

## Blacksburg New School Handbook

"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 Blacksburg New School was founded in 1971 by a small group of parents who wanted to establish a school where each student could learn at his or her own pace in a stimulating and creative environment. In June 1986, at the groundbreaking ceremony for a former building (Whipple Drive), Anne 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 new building, Anne 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 Arts—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 non-competitive and 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.

### Statement of Philosophy

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

- ◆ letting each student progress at his/her own pace using meaningful and positive reinforcement.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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, 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, national origin, religion, physical appearance, or on the status, behavior, or beliefs of their parents.

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 her or his 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 his or her character has been assaulted, please intervene and notify a teacher immediately.

## **Administration**

### **Corporation**

Blacksburg New School is run by a Board of Directors, composed of parents and elected by the parent body at the mandatory Spring and Fall Corporation meetings. The Corporation is made up of all 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.

### **2010-2011 Board of Directors**

Olga Padilla-Falto (President)  
 Patti Rowland (Vice-President)  
 Mark Jackson (Treasurer)  
 Myra Leland (Secretary)  
 Jenn Bjurman-Birr  
 Franklin Blankemeyer

Bob Bush  
 Seema Dalal  
 Nancy Hadden  
 Tracy Kwock  
 Anne Larsen  
 Molly Lazar

Molly Lucier  
 Alan Moore  
 Kristen Morgan  
 Sally Provo  
 Donna Vaden  
 Paul Washburn  
 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 parents are encouraged to participate in these important administrative processes.

Building:	facilitated the construction of the current building and continues to work toward the additions to the building; meets weekly when needed and communicates vigorously via email.
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.
Endowment:	administers investments in the BNS Endowment Fund; disburses funds to the school. Members of this committee are nominated by the Board and elected by the Corporation.
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 Building, Scholarship, Playground, and Endowment Funds; meets weekly as needed.
Marketing:	coordinates publicity efforts including brochure development, advertising, and website; meets as needed.
Personnel:	acts to fill staff positions; reviews salaries and contracts; conducts teacher evaluations; handles personnel concerns; meets intensively when needed.
Scholarship:	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) and After School Program Director**

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

B.A., Psychology, Southern Methodist University

M.S., Child Development, Texas Woman's University

Ph.D., Marriage and Family Therapy, Virginia Tech

Certification K-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, The College of William and Mary

Certification K-8

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

#### **Judy Bauer**

B.A., Liberal Arts & Sciences, Virginia Tech

M.A., Curriculum & Instruction, Virginia Tech

Certification K-8

### **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 Blue Room Teacher (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grades)**

#### **MaryAnn Cass**

B.S., Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi

M.S., Criminal Justice, Jacksonville State University

M.A., Education, Virginia Tech

Certification PreK-6

**BNS Turquoise/Blue Room Teacher (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grades)****Trisha Minick**

B.S., Elementary Education, Appalachian State University  
 Certification K-6

**BNS Middle School/Purple Program 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)****Darby Currie**

B.A., English, University of the South  
 M.A., Special Education, Radford University (expected August 2010)

**BNS Middle School/Purple Program Math Teacher****Ellen Oliver**

B.A., Math and Economics, Emory University  
 M.S., Middle School Math Educations, Western Carolina University  
 Certification 6-8 Math

**BNS Middle School/Purple Program Math Teacher (Algebra I)****Victoria Dean**

B.S., Mathematics Education, Virginia Tech

**BNS Spanish Teacher (K, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grades; High School Level I)****Jennifer Davie**

B.A., Spanish, Virginia Tech  
 B.A., International Studies, Virginia Tech  
 M.A., Foreign Language and Literature (Spanish), West Virginia University

**BNS Spanish Teacher (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grades; High School Level I)****Shana Morris**

B.A., Foreign Language and International Trade, University of Alabama Huntsville  
 M.A., Hispanic Studies, Virginia Tech (*anticipated May 2011*)

**BNS Art Teacher****Patti Rowland**

B.S., Art, Radford University

**BNS P.E. Teacher****Beth Gainer**

B.S., Child and Family Development, University of Georgia  
 M.Ed., Elementary Education, Cambridge College  
 Certification 1-6

