



**We Are NM**

## **NMRSD Update Tuesday, September 8, 2020**

### ***From the Central Office...***

I would like to welcome the new additions to the administrative team:

Ms. Lauren Young	Principal, Nissitissit
Mr. Evan Worth	Assistant Principal, Nissitissit
Ms. Chantele Olmstead	Assistant Principal, Hawthorne Brook
Ms. Margaret Desilets	Evaluation Team Leader Substantially Separate Special Education Programs K-12
Ms. Diane Gleason	Grant Writer / Administrative Coach

On a personal note, my wife Lisa will once again be working as a Special Education Teacher for the Lowell Public Schools. My oldest daughter, Caroline, is a senior at Keene State College, my middle daughter, Courtney, is a sophomore at the University of Tampa, and my youngest daughter, Natalie, is a seventh grader at the Parker Middle School in Chelmsford. Like many of you, most of my time away from work is spent watching my girls who are all still very involved in various activities, something I very much enjoy. Being a father has truly helped shape who I am as a leader, educator and, most importantly, a person.

As Superintendent, I will continue to support building leadership so that they can, in turn, support their staff and have the most positive impact on the students of North Middlesex. I also continue to believe in a well-rounded educational experience that includes academic programming rich in relevant experiences coupled with strong extra/intracurricular programming to further the learning experiences of our students to become productive citizens in a

competitive society. To me, the most effective educators, coaches, and advisors are those who are able to formulate strong, positive, and healthy relationships with students. This is accomplished through a strong support system that further challenges them so that, when they graduate, our students have the experiences and skills necessary to pursue their dreams.

During the 2020-2021 year, I will continue to host parent and community coffees so that I can provide both groups with a place to ask questions, voice concerns, or share positive experiences. However, this year I will host these virtually as participation seems higher and more convenient for our parents and caregivers. Additionally, a goal for me for the upcoming year is to be more visible in schools, both working with principals and visiting classrooms.

In the meantime, the start of the year is upon us, and I know I am not alone in my excitement for some return to normalcy as we look forward to welcoming our students back to school after what has been a challenging six months. Enjoy the remaining days before school begins, and thank you again for your continued support and patience.

### **A Special Shout Out**

The entire administrative team would like to thank the outstanding work of our Nurse Coordinator, Ms. Cathryn Hampson, over the past several months. Since our closure in March due to COVID-19, Cathryn performed yeoman's work throughout the spring and summer and truly went way beyond what is required of her to ensure that NM is as safe as it can possibly be. She worked tirelessly to maintain open lines of communication with the administration, local boards of health, and state officials to make sure our school community had the most up-to-date information during this difficult, unprecedented crisis. I know I am not alone in feeling that we would likely be in a very different place with regard to preparedness if it was not for her time and dedication.

On another note, Cathryn is the President-Elect of the Massachusetts School Nurses Organization and served as one of the distinguished panelists for the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Boston Children's Hospital Zoom discussion "*Working Together to Support Children & Families*" on Tuesday, September 1st.

Nice work Cathryn!!!

## **Congratulations**

A special congratulations to Meghan McCarthy, a member of the NMRHS Class of 2021, who has committed to Merrimack College to play Division 1 field hockey for the Warriors. Meghan still has her entire senior year ahead of her so we cannot wait to see her future successes for the Patriots before she heads off on her next endeavor.

## **Thank You**

I would like to thank the following for their hard work and time commitment this summer for making reusable masks for our students:

- The Squanicook Colonial Quilt Guild is a non-profit organization dedicated to the art and craft of quilt making through education, preservation, and fellowship. The guild hand-made and donated 330 adult and child-sized masks.
- Pepperell Area Mask Makers (from Pepperell, Townsend, Ashby, and surrounding towns) & St. Joseph the Worker Church is making enough reusable masks for any students in the district that are in need. These groups have received donations as well as support from Pepperell Community Arts.

Thank you for your time and efforts!!!

