

Van Rensselaer Elementary School
25 Van Rensselaer Drive
Rensselaer, NY 12144

Jeffrey M. Palmer
Principal

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August 2020

Dear Parents,

It's that time again to welcome our students back for another exciting year at Van Rensselaer Elementary School and to provide you with information regarding the start of the school year. For obvious reasons, school will take on a different look this year. We have worked diligently to prepare a plan that will maintain the necessary focus on health and safety while providing an opportunity for our students to begin engaging with in-person instruction again. The district will be mailing out guidelines outlining how to access information moving forward. The guidelines will assist you with accessing your child's teacher(s) for this year. Please reach out to the school if you need assistance with accessing this information.

Presently, the plan is for school to start on Tuesday, September 8th, for students that are assigned to cohort 1. Our school day is 8:15-3:15. Students that are assigned to cohort 2 will start with remote instruction that first week of school. For students/families in cohort 2, your child's teacher(s) will likely be reaching out to you at some point on September 3rd or 4th to help set up how remote learning will work. We recognize the challenge of helping cohort 2 get started with remote learning before attending school in person. We will need to work together to help your child have a positive start to the school year. Please remember that all students will be on remote instruction every Friday.

You should be able to access bus assignments through SchoolTool. Instructions to do so are included in the guidelines that were referenced in the first paragraph. If you have any questions regarding school bus transportation you may call the Bus Garage at 283-0671. While it is clear we are striving to communicate electronically, I anticipate that a parent packet will be sent home with your child on their first "in person" day of school. It will contain a number of important documents which need to be completed and returned to school by specific dates. Please read all the material in this packet completely and return the signed papers to your child's teacher.

The district's official reopening plan is posted on the [district website](#). I have outlined a few specific thoughts below:

- Please understand that for health and safety reasons parents will not be permitted to enter the building without an appointment. I would recommend calling in advance to set up appointments.

Expectations for All Students:

- All students will need to wear a mask or face covering on the bus, transitioning in the hallway, or whenever social distancing is not able to be maintained.
- All students will need to go through the health screening before boarding the bus or upon arriving to school if they are walkers or are dropped off. Parents will need to be available immediately if their child does not pass the health screening which will include having their temperature taken. It might be a good idea to take your child's temperature before school to avoid any potential inconvenience that may result from your child not passing the protocols.
- Presently, the reopening plan indicates that students will not be required to wear masks during instruction and when they are eating as long as they are socially distanced.

Morning Drop-Off/Walkers

- For students walking to school they may enter through the auditorium entrance doors. School staff will be located outside to conduct the health screening.
- PK-2 children should be dropped off using the pull-off located near the elementary playground. A staff member will go through the health screening with your child. You should remain in your car. Do not pull away until your child has passed the screening. You may not accompany your child into the building. School staff will ensure that your child reaches their classroom.
- Grades 3-6 children should be dropped off at the auditorium entrance. You may pull up to the curb (during this time you may disregard the fire lane signage). A staff member will go through the safety protocol with your child. You must remain in your car. Do not pull away until your child has passed the screening. You may not accompany your child into the building. School staff will ensure that your child reaches their classroom.
- The district is still determining the exact time that students may be allowed in the building. It will either be 8:00 or 8:15. That information will be provided as soon as possible. We apologize for any inconvenience. It is critical that your child not arrive before the designated time.

- Staff members will be in the designated locations until 8:30. If you arrive after this time you will need to walk your child into the security vestibule where the health screening will take place. Please do not leave until the screening has been passed. Please remember the official start to the day is 8:15.

