

**Northport-East Northport Union Free School District Board of Education Special Meeting -
Northport High School (Wednesday, August 11, 2021)**

Generated by Beth M Nystrom on Monday, August 23, 2021

Members present

David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Larry Licopoli, Thomas Loughran, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Carol A Taylor

Members absent

None

Also present

Mr. Robert Banzer, Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Irene McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Dr. Dana Boshnack, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Mr. Louis Bonadonna, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Support Services

Public Attendance: 75 in person, 904 via Zoom

1. CALL TO ORDER – President Licopoli called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. IF NECESSARY, THE CHAIR MAY ENTERTAIN A MOTION TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION - Note: It is anticipated that the Board will meet in public at 6:00 p.m. in the Faculty Dining Room to act upon a resolution, upon majority vote, to immediately convene into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to the employment history of particular persons

Action: 4.01 Motion to convene into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to the employment history of particular persons.

Motion by David Badanes, second by Victoria Buscareno.

Final Resolution: Motion passes

Yes: David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Larry Licopoli, Thomas Loughran, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Carol Taylor

At 6:42 p.m., the Board reconvened in public session in the auditorium at Northport High School.

President Licopoli stated that the Board has received many emails regarding students wearing masks in school during the 2021-2022 school year and all the trustees have read each one. As of today, approximately 40 emails were against students wearing masks and approximately 40 emails were in favor of students wearing masks. Tonight the Board will discuss the current guidance on the reopening of schools and students wearing masks. Dr. Licopoli stated that no decision would be made this evening.

3. Dr. Licopoli led those present in the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; and

4. Pointed out the EMERGENCY EXITS

5. SPECIAL REPORT

5.01 Update on the Reopening of Schools and Related Guidance.

Superintendent Banzer presented an update on the reopening of schools and related guidance.



**Special Meeting of the Board of Education
School Reopening Update
August 11, 2021**



GUIDANCE TIMELINE

- **July 18:** CDC releases updated guidance for the 2021-22 school year
- **July 19:** AAP releases updated guidance for the 2021-22 school year
- **August 4:** New York State Department of Health: releases statement: "Follow guidance from CDC and local health departments."
- **August 9:** SCDHS releases guidance for the 2021-22 school year
- **August 10:** NYSED announces it will be sharing guidance in the absence of DOH guidance (currently awaiting)



Community Feedback

Received 44 letters in support of mask optional/ parental choice

Received 40 letters in support of universal masking



POSITIVITY RATES

- New York State (As of 8/11/21):
 - 7 day rolling average: 3%
 - 3.5% positive daily rate
 - Hospitalizations up 230% over the past month
- Northport/East Northport: Vaccination Rate:
 - <https://covid19.vaccine.health.ny.gov/vaccination-rates-zip-code>
- Suffolk County (As of 8/11/21)
 - 7 day rolling average: 3.7%
 - 4.7% positive daily rate

	One Shot	Fully Vaccinated
11768	74.7%	68.9%
11731	70.5%	65.1%

DISTRICT PRIORITY: Health & Safety & In person teaching & learning



GUIDANCE OVERVIEW

	Masks	Contact Tracing	Vaccines	In-Person Learning	Social Distancing
CDC	Recommended universal indoor masking; Not required outdoors	-No quarantine if 3+ feet & mask properly worn (students only) - If no masks, must quarantine	Recommended for all eligible persons	Recommended and should be prioritized	3 feet indoors
American Academy of Pediatrics	Recommended universal indoor masking	N/A (not addressed)	Recommended for all eligible persons	Recommended and should be prioritized	Recommended, no specifics provided
Suffolk County Department of Health	Recommended universal indoor masking; Not required outdoors	-No quarantine if 3+ feet & mask properly worn (students only) - If no masks, must quarantine	Not required but recommended for all eligible persons.	Recommended and should be prioritized	3 feet indoors 6 feet when playing a wind instrument/singing indoors Physical contact limited
NYS DOE	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD




GUIDANCE OVERVIEW

ADDITIONAL MITIGATION PRACTICES*:

- Continued use of improved ventilation / HEPA filters
- Continued encouragement of good hand hygiene
- Continued heightened cleaning and disinfection of surfaces within schools
- Reminders to stay home and get tested if symptoms arise
- Masking on school transportation
- Cohorting when possible

*As recommended by the CDC and AAP.

