



NMRSD Update Wednesday, October 19, 2022

A Shoutout to Mrs. Proulx

While I am frequently proud of the work our educators do for NM on a daily basis, I experienced a very unique opportunity yesterday in my attempt to fill in for Mrs. Proulx at VBES. All of my teaching and building-based administrative experience has been at the middle and high school levels. That said, having a wife who taught elementary school and the opportunities I have had to observe at the elementary level since coming to NM have afforded me the opportunity to truly see the time and dedication required of those charged with educating our elementary students.

I knew going in that it was going to be a challenge. Mrs. Proulx serves as a paraprofessional at VBES and works in both our extended day program's morning and afternoon sessions. Yesterday, that meant me having to report to VBES for a 7:00 am start and depart just before 6:00 pm. I truly had a great day, but when I got home, it hit me ... I was mentally and physically exhausted. Mrs. Proulx does this every day. While the kids were certainly excited to see me, pretty much every student asked for her, which is such a testament to the relationships she forges with her students.

This experience has truly made me reflect on how valuable Mrs. Proulx and all our paraprofessionals are to our district, and my experience today was invaluable – THANK YOU!

Curriculum Audit

As part of our continued work in the area of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, the North Middlesex Regional School District is conducting an audit this school year of our humanities (English and History Social Sciences) curriculum materials and resources. The focus of this audit is on the area of equity - which requires us to consider the different barriers and conditions that

may exist for various student populations and the extent to which our curriculum materials and resources are differentiated to provide ALL students an equal opportunity to reach the same outcomes/expected learning goals.

A common misconception when people hear that a district is focusing on equity is the assumption that the work is all related to issues of race. This is not true - equity involves establishing the structures to support ALL learners with tools that help each student reach common goals. This includes students with disabilities, students from different racial backgrounds, students from different socio-economic statuses, and students from families where English may not be the primary language, to name a few.

As part of this work, we are soliciting feedback from students, staff, and families to ensure that this work is meaningful and impactful for our students. We appreciate you taking a few minutes to respond to the following questions, as it will help drive our work as we move forward.

An essential aspect of making our work successful and ensuring we are working in the right direction involves developing a common understanding of the language/vocabulary around diversity, equity, inclusion, and diversity. Click on the links below for resources that help clarify those terms:

[NMRSD FAQ Document regarding the Equity Work](#)

[YouTube Video explaining the difference between Equity and Equality](#)

(approximately 4 minutes)

[Colorado State University One Page Document defining Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice](#)

Survey Link: **[Equity Audit Survey](#)**

Core Values

After our first Core Values Task Force meeting, it has become apparent that in order to create new core values, we must also look at our vision and mission. While I realize this expands the original scope of the work, it is important that we look at all three to ensure that they truly reflect what we would like NMRSD to be for our students. All three components are all intertwined, and a thorough process should be three-fold. We will approach this work through the following lens:

Vision: What we want our students to accomplish after 13 years of education in the district.

Mission: How are we going to do that?

Core Values: 3-4 behaviors we want the adults committed to in the district.

All three will serve as the baseline for our next strategic plan, and they should occasionally be revisited to ensure they still reflect NMRSD. Once this is done, core values can be created for our schools that are related to student behavior.

If there is any additional interest in this work, please let me know.

Student Survey: Social and Emotional Learning Indicator System (SELIS)

NM is pleased to announce that it was one of 11 school districts in Massachusetts to be awarded a competitive grant through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Through this grant, the district will be administering a survey to students in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 at some point between October 26th and November 11th. This survey measures students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationship, and responsible decision-making skills. The survey is designed to help understand and improve social and emotional, and academic supports for students. The survey and its analyses are being performed by DESE's psychometric coordinator. Student responses and aggregate results will be provided to our school and district. While we hope that all families will allow their children to participate in this survey, it is optional.

What Are We Asking Your Permission to Do?

We would like your permission to administer a 20-minute survey to your child during the school day between October 26th and November 11, 2022. The survey will provide student response data which DESE will analyze to ensure the survey is valid and reliable and that it collects information in ways that are relevant and supportive of students from all backgrounds and grades.

Protecting Your Child's Privacy

Your child's responses will be confidential. Your child's results will be secured in our student data information system and only accessible to educators, student support staff professionals, and administrators.

