



**Minutes of a Regular Meeting, February 17, 2022
Novi Community School District
Board of Education**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Novi Community School District was held on Thursday, February 17, 2022, beginning at 7:25 PM.

Present: Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith
(by Roll Call)

Absent: Mrs. Roney, Mrs. Murphy, and Mrs. Hood

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. Smith and supported Mr. Mena that the Novi Board of Education approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC HEARING – ESSER III

Mr. Greg McIntyre, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations, reported that as part of the ESSER III application process, districts are required to survey their stakeholders and hold a public hearing for community input. He stated that the acronym ESSER stands for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief and that this money is part of the American Rescue Plan.

Mr. McIntyre said that these monies can be used for reasonable and necessary operating expenses that promote equity and support returning students to the classroom in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. He mentioned that the initial application was submitted on December 15, but it is in a holding pattern until we get input from stakeholders.

Mr. McIntyre reported on December 15, 2021, the District sent out a survey to all of its' stakeholders, staff, students, parents, and community members. He stated the survey closed on February 14, 2021. Mr. McIntyre said that there was a cross-section of participants in the survey including 150 students, 795 parents/guardians, 16 community members, 2 administrators, 116 teachers, 48 support staff, and three (3) district level administrators, and some civil rights organizations. He presented the survey.

Mr. McIntyre reported that he was going to focus on the stakeholders' top priorities which are: 23.47 percent were concerned about addressing learning loss; 22.17 percent were concerned about addressing mental health; 23.23 percent were concerned about addressing emergency procedures; 18.56 percent were concerned about addressing instructional technology; and 15.55 percent were concerned about operations and maintenance. He stated that these were the highest ranked priorities by the stakeholders.

Mr. McIntyre said that the District has already captured the \$763,000 fund and that was part of the

2021-2022 Budget Amendment being presented tonight for Board consideration. He stated that the Public Forum being held tonight is required to gain more community input.

Dr. Ruskin, Board President, asked if anyone in attendance would like to comment, to please step up to the podium and comment as part of the District public record. Seeing none, Dr. Ruskin read the Board of Education statement.

BOARD OF EDUCATION STATEMENT

Dr. Danielle Ruskin, President of the Novi Board of Education, read the following statement:

The Oakland County Health Division has rescinded the mask mandate effective February 28. In the communication regarding the rescinded order, the Oakland County Health Department stated that the two-week notice provided local districts time to prepare and make the necessary district level decision.

The MDHHS has provided guidelines that masks are no longer required indoors and this includes in schools. After some discussion and collaboration, the Board of Education and the administration will not require masks in our District effective immediately.

In following the guidance, we will also support those who want to continue wearing masks. In essence, our District is now a mask optional District.

We understand that masks have created some controversy this year and we want everyone to respect the decision that each person makes.

Whether a person wears a mask or does not wear a mask is a personal decision. We respect the decision each one makes and continue to be a District where we support each other and the choices we all make.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

There were four (4) comments from the audience regarding the rescinding of the mask mandate.

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 February 3, 2022
 - b. Closed Session Minutes of February 3, 2022

- B. Approval of Field Trip(s)
 - a. Novi Middle School Band, Choir, and Orchestra Trip to Sandusky, OH

- C. Approval of Donations

- a. District Support Groups Donations
- b. Anonymous Donation

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported by Mr. Smith that the Novi Community Schools Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda Items A and B as presented and vote on the donations separately.

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Donations

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported by Mr. Smith that the Novi Community Schools Board of Education approve the donations both district-wide and anonymous in the amount of \$147,590.56 and 1,200 respectively, with thanks and gratitude.

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

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>
Julian, Kasey	OH	Music Teacher	New Hire	BA	02-18-22
Ector, Deonna	Adult Ed	ESL Teacher	New Hire	Hourly	02-21-22
DiMeglio, Darlene	TRAN	Perm. Sub Driver	Rehire	Hourly	02-18-22
Smith, Madison	PV	Special Ed Para	New Hire	Level B	02-18-22

B. Retirements and Resignations

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Kniaz, Sharon	MS	History Teacher	Retired	06-10-22
Evasic, Chelsea	ECEC	Community Ed Asst.	Resigned	02-25-22
Selvam, Preetha	DF	Special Ed Para	Position Chg.	02-04-22

C. Leaves of Absence

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Graeser, Julia	NM	5 th Grade Teacher	LOA #1-Child Care	02-14-22 to 06-10-22

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

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

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.

