



Good Afternoon Neshaminy,

The Neshaminy Re-opening Health & Safety Plan recommendation from July has Neshaminy potentially moving from the Blue/Red Hybrid Plan to the All Students in School Plan in November. The Decision Point was to be the October 27 School Board Meeting for a November 2 start.

Though the staff, students, parents and community have helped Neshaminy meet each step of our path back to school for all students every day, I am not recommending we take the next step on November 2.

The decision was not easy, involved the input of many stakeholders and has been complicated by a variety of uncertainties.

For those who do not care for long emails, I'll give you the Executive Summary first. Those who like the details and thought process, I'll continue after the summary.

Executive Summary of the Re-Opening of Schools Recommendation 4.0

1. Table the School Board Decision to Move to Plan A, All-In, scheduled for the October 27 School Board Meeting.
2. Remain in the Blue/Red Hybrid Model through the Thanksgiving Break.
3. Instead of transitioning the entire District to Plan A, All-In, at the same time, prioritize the move by level/grade based on instructional needs, risk factors and facilities issues unique to each level/school.
4. Tentatively schedule Grades K-4 to move to Plan A, All-In beginning on Monday, November 30. Returning to school Monday – Thursday every week with Zoom Classes from home on Friday Mornings.
 - a. Continue the flexible Plan D, Opt-out options for all families.
 - b. Distance between students in the Classroom will vary by school and by individual grade levels and in most cases, less than 6 feet; maybe as little as 3 feet.
 - c. At the Elementary Level, beginning November 6, reduce Friday's Zoom Schedule to a half-day in the morning focusing on Math and Reading/Writing only. Thereby permitting teachers the time to work on the transition; planning both instructionally and physically in their classrooms for the potential November 30 move. (Revised Friday Schedule coming next week)
5. Middle and High School students will remain in the Blue/Red Hybrid Model through January 2021.
6. The School Board will vote on this recommendation on Tuesday, November 10.
7. The School Board will meet again on November 24 having the opportunity to halt/change the transition plan if circumstances warrant.
8. Early January, the Neshaminy Administration will make a recommendation for the potential transition of the Middle Schools and/or High School to move to Plan A, All-In, based on circumstances at that time.

The Discussion of the Recommendation

I believe it is safe to state that all of us would like students back in school daily. Similarly, we all would like to ensure the safety of students and staff in doing so. The difficulty comes with the understanding that everyone's comfort level of "what is safe" is different. The results of the recent survey illustrate parents' differing perspectives. (See the last page) The Survey was not a referendum or majority rules-type vote on what to do next. The survey, along with many conversations, contributed in formulating the recommendations above.

The decision to move to Plan A, All-In, is a balance of the need for in-person instruction, student safety, staff safety, staffing and the logistics of operating schools in the COVID environment. The decision has ramifications for 11,000 people and their families. The most important consideration is obviously their health; but there is an additional risk of moving too fast which has the potential to set us back to September's Plan C, All Online Model. Blue/Red Hybrid has many shortcomings, but it is better than All Online.

Why the Delay until the end of November?

Simply: From my seat, I am not confident we can bring students, grades Kindergarten through Grade 12, back to school in early November maintaining the level of safety, organization and quality that is the community's expectation of us.

As of this email, Neshaminy has only been in the Blue/Red Hybrid for three weeks. While the Health & Safety Plan has been successful in preventing the transmission of virus in our schools to date, the uncertainty of the coming weeks is unlike the circumstances of August and September when Neshaminy transitioned students and staff back to school.

In addition to increases of COVID-19 cases in the Commonwealth, Nation and World, Lower Bucks County has yet to see the full impact of schools re-opening. Council Rock started Hybrid on September 29; Neshaminy on October 5; Bristol Borough and the Tech School last week. Bensalem, Pennsbury, Centennial, Bristol Township and Morrisville plan to begin Hybrid Models in the coming weeks/months. Neshaminy and the Bucks County Department of Health have effectively worked hand-in-hand since mid-September both in Health & Safety Planning and Contact Tracing. I worry about a false sense of confidence in the availability of resources given the limited needs of other school organizations over the months of September and October.

Bottom line: Given the uncertainty of the coming weeks/months, it is too soon into the Blue/Red Hybrid to risk a move to Plan A, All-In. Presently, the potential Risks outweigh the potential Rewards. We need a few more weeks to watch and learn as the Nation moves back inside as colder weather begins.

Where did 3 feet of Social Distance come from?

As the concern about the Spring spike in COVID cases lessened and Pennsylvania moved from "Yellow" to "Green" in June, the school districts in the 4-county area began planning to open with all students in school in September. All districts planned to open with 3 feet of distance between students in classrooms after consultation with the Bucks County Department of Health. (Yes, the Superintendents of Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware and Chester County all met virtually in late June.) Both the CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health gave schools rather ambiguous guidance on

social distancing expectations in schools, adding the phrases “if feasible” or “to the extent possible” to any reference to the 6 feet rule. The World Health Organization established a “one-meter” physical distancing rule which is just over 3 feet.

The planning for a normal opening of schools at 3 feet between students in classrooms ended after a few weeks as the COVID cases in other States around the Nation began to increase during July. The rest of the story gets us back to where we are today.

So, the underlying question is, when is it appropriate and safe to reduce the standard of distance in the classroom to less than 6 feet?

