

Salt Brook Elementary School

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Jean M. Drexinger, Principal

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September 1, 2021

Dear Parents / Guardians,

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year! We have been on quite a wild ride since March, 2020, but this year is showing signs of promise of returning to a more “normal” routine and school setting. I hope you and your family were able to find some peace this summer and are relaxed and ready for our new adventure. I would like to welcome back our returning students and families. To our new students and families who have recently joined Salt Brook, a heartfelt welcome. We are excited to have you join our Salt Brook family and look forward to working with you throughout the year.

NEW STAFF

I would like to introduce you to our new staff members who will be joining Salt Brook for the 2021 - 2022 school year. Each new staff member went through an extensive interview process. I am confident that they will be a nice addition to the Salt Brook community, will work hard to teach their curriculums, and effectively collaborate with parents working together for the benefit of all students who walk through our doors each day.

- **Ms. Danielle DeKunchak, (2nd Grade teacher)**, joined the SB teaching staff in December, 2020 as a co-teacher in Grade 3. In addition, she taught the rising 3rd graders in the NPSD Summer Achievement Program. Ms. DeKunchak is a graduate of Montclair State University. She holds certifications in both elementary education and special education. Ms. DeKunchak is familiar with our curriculums and instructional programs. She will be a fabulous addition to our 2nd Grade team and is looking forward to bringing a hands-on, minds-on learning approach to our young students.
- **Ms. Laura Freeman, (4th Grade teacher, LTS)**, a graduate of the University of North Carolina, Ms. Freeman is a certified elementary education teacher who is currently pursuing her special education teacher certification at Rutgers University. While in North Carolina, Ms. Freeman taught 5th Grade for five years prior to relocating to NJ. During the 2020 - 2021 school year, Ms. Freeman served as a long-term substitute at Salt Brook School and taught all grades and content areas throughout the year. I can safely say that during the 2020-2021 school year Ms. Freeman taught in every classroom in the building! In addition, she instructed the rising 4th graders in the

NPSD Summer Achievement Program. Ms. Freeman has worked with Mrs. Nowell this summer to prepare the classroom and further familiarize herself with the 4th grade curriculum. She is looking forward to working with the students and to maintaining the high standards that the New Providence teachers set in their classrooms.

- **Mr. Daniel Mango, (Vocal Music)**, although new to SB, Mr. Mango is not new to New Providence! A graduate of NPHS, Mr. Mango received his Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts Degrees at Montclair State University. He comes to us with six years of teaching experience in the Plainfield Public Schools. Mr. Mango is also the Co-Director of the NP Summer Music Program. Mr. Mango is looking forward to developing a love of music in our students and continuing the high level of music development and performance that Ms. Crockett has achieved. (Inside Scoop - Ms. Crockett will now be teaching at the NPMS/NPHS).
- **Mrs. Amanda Mahlstedt, (Special Education, Grade 4)**, comes to us with six years of teaching experience. A graduate of the University of Delaware, Mrs. Mahlstedt has a B.S. in Education with a concentration in Special Education and Science. She is dually certified in elementary education and special education. Most recently Mrs. Mahlstedt taught in the Teaneck School District where she taught special education in self-contained and co-teaching classrooms. Mrs. Mahlstedt will be starting the school year in her current district and will join the Salt Brook fourth grade team co-teaching with Mrs. Mintz in October. Mrs. Mahlstedt will be a fabulous addition to our 4th Grade team.
- **Ms. Sarah Niez, (Special Education, Grade 1)** comes to us from Central Jersey College Prep Charter School where she taught First Grade. A graduate of Pace University, Ms. Niez has her BA degree in Childhood Education and a Masters of Education degree in Special Education. She is a certified elementary and special education teacher. Ms. Niez is thrilled to be working in New Providence and very excited to meet her students.
- **Mr. Lenny Thomas, (Evening Custodian)**, joined our custodial staff in August. Prior to coming to Salt Brook, Mr. Thomas worked as an Environmental Service Technician. Since joining the SB family, Mr. Thomas has worked with the custodial team to enhance his overall knowledge of the building and become more comfortable with the day to day operations. Mr. Thomas is looking forward to meeting everyone and to helping to maintain a clean, safe, and orderly environment for all.
- **Mrs. Kathy Yanni, (School Counselor)**, is excited to join New Providence as an additional Elementary School Counselor. Mrs. Yanni comes to us with 13 years of counseling experience! Her most recent position was in the Tenafly School System where she served as an Elementary School Counselor. Ms. Yanni will split her time between Allen W. Roberts and Salt Brook and work with the elementary counseling team to assist our students with their social, emotional, and academic needs. Ms. Yanni participated in our Summer Counseling program and has already met many of our students. She is excited to be working with all of our students this year and is looking forward to guiding and supporting them in their educational journey!

