



NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL

Academics • Balance • Citizenship
The Power of Choice

March 2024

Based on Principal Quarters Vs. Semesters

Historically, New Heights School, for the secondary students, has always been a semester school. Remember that a semester is half of a school year, covers 2 quarters, and spans 18 weeks in duration. Some schools operate on semesters, some operate on quarters, and others operate on trimesters. Semesters make sense in many ways, but recently we have



recognized a problem in that there are a lot of students who have enrolled at New Heights and have credit needs that don't fit neatly or squarely into the semester configuration. Some of these students are coming to us from outside of the district and it has been difficult for us to get them all of the credits they need to graduate through the semester system. Migrating our system to quarters won't cause any of our students a problem, but will actually grant us more flexibility to change courses or change the placement of students each quarter (9 weeks) as

opposed to having to keep them in classes for a full semester (18 weeks).

The one thing that parents and students need to realize with this change is that each quarter now becomes a permanent grade.

Under the semester system, two quarters would blend into a semester grade. A student could technically fail one of the two quarters as long as the other quarter was successful enough to cover the difference. Some students might think they can coast through the first quarter and turn on the after-burners for the second quarter and pass the semester. That is flawed thinking and is no longer the reality. Each quarter is important. This is actually better for the students because they will be required to attend school at a higher rate and do their work at a more even and steady rate. In the end, it will serve our students better in many ways. Be aware that the end of Q3 is March 21st, which is also the last school day before spring break. Students are aware they need to pass the 3rd Q classes.

Conferences

You may recall that New Heights did not offer in-person conference date/night last fall as we normally have in prior years, except by appointment in November. Elementary teachers have always had freedom to schedule conferences



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IMPORTANT DATES

- Board of Directors Meeting
March 13th, 4 pm
- Spring Break March 22–
March 29th



with the parents of each student (K-5th) over the course of a few weeks, but again, this year we made some changes. Secondary teachers and elementary teachers were instructed to offer a private conference with any parent who wanted one over the course of about 3 weeks. We decided to move to that strategy for several reasons, but one of the main reasons is because the parent participation rate over the past few years has been so low that the numbers didn't support hosting a conference night, but we do feel conferencing is important. Some of the teachers requested an in-person conference day this spring, so we are going to try it again. We will host conference night on Friday April 5th from 4pm through 7pm at the school. Elementary teachers will schedule for the K-5, but parents of students in grades 6-12 can come by the school any time between 4pm and 7pm and visit with as many of their child's teachers as they wish. Each conference will be limited to 10 minutes per teacher and these conferences will occur on a first-come first-served basis. In most cases, there is no wait or only a short wait to see a particular teacher. Conferences will end promptly at 7pm, so plan accordingly.



Playground Update

You are probably aware that New Heights has been working on raising funds to update the play area located on the back side of the school. The play apparatus that currently exists has been in place for about 20 years and needs to be replaced. In our journey, we were introduced to some people who encouraged us to consider building a more inclusive playground, one that would be more accessible for people with physical limitations, including folks like grandparents who would like to play with their grandchildren. The ideal playground would largely be accessible by people with other physical limitations, including those confined to wheelchairs. We started trying to raise funds in February of 2020, just before the pandemic shutdowns. For at least the next two years, most of the people and organizations that would have normally funded something like this were giving all of their efforts to Covid relief. Well, we remained persistent and we are proud to say that by the end of this school year, we are confident that we will have raised more than \$600K for the project. There is still some fine tuning to do, but if all goes our way, we should be able to see some progress on this project as soon as late summer. Stay tuned for updates. If you know of a person or organization that would like to get behind this project, simply encourage them to contact the school and we will talk with them.



Calendar Changes

If you pay attention to correspondence from the school, you will recall that we recently sent out some communication about the district's intent to change the school calendar as well as the start and stop time for district schools. Doing that will have an impact on New Heights because we contract with the district for transportation and for meals. That means we have to schedule school on the same days the district has school because that is when they can/will provide us with meals and transportation. They won't do it for us when they don't do it for themselves. That said, next year's calendar will look very similar to this year's, and New Heights will continue to have the same bell schedule of 9:05 to 3:40 for next year. But, starting with the 2025-26 school year, the year after next year, school will begin on or around August 19th and the year will end on or around May 22nd. In that same year, the year after next year, the bell schedule will move to a starting time of 7:55 and school will let out at 2:25 for all students. Like with anything, there will be people who love these changes and people who hate it. Either way, it looks like it is happening. It always takes time to adjust, which is why I am letting you know about this now. It has already been voted on and approved at the district level, so we at New Heights are already making the necessary mental adjustment so that we can be as prepared as possible when the time comes. Families will naturally have to decide on an individual basis if this new time and calendar will work for you. And as always, you can also contact the school with questions.

*Calendar and time changes
do not start until
August 2025*

~ Principal Tom Kearney

Teacher Feature ~ Ms. Shane Wiebusch

Special Education Teacher



1. What inspired you to become a teacher?

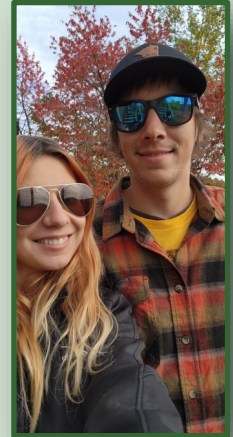
I had this wonderful opportunity in high school to be a teacher's assistant in a resource room. I really enjoyed getting to know the students, building the relationships with them, and seeing them grow into their own person.

2. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I enjoy building relationships with students. I think that is one of the most important parts of being a teacher. Without that trust, it makes it harder for the students to learn because they are less likely to ask questions. When building those relationships as well you can have an impact that can better their learning, and help guide them to become better citizens.

3. What is the most exciting thing you've ever done?

I used to live in California and came back to Minnesota from California in a semi-truck. We drove through half of the states, and I got to see the Montana Snow Cap Mountains.



4. What is something people would be surprised to know about you?

I used to own 21 animals at one time.

5. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I enjoy traveling, reading, playing with my dogs, and spending time with family and friends.

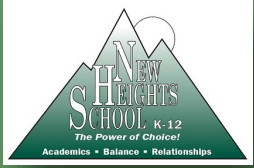


NOTICE

End of Quarter 3:

March 21st





March Monthly Planner

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 	11	12	13 <i>Board of Directors Meeting 4pm</i>	14	15	16
17 	18	19	20	21 <i>End of Quarter 3</i> 	22 <i>No School Spring Break Starts!</i>	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30 
						

Upcoming Events

Spring Conferences—April 5th 4-7pm