**BNS Music Teacher****Dan Schneck**

B.S., Mechanical Engineering, City College of New York  
 M.S., Aeronautics, Astronautics, and Biomedical Engineering, New York School of Engineering & the School of Medicine  
 Ph.D., Fluid, Thermal, and Aerospace Sciences, Case Western University  
 Juilliard-trained violinist  
 Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, retired member

**Judi Schneck**

B.S., Applied Music (Violin Performance), University of Arizona  
 B.G.S., Special Education, Radford University  
 Juilliard-trained violinist  
 Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, retired member

**2010-2011 Blacksburg New School Calendar**

Parents will need to arrange alternative childcare for days that BNS is closed.

Aug.	16-20	Teacher Work Week
Aug.	23	First Day of School (a Monday)

(Virginia Tech also starts on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; Montgomery County Public Schools begin Mon. the 30<sup>th</sup>.)

Aug.	27-28	Annual "Giant Yard Sale" fundraiser; Friday and Saturday (at BNS)
Sept.	6	Labor Day, BNS is CLOSED (VT is open; MCPS are closed.)
Sept.	25	Annual "Auction for Education" fundraiser; Saturday night
Oct.	8	BNS Closes at 12:00, Teacher Work Time for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement (This is a Friday; VT is open but with no class for "fall break")
Oct.	11	No Classes, Teacher Work Day for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement (This is a Monday and it also happens to be Columbus Day; MCPS are open.)
Oct.	14	Corporation Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Thursday
Nov.	6	Annual "Shopping Day" fundraiser at BNS; Saturday 10:00 to 4:00
Nov.	18	Our Thanksgiving Celebration; 6:00 p.m., Thursday evening
Nov.	22-26	Thanksgiving Break (the full week)
Dec.	17	BNS will be open until 3:15 with <b>no</b> After School Program. This is the Friday before our Winter Break. (MCPS lets out on Dec. 23 <sup>rd</sup> )
Dec. Jan.	18 - 2	Winter Break (two full weeks)
Jan.	3	School resumes (a Monday; MCPS also resume on Jan. 3; VT classes resume on Tues. Jan. 18)
Jan.	17	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a Monday, BNS is CLOSED (VT closed. MCPS are closed.)
Feb.	12	Annual "Chocolate Party" fundraiser; Saturday at University Mall
Feb.	18	BNS Closes at 12:00, Teacher Work Time for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement
Feb.	21	No Classes; Teacher Work Day for Parent-Teacher Conferences preparation/reimbursement (This is a Monday and it also happens to be Presidents' Day; MCPS are closed.)
Mar.	2	Science Fair; Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.
Mar.	7-11	Spring Break (This is VT's Spring Break.) (MCPS Spring Break = April 21, 22, 25)
Mar.	17	Corporation Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Thursday
April	18-29	Authors' Tea Weeks, 6:00 p.m. each evening (MTW, TWTh)
May	13	No Classes, Teacher Work Day for Parent-Teacher Conference preparation (This is a Friday.)
May	16	No Classes, Teacher Work Day for Parent-Teacher Conference preparation (This is a Monday.)
May	30	Memorial Day, BNS is CLOSED. (This is a Monday. VT and MCPS are scheduled to be closed.)
June	2	Annual Arts Festival and End-of-Year Picnic Dinner Celebration, 6:00 p.m. (Thursday)
June	3	Last Day of School; Graduation Ceremony at 10:00 a.m.; BNS Closes at 12:00 noon (This is a Friday. MCPS's last day is scheduled to be Tues., June 10)

BNS School Day = 9:00 am – 3:15 pm

This is a 178 day calendar with 3 snow days allotted (for 175 day minimum).

This is a 1059 hour calendar; state requirement = 990 hours.

The 69 hours of Banked Time may be used for weather delays or additional weather days off.

### 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.

### Drop-off/Pick-up Policy

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.

All parents are encouraged to escort their children from the car into the building. We ask that only parents of middle school students—6<sup>th</sup> graders and older—allow those students to walk into the building on their own. PLEASE be certain to watch your child enter the front door. Elementary students (5<sup>th</sup> graders 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 child 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. 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. 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.

### Academic Program

Teachers prepare units of study that are 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.

