

# NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

Contact: **Donna Booth**, Clerk of the School Board  
(804)529-6134

[dbooth@nucps.net](mailto:dbooth@nucps.net)

**October 12, 2020 - Heathsville, VA** The Northumberland County Public Schools' School Board met at the Northumberland County Middle/High School Auditorium for a regular meeting. The meeting was open to the public practicing physical distancing and face covering requirements. The public had access through Zoom audio conference calling as a result of COVID-19 guidelines.

The School Board approved the following personnel: **Aaron Lewis**, Special Education Behavior Coach and **Trinity Bea**, Substitute Teacher.

The School Board approved the supplement personnel listed with the following contingencies:

- further guidance for school and sport participation due to COVID-19;
- the programs, activities and sports actually taking place;
- final installments will be issued/released after formal evaluation of the sponsor/coach and proper return of equipment/uniforms/property, etc.

The following academic supplements were approved: **Michele Jackson**, ARROW Grade 2-3; **Shauna McCranie**, ARROW Grade 4-5; **Sarah Keller**, Music Gifted; **Kim Farmer**, Gifted Music Accompanist; **Susan Lewis**, Art Gifted; **Jessica Rogers**, NES VTSS; **Pam Woolard**, NES Canvas Coach; **Michele Jennings**, NMS & NHS Future Problem Solvers; **Leah Fisher**, NMS & NHS Scenario Writers; **Gary Dickens**, NHS Robotics Team Sponsor; **Shauna McCranie**, NMS Sea Perch; **Katrina Perez**, NMS/NHS Art Talented; **Latasha Lee**, NMS Canvas Coach; and **Jennifer Thomas**, NHS Canvas Coach.

The following coaching supplements were approved: **Bruce Northern** was approved as NHS Head Baseball Coach and **Katelyn Orem** was approved as NHS Assistant Volleyball Coach.

**Other School Board actions:** The Board approved the Education Partnership Agreement (EPS) between Naval Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD) and Northumberland County Public Schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Through this EPA, a K-12 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Outreach program will be established. The purpose of this EPA is to aid in the educational experience of NCPS K-12 students by providing a mechanism by which those students can benefit from the staff expertise, unique facility, and equipment related to Naval science and technology.

# NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



**NCPS Superintendent Dr. Holly Wargo introduced the NCPS Interim Director of Educational Technology Mrs. Javornda Ashton.** Dr Wargo stated, “Many of you know Mrs. Ashton as a friend, community member, former high school math teacher, former high school assistant principal, and, most recently, as the principal of Northumberland Middle School.” Dr. Wargo also shared Mrs. Ashton’s educational background: she earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Old Dominion University(ODU) and a Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership from ODU.

**NCPS Superintendent Dr. Holly Wargo introduced NCPS Interim Principal Mr. Patrick Simmons.** Dr Wargo stated, “Many of you know Mr. Simmons as the Assistant Principal at Northumberland Middle School. Mr. Simmons has now assumed the role of Interim Principal of Northumberland Middle School. Dr. Wargo shared Mr. Simmons’ educational background: he holds a Post Master’s Certificate from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU); a Master of Science in Science Education from Montana State University; and, a Bachelor of Science in Liberal Arts with a minor in Biology and a Concentration in Elementary Education from Longwood University. Mr. Simmons also holds certification in the National Registry Paramedic course from VCU Center for Critical Care and Trauma Education Paramedic Program.

## **The School Board heard Instructional Reports & Health, Safety and Mitigation updates by the school principals:**

**NES Principal Stephanie Baker** informed the Board that students in Hybrid Learning Option attend school in person two days per week and participate in virtual learning three days per week. In person instruction covers the same standards as virtual students. Virtual students participate five days a week in live Google Meets and/or asynchronous instruction with their teachers and classmates. On Wednesdays, NES students complete unfinished work or meet with the teacher in an individual Google Meet, if needed.

All families with students in PreK-5 will complete an online form selecting either a hybrid learning plan or a 100% virtual learning plan. The goal is to collect responses from families by October 14, 2020, and send out letters to families with additional information by October 16, 2020. The current numbers gathered as of October 12, 2020, are 85 hybrid students on Mondays/Tuesdays and 90 hybrid students on Thursdays/Fridays.

