



Northbridge Public Schools

Northbridge School Committee

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Allan Richards, aerichards@nps.org, Heather Alden, halden@nps.org, Rebecca Johnson, rjohnson@nps.org

Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, February 14th, 2023 7:00PM Northbridge High School Media Center

- I. Call to Order (7:00)
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Attendance

Erin Donahue	Present
Allan Richards	Absent
Jill Leonard	Present
Heather Alden	Present
Becky Jackson	Present

Also in attendance were Superintendent Amy McKinstry and Director of Business and Finance Melissa Walker.

- IV. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- V. Statement of Mission
- VI. Student Representative Report

Congratulations to the recently released December Students of the Month, freshman Moth Heyliger, sophomore Sydney Obas, junior Sarah Cowen, and senior Arbor Rousseau. Great job to all of the students for their hard work and determination.

This week is Spirit Week. Monday was Monochrome Day, Tuesday was Tacky Tourist Tuesday, Wednesday is Tie Dye Day, Thursday is Twin/Group Day, and Friday we end off with Jersey Day. We look forward to seeing all of the school spirit and participation over the few days leading up to break.

On February 2nd, students in Mrs. Dabney's French class studied and celebrated "La Chandeleur", which is France's version of Pancake Day. Dating back to ancient Roman times, this Pancake Day is one of the most special and superstitious days for the French. Students celebrated the day by making crepes for themselves to enjoy.

On Saturday, February 11th the Boys Wrestling team hosted the MIAA Division 2 West Wrestling Sectionals. They faced off against teams from across the league.

Congratulations to Anthony, Elijah, Noah, Matt, and Nick who placed in the top 6 and will move on to the Divisional States this weekend as a result of their top performances. Great job to our Boys wrestling team.

The Student Council recently hosted the Candy Gram fundraiser, students and staff could buy sweet treats and write a message to someone important to them at NHS. The Student Council made over \$300 dollars and distributed the Candy Grams on Valentine's Day.

In addition to Candy Grams, the Student Council is encouraging NHS students and staff to donate to the Polar Plunge, which is a fundraiser for Special Olympics that the student council participates in annually. If enough money is raised, members of the Student Council E-Board will take the plunge into the waters near Hyannis Cape Cod during the Student Council state conference that is happening in the beginning of March. QR codes are posted around school so students and staff can visit the Northbridge Student Council fundraising page and make a donation. The Student Council has a goal of \$500, Student Council is already halfway there and would appreciate the support in raising money for Special Olympics athletes.

VII. Superintendent's Report

NES:

Celebrated 100th day of school on Tuesday.

Kindness Initiative: acknowledging acts of kindness by students and taping hearts to the windows around the building. Hoping to fill school with hearts of kindness by the end of February.

In celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday and **Read Across America**, the students at Northbridge Elementary School are having a Seuss Celebration Week the first week from Feb. 27th through March 3rd, which will include a spirit week for students and staff. Mrs. Demeritt has created a flyer for families that outlines each day. Community Reading Day will also take place that week on Thursday, March 2nd, with various community members coming into the NES classrooms to read to the students and then join each other for refreshments and conversation afterward.

PTA Meeting – Wednesday, February 15th at 7:00 p.m.

NES School Council Meeting – Thursday, February 16th at 3:00 p.m.

Kindergarten Registration: NES Kindergarten registration for the 2023-2024 school year will take place by appointment on Wednesday, March 1, 2023. The Parent/Guardian of any Northbridge child who will turn 5 on or before August 31, 2023, is invited to attend. There is a link on the NPS website with additional information and registration.

Pre-K Open House was held on Saturday. There were 19 families in attendance. The NES pre-school program lottery is still currently open, but it closes on February 28, 2023. Please reach out to Mrs. Redding with any questions related to the preschool program.

NMS:

Kindness Chain: Wed. 2/15-Fri 2/17 MS homerooms will be participating in a Kindness Chain activity. To focus on kindness and positivity, students will write a random act of kindness they received, witnessed, or did on paper strips to be stapled together to make a chain for each homeroom. The chains will be displayed in the cafeteria for all to enjoy!

8th grade shadow days at the high school are underway. Three more 8th grade homerooms will visit NHS for the day on Tues. 2/14 and the last group will visit the high school on 2/28. Thank you to Mr. Warzecha and Mr. Sponseller for all of the time they spent planning these visits and the schedules.

2/15 – 6th grade field trip to Gillette; 2/17 – 7th grade field trip to Gillette

This is a STEM-based field trip. The students will be connecting STEM learning standards to designing helmets that prevent concussions.

