

New Leaf

SCHOOL FOR CHANGE
407 THIRD STREET
NEPTUNE BEACH, FLORIDA 32266
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Synopsis:

The school accepts a maximum of 30 students annually for a specifically designed curriculum to improve the student's classroom participation, communication and cooperation skills, and overall academic performance. Teacher-student ratio is 1:6 in Lower School and 1:8 in High School.

Student Profile:

We accept students in 1st through 12th grade when we believe we offer an appropriate match for their learning needs. Students who have **significant** learning disabilities or **severe** emotional difficulties are not always candidates for this program. We do not accept students if we feel we are not adequately staffed for the specific student's benefit. New Leaf School provides a dynamic learning experience for motivated learners. Additionally, the program is designed to assist students who have not met with success in the traditional school setting, who would benefit from a smaller class size and increased personal attention. We reach out to the overwhelmed and the overlooked, as well as the underachieving.

Mission Statement:

Our classrooms are an educational "field hospital" designed to retrieve and restore children alienated from success in the traditional classroom. New Leaf is an appropriate destination for any child wanting to learn to learn deeply. Focusing on process over content, we apply strategies that teach cooperation and self-reliance. New Leaf's educational system encourages each student to seek their personal best, which makes our classroom an ideal destination for most students.

Staff Qualifications:

All lead teachers at New Leaf School are certified or have more than three years of experience and significant, relevant skills to offer their students.

"Far and away the best prize life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." -Theodore Roosevelt

New Leaf

In-Depth

Assessment

We pursue two routes: the **anecdotal record** (the written record of the teacher's observations of the student) and measurable (graded) **progress reports**. During the fifth week of each quarter parents are welcomed to a conference with the instructor to discuss their child's progress at New Leaf. The anecdotal record and the weekly test and project scores may be reviewed at this time. At the end of the 9-week quarter a report card is sent home which has a letter grade for every subject.

These two methods are tools for judging the quality of instruction and the student's reception and response. The best technique for assessment remains the observation of the student's improved quality of work and social function.

Grading systems have their limitations. Parents must consider what an "A" on the report card actually means. Is it a sign of excellence in comparison with the group, is it a sign of meeting the requirements entirely, or is it a sign of the student reaching and striving toward a new and higher goal in the direction of their personal best? Anything short of the latter is misleading and a disservice to the student. In this sense the report card grades best measure the child's rank in the group and the objective accomplishment of specific requirements. The anecdotal record better provides the subjective measure of how the child is doing in relationship to his or her personal abilities. We hope parents will value each of these tools in the proper light.

New Leaf School no longer administers standardized tests for the very reason many parents have chosen to place children with us: students do not come in standardized form. To measure the value added during an academic year we use the Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive of Basic Skills. By comparing the student's current results with the record from the previous year parents will be able to demonstrate their child's progress to a public or private school receiving their child in subsequent years. This also assists in determining that a year of educational value has been added to the student's understanding.

Learning Styles

An abundance of theory exists in the area of learning styles. It is productive to know whether a child is an auditory, visual or kinesthetic/tactile learner, and to provide instruction in a variety of modes so every child has the opportunity to "hear the message in their own language". Additionally, theories that view learners as global or specific learners recommend instruction be delivered in various forms for the same reason. The theory of Multiple Intelligences, proposed by Harvard professor Howard Gardner, suggests each learner has specific

giftedness and should have a chance to learn in accordance with their strengths while developing their less gifted areas.

At New Leaf our teacher-student ratio is kept extremely low so we have the time and energy to know our students as the complex individuals they are. In the best wisdom of our time, our instruction methods combine various techniques to benefit the entire class. All students will have to accommodate to some instruction given outside of his or her best learning mode, which will lead to future resilience as life-long learners in any situation. But each child will also get to play to his or her strengths in the course of each day which leads to satisfaction, increased participation, improved performance, and higher self-esteem.

Every child is gifted; we let them demonstrate this truth at New Leaf.

Learning to Learn

We are born to learn. The accomplishments of the first years of life (before formal learning environments become involved) are phenomenal. At New Leaf we want to revive these natural yearnings for intellectual and social growth. Our approach keeps the learning relevant, self-selected to the greatest degree possible, and functionally challenging.