The following health and safety measures have been initiated: Breakfast/Lunch served in classrooms, the practicing of social distancing and face coverings, and staggered arrivals from buses using a separate entrance where health screenings occur. Students that are dropped off by parents receive a health screening before parents exit the drop off loop. At dismissal, students are dismissed from the gym and buses are loaded with grade levels exiting through different doors.

**NMS Interim Principal Patrick Simmons** reported that Northumberland Middle School is currently operating on a 100% virtual model using Google Meet and class videos for review. In reference to attendance, NMS has a low absentee rate. Mr. Simmons reports that a transition to Hybrid learning is

# NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



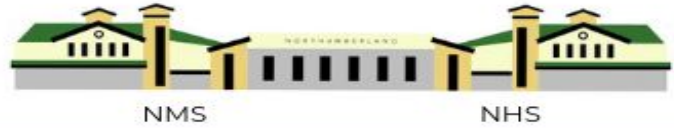
progressing. In person learning will begin October 22nd with all students using Canvas. He reported 168 families have responded to the survey, with 77 in favor of Hybrid. All families will be contacted.

**NHS Principal Dr. Travis Burns** reported that mitigation plans at Northumberland High School are on target. To date, 120 students have signed up for Hybrid learning. Families will be contacted to gather responses for the survey. Dr. Burns updated the Board that the Conditioning Plans for Sports is in alignment with the Northern Neck District schools and will begin November 2, 2020. Student athletes will ease into conditioning sessions with one practice per week per sport. According to the Virginia High School League (VHSL), sport competitions will start on December 28, 2020, with winter sports, followed by fall and spring sports. During conditioning sessions students must maintain distancing, while during practice sessions contact is permissible. Dr. Burns has meetings with VHSL in the coming weeks and will keep the Board updated.

## In-Person Public Comment

- Mrs. Dawn Conley-Taylor, on behalf of the Northumberland County Education Association (NCEA), shared the current Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Covid-19 statistics featured on the VDH Covid-19 Dashboard. She expressed concern that Northumberland is in the red, which means “highest risk” and still decided to open schools for students to attend on a hybrid schedule beginning with the Gold Group on Thursday, October 22, 2020, and the Green Group on Monday, October 26, 2020.
- Mrs. Pauline Brann, NES teacher and parent, expressed concern about the number of hours and amount of extra duties required when teaching virtually and when teaching in person to students. [Click here for Pauline Brann's Statement](#)
- Mrs. Tammy Fulford, NES teacher, expressed concern that the school board reacted in haste when deciding to open schools.
- Mrs. Karen Baker, NHS teacher and parent, spoke as a concerned community member about not having a voice in the decision making of reopening, the risks involved in the sudden decision, and if the school division has enough trained substitutes if another teacher quarantine happened. [Click here for Karen Baker's Statement](#)
- Mr. Jonathan Persinger, NHS teacher, spoke on his concerns about the hybrid option for NHS students. His emphasis was on the health and safety of students, teachers and staff. [Click here for Jonathan Persinger's Statement](#)
- Mrs. Stacey Lee, NMS teacher and parent, also expressed concerns about the plan to reopen schools on October 22, 2020.
- Ms. Krista Hundley Sisk, school counselor and parent, shared concerns about the decision to reopen schools. [Click here for Krista Sisk's Statement](#)
- Mrs. Shauna McCranie, Academically Talented and Gifted Coordinator, shared concerns about the reopening of school to the hybrid option. [Click here for Shauna McCranie's Statement](#)
- Mr. Carl Perez, pastor, community member, and spouse of NHS teacher Katrina Perez, spoke on the health and safety of reopening.

# NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## Online Public Comment

- Mr. Denzel Mitchell, a graduate and former student school board member, commented on safety and health concerns in returning to Hybrid learning.
- Mr. Steve Minor, parent, spoke in favor of the hybrid reopening. He commented that his children will benefit from in-person instruction and needed hands-on learning.
- Dr. Tyron Williams, pastor and community member, indicated his concerns on the safety and health of reopening.