DISTRICT PRIORITY: Health & Safety & In person teaching & learning



GUIDANCE OVERVIEW

COMMON THREADS:

- Universal masking for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals is recommended by the CDC, SCDHS, AAP, email from 240 area-wide physicians, recommendation from district school physician
- Social distancing can be reduced to 3 feet
- **No quarantine is required when students are properly masked and 3 feet apart per CDC**

DISTRICT PRIORITY: Health & Safety & In person teaching & learning



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are some important factors to consider when developing our reopening plan?

- Health & Safety & Full in person learning is a priority
- Maintain opportunities for students
 - Clubs in-person
 - No masking outdoors
 - Use of common spaces
 - Sports/music/extracurricular activities
 - Removal of barriers
- Remote learning in special medical circumstances (virtual regional program under development)
- Vaccine eligibility
- Identify metrics to alter plans and procedures
- Continued partnership with health & educational agencies.
- Remain flexible- adjust to changing circumstances
- Ongoing communication

6. PUBLIC COMMENT/PARTICIPATION - Please Note: Community members are invited to share their questions, comments, or concerns with the School Board. When speaking, citizens should state their name and address for the record and limit their presentation to 5 minutes. Where possible, the Board will answer factual questions immediately. A written response may be provided when information is not available. If a response would involve discussion of Board Policy or decisions which might be of interest to citizens not present at the meeting, the Board may place the item on a future meeting agenda.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Christina Yacobellis Parent	Stated that children are not a high risk for the virus and that summer schools and camp ran without the students required to wear masks. This should be a parental choice.
Caren Razov Parent	Stated that she is advocating for 100% parent choice and appealed for removing COVID-19 guidelines for reopening schools. Children are not at high risk and it should be parental choice as it affects the emotional and mental health of teens.
Matt Jehn Parent	Stated that science is incontrovertible and we need to respect the science. The community needs to protect one another and masks protect the entire community.

- Frank Laquidara
Parent
- Stated that he is concerned about children with learning difficulties such as speech language where they will be unable to mimic and will lose out on key educational experiences. Parents should be allowed to choose if their child will wear face coverings.
- Stuart Ingram
Parent
- Asked for a mandatory mask mandate and for the Board to follow CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics and Suffolk County Department of Health guidelines.
- Michelle Coggins
Parent
- Stated that we don't know the long lasting effects of mask wearing and that the virus is here to stay. She respects all measures that were taken last year and expects the same level of caution and sanitization. She requested parental choice in student mask wearing.
- Jen Zethner
(Representing parent
Jill Boylan)
- Stated that she is a pediatric nurse practitioner and is advocating for children. Stated that there is volumes of data that states that masks do not prevent the transmission of COVID. There are more mental health concerns with mask wearing and the risks outweigh the benefits.
- Casey Austin
Parent
- Stated that the Board sent a letter to Governor Cuomo on June 18th asking for students to not be required to wear masks, and asked why there is confusion on next school year. There were no outbreaks over the summer while children did not wear masks. It should be 100% parent choice to decide what is best for their child.
- Doug Hedger
Parent
- Stated that they've talked about national numbers and state numbers but would like to see the numbers from the district on who has been vaccinated and who has had COVID. He would like those numbers so he could make a decision about his child.
- Tom Fischer, M.D.
Parent
- Stated he is an ER physician and the district is not bound by mandates, these are guidelines from agencies. States this has never been a pediatric condition and there is no hard data that masks work. He hopes that this year the district will take positive steps to return to normalcy.
- Meghan Stone
Parent
- Stated that she strongly believes that all parents deserve a choice on whether or not their child will wear masks. Her daughter was wearing a mask all day at school and suffered major setbacks with speech delay. She is asking to let parents exercise their rights to choose what is best for their children.
- Barrie Feuer
Parent
- Spoke in support of universal masking. Vaccinated and unvaccinated people can spread the virus and parental choice is secondary to the right to have children learn in a safe environment. A virus does not have school boundaries and decisions should not be made without consultation with experts. If we want to have kids in school full time masks are crucial.
- Delanie Finnegan
Mollie Finnegan
Students
- Stated that they do not want to have to wear masks in school this year and they should have a choice.
- Richard Jones
Parent
- Stated that the guidelines are recommendations and that the data doesn't support mask wearing. His boys need to see faces, need to see other children and teachers. This should be a parental choice.

