



**Minutes of a Regular Meeting, February 3, 2022  
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 Thursday, February 3, 2022, beginning at 7:03 PM.

Present: Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

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 Mr. Cook and supported Mrs. Hood that the Novi Board of Education approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

DEERFIELD PRINCIPAL INTRODUCTION

Dr. Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, will introduce Melissa Lane, Novi Community School District's new principal at Deerfield Elementary School. Ms. Lane began her educational career as an elementary teacher in the Birmingham Public Schools, where she taught first, second, and third grades. After teaching for 11 years, Ms. Lane was assigned the position of Instructional Specialist at Pembroke Elementary School in Birmingham, where she provided direct instructional support to teachers as well as district wide professional development.

In 2017, Ms. Lane was selected to serve as principal at North Road Elementary School in the Fenton Area Public Schools. As a principal in Fenton, Ms. Lane has successfully led her school in developing strong instructional practices centered on data and research-based pedagogy.

Ms. Lane demonstrated a deep knowledge of teaching and learning, supporting students, working with parents, and supporting staff. Most importantly, she clearly articulated her deep concern for and support for students. Ms. Lane is knowledgeable of MTSS, understanding data, developing teams, and supporting all the students in her care, as the building principal.

Ms. Lane is a proven leader and will serve the Deerfield community well.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

There was one comment from the audience welcoming our new principal.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Items included in the Consent Items are those which have previously been considered by the Board in committee or at a prior meeting, or of such a routine nature, that discussion is not required. Board

members may request that any items be removed from Consent Items for further discussion, if additional information is needed or available.

**CONSENT ITEMS**

- A. Approval of Minutes
  - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of January 20, 2022
  
- B. Approval of Bills
  - a. Board Report
  - b. Check Register for December 2021
  - c. Purchase Card Report for November 2021
  
- C. Approval of Field Trip(s)
  - a. Novi Pom State Competition
  - b. Winter Guard International Championship Competition

It was moved by Mrs. Hood and supported by Mr. Mena that the Novi Community Schools Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda Item(s) as presented.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

ACTION ITEMS

Personnel Report

Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, presents for your consideration the following personnel changes:

**A. New Hires**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Krukowski, Marlene	DF	Special Ed Teacher	New Hire	MA	02-14-22
Russ, Lauren	HS	Math Teacher	New Hire	BA	02-04-22
Scott, Evelyn	HS	Math Teacher	New Hire	BA	02-04-22
Stacer, Danielle	District	Nurse	New Hire		02-04-22
Geiger, Justine	Career Prep/Adult Ed	Student Data Asst.	Position Chg.	Level B	02-04-22
Selvam, Preetha	DF	Special Ed Para	Position Chg.	Level B	02-04-22

**B. Retirements and Resignations**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Shefferly, Tara	ROAR	Social Worker	Resigned	02-04-22

**C. Leaves of Absence**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Noroyan, Amber	MS	Special Ed Teacher	LOA #1-Child Care	02-23-22 to 06-10-22
Valentine, Karley	ECEC	Secretary	LOA #1-Child Care	02-07-22 to 06-30-22

It was moved by Mr. Smith and supported by Mrs. Murphy that the Novi Community School District Board of Education adopts the personnel report recommendations as presented.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

### Superintendent Evaluation

Tonight, the Novi Community School District Board of Education formalizes the 2021 Superintendent evaluation. The Board met in closed session on January 6, 2022, at the request of Dr. Matthews, complying with the Open Meetings Act guidelines, to review his performance for 2021.

The Revised School Code requires school boards to evaluate their superintendent's job performance annually as part of a comprehensive performance evaluation system that takes into account student growth data and requires certain additional factors. The rating categories in the evaluation are as follows:

- Governance and board relations
- Community relation
- Staff relations
- Business and finance
- Instructional leadership
- Student growth
- Progress toward district-wide goals

At the evaluation meeting, the Board took no action but comes this evening to finalize the 2021 Superintendent evaluation.

It was moved by Mrs. Murphy and supported by Mr. Smith that the Novi Community School District Board of Education approve the 2021 Superintendent Evaluation, rating Dr. Steven Matthews as highly effective.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

### INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

#### MASB Board of Directors Election 2022

Every year in February the Novi Community School District Board of Education, as a member of the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB), has the right to cast a ballot for a group director in the MASB Board of Directors Election. Regions are based on geography. Novi will be casting one (1) vote in Region 8, districts with pupil membership between 5,001 and 11,000.

