



## **NMRSD Update December 5, 2024**

### **Weather-related Delays/Closings**

As I am sure you understand, calling for a delayed opening or closing of the district schools due to inclement weather is not an easy decision or one I take lightly. While I will rarely make the decision the night before (this is New England, and the forecast is often fluid), I will make the call by 5:30 am on the day of the forecasted weather event.

Massachusetts is a state that requires *both* hours and days. Every public school in the district must be in operation for 180 days with one exception; school districts cannot go into July if they have used April vacation. The only alternatives if we run out of time on the calendar are to consider Saturdays (which is very rare) or add time to our days in May and June to make up a day(s). It is also important to consider how warm it can be during June in addition to students being focused on getting out for summer vacation. Where the start of the school year can be warm as well, students are at least more engaged than they would be on the other end.

When making this type of decision, I collaborate with our neighboring districts and the DPW in each of our member towns.

2-Hour Delays and Closings will be posted on all major television networks, and families listed in Aspen will receive a phone call, email, and text message. Additionally, it will be posted as a banner on our website.

Please note that there may be times when a 2-hour delay is called, and there may be a need *to move to closure* if road conditions have not improved.

Usually, the decision is based on whether or not our buses can run safely. With that being said, on the days when the road conditions are less than desirable, I encourage our students to take the bus (this includes our student drivers). Keeping caregivers and student drivers off the road will limit traffic. As a regional district, our students benefit from being guaranteed a seat on the bus.

It is highly unlikely that there will be a school cancellation or a modification to the school day due to temperature, either hot or cold.

Ultimately, I realize that regardless of my decision, some will disagree. Suppose, by chance, a caregiver feels it is unsafe for their child to go to school on a given day due to weather. In that case, that is their prerogative as a caregiver, and the absence will be excused provided a signed note stating such is brought to the school the next school day. Please keep in mind that an excused absence still counts as an absence.

When school is closed due to weather, all after-school activities will be canceled unless it is a state tournament athletic contest that is under the purview of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA).

### **NMRSD Budget Options**

As many of you heard, the SC voted to proceed with Option 4 last night unless there is an override.

Option 4 consists of the following model:

SECC	PreK (Districtwide)/Grades K-1 (Ashby/Townsend)
VBES	Grade K-5 (Pepperell)
HBMS	Grades 2-5 (Ashby/Townsend)
NMS	Grades 6-8 (Districtwide)
NMRHS	Grades 9-12 (Districtwide)

I realize these changes come with many questions and many emails have come in. Where it is impossible to respond to all of these emails with the thoroughness each community member deserves, the district has created an FAQ and posted it on its budget website:

[nmrsdbudget.org](http://nmrsdbudget.org)

***This document will be updated weekly as new questions come in.***

### **District Strategic Plan Forums**

This fall, the school committee approved the [new strategic plan](#) which helps guide and focus our work over the next five years (2024-2029). The curriculum office is coordinating a series of forums to inform families, staff, and the community about the plan and the three overarching strategic goal areas **and** to get input from constituencies to be 'strategic; about which initiatives to place

greater focus on initially (examining which initiatives will provide the greatest benefit for the school community as a whole). The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18th from 6 pm - 7:30 pm in the LGI Room (room 120) at the North Middlesex Regional High School. The purpose of this initial meeting is to provide an overview of the strategic plan. Subsequent meetings will dig deeper into each strategic goal area for prioritizing initiatives under that action.

Wednesday, December 18th 6:00 - 7:30 pm	Session 1 Strategic Plan Overview
Wednesday, January 8th 6:00 - 7:30 pm	Session 2 Focus - Climate, Culture and Community
Wednesday, January 22nd 6:00 - 7:30 pm	Session 3 Focus - Meeting the Needs of all Students
Wednesday, February 12th	Session 4 Focus - Curriculum and Instruction
Wednesday, February 26th	Session 5 Finalizing priority initiatives and methods to communicate plan updates

We look forward to participation from students, staff, parents, and community members. Please reach out to Dr. Burboa-Reese in the curriculum office at [gburboareese@nmrsd.org](mailto:gburboareese@nmrsd.org) with any questions.

### **Curriculum Office**

Last week, the curriculum office sent out the second edition of *NMRSD Curriculum Connection*, the quarterly newsletter updating families and the community about ongoing curriculum work throughout the district. In case you missed it, we are providing the [link here](#).

Additionally, Ms. Comeau, the Director of Title I, Early Literacy, and Parent Engagement, provides monthly newsletters to our three elementary schools that receive Title I services. It provides valuable tips for families to support their child's learning. Check out the December newsletter [here](#).

