

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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‘PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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February 8, 2021 - Heathsville, VA The Northumberland County Public Schools’ School Board met in-person for a regular meeting. The meeting was open to the public in-person and through Zoom audio conference calling as a result of COVID-19 guidelines.

NCPS Expanded Reopening of Schools Survey/Timeline

At Monday evening’s School Board meeting, the School Board asked that NCPS gather input from all stakeholders (students, families, teachers, staff, and community) regarding the topic of an expanded, in-person learning option. The expanded, in-person learning option would begin after the second Moderna vaccine, which tentatively is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021, is administered to teachers and staff who opted in.

Specifically, this means families who choose for their student(s) to attend in person will be able to send their student(s) four (4) days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday with Wednesday remaining 100% virtual and asynchronous for all). Revised guidance from the Governor, the Virginia Department of Health, and the Virginia Department of Education encourages in-person learning options for all students while implementing mitigation protocols of

- Consistent and correct use of masks
- Physical/social distancing to the extent possible
- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Contact tracing in collaboration with local health department

Please know families who choose 100% virtual instruction will continue to have the option for the remainder of the school year.

Below you will find a link to the online survey. Please take some time to provide feedback by Friday, February 12.

[Click here for Family Survey Link](#)

[Click here for Staff Survey Link](#)

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Closed Meeting Action Items

The School Board approved the following personnel to staff the NCPS Family Support Hotline, Monday-Friday 6PM-8PM and Saturday 11AM-1PM. NES: **Pam Woolard, Michele Jennings, Sheila McGlothlin, Heather Klein, Mary Jones, and Rebecca Jones.** NMS: **Beverly Follin, Sheila King, and Jared Dawson.** NHS: **Michelle Gordon, Rachel Edwards, and Genia Powell.** One staff member from each school will staff the Hotline each weeknight/Saturday.

Dale Cook was approved as a substitute who will assist with virtual mentoring and tutoring.

The Board approved the following supplemental contracts, pending return of inventory and equipment reports and the sport has a “functional season:”

Winter:

Head Coach Boys Basketball - **Michael Stevenson**

Assistant Boys Basketball - **Bryan Shabazz**

Assistant Boys Basketball - **Aaron Lewis**

Assistant Boys Basketball - **Quame Green**

Head Coach Girls Basketball - **Terrell Diggs**

Assistant Girls Basketball - **Michael Baker**

Cheerleading Coach - **Shanita Curry**

Head Coach Indoor Track - **Trinity Bea**

Head Coach Dance - **Holly Swann**

Fall:

Head Coach Football - **Aaron Lewis**

Head Coach Cross Country - **Trinity Bea**

Head Coach Volleyball - **Anjelica Scott**

Assistant Football - **Mac Mothershead**

Assistant Football - **Ronald Whitt**

Assistant Football - **Quame Green**

Assistant Football JV - **Isaiah Palmer**

Assistant Football - **James Weldon**

Head Coach Field Hockey - **Mark Fridenstine**

Assistant Field Hockey - **Martin Magerko**

Head Coach Cheerleading - **Shanita Curry**

Head Coach Golf - **Gary Dickens**

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Presentations/Reports

Dr. Holly Wargo, Superintendent, began the meeting by sharing **Governor Northam's letter, dated February 5, 2021**. It reads

“Dear Members of School Boards,

I am writing to discuss next steps in returning to in-person learning during the current 2020-21 academic year--but first, I want to say thank you. I know you are working hard to keep students and staff safe, while delivering instruction in new and unforeseen ways. This has been a unique and difficult academic year, and Virginia is grateful for your service to students, parents, and your communities.

Many Virginia students are approaching a full year without in-person access to their school communities. This is having a real and significant impact on their educational and social development--but after a year of experience, we are now equipped as a society to safely open schools and operate them in ways that protect students, teachers, and staff members. Nearly two-thirds of Virginia's 133 school divisions have demonstrated the ability to do this. But about 40 school divisions currently offer no in-person options, preventing nearly 500,000 students from entering the classroom. This needs to change even if the decision is difficult.”

