



NMRSD Update

Thursday, October 8, 2020

From the Central Office...

Thank you

As we are near the end of week 4 of the new school year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our NM families for their support and feedback as we navigate through this temporary model.

I would also like to thank and recognize our incredibly dedicated instructional and support staff for their creativity and flexibility in delivering instruction and support to our students as well as our secretaries, facilities staff, and nurses for all they do to keep our buildings operating efficiently and safely.

Lastly, the students in our NM community have been nothing short of amazing as they returned to their buildings and/or adapted to receiving instruction in our hybrid/remote models.

We know this has been a challenge for all as we continue to adapt, but I cannot thank our school community enough for the work being done.

Survey Information

We want to thank all families, students, and staff members for providing input around the brief survey sent out last week. As indicated in our Back to School Plan, the first formal change to our model could occur after November 1st.

After reviewing all survey results (Parent/Guardian responses- 1,180, Students- 487, and Staff- 247), the current community metrics, and district resources, the district will not be making any changes to our model and will continue with the half-day hybrid model.

As we approach the holiday season, cold/flu season and families possibly traveling, the district will re-evaluate the model after the start of the new year. Although our ultimate goal is to have students return to school when safe, we cannot make any changes at this time based on all information considered

collectively. The district will continue to make adjustments at each level (elementary, middle, and high school) as needed to make sure that learning, safety, and everyone's well-being are addressed.

Special Education Instruction in a Hybrid Model

Over the last few weeks, several parents/guardians have reached out to district and building based administrators inquiring about the possibility of moving their child to 4 days of in-person instruction (as opposed to 2). As a district, we realize that many of our students, particularly those who receive special education services, struggle with this hybrid model of instruction.

Unfortunately, the only students who are eligible to attend 4 days (versus 2) are the ones identified in the Back to School Plan the district created and shared with families prior to our return (students in foster care, those who are English Language Learners, students who are homeless, and those on IEP's who require substantially separate programs) based on DESE guidance.

We have not made any exceptions to this (as much as we would like all students back full time). As we reevaluate any changes, we will consider all feedback and requests based on current guidance.

If you are concerned with your child's progress, we suggest that you reach out to his/her special education liaison/teacher and/or principal and discuss options for supporting them in this model.

Exciting News

Last spring, NMRSD took its first step towards addressing issues of equity and anti-racism by forming the Equity Advisory Council, which is made up of 19 staff members.

Issues around equity have been a focal point of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Office of Civil Rights, and the state's superintendent's induction program.

When addressing anything that requires systematic change, it is always best to involve the community. To that end, I am pleased to announce that the leadership of our own Equity Advisory Council had the opportunity to meet with 8 alumni of the NMRSD who would like to be involved in how we address this here in NM. To say this group is passionate would be an understatement and what impresses me the most is their dedication to their alma mater and to improving the greater NM community. If there are other community members who would like to join in this effort, please reach out to me directly.

Our initial focus for 2020-2021 will be on providing proper training for our staff so that they are prepared to engage in the difficult and uncomfortable conversations around anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

I think I can speak for everyone that our primary goal is for ALL NM students to have a strong sense of belonging and safety when they are both in and out of schools. We also realize that a larger issue that needs to be addressed is our curriculum and instruction as it is essential that both speak to and is reflective of all students in NM.

We are excited with this community partnership as we begin this important work.

Last Call for Busing

Friday, October 9th will be the last day for students to sign up for busing. It is important to understand that if a student has signed up for the bus and is NOT taking the bus, they will NOT be counted as a rider.

Once we finalize our numbers next week, students who are not regular bus riders will not be permitted to board a bus as we have to ensure physical distancing.

From a financial standpoint, each bus costs the district close to \$400 dollars per day (\$72,000 per year) so we have to make sure we are not running too many buses.

After we get our final counts, Dee Bus will work on creating new bus routes to be implemented for Monday, November 30th (these will be communicated to families in advance). This may mean that your bus number and bus pickup or drop off time may change. Once this is finalized, new riders will not be permitted to board the bus.

Please remember that masks are required and that students who are not wearing a mask will not be permitted to board the bus.

Safety Precautions

We continue to receive reports from parents and community members that physical distancing is an issue after school and on weekends, where students:

- Gather in small groups
- Attend athletic events
- Congregate at basketball courts, fields, and skate parks
- Carpool
- Attend sleepovers/parties

We realize that this is beyond our purview as it is outside the school day, but we desperately need parental help to remind their children of the importance of effective mitigation strategies. With the numbers that were released today, several cities and towns nearby NM have changed to yellow and red and we do not want to see that happen here, especially where the preventative measures

of mask-wearing and physical distancing are within our control. Here are some nearby towns and their status:

Yellow

Tyngsboro
Westford
Littleton
Leominster

Red

Dracut
Lowell
Chelmsford

As we informed everyone this yesterday, NM had three (3) positive COVID-19 cases. It is important that we work together to do everything possible to minimize the spread of COVID-19 as we enter flu season. ***However, we cannot control what happens outside of school, so we are calling on the entire NM community to help us with mask-wearing and physical distancing so that we preserve, at minimum, our current model.***

Reinforcing and supporting these safety precautions is appreciated as we need parents and community members behind us.

Food Service - Message from Whitson's

We are continuing to look to provide for more flexibility around meal pick-up at Ashby Elementary, Varnum Brook Elementary, and NMRHS. If there is anyone who would be interested in volunteering to assist with this, please email Michelle Curran at curranms@whitsons.com

Public Comment for School Committee

Due to the ongoing situation with regard to COVID-19 and the challenges that having public meetings presents, we are going to make some changes to the Public Comment portion of school committee meetings.

For the foreseeable future, the public will still be able to join school committee meetings remotely; however, due to technical challenges, community members who would like to participate in public comment will be asked to do the following:

1. Email Brad Morgan at bmorgan@nmrsd.org by 5:00 pm the night of the meeting.
2. The email must include your Name, Address, and the Narrative that you would like read into the public comment portion of the meeting.
3. Brad Morgan will read your provided comment aloud so that it becomes a part of the meeting.

Please remember that school committee members will not respond to comments the night of the meeting, but may do so at a later date.

Superintendent Coffees

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20th at 4:00 pm.

Please copy and paste this link into your browser:

For Video: meet.google.com/xyv-juec-unn

For Phone: (US)+1 435-268-2189 PIN: 715 301 750#

Additional Tentative Dates:

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. Please be sure to email me questions directly by 5 pm on Monday, October 19th. Where answering questions may often involve discussions with other district personnel, questions received after this point will likely not be answered.