

# NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL

Academics • Balance • Citizenship  
*The Power of Choice*

May 2020

## Based on Principal

Who would have ever believed that we would be closing out our year without having our students on campus for the entire 4<sup>th</sup> quarter? Who further would have believed that having never offered an online version of school before, that we would have had to develop a system to connect with our students and their parents electronically, get it off the ground and flying in a matter of 2 weeks, and then get notice to continue like that for the rest of the year? Being the skeptic that I am, I wouldn't have believed it, but here we are in that exact situation.



There are so many issues that go along with this that I can't touch on all of them in the space I have, but I will make a few points about things I think families would want to know.

**GRADING:** We are going to be as generous and forgiving as we can be, both as humans and teaching professionals. We understand how difficult this has been, partly through empathy, but mostly through experience, meaning several of our teachers are parents or grandparents themselves, and some have had to deal the same issues with their kids that you have with yours. That likely inspired those teachers to make the lessons as flexible as they could, while still having to offer a challenging learning opportunity for their students. We, as I have said many times, will reward effort, but there are some students who did zero work and checked in zero times; what do we do with that? So, we are reaching out to families in those circumstances and are trying to understand the reasons behind the absence. If we can, we will be forgiving, but we also are accountable to the State and it (the State) expects that we conducted school during this time and followed our modified policies regarding student attendance and work completion. We have not been given any guidance to ignore absences, truancy, or work refusals.

**GRADUATION:** It isn't possible right now because of social distancing to have a graduation ceremony and buffet banquet to follow our 25-year tradition. But, we are still ordering caps and gowns for our students, I am still making the video-although it may be late, and we are starting to talk about an alternative celebration for our graduates, but I don't have any details to share yet. Our seniors have been reminded many times that although some of them may be the type who really need the structure that traditional schooling offers at New Heights

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### IMPORTANT DATES

- May 1-May 4- No school students
- May 4-8 Teacher Appreciation Week
- May 10 -Mother's Day
- May 25- No School Memorial Day
- May 28- Last Day of School K-5
- May 29- Last Day of School 6-12



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they have to fight through this difficult time as there will not be forgiveness for doing nothing. It is my true hope that each of my seniors is working hard and checking in with their teachers because, to them, this is the most important semester of their school lives. Again, we can be flexible and understanding, but schools issue diplomas for accomplishments transpiring over a 13-year school career. We never could have predicted Corona Virus issues, but it is here and our seniors have to adapt along with the rest of us. Getting through this time with a diploma will be something no senior class in my lifetime ever had to do. They will be remembered in history books, so let's keep our feet on the gas, put the plows down, and in the words of Larry the Cable Guy..."GET ER DONE!" We want to celebrate your life's accomplishment of graduating later this month.

**END OF YEAR:** When school got cancelled, we put out an offer for families to come to school and get their students' belongings. Some did and others may have thought they'd just wait this out and school would resume as normal. Well, that isn't going to happen this year, so parents of students in grades 6-12 are encouraged to call the main office at 651-439-1962 to schedule a time to retrieve their belongings. Only one family at a time will be allowed in the school. Teachers of students in grades K-5 will be contacting parents to make arrangements for retrieval later this month.

For students in grades 6-12, I will allow a 15-minute appointment for you to gather belongings from secondary lockers. I can't permit entering each room as we are still limiting access to areas we have already sanitized. The rules are simple; bring your own bags, don't come in if you or anyone in your family is sick or even thinking someone is sick. I appreciate your desire to retrieve your family's belongings, but nothing that was left at school is worth the risk of passing on an illness. If you or your family members are or have been, or suspect that one of you may have been ill recently, we will work it out with you at later time and I can promise you that you will get all your belongings returned to you when it is safe, likely later this summer.

