriate to bring in certain items for school-related reasons. 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 the 3:45 p.m. roll call*. 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.
- Cell 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.
- 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.
- If “smart watches” are brought to school, they should be kept on *airplane mode* during the school day.

**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, Molly Lucier, or Jenny Orr.**