### **Updates to Title IX Regulations**

The 2024 Title IX regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education represent a major step forward in ensuring equity, inclusivity, and fairness in educational settings. These updated regulations, which take effect on August 1, 2024, expand protections against all forms of sex-based discrimination, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy-related conditions. They aim to create safer, more supportive environments for

students and families by emphasizing accountability, procedural fairness, and support.

### ***Key Highlights***

- **Broader Protections**: The regulations safeguard against sex-based harassment and discrimination across all educational programs and activities, ensuring that all individuals are treated with respect and dignity.
- **Streamlined Processes**: Schools must respond promptly to reports of discrimination, offering clearer and more efficient grievance processes, including the option for informal resolution where appropriate.
- **Supportive Measures**: Schools are required to provide accommodations such as academic adjustments and safety measures to those impacted, even if no formal complaint is filed.
- **Role of Confidential Employees**: A critical update is the designation of "confidential employees," who serve as trusted resources for students and staff. These employees offer a safe space to discuss concerns without initiating a formal investigation, ensuring individuals can seek support while maintaining privacy.

These changes are complemented by fact sheets and summaries from the Department of Education to assist schools and communities in understanding and implementing the updated regulations. For more detailed information, access the Department's official resources. You can also check out the district resources, which include the updated policy and grievance procedures, by navigating to the district website - [click here](#).

### ***District Title IX Coordinators:***

For Students: Gary Burboa-Reese, [gburboareese@nmrsd.org](mailto:gburboareese@nmrsd.org)  
For Staff: Anne Marie Tucciarone-Mahan, [hr@nmrsd.org](mailto:hr@nmrsd.org)  
Confidential Employee: Lisa Comeau, [lcomeau@nmrsd.org](mailto:lcomeau@nmrsd.org)

### **MCAS Ballot Question #2**

Ballot Question 2, regarding the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam, has been approved by voters. What does this mean?

The question asked voters whether students should be able to graduate high school without achieving a certain competency on the MCAS exam.

Since the question passed, MCAS testing competency is no longer a requirement for students to graduate high school. The standard for high school graduation is now determined by the district rather than by the State. Students must still complete all district graduation requirements.

However, MCAS testing will not be eliminated. State testing is federally mandated, so North Middlesex students will continue to take the MCAS exams on the current state schedule, including in Grade 10.

### **SEPAC Event**

SEPAC is hosting a Sensory Santa Event! This FREE event is exclusively for NM families with children who have a disability or with specific sensory needs. Pre-registration is required to participate, so secure your spot today! For more information, click [here](#).

### **Calling Volunteers**

After receiving several inquiries about whether or not NMRSD could use volunteers, I am happy to offer this opportunity to those willing to serve. Both the high school and middle schools need volunteers to monitor high-traffic areas during the school day. The role would entail doing a quick walkabout occasionally and sitting at a workstation.

Volunteers will certainly have time to complete deskwork if they want to bring it.

### **Need Extra Help? Sign Up for NHS Tutoring!**

Our National Honor Society (NHS) members offer tutoring for elementary, middle, and high school students. Sessions are held at town libraries after school from 3-5 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Saturdays. For high school students, tutoring is also available after school from 2-3 p.m. in the Commons or during flex block on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

If you're interested, click [here](#) to fill out the Google Form. We'll then match you with a tutor and help schedule your first session.

Take advantage of this fantastic resource for academic support!

### **Breaking News & Press Releases**

[North Middlesex Regional High School Students Raise Money to Support Installation of Adaptive Swing](#)

[North Middlesex Regional School District Hosts Unified Basketball Jamboree with Three Other School Districts](#)

[Executive Assistant Robin Eibye Honored for Excellence by Statewide Organization](#)

[North Middlesex Regional School Committee, Sending Communities to Host Community Budget Forum](#)

[Varnum Brook Elementary School Recognized by State Officials, Special Olympics Massachusetts at Assembly](#)

[Field Hockey Player Meredith Southard Pantano Featured in Lowell Sun](#)

[Varnum Brook Elementary School Recognized by Special Olympics North America](#)

[Two North Middlesex Regional High School Students Commended by National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#)

### **Parents/Caregivers - Who to Contact**

Students and/or caregivers are often unsure who to contact in the North Middlesex Regional School District in case of questions, concerns, or problems. Please direct these to the appropriate contact(s) below to ensure a prompt response.

*Classroom issues...*contact the teacher first. If you have additional concerns, contact the School counselor. If you are still concerned, contact the building Principal.

