



Gryphons returned to campus last week to kick off the 2025-26 school year.

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

# QUID NOVI

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## LOOK FOR IT: PREDICTABILITY AND SUPPORT

By John Heaton, Headmaster

The value of a well-ordered school cannot be overstated. Children thrive when they have routines that are clear and consistent, and a school culture that is structured provides the framework for the most freedom. At New Covenant, our faculty and staff achieve this so well that, ironically, it can lead to misconceptions.

From time to time I meet prospective parents on tours, who divulge that they heard that New Covenant was “rigid.” When they take the tour, however, they see children on task, teacher-centered classrooms, and very happy students across the grades. They often remark on the freedom that

flourishes, especially in the high school, where they see unsupervised students working independently in the senior lounge with their coffee pots and microwaves. I can see the gears churning as they try to square things they’ve heard about the school from what they actually see first hand. And what they see is a culture of students learning responsible behavior in an ordered but liberating environment.

There are two other ways that a well-ordered environment finds expression: predictability and support. Our consultants at Independent School Management (ISM) have conducted longitudinal research to determine the factors that contribute

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### WHAT'S NEW?

#### Administrative Staff Changes

Changes in staffing last spring caused a bit of shifting in the offices of those who have the most contact with parents. In case you didn’t see our QUID NOVI (Summer edition), here is what has transpired. **Linda Simon** requested part-time hours and became our Director of Alumni Affairs. Her position as Admissions Director was then filled by **Eliza Olson** (Camden-9th; Harvey-6th) whose former position of Director Parent Relations was filled by **Tiffany Fulcher** (Hayden-5th; Madison-2nd). Tiffany vacated the Administrative Assistant to the Divisional Principals position, and **Maria Hayden** (Evangeline-8th) joined the staff in that capacity.

What does this mean? All admissions questions—mostly prospective parents—will communicate with Eliza. All parent/volunteer questions—mostly current parents—will communicate and receive regular emails and newsletters from Tiffany. Maria will support our academic team in the office. We are well-staffed and wish to be accessible to you as you have need.

THINK. LEARN. LOVE. LIVE.

# H O N O R A R I A

## CHANGES TO THE VA529 (COMMONWEALTH SAVERS) PLAN

The recent passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) has expanded the terms of usage for anyone with a 529 educational savings account, specifically for those who might use it for K-12 private education. Under the new law, more educational expenses are covered to include tuition for tutoring or extracurricular education programs, national test fees (think SAT or ACT), special education therapies, and other learning materials. Beginning in January, 2026, the withdrawal limit from any account will increase from the current \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year. This allows a parent to fully fund tuition at New Covenant Schools plus other educational expenses through a 529 savings account and receive the tax benefits.

There are other benefits as well as some tax law changes resulting from the big, beautiful bill.

The development office will be explaining those throughout the fall semester in short morning meetings over coffee. The meetings begin at 7:45 am and will last about 30 minutes. You will be out the door to work or the remainder of your day quickly. Check your schedule to see if one of these meeting dates fits or call **Dayna Renalds** to set up an appointment another day. We look forward to sharing the tax law changes with you.

- Wednesday, September 10
- Wednesday, September 24
- Wednesday, October 15
- Wednesday, October 22
- Wednesday, October 29

## ANNUAL BACK-TO-SCHOOL PICNIC FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

*Join us for an evening of sports, bounce houses, food, and fellowship.  
The schedule for the evening is as follows:*

4:30p

7/8 Boys'  
Soccer vs.  
Roanoke  
Valley  
Christian

5:00p

JV Girls'  
Volleyball vs.  
North  
Cross School

6:00p

Varsity Men's  
Soccer vs.  
Roanoke  
Valley  
Christian

6:30p

Varsity  
Women's  
Volleyball vs.  
North  
Cross School

5:30p FOOD SERVICE STARTS



# E T C E T E R A

## EVERYONE

### MEETING FOR SPORTS PARENTS

A meeting with the Athletic Director will be held for parents of all fall athletes (soccer, volleyball, cross country and tennis) on **Monday, August 25 at 5:30pm** in the Workman Field House. At this meeting AD **John Maynard** will go over key athletic policies, clarify changes made to the Athletic Handbook over the summer, and introduce you to coaches. We ask that at least one parent from the athlete's family be present. A short summary of the meeting will be sent to each household after the meeting. We are looking forward to a competitive season this fall.

### MOMS IN PRAYER

Please join us starting this **Wednesday from 2:00-3:00pm** in the chapel for a time of prayer for our students, teachers, staff, and community.

### AFTERCARE

This quarter's aftercare program is full and will not be accepting daily add-ins.

### NURSE'S OFFICE

The nurse's clinic will be open daily starting at 8:30am. Prior to this time, the clinic will be available for medication drop-offs, parent meetings, and emergencies only.

### STUDENT PICK-UP/ABSENCES

If your child will be absent, please send an email by 9am to [ncsoffice@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:ncsoffice@newcovenantschools.org) indicating the reason for their absence. If you need to pick up a student early for an appointment, email the time you need your student in the lobby. A parent or guardian must sign out and in all non-driving students. Parents who wish for their child to drive themselves to an appointment during instructional time (a scheduled class period), regardless of grade, must provide written permission

for each occasion. Driving students are required to have a driver form on file and sign in and out at the lobby desk.