I am not debating whether the standard should be 6 feet or 3 feet at present. I don't know the answer to that question. I wish there was clear answer or a definitive mandate; but there isn't. However, I think we can safely say 6 feet is better than 3 feet as 10 feet is probably better than 6 feet. What I do know is that 6 feet is not a mandate. I do know there are presently schools in the county with 25 students in a class with less than 6 feet between them. What I do know is that with the standard of 6 feet of distance in the classroom, Neshaminy will have to remain in the Blue/Red Hybrid Model. The math doesn't work any other way.

Hence our delay on the K-12 move to Plan A, All-In and the recommendation that only Grades K – 4 potentially make the transition.

What about Contact Tracing at less than 6 feet in the Classroom?

Contact Tracing is a function of the trained personnel of the Bucks County Department of Health. Neshaminy assists by providing information and contact information of others who may be defined as a “Close Contact” to someone who is COVID Positive. On Wednesday, the CDC revised the definition of a “Close Contact” to someone who has been within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period with the COVID Positive Individual during a two-day window of concern. (Let's hope all levels of public health officials agree on this standard...)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>

Unfortunately, with less than 6 feet of distance between students in the classroom/lunchroom, any student in an adjacent desk to a COVID positive student would be considered a “Close Contact” with exposure warranting some form of quarantine by public health officials.

Why start the Monday after Thanksgiving?

There wasn't a ‘good’ week on the calendar to make the move prior to the end of 2020. Early November is too close given the uncertainty. Monday, November 30 gives us three and one-half weeks until the break.

While the Thanksgiving Break presents concerns as families gather and colleges send students home for the semester, it gives our elementary teachers three Friday afternoons to ready their planning and classrooms along with the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving for our custodial staff to do the same with the common areas.

Finally, the delay provides time for our Transportation Department to continue to adjust Bus Runs to ensure there are no more than 2 students per seat scheduled to be on a bus.

Why move the Elementary to Plan A, All-In First?

A “One Size Fits All” Plan would delay all schools as we continue to address significant obstacles in some schools. Essentially, there’s a greater need for in-school instruction and it is logistically easier to maintain the Health & Safety Protocols at the Elementary Level. The considerations included:

- For the most part, the younger the student, the more difficulty they have learning in the Live-streaming and Asynchronous environment.
- Elementary schools have smaller populations and have more controllable student movement/transition.
- Elementary Class Enrollment Sizes (22 – 29 students) are smaller than Middle and High Schools (30 – 35 students)
- Therefore, the distance between students while seated at desks in the classroom can be much greater than what is ultimately 3 feet at the secondary level. (We will get parents the distance once established in each elementary classroom.)
- Elementary Classes, for the most part, ‘travel’ as a group throughout the school day.
- Lunch at the Elementary Level can be done in the classroom.
- Elementary students are less likely to be “out and about” among others without parent supervision outside of school hours.

<https://covid19-bucksgis.hub.arcgis.com/>



All that said, we are still short on supervision of elementary lunch and recess; hoping to find more folks willing to come work for us. And the afternoon Car Rider dismissal is problematic if the present volume is doubled at some elementary schools. More details in the coming weeks with the solution to that conundrum. (Interested in being a Cafeteria or Recess Aide? <https://neshaminypa.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx>)

Will Plan D, Opt-Out Continue?

Yes, all Plan D Options will continue if the decision is to move Elementary to Plan A, All-in, at the end of November. Parents uncomfortable making the move to 4 days a week may move to the Live-Streaming or NSD Virtual Academy. Additionally, parents wishing to return to the in-school models may do so at any time.

Is there an All-In, Hybrid or Opt-out Option?

The triple option of All-In or Hybrid or All Online is not doable. If we transition to Plan A, All-In, the Blue/Red Hybrid Model at that level ends. As you know, it's the same teachers, the same students and the same classes. By providing the flexibility to "come and go" between Plan D, Opt-Out and either In-school model du jour, the concurrent three model option is not possible. The options are presently Blue/Red Hybrid or Plan D, Opt-out. If the Elementary schools move to Plan A, All-In, the option for Elementary Parents will be Plan A, All-In or Plan D, Opt-out.

Why not the Middle and High Schools yet?

Moving the secondary schools to Plan A, All-In, requires a comfort level of significantly more people with less space between them. We all had hoped the Virus's incidence in the community would be such that we had that comfort at this point with a bit more 'closeness'. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

Logistically, significant obstacles remain related to the Health & Safety Plan. Obstacles include:

- Class Enrollment Size is 30-35 necessitating roughly as little as 3 feet of distance between students when seated at desks in the classroom.
- Lunches in the cafeteria would require normal cafeteria tables with less than 3 feet of distance between students who are facing one another. Lunch in the classroom is not an option at NHS as there are few available rooms. Lunch in the classroom at the Middle Level would require many additional staff for supervision. We are still short such staff for elementary lunches in classrooms. We continue to work through solutions to this obstacle.
- Middle, and particularly High School classes 'remix' with different students each period throughout the school day.
- Hallways during Class Transitions will be double the volume of the Blue/Red Hybrid.

Beyond the lunch issue, which we will work to resolve by January, the others are a function of the size and populations of each school; ultimately, only resolvable by reducing the 6 feet of distance expectation.

Why only 4 days a week instead of 5 days a week?

