



# Northbridge Public Schools

## Northbridge School Committee

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### Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Agenda Tuesday, April 25th, 2023 7:00PM Northbridge High School Media Center

- I. Call to Order (7:00PM)
- II. Pledge of Allegiance (7:00PM)
- III. Attendance (7:00)
- Erin Donahue Present
- Jill Leonard Present
- Allan Richards Present
- Heather Alden Present
- Rebecca Johnson Present
- IV. Statement of Audio and Video Recording (7:00)
- V. Statement of Mission (7:01)
- VI. Student Representative Report (7:02)

Congratulations to newly released Feb students of the month, for their embodiment of the Rams protocol and hard work: Ryan Reyes (Freshman), Juliette Lannon (sophomore), Amanda Smith (Junior), Lester Burdick (Senior). RISE post grad students set up a Nailed It competition between groups of students. Team Yummy Flaming Hot Cheetos won overall, and teams Feral Farmers and Ninja Elementals for winning Theme and overall creativity. Keira Tulley (Senior) received Daughter's of Revolution Good Citizen Scholarship. Feb 13<sup>th</sup>, Mr. NHS pageant was held, and James Kenoi won the title. Well into Spring athletics, all of which are having a strong showing.

#### VII. Superintendent's Report (7:04)

NES Yearbook is available to order, Deadline to order May 5<sup>th</sup>. April 28<sup>th</sup> 9:00AM NES hosting principal's coffee open to parents and families. Spring Concert at NES at 7:00PM. Me and My Special Person dance was sold out and went very well. Suggestions to split between Pk-2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> to accommodate families. Raised \$6000 dollars, over half

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was profit. 8<sup>th</sup> grade dinner dance May 12<sup>th</sup> at NMS from 6-9PM. Middle School Drama has performance “Summer of Kaos” Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 6PM and Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2PM. Tickets \$5, Free to NMS students. Community Closet at NMS open April 26<sup>th</sup>, May 10<sup>th</sup>, May 31<sup>st</sup>. They have a selection of Prom gowns and accessories as well as normal clothing. Celebration of learning and belonging, as well as evening of the arts, had great turn out. Over 35 tables of student work and community partners. Chorus and Band showed the improvement that having the programs as young as 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in NES are helping the students when they join the clubs in NMS in terms of quality and quantity. 3 finalists for Principal search have been forwarded to her. Second Round interviews will happen on Friday, with a Meet and Greet for the community with all 3 on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Bus Registration is open, online form is encouraged. Current fee is valid through June 2<sup>nd</sup>, after that any registration costs \$50 more. Families encouraged to sign up earlier rather than later.

59% of High School Students were on Honor Roll or higher.

#### VIII. Presentations: (7:10)

##### A. HOSA Students (Future Medical Professionals) (7:10)

Caroline O’Brien (senior), president of the club approached Robin Lawrence Science department chair at NHS to bring HOSA to Northbridge. Maija Beaupre (freshman) also present. HOSA’s purpose is to help empower and train future health professionals through education, collaboration, and experience. Students choose an area of interest and study, then compete at state and international conferences.

Caroline explained the different categories of competition, as the areas of medical and health professions is very varied, both individually or as groups, and difference between testing, practical testing, and emergency preparedness skill tests.

First year goal was individual tests in competition to gain an understanding of the system. Goal next year is to participate in community service and team events. Attended MA state competition in March at Worcester U. 300 students from over the state. 2 Students qualified for International: Caroline O’Brien won 3<sup>rd</sup> in Behavioral Health. Megan Stearns won 3<sup>rd</sup> for Medical Reading. Caroline was at UMass Medical on the day the results were announced, getting 3<sup>rd</sup> at the MA Brain Beat competition.

Community outreach, have been in contact with Red Cross to set up a Community CPR Program and wants to sponsor their own Blood Drive. Trying to get students trained as volunteers with the Red Cross.

Looking for support in awareness, legitimacy, and some funding from the School Committee. Commended by the Committee for their performance and abilities. Asked about how they get funding. Science Club had taken on some of the funding. Competition fees were all student paid/fundraised. Met with other chapters to learn how to set up the chapter and best ways to fundraise. Students from Health Pathways and students with an interest in medical careers are encouraged to join. Science department has a lot of tools already to help support this group. This club is helping to provide SoftSkills for in-depth looks into medical careers, and helps the school as we are not a technical high school. HOSA is a very well recognized and regarded program outside of New England, and will be looked at well by colleges.

