



NMRSD Update

Monday, August 24, 2020

Dear NM Community,

As we round out a summer that has been challenging, to say the least, I would like to thank everyone in the NM community for your continued patience and support. I hope that you are all safe and well, and that you were able to find time to focus on your own well-being this summer as we prepare for an opening of school that will be very different from what we have experienced before.

That said, I still hope that the start of a new school year will generate the excitement among staff and students that it always has.

As you may already know, we will begin the year following a Hybrid model, through which students will be sorted into Cohort Blue, Red, or White. Students in the Blue and Red Cohorts will participate in in-person learning twice a week, for a half day at a time, and students in Cohort White will participate in full remote learning. When students in Cohorts Blue and Red are not physically in school they will also take part in remote learning, including the afternoons after their in-person half day sessions.

If you have not already seen it, I would encourage you to review our full [Return To School Plan](#) that can be found on our website. Amid the fluid situation that COVID-19 presents, there is potential that although we will begin the year in a Hybrid model, we could likely experience a Remote or Full In-Person model change. Having some familiarity with each model should make transitions easier if or when they occur.

The NMRSD will open for faculty and staff on Wednesday, August 26th, and embark on ten (10) days of training, professional development, and planning to get ready to welcome students on Monday, September 14th.

Unlike the spring, students will be held accountable for any remote work (whether the student has chosen Hybrid or Full Remote). Work will be graded and attendance will be taken for each class. We understand that at home work

presents a challenge for families, and we will do our very best to support students as our district continues to navigate remote learning.

It is safe to say that this year will have its bumps and we will likely encounter challenges that we have not even thought of, but I am confident that we will get through this together and come out stronger and more resilient on the other side of COVID-19.

2020-2021 Calendar Update

- Start Date for Preschool-Grade 12: Monday, September 14th
- All Professional Development ½ Days cancelled. This does not include the following early release days
 - Monday, November 23rd & Tuesday, November 24th (Parent Conferences K-8, Full Days for High School)
 - Wednesday, November 25th - Thanksgiving Recess
 - Wednesday, December 23rd - Winter Recess
 - Wednesday, March 10th & Thursday, March 11th (Parent Conferences K-8, Full Days for High School)
 - Monday, June 14th - Last Day of School for Students
- All snow days will be remote / at-home learning
- Last Student Day: Monday, June 14th

The final 2020-2021 school calendar will be made available on the district website by the end of the day tomorrow.

Masks - Mandated K-12

On Monday, August 17th, the NMRSD School Committee voted to mandate that all students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 wear a mask on the school bus and during the school day (with the exception of mask breaks). Students in our preschool program will be encouraged to wear masks but they are not mandatory.

Please note, gaiters are not allowed and bandanas are not recommended. If your child struggles with using a mask, here are some [Tips to Make Kids More Comfortable with Masks](#). This article includes great ideas for helping children of all ages comfortable with using masks.

Mask Breaks

Mask breaks will be scheduled to occur one (1) time daily during the school day.

Contact Tracing

While we recognize there is a great deal of information out there, the NMRSD will be following the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations regarding contact tracing, which are supported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, a close contact is defined as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has been within six (6) feet of another person for fifteen (15) minutes or more without a mask. According to this protocol, it is possible that we will not see a situation that fits within these parameters in our classroom due to our safety protocols.

The following have been released by DESE and DPH for School Districts:

- [DESE and DPH Joint Memo 8/20/20](#)
- [DPH and DESE Alignment Slides](#)

This is how Massachusetts schools must handle contact tracing in order to be in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

NMRSD will work closely with the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health to identify close contacts of COVID positive individuals who have been in the school. Those identified as close contacts will be contacted and instructed to quarantine for 14 days. Both NMRSD and NABOH will work with the identified individuals to support them through this process. Communication between the NMRSD, NABOH and only those who are in isolation or quarantine will be essential to successful containment of spread.

Contact tracing is covered in further detail on pages 38-43 in our Return To School Plan, which also references the following link: [Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#)

NMRSD K-4 Remote Learning Academy

The NMRSD Remote Learning Academy will be offered for our K-4 students who will be on a completely remote schedule for the 2020-2021 school year.

The RLA is instructed by elementary NMRSD staff members from Ashby Elementary School, Spaulding Memorial School, and Varnum Brook Elementary School. Due to the combination of grade levels and need, students in the RLA may or may not be instructed by a teacher from their home town school.

Therefore, each grade level may have students from one, two, or three towns based on need. All expectations for students in remote learning will be the same for students attending either hybrid cohort.

Please contact your child's building principal or Nancy Milligan with any questions.

Cohort Assignments

Cohort and class assignments will be posted in Aspen on Monday, August 31, 2020.

Fall Sports

Sports are an important part of a well-rounded educational experience, even during the current public health crisis. Working in close consultation with a variety of stakeholders and our medical advisors, and based on the [Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Guidance](#) recently provided by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) and DESE have collaborated to provide the attached modified sports guidance for school year 2020-21.

Please see the attached:

[*Joint Guidance on Modified Sports Seasons for School Year 2020-21*](#)

We look forward to seeing our students in-person and remotely this fall, and until then, be well and enjoy the remainder of the summer.

Sincerely,

Brad Morgan