

## **F. A. Day Middle School Newsletter**

*September 4, 2020*

### **Quotes of the Week**

***“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite the darkness.” -Desmond Tutu***

***“Just do the next right thing.” --- Elsa, Frozen II***

\*\*\* Note: I am sending this newsletter again. The last version had some formatting issues that made it challenging to read. My apologies. Have a wonderful weekend!

#### **THIS WEEK’S QUOTES**

At the 8th Grade Completion Ceremony this past June, I talked about the challenging times confronting our students, not fully aware at that moment, that fall would bring some similar, and in some ways, more complex challenges. In June I was reminded that our students were that “light” or the stars in the darkness that propelled all of us forward to find innovative ways to create some normalcy for our children despite the public health and racial injustices around them.

Each family has worked to find a way to do that over this past summer and now as we prepare to welcome your children back to school in a virtual world, you are passing that torch again to us. Like with all of you at the beginning of the summer, at first it was overwhelming to know how to reinvent school, and explore ways to improve upon how we approach education, community building and social emotional learning in this virtual world. We knew that we needed to improve the model that was created during the first weeks of the public health crisis this past spring. And so... as a first step, we did what we knew to be “the next right thing.”

This summer we tapped NPS teachers from across all four middle schools to create resources for their colleagues in supporting students’ social emotional needs and executive functioning, fostering community and engagement, universally designing curriculum, creating actively anti-racist school communities and using technology to achieve all of these goals.

This past week, our Day faculty has leaned into the first four days of professional development which will continue over five more days to build their capacity to engage your children in rigorous academic work and support the needs of our middle school students for peer interaction and social engagement despite the distance and removal for now from a physical classroom. Our faculty is collaborating every day as multi-disciplinary teams to build connections and community and in grade level content

departments to universally design curriculum to create entry points for students of all needs and ability and endless ceilings for student growth. They are building their capacity to use their new learning partner, technology, to maximize student engagement and learning.

While certainly in uncharted territory, it seems “doing the next right thing” has led us to a place where I am confident in our preparation to welcome back your children in a distance learning environment. At our opening day faculty meeting this year, we focused on the power of hope in this changing environment. We poured through your children’s responses to their “hopes for the new school year,” and in that we found our shining light to begin again. I thank you for entrusting us with the care of your children and look forward to a new year at Day Middle School.

## **PARENT ORIENTATIONS**

Although parent orientations are typically reserved for our incoming 6th graders, this, as we have noted, is not a typical year. Many of the familiar structures of middle school will look differently even to our returning 7th and 8th graders. We will share this new experience together beginning this week with purposeful efforts to orient families and students to our new distance learning and eventually hybrid learning structures.

Toward that end, I have scheduled three, grade-level virtual orientation sessions for parents and guardians of our middle school students. Your children are welcome to join you, but please know that this presentation will be geared to parents and guardians. Our skilled Day faculty are already actively engaged in planning orientation opportunities for your children the first week of school.

Below are the meeting times by grade, the meeting invitation link and our virtual meeting norms that we must follow because we will likely be such a large online group:

**Event:** Parent and Guardian Orientation

**Date:** Wednesday, September 9, 2020

**Times:**

- 6th grade parents/guardians from 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- 7th grade parents/guardians from 6:15 p.m. 7:15 p.m.
- 8th grade parents/guardians from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

\*\* Sessions will be recorded in case you are unable to attend

Please use the same Zoom link for each meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://newton-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/96038706011>

Meeting ID: 960 3870 6011

Passcode: dayparents

### ***Norms for virtual Principal Office Hours:***

- To join, please click on the Zoom meeting link above at your designated time.
- When you enter, you will be muted so that we can hear all participants one at a time. Please keep your microphone muted unless called on for a question.
- The video sessions will be recorded for those who cannot attend at the designated time.
- You need to use the chat feature to write questions.
- Please post your name on your screen in your Zoom settings as I will ask you to unmute so that we can have a dialogue about your question.
- This is not a “drop in office hours”. It is disruptive to add members while the session is going on, so I will only admit participants up to 3 minutes past the start time of the meeting.
- Please refrain from asking specific questions about your child or a faculty member out of respect for confidentiality. Any questions of that nature should be directed to me via an email so that a personal conversation can be scheduled.