If you recall, we moved Elementary Lunches into the Classroom. This move required an additional 40 staff to supervise those classrooms during lunch. We were unable to find anywhere near that number of people. This was the final obstacle to re-opening in the Blue/Red Hybrid Model on October 5. As a fix, we offered our Bus/Van Drivers and Bus Aides a swap of their Friday work hours for a few hours each day on Monday through Thursday to supervise lunch and recess at elementary schools. (All students are online on Fridays so there is no need for transportation on Fridays). 40+ Transportation employees agreed. So, if you are following along, I "Robbed Peter to pay Paul" eliminating my ability to provide Transportation on Fridays to cover Elementary Lunch and Recess the other days of the week.

As a result, we will need to begin with 4 days a week until I can untie the knot by either hiring additional staff and/or again asking our transportation staff to volunteer to do both assignments. Hopefully, in the next iteration of the re-opening plan, we can move the Elementary Schools to 5 days a week of in-person instruction. (Interested in being a Cafeteria or Recess Aide?)

Review the Decision Timeline:

10/17 – Parent Survey

10/22 – Superintendent Recommendation to Neshaminy Community (This Email)

10/27 – Recommendation Presentation at Public Board Meeting (This email again)

11/10 – Board Work Session Vote on Potential Elementary Start of November 30

11/24 – School Board Public Meeting – Fail Safe to change 11/10 Decision, if warranted

11/30 – Potential Start of Grades K-4 in Plan A, All-In (with Plan D, Opt-out Remaining)

01/2021 – Decision-point for the next Re-opening Improvement Iteration

More Data Below:

For those folks looking for even more information, below are COVID Dashboards from Pennsylvania, Bucks County and Neshaminy along with some disaggregated results of the most recent Parent Survey.

A Closing Thought:

The survey results from earlier this week illustrate polarized comfort levels about reducing the distance between students in the classrooms. And there are those who believe our decisions are being made because of a particular political idealization of myself, the District Cabinet, the Administrators, the School Board, Labor Organizations and/or the Neshaminy Staff. I can assure you that nothing is farther from the truth. Interestingly, we get complaints from both sides of the political spectrum. As Educational Leaders, we follow the same practices we ask of our teaching staff when it comes to complex, controversial topics.

The aforementioned groups have worked together since the Spring to get students back to school safely and as quickly as possible given the circumstance presented us. The sole focus has been what is best for students, parents and the Neshaminy Staff as a whole. We will continue to do so.

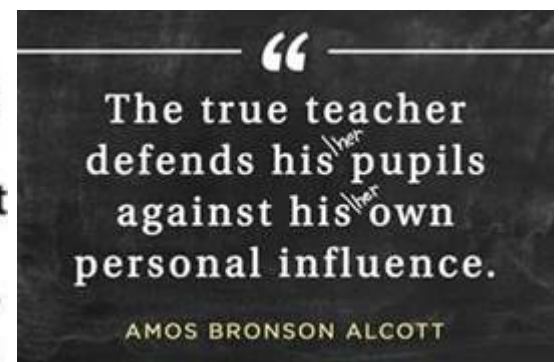
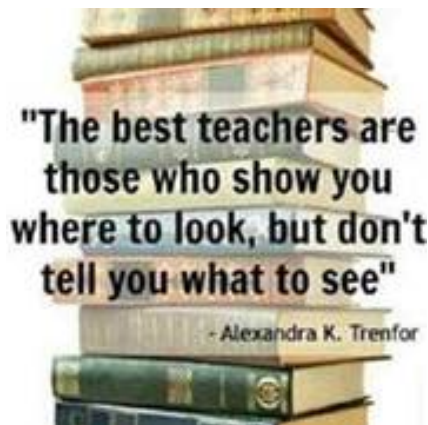
If we can get the elementary students back for 4 days a week, we are one step closer to getting all students back to school more days a week.

As always, with Neshaminy Pride,

Rob

215-809-6512

Rob McGee, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Neshaminy School District
rmcgee@neshaminy.org