Benefits and Risks of Being in This Study

This student study will help our district to better understand and support the social and emotional needs of our students and sustain an emotionally secure and safe environment for all our students. There are no known risks to participating in this study. The survey is *voluntary*; if your child, for example, does not want to take the survey, there are no penalties or consequences for your child not participating. If you do not want your child to participate, you may opt-out by emailing Dr. Gary Burboa-Reese, Assistant Superintendent, by Monday, October 24, 2022, at gburboareese@nmrsd.org. Your email just needs to indicate that you do not wish for your child to participate in this survey (SELIS Survey Opt-Out). Please be sure that the email also includes the following information:

- Your Child's/Children's Name(s)
- Your Child's/Children's Grade Level(s)
- The School Your Child/Children Attend(s)

If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact Dr. Burboa-Reese at gburboareese@nmrsd.org

NMRSD Cross-District Door Decorating Contest

During the month of September, all schools were invited to participate in a district-wide door decorating contest with the theme of “Better Together”. At each school, staff and students worked together to decorate their classroom doors and had them judged. The building winners moved forward for the district-wide contest. We are now opening the voting up to the community to decide which NMRSD door best meets the “Better Together” theme we are all working towards this year. We would love to hear from you! Please vote for the best door by next Friday, October 28, 2022. [NMRSD Door Decorating Contest](#)

Coffee & Conversation w/ High School Counselors

The high school counselors are hosting a series of in-person "coffee and chat" meetings with parents. They hope to offer these meetings throughout the school year. The next scheduled date is Thursday, November 3rd, from 7:30 am - 8:15 am. These sessions are designed to be informal and cover subjects of interest to parents of all grade levels. The counselors hope that an open agenda will allow parents to steer discussion about their concerns in navigating their children's teenage years. Please call your child's school

counselor if you have questions about these meetings. If a parent is unable to attend, the counselors welcome parents to the school for individual meetings.

Acceleration Academy

We have noticed that one of the unfortunate results of COVID-19 is the interruption in social/emotional development and schooling for our youngest students. As a result, many of them missed out on PreK altogether and/or had a very different kindergarten experience. In an effort to address this need, NMRSD is beginning to look at offering an ESSER-funded K, Grade 1, and Grade 2 Acceleration Academy during our vacation breaks this school year. The proposal is to offer an additional 12 days/42 hours of instruction to recommended students who teachers feel could benefit from some additional intervention. We are currently thinking about offering this during the following dates from 8:00 am - 11:30 am:

December 27-30

February 21-24

April 18-21

More information on this will be released in the coming weeks, provided it is something we think we will be able to offer.

***Parents/Guardians of students who receive special education services:

Please note this 'Acceleration Academy' is a districtwide initiative for all students (regardless of whether or not they receive school-year special education services) and is not meant to replace or supplement these services. This service is provided to all K-2 students as a resource to provide additional supplemental instruction in an attempt to remediate some development/skills that may have been lost during the period of Covid 19.

Substitutes Needed

The district is currently searching for confident substitute teachers/paraprofessionals to join our team. If you are a friendly and competent professional with an interest in education, then we're interested in you. Your duties will include managing classroom activities, student supervision, and support. If you or someone you know are interested in being a substitute in one of our programs (preschool through high school), please reach out to our human services department via this link to apply:

[NMRSD Human Resources](#)

Food Service

If you have seen the news, Fresh Picks, our food service provider, is encountering some supply issues that will impact NMRSD's school breakfast and lunch menus. This is due to the fact that the Sysco Boston workers have gone on strike. Sysco is the largest food distributor in New England and the Fresh Picks supplier.

Each school is doing the best it can, but everything is based on food availability. The menus online will not be changed as each school may be doing a different item based on what they have in their kitchens.

Fresh Picks also maintains communications with school nurses who have concerns about specific students.

We will keep you posted if there are indications that this will be a longer-term situation.

Handbook Change

Please be advised that we have some new language for middle and high school student handbooks. This new language was passed by the NMRSD School Committee on Monday, October 3rd, and has been recommended for all MIAA-member schools. This language relates directly to extracurricular participation and locker room supervision and requires a signed Parent Consent, Release from Liability, and Indemnity Agreement. The new language is below and will go into effect during the next few weeks:

Students participating in voluntary extra-curricular activities, including but not limited to intramural or interscholastic athletics, are required to return a signed release of liability to the administrator/supervisor of the event/activity prior to engaging in the activity, event, or, in the case of athletics/sports, to the Athletic Director prior to the commencement of the specific athletic/sport's season recognized by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association ("MIAA"). As these activities are voluntary, the student's participation in an event, activity, or athletic/sports season is conditioned upon receipt of the signed and returned release of liability form. Massachusetts law permits use of such releases for school-related voluntary extra-curricular activities, including but not limited to athletics/sports. Release forms will be distributed by the Athletic Director and/or by the administrator overseeing activities.