- **Ms. Lucy Zheng, (4th Grade teacher, LTS)**, A graduate of Montclair State University, Ms. Zheng is a certified elementary education and special education teacher. During the 2020 - 2021 school year, Ms. Zheng served as a 4th Grade co-teacher at Salt Brook School and worked alongside Mrs. Feliciano-Allen in Class 4AR. In addition, she taught the rising 5th graders in the NPSD Summer Achievement Program. Ms. Zheng is familiar with the fourth grade curriculum and grade-level expectations. She is looking forward to working with the students and to maintaining the high standards that the New Providence teachers set in their classrooms.

DAILY SCHEDULE

All students will follow a full-day in-person daily/weekly schedule provided to them by the assigned teacher. All teachers will continue to use Google Classroom to post their daily and weekly lessons/assignments.

All 5th and 6th Grade departmentalized classes will be taught in their departmentalized classrooms. Students will resume switching classes.

Art, Music, Library, STEM, and Writing Lab (Gr. 6 only) will be held in our specialized classrooms allowing for the children to fully utilize all materials/equipment associated with that discipline. All hands-on equipment will be sanitized regularly following use. PE will continue to be held outside (weather permitting). However, the gymnasium is fully operational this year and will be used for PE classes as well.

Covid Support Teachers - In order to assist our students who may need to quarantine, a covid support teacher will be assigned to them. The students will access their assignments through google classroom and the covid support teacher will check in with them periodically throughout the day to assist, reinforce, and guide as needed.

ATTENDANCE

We will continue to utilize the “Attendance Matters” absence form located on the home page of the NPSD website [Attendance Matters Form](#). All parents must utilize this form when reporting their child(rens) absence.

LUNCH/RECESS

In order to allow for greater social distancing while eating and lessen the number of students in the cafeteria at one time, an additional lunch period has been added to the building schedule. Outlined below is the 2021-2022 lunch/recess schedule.

LUNCH TIME	RECESS TIME	GRADE
11:28 p.m. - 11:48 a.m.	11:48 a.m. - 12:08 p.m.	5
11:48 a.m. - 12:08 p.m.	11:28 p.m. - 11:48 a.m.	6

12:10 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.	12:30 p.m. - 12:50 p.m.	3
12:30 p.m. - 12:50 p.m.	12:10 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.	4
12:52 p.m. - 1:12 p.m.	1:12 p.m. - 1:32 p.m.	2
1:12 p.m. - 1:32 p.m.	12:52 p.m. - 1:12 p.m.	1

For those students scheduled for the later lunch (Grades 1 and 2 only), a socially distanced morning snack time will be scheduled in the classroom at a designated time decided by each teacher. Snack time will not be offered in the other grades unless medically warranted. Please have your child eat a hearty breakfast prior to arriving at school.

All students will eat in the cafeteria. Beginning on Day 2, weather permitting, students will have the option of eating outside on the grassy area behind the cafeteria. In order to provide social distancing during eating, designated seat markers have been placed on the table benches. To begin the school year, all students will sit according to their homeroom. Students will be allowed to select their seat. Once a seat is selected, a seating chart will be developed for each homeroom. This chart will be referred to in case contact tracing is needed.

Recess will be held outdoors weather permitting. In case of inclement weather, the following areas will be utilized: gymnasium, library, classrooms.

Lunch/Recess Home Option - Students will also be provided with the option of going home for their lunch/recess block. If you would like your child to go home for the lunch/recess block, please complete this [Lunch/Recess Option Form](#). Kindly complete one form for each child. Please note that the lunch/recess block is 40 minutes in length. Students will need to be signed out each day in the main office by a parent/caregiver and then signed back in by the parent/caregiver upon return. Once registered for this option, students will need to be picked up each day during lunch/recess for the entire trimester. Please note that each grade has a different lunch period, and siblings in different grades will be dismissed for lunch at different times. The first trimester is scheduled from September 8, 2021 to December 8, 2021.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

These established protocols reflect the recommendations of the New Jersey Department of Health and are informed by CDC guidance.

FACE COVERINGS/MASKS - In accordance with Governor Murphy's Executive Order 251, all students, staff, and visitors in grades K - 12 must wear face masks in the indoor portion of the school premises. It is recommended that the students bring an additional face covering in their backpack each day.