My past emails may be found at www.neshaminy.org/Page/42023

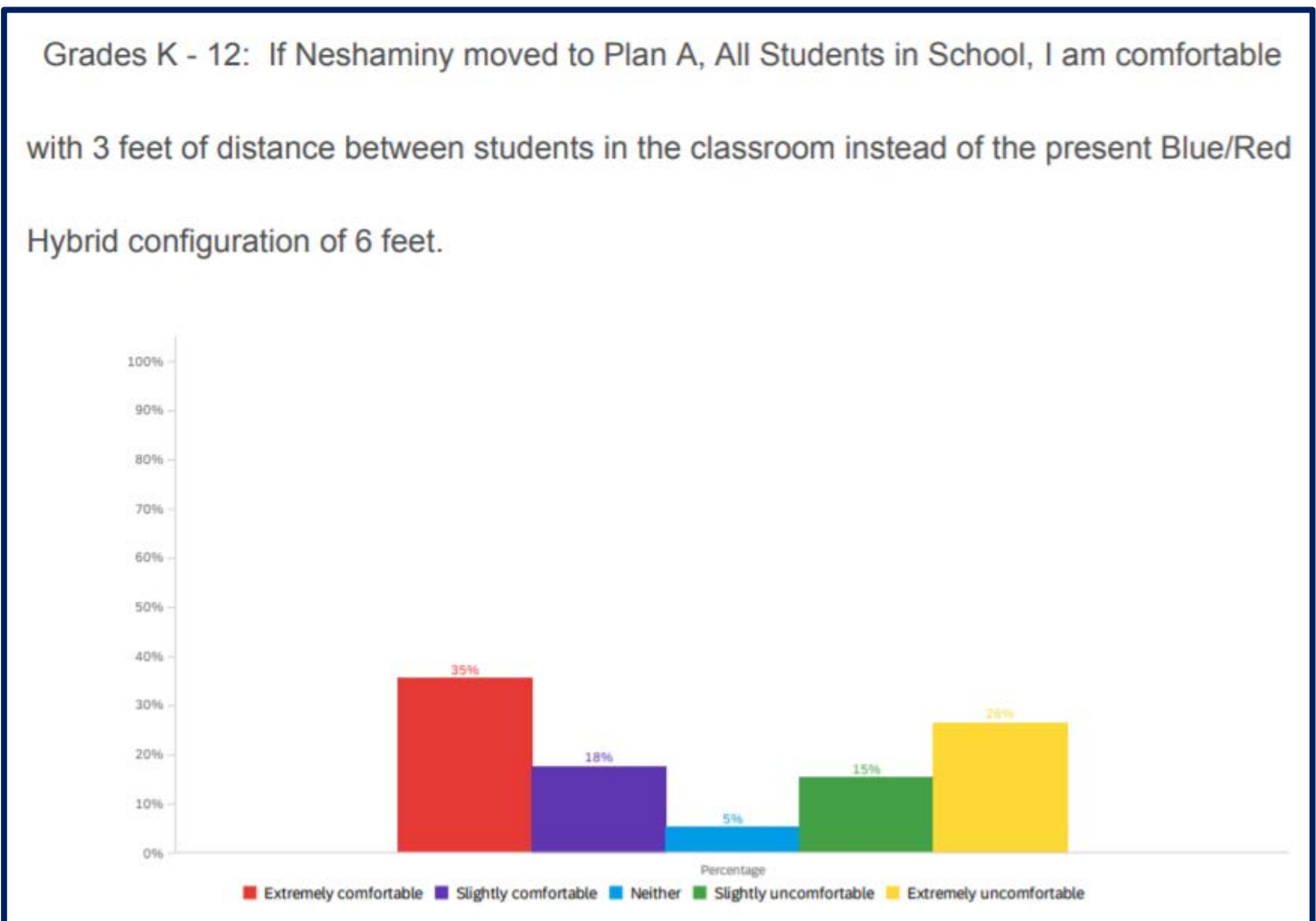
October 17 Parent Survey Results:

Below are the results of the most recent survey of parents. Again, the survey was not a referendum or a majority wins vote. The goal was to better understand the comfort level of the parents of the 9,000+ students in the District on decreasing Social Distancing at this time along with which academic option they might choose for their child(ren) if Neshaminy were to move to Plan A, All-In in the near future.

The results include 6000+ responses of the 9000+ students in the District. The distribution of responses is proportional across grade levels and Neshaminy's 10 schools.

The results have informed the most recent Re-opening Recommendation presented in this document and set a clear direction for future planning for the Middle and High School Levels.

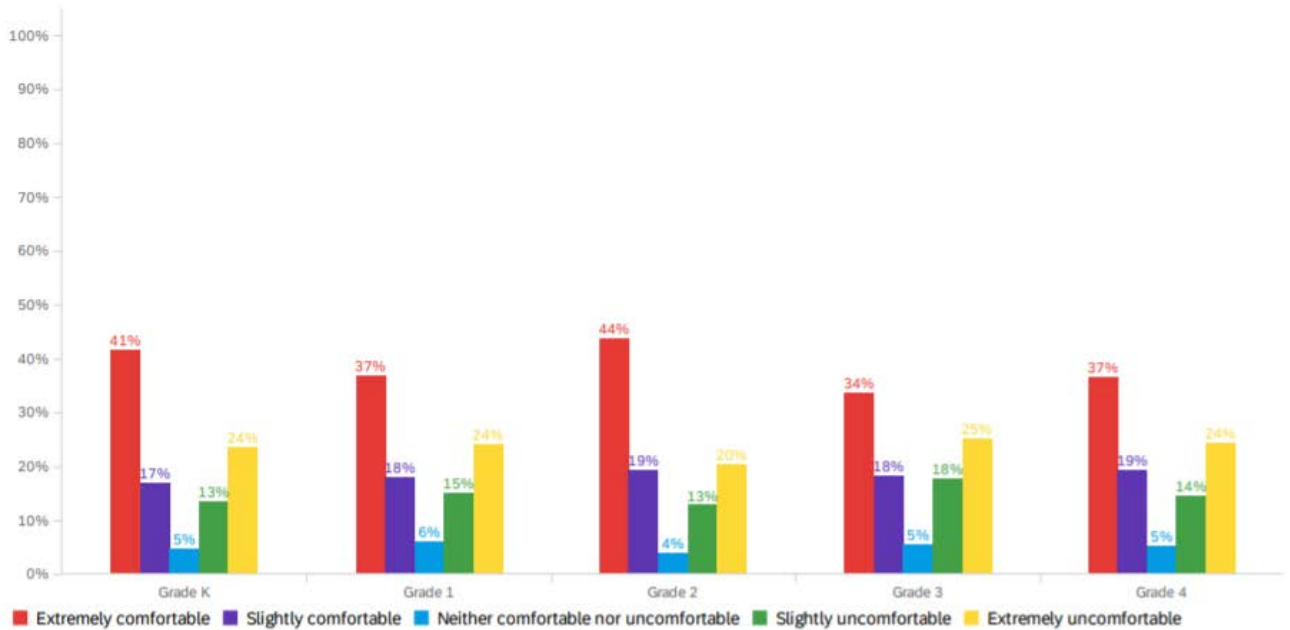
The Survey Results and Individual Comments included in the survey have been shared with the School Board in advance of this email.



