

NEW COUNTRYSIDE FAMILIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Welcome to Countryside Elementary! Here you can find answers to frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions, please contact one of our Welcome Committee chair, Dima Albasha (dimabasha@hotmail.com) or a PTO Co-President (contact information listed at the end).

What time does school start and end?

The opening bell rings at 8:20 a.m. At this time, students are permitted to enter the building. The second, or “tardy” bell rings at 8:35 a.m. At this time, all children are expected to be in their seats and ready to begin their work.

For grades 1-5, dismissal is at 3:00 p.m. on all days except for Tuesdays (and occasional early-release Thursdays) when it ends at 12:30 p.m. Kindergarten students follow different schedules (see Kindergarten pick-up section below).

School Locked Door Policy

In the mornings, school doors will remain locked until 8:20 a.m. At 8:20 a.m., doors will open, and students will enter by grade. Doors will be locked again at 8:40 a.m. To enter the school when doors are locked, press the buzzer by the front doors and go to the front office once admitted. Please have photo identification to show the front office if requested.

How do drop-off and pick-up work?

School drop-off: Children line up by grade outside in the main yard in front of the school. When the first bell rings at 8:20, children enter the school in grade order starting with Kindergarten. Supervision is not provided before this time. Children who arrive after 8:20 may proceed into the school through the front main door. Those who arrive after 8:35, the second bell, must sign in at the office and pick up a late pass.

The corridors in Countryside can get congested as children head to their classrooms. To keep hallways as safe and clear as possible, parents/caregivers are advised to drop off at the school entrance and not accompany their children inside. Kindergarten parents can walk their children to their classrooms as needed, especially at the start of the school year.

School pick-up, grades 1-5: Parents/caretakers wait outside the building in the front schoolyard for their children to be released. Children are dismissed from their classrooms and walk out of the building to meet their parents/caretakers. Grades 1-3 exit the main door, and Grades 4-5 exit the side door near the flagpole. Please choose a spot to meet your child away from the doors so that the children can exit quickly and safely.

Kindergarten pick-up: Your pick-up time depends on whether your child follows the A or B schedule. A schedule is 3:00 pickup (M, W) and 12:30 pickup (T, Th, F). B schedule is 3:00 pickup (Th, F) and 12:30 pickup (M, T, and W). The 3:00 p.m. releases for kindergarteners do not begin until the first week of October. For the first few weeks of kindergarten, all kindergarteners, both schedules A and B, are released at 12:30 p.m. (M-F). Please wait in the kindergarten courtyard on the south side of the main building to pick up your child.

Class	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
Grades 1-5	3 pm	12:30	3	3 (or 12:30)	3
Kindergarten - A group	3 pm*	12:30	3*	12:30	12:30
Kindergarten - B group	12:30	12:30	12:30	3* (or 12:30)	3*

*3:00 pm releases for kindergarteners begin the first week of October

Where can I park during drop-off and pick-up?

Drop-off and pick-up times are busy, and traffic is congested. When possible, please walk to school or carpool. For families who drive to school, the **Blue Zones** (see below) are the designated drop-off and pick-up spots. Parking or stopping is prohibited in designated bus drop-off zones at all times. On-street parking surrounding the school is limited during peak times. Please have patience and exercise extreme caution while driving in the area. There are kids everywhere! If you choose to walk or park and walk, please use the crossing guards to cross the streets.

What are Blue Zones?

The Blue Zones (marked by the color on the curb) are designated pick-up and drop-off spots. Countryside has two Blue Zones; the main one is located on the southbound side of Dedham St. in front of school, and a smaller one is located across the street heading northbound. Blue Zones are restricted to LIVE PARKING only from 30 minutes prior to the start of school and from one hour prior to 30 minutes after the close of school. Live parking means you must stay in your car when dropping off or picking up in a Blue Zone. Please continue to pull forward to maintain the traffic flow and keep our children safe. For more information on Blue Zones, visit <http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us/transportation/bluezone>.

Are there buses to and from Countryside?

The Newton Public School System provides buses for children who live more than 2 miles from their neighborhood school. Children who live from 1-2 miles from school will need to purchase a bus pass. For more information on bus transportation, visit <http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us/transportation>.