As unique people, children come through the classroom door with different skills mastered and lacking. Our daily activities are designed to reveal why we learn and how we learn as much as it strives to share new content. The children are with us to learn to learn deeply. This reflective accomplishment will aid them for the rest of their lives. Reflection is at the very heart of critical thinking. A lack of awareness is the reason for much of what goes awry in the typical classroom. **Most schools are in a rush to expose children to as much content as possible, even when many of the students do not yet have the structures in place to categorize and store the new information presented to them.**

Many people have come to believe that the modern classroom provides the only way to learn, forgetting the traditions of learning in former times. The child of wealthy parents sometimes received instruction from a learned person hired as a tutor who shared the basics of Latin and Greek and encouraged the child to think critically as a daily activity. Reasoning was a basic element in the education of the ancients. We return the responsibility of reasoning as a response to instruction to the daily curriculum.

Believing that how and why we do a thing is as important as the final result sets us apart from some other learning institutions. So we live by the standard "life is a journey, not a destination". Our students come to expect a rational motive for their activities, and we encourage them to apply this expectation to their personal choices as well. Our approach at New Leaf aims the children toward thoroughness in thinking and communication skills, providing a significant foundation for their future education.

Fees

Basic Tuition is \$10,500 per school year, divided into ten monthly payments for the parent's convenience. Additional fees will be assessed based on a child's unique needs. Payments can be divided into two semester payments if parents prefer. The tuition payment is due on the 1st of each month. A late fee of \$25 may be assessed after the 5th business day of the month.

The **non-refundable application fee** is \$100, which includes assessment of grade level functioning in the basic subjects.

The non-refundable registration and Book/Supply Fee is \$350.

Both are due upon registration.

Accreditation

New Leaf does not seek accreditation at this time. Being an intentionally-small school, we do not fall into the size standards required by the reputable accrediting agencies. We do however use their guidelines to design our program and campus.

We seek genuine, substantial student progress as a measure of the quality of our program. Student and parent satisfaction is the hallmark of our success.

School Structure

We divide our school into two tiers: Lower School (grades 1-8) and High School (grades 9-12). Each is a multi-age classroom. Attendance is limited to 8 students in high school and contained in one classroom. The Lower School teacher to student ratio is 1:6 or lower, with a maximum of 24 students. Two classrooms are united to serve the Lower School. One room is used for small group instruction, the other is designed for the four language and 3 mathematical reinforcement activities that ensure deep mastery occurs for each student.

Unique Course Offerings

Three experiences are offered at New Leaf created specifically for our students. Throughout the year students study a course called **Being 101**. This gives them solid information on how to become a deeply peaceful person on the inside and to interact with others in a peaceful manner.

Our older students can qualify to participate in New Leaf's **Mentorship Project**. Academic progress, positive attitude, and good character are the standards for qualification. The idea for this long-term opportunity came from Harvard professor Howard Gardner.

The Mentorship Project takes place each Friday from 10am to 3 pm for the majority of the year. Each student is paired with one local business owner throughout this time to perform entry level work, solve real life problems in real time, and develop an additional layer of adult support system. Our participants connect with the real world in a supervised setting to develop their work ethic, see the need for

continued education, and gain the satisfaction of mastering new skills as they build their work experience.

A companion program to the Mentorships is offered in the **Volunteership Program**. This has the same qualification standards but is designed to develop the team player skills and community involvement of our younger students. In supervised outing each Friday a service project is undertaken. Beach and park clean-ups, which have in past years included making improvements to the Butterfly Garden at Jarboe Park, painting projects at Neptune Baptist Church and helping with fundraising efforts at the Neptune Beach Library. Students are encouraged to propose projects that have significance to them.

Student Code of Conduct

In language, dress, intention and behavior students are expected to act with responsibility and kindness toward others. This is simply stated and intentionally broad on purpose. Phrased in this way the code requires students to consider their motives and potential outcomes. This continual expectation of personal reflection matures and deepens our students.

Lunch Time

Lunches will be brought from home. Meals will be eaten in the classroom, (and sometimes outdoors when the weather is favorable). Parents are asked to monitor the lunch process. Tasty, hearty lunches make afternoon learning possible. Whole foods and 100% fruit juice or water are required. Desserts and chips are not permitted. Use a thermos and/or ice packs for temperature control. Every student must have a lunch every day.

