

The Village School of North Bennington  
PO Box 847  
9 School Street  
North Bennington, Vermont 05257  
802-442-5955  
[www.vsnb.org](http://www.vsnb.org)



September 7, 2018

Dear Families and Community Members,

We are off to a great start for the year. The First Day Celebration was a huge success due in equal parts to the weather, the entertainment (Troy Wunderle), and wonderful community support. In my opening address, I talked about First Day as a celebration of learning and community. The Village School is a genuinely warm and inclusive community. This is one of the defining characteristics that makes our school so very special.

As an institution dedicated to the growth of young people, we want to provide all students and community members with a safe and healthy environment where everyone feels respected; a place where they feel they can be who they are without judgement. In trying to make our school welcoming and comfortable for everyone, we recognize the need to embrace diversity in all its forms. It's important to us that students understand people come in all shapes, sizes, genders, religions, ethnicities, and many other characteristics that make up their identity. Families come in all sorts of different configurations: single parent, mom and dad, two moms, two dads, grandparents, foster parents, and guardians, to name a few. In order to maintain our open and inclusive school culture, we will be making a point to focus on values we feel are important to our community, such as kindness, tolerance, respect and equality.

One area we will pay particular attention to this year and learn about with our students is the area of gender identity and self-expression. Classroom discussions may take the form of structured lessons or impromptu conversations, always with age-appropriate content in mind. We will be referring to best practices in diversity and gender instruction coming from respected resources such as the National Association of Independent Schools ([nais.org](http://nais.org)) and GLSEN ([glsen.org](http://glsen.org)). We will also turn to specialists such as Dr. Jennifer Bryan, who offers gender consultation to PreK-12 schools and published a comprehensive text *From the Dress-Up Corner to the Senior Prom: Navigating Gender and Sexuality Diversity in PreK-12 Schools*. Her conceptual and pedagogical models related to gender in educational settings continue to evolve, keeping pace with the profound and rapid social changes occurring every day in the culture at large.

In younger grades, teachers may talk about the gender assignment of things. For example, we often label certain colors, clothes, or toys as “boy” things or “girl” things. These conversations will help students hopefully create new, unbiased understandings. In the middle grades, a lesson might be related to pronoun usage. “She” and “he” may not cover everyone; some individuals might not feel they fit into one of those labels and would prefer to use another label like “they,” which has become part of the lexicon in discussions of gender identity. For sixth graders, a discussion might focus on their identity and self-expression. As we work with students, we will be mindful of their developmental understanding and needs. When appropriate, we will take advantage of teachable moments with the goal of fostering an inclusive community for all.

If you would like more information and/or resources about gender identity to better inform yourself and your student(s), please reach out to me. Also, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Warm Regards,

Timothy J. Newbold  
*Head of School*