



New School High FAQs

1. Who is the authorizer for New School High?

New School High is authorized by Central Michigan University, which is Michigan's most experienced charter school authorizer. The Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at CMU provides resources and support for New School High and 62 other Michigan schools that include over 31,000 students.

2. Where will New School High be located?

For our first year or two, New School High will be housed in a wing of the beautiful Risen Christ Church building located at 46250 West Ann Arbor Road in Plymouth, Michigan.

3. When will New School High have its own building?

For now, our needs are perfectly met by our facility. We are committed to providing a safe, attractive, comfortable, and fully-equipped learning environment for our students and staff, while being fiscally responsible and matching our needs to our budget. That being said, adding one grade per year means that our facility will need to expand with the growing student body. At that time we will need to move to a larger existing facility or build a new school. We expect this to be in 1-2 years.

4. Does being in a church building mean the school has religious ties?

New School High is a public school academy and will comply with all state and federal requirements regarding the separation between church and state. Students and staff will enter the building through a separate entrance and there will be a division between the side of the building used by the school and the side used by the church. There will be no religious symbols in the areas used by students and staff. The church will have no influence on the curriculum or activities of the school.

5. Does a student have to live in Plymouth-Canton to attend New School High?

No. There is no residence requirement. Students may live in any community and attend New School High. This is the case with all charter schools.

6. Is there a charge to attend?

No. As a public school academy, there is no tuition charge to attend New School High.

“Charter schools are, by statute, free and open to all Michigan residents.” (MDE Charter Schools Q&A)

7. How is New School High funded?

“All charter schools are funded through the State School Aid Act. A charter school receives funding through the per-pupil base foundation. By law, this amount may not exceed the per-pupil base foundation received by the local school district where the charter school is geographically located.” (MDE Charter School Q&A) This means our school cannot receive more funding per student than the local district, which is Plymouth-Canton Community Schools. Charter schools may also apply for grants and accept donations.

8. Will New School High have the same information and data on its website that traditional public schools have?

Yes. “Charter schools must provide the same transparency information on their website that all public schools provide.” (MDE Charter Schools Q&A)

9. What does it mean for a school to be “teacher-led”?

According to *Trusting Teachers With School Success*, by Kim Farris-Berg, Edward Dirkswager, and Amy Junge, there are approximately 60 teacher-led schools in the US. Teacher-led schools are defined as schools in which teachers may have decision-making authority in areas such as determining the learning program and materials, setting the schedule, setting school-level policies (such as homework, grading policies), selecting, evaluating, and retaining colleagues, determining budget, etc.

10. Is New School High associated with the National Heritage Academies or Prep Net schools in Plymouth-Canton?

No. New School High is an independent, self-managed, not-for-profit school that was founded by people who live in the Plymouth-Canton community. National Heritage Academies and PrepNet schools are founded and managed by companies that are based in Grand Rapids.

11. What qualifications are required of the teachers?

“Certification requirements for charter school teachers are identical to those of local school district teachers. Charter teachers must be certified and “highly qualified” as defined in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.” (MDE Charter School Q&A) Beyond the state requirements, we seek to bring master teachers onto the New School High team who are creative, accomplished, life-long learners and role models who truly love working with high school students and can inspire students to share their passion for learning.

12. Can teachers at New School High be members of a teachers' union?

This is a decision for the teachers, who may organize if they choose.

13. What benefits will staff have?

Staff members will be offered health benefits that are comparable to those of the local school district.

14. Does New School High have a Board of Education?

Yes, as a public school academy, New School High has a board. In our case, the board members were also founders of the school and have been involved in the planning and operations from the beginning.

15. How can a person become a board member for New School High?

Unlike traditional public school districts in which board members are elected, public school academy board members are appointed by the authorizing body. In our case, after an application process, Central Michigan University interviewed and approved the current board members. Those interested in serving on the New School High board should contact Orlando Castellon at the Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at CMU.

