



**Minutes of a Closed Session, December 1, 2020  
Novi Community School District  
Board of Education**

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A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Novi Community School District was held on Tuesday, December 1, 2020, beginning at 7:07 PM via Zoom.

Present: Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Hood, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, and Mrs. Roney

Absent:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Members of the audience joined with the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Mrs. Murphy and supported by Mrs. Roney that the Novi Board of Education approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Hood, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, and Mrs. Roney

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

There were 55 comments from the audience regarding the extended learning plan.

ACTION ITEMS

Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan Reconfirmation

The Novi Community School District Board of Education met on the following dates to consider the Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan:

- September 24, 2020
- October 15, 2020
- November 19, 2020
- November 23, 2020

The Novi Community School District Board of Education on October 15, 2020, and November 19, 2020, approved the following recommendation:

*Through at least January 22, 2021, the end of the first semester:*

- *In-person: A hybrid blend of in-person and virtual instruction with strict adherence to clear safety protocols. Students will attend in-person school two days a week, virtual experience on Wednesday, and be provided at-home experiences two days a week.*

- *Virtual online instruction: An online, virtual learning program for students.*
- *Continued focus on improving both our hybrid and our virtual programming.*

In addition, on November 19, the Board of Education approved this recommendation:

*If, because of quarantine, classrooms cannot be appropriately staffed individual classrooms or individual schools could go virtual until appropriate staffing levels can be maintained. Without our teachers, the human capital, schools cannot operate effectively.*

The question before the Board of Education is what to do beginning second semester, which begins January 25, 2020?

The COVID-19 statistics continue to be worrisome.

The 7-day average of daily cases and the counts per day have risen since school began on September 8, 2020:

	<b>7 day average of daily cases</b>	<b>Counts by day</b>
1-Jul	35	51
1-Aug	110	95
2-Sep	82	111
8-Sep	76	70
1-Oct	58	60
2-Nov	337	343
28-Nov	644	486

The daily cases per zip code numbers have also continued to increase since September 8.

<b>By zip code daily case per 10,000 residents</b>			
	48374	48375.0	48377.0
8-Sep	22.5	13.6	22.7
8-Oct	16.0	19.8	20.3
8-Nov	44.3	38.6	65.1
30-Nov	111.6	95.3	153.0

The Oakland County Health Division also tracks data by school district boundary. They report the data as cases in the district per 10,000 residents. Here is the data for the Novi Community

School District.

**By district, cases per 10,000**

8/6 - 8/19	4.3
8/13 - 8/20	6.7
8/13 - 8/26	6.7
8/20 - 9/2	9.1
8/27 - 9/9	8.8
9/3 - 9/16	12.2
9/10 - 9/23	15.2
9/17 - 9/30	8.8
9/24 - 10/7	4.9
10/1 - 10/14	7.3
10/8 - 10/21	16.7
10/15 - 10/28	24.3
10/22 - 11/4	28.6
10/29 - 11/11	37.4
11/5 - 11/18	51.6
11/12 - 11/25	60.2

The percent positive on tests has also increased:

	<b>Positivity Rate Oakland County</b>
8-Sep	5.65%
8-Oct	3.14%
8-Nov	13.46%
29-Nov	14.94%

The Oakland County Guidance for In-Person Instruction document lists the county at level E – the lowest rating based on cases per million residents and percent positivity.

A final data point. Our school nurse and the nurse assigned to us from Oakland County reviewed all of our absence data due to COVID-19. In our district with our safety protocols in place, 90 students and 10 staff were mandated to quarantine. If we did not have our safety protocols in place, our required quarantine would have been 1011 students and 160 staff.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued guidance on schools during the COVID pandemic. They state that “the best available evidence from countries that have reopened schools indicates that COVID-19 poses low risks to school-aged children – at least in areas with low community transmission.” However, they go on to say, “That said, the body of evidence is growing that children of all ages are susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection (3-7) and, contrary to early reports (11, 12), might play a role in transmission.”

