



NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL

Academics • Balance • Citizenship

The Power of Choice

January 2025

Based on Principal

Important Policy Update

Dear Parents of New Heights Students, I am choosing to use my space in this month’s letter so that you are all properly informed of two recent and important changes to rules and policies at New Heights.

At the December 11th meeting of the school’s board of directors, two policies were reviewed, recommended for adoption and passed for immediate enforcement. The first was a policy regarding prohibiting the act of loitering on the school’s campus. The second policy addresses the management of students’ cell phones and other electronic devices during the school day.

For each policy, we will give a short to the point version, but for those who want more details, you can read the longer, detailed explanation directly below the short version.

No Loitering



(Short) No Loitering means students are not allowed to gather in groups and hang out in any area of the school or on the school’s campus without a legitimate school-related purpose.

(Detailed) The act of loitering has been addressed by colleges, universities, communities, shopping centers and malls, cities, and now New Heights School. The general idea is that students and visitors are prohibited from assembling, gathering, congregating, or grouping anywhere on campus unless it is for a scheduled or structured activity, which would include a teacher, staff member or supervisor. Over the years we have had several instances where groups of students, most commonly high school aged students, decide to gather in between classes in various locations of the school. These groups typically begin as small groups of 3- 5 students, but have the potential to grow into groups of 10 or more. Regardless of the size of these groups, the group members tend to get loud, tend to use inappropriate language, and tend to cause a lot of issues. Unintended issues include creating feelings of intimidation for people who want to pass through the area where these groups tend to gather to point that students and staff have both reported that they are nervous or hesitant to use the drinking fountains and restrooms, and some have said that they feel forced to use alternate pathways to access spaces in the building. This should never be the case in a public space. So, the board of directors has taken the position with the school’s staff and administration that the act of loitering is strictly prohibited. Students will still be given passing time to move from one scheduled time of day to another, but they are expected to move appropriately to and from those locations without stopping and gathering in groups and basically “hanging out” in those groups anywhere in the school or on the campus.



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IMPORTANT DATES

- Jan. 2 — School Resumes
- Jan. 15—Board of Directors Meeting 4pm
- Jan. 16—End of Quarter 2
- Jan. 17—No School- Grading day
- Jan. 20—No School- MLK Jr. Day
- Jan. 21- Quarter 3 Begins

Based on Principal (Cont'd)

While this policy won't solve all of the school's problems, it does provide guidance as to what students can do, what they can't do, and what will happen if repeated violations of this policy occur. New Heights strives to offer a safe school environment, physically and emotionally for all people. The No Loitering policy is intended to help ensure that the school is and remains a physically and emotionally safe place.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

The second policy that was passed is one that addresses student Cell Phone and Device Management.

(Short) Basically the new policy clearly states students, regardless of age, are not permitted to use any personal cell phone or any personal electronic device in any class space from the time the bell rings to start class until the time the bell rings to end class... period.



(Detailed) You may or may not be aware that cell phones and devices are causing a lot of problems with students in schools around the world. This is evident in many aspects, but among them is that these devices are occupying too much of our students' time and energy, and the academic production of students is in rapid and significant decline. The governor of the state of MN has compelled all school and district leaders to pass more robust school policies regarding the use of these devices. The state did not provide much guidance on how to do this, but we at New Heights know what we want to do in terms of creating a space where students can get back to paying more attention to what matters most at school, which is going to mean stricter enforcement of the use of devices while at school. Here are the basics:

Students in grades K-5 come to school, in some cases, possessing a cell phone or device. Students in grades K-5 may not access their phones or devices during the school day whatsoever. This remains the same as the current practice.

Students in grade 6-12, regardless of age, may bring their phones to school, but are not allowed to use their cell phones, smart watches, tablets, ear pods, earbuds, headphones, or any other device capable of interacting with the internet or music in any class unless it is expressly part of a teacher led lesson, which would only involve the use of school-owned and supported devices.

We recognize that most students are going to possess and bring some of these devices to school, but when class begins, which is signaled by the ringing of timed bells, all devices are to be put away and kept out of sight for the remainder of class time. The end of class is also determined by the ringing of a timed bell for students in grades 6-12. At that time, students are free to check their phones. Students may also access their phones during breakfast, lunch and passing time only. Cell phone use is not permitted in the restrooms whatsoever. Of course, this aspect is hard to enforce, but students are expected to adhere to this provision. Restrooms are places where privacy is of utmost importance and cell phones are not to be used in these places.

