



Nettle Creek Family of Schools

August 3, 2016

Dear Parents,

Welcome to a brand new school year at Nettle Creek School Corporation! While there will be many new learning opportunities for our children this year, some things about our schools will never change. Every year you can count on all of us to provide for each child's learning needs at high levels. True to our GROW @ THE CREEK theme, however, we are always looking for innovative ways to meet our mission's directive to provide exemplary educational experiences for students.



Beginning this school year, we are implementing four corporation-wide initiatives that have been in the development phase over the past year. We are very appreciative of the work that staff, students, parents and community members have invested to develop these innovations. As you read the descriptions that follow, you will see that all four of these initiatives revolve around our central focus of increasing our students' achievement. Big changes continue to occur at the state level regarding academic standards, how student performance is measured using those standards via ISTEP+, and how school letter grades are figured to more fairly communicate the progress a school corporation is making toward meeting changing expectations. Because our goal is continuous improvement, NCSC is not waiting for the State to finish its work. We know the areas in which we need to grow. Addressing these four areas now will put us big steps ahead when the State finishes its work.

**Area 1: What We Know** For quite some time Nettle Creek teachers have asked for more opportunities to learn what the field of education is discovering about how children learn and for opportunities to learn new strategies teachers can use in their classrooms to meet the requirements of Indiana's new academic standards. NCSC has created a new position and hired Ms. Laura Swain as a curriculum coordinator/instructional coach to meet this request. Ms. Swain not only brings a deep understanding of educational best practices, but she will also be in classrooms every day to follow up and to help all teachers grow in the areas of planning, instruction and assessment.

**Area 2: The Time We Need** Teachers spend a good part of their summers reading and attending professional workshops. A strategy that has proven effective elsewhere is to embed time within the school year to continue their learning and for teachers to collaborate with one another to share what is working in K-12 classrooms at Nettle Creek. Do you know that Nettle Creek elementary students score better in science on ISTEP+ than every other school in Wayne County? Our teachers have asked for time to learn from each other. NCSC is implementing a Condensed Day schedule this year that will allow teachers to collaborate for forty-five minutes two times per month so that they can bring what they learn back to their own students. We acknowledge that these late-start days will require families to change their morning routine – a contribution which we appreciate and don't take lightly. Attached is more information about our Condensed Days project. This information is based on feedback we received from parents during planning and will help families on these late-start days.

**Area 3: The Tools We Use** Nettle Creek School Corporation initiated an ambitious technology plan two years ago that has brought iPads and interactive projectors to the elementary school and Chrome Books to students in grades 6-12. This year, NCSC students in grades 3, 4 and 5 will begin using Chrome Books 1:1. Students in grades K-12 have new math materials that are better aligned to state standards and include a hybrid situation that uses textbooks and online materials.

**Area 4: Accountability** While the State of Indiana works through their challenges of replacing ISTEP+, Nettle Creek is implementing our own assessment plan to track student progress throughout the year so teachers can adjust instruction based on midyear results. Students and parents are already very familiar with NWEA MAP tests. All students K-12 will take MAP tests three times this year. This will require grades 7-12 teachers to GROW @ THE CREEK to learn how to use the results to inform their instruction. MAP results will be sent home and parents can watch their student's progress over the year, too. A Jr./Sr. high teacher who has jumped into this MAP initiative with both feet discovered that senior high MAP scores can actually be used to help students as they choose colleges!

As you can see, Nettle Creek is going to have a busy year focused on student success. To families who are returning to NCSC, "Welcome back!" You can be sure the new year will continue to meet and exceed your expectations. To families new to NCSC, "Welcome aboard!" Ever greater numbers of you are joining us. You help us GROW @ THE CREEK, and we're so pleased you've decided to join us. I am always available to everyone at 765.489.4543 and at [wdoering@nettlecreek.k12.in.us](mailto:wdoering@nettlecreek.k12.in.us). I am very much looking forward to this new school year!

Sincerely,

William Doering, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

Nettle Creek School Corp.  
297 E. Northmarket St.  
Hagerstown, IN 47346

[growatthecreek.com](http://growatthecreek.com)  
765-489-4543