



North Branch
SCHOOL

2020-2021 Handbook
School Age

NORTH BRANCH SCHOOL
221 Mickens Road, Afton, VA 22920
540-456-8450
www.north-branch-school.org

Every child's experience at North Branch School is enhanced by the extra efforts of adults in our school community, and we can never say THANK YOU enough. As you read through this handbook, we hope many questions will be answered for you. We also hope many possibilities present themselves to you, and your own contribution to the life of the school begins to take shape.

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**WELCOME TO NORTH BRANCH SCHOOL
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN**

North Branch School Mission Statement:

North Branch School fosters respect, non-violence, environmental responsibility, and the involvement of students, teachers, and families in our community.

*We value the uniqueness of each child.
Our curriculum promotes the desire to learn and to develop abilities to the fullest.*

We are dedicated to providing a diverse environment which stimulates curiosity, creativity, and cooperation.

Aftercare Policy:

At this time- there will be no before care or after care offered during the 20-21 school year. We will reevaluate this as we begin to open in person.

Morning Drop off & Afternoon Pick up Procedures 2020-21

BEFORE COMING TO SCHOOL:

Review the daily home screening questions/card, take your child's temperature. If you answer YES to any symptom or have a temperature of 100.0 or higher. STAY HOME and PLEASE contact your healthcare provider.

Please also contact the office to report your child's absence and reason for absence. 540-456-8450 or northbranch@nbsva.org

Drop Off: 8:30 am - 9 am

Each Monday morning cones and signage will be set out. Sign will be placed at the entryway of the circular drive and cones will be set up along the edge of black top to guide cars through the traffic queue.

Signs will direct cars in the circular drive. Cars will be to the RIGHT of the drive, first car stopping at the swing set end of the black top, bumper to bumper.

The LEFT side of the circular drive will need to be left clear for cars exiting the queue.

ALL parents and students will need to remain in the car, with masks on until they have been screened by NBS staff.

Quick morning screening questions, temperature check and school items check will be conducted of every student in the car.

Staff will notate on the sheet of paper any child who answers YES to any question, has a temperature at 100.0 or above. Students who do not pass the screening will be asked to return home for monitoring by family/caregivers.

New students to NBS will be met by an available staff member to be taken to their classroom to meet their home room teacher (staff or teams who do not have a home room will be available to help get students into their rooms the first few weeks). Preschool will always have one teacher at drop off time to escort students into the building.

****there will be NO free outside play at drop off or pick up, students will report to their classroom homeroom teacher****

Preschool: One of the preschool teachers will be available to bring students into their classroom from cars each morning.

PICK UP

The pick up queue will follow the same procedures as the morning drop off queue. Cars to the right of the circle, bumper to bumper. First car at the edge of black top. The inside (left) side of the circular drive will need to be left clear for cars exiting the queue.

Preschool: 12:30 pm. At 12:30 PM, preschool students will be brought to the front porch to be taken to parents in the pick up queue by teachers. Teachers will remain with students until all students have been picked up.

EP ½ day pick up: 1 pm. At 1 PM, EP students will be brought to the front porch to be taken to parents in the pick up queue by teachers. Teachers will remain with students until all students have been picked up.

Main Building: 3:15 PM, all students will be ready for pick up at 3:15 PM. They will be waiting in their classroom. When their parents/caregiver/carpool driver arrives and is stopped, the main building teacher on duty will use the walkie talkie to call students out and the student will exit the building and get in the car.

Annex: 3:30 PM, all students will be ready for pick up at 3:30 PM. They will be ready on the front porch of Annex (5th, 6th & 7th grades) for when their parents/caregivers/carpool driver arrives and is stopped. They will then proceed to the car after verbally checking out with staff members on check out duty.

Trailer: 3:30 PM, all students (8th grade) will be ready for pick up at 3:30 PM. They will be ready along the trailer ramp (unless rain, then in the trailer and a walkie talkie will be used when parents/caregiver/carpool driver arrives). When parents/caregiver/carpool driver arrives and is stopped, students will proceed to the car after verbally checking out with staff members on check out duty.

