



Welcome to Newcastle Elementary!

Learning together with pride

Welcome to Newcastle Elementary! On behalf of our school staff and the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA), I offer a warm welcome, and hope that you find our school to be a wonderful home and safe haven for you and your child. At Newcastle, we are committed to family partnerships that allows us, together, to encourage the intellectual, academic, social, and emotional growth and well being of each and every student we serve. Communication is key to any successful partnership, and I invite you to reach out to any member of our staff (particularly your child's teacher!) with any questions or concerns that may arise. In the meantime, I hope that this brochure is help to you as we begin our first steps in this journey together

Dr. Tod Wood – your Newcastle principal

Communication

Any great partnership starts with communication. How do we seek quality communication with you?

Websites: Most of our resources and communications are available on our websites. This includes resource guides, teacher web pages, policies, procedures and general information.

School: connect.issaquah.wednet.edu/elementary/newcastle

PTSA: newcastleptsa.org

Newsletters:

- › **School E-News.** *This is the primary way the school informs parents about school news, events and needs. Parents are automatically signed-up for the E-News based on the email provided during enrollment. If you are not getting the E-News, please go to the school web page, go to News & Events, select the E-News link and look for the 'Get E-News' button.*
- › **PTSA Newsletters.** *Our PTSA provides more information on parent and community news, events and opportunities through the weekly What's Happening and the monthly Cub News. To sign up for the PTSA Newsletters, go to newcastleptsa.org and select the 'back to school sign-up' link.*

Email: The best way to start a conversation with a staff person is to send a short email. Please give 1-2 school days for a response. If the matter is urgent you may call the school office. Staff emails may be found on our website under the **Contacts & Help!** link. Links to web pages for each staff person are also found from that link.

Who do I contact? When you have a question or concern and are unsure who to contact, go to our **Contacts & Help!** link and select **Who to contact when...**

Newcastle Mission & Vision

At Newcastle, our students...

- ◆ Build character as caring and responsible citizens.
- ◆ Grow as inquisitive, independent and confident learners.
- ◆ Acquire problem solving skills and strategies with perseverance and creativity.
- ◆ Develop thinking skills and habits applied across content and to real life situations.

To support student growth, our staff designs the school environment and experiences to...

- ◆ Integrate peer collaboration and support positive social engagement.
- ◆ Guide students as they share the responsibility of their learning.
- ◆ Design authentic learning tasks and questions that connect new concepts and skills to the world around them.
- ◆ Identify and adjust to each student's needs to deepen knowledge and thinking skills.

To-Do List.

Getting a school year started is a great logistical challenge for our staff and for parents! To help here is a To-Do list:

- New Student Enrollment.** Access is available through the Newcastle website:
<https://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/school/enrollment>
- Set up Family Access.** Family Access is the official district information system. To set up Family Access go to our school website and look for the **Family Access** link on the left and follow the set-up directions.
- Enrollment Verification (EVP).** **All** families must complete EVP early each **August**. This helps ensure we complete annually required forms and have accurate enrollment numbers so we can staff and schedule classes appropriately. EVP Includes...
 - ✓ Confirm intent to attend Newcastle
 - ✓ Register for or join the PTSA
 - ✓ Pay for School Supplies
- School Supplies Fee.** Rather than providing a supply shopping list we ask families to pay a school supply fee. The supply fee saves waste, money and provides quality materials for all students in a timely manner.
- Set up / check your lunch account.** See page 4 for instructions. This is a great safety net even if your child will mostly bring lunch to school. **It is recommended that kindergartener and new 1st graders bring lunch the first two weeks of school.** This will help them transition well before attempting to buy lunch.
- ANNUAL Volunteer Approval.** Everyone who volunteers during the school day must go through an approval process and background check EACH YEAR. **It is our hope that EVERY parent will complete this process** even if you generally cannot volunteer. The link to the process is found on our web page under **quick-links**. **One week after you receive the email indicating your "Application is Complete" you are considered approved to volunteer.**
- 1st Week of School.** The first week(s) of school are busy. See the Year-at-a-Glance to the right for some of the tentative dates to keep in mind.

KINDERGARTEN: The first 3 days of kindergarten are parents-student-teacher conferences. Kindergarten classes start on the 4th day of the school year.
- Be sure to read our school Code of Conduct and Parent Guide** on our web page.

Year at a Glance

Dates subject to change, see web page for updates.

PTSA General Meetings in months with *

MARCH

Pre-K Testing for incoming Kindergarteners

AUGUST

Enrollment Verification Process (early Aug)

Ride the Bus

Annual Forms & Class Placement (late Aug)

SEPTEMBER*

Meet the Teacher (Day before school starts)

Kindergarten Conferences (First 3 days of school)

Curriculum Night

October

PTSA Fall Family Event—Costume Carnival

ISF Fundraiser

NOVEMBER*

PIE Night (Parents In Education)

DECEMBER

First Report Card

Conferences

Winter Break

JANUARY*

FEBRUARY

PTSA Winter Family Event

Mid-Winter Break (Presidents Day Week)

MARCH

Second Report Card

APRIL*

Spring Break

STEM Night

State Testing begins

ISF Fundraiser

MAY

PTSA Spring Family Event

JUNE*

End of year celebrations

Final Report Card

Making Connections

Joining an elementary school community is often a long-term and important life commitment. We hope your family makes new connections and experiences a strong sense of community during your time with Newcastle. This takes effort on all parts. Here are some ideas for how to connect to our community:

1. **Register with &/or Join the PTSA.** *The PTSA is a unique close partner with the school. To get a complete picture of any school, become an active PTSA member. A family membership is \$25 or you can register for free and still get the newsletters. (School directory is provided for members only.)*
2. **Read our communications.** *Thank you for signing up with the PTSA and school newsletters. We do our best to highlight the most pertinent and timely information for families, so please take the time to read your emails!*
3. **Attend school and PTSA events.** *Coming to our family nights, curriculum nights and other school events is a great way to connect. Be bold and introduce yourself to new people! Have your child find the students he or she is connecting with and meet their parents. **Also, don't forget the key events for adults such as PTSA meetings and Principal Coffee Talks** to learn more about current issues and the inner workings of the school.*
4. **Join a PTSA committee.** *Committees run by the PTSA serve a core function for our school. They include opportunities during the day or outside the school day including LionArt docents, fundraising, popcorn Fridays, family events, parent education, the school yearbook, food drives, and more.*
5. **Volunteer in class or after school.** *Volunteer opportunities with the school abound. In our classrooms, volunteers read with children, help with art and science and help with copies and logistics. The library uses volunteers regularly and there are many other opportunities such as providing recess alternatives, like our game room. Or if you have an interest or idea, just ask your child's teacher, the principal or the dean of students. Programs start with your ideas!*
6. **Become a VOICE mentor.** *We operate a program to pair students with mentors. Mentors can be school parents, community members or extended family members that want to give back to a child who would benefit with more adult connections in school. We provide training and match mentors and mentees.*

Being a Partner and Advocate

We thrive best when all our families are advocates for all our students. And of course we know that your #1 job is to advocate for your child(ren). We are partners who also want the best for our students. When you have a unique concern, question or need, how can you best advocate and partner with staff on behalf of your child? Here are some key points to consider:

1. **Encourage your student to self-advocate.** *Yes, students feel safest reporting problems to their parents. Whenever possible, encourage your child to report problems to an adult. For persistent or larger problems it is best to have students talk with their teacher or the school counselor or dean.*
2. **Make positive presumptions & consider other perspectives.** *Three things to remember when your child shares something unexpected: 1) Generally all kids seek success but problems emerge even when **intentions are good**. 2) Each child has a piece of the picture, but they also **filter their experience through a personal lens**. 3) The adults at school are here for children, and we are all **problem solvers ready to help**.*
3. **Always start at the source.** *Generally we ask you to start with the teacher for classroom issues. Our website has advice on where to start with issues that occur outside the classroom under the **Contacts and Help!** link.*
4. **Ask for help.** *Just as we teach students, start by asking for help and share what you (or your child) experienced.*
5. **Be proactive, don't let it build.** *We would rather address issues before they become big problems.*

Money: Accounts, Fees and Fundraising

Managing all the information about money in school can be confusing. Here is a short guide to what you need to know going into the school year.

Essentials: There are a few accounts / systems you really need to know:

- ◆ **Lunch Money.** Even if you plan on sending your child to school with lunch each day, it is highly recommended you establish a lunch account. That way, in the case of an emergency or the rare lost lunch, your child has a back-up plan. Though you can bring lunch money to the office, the best way to manage your child's lunch account is online. Info is available on the district web page (<http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/>) under the **Lunch Program** or **MySchoolBucks.com** link.



MySchoolBucks.com
Manage student lunch funds

Lunch Program
Menus, nutritional data

- ◆ **Field Trips.** Each class takes 1-3 field trips per year. Payment for fieldtrips are made online using the **Pay Online** link on our school website's main page.



- ◆ **School Supply Fee.** In order to leverage our bulk buying power and school discounts while ensuring high quality school materials for all students, we have moved to a school supply fee rather than providing a supply list and asking parents to buy supplies and send them to school. You will be prompted during EVP to pay the school supply fee, or you can simply go to <http://newcastleptsa.org/Home>; scroll down and on the **left sidebar** look for the **School Supplies** link. The PTSA processes payment so you will need to set up an account if you have not done so.

Recommended / Requested: During the course of the year you will learn about our reliance on donation programs to empower our school enrichments (see sidebar to the right).

- ◆ **PTSA Fundraising.** Our PTSA raises money through a biennial school auction as well as another smaller fundraisers (like a fun-run) on non-auction years. These fundraisers combine to fund a budget of over \$170,000 per year to empower a wide variety of programs such as assemblies, LionArt docents, field trip scholarships, playground equipment, science enrichments, intervention programs and classroom grants. This makes a profound impact on our school offerings and supports.

- ◆ **Issaquah Schools Foundation (ISF) Fundraising.** ISF engages in fundraising for schools with two primary pushes, one in the fall and one in the spring. Watch for information on how you can participate in these campaigns. Funds raised by ISF support a wide range of programs from curriculum materials and professional development to direct services to students.

See issaquahschoolsfoundation.org/programs/ for more information.

- ◆ **5th Grade Fundraisers.** Our 5th graders go on a 3-day environmental education outdoor camp. To defray some of the cost, they do some fundraising, often at school events.

Why does a public school do so much fundraising?

Our school is deeply committed to the success of each and every student we serve. Sometimes we see specific needs of individuals, or our student body as a whole (such as in the case of technology), that are not met by the needs of "basic education" as funded through the state and federal funds. Out of a commitment to providing the best that can be offered to every student, schools often find it necessary to stretch beyond the basic budget in order to meet those needs. As a result, many districts have formed foundations and school PTSA's that assist with fundraising to support additional programs, resources, and activities that will help ensure schools continue to meet the needs of every child through the enrichment of basic program offerings.

Scholarships and Financial Aid. Need financial assistance for fees and field trips? Scholarships are available. Please contact the school for more information and scholarship forms.