Wargo shared she is proud that **Northumberland is counted in the two thirds of public schools who have offered hybrid instruction. From the first day of school, Pre-K through grade 3 students had the option of attending in-person, and, in mid October, Pre-K through grade 12 students were provided the option of attending in-person instruction two days per week.**

Wargo stated the School Board is interested in considering **an expanded, four day in-person reopening** for Pre-K through 12 students after the second dose of the Moderna vaccine is given to teachers and staff who opt in. Tentatively the second dose is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021. The School Board will collect responses regarding this matter from all stakeholders through a survey. Then, the School Board plans to meet next week during a Special Called Meeting to review survey responses and to determine a timeline for an expanded reopening.

Black History Month

Next **Dr. Wargo** shared the following: February is Black History Month, and NCPS will be celebrating throughout the month. Virginia's “Road Map to Equity” prioritizes our strategy into two categories: (1) Increasing the Cultural Proficiency of Virginia's Educator Workforce; and (2) Closing Opportunity Gaps for Virginia Students. Culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, making culturally responsive educators necessary for the equitable achievement of a diverse student population. Our strategy will focus on the following: increasing teacher diversity; supporting culturally relevant teaching pedagogy; working with VDOE to enhance teacher preparation; working with VDOE to amend licensure requirements to include cultural competency; developing new professional learning opportunities; supporting courageous leaders; revising educator evaluation to include cultural competency efficacy; and incorporating cultural responsiveness and inclusion into school climate evaluation.

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National School Counseling Appreciation

The VDOE announced the week of February 1-5, 2021, as National School Counseling Week: “As vital members of the education team, professional school counselors are agents of equity for students . . .

School counselors close achievement gaps and maximize student success by providing academic and career development interventions, psychosocial counseling, and mental/behavioral health supports.”

NCPS recognized **Hailey Flood (NHS), Sarah Henry (NHS), Beverly Follin (NMS), Krista Hundley Sisk (NMS), LaNeisha Gainey (NES), and Lynne Haynie (NES).**

School Board Appreciation Month & School Board Clerk Appreciation Week

February also is Virginia School Board Appreciation Month and next week is School Board Clerk Appreciation Week. The School Board accepted a Proclamation recognizing the contributions of the state’s local school boards to the academic success of its public school students and expressed its sincerest recognition to local board members for their focus on the well-being and achievement of children throughout the Commonwealth. NCPS recognized **Mrs. Betty Christopher, Mrs. Gayle Sterrett, Ms. Denise Mazychk, Mrs. Dana O’Bier, Mr. Carl Perez, Miss Amaya Crabbe (Student Representative) and Ms. Donna Booth (Clerk) and Mrs. Shelley Vanlandingham (Deputy Clerk).**

Remind Support Hotline

Mrs. Javarnda Ashton, Director of Educational Technology, reported NCPS has implemented a family support hotline for families and the community outside of regular school hours. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday from 6pm to 8pm and Saturday from 11am -1 pm. Staff members from all three schools are assigned and available to receive requests from families. Each school has a unique code that can be texted to join the hotline and submit your request. Upon receipt of the request, a staff member will call the family using Remind Voice calls to provide assistance. The following staff are assigned to provide support to families on a weekly rotation: **NES: Pam Woolard, Michele Jennings, Shelia McGlothlin , Heather Klein, Mary Jones, Rebecca Jones NMS: Beverly Follin, Shelia King, Jared Dawson NHS: Michelle Gordon, Rachel Edwards, Genia Powell.**

Remind Enterprise Plan Remind is a communication platform that makes it easier for educators, students, and parents to work together. Remind has easy-to-use features that allow schools and districts to activate engagement across their communities. Remind allows for the sending of messages via SMS, in-app notifications, or email and phone calls without sharing personal contact information. Remind is now the official communication platform for Northumberland County Public Schools. Professional Development was offered for teachers and staff on Wednesday, February 3, 2021.