In our **Region 8**, there are four (4) candidates running for one (1) seat.

#### **Region 8 (three-year term)**

- Melandie Hines – Wayne Westland Community Schools
- Darlene Pomponio (Incumbant) – Southgate Community Schools
- Angie Smith – Farmington Public Schools
- Michael Swiecki – Wyandotte Public Schools

The Novi Community Schools Board of Education is asked to approve tonight for whom they would like to decide to cast the vote for.

Voting takes place via online ballot. The district receives one ballot, which has been emailed to the Superintendent's Secretary. After a decision is made the secretary will cast the ballot for the Board. Ballot deadline is 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 2, 2022.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Capital Projects Committee

Mr. Mena, Board Secretary and Capital Projects Committee Chair, reported that they had a robust meeting for about an hour and a half. He stated that they discussed ongoing projects, timelines for completion, and some governance ideas with how we move forward with the rest of the bond dollars.

### Governance and Policy Committee

Mr. Smith, Board Trustee and Governance and Policy Committee Chair, reported that the two (2) main topics that were addressed were our social media policy and our communications policy, with the public. He stated that this would include everything from District devices to personal devices. Mr. Smith said that social media is not just posting on Facebook, but Twitter accounts, and whatnot. He mentioned that the committee asked for more clarification on some different policies and are looking at what other school districts have in place.

Mr. Smith reported that the committee had a continuation discussion on a couple of things that carried over from last year. He stated that they talked about committee assignments, or the frequency that committees are meeting. Mr. Smith said there was some discussion on Ad Hoc committees, the DEI committee, and the legislative committee. He mentioned that the committee asked for more clarification and since then, the committee has gotten some input and suggestions from the public. Mr. Smith said that the committee is taking all of that into consideration.

Mr. Smith reported that the committee also talked about continuing to hammer out the definitions that would be used between a textbook used in a classroom and a book that would show up in the media center. He asked, what would be considered a textbook and what would be considered a book or an aid brought in by a teacher?

Mr. Smith stated the last thing was clarification between a gift and a grant. He said this might seem straight forward, but there were some comments about grant money that was used and did not come to the Board for approval. Mr. Smith mentioned that it was clear, the fundamental difference is that a gift you do what you want with it and a grant is usually tied to some particular use.

Mr. Smith reported that the committee will continue with these policies and will do our best to articulate a clear definition of what is what and also what would be considered a violation of that in absence of clarification. He stated that in this day and age it seems like some of our challenges are in the gray area or in what would be a subjective decision on that violation. Mr. Smith said that we are trying, as a committee, to eliminate that ambiguity between these different topics yet it is important to give our teachers as much birth as they need as professional in the classroom.

Mr. Smith mentioned that since he, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Mena are on the Capital Projects committee and the Governance and Policy committee they are going to try to coordinate those two (2)

committee meetings for the same day. He reported that with an increased cadence, we will be able to get through more things quickly with less intrusions on their personal lives.

#### COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were eight (8) comments from the audience this evening in support of the District's social emotional learning, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, social media, District policies on books, Social Justice, the District's curriculum, and great experiences in Novi schools.

#### SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Steve Matthews, Superintendent of Schools, responded to statements from the last Board meeting regarding the social emotional learning guide. He reported that this guide was developed by teachers and administrators, in our District, as a support for teachers and administrators as they support students in our schools.

Dr. Matthews stated that all of us have become aware since the pandemic and even before the pandemic that our students struggle at times; not all of them and not all at once. He said that our students have been thrust into an unprecedented situation and we, as professional educators, had an obligation to try and provide resources that would support our students as they tried to navigate through the pandemic.

Dr. Matthews reported that it was suggested this social emotional learning guide was somehow hidden and never discussed publicly. He stated that was far from the truth. Dr. Matthews said that the guide was developed by our staff as a way to bring a variety of resources together to provide ideas for teachers, staff, and administrators to use to support students. He mentioned that the SEL guide used national standards that were developed by a group call CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning.