## **Masks**

Please note the new District Policy **EBCFA-Face Coverings** which was approved today. It is important to point out some key aspects of the policy in advance for planning purposes as some of this represents a **change** of what was previously communicated regarding which “types” of face coverings are allowed. The salient points of policy include:

***A face covering that covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings, on school grounds, and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed. Exempted from this policy are students in Pre-K.***

***The following types of masks/face coverings are acceptable to wear at school:***

- ***Blue disposable surgical masks (must be replaced daily; cannot be reused or washed).***

- *Fabric masks (preferably at least two layers).*
- *Face shields along with a surgical or fabric mask.*

*Thicker, more densely woven cotton fabrics are best, such as quilting cotton or cotton sheets. Stretchy knits aren't ideal. Hold the fabric up to the light: The fewer tiny holes you can see, the better it will work to filter droplets. You want a fabric that doesn't allow droplets to pass through while ensuring you can still breathe appropriately with your mask in place.*

*The following types of masks/face coverings are not acceptable to wear at school:*

- *Masks with vents*
- *Neck gaiters*
- *Plastic face shields alone without a fabric or surgical mask*

*In addition, masks or face coverings will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral, or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. A written note from a physician is required for a requested exemption. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.*

### **Bus Behavior**

Where bus rules have always been in place, the one change this year is that students will be required to wear masks and maintain physical distancing. This will be explained to students during the first few days of school. Students who are not able to comply with mask wearing and physical distancing will be removed from the bus and will need to be driven to and from school by their parent/caregiver.

### **Building Inspections & Assessments**

It is important to point out that since our closure in mid-March, our primary focus has been the safety of students and staff in any return to school. To that end, NMRSD has done the following to ensure as safe an environment as possible:

1. All building HVAC units have been serviced and assessed by outside professionals to ensure that they are both working as designed and

bringing in adequate fresh air. This is part of our routine maintenance and occurs 2-3 times a year in each building.

2. In accordance with DESE guidelines, all buildings have been inspected by the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health and are prepared to reopen.
3. John Turner Consulting conducted a limited indoor air quality test and all district buildings are maintaining state standards.
4. For any instructional spaces that do not have direct access to fresh air, air purifiers have been purchased by the district.

### **Food Service FYI**

The USDA has announced they approved the continuation of serving free meals. Please take note that this is to all students, REGARDLESS of eligibility, through December 31, 2020.

### **Facility Use**

For the foreseeable, all future INDOOR facility use will be suspended. I realize this may create an inconvenience, but I do need to limit traffic in our buildings while ensuring that the workload of our facilities department remains doable. If circumstances change for the better, I will revisit this.

### **Tentative Superintendent Coffees**

All coffees will be held virtually on the following dates and times:

Tuesday, September 22nd	9am
Tuesday, October 20th	4pm
Tuesday, November 17th	9am
Tuesday, December 15th	4pm
Tuesday, January 12th	9am
Tuesday, February 9th	4pm
Tuesday, March 9th	9am
Tuesday, April 13th	4pm
Tuesday, May 25th	9am

Invitations will be sent out the day before the meeting. When possible, both the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Student Services will be in attendance.

### **NM Athletics Update**

In the quest to educate the whole student and enhance their

student-experience, a functioning athletic program will:

- ★ Aid in the process of rebuilding interpersonal and community connections
- ★ Support the implementation of any of the instructional models being followed
- ★ Foster deep and positive social/emotional health outcomes in our community

By adopting the EEA/DESE & MIAA-approved rule changes and limiting competition to localized/geographic bubbles (or “pods”), the Midland-Wachusett (MidWach) League, made up of 26 School Districts including NM, has created a sustainable model for school-sponsored athletics throughout the duration of this pandemic. NM’s pod will consist of the following districts:

- ★ Littleton
- ★ Tyngsborough
- ★ Ayer-Shirley
- ★ Groton-Dunstable

All Practice/Tryout and Contest Schedules will be posted on [mwlma.org](http://mwlma.org) (in the coming days) when approved and finalized. These details are often finalized months in advance, and in different circumstances, we would already be a few weeks into the season! [Click here for an FAQ List](#) and register for a fall sport at NMRHS (Grades 9-12) by visiting [FamilyID.com](http://FamilyID.com).