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>)

The CDC emphasizes that schools need to take action to lower the risk of COVID-19 spread. They emphasize that everyone should take precautions to protect themselves and others. Included in that list of precautions is social distancing, which we have done in our district since September 8. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>)

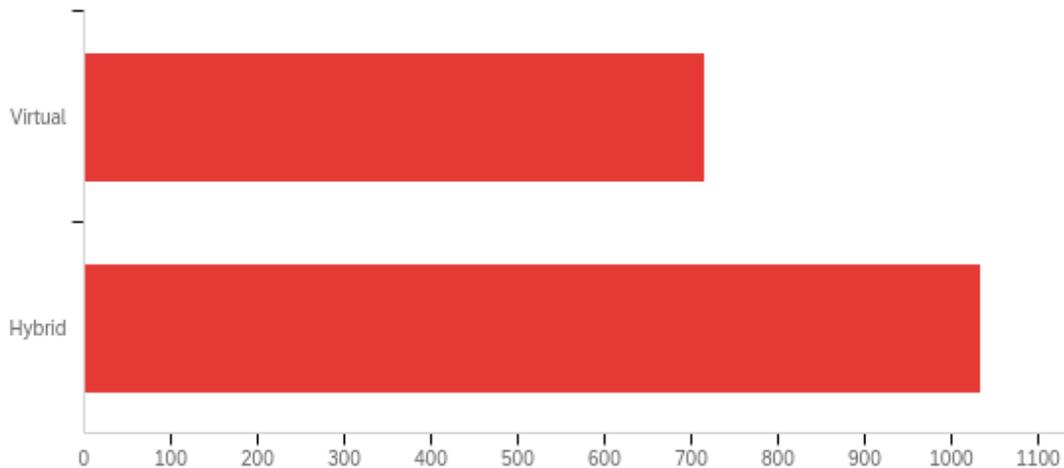
There are clearly many benefits to schools being open. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends that schools have in-person learning. However, they also recommend that social distancing be part of the equation. (<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>)

The available evidence is mixed on children and COVID-19. The Harvard Medical School states, “Early studies suggested that children do not contribute much to the spread of coronavirus. But more recent studies raise concerns that children could be capable of spreading the infection.” (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-basics#:~:text=Early%20studies%20suggested%20that%20children,of%20spreading%20the%20infection>)

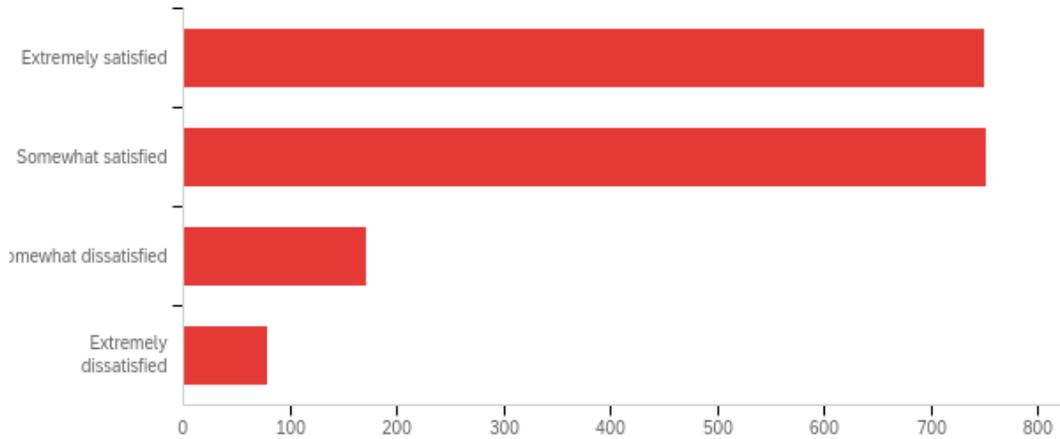
As the Superintendent, I cannot bring to the board a recommendation to return to school full time at this point with COVID-19 cases numbers at this high level, clear recommendations to maintain social distance, and caution urged by medical professionals.

A survey was conducted over the Thanksgiving holiday asking parents to give us feedback. We had over 1700 responses.

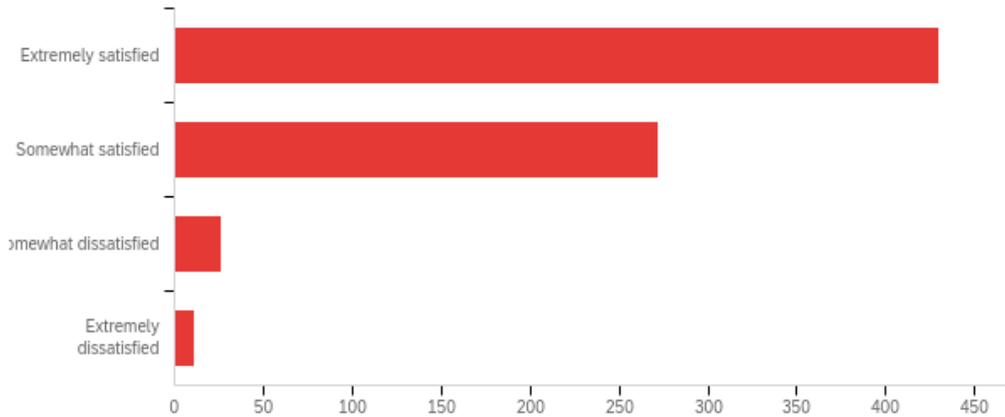
They were representative of both the hybrid and the virtual families.