The core curriculum includes:

Math	Spanish
Language Arts	Art
Science	Physical Education
Social Studies	Music

### After School Program

The After School Program is a state-licensed program that lasts from 3:45 to 5:45 on every full day that school is in session (with the exception of the last Friday prior to Winter Break). The program may be used on a regular or drop-in basis. Parents who are on-site providing service to the school or meeting with teachers or other parents during this time will not be charged for the ASP service. It is important, however, that these parents sign themselves in and out on the daily sign-out log. Under the supervision of the after-school staff, the students engage in a variety of outdoor and indoor activities. If needed, students may be divided into separate groups during this time. It is very important that *all* parents adhere to the ASP’s check out policy. The ASP director will distribute specific guidelines about this program during the first week of school. *Please note that this program ends at 5:45 sharp.*

## Tuition and Fees

### Tuition/Registration:

Monthly **full** tuition for the 2010-2011 school year is \$620.

There are 9.5 monthly tuition payments, plus a non-refundable annual registration fee equal to one month's tuition. This makes a total of 10.5 payments for the year. The second child in the same family receives a \$50 per month reduction. The third child in the same family receives a \$100 per month reduction. The fourth child in the same family receives a \$150 per month reduction. And the fifth child in the same family receives a \$200 per month reduction. The annual registration fee is waived for third and subsequent children from the same family. Each spring every family is required to pay this registration fee in order to hold their child(ren)'s spot for the following year.

#### **Tuition Reduction Options (TROs):**

TROs involve the performance of specified duties for the school. Categories of duties include administrative, cleaning and maintenance, and interactive (with the students) options. Families are offered one TRO per enrolled child. They require approximately 1½ to 2 hours per week, are worth \$60 per month in reduced tuition, and are organized by the school's Vice President. A list of the TRO assignments is posted in our lobby. Parents are expected to be familiar with all of the responsibilities of their TRO. Additional TROs *may* be available upon request.

#### **Supply and Activity Fee:**

A semi-annual supply and activity fee of \$250 per student in grades K through 5 and \$312.50 per student in grades 6 through 8 (middle school) is charged at the beginning of each academic year and again in January to cover the cost of books, supplies, and most field trips. Overnight field trips for the upper grades, for example, usually require a supplemental fee.

#### **After School Program:**

The fees for the ASP are \$5 per student for half-afternoon (student picked up before 4:45 pm) and \$10 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 \$40 per week is available for families who utilize this program on a regular basis.

#### **Extra Events/Field Trips:**

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 will also appear on the monthly statements of those who choose to participate. Some events may require advance payment.

#### **Missed Obligations:**

If you cannot fulfill your TRO on a particular day, you are expected to find a substitute from within the parent body. Parents are often willing to switch days. Parents missing a scheduled TRO without finding a substitute will be assessed a charge of \$15 for each missed obligation. Continued inability to properly execute a TRO commitment may result in a TRO reassignment or the discontinuance of the TRO opportunity.

Because the teachers depend on parent support, it is essential that lunch duties *arrive on time*.

The school recognizes that in times of illness or emergency, you may not be able to find a last-minute substitute. If this happens please call the Vice President (Patti Rowland) rather than the teacher.

Also, parents are asked to observe the closing time of our After School Program. Parents will be charged a late fee of \$1 per minute (per child) 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 for our staff and your children by arriving on time.

#### **Parent-School Contract:**

Parents sign 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 1st of Month:**

On or about the 25th of each month, an invoice will be distributed to each family's mailbox. This

invoice will reflect the charges that have accrued through the 20th of the month plus the usual tuition charge for the coming month. All charges are considered due by the 1st of the month, each month, September through June (the June payment will be for ½ month). The first invoice showing September's tuition and the annual supply/activity fee will be distributed 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 on your check the reason for the payment. 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 placed in the tuition box on the side of the family mailboxes.

**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. 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 now utilizes a professional cleaning service. The professional cleaning schedule, however, must be supplemented. Keeping our school clean is our responsibility. Several parents will be providing

regular cleaning as part of their TRO duties. Additionally, a major indoor clean-up session is organized near the start of the school year. Each family is asked to please help with this cleaning. It is a very nice way to get to know the building and the community. Grounds clean-up and outdoor maintenance activities are announced throughout the year depending on need.