Students, for now, will continue to be permitted to bring their phones and or devices to school, but must adhere to the policy expectations in place for each age level. Consequences for violations will range from having to turn the phone over to a teacher for the remainder of a class period, all the way to not being allowed to bring the phones to school at all. Of course there is a range of steps in between.

Eventually we believe that the state legislators will create a law that universally deals with this issue in all public schools, but they have not done so yet despite mandating that school officials do so at the local level. So, starting January 2, 2025, the school will be enforcing this new policy. It isn't complicated, but if you have questions, feel free to call the school and you can chat with Mr. Kearney or Mrs. Massmann. One or both of them should be able to answer your questions regarding these new policies.

Thank You.



Based on Principal Continued from page 2...

End Of Quarter 2...Start of Q3

The end of quarter 2 is just around the corner. Students will have just short of 3 weeks to get all necessary work turned in and graded in order to pass classes and or improve upon their current grade in their classes. Remember that New Heights has moved to a quarterly grading system rather than a semester grading system, which means that each quarter is important and students need to stay focused and stay current in these classes.

Our teachers will work with the students upon their return this Thursday to get reacclimated to the school environment and get their minds back their academic responsibilities. The end of the quarter is Thursday January 16th with the teachers' grading day being Friday the 17th. As normal, students in grades 6-12 will get new schedules upon their return to school on Tuesday January 21st. That day will also mark the beginning of Q3, which is a brand new grading period. There will not be conferences scheduled for January or February.

Congratulations on a New Arrival!

We want to congratulate Mrs. Johnson, our 6th grade teacher and middle school math teacher, on the birth of her new baby girl. She and her husband are celebrating the birth of their second child, who arrived on Sunday the 29th of December. What a great time of year for this exciting news and for the addition of a new family member! Obviously Mrs. Johnson will be taking some time off from her duties at school to be at home with her new baby, so we have made arrangements for Mr. Beau Junker to fill in during the remainder of 2nd quarter and through the duration of Mrs. Johnson's maternity leave, which is expected to last for the entire 3rd quarter. Mr. Junker comes to us with lots of solid experience as a licensed social studies teacher, elementary teacher and school administrator. He spent a few days in the room with Mrs. Johnson prior to winter break to see how the classes run and to get a chance to meet the students before taking over the teaching responsibilities. We are very confident that Mr. Junker will provide the students with an excellent experience over the course of the next 12 weeks or so. Hopefully some of you will get the chance to meet him at some point.

Back on Track For The New Year!

It is always a good idea to try to get your children, our students, back on track and ready to resume school. It is often the case that children of all ages get on very different schedules during larger breaks from school. That means staying up late at night, lots of screen time, sleeping in late, and not having a lot of scheduled responsibilities. As you can imagine, that makes returning to school a huge shock to the system. So, although there isn't a lot of time between you receiving and hopefully reading this newsletter, and the return to school, maybe some of you can make the transition a little easier by encouraging getting to bed at a reasonable hour and maybe reducing screen time just to get the students' brains to reset a bit. We might see more engagement rather than zombie-like, worn out humans on the first few days back. Either way, school resumes Thursday January 2nd. Happy New Year Everyone!

Recent Events at NHS

Student Council and Elementary Reading Buddies

Student Council Members spent time at the end of November reading to the Kindergarten and First Grade Class!



Elementary Field Trip to Wargo Nature Center

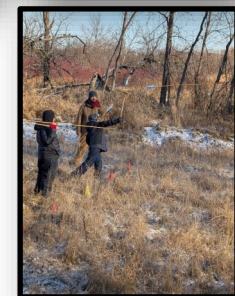
We had an exciting day of hands-on activities!

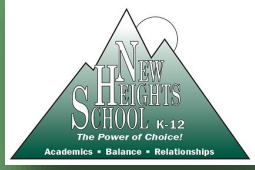
The kindergarten and 1st graders explored Hike & Chickadee Landing, the Subnivean Zone, and 6 Slick Tricks & Indoor Exploration.

The 2nd and 3rd graders rotated through similar activities, learning about life beneath the snow.

The 4th and 5th graders enjoyed playing historic Native American games like Double Ball and Flinch, explored artifacts and culture, and tried Hunting a mock deer using Atlatls.

The day began and ended with group gatherings, fostering curiosity and a sense of community. We had the best time despite the colder weather!





January Monthly Planner

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
				<i>School Resumes</i>		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			<i>Board of Directors Meeting 4pm</i>	<i>End of Quarter 2</i>	<i>No School—Grading Day</i>	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	<i>No School—MLK Jr. Day</i>	<i>Quarter 3 Begins</i>				
26	27	28	29	30	31	1



Upcoming Events:

February 17—No School (President’s Day)