*Scheduling issues...*contact the School Counselor first. If you have additional concerns, contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal.

*Curriculum issues...*contact the appropriate teacher first. If you have additional concerns, contact the building Principal. Finally, contact the Assistant Superintendent's office.

*Special Education issues...*contact the appropriate teacher(s) first and then your son/daughter's special education liaison (listed on your child's IEP), if warranted. If you have additional concerns, contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal. Finally, contact the Special Education office.

*Behavioral issues...*contact the teacher first. If you are still concerned, contact the Guidance Counselor and then the building Assistant Principal/Principal.

*Social, emotional, personal, health, or family issues...*contact the School/Adjustment Counselor or the nurse to discuss your concerns with



them. If necessary, also contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal. Contact the Assistant Superintendent's office if you feel your concern has gone unresolved.

*Homeless or temporary housing (McKinney Vento Status):* Contact the Guidance Counselor and inform them of your status. In some instances, they may direct you to the building Principal. Finally, contact the Special Education office. The homeless liaison (Erin Upton) will be notified of the status, and transportation will be arranged through his office (if needed).

*Athletics issues...*contact the coach first. If you are still concerned, contact the Assistant Principal/Athletic Administrator at the High School.

*Attendance issues...*contact the School Counselor first. If attendance issues continue, contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal.

*Report Cards & Transcripts...*contact the School Counselor first. If you have additional questions, contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal.

*Harassment & Discrimination...*contact building Principal. If you are still concerned, contact the Title IX and VI Coordinators. Finally, contact the Human Resources office.

*Bullying...*contact the School Counselor. If you are still concerned, contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal.

*Technology questions and/or issues...*contact the district technology office.

*Student Activities/Clubs...*contact the advisor first. If you are still concerned, contact the building Assistant Principal/Principal.

*Special Education Transportation (VanPool Transportation)...*contact the Special Education office.

*Transportation (Dee Bus)...*contact the building secretary, followed by the building Assistant Principal/Principal. Finally, contact the business office.

*Food Service...*contact the Food Services Manager. Finally, contact the business office.

*Ethics Questions...*contact the [Massachusetts State Ethics Commission](#). The Commission's Legal Division provides free, confidential advice to anyone subject to the conflict of interest law. To obtain advice from the Commission, call (617) 371-9500 or (888) 485-4766 or request advice online.

*District Policies...*contact your School Committee representative or the committee chairperson.

For email contact to a specific faculty, staff, or committee member, please enter the person's first initial and last name @nmrsd.org, for example, [jdoe@nmrsd.org](mailto:jdoe@nmrsd.org).

**2024-2025 NMRSD Administrative Team**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>School</b>
Anne Cromwell-Gapp	Principal Extended Day Program Director	AES / SECC
Kate Guziejka	Principal	SMS
Stephanie Thompson	Assistant Principal	SMS
Ami Dolan	Principal	VBES
Ashley McEndarfer	Assistant Principal	VBES
Chantele Olmstead	Principal	HBMS
Jason White	Assistant Principal	HBMS
Lauren Young	Principal	NMS
Evan Worth	Assistant Principal	NMS
Laurie Smith	Interim Principal	NMRHS
Ryan Demar	Assistant Principal/Athletic Administrator	NMRHS
David Amari	Director of Facilities and Grounds	District
Cathryn Hampson	Supervisor of Health Services	District
Jeremy Hamond	Director of Operations Technology Facility Use Student Registration	District
Nancy Haines	Business Manager	District
Anne Marie	Director of Human Resources	District



Tucciarone-Mahan	Title VI/IX Coordinator for Staff	
Erin Upton	Director of Special Education Homeless Liaison	District
John Judge	Assistant Director of Special Education Grades 5-8 Evaluation Team Leader Out-of-District Coordinator	District/NMS
Diane Gleason	Administrative Coach / Grants Grant Writer	District
Shannon Cole	Grade PK-4 Evaluation Team Leader	District/VBES
Gary Burboa-Reese	Assistant Superintendent Counseling Homeschooling ADA Compliance Officer Title VI/IX Coordinator for Students	District
Kevin Cormier	Director of Data & Accountability	District
Lisa Comeau	Director of Title I & Literacy	District
Brad Morgan	Superintendent Health Services	District

**2024-2025 School Calendar**

[Please click here for the full 2024-2025 school calendar.](#)

**2024-2025 School Committee Meeting Schedule**

[Please click here for the 2024-2025 School Committee meeting schedule](#)