Mrs. Javarnda Ashton provided an update on the Community CyberSafety Website. Northumberland County Public Schools has partnered with Family Zone, a leading provider of cyber safety products and education, to ensure your students are cyber safe while at school. NCPS is already using the Family Zone to block inappropriate content and to identify red flag search terms from students. Now parents or caregivers of our school district, have free access to the Family Zone Cyber Safety Hub, which includes articles, videos, courses, and more. They have access to “sign up” with Family Zone to receive ongoing

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materials and education from the platform we trust to manage cyber safety across our entire district. NCPS was also featured in the Linewize Monthly newsletter highlighting our cybersafety Community Hub.

Public Hearing Comments on 2021-2022 School Board Budget

Mrs. Hailey Kitchen-Flood, NHS school counselor, commented that a Director of School Counseling is needed to provide guidance to NCPS students. Mrs. Flood reported that other school divisions have benefited from having a director that will provide assistance and guidance in curriculum development, professional development, graduation requirements, and needs assessments. She suggested that this position should receive a salary of \$95,000.

Public Comment

Dr. Tyron Williams commented on the professionalism and commitment that teachers and administrators have made during these times. He gave “kudos” to the educational technology team and applauded parents for “hanging in” with students and teachers. As President of the NAACP local chapter, he is pleased with the School Board and Superintendent Wargo’s strive to enhance the learning of our students.

Mrs. Hailey Kitchen-Flood addressed the Canvas learning system as a great resource and asset for school counselors in providing needs assessments and support for social and emotional wellness.

Superintendent’s Report

Mr. Adam Letizia, Director of Instruction and Student Services, submitted an update on the Findings and Recommendations of the Sub-Committees on Equity for Student Participation in the Chesapeake Bay Governor’s School (CBGS), the Northern Neck Technical Center (NNTC), and the Honors, Talented, and Gifted Programs (TAG). A review of the data identified inequities in participation based on race, gender, and economic disadvantage: underrepresentation of black students and overrepresentation of white student participating at CBGS, NNTC, and Honors and TAG; overrepresentation of male students and underrepresentation of female students at NNTC; Hispanic and English Language learners are represented while economically disadvantaged students are underrepresented at CBGS, Honors, and TAG. Mr. Letizia reported that the Committee offers the following solutions: Institute the talent development and young scholars program at NES in grades K-2 by adding an additional gifted resource teacher; professional development for current staff and hiring culturally competent educators; provide communication-pamphlets, brochures, surveys, and forums in educating and supporting gifted development; provide mentoring programs, arts and humanities programs and independent study programs to promote minority students’ full potential; and provide STEM, project-based learning, computer science and engineering programs regardless of race, background, or economic standing. Other resources to make available: multiple field trips to NNTC during the middle schools years; provide additional exposure for 9th grade students to NNTC; have

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current NNTC present to students and share their experiences and increase awareness of NNTC programs to families and communities.

Instructional Reports

NES Principal Stephanie Baker updated the Board on the NES instructional report. NES celebrates Black History Month! Our students learn of the accomplishments and contributions of African Americans such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Arthur Ashe, Maggie Walker, Thurgood Marshall, Jackie Robinson, Rosa Parks, and others. Teachers are celebrating Black History Month through their read alouds, biography units, writing, and using books on our online program Epic!, which offers our in-person and virtual students many great book titles for reading and listening. PBIS, One School One Book, Family Engagement, and the 100th Day of School! Our NES PBIS team and our One School One Book Coordinator, **Mrs. Sue Swift**, are working together to host a **family engagement drive-thru opportunity for our NES families. On Wednesday, February 17, 2021 (the 100th day of school!) from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m., families will have the opportunity to “drive-thru” the blacktop at NES, pick up the One School One Book title (The Trumpet of the Swan by E. B. White) and a treat for the 100th day of the 2021-2022 school year!**

NMS Principal Patrick Simmons provided the following instructional report:

Black History Month at NMS: As a school, Northumberland Middle School is celebrating black history month. Mr. Simmons thanked **Mrs. Tracey Harding** for her helping with the plan. Each day we are introducing our students through morning announcements nationally and locally known members of the black community, who have made significant contributions to American history. The middle school has been seeing its highest numbers of in person attendance. We are pleased that many new students are considering joining us for green and gold day for hybrid learning. After school tutoring in-person and virtual tutoring has started for Math and Language arts on Tuesday and Thursdays, and is now being extended to all core subject areas at NMS.