### GRYPHON OUTFITTERS

The school store is open each Thursday school is in session from 2:30-3:30pm. For any questions, please contact the store manager at [Gryphonstore@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:Gryphonstore@newcovenantschools.org)

### SAVE THE DATE

Our annual Back-to-School Fellowship Picnic will be held **Friday, September 5**. Plan to bring your family and come join us for a good time together! More details to come.

### ALLEGRO MUSIC LESSONS

Allegro Music will offer on-site music lessons again this year, beginning the final week in August. There are a few openings for piano, guitar, and beginner voice. Visit [www.allegromusic.school](http://www.allegromusic.school) or text (610) 350-1780 for info.

### RIDE SHARING

Be sure to update Facts Family Portal regarding who can pick up your child. To indicate who can pick up your child, log into Facts Family Portal, and go to: School > Web Forms > Family Demographic Form Transportation > Transportation Form. Enter those individuals who are allowed to transport your child. Click save when finished.

### PARENTS WELCOME

We are grateful for the opportunity to welcome parents on campus. When you are planning your visit, please remember the following protocols required of our visitors:

1. All visitors must use the main entrance and be signed in. Please do not leave the lobby area without receiving authorization from front desk personnel (not even to peek in the kindergarten wing or front office). Please notify the office if anyone other than a parent is planning to visit your child.



## LABOR DAY

There will be no school  
**Monday, September 1.**

2. You are welcome to visit during your student's lunchtime; lunchtime is the appropriate time for visiting with students. Please email the teacher if you would like to request a meeting or visit the classroom.
3. Many students enjoy an occasional lunch visit or hallway hello; however, parents of our youngest Gryphons are encouraged to avoid this practice early in the school year. Such visits often cause children and their peers to become upset. By allowing your child time to become comfortable with routines before visiting, you are helping your child and all students have a more positive school experience.

### TEXTING SERVICE UPDATE

New Covenant will be updating its texting service to better integrate with our current FACTS Family Portal system. This service will allow us to communicate important announcements, reminders, and podcast updates with parents through text messages. You can opt in by clicking the following link: <https://newcovenantschools.factsmgmtadmin.com/text>

### THANK YOU

New Covenant has raised \$576.75 by shopping at Kroger. You can help New Covenant earn money by linking your Kroger account to our school. Simply log in to your Kroger account online or go to the app and select Rewards, Community, and New Covenant Schools to link your community rewards. Our organization code is IX901.



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most powerfully to sustained academic achievement. With data from hundreds of schools they have found incontrovertibly that the biggest drivers—that is, the strongest corollaries to strong student performance—are predictability and support. Put simply, this refers to clear expectations compassionately delivered. We can think of these factors as the two rails on which a train runs. The rails are not the main thing, the train is, so these two “rails” are meticulously maintained.

#### **What do we mean by predictability?**

First, we mean that the “rule-reward” structure is strong, but also intelligible and fair from the student perspective. We measure this throughout the year with student surveys, and the responses we get from fifth grade and higher consistently confirm that our teachers excel at modeling the values and communicating the expectations of our community. This leads to the second element, that faculty responses are

consistent, fair, and accurate from the student perspective both academically and behaviorally. Students consistently tell us that they knew what would be on the test, or that certain behaviors were permitted or not. They generally know that faculty demonstrate an evenness in their application of rules, policies, and procedures.

**What do we mean by support?** A well-ordered school culture *can be rigid* when it is not accompanied by high levels of support. We define support for your child as an environment where students perceive that the entire faculty, administration, and coaching staff genuinely seek the students’ success and work to achieve that success, without inflated reinforcement. A large part of a teacher’s task is to give constant feedback to students—feedback in regard to behavior, attitudes, character, and academic performance. By definition, a student *could* be made to feel relentlessly

scrutinized, unless he enjoyed the natural and pervasive sense of compassion and the teacher’s conspicuous desire for student success. While reinforcement within a healthy community is accurate (“Samuel was caught cheating and will have to suffer the consequences”), accurate assessment is not contrary to compassionate delivery. Our teachers are constantly encouraged to be accurate and firm, yet speak with compassion.

Building a strong and stable school culture allows us to make mistakes, fall short, or overcommit, all of which we sometimes do. The goal, however, is to learn from such episodes. A healthy community recognizes human frailty and supports its members through the sometimes painful process of growth, and strives to create a willingness to try again and improve. This is at the heart of maintaining the educational community we aspire to be.



*New Covenant Schools held the annual Convocation Service at Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian Church on August 10, 2025. Seniors begin their journey of their final year at NCS as the Class of 2026.*

## QUID NOVI

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CLASS OF 2026 • John Gauger,  
Nancy Hall, Chris Misiano, Sam Mizener,  
Tom Rogers, Anne Umbarger  
CLASS OF 2027 • Dusty Miller, Court Shipman  
CLASS OF 2028 • Neil Bonhert, Scott  
McCurley, Leann Perault, Leland Seckman

### EX OFFICIO

John Heaton—Headmaster  
Davidson Morse—School Warden

### OUR MISSION

New Covenant Schools is an educational community serving families of Central Virginia, providing an exceptional education in a classical curriculum within the framework of historic Christianity, furnishing the student with the tools of education and the inspiration to be a lifelong learner.

**NEW COVENANT schools**