Dr. Matthews reported that the CASEL framework is built around five (5) standards for students and adults: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. He stated the guide provides a variety of ideas. Dr. Matthews said that some create controversy, some have wide agreement, but all of it makes him and others in the District think and gives us the tools to use to support out students.

Dr. Matthews asked, is this a mandatory tool or guide? He stated, no it is not. Dr. Matthews reported that it is a resource that provides ideas. He mentioned that it was created at a time when teachers and administrators were asking for resources; it was created at a time when some parents were telling us that some students were struggling. Dr. Matthews said it was created to provide our staff some support as we look to find ways to help our students.

Dr. Matthews reported that the inference was that we have kept this hidden and that we did so because we did not want parents to know what we were talking about with the students, in our schools, is far from the truth. He stated that we presented it to the Board in a public meeting on March 4, 2021. Dr. Matthews said that it was not posted on our website because it is a teacher resource.

Dr. Matthews mentioned that it was also suggested that we should examine our Academic Advisory times, that we provide at school. He reported that we provide these times at each of our levels. Dr. Matthews stated that they have academic and social emotional component to them.

Dr. Matthews said that elementary schools have WIN, What I Need, time and multi-grade cabin, village, or community time. Dr. Matthews mentioned that when time is daily, the multi-age community time is often weekly or monthly. He reported that at the middle school, we have 8-20, which has an academic time and a community building time.

Dr. Matthews stated the high school has academic advisory, which has an academic and community building time as well. He said that the community building aspect has been questioned for its value. Dr. Matthews mentioned that we created this time, so that we can build community within our schools, strong communities enhance academic performance. He reported that strong communities that support all students, create schools that encourage and support all students as they strive and grow and reach their potential.

Dr. Matthews stated that schools cannot be focused exclusively on academics. He said this week, our girls' basketball team held its annual recognition of each player's favorite teacher. Dr. Matthews mentioned that those teachers are their favorites not only because they are good teachers, but because they build relationships with students. He reported that they are listening to students and providing guidance. Dr. Matthews stated that they mentor, they push, and they encourage this in community building time. Dr. Matthews reported that our community building time, in our schools, is done to provide us time to focus on community building and in doing so we make our academic program that much stronger.

Dr. Matthews stated that the second part of his report is on our Board committee work. He said that we have created a strong committee structure, but it takes time and it will be messy. Dr. Matthews mentioned that some of the topics that will be discussed potentially will be filled with emotion, but he is confident that we can find our way through these discussions as we listen to each other, try to understand other people's points of view, and believe that all of us want what is best for the students in our District.

Dr. Matthews reported that we craft policies and make decisions to build a school district that supports our students. He stated that everyone will make mistakes from time to time and most errors are handled through our HR process. Dr. Matthews said the community will not know what discussions were held with the employee who makes a mistake because that is the way the system is supposed to work. He mentioned that at times emotions will run hot, but we should find ways to listen and understand that we will read the solutions and not just focus on the punishment.

Dr. Matthews reported that all of us up front are wearing Oxford strong shirts. He stated that this is part of a larger effort to support our friends, students, and the community of Oxford. Dr. Matthews said all Novi students and staff are encouraged to wear navy and gold tomorrow, Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup> or if you have an Oxford strong shirt. He mentioned that anyone wearing an Oxford strong shirt can get into the basketball games, at Novi High School, for free.

Dr. Matthews thanked the Board for their evaluation of him and that he is pleased that he can serve this community.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Greg McIntyre, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations, reported that Cindy Valentine, our Director of Transportation, has met the requirements to renew her MSBO Director of Transportation Certification. He stated that it is good through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026 and he wanted to commend her and recognize her.

Dr. Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, reported that Monday will be the fourth Mentee Monday session of the year. He stated that it will be a virtual session and Jeff Dinkelmann, Director of Students Growth and Accountability, will join him. Dr. Kinzer said that they will be reviewing the State of Michigan Professional Development requirements for new teachers; discussing options in our District for meeting those requirements; and how we document.