NHS Principal Dr. Travis Burns updated the Board:

Picture Days for Hybrid/Virtual Students February 9th and 12th will be onsite picture days for students. Virtual students may also come to school to take their pictures. Students may also submit photos for the yearbook electronically. To do so students have been directed to the yearbookforever.com site. The cost of the yearbook is \$60. • Underclassmen pictures 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. and Senior pictures 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. in the auditorium. • Virtual students may come in to have their portraits taken with health screenings upon arrival. Communication and Community Relations NHS hosted a 2nd Semester Virtual Open House Day for students and families on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. NHS Grading Expectations/Recommendations In an effort to promote grading practices that are consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive learning, the following expectations and recommendations will be followed by NHS teachers. These recommendations are based on best-practices, professional development, teacher input, and feedback from student and parent listening sessions. NHS has conducted two listening sessions with students and one with parents during the Virtual Open House on January 20, 2021. Grades are to be based primarily on assessment scores (tests,

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presentations, projects, authentic learning experiences). Very little weight should be given to homework and daily practice. The purpose of homework and daily practice is to learn from mistakes, correct errors in understanding, and receive feedback. Students are to be granted opportunities to improve performance through retakes, redos, and do-overs. Grades are to be communicated to students in a timely manner. Grades are to be updated on a weekly basis in PowerSchool. The expectation for the minimum number of grades to include in a gradebook is 15 per semester. One to two grades per week is a good standard to follow.

Director of Testing, Accountability & Data Technology Mrs. Virginia Booth provided the Board with an update of Virtual and Hybrid attendance numbers: **NES:** 215 (39%) virtual, 336 (61%) hybrid, 551 total students; **NMS:** 127 (47%) virtual, (53%) 144 hybrid, 271 total students; **NHS:** 215 (53%) virtual, 189 (47%) hybrid, 404 total students.

Mrs. Virginia Booth provided the Board with a SOL Testing Update for Northumberland Public Schools. Northumberland High School will be conducting SOL testing from February 3-10 for students who completed an SOL course in Fall 2020. Students will be testing in small groups each day and examiners will be administering EOC tests for all subjects, including Reading, Math, Science, and History. Students enrolled in a Spring 2021 semester SOL course will also participate in SOL testing in May 2021.

Northumberland Middle School will be SOL testing 8th Grade students in Science on February 9, 10, and 11. All other SOL testing will be conducted in May 2021. Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 will be given a Math and Reading SOL. The 8th grade students will also be taking a local assessment in Civics Economics and Writing.

Northumberland Elementary School will conduct SOL testing in May 2021 for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in the subjects of Math and Reading. A science SOL will also be given to 5th grade students.

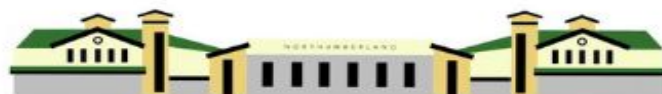
Dr. Holly Wargo provided the Board with updates and highlights from **Mrs. Stacey Branem, Director of Transportation**. The Transportation Department continues to use the Clorox 360 machine to disinfect buses on a weekly, rotating basis. Currently, there are three van routes. Buses/vans are being sanitized/disinfected after each run. There are twenty regular buses and two SPED buses on the road daily transporting students to and from school. The Transportation Department continues to work closely with food service to deliver meals to students every Wednesday. This past Wednesday we delivered 469 meal bags throughout the county. We are looking forward to having more and more students return to in person learning and are prepared and committed to keeping our students safe as well as drivers and staff.

