

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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August 10, 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 audio conferencing as a result of COVID-19 guidelines.

The School Board approved the following substitutes: **Dorolena Bowis, Regina Thompson, Lewis Howard, Anna Brennan, Lon Patrick, Debra Bull, Thomas "Luther" Wilson, Joan Walters, Greg Evans, James Keefer, Tammy Waddy Jones, Kevin Rice, Stephanie Ricks, and Charlene Suchan.**

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.

District Supplements: **Michelle Gordon**, Substitute Teacher Facilitator; **Tammy Fulford**, NES Mentoring Program Facilitator; **Leah Fisher**, NMS Mentoring Program Facilitator; and **Jill Murray**, NHS Mentoring Program Facilitator.

Other School Board actions:

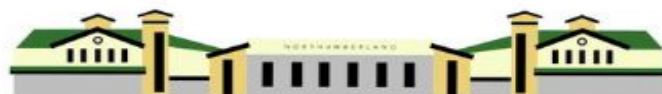
- Approved May 2020 VSBA Policy Updates
- Approved Student Code of Conduct for 2020-2021.
- Approved NCPS Safety & Crisis Manual Comprehensive Guide.

NES Principal Mrs. Stephanie Baker updated the Board on Reopening Northumberland Elementary under Phase II guidelines. Mrs. Baker reported that in-person instruction will be available to preschool to third grade students given the unique challenges of providing remote academic and social emotional support to young learners and English language learners. In-person instruction also will be available for students with disabilities if the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team agrees it is appropriate and the parent chooses the in person learning option. Virtual instruction may remain appropriate for certain students who may be challenged with adherence to the strict social distancing and safety guidelines as determined by the IEP team and the parents' consent. Mrs. Baker explained that NES will follow the health, safety and physical distancing guidelines provided by the CDC. In the school setting, schools are encouraged to aim for six feet of physical distance to the greatest extent possible, if six feet of distance is not feasible (inclusive of buildings and school buses), schools should

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NES



NMS

NHS

implement a combination of face coverings and a minimum of three feet distance between everyone present. Mrs. Baker reported the current enrollment option results:

- PreK: 72 maximum students; 33 students registered; 15 Hybrid selections; and 6 students 100% virtual.
- Kindergarten: 80 students; 21 Hybrid; 22 no response; and 33 students 100% virtual.
- 1st Grade: 90 students; 43 Hybrid; 13 no response and 32 students 100% virtual.
- 2nd Grade: 103 students; 29 Hybrid; 14 no response and 58 students 100% virtual.
- 3rd Grade: 80 students; 30 Hybrid; 7 no response and 41 students 100% virtual.
- 4th - 5th Grade: 22 special education students and 6 English Learners (EL) students

Mr. Jeff Brann, Director of Operations & Maintenance, reported that maintenance is working with ServiceMaster and other distributors to have needed supplies delivered in preparation for the reopening of schools and facilities. Currently in inventory are foam sanitation dispensers, hand sanitation pump bottles for every classroom, a supply of safety goggles, and specialized disinfectant spray. Mr. Brann reported that NCPS is ready for the start of school on Tuesday, September 8, 2020.

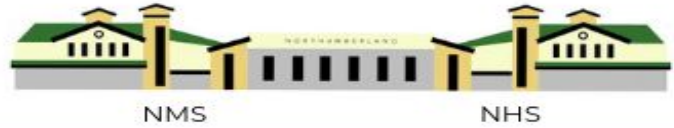
Dr. Richard Williams from Three Rivers Health District addressed the Board and received questions on PreK through Grade 3 reopening at Northumberland Elementary School. Dr. Williams stated he would not speak against Northumberland Elementary School's reopening plan.

Dr. Richard Williams and Superintendent Dr. Wargo cautioned that families placing their children back into in-person learning environments must accept the possibility that they will contract the virus. Dr. Williams stated up to 40% of cases are asymptomatic which is why the appropriate wearing of face coverings and practicing of physical distancing by students and employees is critical.

Dr. Williams also informed the board that since teachers began to return to school buildings in order to prepare for the upcoming academic year, three schools in two school districts inside the Three Rivers Health District have already had cases of COVID-19 among their staff.