Children who travel to and from school by bus are expected to take the bus each day unless absent. For any other arrangements, please send a note with your child.

Does Countryside have an afterschool care program?

Yes, Countryside has an aftercare program, Countryside Children's Center. Their website is <http://www.countrysidechildrenscenterinc.com/>. Contact Joan Tanner, Executive Director, at j_tanner00@msn.com for more information.

Does Countryside have resources and support for families of students receiving special education services?

Yes, Countryside has a PTO liaison to the citywide Parent Advisory Council for Special Education, (PAC). Alla Lagoon, a Countryside parent, is the Countryside liaison. Contact her at alla.lagoon@gmail.com. For more information, visit the PAC website, <http://www.newtonpac.org>.

What if my child will not be in school or will be late?

It is very important that you let the school know if your child will not be in school for any reason, sickness, travel, etc. If your child will be absent or late, you must notify the school by calling the Countryside Safe Arrival line before the opening bell. The Safe Arrival phone number is 617-559-9470. If your child is not in school and you have not called, the school secretary will call your home for an explanation of the absence. If the child cannot be located or accounted for, the school will contact the Newton Police immediately. If your child is late due to a medical appointment, please have the doctor's office write a note for the school.

In the case of an anticipated absence, please notify your child's teacher in writing in advance. In addition, you may call the Safe Arrival phone number with this information when you know it.

What if I need to pick my child up early from school?

If you need to have your child dismissed early, you must write a note to your child's teacher, giving the requested date and time of departure. Your child will be waiting for you in the school office, where you will make an entry in the Sign-Out Log. The school will not release children during the school day except to a parent or to another adult designated by the parent in writing. A release form is available in the office and is sent home to parents in the fall.

What happens if my child becomes ill during the school day?

Countryside has a full-time nurse, Laura Murphy. If your child becomes ill at school, he or she will be taken to the nurse's office. If the nurse determines that your child is too ill to stay at school, you will be notified.

If case of emergency during the school day, will the school contact me?

Yes, it is critical that the school has your telephone numbers - home, office, and mobile - so we can get in touch with you in an emergency. The school will send forms home for you to fill out. Please complete the forms and return them as quickly as possible.

How can I find out if school is cancelled?

Blackboard-Connect is the communication system utilized in the Newton Public Schools. This system contacts the number(s) designated as your child's emergency number(s) on the yellow Student Contact sheets you will receive at the beginning of the school year. Please make sure your child's emergency information is kept up to date at all times.

In addition to utilizing the Blackboard-Connect communication system, "no school" and delayed opening announcements due to weather are given to several radio and TV stations, including WBUR 90.9 FM, WBZ 1030 AM, WILD 1090 AM, WNTN 1550 AM (6:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.), WRKO 680 AM, and TV channels 4, 5, 7. Cancellations and delays will also be posted at www3.newton.k12.ma.us or you can call 617-559-9699 for a prerecorded message.

Please do not call Countryside or the Newton School, Fire, or Police Departments. Although schools may be open after snow or ice storms, parents should use their own judgment to determine whether road conditions in their area permit children to proceed safely to school. The judgment of the parent is accepted as a legitimate reason for student absence in such cases.

What is Countryside's visitor policy?

Buzz the security system by the front door. Please have photo identification with you in case it is requested. You must go to the office, sign in, and affix a visitor pass badge to your clothing before proceeding further into the building. Please sign out upon leaving.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in their children's classrooms and in the school. However, all parent volunteers, whether volunteering for field trips or classroom programs or projects, are required to have a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check. Please contact school secretary, Dolly Wallace, at 617-559-9450 to begin this process. For more information about the CORI process, visit the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) website or follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/44jmvnc>.

How does lunch work at Countryside?

All children in grades 1 through 5 eat lunch at school every day except Tuesdays. However, Kindergarten students do not begin their lunch program until the first week in October and only eat lunch on the two days that they stay until 3 p.m. Children have 40 minutes for their lunch/recess period: 20 minutes in the cafeteria and 20 minutes of recess. The grade schedules are as follows:

4th grade and 5th grade: 11:20 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

2nd grade and 3rd grade: 12:10 p.m. - 12:50 p.m.