### **PARKING LOT**

To make this time most productive, I have again created a virtual “parking lot” for your questions. Please follow the link below to submit questions you might have for the coming year. I will do my best to answer them periodically right in the parking lot, but will also use the parking lot questions to frame our discussions during office hours. Please note that this document will remain live, and you can also use it to add your own questions. I will check it periodically to respond. The benefit of using this format is that many parents have similar questions, and you are able to view all of the responses.

[Day Parent/Guardian Question Parking Lot August 2020](#)

***In order to respect the privacy of you and your child, I ask that you do not put any questions about any individual student issue into the parking lot but rather email me directly for an appointment.***

**RECORDING OF 9-2-20 PRINCIPAL OFFICE HOUR:** [Principal Office Hours 9-2-20](#)

**SAVE THE DATE**

***6th Grade and New Students “Safely Distanced” Welcome Social:***

**When:** Monday, September 14, 2020 at 12:00 - 3:30 (\*each team will meet for 30 minutes)

**Description:** 6th graders will receive their team and homeroom/homebase assignments on Friday, 9/11. We will invite them to Albemarle Field by team and assign them to their smaller advisory groups to have ice cream and get to know their teachers and classmates. Each team meeting will only be 30 minutes long. All 6th graders will receive their Day Middle School “swag bags” with curricular materials. Details about the exact 30 minute block for teams will go out on Friday. Parents will wait in their cars on Albemarle or nearby.

\*We will work with individual families on transportation issues. An adult must accompany the student to avoid large groups of student gatherings before or after the event.

***7th and 8th Grade Materials Pick-Up:***

**When:** Tuesday, September 15, 2020. Morning 7th grade; Afternoon - 8th grade:

**Description:** Parents will be given directions to drive around the school on Minot Place. As in the spring with the locker clean-out, you will put your child’s last name and grade in the front window. You and your child will be given a Day Swag Back courtesy of our generous Day PTO, which will be filled with necessary curricular materials for the year.

Details about the exact times will be included in next week’s newsletter. Last year’s yearbooks will also be available for pick-up and purchase.

**SHARING OF COHORT INFORMATION**

Although we are beginning our school year in a distance learning model, we are informing families now about their child’s cohort in November when we transition to the hybrid model.

On Wednesday, September 9, 2020, families will be receiving information about the cohort their child has been placed in when the middle school transitions to a hybrid model in November. Middle school students placed in “Cohort A” will attend school in person beginning on November 16th on Monday and Tuesday mornings, and those in “Cohort B” will attend school on Thursdays and Fridays.

Students who will be “distance only” in November will also be placed in cohorts, indicating when their virtual morning classes will take place (either Monday and Tuesday - Cohort A or Thursday and Friday- Cohort B).

The district will be sending out information to families to inform them how they can access cohort information via ASPEN, our student information system, on Wednesday.

## **TEAM PLACEMENTS**

We expect that team placement information will be posted and available for students and families this Friday, September 11, 2020. Students will be assigned to a team, and a home base/homeroom, which is then divided into smaller advisory groups. Each advisor will be responsible for connecting with 10-12 students on your child’s team. More information will be provided prior to team postings this Friday.

## **VIDEO MESSAGE TO OUR STUDENTS**

I will be sending out a video message to students via their NPS Gmail accounts on Tuesday, September 15, 2020 to welcome our students back to a new school year. Please have them practice using their school-issued NPS Gmail accounts as this will be an important skill in the new school year. Their Gmails are their [LASID@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:LASID@newton.k12.ma.us). Their LASID number is the same as their lunch numbers. Their passwords are the same as their Google accounts. They can access their Gmail from the student tab of the NPS website.

### **Student Gmail**

As you have been notified by our Technology Director, Steven Rattendi, last week, NPS students now have access to a student Gmail account. As teachers and students learn how to access these accounts, we will explore more direct communication with students about distance learning resources. In the interim, please have your child become familiar with their Gmail account. Instructions for doing so are linked below:

[Gmail Instructions](#)

The links have been added to the district [COVID-19 Technology Support](#) page, and to the district [Student Resources](#) page.