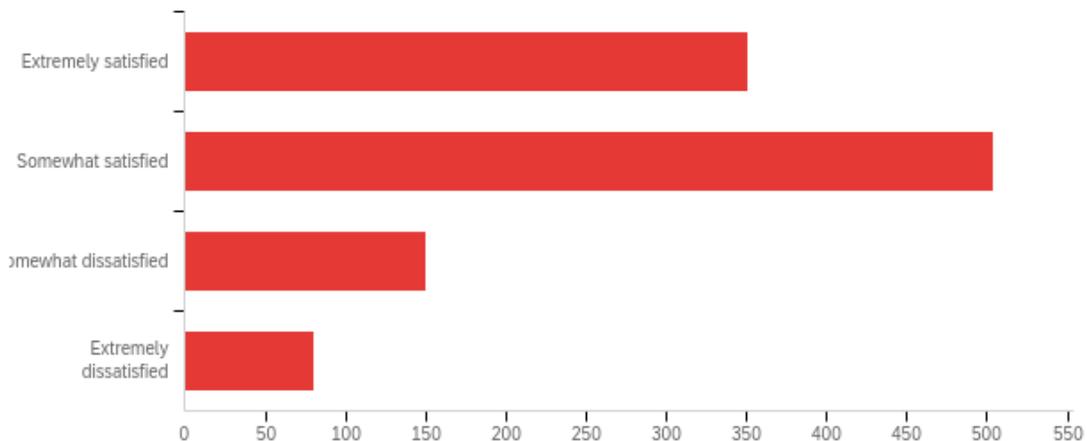
Parents were asked about their current level of satisfaction with the current approach. Approximately 42% were extremely satisfied and another 42% were somewhat satisfied. Just under 10% were somewhat dissatisfied and under 5% were extremely dissatisfied.



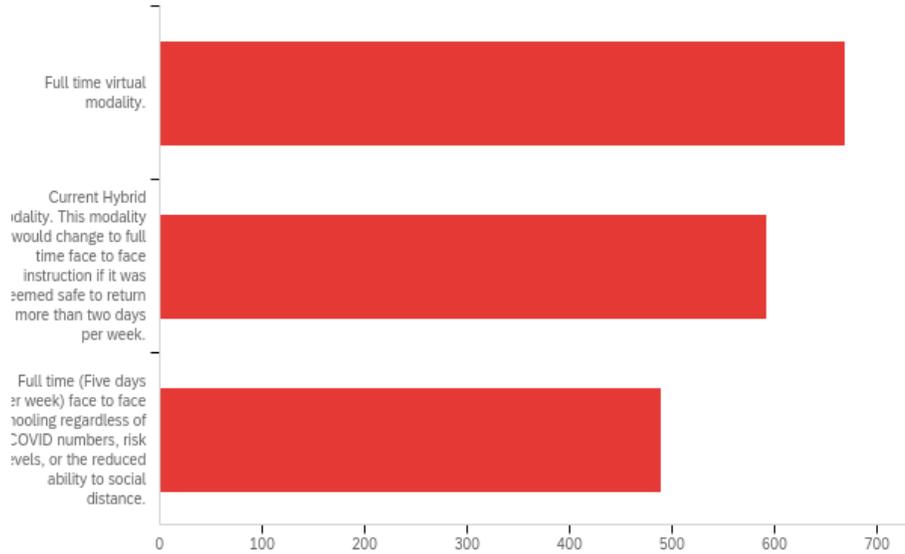
If only the virtual families' responses to the satisfaction question are examined, 95% of the parents are either extremely or somewhat satisfied (58.19% extremely and 36.81% somewhat satisfied).