K and 1st grade: 1:00 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.

All children have the option of bringing lunch from home or participating in the school lunch program. For details on the Newton lunch program, please visit the website at <http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us/operations/foodserves>.

Can my child bring peanut butter or other nuts for lunch?

Yes, nuts are allowed in the cafeteria. We provide a nut-free table for children with allergies.

Does my child bring snack to school?

Every class has snack time either in the mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Please make sure the snack contains no nuts if your child is in a “nut-free” classroom. During the first few days of school, most teachers will send home specific snack guidelines for your child’s class.

Are there extracurricular activities or clubs at Countryside?

Newton Community Education, a self-sustaining arm of the Newton Public Schools, has several extracurricular classes and activities that are held after school at Countryside. You must register for these classes and activities through Newton Community Education (<http://www.newtoncommunityed.org/>), and there are program fees associated with these classes and activities. Most recently, classes included chess, drumming, mad science, math mania, and Lego robotics.

There are also occasional school-related afterschool activities, such as rehearsals for the annual Countryside musical.

How do I connect with other families?

You will have received a print version of this year’s *Directory* with your child(ren)’s classmate information. The Countryside PTO also has a secure, encrypted directory online. Please enter your family’s information in the *Directory* so that your child(ren)’s classmates can contact you. You can do this by going to <https://www.myschoolanywhere.com/new-family.a5w?fam=CountrysideElementarySchool6154> or <http://goo.gl/xaVyfo>. You can also email information to countryside@pto.org.

How do I hear about what’s going on at Countryside?

The majority of communications from the school and PTO are sent via email. The PTO emails a weekly newsletter, the *Update*, every Sunday with school news and information about upcoming school events and activities. ***If you are not receiving the Update, please send your email address to countryside@pto.org and/or one of the Co-Presidents.*** Urgent information or requests are sent as separate emails. Please read all communications from the school and the PTO so that you can stay informed. The PTO also has a website at <http://countrysidepto.org/> where you can find lots of helpful information, including the school calendar and various forms.

How can I be involved in my child's classroom?

Teachers welcome parent volunteers at various occasions throughout the year. Most teachers will post sign-up sheets for volunteer opportunities at Back to School night (see below for dates). Each classroom has 1-2 Room Parents who work with the teachers to coordinate class activities and plan community-building events. Throughout the year, Room Parents will email you sign-up sheets for specific volunteer opportunities in your child's classroom. To be sure that you receive these emails and to receive the PTO weekly *Update*, please make sure that the PTO has your most current email address. ***Send your email address to countrysidedirectory@gmail.com and/or one of the Co-Presidents.***

2014 Back to School Night dates:

Grades K-4 : Wednesday, Sept. 10 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Grade 5: Thursday, Sept. 17 from 6:45 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

How can I be involved at Countryside?

The Countryside PTO is an active group of parents and teachers who work together to help make Countryside a better school for your child. Every Countryside family is a member of the PTO. The PTO helps to enhance your child's school experience through programs (such as visiting poets and science programs as well as an all-school musical) and support your teachers by providing classroom resources and materials. The PTO builds community spirit and facilitates information sharing. We encourage you to join us and get involved in the Countryside PTO. The infusion of new parents on our PTO committees brings new ideas, energy, and creative talent to help keep our programs dynamic and strong.

Please visit our PTO "Committees at a Glance" at http://www.countrysidepto.org/pto_commit.html to see which committee is right for you. There are many opportunities to become involved that will fit your schedule. Joining a PTO committee, volunteering during school-wide events, or working in the Countryside library are great ways for incoming families to make friends and build a strong Countryside community.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Countryside Elementary Main Office: 617-559-9450

Countryside Principal: Beth Herlihy, elizabeth_Herlihy@newton.k12.ma.us

Call Back/Safe Arrival: 617-559-9470

Health Room/School Nurse: Ms. Laura Murphy, 617-559-9454

Countryside Children's Center (aftercare): 617-964-6958 (Countryside location) or 617-965-6434 (Upper Falls location)

PTO Co-Presidents:

Teri Ginsburg, teriginsburg@gmail.com

Leslie Gonzalez, cubish1@verizon.net

Anne Kalis, annekalis@yahoo.com