**Director of Special Education and Student Support Services Dr. Jamie Sears** informed the Board that PreK-12 students with an IEP have been notified that in person instruction is available. Case Managers and administration have reached out to families with technology and attendance concerns or to those that need adjustments and additional support. OT and speech services are available for Hybrid and Virtual students. Letters also have been sent. Dr. Sears also advised the Board that the policy of restraint adopted at the September 14, 2020, board meeting is in full force. Phase 1 requires that training be completed by January 1, 2021.

**Interim Director of Educational Technology Mrs. Javornda Ashton** provided the following updates:

- School Board Office move
- Division wireless upgrade
- Canvas Learning update
- Eduspire Solutions
- Incident IQ
- Canvas Help Desk
- Sign installation
- Installation of 40 wireless access points at NMS and NHS
- E-hallpasses for NMS and NHS

Mrs. Ashton also shared that **Mrs. Rachel Hall, Instructional Technology Resource Teacher**, provides weekly information to teachers and staff regarding Google Meet and Canvas. Likewise **Mrs. Virginia Booth, Director of Data, Accountability, and Instructional Technology**, has completed CANVAS gradebook passback. This allows grades to sync from Canvas to the PowerSchool.

**Mr. Jeff Brann, Director of Operations, Maintenance, & Facilities**, provided the Board with an update on the Maintenance Department. The cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing of the buildings is continuing to be provided by ServiceMaster, Inc. and the school custodial department. The cleanliness, disinfecting, and sanitizing of the buildings has significantly improved since contracting custodial services and as a result of the hard work of custodial staff. Mr. Brann indicated that currently the department is installing and/or ordering touchfree water fountains for the schools, The installation

# NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



project will be completed soon. He also shared the move of the School Board Office remains an ongoing project and priority.

**Superintendent Dr. Wargo provided a School Nutrition update on behalf of Mrs. Saunee Hamlett, Director of School Nutrition.** The School Nutrition staff is preparing meals for around 620 students weekly. This number includes meal delivery to homes and meals put on the buses for those students on the Hybrid schedule. Starting October 21, all students signed up for meals will be receiving five (5) breakfast and five (5) lunch meals by bus on Wednesdays. As we move forward, students returning to NMS and NHS on October 22nd will be offered breakfast and lunch daily, just as those on Hybrid schedule at NES. We are looking forward to seeing more students.

**Director of Instruction and Student Services Mr. Adam Letizia** provided a school calendar and Hearing & Vision Screenings update. Mr. Letizia informed the Board that a calendar survey was sent to staff because of concerns with the updated calendar approved at the September 14, 2020, school board meeting. Eighty-seven percent of the responses were in support of the new calendar. Mr. Letizia reported on the waiver provided by the Department of Education for hearing and vision screenings. Instead of hearing and vision screenings being completed by the first 60 days of instruction, the waiver states that the screenings must be scheduled within the first 60 days of instruction and be completed by the last day of school. Dr. Jamie Sears has scheduled February 22, February 23, and February 25, 2021 for the screenings.

## Board Member Comments

Board Member Denise Mazyck thanked the Board for their support for her appointment as the Interim District 3 School Board Member. Ms. Mazyck commented that she values learning in a safe and healthy environment. She will continue to monitor the Covid-19 data received from doctors and scientists.

Vice Chair Gayle Sterrett welcomed Ms. Mazyck to the Board. Mrs. Sterrett looks forward to working with her and feels she is well qualified to serve District 3.

Board Chair Betty Christopher welcomed Ms. Mazyck and knows that she will be an added benefit to the Board. Mrs. Christopher indicated that it is always nice to have former Northumberland students return home.

Board Member Dana O'Bier gave an update on the Northern Neck Technical and Alternative Education meeting held on September 22, 2020. The Northern Neck Technical Center has 100 students and the Alternative Education Program has two (2) students attending morning and afternoon classes. There are approximately two to seven students per class. Cleaning is provided mid-day and at the end of each day.



# NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



NES



NMS

NHS

Board Member Dana O’Bier also provided a statement on the reopening of schools to the Hybrid and Virtual Learning Option. Mrs. O’Bier stated it is important to work together for the students. Mrs O’Bier read from the document “Re-Opening Schools Plan for NCPS” and referenced the October 1, 2020, school board minutes in her comments. [Click here for Mrs. O'Bier's Statement](#)