****if you have students in more than one building, please arrive for the later pick up time (3:30 PM).****

Attendance:

Please call school **ANYTIME** your child will be absent. If your family is planning a trip, please notify your child's teacher ahead of time. If you need to pick up your child during the school day for an appointment, please notify your child's teacher ahead of time and remember to check out with the office when you leave.

If your child becomes ill during school, you will be notified. If this occurs, please make arrangements to have the child picked up as soon as possible.

If your child is ill at home, they must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Updated Covid19 sick policy for children & staff

— Children or Staff who show symptoms of illness will be excluded from NBS facilities and must remain isolated from others.

- ◆ Fever of 100.0 degrees or higher
- ◆ Cough
- ◆ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ◆ Chills
- ◆ Muscle pain
- ◆ Sore throat
- ◆ New loss of taste or smell
- ◆ Other illness symptoms. The above are the most common symptoms of Covid19, but are not the only symptoms.
- ◆ Please refer to the [CDC site](#) listing signs and symptoms here.

— Children or Staff with known household members with Covid19 will be excluded from NBS facilities

— NBS staff will monitor for absenteeism.

— **Keep your child at home if sick with any illness.** Contact your healthcare provider to discuss your child's symptoms.

— Inform NBS Office staff (540-456-8450 or northbranch@nbsva.org) if your child is ill or will be absent for any reason.

— If your child or any family member tests positive or is diagnosed with Covid19 you **MUST** notify NBS immediately.

◆ NBS is mandated to notify the Thomas Jefferson Health Department (TJHD), our state licensing agent and follow all recommendations.

◆ NBS must keep a list of all the individuals who may have come in contact with children in the event the TJHD decides notifications and additional steps are needed for closure & cleaning.

◆ **A mandatory 14-day waiting period for any child that has been exposed to or has tested positive for the coronavirus must be followed before they are able to return, along with a physician's note clearing the child. The classroom will be closed for 2 days for cleaning and to allow the local health officials to determine how the Covid19 situation is impacting the school and determine the next appropriate steps.** Any temporary closures will be made in coordination with federal, state and local health and educational officials. NBS is not expected to make these decisions.

— If students or staff have recently been in close contact with a person with Covid19, they should stay at home and monitor their health.

If cases of Covid19 positive test in population-staff, students, family members in same household, or student/staff/family members who have had known contact with a positive Covid19 individual and attended school before becoming aware of possible contagion (regardless of community transmission)

— NBS will notify the student body population of positive test(s) and possible transmission of Covid19 while at school.

◆ Communication with families will maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the ADA and FERPA

— NBS will notify Thomas Jefferson Health Department (TJHD) and follow all recommended directives/guidance from the TJHD, CDC and State on closure, cleaning, disinfecting and reopening.

— NBS will close for a short dismissal from school for all students and staff of 2-5 days or duration recommended by the TJHD dependent on transmission risk assessment by TJHD officials & guidance.

IF a short dismissal period is recommended, NBS will follow guidelines from the TJHD in addition, NBS will:

◆ NBS closes off access to the school building and waits as long as possible (minimum of 24 hours) before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets (following CDC recommendation).

● NBS cleaners will follow routine cleaning procedures followed by a full disinfect of all frequently touched areas and areas that might have been used by the ill persons.

● NBS will use an EPA registered disinfectant cleaner.

● Frequently touched areas will undergo deep sanitization. Examples of frequently touched areas, include but not limited to: bathrooms, doors, loft ladders, tables, chairs, light switches, cubbies, sinks and common spaces etc.

◆ Discourage staff, students & families from gathering or socializing.

◆ NBS will cancel all extracurricular group activities, school based programs and large events planned during this time.

— NBS will work with the TJHD on decisions of when it is safe to re-open NBS and whether it is safe for staff to continue to have access to the building during dismissal (to prepare remote learning packets).