Staff Meeting Tuesday, February 14th – MS Staff will begin to develop a new vision and mission statement which aligns with the core values of community, belonging, respect, accountability and teamwork that were established during the first planning session.

MS MCAS prep classes are still taking place after school Monday and Thursday through March. They currently have over 60 students attending in grades 6-8. NES MCAS prep classes are also still taking place. They have 51 students attending between grades 4 and 5.

MS's Unified basketball will be starting after Feb break. They are currently scheduling basketball games with Auburn and Shrewsbury with the hope of hosting a Jamboree in late March.

BVSC will be holding another Job Fair at Milford High School on Monday, April 3rd from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Northbridge will be participating. Last year we found Kylie Farrell (HS PE) and Emily Gay (MS Math) at this job fair, and both are phenomenal, so we're hoping for the same luck this year.

This morning, the Worcester County Superintendent's Association held a luncheon with several of our legislatures, senators, and reps, to discuss some of the topics that are plaguing us, as school superintendents, that we hoped they could help us with. Including the 14% OSD rate, universal lunch, and funding us at the full inflation rate.

Next week is February break.

Jill Leonard asked if it would be helpful if more people called the legislature on behalf of the needs of the schools and questioned if that would be beneficial or if the meetings have been enough. Superintended McKinstry replied that specific numbers and personalized information that affects families and districts is important when issues are presented by the legislators and thinks that any contact with legislators is good contact, especially if it is to help the district.

Erin Donahue wanted to know if the online link to kindergarten registration allowed the parent to make an appointment online. Superintendent McKinstry confirmed that the online link provided both registration information as well as the ability to set up an appointment for registration.

Erin Donahue also commented on the NMS kindness chain and noted that in previous years, the students decorated the town common with the chains. She said that it was cute and that it was a unique connection with the community.

VIII. Presentations:

A. Superintendent's Mid-Year Progress Report

Superintendent McKinstry presented updates on her 3 goals:

1. Professional Practice Goal: To enhance leadership skills and provide more legal and HR and in-house support by enrolling in courses and participating in workshops and education programs.
 - a) She is currently enrolled in an advanced law program that is comprised of 6 courses that she will take between now and December. Superintendent McKinstry is just finishing an educational law course that has been very beneficial.
 - b) She is participating in a Special Education for district leaders course through MASS (Mass Association of School Superintendents) where she is learning about the new IEP process including policies and procedures and special ed updates.
 - c) Superintendent McKinstry and Jill Healy are participating in a Mass Ready Foundation yearlong learning series focusing on diversity and inclusion. She is hoping to gain a lot of knowledge that can be shared with the administration and staff in the district.
2. Student Learning Goal: To schedule meetings with various groups of leaders.
 - a) Shared leadership is one of the strategic objectives in the strategic plan and she wanted to make sure that she was consistently meeting with different groups while making sure that the groups were gaining something from it. She met with APs and Deans separately than with principals because their job descriptions are different. Another example is meeting with district admin separately sometimes from the building admin. Superintendent McKinstry noted that she had an upcoming meeting with the full building leadership team, district leadership team, and de-seasoned team leaders to discuss the current status of curriculum, SEL

programming, district morale. She added that she does meet monthly with various teams and principals and conducts walkthroughs in their buildings.

3. District Improvement Goal: To provide administrators and staff with culturally responsible leadership that promotes cultural belonging.

B.

- a) A survey was conducted of all staff at every building and a lot of questions were asked regarding their focus areas, concerns and morale. A leadership team meeting was conducted and the survey information was shared with the administrators keeping all responses anonymous. There were hard conversations about the different areas that need improvement and conversation continues in those areas.
- b) Superintendent McKinstry is currently working with the Middle School on a mini- strategic plan to improve staff morale and the structures based off the survey feedback. New core values were established and the new teachers were included in this process. A vision statement is being worked on that will align with the district plan and will get the forward motion going.
- c) Culturally responsive look fors are being used during learning walks. A rubric has always been used for leaning walks but DESE put out some culturally responsive look fors that are SEL based and how the teachers are building culture within their classroom and how that impacts instruction.
- d) Each of the buildings has been hosting staff culture building activities such as breakfast in the morning or team building events or meeting outside of school to build more outside relationships to bring into the building. A holiday culture event was held right before the holidays and it was nice to see all of the schools really getting together. The Celebration of Learning will be held on April 12 and building level inclusive events are coming up and on the next PD Day, there will be the unsung hero awards and a staff culture building event and a book study with the leadership.
- e) Superintendent McKinstry is co-teaching a section of tenth grade ELA.
- f) She is working closely with the Worcester County superintendents regarding issues occurring in the district and across districts.

