



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 2, 2013

Sandy Hook Students to Resume School

In an effort to restore some sense of normalcy after the shootings last month at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, school officials have found a building in the nearby town of Monroe where the surviving students will resume classes Thursday. Today is an [open house](#) for the families to tour the new facility, the former Chalk Hill School.



On [December 14](#), gunman Adam Lanza blasted his way into the Sandy Hook school and killed 20 students and six staffers, before killing himself.

Fox News reports that “the students’ desks have been taken along with backpacks and other belongings that were left behind in the chaos following the shooting on Dec. 14.”

Workers, many of them volunteers, have been diligently preparing the new school for the students, painting and reorganizing. They have even raised the floors in the bathrooms so that the children may reach the toilets.

Likewise, there was a great effort to make the transition for students as comfortable as possible. Parents entering the former Chalk Hill school in Monroe were greeted by a police officer at the door as well as grief counselors in the hallways.

“The healing process for these kids is the most critical thing, and being together with familiar faces. I know that Newtown is taking great strides so that happens when they get over here,” Monroe School Superintendent Jim Agostine said.

Parents are being encouraged to accompany their children to school on Thursday to help make the transition as easy as possible.

“I want to reassure you that we understand many parents may need to be near their children on their first day(s) of school and you will be welcome,” interim principal Donna Page [wrote in a letter to parents](#). “That being said, we encourage students to take the bus to school in order to help them return to familiar routines as soon as possible. Parents choosing to join their children may come to school after our 9:07 a.m. opening and will be welcome in the classroom or the auditorium throughout the day.”

“I want parents and families enduring the loss of their precious children to know their loved ones are foremost in our hearts and minds as we move forward,” she continued. “We recognize your needs are paramount in our preparations and planning. Your strength and compassion has been and will continue to be an inspiration to me and countless others as we work to honor the memory of your precious children and our beloved staff.”

Some parents of the Sandy Hook students are understandably uncomfortable with the transition, however.

David Connors, for example, the father of 8-year old triplets who have been suffering from nightmares



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and anxiety over separation from their parents since the day of the tragic shootings, is fearful of how his children will cope with returning to school. "I'm nervous about it," he admitted. "It's uncharted waters for us. I know it's going to be difficult."

According to Superintendent Janet Robinson, school workers will do everything in their power to make the students' return as normal a school day as possible.

"We want to get back to teaching and learning," she said. "We will obviously take time out from the academics for any conversations that need to take place, and there will be a lot of support there. All in all, we want the kids to reconnect with their friends and classroom teachers, and I think that's going to be the healthiest thing."

Clinical psychologist Julian Ford asserts that students will likely have questions about the shooting and that teachers should address those questions as they come up, but should otherwise focus on school work and treat Thursday as a regular school day.

"Kids just spontaneously make associations and will start talking about something that reminds them of someone, or that reminds them of some of the scary parts of the experience," Ford said. "They don't need a lot of words; they need a few selective words that are thoughtful and sensitive, like, 'We're going to be OK,' and 'We really miss this person, but we'll always be able to think about her or him in ways that are really nice.'"

"Each of the boys and girls are going to have different reactions to different aspects of the environment, different little things that will be reminders to them," he said.

Superintendent Robinson indicates that teachers have been working on arranging their classrooms in a way that will be pleasing to students upon their return.

She also adds that the district is working on a way to honor the teachers at Sandy Hook, both those who perished and those who survived, but have not yet decided on how to do so.

"Everyone was part and parcel of getting as many kids out of there safely as they could," she said. "Almost everybody did something to save kids. One art teacher locked her kids in the kiln room, and I got a message from her on my cellphone saying she wouldn't come out until she saw a police badge."

Following the evacuation of the school on December 14, teachers continued to attempt to distract the children from the horrors that unfolded by singing songs with them and reading them stories.

Students returning to school on Thursday will be greeted by therapy dogs. Yahoo News [reports](#), "Ten golden retrievers from Chicago's Lutheran Church Charities, which were sent to Newtown to comfort survivors last month, traveled back to Newtown on New Year's Day to prepare for the school's reopening."

Welcome signs and beautiful memorials line the road to the school and also [await](#) the children and staffers of Sandy Hook Elementary School at their new building as classes open tomorrow.

Photo of sign welcoming Sandy Hook Elementary students to the Chalk Hill School in Monroe: AP Images



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