16. Will transportation be provided?

Transportation will not be provided. Families whose children attend public school academies or private schools often organize car pools or share the cost of transportation.

17. Will New School High serve lunch?

Students will need to provide their own healthy food for lunches and snacks. A kitchen is available for storage.

18. How are students selected?

“Except as prescribed in law, a charter school may **not** be selective in its enrollment process. It may not screen out students based on disability, race, religion, gender, test scores, etc. It may predetermine the ages, grades, and number of students it will serve. A random selection process must be used if the number of applicants exceeds the school’s enrollment capacity.” (MDE Charter School Q&A) After February 27, 2015, if we have registration materials from more than 125 students, the families of registered students will be notified and a public, random drawing will be held within two weeks to determine the students who are guaranteed a place and those on the waiting list.

19. Does my child need to have a certain grade point average or take an admissions test to attend?

There is no admission requirement for a student to attend New School High or any other public school academy. “Charter schools must serve anyone who applies to attend up to enrollment capacity; that is, they may not screen out students based on race, religion, gender, or test scores.” (MDE Charter Schools Q&A)

20. My child has been certified for special education services. Can he attend New School High?

Of course! Students who are certified for special education may enroll at any public school academy and receive appropriate services.

21. Can New School High select students with the intention of balancing the numbers of boys/girls, or religious/ethnic/cultural groups, or by community of residence, or by general/special education status, or in any other way?

No. By law, no public school academy can deny admission to any student in an attempt to “balance” the student population in any way. All who register have an equal opportunity to attend, as long as there are seats available.

22. Will New School High have extra-curricular activities?

Definitely! As a brand new school, we are excited to have the opportunity to build a program based on the interests of our students. Before school starts in the fall, we will gather the first freshman class to gain their input on extra-curricular offerings.

23. What is the New School High mascot?

The determination of the school mascot will be the honor of the founding group of students, who will select the symbol they wish to represent their school.

24. Will New School High have a football team and homecoming?

It is unlikely that we will have a football team right away due to the fact that only 9th graders will attend in our first year. Once there are more students, having a football team will depend on student interest. Homecoming is a traditional high school event that can be instituted as soon as there is a first graduating class to “come home”.

25. Will New School High have dances and other social events?

It is important that students feel connected to their school through traditions and celebrations that mark important times. Dances, activities nights, school trips, and special events are all ways New School High will encourage students to widen their circles of friends, try new things, and have fun.

26. Are uniforms required?

We want our students to be dressed in comfortable, economical and stylish clothes that support the primary goal of school, which is learning. Our dress code will be simple: long pants or jeans that are clean, with no rips, and worn at the waist; athletic or street shoes (no high heels or flip-flops); school t-shirts of various colors and designs in long or short-sleeved styles; school sweaters, or hoodies. There are no requirements regarding hair color, length, or style. Before school begins in the fall, we will enlist the recommendations of our students and families regarding the dress code.

27. My child has a serious allergy; what procedures will be followed to make sure she/he will not become sick at school?

Every child will have the essential medical information on file and, when necessary, a plan to keep him or her safe. New School High is committed to the health and safety of every student at all times.

28. What technology will be available?

All students will have access to their own Google Chromebook for research and writing. There will also be a class set of conventional laptop computers for tasks that are beyond the capability of Chromebooks. Special use Mac computers and iPads will be available for use at school for comprehensive projects involving graphics, sound, video, etc.

29. May students bring their own computer if they choose?

Yes. Students who use their own computers will be required to comply with the school's technology policy while at school.

30. Will computer skills be taught?

Yes. For students to succeed in high school, it is essential that students know how to use technology effectively and safely. To build the proper foundation, all students will participate in an extended orientation before classes begin in which technology skills are evaluated and skills essential to academic success are explicitly taught. New School High will adhere to the Michigan technology standards.