For those holding positive meal account balances, Lindsay will contact you about your positive meal accounts and you can work with her to maintain

the account or have excess funds returned to you. If your family meal account is negative, Lindsay will contact you to make arrangements to reconcile the account prior to the end of year, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**NEXT YEAR:** We still don't fully know what to expect for next year. There is speculation that another wave of Covid may hit, so we are going to have to prepare for multiple scenarios, including starting school as normal or beginning with distance-learning similar to what we are doing now. There could be new rules issued by the government about how many kids can be in a school or a class, there could be alternating days, half days, no hot lunches, and many other things that will only cause us anxiety if I list them all now. That said, I hope you trust that New Heights staff members and teachers are doing their best to help your family get through this difficult time. It should be considered that we will be right here for you again next year whether we do it at school or do it online; we hope to continue to be your school of choice. I have meetings online with school leaders from all over the state and I have not heard a single school leader convince me that any of them are doing any more for their students and families than we are. I truly believe that being as small as we are, we are able to make stronger connections, react more quickly, be more flexible, and give you all more of what you need than our larger counterparts. I really hope you feel that way too. We hope that all of you and even more decide to make New Heights your school of choice for the upcoming year!



**REFERRALS:** If you know of anyone who has kids who could benefit from our relational, common-sense approach to public education, kindly encourage them to check out our school's website at:

[www.newheightsschool.com](http://www.newheightsschool.com)

and have them see what we do. We are also on Facebook and they can call the school to get any questions answered. Once permitted, we will get back to meeting with families at the school, or we may go to a Zoom conference for those who prefer a "face-to-face meeting." We are here for you and we'd like to be here for others you know as well.

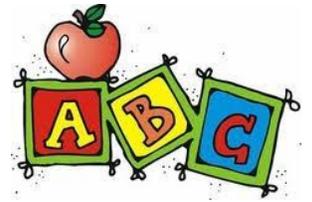
Let us know if you need anything at all. Keep checking with the teachers, help your kids carve out some quality learning time each day, find reasons to celebrate, and stay safe.

See you soon!!!

Thomas Kearney, Principal, Superintendent

# Teacher Feature— Mr. Linner

## SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST



Mr. Linner, also known as “Mr. L” has been New Heights’ School Psychologist since 2018. He is an expert when it comes to talking with students and helping them solve their problems. Mr. Linner is

working on his Yoga Calm certification and teaches yoga classes for New Heights students every week with Mrs. Massmann. Mr. Linner is a Stillwater resident and lives so close to the school he often walks or rides his bike to work. Here are some more interesting facts about our fabulous school psychologist, and pictures from his recent travels in India.

### 1. What inspired you to become a school psychologist?

I started off my career as a teacher, but stayed in school and became a school psychologist. I have been inspired by many of the teachers that I had in elementary school who believed in me. I have been inspired seeing students change over the years and I try to inspire students to make positive changes in their life.

### 2. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I like the community of students and staff and the relationships that are built. I enjoy teaching yoga with Mrs. Massmann. It has been great to see the students grow over my last two and one half years at the school.



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

The most exciting thing I have done is gone up in the mountains of Tibet in the Himalayas and walked around a holy mountain.

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

People are surprised to learn that I went to New Heights as a child when it was Washington Elementary. I only went there from kindergarten to second grade, but I remember the wood floors and reading my *See Jane Run* book and a story about words. I also remember that it was hard for me remembering all the different sounds of the vowels. My father also went to the same school.



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

My three children are grown so free time is pretty quiet. I do yoga and biking daily. I also like traveling and went to India last summer.



### *Please Register for the 2020-21 School Year*

Registration is now open for the 2020-21 school year. Registration is done on-line through the JMC Parent Portal. If you have any questions please contact Julie Kearney at:  
[jkearney@newheightsschool.org](mailto:jkearney@newheightsschool.org)



## Celebrating Earth Day

Just because we are at home, doesn't mean we can't honor our earth. This year, Earth Day was celebrated on Wednesday, April 22, 2020. Started by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970. Senator Nelson's goal was to sponsor a "national teach-in on the environment" and raise public awareness about the issue of pollution and its harm on the environment. To honor this Earth Day, several New Heights Teachers and students got outside to enjoy our wonderful planet.



Mrs. Massmann and her husband went for a hike.



6th grade student, Gavin, created a gnome garden at his house.



Ms. Mankowski and her family picked up trash in her neighborhood.

*Did you know  
the first  
Earth Day  
was  
celebrated  
April 22,  
1970.*

## Where Are They Now?

New Heights teachers are working hard these days developing lessons, discussing student issues and trying to find the best possible ways to support students during distance learning. While most teachers are not going into school, they are meeting virtually in Zoom meetings.