It was moved by Mr. Mena and supported by Mr. Cook that the Novi Community Schools Board of Education's MASB Board of Directors Election ballot for **Region 8** be cast for Darlene Pomponio, candidate for a 3-year term and MASB Board of Directors Election ballot

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Politics Club Field Trip

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 Mr. Smith and supported by Mr. Cook that the Novi Community School District

Board of Education approve the YMCA Michigan Youth in Government Trip to Lansing, Michigan, March 10-13, 2022.

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

2021-2022 Budget Amendment

On June 10, 2021, the Board of Education adopted the District's budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. An amendment to the budget reflecting all the changes known at this time has been prepared. It was presented to the Finance Committee on February 10, 2022 for review and is presented to the Board of Education tonight.

The 2021-2022 Budget Amendment is presented for information and discussion tonight and will come back to the Board for approval at the March 3, 2022, Board meeting.

Physical Education Waiver

The curriculum committee met several times to discuss offering Physical Education (PE) credit to students who meet the state graduation requirement for Physical education in the following ways:

- Complete a course that meets the PE requirement
- Complete a summer school course that meets the PE requirement
- Compete both years of IB Sports, Exercise & Health Science HL1/HL2
- Earn Credit through the PE Test Out scoring 80% or above
- Complete the PE waiver process listed below

PE Waiver Process

1. Students may qualify for the PE waiver in the following ways:
 - 2 seasons of a high school sport (Freshman, JV, Varsity, or Unified Sports)
 - 2 seasons of marching band
 - 2 credits of dance at Novi High School (Beginning Dance, Dance II, Dance III, or Dance IV)
2. The PE Waiver must be signed by the athletic director, marching band director, or dance program director after completion of the 2nd season/credit.
3. Students must submit the completed and signed PE waiver application form to the student services office prior to the end of their Junior year.
4. Any student who has not met the PE requirement through one of the means above will be scheduled into a PE course during their senior year.

*Students who complete the PE waiver process will have this noted on their transcript. There is no additional credit awarded for the waiver and students who qualify for the PE waiver must still meet the minimum 22 credit requirement for graduation for Novi High School.

This is presented for information and discussion tonight and will come back to the Board for approval at the March 3, 2022, Board meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were four (4) 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.

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. RJ Webber, Acting Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, reported that he met this week with the K-6 administrators and some central office folks to review the iReady data set from the winter of 2020 into the winter of 2022. He stated that our kids and our parents are amazing. Dr. Webber said that when you look at the data set, you can see absolutely no difference between the times before 2020, before the pandemic hit, and the winter of 2022. He mentioned that as a matter of fact, we improved in some of the metrics.

Dr. Webber thanked the parents in the room. He reported that for the students out there, this has not been easy, and that is an understatement for many. Dr. Webber thanked everyone for putting in the effort and believing that education really is that knowledge is power and knowledge is the light and to chase that.

Dr. Webber referred to a comment made during the ESSER presentation that he thought was really interesting. He stated that it was in regards to the three (3) areas that we would serve. Dr. Webber said the first two (2) were our Novi Adult Transition Center, where we serve students in this community up to the age of 26 and also the Career Prep Program, both housed at the ROAR Center. He mentioned that the reason those two (2) programs stuck out, and he wanted to make sure the community deeply understands this, is that those are the programs that many districts do not have or support to the level that we do.

Dr. Webber reported that he is exceptionally proud that our community school district has not turned their backs on those who need us the most, so thank you to past boards, the current board, and the community for believing in those things. He stated that if you have not had the chance to check out the ROAR Center, the NATC, or Career Prep, please do so because amazing things are going on there.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Greg McIntyre, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations, updated the Board on the Food Service RFP. He stated that it did go to the Michigan Department of Education and the District received a partial approval. Mr. McIntyre said that they dictate to us if the RFP meets readiness before it goes out. He mentioned that once we get a full approval, it will come before the Board for information and discussion and then again for approval.

Dr. Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, reported that the HR department, building principals, and directors are actively moving into the hiring season for the 2022-23 school year. He stated that we will begin that work with virtual career fairs that will be put on by Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan, and Western Michigan.