#### B. 2022-2023 Parent Satisfaction Survey Results (7:37)

Resent survey out to get more MS and HS respondents, but more ES responded. 90% of parents feel welcome, and 82% feel the environment is caring. Most feel their children are safe physically and mentally. Only 61% felt that discipline is handled correctly. 62% feel they get adequate communication from the school for incidents that occur, but when polled on types of communication, a majority felt each of the different types and levels of communication was adequate. Parents would like more education from school district on Effects of Social media, Depression, Anxiety, Self-Harm, Bullying/Cyberbullying, ADD/ADHD: Working with adjustment councilors to develop parent education opportunities. 12.6% dissatisfied with quality of education, the rest were satisfied or very satisfied.

Parents want to see more family events and volunteer opportunities noted well in advance for parents to schedule time to join. More community events and revitalization of the Interest Fair and Evenings of the Arts and Sciences. Parents asked for more instructions aids, better communication, and more meetings with parents (without the students around). The students need more outlets for the students at the high school. Consistency among teachers in respects to grading and rule enforcement, as well as communication with parents. Bullying issues need to be handled and dealt with better.

Erin Donahue pointed out with discipline and communication how we cannot provide all the information on student punishment and discipline, and that there needs to be some education for the parents on what information we can provide, as we have moved towards remediation and proactive rather than reactive, and discipline looks different from what they understood it to be for them. Wants to look deeper into the comments the parents were giving.

Suggested parent focus groups for the school district to understand what the parents want and how to fulfill their needs, since everything we do seems to not be working.

Superintendent McKinstry pointed out that they have made a format for all of the email communication, they have tried more communication and tried less communication, and there are always parents who are upset with the type of communication. Explained last year, a series of afterschool classes were set up with outside vendors come and educate parents on the topics they had requested education on in the last survey (pointed out many were still hot topics this year), and no one showed up, even when they had chosen the surveyed best date, time, and had childcare provided. Possibly setting up Parent Town Halls could help, especially online so people can listen and attend easily. Most people claimed they wanted email communications, but many of them are still not reading the emails.

Jill Leonard asked if 2<sup>nd</sup> Step has a parent component. It does not have one. Offered training for Social/Emotional needs in the home, and no one appeared.

Only around 180 responses from across the district on the survey. Getting focus groups of parents in person/Zoom mix to increase the participation and get direct feedback and input.

#### IX. Consent Agenda (8:01)

##### A. Warrant 43-42s 04/13/2023 \$139,921.21 (8:02)

A motion was made by Allan Richards to approve the Warrant. The motion was seconded by Heather Alden.

Erin Donahue	Yes
Jill Leonard	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes
Heather Alden	Yes
Rebecca Johnson	Yes

5 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was with a roll call vote of 5-0

B. Warrant 43-43s 04/20/2023 \$178,081.64 (8:03)

A motion was made by Heather Alden to approve the Warrant. The motion was seconded by Allan Richards.

Erin Donahue Yes

Jill Leonard Yes

Allan Richards Yes

Heather Alden Yes

Rebecca Johnson Yes

5 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was with a roll call vote of 5-0

X. Discussion (8:03)

A. MS Cell Phone Policy (8:03)

Asked to be on the docket by Joe Strazzula at the 4/11/23 meeting. Included in packet is Milford Cell Phone policy and Northbridge Policy. Spoke with Milford SI and received the Staff handbook instructions on the policy. Proposed: leave and lock phones (off) in lockers all day. Any update will go into place for next school year. For Middle School, would need to purchase keyed combination locks for each of the new lockers.

E. Donahue brought up the old policy of renting locks to the students, and those that come back intact get their money back. The cost of handing out chrome books during covid makes purchasing the locks a difficulty and cannot just hand out locks.

J. Leonard pointed out that they would only have access to phones between classes in the hall, would they be able to look at their phones then?

B. Jackson stated at her school a few years ago, the rule was between bells (in class) phones were away, but between periods and at lunch, they were allowed their phones. Phones went to office if out in class. Made passing period and tardiness increase. Stating that students did not use their lockers in Milford. Most students seemed to be able to honor the Bell to Bell policy.

Superintendent pointed out that some students have 504s and medical reasons to need phones, and they don't want to single them out for privacy and confidentiality purposes.

Becky Jackson also brought up that it is a skill they need to learn, when to look at the phones and when not to.