If you notice any safety hazards or items in need of repair, please leave a note in the box of the appropriate maintenance parent (Building/Indoor or Grounds/Outdoor).

## **Interaction with Teachers and Parents**

In a parent cooperative, there is 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 whenever they like. Parents are asked, however, 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.

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 her/his mailbox and she/he will respond to you at her/his earliest convenience.
- If you have a serious disagreement with a teacher, make an appointment to discuss the problem face-to-face. The Lead Teacher, President, or Ombudsperson will mediate when necessary.

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, 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, or Ombudsperson will arrange and facilitate a meeting between the parties involved.

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 hold formal one-on-one conferences three times a year with parents 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 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 special testing (including psychological evaluation) or special services (e.g. tutoring), parents will comply with such a request as soon as possible and not longer than 30 days. Upon the teacher receiving test results, parents will accept the teacher's recommendations including 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 she/he leaves 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.

### **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. Consequences for excessive absences are outlined below:

- If a student has 10 absences, the teachers will notify the parents in writing, as well as the President of the school. The President will call a meeting with the parent(s) to discuss the situation and to strategize ways to improve attendance.
- If a student has 15 absences, s/he 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, s/he 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.

Please note that math classes start at 9:00 for grades 1 through 8. Arriving late could result in an absence for math class. Keep in mind that late arrivals are *very* distracting for the entire class.

### **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, a hug, 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 unacceptable language (e.g. curse words), or is beyond any other means of discipline, the teacher will ask the parents to take the student home. A teacher-parent 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 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 her/his 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 made available to all parents via email at the start of the school year.

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 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 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.

## **Playground Guidelines**

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 indoor lunch-time. They may go inside the Red Room bathroom if needed and they may get a drink of water at the fountain outside this door. In cold weather the play may be shortened as determined by the temperature and supervising adults. 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, and Blue Room students is from 12:00 to 1:00. Purple Program lunchtime is from 12:00 to 12:45. While supervising students during playground times, please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Positive, creative, active play is to be encouraged.
- Teasing, hitting, throwing of sticks or stones, or violent play of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Two or more students playing together must include others in their play if it is requested.
- 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.
- Adults should position themselves as to provide supervision to all play areas. Lunch duty parents should establish and assign themselves to “zones.”
- First aid supplies are in the kitchen. A container of bandaids is on the shelf near Red bathroom.
- Emergency medications (inhalers, Epi-Pens) are above the sink in the particular students classes.
- 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.
- Harvesting (e.g. picking berries, pulling leaves off tree) is not allowed.
- Rocks should be kept in the creek bed and not rearranged.
- Touching (or poking or carrying) bugs is not allowed. 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 (teacher permission required) pencils, paper, or other writing equipment must stay on the 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 fence, tree, or basketball pole climbing is allowed, nor is hanging/pulling on tree branches or basketball hoops.
- Only adults or middle school students (with adult permission) may adjust the basketball nets.
- 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.
- The very large tire may not be rolled downhill.
- 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.
- Two (and only two) students at a time may be on the monkey bars, but they must not come into physical contact with one another. Also: no hanging from legs or climbing on top of monkey bars.
- Students may sit at the picnic tables—but not stand on them.

- If students are eating outside they must sit down while eating. Younger kids should utilize the picnic tables; older kids may sit on porch benches or outdoor classroom if picnic tables are in use.
- 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.”
- Only balls and saucers are to be thrown and only in open spaces.
- Soccer and similar field games should be played on the field.
- Swings are for one student at a time. Students must swing in upright position. And no jumping off.
- The little picnic table under the new climbing structure is to be treated gently—no standing on it.
- 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 are encouraged to utilize a second “outdoor” pair of shoes—especially on muddy days.
- Students are asked to brush off sand and empty sand-filled shoes before entering the building.
- When given a verbal reminder of a guideline, students are encouraged to verbally acknowledge the reminder (e.g. “okay”).
- Things at BNS stay at BNS. Students may not take anything (sticks, rocks, caterpillars) home from the 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.