Dr. Kinzer said that we will have a team of administrators attending all of those virtual career fairs in the next six (6) weeks. He mentioned that it is our hope that we will be able to do some early hiring in some positions. Dr. Kinzer reported that they are aware that the hiring work will continue throughout the summer and likely into the next school year. He stated that they will do their best to get a jump start on this.

Dr. Kinzer stated that they have been working collaboratively with the Novi Education Association on the 2022-23 calendar. He said they are making great progress on that.

BOARD COMMUNICATION

Mr. Smith, Board Trustee, complimented Ms. Patel and Ms. Hoppenstedt. He stated that he had an opportunity this week to participate in an IEP re-evaluation to consider whether continuing along that path or perhaps segwaying into a 504 plan. Mr. Smith reported that he continues to be amazed at the level of professionalism and thoughtfulness and the care and love that team has. He said he believed there were six (6) people on the Zoom call and their preparedness and attention to detail was noticed and appreciated.

Mr. Smith mentioned that it is really cool that we have that many people in place whose intent and mission is to help our students get the support that they need to succeed and thrive, not just in their current year, but as they leave the school district and go out into the world. He reported that he was sure there are others in similar roles in different buildings. Mr. Smith expressed his gratitude to the team.

Mr. Smith complimented Dr. Ruskin for her professionalism and courage in reading the statement tonight. He stated that he appreciated those in the audience that passed on their comments. Mr. Smith mentioned that there were comments from people to the Board through emails who could not be here tonight. He said that he appreciates those in the audience, their tenacity and braving the elements.

Mr. Smith reminded everyone that he is an elected official and his duty is to represent those that elected him, to be their voice on this Board. He reported that he is one (1) of seven (7) elected to be here and represent and be that voice for those who put him in the chair, it is his duty. Mr. Smith stated that he was told he should be worried about his career. He said this is not his career, this is a volunteer position that he chose to run for.

Mr. Smith mentioned that he is humbled by the 6,500 people in Novi who thought he would be a good representative for them. He said that is why he sits here. Mr. Smith encouraged anybody who is not happy with the voice or the Board, then consider running for office. He stated that he does not want to put words in the mouths of his counterparts, but he is not aware of anyone at this table who is not in support of the statement that was read tonight.

Mr. Cook, Board Vice-President, read a heartfelt letter from a student that stated:

Recently, the Oakland County Health Department has been pressured into removing the mask mandate for Oakland County schools by parents and some students, after February 28. The District will be allowed to decide on mask mandates themselves.

For any district that chooses not to enforce this mandate, this will almost definitely cause a rise in COVID cases in their schools and will lead to many temporary closures. I am sure there are many reasons the parents do not want mask mandates in schools, but science has proven that masks do indeed help prevent the spread of COVID 19. Even if they are slightly uncomfortable, the positive outweighs the negative.

I am a high school student in Oakland County and am worried about the effect that removing masks will have. While masks may be uncomfortable for a while, you quickly get used to them. For those parents reading this who assume their child hates wearing masks, ask them about it. Yes, some may say they don't like wearing masks. Some will

say that they don't mind it and that masks help. After all, the kids are most affected by this decision, so they should have an input as well. If the mask mandate is removed, then there will be a rise in cases followed by possible school closures. Even for students who don't come down with COVID, co-learning would become more difficult.

Mr. Cook reported that this was written by his son shortly after he came down with COVID. He stated that he had to explain to his son that the decision the Board made, even going back to two (2) years ago when nobody would make a decision on when it was safe to go back to school, this Board pushed hard for metrics and to use metrics and measurements to get kids back in the classrooms. Mr. Cook said, masked or unmasked, whatever, we wanted kids in the classroom this year. He mentioned he explained to his son the Health Department of Oakland County took a stand, which is something that they had not in the past and we are listening to the health professionals.

Mr. Cook reported that in his household they agree to disagree and his son believes that he needs to wear a mask, so he will wear a mask and Mr. Cook is leaving it up to him because it is his choice. He stated that the health officials are saying you don't have to mandate masks anymore, but people can wear masks if they so choose. Mr. Cook said that is why he supports what the District has done and what the Board is doing.