Dismissal

- If you need to pick up your child early from school for an appointment you will need to do so before 2:45. This should not be a frequent occurrence. The dismissal process will start at 2:45 so students will not be called out of class after this time. If you plan on picking your child up daily please see the process for doing that outlined below. Due to the need to socially distance in school it is important that parents do not plan on picking their child up from the office every day.
- If you plan on picking up your child daily you will need to send in a note. Students being picked up will be located in the hallway down by the auditorium starting at 3:00. They will be socially distanced. Many, if not all, of the parking spots in the first row will be reserved for dismissal. You will need to remain in your car and a staff member will help you with the process. As a reminder, you will need to be prepared to show ID when asked. Your child will be brought out to your car following this interaction. Please be patient with the process.
- Students that are walkers will be dismissed at 3:00.
- Students riding the buses will depart from school at about 3:15 or so.

Other Reminders:

- Please label any lunches, coats, jackets, sweaters, and/or backpacks that your child may bring to school. Please remember that lockers will not be used so please minimize the materials your child is bringing to school.
- Students should come to school dressed in the proper attire. Shoes and sneakers should be worn at all times. For safety reasons, open toe shoes, flip-flops, and platform shoes are not allowed.
- Please call Mr. Foust at 436-8561 (extension 8126) if your child will be absent from school. **NYS law requires a written excuse for each absence.**
- All parental requests for a bus change **MUST** be put in **writing** before they will be honored. Requests for bus changes may not be made over the phone and will not be honored. All requests must be in writing and submitted to the office no later than 9:00 am. Please understand that it is very difficult to make transportation changes during the school day which is why all changes should be made by 9:00. Due to the required social distancing, it is likely that the Transportation Department will need to be more restrictive

in honoring changes. More information will be provided with regards to this as it is determined.

- As a reminder, all parents and visitors must sign in upon entering the building. Again, only parents and visitors with an appointment will be permitted into the building. This is increasingly important to maintain a healthy and safe environment under the present circumstances. We will again be using our Raptor Visitor Management System. If you did not register with your license or other identification last year, you will need to do so this year to have access to the building.
- Electronic devices are prohibited from school unless they are school issued or approved. That letter is the final page of this document.

As always, the final weeks of summer will pass quickly for all. In discussing the first day of school with your child, it will be increasingly important to reassure him/her that school is a very special place where wonderful things will be learned. For some of our students, it is understandable that the situation has led to them feeling anxious about school. Please emphasize that school is a safe place. Under any circumstances, transitioning back to school can be a difficult process for students. I encourage you to be supportive and patient with this process. Please give your child the first couple of weeks to get to know their teacher (s) and what is expected of them. Please contact your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns. We look forward to Tuesday, September 8th as the beginning of another terrific year here at VR! Should you have any questions, please feel free to phone school at 518-436-4618.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Palmer

Elementary Principal

VR's Vision:

Our school is a safe and caring community where students learn to think critically, grow socially, and develop a love of learning that will last a lifetime. We will be polite, work hard, and have fun as we SHOW PRIDE at Van Rensselaer Elementary School.

August 2020

Dear Parents and Families,

The main purpose of this letter is to remind you that the use of electronic devices is prohibited for elementary students. These devices are a significant distraction and can obstruct the educational process. These devices include but are not limited to paging devices, cell phones, portable communication devices, electronic games, laser pointers, iPods, iPads, tablets, portable CD players, MP3 players, and DVD players. A student who is found in violation of this rule will have the offending device confiscated and returned only to their parent or guardian. The student may also face additional disciplinary consequences depending on the situation. In addition, please be aware that using electronic devices to record or photograph on school grounds (including the buses) is a serious offense and will likely result in the student being externally suspended from school. There may be special occasions when your child's teacher grants permission for the use of electronic devices (from home) in the classroom. You will be notified by the teacher if that is the case, and the devices should only be used under the direct supervision of the teacher in the classroom.

I realize that some of these devices are used as a way to communicate with your child. Please know that if a parent needs to speak to his or her child they should call the office at 436-4618. The student will be given the message or called out of class depending on the urgency of the message. Students will be able to use the phones in the office to communicate with a parent or guardian if necessary.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Palmer

Elementary Principal