Dr. Holly Wargo provided the Board with a summary from **Director of Maintenance and Operations, Mr. Jeff Brann**. The current status of the maintenance department is as follows:

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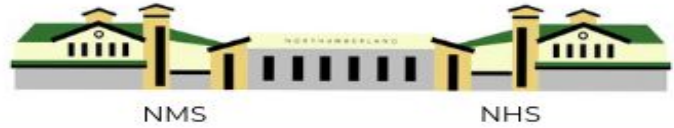
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--The maintenance department is currently troubleshooting the NES sewage transfer pumps. These pumps are failing to send effluent to the drain field in an auto status. At the moment we are manually pumping down this system to prevent backflow.--The HS Gym climate control unit on the roof is failing to shut down on demand once the space has met the required temperature. We currently have the parts on order to correct this issue.--The maintenance and custodial staff are working in conjunction to ensure all walkways, parking areas, and bus loops remain clear of snow and ice with the current weather conditions we are experiencing.--We worked with Angelica Scott to test fit the new dual volleyball court setup to ensure proper social distancing during the upcoming season.--NES is experiencing multiple blower motor failures throughout all classroom pods due to age as well as the higher demand placed on them from the new electronic control system. This was an expected issue with the new system in place and the maintenance department has developed a strategy that improves parts arrival timeliness as well as repair turnaround. Adjustments to the timeframe of unoccupancy has reduced the failure rate and we will keep a vigilant watch on the system's performance.--NES boilers have been struggling with keeping up with cold weather demands. We are incorporating higher gallon per hour fuel nozzles to see if this will allow this system to better maintain the building temperature demands. We are also working in conjunction with Honeywell to readjust the cut-in cut-out setpoints between each boiler. This will put less of a load on the current boiler scheduled for lead heat requirements. With the increase in maintenance hours on these boilers the need for replacing these units is becoming more essential.--The maintenance department has installed heat strips at all outlet points of the well house supply tanks to prevent freezing. Even with the gradual increase of students we are still experiencing minimal demand and water flow.--The maintenance department has noticed an increase in door hardware and locking system failures. Currently we are researching options to upgrade several door systems that have experienced this. These issues are due to age and excessive use over time.--The maintenance department was just notified that one of the security camera DVR's is inoperable. We are looking at a solution to fix this immediately. --The maintenance department worked with Dominion Energy to disconnect the main power supply to the westbound 25MPH road sign in order to safely replace the main breaker panel that was no longer serviceable. Both road signs are now functioning properly.--Lastly, we are still trying to incorporate the LED upgrades in between all work orders and monthly maintenance schedules.

Dr. Holly Wargo provided the Board with a summary on behalf of **Director of School Nutrition Mrs. Saunee Hamlett**. For the month of January we have delivered a total of about 15,000 breakfasts and lunches . We are delivering meals every Wednesday and offering breakfast and lunch to the students in the classrooms. Last year our School Nutrition Program purchased books to be read to NES students monthly that go along with The Harvest of the Month. The Harvest of the Month for February is Butternut Squash. The NES librarian Mrs. Swift has graciously agreed to read the book Sophie's Squash during library class. For the rest of the school year, a new book will be introduced. Harvest of the Month for March is Kale - the book - Captain Kale and the Superfoods! Harvest of the Month for April is Lettuce - the book- Lettuce Grows on the Ground Harvest of the month for May is Strawberries -the book - The First Strawberries - A Cherokee Story.

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Board Comments

Mrs. Dana O' Bier updated the Board on the Northern Neck Technical Center and Northern Neck Alternative Education January 2021 joint meeting. Dr. Wargo was named Deputy Superintendent of the Northern Neck Technical Center and Northern Neck Alternative Education Regional Boards. Both Regional Programs submitted a 2% pay increase in their 2021-2022 Budgets for review.

Ms. Denise Mazyck thanked the Superintendent Wargo, Mrs. Javornda Ashton, Instructional Technology Director and team for the support hotline. Ms. Mazyck provided an update on her participation in the "VSBA Orientation of New School Board Members" on January 26, 2021. She attended sessions of School Law, Procedures, and Budget Basics.

Mr. Carl Perez thanked the public for their attendance in person and virtually. He related that communication is vital and parents need to reach out and communicate with teachers. Mr. Perez urged all parents to be the advocate for their student. The school member's job is to help to be sure that "Every student needs to cross the finish line."