Mr. Cook mentioned that agreeing to disagree is something we have not had in this community in a while. He reported that we have two (2) divisive sides and if you are not with them, you are against them. Mr. Cook stated that on this Board we have seven (7) people and we are each only one (1) seventh of what happens here. He said we all have different ideas; we all have different specialties; we all look at things differently and sometimes we agree to disagree because it is best for the community as a whole.

Mr. Cook said that this was actually a survey his son started and he was trying to get a hundred people to sign it, but he got 45. He mentioned that some of those are teachers and a lot of them are students. Mr. Cook asked, is there a student voice? He reported we are listening to the students, yes we are, but we are also listening to professionals and we are listening to parents. Mr. Cook stated that we had over a hundred communications and at times he could not keep up with them and they were on one side or the other. He asked the community, as we move forward, let's agree to disagree. Mr. Cook said you have a choice; you can wear your mask or you do not have to. He stated, do what is best for you.

Mr. Mena, Board Secretary, reported that he wanted to clarify that back when Oakland County made their mandates, he was extremely disappointed because, as mentioned at the time, everybody talks about local control and we were about to vote on deciding what we thought was best for our District and that decision was taken out of our hands. He stated that Novi does not have a mask mandate, that we were working under Oakland County's mandate, so just to clarify, this is a statement basically saying that we are going to follow the recommendation.

Mr. Mena said that at this point, in Oakland County, we do not have a mask mandate, so there is nothing for us to vote on, nothing for us to do or undo because we never got to make a decision for this District.

Mr. Mena mentioned that Mr. Cook has been helping him out quite a bit over the years, in fact he has been a great volunteer for athletics including assisting with the video scoreboard during the football season. He reported that Mr. Cook has been helping out with stats, track and field, play-by-plays for

basketball. Mr. Mena stated the guy is really good and has talent. He said that he does enjoy working with him. Mr. Mena mentioned that if ever any of his fellow trustees would like to come out and help. He reported that there are so many opportunities to volunteer for different things here in this District, so if any community member is listening and you have some spare time, we are looking for volunteers. Mr. Mena stated that we have to make sure we get HR clearance first.

Dr. Danielle Ruskin, Board President, reported that with regards to the statement and out of pure transparency, we have three (3) missing Board members, so she did not want anyone to assume that these four (4) people just came up with this idea or that it was their own opinion and was put on this paper. She stated that as President of the Board, she did not work unilaterally that she reached out to Board members who could not be here tonight to make sure that their voice was heard and that the statement being read on the entire Board's behalf represented something that they felt comfortable with.

Dr. Ruskin said there were a few important things in the statement. She mentioned that we know that masks have created some controversy this year, but she really wants people to focus on the choice. Dr. Ruskin reported that we are a small knit community and we have different thoughts on this and that is okay. She stated that the most important thing in here is being respectful.

Dr. Ruskin said this is extremely important and how it will be managed in the schools; how will this be addressed in the classrooms. She mentioned that she was certain that our administrative team will work directly with our building principles and make sure that we can all work through this as a school district. Dr. Ruskin reported that our schools will help them learn that we each have an opportunity for critical thinking and to look at the risks and the benefits and what choice we have to make based on the information that is being presented to us at the moment.

Dr. Ruskin offered some clarity on the conversation that were had both in closed sessions and Dr. Matthews, although he does not sit here in this chair, was an active participant with this cabinet and with all of us in the conversations that have been had over the last eight (8) weeks.

Dr. Ruskin reminded the Board that they received their building assignments recently for this semester and she encouraged them to get into the buildings and call the principal to see when they can come for a visit to see what our wonderful students are going.

Dr. Ruskin stated that tonight was a moving Board meeting and there were a lot of moving parts. She said there were a lot of things that have been going on in our community were brought up by public comment and that is the purpose for it, so that you can address the Board and can have your voice heard, whether you are a student voice; whether you are a parent voice; whether you are just a community member; whether you are like the gentleman who was here and said he was a newbie, but has been in the District longer than some of us have been alive.

Dr. Ruskin expressed her appreciation in hearing from you, whether you think we agree with you or disagree with you is absolutely irrelevant, your voice matters and this Board wants to hear from you.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Ayes: 4 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Mena, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Smith

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for March 3, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., at the Educational Services Building.

Willy Mena, Secretary

An online recording of this meeting is available on YouTube and on the District Website: novi.k12.mi.us