Dr. RJ Webber, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, reported that a fantastic article came out in the Detroit Free Press about the pandemic hitting some of our students hard and why some teachers are hopeful for English Language Learners. He stated that one third of our students in Novi are English Language Learners or former English Language Learners. Dr. Webber said that it was great to see a top fold or at least a digital story that included some of our teachers and kids, being recognized for the incredible work that they do. He mentioned that he is proud of our students and staff for weathering what has been an exceptionally difficult January for many people due to the rise in Omicron and the amount of people who have been out

Dr. Webber reported that fifth and sixth grade camp is happening right now, which is fantastic. He stated that getting back to a little something that Dr. Matthews had said earlier he believes that he has tweeted about 20,000 times in his eleven years in this community and now Twitter keeps track, so he included this on a tweet because it says something about how, when we share who we are with the world and the community, we are either vulnerable or proud of the work that we do or where we work.

Dr. Webber said he received a LinkedIn communication about a month ago from a former student of his at Mayflower Junior School of Kennedy. He mentioned that the student said Dr. Webber had taught him English sometime in 1991. Dr. Webber reported that the student said Dr. Webber would probably not remember him after 30 years, but he remembered Dr. Webber. He stated that the student thanked him for being an inspiration and that he could not remember anything Dr. Webber taught him, but he clearly remembered the feeling of inspiration and excitement he brought to the class.

Dr. Webber said that what that has led to is come conversations like the one at the podium tonight about the Trevor Noah book and the camera. He mentioned that these kids did not have any pictures taken of them, so Dr. Webber sent him a picture of his class, as picture that hangs in his office. Dr. Webber reported that era for them was an era of absolute isolation and the point is the relationships that our students build with our staff, the teachers or principals, is really what carries on. He stated there cannot be meaningful learning if that relationship is not there, so we need to think about that as we come to meetings and talk about each other. Dr. Webber said that many people have platforms, but very few have true accountability.

Dr. Webber stated that he would like to celebrate Black History Month. He read a couple of things from two (2) of his favorite poets and authors. Dr. Webber reported that the first is Zora Neale Hurston, "There are years that ask questions and years that answer." He said that we are all still waiting for an answer because the past two (2) years have been hard on all of us. Dr. Webber read another Zora Neale Hurston quote, "I love myself when I am laughing. . . and then again when I am looking mean and impressive." He also read Langston Hughes poem, I, Too; "I, too, sing America. I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen when company comes, but I laugh, and eat well, and grow strong. Tomorrow, I'll be at the table when company comes. Nobody'll dare say to me, "eat in the kitchen," then. Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed—I,too, am America.

## BOARD COMMUNICATION

Mr. Smith, Board Trustee, reported that tomorrow will be two (2) weeks since he found his father deceased on the floor. He stated that he has had time to go through some stuff and it has not brought back the best memories. Mr. Smith said he thinks back to his childhood and how his father was raised, both parents were raised, in a time where Polish jokes were all the rage. He mentioned that with a name like Smith you would think that I am not Polish, but I am. Mr. Smith reported, how things change and nowadays you cannot tell Polish jokes, but how funny they were.

Mr. Smith stated that he believes it was in 1974 was the first time he was called the n-word because his parents had divorces in 1968 and his mother moved in with an African American man in Grand Rapids. He said that it was not too cool, in the 60s, in Grand Rapids, but he raised me until I was in high school, then we lost touch. Mr. Smith mentioned that he finally got back in touch with him about seven (7) years ago and introduced him to his grandchildren. He reported that his son would be the first to tell you that Derek hugged him more than g-pops ever did and that he had never heard g-pops tell him that he loved him, but Derek did every time they saw each other.

Mr. Smith stated that it has been over 46 years since he had to deal with that and obviously he identifies as a successful white male. He said that he recalls Derek picking him up from that all white Catholic school, in his yellow cab and asking him to sit in the front. Mr. Smith mentioned that we would drop his books on the floor and bend over in an effort to hide because of the ridicule he would get the next day.

Mr. Smith reported that he has a fascination with Anthony Bourdine and not just because people say he looks like him, but because he was a man struggling with mental health and recovery. He stated that Anthony lost his battle and ended up taking his own life. Mr. Smith said that Anthony was in an episode in LAOS and described the horrors of the aftermath of war on the residents. He mentioned that he did not want to turn a blind eye to some of the things that are real today. Mr. Smith encouraged everyone to continue to work to address some of the shortcomings.