The student's participation in any extra-curricular activity, including but not limited to intra-mural or interscholastic athletics/sports of any nature,

is conditioned on compliance with all applicable laws, district policies (including but not limited to policies relative to student conduct and discipline, bullying, hazing, harassment, and discrimination), all MIAA policies, and district values and behavioral expectations. In the interest of student safety and compliance with these laws, policies, values, and expectations, coaches and/or other school staff will routinely monitor locker/dressing/changing room activities. Such monitoring may include physical presence by coaches or other staff in locker/dressing/changing rooms. While monitoring students in locker/dressing/changing rooms, all coaches and staff will give appropriate consideration to student privacy. Students seeking increased privacy when changing clothes/uniforms may utilize individual stalls and/or privacy curtains or screens where available, and are encouraged to address any privacy related concerns with the coach or building principal/designee.

Mental Health Referral Service

As noted in previous weekly updates, the district has again partnered with Care Solace to provide an additional layer of care for our community.

Care Solace helps individuals find mental health care providers and substance use treatment centers. Their Care Companion™ team is available 24 hours per day/7 days per week to quickly connect you to carefully verified providers in our community. This referral service is open to all employees who work in or residents (regardless of age) of Ashby, Pepperell, and Townsend.

Students, staff, and families may access Care Solace services in two ways:

- **Call (888) 515-0595** at any time. Support is available in 200+ languages. A dedicated Care Companion™ will help you every step of the way to research options, secure appointments, and follow up to make sure it is a good fit.
- For an anonymous search, answer a few questions to get matched with an extensive list of care providers at caresolace.com/nmrsd

Care Solace is available for use **at no cost to you**. They will connect you with providers accepting all medical insurances, including Medicaid, Medicare, and sliding scale options for those without insurance. All information entered on the Care Solace tool is completely confidential and securely stored.

Please note that this service is an optional resource available by choice and is not mandatory to use. Care Solace is not an emergency response service or

mental health services provider. In a life-threatening emergency, please call 911 or the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

If you are interested in counseling-related services for your child, yourself, or another family member, please contact Care Solace for valuable assistance. This is a complimentary resource provided by the district. If you have specific mental health-related questions, please contact your child's counselor.

Fall & Winter Parent/Caregiver Information Series

Wednesday, November 9th @ 6:30 pm
Teen Mental Health & Moving on from COVID-19
Dr. Dan Rosa

This presentation will be geared toward parents/caregivers of middle and high school students. Dr. Rosa is a veteran clinical psychologist in the Chelmsford Public Schools and was instrumental in bringing in a K-12 team of clinical psychologists to the district. He has a private practice and has done presentations throughout Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Wednesday, December 7th @ 6:30 pm
How Do We Create Safe & Welcoming Schools for All Students?
How Can We Support Our LGBTQ Students?
Jeff Perrotti

This presentation will be geared toward parents/caregivers of all grade levels. Jeff is a renowned expert in the field of Gender Education - creating a Safe School Climate and the founding director of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education's Safe Schools Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Students.

Community Coffees (Virtual)

All Community Coffees will be virtual and will be held at 4:00 pm on the following Mondays:

October 24th
December 5th
February 13th
March 27th
May 8th

The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Director of Student Services will attend the coffees.

2022-2023 School Committee Meeting Dates

For the time being, all sub-committee and most school committee meetings will continue to be virtual as we continue to receive feedback that it is more convenient for the public to attend. Attendance at school committee meetings is one of the best ways to remain current with district policy, budgetary matters, and news.

All meetings, unless noted otherwise, are held on Monday evenings and begin at 7:00 pm. For the full docket of meetings, please click on the link below:

[2022-2023 School Committee Dates](#)

Please note that these dates are subject to change as committee business necessitates.

2022-2023 School Calendar

For the full 2022-2023 school calendar, please click the link below:

[School Calendar](#)

2022-2023 Parent/Caregiver-Teacher Conferences (November/March)

Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback and requests we have received, parent/teacher conferences will again be virtual for this school year due to increased attendance and convenience reported by parents/caregivers. More information on this will follow from the respective schools.