

1-19-24 Community Message

NCS Community,

I hope this message finds you well. It is hard to believe that next week will mark the mid-point of the 23-24 school year.

January often serves as the perfect time to engage in conversations with children regarding their assessment of the school year thus far, whether it terms of academics or behaviors (in school, attendance, effort, etc.) As you and your child(ren) set goals for the remainder of the year, know that our teachers and administrators are willing to partner with you to ensure your child has access to any/all supports available.

Several weeks ago, the new NES playground officially opened which of course was reason for great excitement among our students. Without question, this new facility will serve our students and community well for many years to come. I am also pleased to share that the other aspects of our capital project are progressing on time. The first NES classroom renovations are scheduled to be completed in March, and all demolition has been completed in the HS Auditorium. The collaboration between the contractors and NCS staff has and continues to be outstanding, and as a result, disruptions to student learning/activities have been few and far between.

January also marks the time of year when budget planning intensifies for the following school year. NCS (and most NYS schools) continue to navigate a budget landscape that includes declining enrollments and elimination of federal stimulus monies. Earlier this week, Governor Hochul released initial state budget runs and while these indicate an overall increase across the state, for many regional WFL schools, including Naples, reductions in foundation aid remain likely. We will continue to advocate with our state representatives for school allocations that are equitable and of course there may be changes with these allocations as we move through the winter. As always, maintaining student programming will remain our top priority as the NCS budget picture becomes clearer in the months ahead. Our initial budget hearing took place on Wednesday, and we welcome the NCS community to join us at future budget hearings which will take place at our scheduled board of education meetings on February 7th, March 6th, and April 10th.

Lastly, I wanted to share with you a letter below that speaks to the topic of Board of Education seats at NCS. As always, thank you for your support of our schools and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns.

Kevin Swartz

NCS Superintendent

1/19/24

Good afternoon,

We hope you and your family had a wonderful holiday season and that your 2024 is off to a good start.

As you may be aware, the Naples community currently elects nine members to serve on the NCS Board of Education, with terms lasting 3 years. These elections coincide with our annual budget vote in May. Across New York State, school boards are typically comprised of 5, 7, or 9 member boards with 7 being the most common number of members.

In recent years, Naples CSD has seen very few contested board of education elections. Currently, there are many NCS school board members who have served multiple terms over the span of many years. Several members have indicated that they may opt not to seek additional terms in the future after many years of dedicated service. Regionally, other school districts are seeing similar challenges with filling board seats and as such a number have initiated the process to consider reducing the number of Board of Education seats in their respective districts.

Over the past few months, NCS Board Members have engaged in conversations with community members to gauge the potential interest others may have around school board service in the future. While there have been pockets of mild interest, it seems unlikely that we would see regularly contested elections if we move forward with a nine-member school board. These could lead to vacancies on the board or the potential for “write in” candidates to assume these important positions which have a tremendous impact on school policy, budgets, and function. Further, vacancies within the board may lead to scenarios where quorum cannot be met as legally required, which could prohibit the district from conducting essential business.

As such, the district and NCS Board of Education plan to initiate a required petition which would allow our district to move forward with the process of determining if a board seat reduction would be supported by the NCS community. At this point in time, the required number of signatures (at least 25) are being obtained by the Board of Education and this would allow the district to hold a referendum vote in May to determine if this shift in board members would eventually take place.

If approved by the community, this shift would not be enacted until 2025, and know that many discussions have and will continue to take place among our Board of Education members to ensure a smooth transition to a seven-member board should this referendum pass.

Should you have questions or potential interest in school board service, do not hesitate to reach out to a current Board of Education members as they can provide perspective on what this type of service entails. Either of us can answer additional questions you may have; please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Kevin Swartz

NCS Superintendent

Jake Hall

NCS School Board President