— Depending on guidance from the TJHD and the level of community transmission, dismissal and remote learning could continue or school could re-open.

Once it is considered safe to re-open, NBS will continue to follow good hygiene, handwashing, social distancing and cleaning and disinfecting while at school.

Babies at Work Policy:

Overview: NBS values the educational, social, and human value of having babies in the classroom. If a teacher wants to bring his or her baby, he or she is encouraged to do so. As a school community, we support each other, looking for ways we can make it work for teachers and students alike.

Why: We find that the benefits of having our students around babies far outweigh the once-in-a-while day when a crying baby disrupts the class. The students learn empathy and child development; they learn to be gentle; for those who are the youngest child in the family, they have the experience of being the older, more competent child. Students also experience first hand the challenges of raising a small child and get to see all the care that was taken for them; it does a good job of countering any sense that one is the center of

the universe! The students also learn to view their teacher as a whole person, one with a life outside of the classroom. The teacher who is also the parent experiences the opportunity to continue to do a job he or she loves and stay close to his or her baby. The baby experiences a huge family, resulting in wonderful socialization, confidence, and trust in the world.

How: Teachers generally come back to work with their babies when the babies are strong enough to be exposed to the student germ pool. Each teacher approaches baby care differently, but often the teacher will have a conversation with the class, including the class in decisions about how the teacher will handle feeding the child or changing diapers, for example, so that every student can feel comfortable. Teachers will also communicate with the parent body about these expectations and decisions. In general, students and parents alike are thrilled. Backpacks, slings, and "snuglis" often allow teachers to carry on with their teaching with the baby, almost the same way they did before. When the baby becomes mobile, teachers will often create a safe, carpeted space in the classroom with toys, so that the baby can crawl and explore. Once a child is 2 years and 9 months, the child can be part of the preschool program. Before that time, a mobile toddler might join a class on a woods walk, or playing a game outside, or listening to a story. The staff works together to let the parent-teacher know what times might work for their child to visit other classrooms, as well as what times do not work.

Child Records:

North Branch needs to have on file for your child: application, a current emergency form (UPDATED YEARLY) and a current signed contract.

Communication with Parents:

Verbal reports- We value frequent face-to-face exchanges of information at drop-off and pick-up times; however, if you are going to need an extended, uninterrupted discussion with a teacher, please schedule a conference. In the '20-'21 school year, we ask that you please schedule a meeting with your child's classroom teacher in advance.

Written information- Newsletter and Weekly Notes:

A weekly newsletter about classroom activities and school news will be sent home to each family, usually on Fridays. Remember to ask your child for this and check your email for an electronic copy. A copy will be posted outside the office. We will also post it weekly on the school website www.north-branch-school.org

Conferences-Parents and Teachers may request conferences at any time. We set aside Columbus Day, Election day and two February Days to schedule individual teacher/parent conferences with every family. There will be two individual conferences, one in the fall and one in February.

Narrative Evaluations-There will be two progress reports during the academic year (Fall & spring-shared at time of conferences) and end of the year evaluations prepared by the staff in June. End of Year evaluations will be mailed to families. To receive End of Year evaluations, families must be current on the year's tuition payments. Evaluations and record requests will be held until families are up to date on payments, and records will not be sent to other schools until payments are current.

Communication with Parents During an Emergency:

In case of an emergency situation at school which requires evacuation, information will be available at the local sheriff's office at 434-263-7050.

Daily Schedule: Early Primary Afternoon Addition: in '20-'21 this is only available if we return to school full time in person.

The Early primary Program is designed to allow parents maximum flexibility for meeting the needs of their Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten age children.

All Early Primary students must attend Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings 8:45-1:00.

Families of children ages 5 and 6 in Early Primary may contract for afternoons in addition to the morning schedule. January is often the month to add to your child's schedule. Please speak with Autumn if you wish to add an afternoon or multiple afternoons to your second semester.