At this point in time, the MidWach league has suspended all middle school athletic programming due to COVID-19 and the complications it has presented around transportation and the overall budget. Should anything change during the year, we will communicate that to families.

### **NM Clubs**

Unlike athletics, which are governed by the MIAA, clubs are a local decision. At this point, advisors have the option of running clubs remotely or in-person. However, all in-person meetings would need to occur outdoors as the facility staff will begin the cleaning and disinfecting process for the next day once students are dismissed.

### **NM Boosters Golf Tournament**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NM All-Sports Boosters for the incredible golf tournament that they organized and ran on Friday, August 21st at Overlook Country Club.

There were 27 foursomes who participated in what was truly a fun day for the NM community. I would also like to thank our sponsors whose generosity will go a long way to help fund our athletic programs each year. These sponsors include:

- ★ *Wilson Brothers Heating & Air Conditioning*
- ★ *Babin Landscaping*
- ★ *David Newsham ('82)*
- ★ *Pepperell Lions Club*
- ★ *Pepperell Veterinary Hospital*
- ★ *Sophia's Pizzeria*
- ★ *L.F. Robbins Insurance*
- ★ *KRM Carpentry*
- ★ *Evan's on the Commons*
- ★ *NESS Sportswear*
- ★ *New England Nails*
- ★ *Rollstone Bank*
- ★ *Bormann Brothers*
- ★ *Blood Team Realty*
- ★ *Ascend Advising*
- ★ *Clark's Auto Body*
- ★ *Pepperell Family Practice*
- ★ *Mariano Restaurant Group*

### **NMRSD Organizational & Facilities Review-Collins Center**

As we have discussed at previous meetings, NMRSD has been in discussions with the Collins Center out of UMass Boston and has since been awarded with an 80K grant that was spearheaded by Pepperell Town Manager, Andrew MacLean at the request of the school district.

As our collaborative budget discussions portrayed last year, for the past several years, the NMRSD budgetary increases have been primarily due to collective bargaining agreements, transportation costs, and health insurance costs, leaving very little room for other district needs, capital projects, and curriculum improvements.

Where our per pupil costs are competitive comparatively speaking and our class sizes are wide-ranging, it is the intent of this study to explore what, if anything, we can do better when it comes to both educating our students and establishing a budget that is responsible and responsive to the needs of our students. It is not the intent to lower the district's per pupil expenditures but

to explore ways in which we can save in areas so that additional money can be freed up to directly impact student learning.

The study will include a thorough examination of the following:

1. Facilities - do our facilities adequately serve our students and staff?
  - a. Are there too many? Too few?
2. Could reassigning students to elementary schools have a positive impact on balancing class size throughout the school district?
3. Are we using the best model to educate our students (elementary-middle-high)
4. Are there better locations for central office and preschool?
5. Do we need to re-examine aspects of our regional agreement?

**Director of Human Resources, Anne Marie Tucciarone-Mahan**

It has been an exciting time for the district with the start of the school year and welcoming many new faces! I am pleased to introduce:

***New Staff***

***Ashby Elementary School:*** Katelyn Smith, Title 1 Teacher

***Spaulding Memorial:*** Kirsten Alfano, Speech & Language Pathologist; Katherine DeLeo, Kindergarten Teacher; Emily Foster, Grade 4 Teacher; Sandra Marshall, SPED Paraprofessional; Liam McMahon, Technology Teacher; Kayla Noll, Librarian/Media Specialist; Vincent Schroth, Custodian; Theresa Varville, K-Grade 4 EL Teacher.