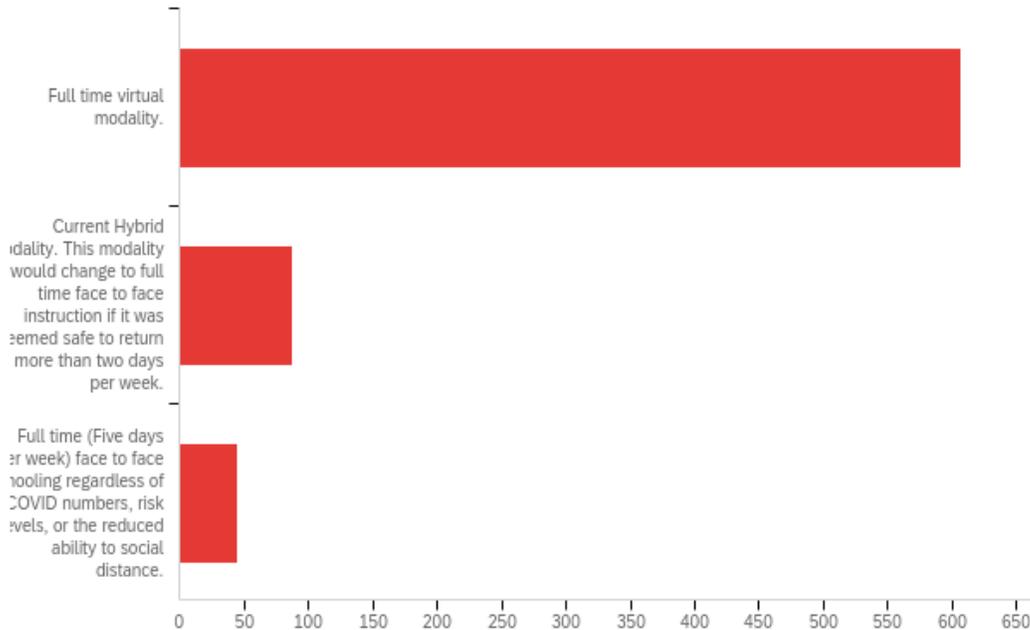
If only the hybrid families' responses to the satisfaction question are examined, 78.95% of the parents are either extremely or somewhat satisfied (32.35% extremely and 46.45% somewhat satisfied). Just over 21% are either somewhat dissatisfied (13.82%) or extremely dissatisfied (7.37%).



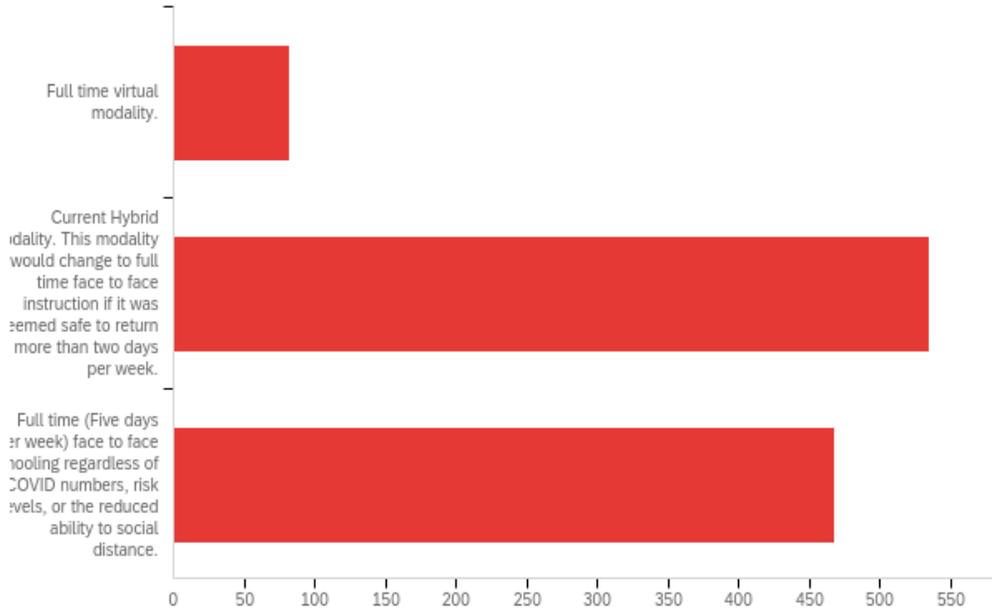
If asked to choose a new learning modality, 38% would choose full virtual, 34% would chose the current hybrid plan, and 28% would chose fulltime, five days a week.



If asked to choose again, virtual families would overwhelmingly stay virtual (82.14%). Just under 12% (11.77%) would choose hybrid.



If asked to choose again, hybrid families are split. 49.31% would choose the current hybrid format and 43.13% would choose full time in class. Just under 8% (7.56%) would choose virtual.



We asked these questions to get a snapshot of what our families are currently thinking. It is clear, that both virtual and hybrid families are extremely or somewhat satisfied with our current approach. There is a much smaller group of parents that are somewhat or extremely dissatisfied.

Clearly, we cannot make everyone happy. We must make the best decision we can based on the information that we have.

It has been argued to me that we should just let the parents decide. They know the risks of five day in-person instruction. I choose not to make that recommendation. I believe that it would put students and staff at risk.