## **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 one hundred (100 F) degrees or greater must be picked up from school immediately. The student may not return to BNS until s/he has been without fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

Any student with the 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, s/he must be picked up from school and may not return to BNS until well (24 hours recommended since 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 on the emergency form 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.

## **Medicine Policy**

Due to intense and new state regulations, 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 should not be stored at the school. The school may consider an extenuating circumstance and in that case the parent must meet the extensive new regulations with regards to the storage and paperwork associated with the medication. Please note that the school does not administer behavioral medications.

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 or inhaler), the parent must secure the required written documentation from the child’s doctor at the start of each semester, complete the paperwork for the medication administration at the start of each semester, 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. Please note that students may never have medication (not even a vitamin or lozenge) in their pockets, backpacks, lunchboxes, or cubbies.

## **Health**

The Virginia State Department of Health requires that we have a health form stating whether or not your child has had 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.

Please 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**

Each family and teacher is assigned a mailbox at the school. Communications from teachers, the Board, and other parents are 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. Parents should let the President know if they have no regular access to email. In addition, 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.

The school communicates regularly through the parent email list: [parents@new-school.org](mailto:parents@new-school.org), as well as through the teacher and classroom lists posted in your directory. Email address changes may be sent to Olga Padilla-Falto at [padillafalto@gmail.com](mailto:padillafalto@gmail.com). Again, all parents and teachers are strongly encouraged to have regular access to email.

### **School Telephone**

The school number is 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: 230-3964. The school’s fax number is 552-5115.

### Security

Please see Olga or T.J. for the code to the building if your family needs access after school hours— e.g. cleaning TRO. Only a limited number of people need to 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 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 Olga 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 door is in its locked position.

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

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. All-school functions can be quite crowded. During most of these events we have permission to park along the drive (but never on the grass) of the cemetery (Memorial Gardens) across the street.

### Snow Days

School closing will be announced on WVTF (NPR affiliate; 89.1 FM) radio station, as well as on the three major television stations. An email message will also be sent as soon as the decision is made. The decision to close is not related to Montgomery County Schools, so please listen to the radio, watch television, or check email on questionable mornings. These decisions are always difficult and not too much fun to make. The President tries to make this decision as 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 in to work, or if the school is without power, we will 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 our teachers are unable to drive their routes to school safely we do not open. Three snow days are built into the BNS calendar. Discussion regarding lost school days due to snow (if 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. 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: Emergencies 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.

### Proper Clothing

Students must have proper seasonal clothing at BNS. They will always need to have extra shoes or slippers and an extra change of clothes available. Boots, hats, gloves, and winter coats are needed in the winter months. Wet weather means more clothing changes. Please label everything and check the Lost and Found regularly. When weather dictates, parents are encouraged to sunscreen their children prior to the school day. **Students must wear appropriate footwear for P.E. classes.**

## **Food**

Students must bring a lunch (including beverage) and a morning snack each day. BNS does not provide either food or beverages. 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 child's physical, intellectual, and emotional development. Families are responsible for providing a nutritionally balanced lunch for their child. Foods such as potato chips, cakes, and 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. 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 her/his appetite and preferences.

All lunches and snacks should be ready to eat with no additional preparation necessary. There is no student access to microwave and refrigerator 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.

## **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.

## **Birthday Parties**

If your child would like to have a small birthday celebration at school, please make arrangements with the teacher in advance. Also, since the class sizes are small, please be sensitive to students' feelings when inviting students to parties outside of school.

## **Field Trips**

Parents will be notified of field trips and asked to assist with driving when necessary. Please be aware of our seat belt policy: *All students must wear seat belts 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.

## **Photographs**

Students (and their work) are often photographed both at the school and on field trips. In addition to lobby displays and scrapbook compilations, these photographs 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 of your child (or your child's work) to be used for such purposes.

## **No Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited in the school building and on the school grounds.

## **Absences**

We are always concerned when students are absent. Please notify the teacher when your child will not be in school. Please see Attendance Policy section for more information about attendance. Students are expected to attend school regularly.

## **Children at School Outside School 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 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**

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 trading cards of any kind or weapon-focused toys or books) to be played with *after 3:45 p.m.* Hand-held video games (of appropriate content) may be only played after 5:00.

**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 Olga Padilla-Falto.**