Grade K - 4: If Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, I am comfortable

with 3 feet of distance between students in the classroom instead of the present Blue/Red

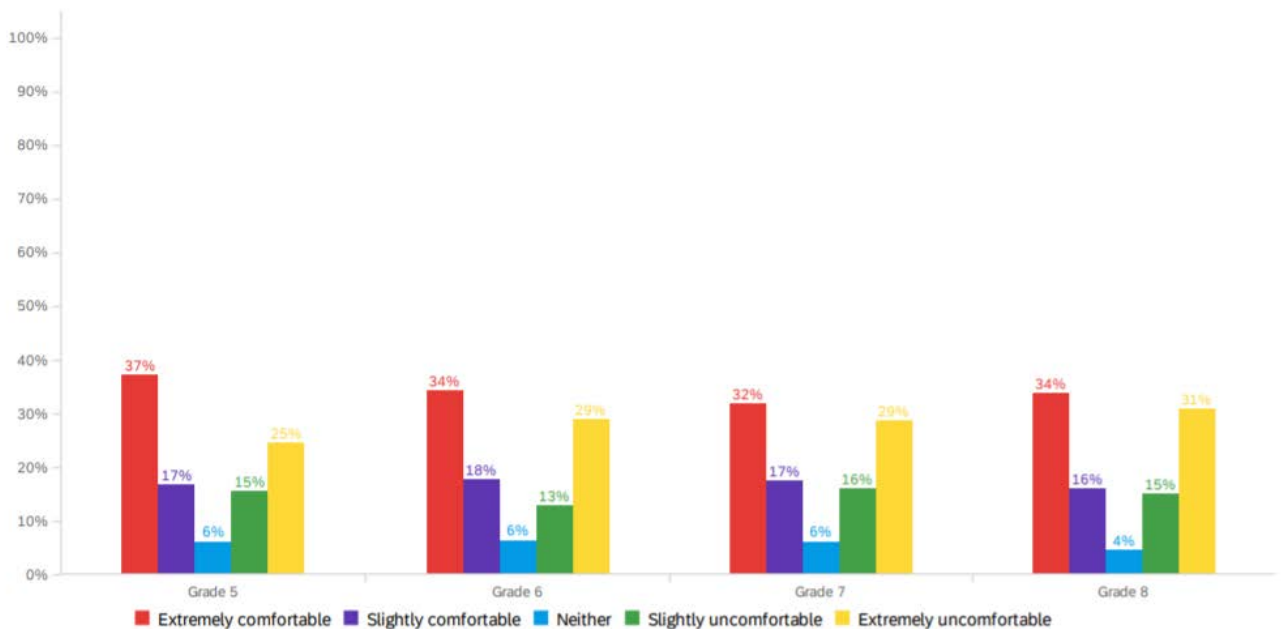
Hybrid configuration of 6 feet.



Grade 5- 8: If Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, I am comfortable with

3 feet of distance between students in the classroom instead of the present Blue/Red

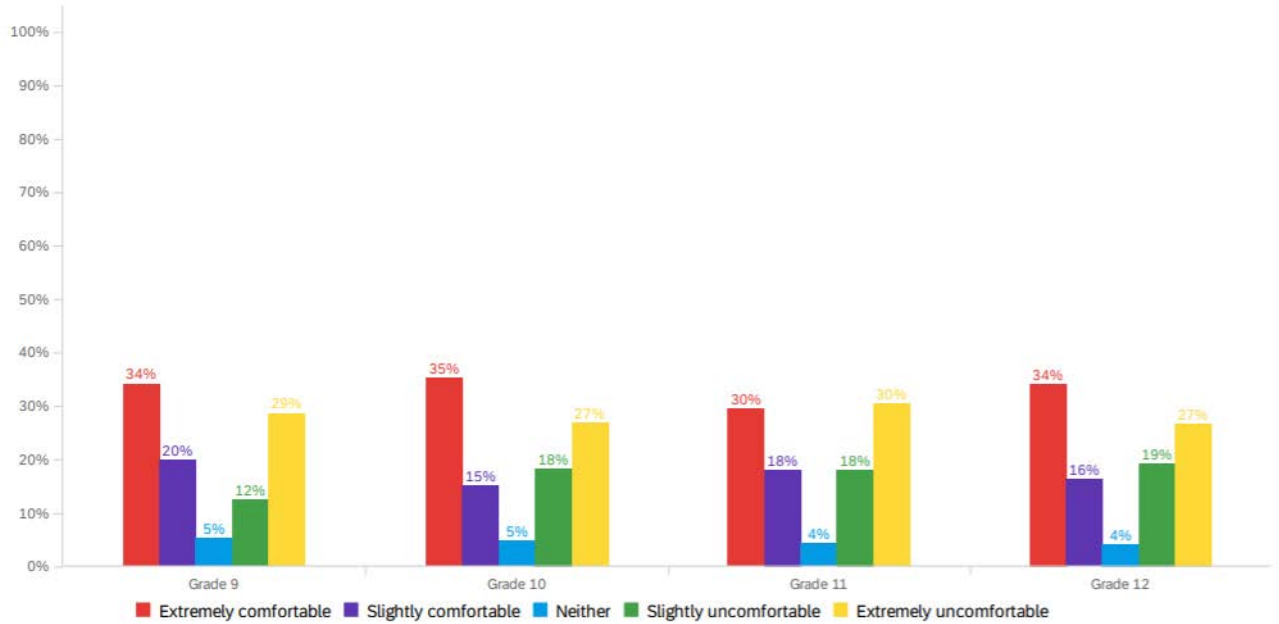
Hybrid configuration of 6 feet.



