

August 18, 2021

Parents and Community Members,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome everyone to our 2021-2022 school year. The staff and I are looking forward to providing a dynamic and joyful learning experience for all of our students. We aim to educate our students through various learning experiences that include classroom-based instruction and experiential learning beyond the classroom. With a heavy focus on the whole child, we work our hardest to meet the needs of each student with an understanding that every child is unique and valued. With that in mind, we strive to keep the connection between school and home vibrant and open. Our community is an integral part of our student's learning experience, and we are thankful for all the support that we receive year in and year out.

Speaking of community support, we lost a valuable member of our support system this summer. John Sears passed away from a logging accident. John volunteered his time for over 30 years at Sharon Elementary. He was a driving force behind many initiatives at school. He was instrumental in developing our cross country ski program, spending Friday afternoons each winter helping to guide students through the forest and helping them develop skills that will last a lifetime. In honor of John, we have started the John Sears scholarship program to help children access outdoor education and other opportunities. More information about this scholarship program will be coming soon. John will be dearly missed.

I want to extend a warm welcome to our new families. Sharon Elementary prides itself on being a place of care. Please reach out if you have any questions in regards to your child's educational program.

A big thank you goes out to David Whitaker for all his hard work this summer getting our building ready for the upcoming school year. We have been short-staffed in the custodial department, and it's put a little added pressure on Dave, but he's taken it in stride, and our building will no doubt be ready to go.

Our first day of school this year is September 2nd. You can find a copy of our school calendar on our website, www.sharonelementary.org. Please take a moment to look over the calendar and mark your calendars with dates that school is not in session and half days. Also, be sure to mark your calendars with our vacation dates. Finally, if you have any questions regarding this year's calendar, please reach out.

Our school day will begin at 8:00 am. Students may arrive at school no earlier than 7:30 am. Our breakfast program will run from 7:30 am until 8:00 am in the cafeteria. Students who do not wish to have breakfast, but arrive prior to 8:00 am, will be directed to our early morning recess until the start of our day.

We are planning to open schools for in-person learning on September 2nd while following the guidance provided by the Vermont Agency of Education and Department of Health: **masking will be required indoors and while being transported via the bus at all of our WRVSU member schools.** This means that we will mitigate Covid-19 and the Delta variant by requiring all faculty/staff and students to be masked while they are indoors. We will begin the year this way and will reassess the situation as our student vaccination rates reach above 80%, which for our student population will not happen for a while, as vaccination is still not authorized for elementary students under 12. This aligns with the recommendations provided to us from the AOE.

We learned many things last year as we navigated this pandemic. While we will not have morning health checks as we did last year, we will continue to have students dropped off in front of the school, similar to last year. Unlike last year, all students will enter through the main entrance of the building and either head to their classroom or early morning recess/breakfast. At the end of the day, students will be released similar to last year. Students who ride the bus will be released first and then students who are being picked up by parents. Parents will pick their child up in front of the school.

Preschool will have a different procedure for drop-off and pick-up. If you are a Preschool parent, your child's teacher will be in touch about drop-off and pick-up procedures.

One Planet will once again be offering after-school programming. If you wish for your child to attend One Planet, be on the lookout for information about programming and how to sign up.

We are happy to announce that once again, school breakfast and lunch will be offered for **free** to all students. We still ask that folks fill out the Free and Reduced lunch forms no matter what your income status is. By filling out this form we have the potential to receive funding back from the state that will help with our school budget.

Your child's teacher will be reaching out to you soon if they have not already done so. As stated before, communication between home and school is vital to your child's educational success. Be sure to arrange a reliable communication process with your child's teacher. Many classes use services such as ClassTag and Class Dojo to communicate with parents. Teachers can assist parents with setting up accounts.

In closing, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. I look forward to having a fantastic school year and can't wait to see your wonderful children walk through our doors. Everyone at Sharon Elementary is grateful to have the opportunity to guide your child down their educational path.

Sincerely,
Keenan Haley
Principal
Sharon Elementary School