Sick Policy

Students are requested to stay home for 24 hours after the last experience of **any** of the following: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, green mucus or significant headache. Thank you for keeping all of us well.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to arrive at school between 8:30 and 8:45. Absences due to illness are excused. If a student's unexcused absences rise to 20% promotion to the next grade level is not guaranteed and the family goes on academic probation. If it rises to 30% without understandable cause the family will be dismissed from New Leaf. While this may seem harsh, school attendance is a key part of child advocacy.

Pick up and Drop off Method

Students are expected to arrive at school no earlier than 8:30 and no later than 8:45. Help your child be as independent as possible. After the first week of school parents of our youngest students may have their child come up the stairs alone and wave to them from the classroom window. The morning is not an ideal time to

ask the teachers a quick question. Send the question on a note with the "See & Sign". We want the morning to be student-centered which is achieved when the teacher is talking with the students.

At the end of the day parents of Lower School students may come to the gate area and wait for the children to be individually released.

Please enter the parking lot from Second Street and exit onto Walnut. We need a safe consistent traffic flow. Also, please pull into a parking space instead of waiting in a traditional 'car pool line'.

Students riding bikes use the sidewalk behind the sanctuary and turn westward on Walnut toward Third Street. Bike riders are not to cross through the parking lot. Thank you for helping us keep each child safe, and every vehicle undented!

Homework

We encourage our students to do homework, but not at the expense of the family life. We do not want our children working more than 10% of their time between the end of the school day and bedtime. So we'll value the habit of homework, but keep it in perspective.

Daily assignments will be communicated to the parent as designated by the particular teacher. Homework is to be done at the parent's discretion. We understand there are times when life trumps homework. A note from a parent providing the reason why an assignment isn't completed will allow the student to have an additional day to turn it in. Parents are welcome to provide information to help us tailor homework for a child's specific situation and abilities.

Our students are expected to be reading each evening for the on-going literacy requirements (15 books on the child's reading level read during the course of the school year). Homework is not assigned on the weekends, but projects may sometimes be due on a Monday. Through adequate planning a family can avoid the stress of working on the weekends.

Field Trips

We make relevant journeys into the real world to supplement our classroom learning every few weeks. Trips to the public library and the nearby parks are also scheduled. A separate fee is charged per field trip. Having family members join us as chaperones is a marvelous opportunity for the extended family to take part in the student's education.

We have several significant annual events. Each October the Lower School students (grades 4-8) go to a 3-day, 2-night science/history camp on St. Simons Island. In May we celebrate the All-School Picnic at Howell Park in Atlantic Beach.

Parental Concerns

Please consider the “Concerned Parent Input Department” open to you at all reasonable hours. The director can be reached at the New Leaf number, or at home (610-9081). When something strongly concerns you, please speak with your child’s teacher or the director before you tell the neighbors, extended family or friends in the New Leaf family. We will strive to find a prompt resolution for your concerns and value the opportunity to improve the New Leaf program. Your concerns and suggestions are vital to the growth and success of New Leaf.

Energy Investment

Each family is asked to invest themselves in the work at New Leaf. We are fortunate to be partners, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Explore the ways you might advance this work. Everything is welcome: in-class volunteering, field trip chaperoning, sharing expertise, loaning resources for topic studies, sharing New Leaf information in the community, and the many things you will think of that we couldn’t anticipate. The important thing is that it be your own unique, heart-felt contribution.

WITT Meetings

This is our version of a Parent-Teacher Association. WITT stands for “We’re In This Together”. From the beginning of New Leaf this union of parents has been essential to our success in reaching students who weren’t successful in other environments. Caring relationships formed between families provides the patience needed to endure the period students often go through before breaking through to new ways of being. Your participation strengthens the entire school.

This dynamic association meets once each quarter to consider current issues and upcoming events. This is a prime opportunity for discussion and parent input. **The 4 meetings are mandatory**; plan now so your family is represented at each meeting.

Parent Classes

A mandatory class for new families is offered at the start of the school year, and again in January. This is an orientation to the unique culture of our school. During this time we strengthen our connections to one another and explore the Being 101 curriculum used in the classrooms so parents can speak the same emotional language and use the same strategies as the students and the staff.

Several additional classes on a range of topics are offered throughout the year. Each family will select at least one to attend, but are welcome to attend as many as they’d like.

Each family reads *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelsen during the first 9 weeks their child is enrolled and fills out a planning sheet for implementing the strategies within their unique family.

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