One alternative that the Board has expressed interest in is having classroom cameras on so that students at home could Zoom in for the class. The thought is that five days of instruction could be provided by allowing hybrid students on the at home days to log in for class. I would not recommend this approach as a mandate for all classes. Some classes can, and do, have success with this approach. But my recommendation is to allow building administrators and individual teachers to make this determination.

Elementary teachers do not sit behind their desks and teach. They meet individually with students, work in small groups, move around the classroom, sit on the floor, and teach in a very active manner. Zoom cameras would either restrict their teaching or at home students would not benefit for much of the day because the teacher would be in the classroom and not at his/her desk.

Secondary classrooms are also not static. Small group work, individual discussions, class discussions all do not lend themselves to computer Zoom cameras being on.

But in some instances, teachers can find application for this approach. But this decision should

be made by those in the classroom with their building administrator.

Additionally, experience in other districts has demonstrated that in-person students may choose to stay home if the lesson is available via a camera in the classroom. This leads to lower attendance for in-person instruction. This undermines in-person instruction and changes the experience for our in-person students. Reports from other districts identify that in classrooms with cameras on for at home students, the teacher focuses on virtual instruction even though students are at school.

For these reasons, Zoom cameras on at all times does not seem to be a viable option.

Concern has been expressed about at-risk students, specifically students needing additional support. We have addressed part of this issue by hiring additional staff to provide support. At the K-4 level we have hired retired teachers to work with students. For hybrid students this support is provided during at-home days and for virtual students it is provided during their virtual day, typically during WIN time in the K-4 buildings. At the secondary level we are providing after school tutoring.

Additionally, some students with IEPs are coming in for more in-person instruction throughout the week.

Much of the discussion has focused on bringing back students fulltime. This is the goal of both the Board of Education and the administrative team. However, with rising COVID-19 numbers I cannot recommend that we do that.

The question then becomes when will it be safe?

Instead of defining that and putting that in the recommendation, I believe that the Board of Education and the administrative team, with the Superintendent taking the lead, need to find common ground on when it would be safe to bring students back fulltime.

I believe that we need to continue to look for guidance from the Oakland County Health Division and examine our own experience.

The Board of Education voted against the recommendation I presented at the November 23 meeting. Tonight I bring a similar recommendation that provides some flexibility to the Board. As we ask parents about second semester we need to be clear that there would be a possibility of hybrid students coming to school five days a week if conditions changed.

Additionally, I bring a new virtual option.

These are the two options that I believe create safe conditions and provide us an opportunity to educate our students.

These recommendations have been reviewed by the Novi Community School District administrative team. Our administrative team is supportive of these recommendations and

believe that we are providing a positive learning experience for our students in a safe and responsible manner.

Option A: Two options will be offered for second semester beginning January 25, 2021.

Virtual:

- A continuation of the virtual plan that has been in effect since September 8, 2020. Students attend school remotely five days a week following the regular school schedule. Wednesdays will continue to have a modified schedule to allow teachers 90 minutes of collaborative time.

In-person beginning as hybrid:

1. In-person instruction would continue in a hybrid format to ensure safety measures including the use of social distance.
  - a. Hybrid would utilize a variety of instructional strategies such as in-person instruction, at-home lessons, or virtual instruction.
  - b. Work would continue to look for opportunities to improve the hybrid experience.
    - i. Improvements that individual teachers discover and utilize would be shared with all teachers.
    - ii. Hybrid classes may take on a variety of forms as certain disciplines utilize formats that work in a subject area.
      1. For example, if a science class could find a way to make Zooming in during at home days' work then that could be utilized by all similar science classes.
  - c. It is anticipated that the current structure of two days in-person – either Hybrid A - Monday/Thursday or Hybrid B - Tuesday/Friday, a Wednesday virtual day with a modified schedule, and at-home assignments and activities for at-home days would continue.
  - d. But it might be possible that the structure could change if other beneficial approaches could be implemented.
2. Hybrid could move to five days in-person if certain conditions are met that improve safety for both students and staff.
3. At-risk students will continue to be provided with additional support as determined by our district team in consultation with parents.
4. Choices made for second semester will continue for the entire second semester, through June 2021, to provide continuity in the learning experience for both students and teachers.
  - a. Virtual students would stay virtual for the entire second semester.
  - b. In-person students would stay in-person for the entire second semester.
5. Any changes in plan to second semester will potentially result in changes in teachers or schedules for all students. We will work to avoid changes as much as possible but it is inevitable that changes in both teacher and schedules will occur for some students.
6. Parents will be asked again to recommit for second semester by December 11 to either virtual or in-person learning for second semester beginning January 25.