- g) She met with Chief LaBrie and Officer DeJordy from the NPD and nurse Lori Johnson regarding the issues of marijuana and THC as the use has gone up significantly. It has become a huge issue. She has met with students and hopes to have speakers come in to
- h) educate the students and provide educational programs to the parents as well regarding THC, vaping and marijuana.

Heather Alden commented on the Superintendent's commitment to education and the district saying that it is fantastic and mentioned all that is being done for morale and noted the difference post-COVID. She said that the connection is coming back.

Erin Donahue noted that speakers who present with real life stories have the biggest impact. She also thanked the superintended for her continued commitment.

Jill Leonard had a question regarding the book study to confirm that it was starting with administration and that it would filter down to staff. Superintended McKinstry described the books and hopes that the building administrators take the book back to use at staff meetings.

Rebecca Johnson thinks that using a case study environment for PD is a good idea as it opens up productive conversations. She also said that she thinks the Middle School's mini strategic plan is coming at a good time of the year.

IX. Consent Agenda

A. School Committee Meeting Minutes: January 24, 2023

A motion was made by Heather Alden to approve the School Committee Minutes from January 10, 2023. The motion was seconded by Jill Leonard. The vote was taken by roll call and the following votes were recorded:

Erin Donahue	Yes
Allan Richards	Absent
Jill Leonard	Yes
Heather Alden	Yes
Becky Jackson	Yes

4 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote 4-0

B. Warrant 43-32s 02/03/2023 \$333,666.64

A motion was made by Heather Alden to approve Warrant 43-32s 02/03/2023 for \$333,666.64. The motion was seconded by Jill Leonard. The vote was taken by roll call and the following votes were recorded:

Erin Donahue	Yes
Allan Richards	Absent
Jill Leonard	Yes
Heather Alden	Yes
Becky Jackson	Yes

4 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote 4-0

X. Discussion

A. School Calendar Revision - Change March PD Day from 3/29/23 to 3/31/23

Superintendent McKinstry explained that the yearly school calendars are done so early that the 3/29/23 date is an ELA MCAS date and that there is no flexibility for the HS MCAS. There are no other days to change it to except 3/31/23. Moved to motion for that evening so that the parents would know.

B. Spring Town Meeting Requests

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow, or transfer from the undesignated fund balance (free cash) or from the Town Building Maintenance Fund established pursuant to Chapter 438 of the Acts of 2012 for the maintenance of Town-owned buildings and facilities, the following sums of money to be expended under the direction of the School Committee: \$70,300 to replace deteriorating Doors/Frames at the Middle School; \$24,975 to replace the clocks at the Middle School, \$79,000 to refinish the gymnasium floors at the Middle School and High School; and \$19,500 to replace the ride-on scrubber at the Middle School.

Final Article Language to be amended by Town Manager and Town Counsel

Director of Finance Melissa Walker also noted that a space study was going to be conducted to assess if there would be any financial benefit or savings to relocate the Administration Offices into vacant spaces in the Middle School because there are now only 3 grades there. Also, an overall assessment of the Middle School would be conducted as a capital planning study to identify any problems on the capital planning plan.

XI. Public Comment: Brandon King of 75 Sheryl Drive

Mr. King discussed the THC and marijuana situation. He said that when educating students about drugs that it was crucial to give students information to make educational choices without enticing their curiosity. Mr. King inquired about an alternative to suspension and mentioned the possibility for a student to have homework assigned due to lost time and feels that students should be punished and that children crave structure. He talked about teachers giving bad habits to other teachers.

XII. Action

A motion was made by Heather Alden to approve the School Calendar Revision – Change March PD Day from March 29, 2023 to March 31, 2023. Jill Leonard seconded the motion. The vote was taken by roll call and the following votes were recorded:

Erin Donahue	Yes
Allan Richards	Absent
Jill Leonard	Yes
Heather Alden	Yes
Becky Jackson	Yes

4 members having voted in the affirmative
0 members having voted in the negative
The motion was accepted with a roll call vote 4-0

XIII. Information

A. Staffing update

Superintendent McKinstry noted that most of the open positions were instructional assistant positions but noted that there were behavior tech positions open. She noted that there has been a lot of turnover with Instructional Assistant positions but the students are getting the instruction that is needed and that they will continue to look for new staff.

XIV. Adjournment - The Meeting of the Northbridge School Committee was called to adjourn by Heather Alden and seconded by Jill Leonard at 7:50 PM.

Erin Donahue	Yes
Allan Richards	Absent
Jill Leonard	Yes
Heather Alden	Yes
Becky Jackson	Yes

4 members having voted in the affirmative
0 members having voted in the negative
The motion was accepted with a roll call vote 4-0