31. Will students be allowed to use cell phones at school?

Students may bring cell phones to school, but all phones must be silenced and out of sight during the school day. The exception would be if a teacher specifically allows the use of a phone function as a part of classroom instruction.

32. Are students required to take standardized tests?

“Charter school students are assessed annually as part of the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP), and charter schools are required to administer other state mandated assessments such as the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) and the English

Language Proficiency Assessment.” (MDE Charter School Q&A) At New School High, 9th graders will take the Explore test, 10th graders will take the PLAN test, and 11th graders will take the ACT as well as any other tests mandated by the State of Michigan. These tests are a requirement of our charter contract with the Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University.

33. What is the grading policy at New School High?

Students will be assessed against the content standards for the individual course rather than being compared to their peers. Evaluations will be based on demonstrated proficiency, from “Needs Significant Help” to “Mastery”. These levels will correspond to letter grades on a student’s official transcript. Because our goal is learning, students will be encouraged to revise and improve their work and grades.

34. Are charter schools required to adopt the core curriculum?

New School High will adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC). “Local education agencies and public school academies are required to adopt a model core curriculum per Section 380.1278 of the Revised School Code.” (MDE Charter School Q&A)

35. What is a school day like at New School High?

Classes begin at 8:30 am and end at 3:30 pm because we know a later start time is aligned to adolescent development (American Association of Pediatrics) and results in improved achievement. Since we believe that both a consistent structure and using time to support student learning are essential, we have designed a schedule in which each day of the 6-day cycle is a combination of extended classes for activities such as labs, research, writing, or independent study (120 min.), moderate-length for direct instruction (60 min.), and shorter-length for discussion (40 min.). The schedule for a 9th grade student includes math, ELA, science, social studies, health & wellness, advisory, and independent study (which may include a world language or the arts).

36. How large are class sizes?

Class sizes vary, depending on the activity. Labs, direct instruction, and discussion sections will be no larger than 25 students. Project-based learning will be groups of 2-8. Independent study will be supervised time for students to work on their own.

37. Will field trips be a part of the curriculum?

Field trips are an essential part of learning at New School High. We want our students to interact with the world outside the classroom so learning is active and relevant. The resources of our community are vast, and we plan to take full advantage of their ability to expand the experiences of our students.

38. Why is four years of Health and Wellness required at New School High?

There is much concern in our nation about stress, lack of exercise, and unhealthy sleeping and eating habits among adolescents. Education science shows that exercise, adequate sleep, and a healthy lifestyle promote increased academic achievement as well as general well being. With our commitment to the education of the whole child, healthy lifestyle education is an important part of our curriculum.

39. What is project-based learning and why is it so important?

Project-based learning is a powerful way for students to attain deep knowledge and develop the higher-order thinking skills required for life in the 21st century. Well-designed project-based learning is a way for students to learn “hands on” as well as pursue their individual interests. Projects are also a way for students to demonstrate what they know and can do in a more authentic manner than a multiple-choice test.

40. What is the purpose of the 9th grade advisory class?

Strong research shows that success in 9th grade is crucial to a student’s success in high school. Our advisory program is designed to give high school students the tools they need to succeed, such as the adoption of an academic mindset, effective organizational and study skills, knowledge of and advocacy for the way the student learns best, how to work successfully in a group or independently, respectful and responsible behaviors, etc.

41. What is the purpose of the 10-12th grade advisory classes?

As students grow and mature, their needs change. Topics such as career planning; college searches, applications, and financial aid; internships; job shadowing; and the extended individual project for upperclassmen will require dedicated time during the school day.

42. Why does every student need an Individual Learning Plan?

All students do not learn in the same way and on the same day. Each student is an individual, with different strengths, challenges, interests, and goals. In collaboration with the student and family, we are committed to designing an academic program that addresses these differences. We believe students take more ownership of their education when they have a voice in it. An Individual Learning Plan will allow students who can move more quickly through the curriculum to do so, as well as provide more time and support to those who need it.