Financial Information:

- Tuition income goes towards staff salaries and benefits.
- All families receiving financial assistance perform work needed by the school. NBS thus receives cleaning, landscaping, maintenance, special classes, etc., without paying high outside service fees.
- Annual Fund donations go towards general operating expenses.
- Fundraising events are designated for special programs.
- Contributions to the Endowment Fund and/or Founder's Fund help attract and retain outstanding faculty.

Tuition:

Tuition rates are posted in the office. Checks may be left in the payment folder in the office. If you are paying with cash, please ask for a receipt in the office.

Tuition paid in 9 installments is due by the 1st of the preceding month. (For example, October's tuition is due September 1.) Tuition paid in 12 installments is due according to the agreement with the business manager. Please help us meet our payroll obligations to staff by paying tuition on time. **A \$25 late fee will be charged each time tuition payments become 30 days past due, unless prior arrangements have been made with the business manager. This fee will be cumulative; you will be assessed \$25 for every 30 days a tuition payment is past due.** Any questions regarding tuition payment or tuition assistance should be addressed to the business manager, Philippa Proulx, 540-456-6849.

Enrollment Fee/Re-enrolling:

Returning families will have the opportunity to submit a non-refundable enrollment fee in February to hold a place for the following year. After contracting, this fee covers student accident insurance, a yearbook, some field trips, and a portion of classroom and general supplies.

Enrollment fee, signed contract, and up-to-date current year's tuition **must** be in place to start school.

Contracts:

Once a contract has been signed, parents are committed to pay for the service, whether that service is used or not. While the Board reviews and considers thoughtfully any request for release from the contract, release is not typically granted unless the class fills and NBS can no longer offer the service for which parents have contracted.

Food Policies:

****North Branch School will make every effort to observe dietary needs, but can not guarantee supervision of all children at all times.****

Snack Preschool-MS: Parents need to pack enough food in each child's lunch box to cover a morning snack and lunch. PLEASE note that in addition to adequate food, CHILDREN ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE WATER BOTTLES DAILY.

Birthday treats or special occasion classroom treats will not be allowed in '20-'21.

Lunches- We do not have refrigerator, freezer, or cooking space for students' use, so send only foods that can be eaten directly from your child's lunch box. Ice packs are recommended if sending foods that need to stay cold.

Children may NOT trade items from their lunches, so that parents can be confident their child is eating the food they provide. However, teachers may supervise sharing a small part of lunch with others to help a person who has forgotten his/her lunch. This is beneficial for the person who is without lunch, providing fuel for the afternoon. It is also important for the other children as it reinforces good manners and sharing. Please do NOT send sodas, candy or glass containers to school.

Giving at North Branch:

Tuition pays for teacher salaries and benefits. That leaves many necessary items and programs in need of funding. Here are some of the ways you can help the school receive this much-needed support for our programs and facilities. Please see our Development Director, Bonnie Holliday, if you have any questions or suggestions.

ANNUAL FUND: Our goal is 100% family participation. Please give at a level that is comfortable for your family, whether it is \$1 or \$1,000. All donations are appreciated and join with gifts from friends, former families, alumni, and board members to cover day-to-day operating expenses. Consider a recurring monthly gift thru Paypal (no account needed) by using the "Donate" button at north-branch-school.org This is an easy way to structure your contribution.

OTHER FUNDS: Besides the Annual and Building Funds, North Branch gratefully accepts contributions for our Grandparents' Fund, Endowment Fund, Financial Assistance Fund, the Naomi Scherr Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Thomas W. Zinsser Memorial Fund for Fine Arts, the Founder's Fund, and for special programs such as the Model UN.

GIFTS IN HONOR OF OR IN MEMORY OF SOMEONE SPECIAL: A donation is the perfect way to honor or remember someone in your life or the lives of your children. The honoree or family of the person remembered will receive notification from the school. Gifts also will be acknowledged in the annual newsletter and contributions to the Annex Fund will receive a leaf for the Tree of Donors.