The Board heard public comments regarding the reopening of schools. Four comments were in favor of reopening PreK-3 and seven comments asked for reconsideration of the decision to reopen. Ms. Jennifer Bramblet indicated that her daughter would benefit from face-to-face instruction, but will not be provided because she is in the 12th grade. Ms. Joy Smith is in favor of back to school instruction. Mr. Tyron Williams indicated that the powerful message by Three Rivers Health District administrator calls for reconsidering opening schools. Mr. William Felton was against reopening and questioned the decision and guidelines to open. Ms. Martha Williams supports face-to-face instruction, citing a successful summer school program. Mrs. Beverly Fallin supported parent choice to sending their child to school mentioning the increase in mental health cases from lack of normalcy. Ms. Denise Mazyck supports total virtual learning and was concerned over Dr. Williams' comments. Mr. Richard Saxer strongly disagreed with the school board decision to reopen schools. Ms. Amanda Schillmouer as school

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psychologist understands the impossible decision but supports the experts that virtual format is a better solution for now. Ms. Tara Brent stated that equity data shows that in school learning environments provide a devastating health and safety impact on African Americans & Hispanic students putting them at high risk. Dr. Wargo answered the email questions from Ms. Mazyck about the protocols in place for teachers, students, and families when COVID-19 cases are reported.

Superintendent Dr. Wargo informed the Board that the Virginia Department of Education State Superintendent Dr. James Lane has exercised emergency authority and waived school accreditation for 2021-2022. Schools will be assigned a rating of “Accreditation Waived.” The decision was due to insufficient data to calculate growth in reading and mathematics without Spring 2020 assessment data. The waiver will allow schools to focus on the impact of the pandemic academically, socially and emotionally on students due to the extended school closure. Spring test data will be used to evaluate the effect of the pandemic, school closure and will be able to establish a new baseline for measuring student growth.

Dr. Wargo shared correspondence from State Health Commissioner Dr. M. Norman Oliver and Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. James Lane on the Final Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools. The letter, in part, recognizes the dramatic impact that the school closure had on student learning and social emotional well-being. [Click here](#) here to review “The Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools”.

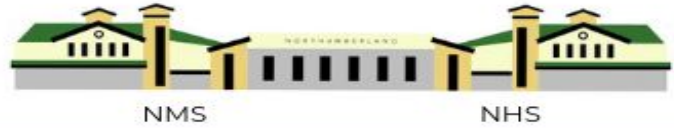
Dr. Wargo shared the Department of Labor and Industry Emergency Temporary Standards outlining standards for mitigating the spread and public health risk of COVID-19. [Click here](#) to view the Standards adopted by the Safety and Health Codes Board on July 15, 2020.

Mr. Bob Gilbert, Director of Technology gave a brief update on the chromebook and laptops for 1:1 computer initiative for students and staff. Chromebooks are in route and are slated to be delivered by August 13, 2020. Student laptops have been delivered and are currently being set up for computer distribution.

NMS Principal Mrs. Javornda Ashton reported on Synchronous & Asynchronous Learning. Synchronous learning is instruction delivered by Google Meet or face-to-face. It is virtual, live teaching, of instruction and interaction that occurs at the same time with students. A typical day of synchronous learning consists of daily attendance, direct instruction, assessment, group collaboration, teacher-led review and small-group instruction.

Asynchronous learning utilizes online “on your time” instructional format. Learning activities that are completed any time, any place, independent, online, and teacher-assigned tasks and activities. A typical day could consist of daily attendance, online activity, online lab, online group collaboration, independent practice and review, project-based learning, teacher grading, discussion boards, and video feedback.

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Instructional Technology Resource Teacher Mrs. Rachel Hall reported on the Virtual Virginia & Canvas Learning Management System. The Virtual Virginia program offers online Advanced Placement, world language, elective and core academic courses and professional development opportunities to schools, students and teachers across the Commonwealth. Virtual Virginia courses can be scheduled throughout the day, as courses do not have to be taken in “real” time. There are prerequisites to enroll in Virtual Virginia courses. Mrs. Hall reported that the Canvas learning management system will be used to connect hybrid and virtual learning students and teachers. Teachers will be receiving professional development August 17-21, 2020 on the Canvas learning management system.

NHS Principal Travis Burns prepared and submitted the 2020-2021 Student Code of Conduct. The publication is a comprehensive guide for students, families and staff. One difference of the 2020-2021 Student Code of Conduct is the inclusion of COVID-19 - Student Responsibilities Related to Health and Safety Measures.

Mrs. Javornda Ashton presented the NCPS Safety & Crisis Manual Comprehensive Guide. The Safety & Crisis Management Team consists of District Administrators, School Administrators, Athletic Directors, the School Psychologist, School Counselors, School Nurses, School Resource Officers, and Departments of Operation & Maintenance and Technology. The Safe Schools Plan places a strong emphasis on prevention using strategies which range from building design to discipline policies and programs which improve school safety and climate.