43. What is Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-Based Grading means students are assessed against the content standards for the individual course rather than being compared to their peers. Evaluations are based on demonstrated proficiency, from Needs Significant Help to Mastery. These levels will correspond to letter grades on a student’s official transcript.

44. Does New School High include character education as a part of its curriculum?

At New School High, positive personal skills are valued as essential to success. Therefore, skills such as kindness, cooperation, respect, preparation, leadership, creativity, and responsibility are explicitly addressed in the advisory class and pro-actively supported in all other school interactions. Since the development of these qualities and skills is an important priority, useful feedback to students will be given regularly in the form of personal grades. These personal grades will serve to document progress with the goal of continual improvement. Personal grades are standards-based but never a part of a student's grade point average (GPA). That being said, personal grades may provide valuable documentation for the student who is applying for an internship or a part-time or summer job. While preparing his or her college application, personal grades will be powerful evidence of desirable qualities such as leadership and responsibility.

45. What will school be like for students who are certified for special education?

We are committed to inclusion to the greatest possible extent and agree with the following statement of Steven Frank Hawley and Karen Hawley Miles, co-authors of *The Strategic School*: "Imagine if we were to embrace a vision that blurred the distinctions between special education and general education, requiring all teachers to be experts in differentiated instruction and focusing special education dollars on delivering a higher quality of instruction."

46. Will there be Advanced Placement courses available?

In addition to achieving proficiency in the standards and meeting the requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC), every student will be challenged with the academic goal of sitting for at least two AP examinations on the subjects of their choice. Depending on student needs, an AP course could be taught or school staff, with the additional support of mentors, could coach students individually and in small groups for specific examinations.

47. How will the needs of upperclassmen be met as they grow and mature?

As students grow, it is appropriate that they extend their learning beyond the school and out into the community. Older students need and want greater autonomy and responsibility. Prior to graduation, all New School High students will design and complete either an internship in career exploration, a community service project, a sustained project in the arts, or a research project. Most students will begin work on these goals in grades 11 or 12, however, some students may be ready for these challenges earlier. The student's Individual Learning Plan will reflect the sequence that is most appropriate for that individual.

48. How can parents be involved in the school?

Our families are essential to the success of the school and of its students. We encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom, join us on field trips, and offer their expertise in any number of ways. Parents are invited to join the Parent Advisory for regular dialogue with the staff. Also, our monthly Parent Academy will be a place to share knowledge about any topic that promotes student growth and well being.

49. How can a small high school compete with the opportunities offered by a large high school?

The advantage of a small school is its ability to banish anonymity. Knowing our students well allows us to match their interests and goals with the resources they need. We place great value on our community partners and our vast network of professionals and experts in diverse fields to broaden the learning opportunities of our students. Collaboration with the Plymouth Historical Society, the Michigan Philharmonic, the Plymouth Community Art Council, and a cadre of retired master teachers are essential to our program and may take the form of speakers, guest experts, on-site project-based learning/research, service learning, student internships, project mentors, career exploration, or employment. We are committed to expanding our vibrant network of partnerships to many other non-profit organizations, institutions of higher learning, and businesses for our mutual benefit.

50. How does Universal Design for Learning (UDL) benefit students?

Universal Design for Learning helps all students learn better. A commitment to the principles of UDL means that to the greatest extent possible, our teachers will use multiple means of communicating the course content to the students. Also, students may be allowed to express what they know and can do in various ways. Finally, student interests and goals will always be an important priority in the lesson or project design. For more on the science behind UDL and its successful application for teachers and students, there is extensive information on the CAST.org website.

51. Will the school calendar be different from surrounding schools?

Schools in Wayne County must adhere to certain school calendar requirements. In addition, New School High will generally follow the calendar of the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools regarding most holidays and breaks.

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For more information, contact Cynthia Burnstein, school leader, at cburnstein@newschoolhigh.org or leave a message at our website newschoolhigh.org.