Mr. Smith made an appeal to everyone listening that the Novi Youth Assistance Program could use some volunteers. He reported that NYA is a resource for our community that is under appreciated. Mr. Smith stated that their primary focus is prevention from not just bullying, but kids hurting themselves, truancy issues, kids struggling with peer-to-peer pressure, and things that we take for granted like snow pants, mittens, and gloves. He said that we have kids in our community, in our schools, that do have to worry about these things and it is groups like Novi Youth Assistance that provide and do meaningful work. Mr. Smith mentioned anything you can do to support them would be appreciated.

Mrs. Hood, Board Treasurer, reported that once a month we get a copy of MASB's booklet called the Leaderboard. She stated that this month, Dr. Matthews has an essay about his journey from being a parent, to being an administrator in another district, to being (at the same time) an elected Board member in his home district. Mrs. Hood said that he talks a little bit about those different roles and staying in your lanes as you go through those roles. She mentioned that the pinnacle of his career is he is now able to call a snow day. Mrs. Hood stated that it was a very nice essay and she appreciates the reminder, as a Board member, of what lane we are in and who stays in what lanes.

Mrs. Hood reported, with our Oxford Strong shirts on this evening, she had the opportunity to talk to Kelly Breen, our State Representative. She stated that there is a new task force in the Michigan House



of Representative called School Safety Task Force and she is one of eight (8) members. Mrs. Hood said that it just started on January 10<sup>th</sup> and they have been doing a lot of significant work so far. She mentioned that they are trying to figure out how they best serve our students and our school staff.

Mrs. Hood reported that they have talked to the state police and Kelly is talking to the Oxford parents tonight. She stated that they have engaged with Parkland parents and divided their work group into six (6) areas from physical safety to mental health issues, staffing and personnel. Mrs. Hood said that they are crafting a survey for ISDs and district that we will be responding to. She mentioned that they are also studying the effectiveness of social and emotional learning and where it can be expanded to help a greater number of children. Mrs. Hood encouraged us to Google Michigan House School Safety Task Force; they want feedback from both the public and those involved in schools.

Mr. Cook, Board Vice-President, reported that he thought Dr. Matthews real life goal was to make the best chocolate chip cookie ever. He stated that his dog was very upset that he would not call a snow day because the kids would not be around.

Mrs. Murphy, Board Trustee, thanked Dr. Ruskin on behalf of the Board for their t-shirts. She stated that Dr. Ruskin volunteered to supply them and she is so appreciative.

Dr. Danielle Ruskin, Board President, reported that with the Oxford shirts, it is really an MHSAA Program. She stated that Brian Gordon, our former Athletic Director, and Don Watchowski, our current Athletic Director, and his office have wrapped their arms around the fundraiser and she was sure that there have been thousands and thousands of shirts sold within the Oakland County Community. Dr. Ruskin said that it has been put out there to all of the schools in the State of Michigan for the MHSAA event, so she is looking forward to hearing how that went for them and the money that has been raised for that community to support them. She mentioned that not only tomorrow will you have the opportunity to get in free, but that there are three (3) additional athletic events that people can get in for free if they wear their Oxford Strong shirts.

Dr. Ruskin reported that Monday evening she was out in the backyard with a flashlight, in the very dark, searching for her son's air pods and underneath the trampoline, in a white bag (opened), but not destroyed, by her puppy, were all of these shirts. She stated that she did not know they had been delivered and yet there were all of your shirts. Dr. Ruskin said that we are lucky to actually be wearing them.

#### CLOSED SESSION

A public body may meet in a closed session only for one or more purposes as specified in the Open Meetings Act. Tonight, Pursuant to Section 8(k) of the Open Meetings Act, the Board will move into a closed session to discuss issues related to security. (MCL 15.268(k)).

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported by Mr. Mena that the Novi Board of Education Regular Board move into a Closed Session.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

The Board moved into a Closed Session at 8:34 PM. The Board came out of a Closed Session at 9:36 PM. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported by Mrs. Murphy that the Novi Board of Education Regular Board meeting be adjourned.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Roney (remotely), and Mrs. Hood (by Roll Call)

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for February 17, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., at the Educational Services Building.

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Willy Mena, Secretary

An online recording of this meeting is available on YouTube and on the District Website: [novi.k12.mi.us](https://novi.k12.mi.us)