STUDENT SCREENING - During the August return to school registration process, parents/guardians have been asked to complete the Covid-19 Acknowledgement and Consent form, acknowledging that they

will monitor their child daily for symptoms of Covid-19. Please be sure to complete this form prior to school beginning on September 8th. **Students who have symptoms or do not feel well should NOT be sent to school.**

NURSING OFFICE PROTOCOL - An isolation space for students and/or staff suspected of having Covid-19 symptoms will continue to be utilized. This area has a designated exit so the student or staff member is not walking through the building. This will help to maintain confidentiality and treat the situation in a respectful manner. Each child will be supervised by an adult until the parent is able to pick him/her up. Parents will be strongly encouraged to pick their child up immediately to prevent possible exposure to others.

Protective equipment will be supplied by the district and worn by all nurses.

The school nurse will determine when students need to be sent home. Students may be sent home more frequently if not feeling well.

Students who test positive for Covid can return to school after the 10th day of isolation and clearance from local health officials.

Students who are sent home or are at home sick with covid-like symptoms will be required to have a covid test and have a negative test result prior to returning to school.

Our school nurse, Mrs. Kral, will review all covid or potential covid cases and communicate with families prior to the child(ren) returning to school.

Please click on this link and refer to the [COVID-19 Exclusion Flow Charts 2021-2022](#) for more detailed information.

Parents/families are required to report a positive COVID-19 test for a student, or any person residing with a student. If a parent believes their child has been exposed to COVID-19 but has not been tested or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they must inform their school principal and/or school nurse for further guidance.

NOTE: The information outlined above, is based on the current Department of Health guidance. Updated information and guidance will be shared when and if needed.

HANDWASHING - All students and staff will wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at the following times:

- upon arrival at school (use hand sanitizer if there is no sink in the classroom)
- after being outside for physical activity
- before and after snack time/lunch
- prior to leaving school for home
- after sneezing, coughing, or blowing nose
- prior to and after removing and putting on a face mask

FIELD TRIPS, ACTIVITIES, and CLASS CELEBRATIONS

Elementary grade-level field trips will be scheduled for Spring, 2022.

Large-scale school and PTA events will be held outside when possible. Inside events may be modified and/or adjusted as needed.

Elementary after-school clubs will be offered in-person beginning in October/November.

In-person class parties and celebrations that involve sharing of food have been suspended until further notice. Non-food class parties and celebrations are permitted.

Birthday treats involving food are not permitted to be sent to school at this time. Non-food birthday treats may be sent into school and shared with classmates.

PARENT RESOURCES

The New Providence School District places a strong emphasis on communication and partnerships with students and parents. The NP Parent/Student website [NP Parent and Student Site](#) aims to support students and parents in the critical areas of health and safety; social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices; and technology. Please review the links to resources, articles, and videos. Additional information may be provided by other district personnel and will be added as needed.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is essential. Our district and school websites will continually be updated and the district will send home relevant information as needed. Please refer to our website for more information and helpful links. [New Providence School District](#). You received an email on August 23rd from the District with a link to your PowerSchool parent portal to update your child's student information and electronically sign annual permission forms and the acknowledgement of school district policies for the 2021-2022 school year. If you have not done so already, please log into your parent portal, navigate to *Forms* and then the *Enrollment* tab to complete this process. It is imperative that you complete your Returning Student Registration prior to the start of the first day of school, Wednesday, September 8th. Please note that you will need to complete this process for each child enrolled in the school district. If you have not received this email, please contact the Main Office immediately.

IN CONCLUSION

This summer I read a book entitled, "The Power of Good News" by Hal Urban. This book is focused on the importance of "nourishing our minds just like we nourish our bodies by choosing what information we consume". The title of this book caught my attention because offering a full day of in-person instruction and bringing back a greater sense of classroom and activity "normalcy" for our students and staff is certainly Good News! We are thrilled to have our students back in our classrooms full-time, filling them

with energy and enthusiasm for learning. While we are all aware that we are not out of the woods yet with Covid-19, I do feel that we are making progress. As American poet Maya Angelou so wisely said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” This school year, our goals will be to ensure that **ALL** of our students feel connected, that **ALL** students are engaged in new learning and experiences, and that **EVERY** child feels welcomed, valued and “at home”.

The staff and I are excited about the new year, ready to open school, and look forward to welcoming all of our friends back to school on September 8th.

Sincerely,

Jean M. Drexinger

Jean M. Drexinger, Principal