Many students are participating in virtual meetings with their teachers via Google Hangout. Mrs. Massmann also offers Google Hangout check-in meetings every Wednesday at 11:30 am for middle school students and 12:05 pm for high school students.





## From the School Counselor...

Hello students and families, I hope you are all doing your best to take care of yourself during this time at home. According to [www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org), May is *Mental Health Awareness* month. Here are some important facts to know about mental health.

- Nearly 1 in 5 American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year.
- 46 percent of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, and half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.

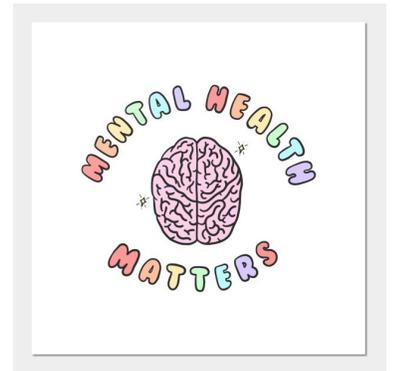
Everybody experiences mental health issues in different ways. Some common signs of distress may include: not acting like they normally do, a loss of interest in the things they used to enjoy, talking about feelings of hopelessness, being more reckless, or isolating from family and friends.

In an emergency, or if you or your friend needs urgent help, call 911 right away. You may even need to take your friend to the emergency room for assistance. If you feel it's safe, stay with your friend or find someone to stay with them until help arrives.

During this time, it is critical that we are practicing some healthy habits to boost our mental health.

Here are some suggestions to try during this challenging time.

- Track gratitude and achievement with a journal. Include 3 things you were grateful for and 3 things you were able to accomplish each day.
- Work your strengths. Do something you're good at to build self-confidence, then tackle a tougher task.
- Show some love to someone in your life. Close, quality, relationships are key for a happy, healthy life.
- Take time to laugh. FaceTime or talk with a funny friend, watch a comedy, or check out cute videos online. Laughter helps reduce anxiety.
- Spend some time with a furry friend. Time with animals lowers the stress hormone - cortisol and boosts oxytocin - which stimulates feelings of happiness.



### Local Resources for Help:

Washington County Crisis Response Unit  
Phone number: (651-275-7400) Crisis Text Line - Text MN to (741741)

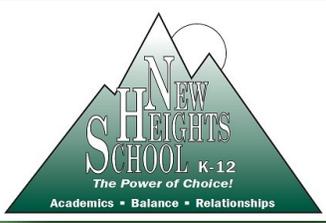
National Suicide Prevention Phone number:  
(1-800-273-8255)

Crisis and Support YouthLine: Call (877-968-8491) Text: teen2teen to (839863)

Outfront Minnesota: Domestic Violence, LGBTQ+ Call (612-822-0127) option 3

Crisis, Support, LGBTQ+ The Trevor Project:  
Call (866-488-7386) Text: START to (678678)

- Take 30 minutes to go for a walk in nature - it could be a stroll through a park or a hike in the woods. Research shows that being in nature can increase energy levels, reduce depression, and boost well-being.



# May Monthly Planner

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

				2	1 <b>No School Students</b> 	2
3	4 <b>No School Students</b>	5 Special Board Meeting 11:00am	6 <i>Google check-ins</i> 11:30am Middle School 12:05pm High School	7 <i>Yoga Calm via Google</i>	8	9
<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">             teacher  appreciation week           </div>		Cinco de Mayo				
10 	11	12	13 <i>Google check-ins</i> 11:30am Middle School 12:05pm High School  School Board Meeting 11:00am	14 <i>Yoga Calm via Google</i>	15	16
17	18	19	20 <i>Google check-ins</i> 11:30am Middle School 12:05pm High School  Annual School Board Meeting 11:00am	21 <i>Yoga Calm via Google</i>	22	23
24/31	25  MEMORIAL DAY <b>No School</b>	26	27 <i>Google check-ins</i> 11:30am Middle School 12:05pm High School	28  <b>Last Day of School K-5</b>	29 <b>Last Day of School 6-12</b>	30 