If your child does not remember their LASID number or if they are new to Newton Public Schools, please add your contact information to the document linked below, and we will have Ms. Fisher, my assistant get in touch with you.

## **SCHOOL SUPPLY LISTS**

School Supply lists will be finalized by Friday, September 11, 2020 and sent out with my newsletter. This is a “recommended” supply list. Any family unable to purchase items on the list can contact guidance counselors and supplies will be provided by us.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Our NPS Technology Department sent out an important email this past Thursday about family technology needs. Please check your SPAM folder if you did not receive it. It would have been sent from the email address below:

[ftsupport+c19-1to1@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:ftsupport+c19-1to1@newton.k12.ma.us)

As I have indicated previously, NPS will eventually provide a Chromebook to every middle school student, but given the back orders of laptops throughout the country, some of the devices will not be shipped in time for the start of school on September 16th. As a result, the technology department is sending out this survey to ask for information about immediate technology needs for the beginning of the school year. Please take a moment to complete the survey as soon as you receive it.

## **FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

The first day of school is Wednesday, September 16, 2020. Teachers will be calling home welcoming families and sending out information about how students access their advisory class, which is their first class on Wednesday, September 16th.

## **STUDENTS IN THE BUILDING**

A small cohort of students have been identified due to their needs to attend school in person beginning on September 16th. Families of students who were identified for this instructional model have already been notified. We will be sending out more information to those families about building-based protocols and safety precautions. If

you have any questions, please out to Mike Thurm, our Assistant Principal for Student Services at [thurmm@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:thurmm@newton.k12.ma.us)

## **SUMMER READING**

In times of uncertainty, there is something reassuring about the consistency of summer reading. This year our Day Middle School Summer Reading Committee has done an exceptional job of selecting books that have a common theme of resilience, which is a concept that we will be discussing frequently throughout this school year as we look to develop our students' ability to navigate a challenging landscape. Below is information about each grade level's summer reading expectations.

[Day Summer Reading 2020](#)

## **YEARBOOKS**

Students who purchased last year's yearbooks will be able to pick them up on their designated date of materials pick up (9/15). Rising 9th graders (last year's 8th graders) will pick up their yearbooks this coming week. A separate email will be going out to them through the NNHS listserv.

## **CONTACTING THE SCHOOL**

Our school offices are now open from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. The general school number is: 617-559-9100.

Contact Ms. Donna Fisher or Ms. Gandolfo for general school questions:

[fisherd@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:fisherd@newton.k12.ma.us)

[gandolfo@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:gandolfo@newton.k12.ma.us)

Contact Ms. Michelle Barry or Ms. Maria Vitone with questions about registration:

[barrym@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:barrym@newton.k12.ma.us)

[vitonem@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:vitonem@newton.k12.ma.us)

Contact Mike Thurm with questions about IEPs or 504s or any questions related to student services:

[thurmm@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:thurmm@newton.k12.ma.us)

Contact Deborah Romeo or Michael Harding for team, cohort or course placement questions:

[romeod@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:romeod@newton.k12.ma.us)

[hardingm@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:hardingm@newton.k12.ma.us)

Contact your guidance counselors for questions about your child's transition to school:

6th Grade: Ms. Bernier and Ms. Murphy

[bernierbe@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:bernierbe@newton.k12.ma.us)

[murphyj@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:murphyj@newton.k12.ma.us)

7th Grade: Ms. Bryant or Mr. Thompson

[bryantm@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:bryantm@newton.k12.ma.us)

[thompsonj@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:thompsonj@newton.k12.ma.us)

8th Grade: Ms. Calabro, Ms. Burke, Mr. Dewees

[calabros@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:calabros@newton.k12.ma.us)

[burkem@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:burkem@newton.k12.ma.us)

[deweesd@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:deweesd@newton.k12.ma.us)

And of course, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at my email below.

My best to you and your families. I look forward to seeing everyone at our parent orientations this Wednesday.

Jackie Mann

F. A. Day Principal

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