INFORMATION TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS: We like to keep our friends informed about goings on at school through letters, newsletters, blog entries on our website, photos, and cards and drawings from students. We also ask those on this list to contribute to the Annual Fund or other school funds. This is a very important way to help your children and their teachers. Please plan to give us at least two names of people who are interested in your children and their school experiences.

SUGGEST A FUNDRAISING EVENT: North Branch holds several successful fundraising events throughout the school year. The ideas for those events came from parents! See Bonnie if you have an idea for a fundraiser.

GIFTS: If you know of a company or an individual who may be interested in making a monetary, equipment, or material donation, please let Bonnie know. NBS also gratefully accepts gifts of stock and matching gifts.

TAX ADVANTAGE: North Branch School is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations and gifts-in-kind are tax deductible as allowed by law.

PLANNED GIVING: While no one likes to dwell upon this, it is a way that schools and other charitable organizations receive support. We ask that when you are making or reviewing your estate plans, you please consider including North Branch School. Some people designate a set amount for charitable organizations, while others include a percentage of the estate, from 1% - 100%. An attorney or CPA can advise you.

ID Requirements:

North Branch staff do not have identification cards. Your child will only be released to those people listed by you on your emergency form or if we have written or verbal permission from you to let someone else pick him/her up. If we are unable to reach any of the numbers listed on your emergency form, the state requires that we tell you we will contact the Sheriff/Child Protective Services. This has never been necessary in the past, and we hope it will not be in the future!

Inclement Weather:

School closing for snow or other hazardous weather conditions will be announced on Channel 29 TV and the NBS website: north-branch-school.org. There will be an announcement on the school voice mail, which you can reach by calling the school's number after 7AM of the day in question, 540-456-8450, and NBS App announcement will be posted the morning of the day in question. North Branch does not always close when surrounding counties do. If we are open but your road is a problem, please use your own judgment about safety.

Make up day for hazardous weather:

If make up days are needed, they will be added to the end of the school year. Notification of make up days will be provided to families by March 1st or the closes Friday to March 1st. Preschool make up days will only be added if school age make up days are added.

Medication Administration:

If your child needs to receive medication during the school day, please give this directly to Autum Fish, with the medication form completed by the physician. Autum Fish and Susan Butler are the only NBS staff certified to administer any medication. The medicine will be locked away during the day and returned to you upon pick-up. Except for emergency care, no medication will be administered without your consent.

Operation Information:

North Branch School's hours of operation are from 8:30 am–5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, September–June. The office is open 8:30–4:00 daily. Individuals may call the school at (540) 456-8450 at any time during business hours, or leave a message for staff if after hours.

Parental Involvement at North Branch:

North Branch School maintains an open door policy to all families at all times.

Parents are always welcome at North Branch. Sometimes preschoolers find it difficult to remain with their class when parents are present in other areas of the school. Please tell your child's teacher if you plan to stay at school during Preschool hours. Teachers may request that parents avoid being seen by their child.

Parent involvement is essential to North Branch School. Your time spent on fundraising events, workdays, maintenance, and upkeep is the difference between our low tuition and the expense of other area schools. The contract states that parents are expected to help with at least one fundraising events and at least one workday, however, **we encourage you to participate in as many as possible. WE NEED ALL THE HELP**

WE CAN GET FOR EACH EVENT AND PROJECT! You will benefit from the camaraderie and the school will benefit from your efforts.

Please make sure to sign in at workdays and fundraising events so you will be credited for the work you do. On the yellow pages you may opt to “buyout” of workdays at \$50/day and fundraising events at \$100 per event. You will be billed at the end of the year if you have not participated in the appropriate number of workdays and/or fundraisers. If you are doing tuition credit work, you are still expected to participate in the appropriate number of workdays and fundraisers. If anyone knows of a civic group looking for service projects, please let Autumn know.

Parent Yellow Pages

This one-page form helps us know your interests, talents, and preferences for ways to help out around the school. Please take a moment to complete this and return it to the office ASAP.