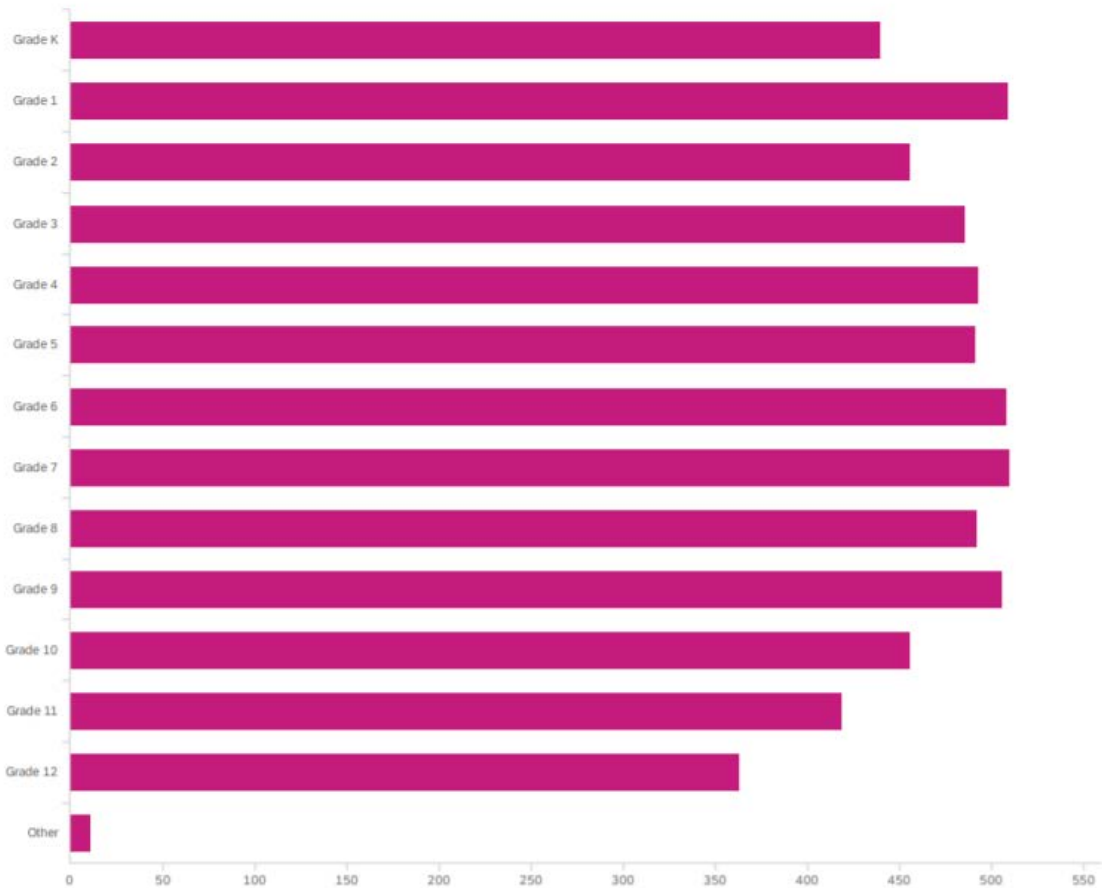
Grade 9 - 12: If Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, I am comfortable

with 3 feet of distance between students in the classroom instead of the present Blue/Red