Frank Labate Parent	Stated that the virus is statistically insignificant in kids. 78% of adults in New York state have received the vaccine. The safety is for people over the age of 70 and the masks are for protecting the elderly and obese who chose not to get vaccinated. We should not be asking kids to sacrifice for the elderly, it should be the other way around.
Suzanne Amato Parent	Stated that Dr. Zucker stated in July that masks should be for healthcare workers, not for the public. Wearing masks should only be for sick people. Asked for data that shows wearing a mask is safe. The most logical choice is to allow the kids to breathe freely and make masks a parental choice.
Susan Viscuso Parent	Stated she has done considerable research on masks and asymptomatic transmission has never been a driver of outbreaks. Advocated for letting parent choose.
Clay Roos Parent	Stated that kids represent the lowest risk individuals and there is inconsistency in whether masks work or not and what type of mask you should be wearing. He agrees that COVID is real and encourages everyone to make a common sense decision. Asked for a common sense approach and give parents a waiver and make a decision on their own.
Nicole Richichi Parent	Asked for information to be put on the website about a mask leniency program, who qualifies and how to apply for it should a child need it. Asked for parental choice and special consideration for students who are the most vulnerable.
Moriah Heuer Parent	Stated that at the secondary level many students have the ability to be vaccinated and many students have not been vaccinated. It is important to have some barrier to students who are unvaccinated. She believes students should wear masks. They still need to have mask breaks and accommodate those who cannot tolerate a mask. Masks do not prevent disease spread but they can reduce spread and reduce viral load. Students need to be in school full time and we must do whatever we can to have students in full time.
Julie Hendricks-Atkins Parent	Stated that she loves that we have high vaccination rates in the community and loves to see that in person learning is being prioritized. Students were negatively impacted in terms of academics and socially with remote learning. Stated her family is more comfortable wearing masks. Asked how the district will insure that children are in school 180 days in terms of minimizing quarantines and preventing against districtwide closures.
Don DeSantis Parent	Stated that this is parental choice. We have to rethink how data is shared with the community that helps us to critically think through this. He doesn't see the danger that the CDC sees. There are changes in children now with anxiety and we need to apply that to the decisions that are made.
Jessy Nudell Parent	Stated that she wants children to be in school in person. This is a worldwide pandemic and masks reduces transmission. We need to make a decision not based on politics and not based on parental choice but on what is going in in the entire world. This is a very small piece of pie of the community.
Linda Ihle Grandparent	Stated that her two grandchildren have comorbidities and that everybody needs to be masked. Everyone who is eligible to receive a vaccine should be vaccinated.

She doesn't understand the fuss about wearing masks and it is the obligation of the school board to protect all children.

Suzanne Sangiorgio
Parent Stated that her son attended camp all summer and has not worn a mask, and now he will have to wear one to attend kindergarten. There is no science that children should be wearing masks. She doesn't want children masked anymore and doesn't want them silenced any more.

Joe Yacobellis
Parent Stated that he agrees with everyone else who spoke about not wanting masks. Asked what happens in a heat wave and they have to wear masks in rooms without air-conditioning.

Eleanor Noonan
Student Stated that she wants students to wear masks in school so they can be protected. Wearing masks protects you 85%. She wants her senior year to go well and does not want to go remote.

Action, Report: 5.01 Update on the Reopening of Schools and Related Guidance
Recommendation to enter into Committee-of-the-Whole to discuss the reopening of schools and related guidance

Motion by David Badanes, second by Victoria Buscareno.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Larry Licopoli, Thomas Loughran, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Carol A Taylor

At 9:03 the Board entered into Committee-of-the-While to discuss the reopening of schools and related guidance.

At 9:03 p.m. the Board took a 2-minute recess.

Recommendation to exit Committee-of-the-Whole and reconvene in public session.

Motion by David Badanes, second by Allison C Noonan.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Larry Licopoli, Thomas Loughran, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Carol A Taylor

At 10:11 p.m. the Board exited Committee-of-the Whole and reconvened in public session.

President Licopoli stated that the Board will be making a determination on the school reopening plan at the August 26th Board Meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT - Board policy requires adjournment by 10:30 pm, unless meeting is extended by vote.

Information: 7.01 Upcoming Meetings

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, August 26, 2021

7:00 p.m.

William J. Brosnan School Cafeteria

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, September 9, 2021
7:00 p.m.
William J. Brosnan School Cafeteria

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, September 23, 2021
7:00 p.m.
William J. Brosnan School Cafeteria

Action: 7.02 Adjournment
Recommendation to adjourn the meeting

Motion by David Badanes, second by Allison C Noonan.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Larry Licopoli, Thomas Loughran, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Carol A Taylor

At 10:20 p.m. the Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth M. Nystrom
District Clerk