YOUR HELP IN KEEPING NBS A TOBACCO FREE ENVIRONMENT IS MUCH APPRECIATED.

Pet Policy:

In the interests of safety and health, family pets of any kind are not allowed in North Branch School buildings.

When school is in session, no pets will be allowed on North Branch School grounds from 8:00 AM – 5:30 PM. If pets are brought to school for pick up and drop off, they must remain in the car at all times.

Pets are not allowed at school-sponsored events.

School Behavior:

All members of the school community are expected to be safe and considerate in regards to others of all ages. Please address behavior concerns with **staff members**, so that they can work with children and families appropriately.

School Clothing:

We understand that saying “dress appropriately for school” means different things to different people. We want everyone to be able to be focused on learning and be fully involved with school activities while at school. For that reason, we require that clothing worn at school

-always include shoes

-be comfortable

-be practical for school activities, which can often include sitting on the floor

-be appropriate for the weather, since we value being outside even on very hot days and very cold days

-allow for movement, such as running, climbing, and enjoying games

-leave the wearer’s mind free to concentrate on learning and being at school and not require frequent adjusting or attention

-be free from upsetting words or pictures--again, so that everyone can concentrate on learning

If a teacher has a concern about a student’s clothing, we will gently and privately talk to that student to explain our concern. As with everything at NBS, we see this kind of conversation as an opportunity to teach and learn about cultures and expectations, rather than as a punishment. If we notice clothing that repeatedly concerns us, the Head of School will talk to the parents and the student.

School Organization:

Board of Trustees:

The North Branch Board, made up of former parents, current parents, and community members, oversees the long- and shorter-range interests of the school and handles major financial decisions, hiring decisions, and major disciplinary issues, while entrusting the daily workings of the school to the Head and staff. The Head of School acts as a conduit between the faculty/staff and the Board, advocating for students, parents, and staff, although members of the school community are encouraged to communicate directly with Board members if they feel the need. There is a close and dynamic relationship between the Head of School and the Board, working together to provide the best possible learning experience for the entire school community. Reflecting the mission statement, the Board operates by consensus.

Meetings are held at the school and are open to all adult members of the school community. The minutes and a handbook of policies are kept on file in the office for those interested in reviewing them. Board members may be contacted with your questions about long-term direction of the school and any items you wish to discuss.

Current board members are:

Ellen Bouton, 540-456-6746, ebouton@cfw.com

Reid Harris, 434-962-2479, reid.h.harris@gmail.com

Bill Hess, 434-996-6850, bh1411717@gmail.com

Christy Howe, 434-361-9116, christyannhowe@hotmail.com

Becky Lindsay, 540-456-8127 airthfarm@ntelos.net

Jaime Marion, 540-949-0660, jamarionjr@comcast.net

Philippa Proulx, 540-456-6849, proulx@cfw.com

Program Development- Head of School, Smith Coleman, works with staff and Head of Annex Program, Maggie Buchanan & Katrien Vance, to design the curriculum and the structure of group experiences. We highly value open communication among staff and parents. Your questions, feedback and suggestions are very important to us in shaping our program. Teacher mailboxes are located in the supply room next to the office for messages or materials you may wish to leave. During the school day staff are working with students and may not see emails or texts.

Administration- General communication and office matters are handled by Autum Fish, Administrator.

Sunscreen/Insect Repellent:

NBS staff do not routinely apply sunscreen or insect repellent. If you child has a particular need in these areas, please speak with staff.

Suspected Child Abuse:

The Commonwealth of Virginia requires us to inform you that if child abuse is suspected, North Branch teachers are required by law to report the possibility to the Social Services Department.

Transportation Policy:

No pick-up or drop-off transportation is provided by North Branch.

Visitors

All visitors must report to the office. Alumni visitors must verify with the office before visiting to receive permission to visit during the day.

We are glad Your Family is part of our School Community.