

Back to School – August 2021 School Board Letter

-Arla Shephard Bull

It is normal to have back-to-school jitters, and this year especially so given the tumult of the past several months as the pandemic wears on.

Emotions are high. All of us – school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members – are tired. We all want to return to “normal” and we all want happy and healthy children in school. I know that our school leaders are excited to welcome students back on Sept. 1 and that our parents and students are more than ready to come back.

There are fears over mask and vaccine mandates. There are fears over potential school shutdowns and children getting sick.

I work in health care and recently returned to work after a four-month maternity leave. The morale among my co-workers now, compared to before I left, is noticeably more somber. Health care workers and educators now have to comply with a vaccine mandate, and I completely understand those fears. At the same time, COVID cases are at an all-time high, and the number of hospitalized patients we are seeing is only increasing.

North Mason School District is committed to ensuring the safety of our students and employees. I hope that everyone remembers that the current mandates are the result of executive action by our Governor. Requirements issued via executive action by the Governor hold the power of law, and school districts must follow the law.

Students will **not** be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine. There is a new law (passed in 2020) that removes the 30-day grace period that schools had to ensure that students are in compliance with all of their other immunizations. When school starts, families need to be sure that their students have had their immunizations or have the proper documentation for exemptions on file with the district. Please reach out to District Nurse Ashley Mjor for any questions at amjor@northmasonschoools.org.

I am looking forward to the start of the school year because I know our students need the community and safety net that our schools provide. Our students are resilient, and I know we will have a great start to the year!

Arla Shephard Bull

District 5