H. Alden brought up if this is an actual issue with the policy or if it is just the implementation and enforcement that is the issue. Advised to tighten some of the punishments to make prohibiting a student from having their phone for the rest of the year easier to get to, including zero tolerance towards inappropriate pictures and filming altercations. Again, stated that the policy does not matter if the implementation is not there. Because of employment turnover, this has been hard to strictly enforce.

#### B. District Bullying Policy (8:23)

Shared current policy in the Policy Manual, also part of the Handbook. Do anti-bullying curriculum at all the schools. Use 2<sup>nd</sup> Step at Elementary and Middle, and Mark at High School as they are part of the Rethinking Discipline initiative because of number of suspensions. Explained the legal definition of Bullying, cyberbullying and how it differentiates from students being mean to one another. Also provided research information on the connection between Bullying and suicide. Cyber Bullying has been down since coming back to school compared to during COVID. The largest group being bullied are those of lower economic status, across the district, state, country. Makes the bullying forms available to all of the students and parents, and investigates every form that is submitted. Showed MA information showing number and percentage of substantiated bully reports over 4 years. Majority happen around middle school and early high school (6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade consistently). Showed current year bullying statistics. Substantiated Bullying reports line with trend with State (0/5 in HS (1 under investigation), 5/21 in MS (2 under investigation), 1/6 ES). All students received a consequence for their actions, bullying or not. Once Bullying has been substantiated, Safety plan is put in place for the victim and meetings with adjustment councilors, and education classes for the bully, and letters are sent home to all families involved explaining what will happen to the aggressor and how the victim will be protected. Ms. Palmer-House has been trying restorative practices at Middle School to improve this. While phone calls can trigger a bullying investigation, the forms provide a lot more information.

Committee suggested education for parents to better understand the definition of bullying and the difference between bullying and being mean. Also asked How the communication comes back to the parents about what happened, why it didn't meet the bullying criteria, and what we are going to do to help the child. Asked about implementing Restorative Practices as young as kindergarten, possibly with Sue Palmer-Howes leading it. Also suggested

getting peer mediation back in place. Need to get the parents and family involved, as these behavioral issues are throughout all their life and require community support. Need to also increase the implementation of a culture of acceptance and love.

#### C. Transportation Contract Renewal (8:56)

Already spoke during budget meeting. 3 year contract with provider. Option to renew for 2 more years. Showed rates of nearby towns. Recommend renewing based on rates and because very few vendors will bid on contracts, so it is hard to get multiple companies to bid competitive and lower rates. Still currently lower than surrounding districts, even with 13% increase for renewing.

#### XI. Public Comment (8:59)

Brandon King of 35 Shell Drive spoke for many parents who could not be there about both the Bullying and Phone policies. Brought up that due to confidentiality, there are some parents who are feeling that students are disciplined differently depending on who they are related to (faculty, teachers, SC, etc). Provided some ideas for how to handle punishment for cell phone and bullying use. Suggested to punish everyone for breaching the cellphone policy, and the students will police themselves after the first or second time, as they will all know who did it. Also brought up how online bullying is far easier, and how to categorize a cyber bullying incident (based on number of shares or initial incidents). Suggested having an App instead of any other type of communication as it is immediate and far more likely to be interacted with than an email or Social Media post. Had a lot of parents state to him that they just ignore NES and NPS emails. Understands Apps are not cheap. Have something the parents actively sign onto and gives them notifications that they have to turn off to not get them. Also having it separate from email would make it easier to not get lost in emails.

Parents prefer everything in-writing.

#### XII. Action (9:05)

##### A. 23-24 School Calendar

A motion was made by Heather Alden to approve the School Calendar. The motion was seconded by Allan Richards.

Erin Donahue	Yes
Jill Leonard	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes
Heather Alden	Yes

Rebecca Johnson                      Yes

5            members having voted in the affirmative

0            members having voted in the negative

The motion was with a roll call vote of 5-0

XIII.     Information (9:06)

A.   Senior Events Calendar

Asked if the \$25 bus fee was being covered or worked on, because some seniors last year could not go because of finances. Knows the trip is full. Asked to follow up that everyone who wanted to go could go, regardless of financial constraint.

XIV.     Adjournment (9:08PM))

A motion was made by Allan Richards to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Heather Alden.

Erin Donahue                      Yes

Jill Leonard                        Yes

Allan Richards                    Yes

Heather Alden                    Yes

Rebecca Johnson                Yes

5            members having voted in the affirmative

0            members having voted in the negative

The motion was with a roll call vote of 5-0