***Varnum Brook Elementary School:*** Courtney Arnaud, Kindergarten Teacher; MaryJane Bradley, Kindergarten Paraprofessional; Shannon Hess, SPED Teacher; Bethany Sciuto, School Adjustment Counselor; Rebecca White, Grade 4 Elementary Teacher.

***Nissitissit Middle School:*** Madison Brooks, SPED Teacher, Achieve Program; Megan Finley, Technology Teacher; Angela Fetzer, Paraprofessional.

***North Middlesex Regional High School:*** Russell Holden, Environmental Science Teacher; Joseph Lemay, Business Teacher; Laura Mahan, Anatomy & Physiology Teacher; Jessica Ware, SPED Teacher.

***Squannacook Early Childhood Center:*** Lisa Gilloghy, LEAP Paraprofessional

***District-wide:*** Ronald Steers returned to the Maintenance/Custodial Department

### **25 Year Awards**

The following staff were recognized on opening day for 25 years of service to the NMRSD:

**Debra Clifford:** Ms. Clifford is currently a grade 5 ELA teacher at Hawthorne Brook Middle School. Prior to working at HB, she taught at Squannacook Early Childhood Center.

**Andrea Pageau:** Ms. Pageau is currently a second grade teacher for Varnum Brook Elementary School. Prior to working at VB, she taught 2nd grade at the Peter Fitzpatrick Elementary School.

**Jeraldine Wendling-Lumbert:** Ms. Wendling-Lumbert is currently a pre-k teacher at Squannacook Early Childhood Center. Prior to working at SECC, she was a pre-k teacher at Spaulding Memorial School.

### **Other Staffing Updates**

- Tyler Lapierre of HBMS is changing positions from Math Teacher to Physical Education/Health Teacher.
- Michael Lavoie is transferring from Gateway at SECC to an Achieve Program Teacher at NMRHS.
- Kerry McCarthy of VBES is changing positions from SPED Teacher to Kindergarten Teacher.
- Lauren (Lynde) Russell is changing positions from Biology Teacher at NMRHS to Science Teacher at NMS.

### **From the Assistant Superintendent, Nancy Milligan**

The district steering committee, working with the parent focus group, has created a parent website addressing topics of interest and need from our spring and summer planning. Although not exhaustive, it is a starting place for parents looking to support their children this year in either a hybrid or remote environment.

Please check out the parent website at

<https://sites.google.com/nmrtd.org/nmrtdcovidfamily/home>

We look forward to supporting all students this year in all models. Please contact your child's teacher(s) with any questions.

**From the Director of Student Support Services, Brad Brooks**

Over the last several months, I have heard from many of our special education parents and guardians...many of whom are eager for the school year to begin. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of our parents/guardians for their assistance, patience, input and support during this unprecedented time. Many of our students struggled with switching to remote learning this spring and I could not be more proud of our special education staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, service providers, psychologists and counselors) who worked diligently to deliver special education services in this remote model. I am very excited to see many of our students in their buildings the week of 9/14/20 and look forward to a productive year.

A special welcome to our new special educators in the district. I would also like to introduce Margaret Desilets as our new district Evaluation Team Leader (ETL). Margaret has worked in the district as a special education teacher for the last 12 years. Her role, as ETL, will be to assist teachers and building administrators with students in our specialized special education programs, housed at Varnum Brook, Nissitissit and the high school. Welcome to Margaret.

As always, if assistance is needed, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Brad Brooks, Director of Student Support Services

John Judge, Assistant Director of Student Support Services

Margaret Desilets, Evaluation Team Leader

**Community Calendar**

Part of the district website includes a Community Calendar that will help to avoid conflicts among town groups and school groups. In the past, town groups and school groups have had conflicting events, which inadvertently caused some conflict and also negatively impacted attendance. Where the majority of what we do is to benefit students, our hope is that this new calendar, which all stakeholders can access, will help to avoid conflicts moving

forward and provide even more opportunities for students to use their time productively outside of school.