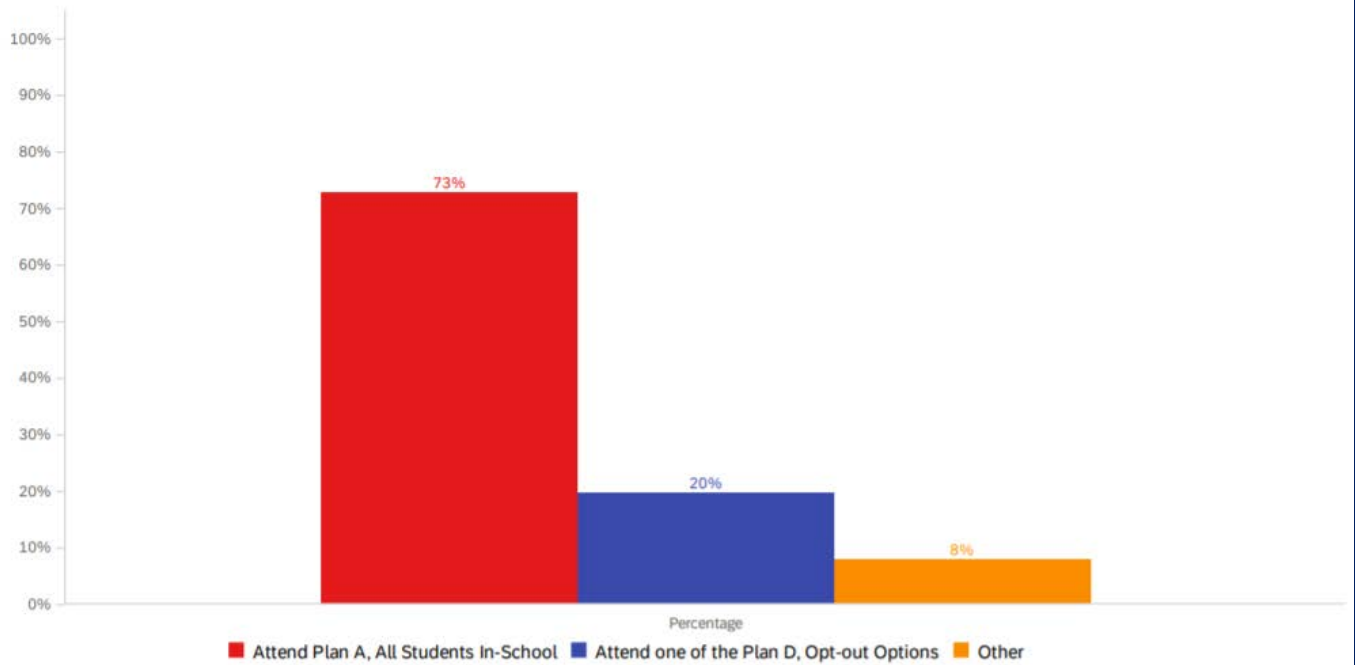
Hybrid configuration of 6 feet.



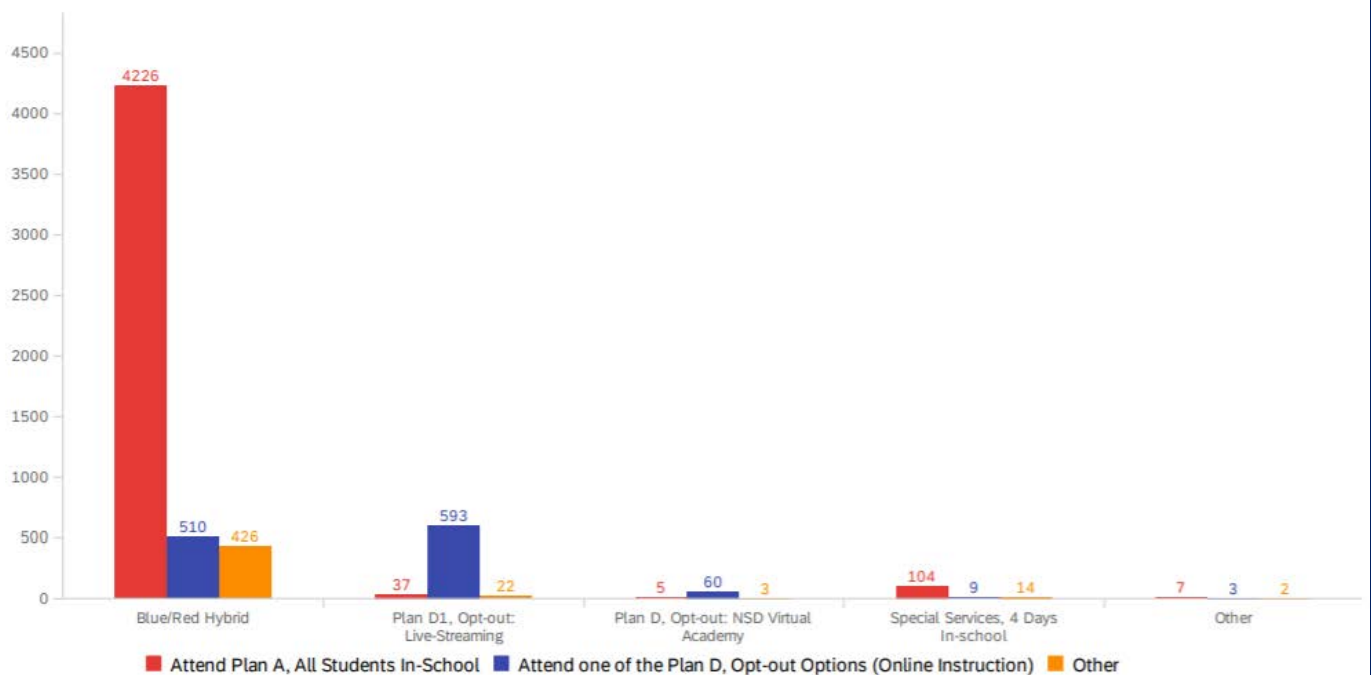
Q3 - Student's Grade



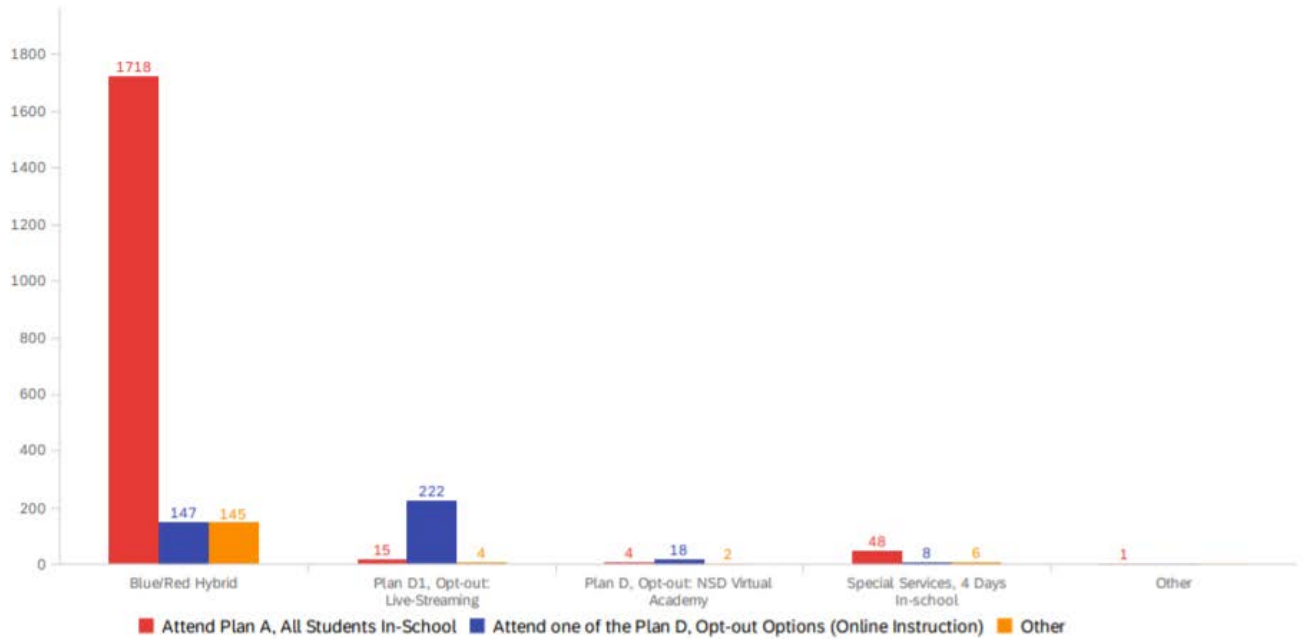
Grade K - 12: If Neshaminy moves to Plan A, All-Students in School, eliminating the Blue/Red Hybrid Model, this student would...



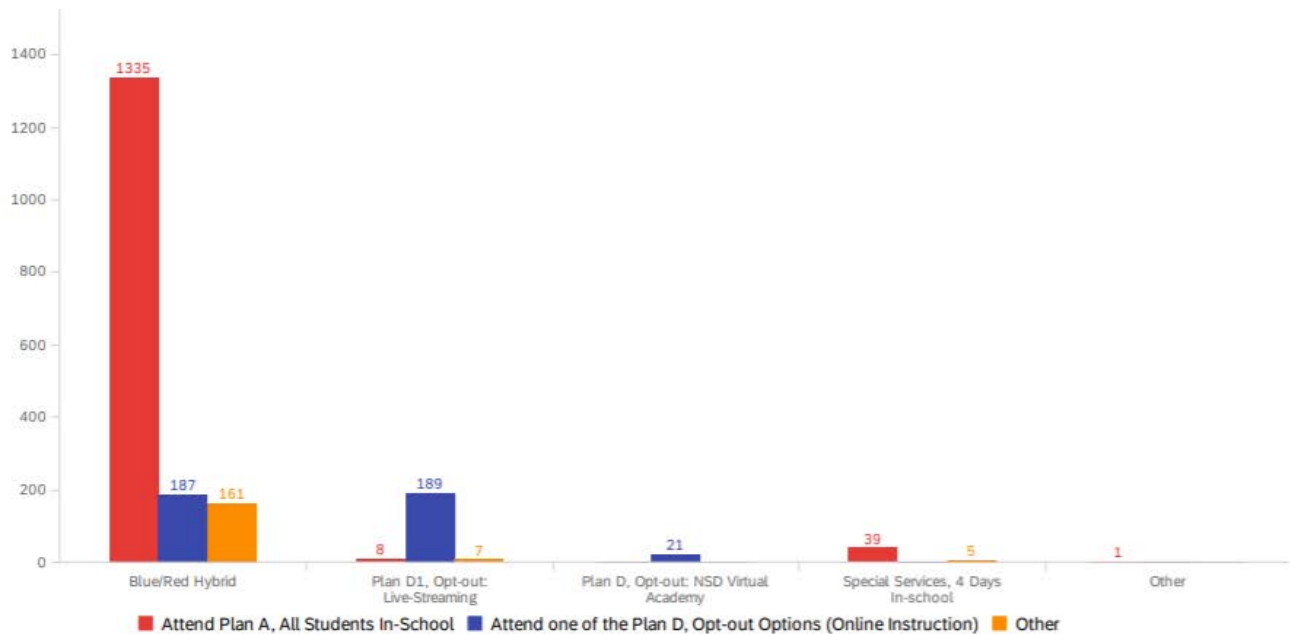
Grade K - 12 Responses: Grouped by the Instructional Model the student is presently participating in, if Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, eliminating the Blue/Red Hybrid Model, this student would...



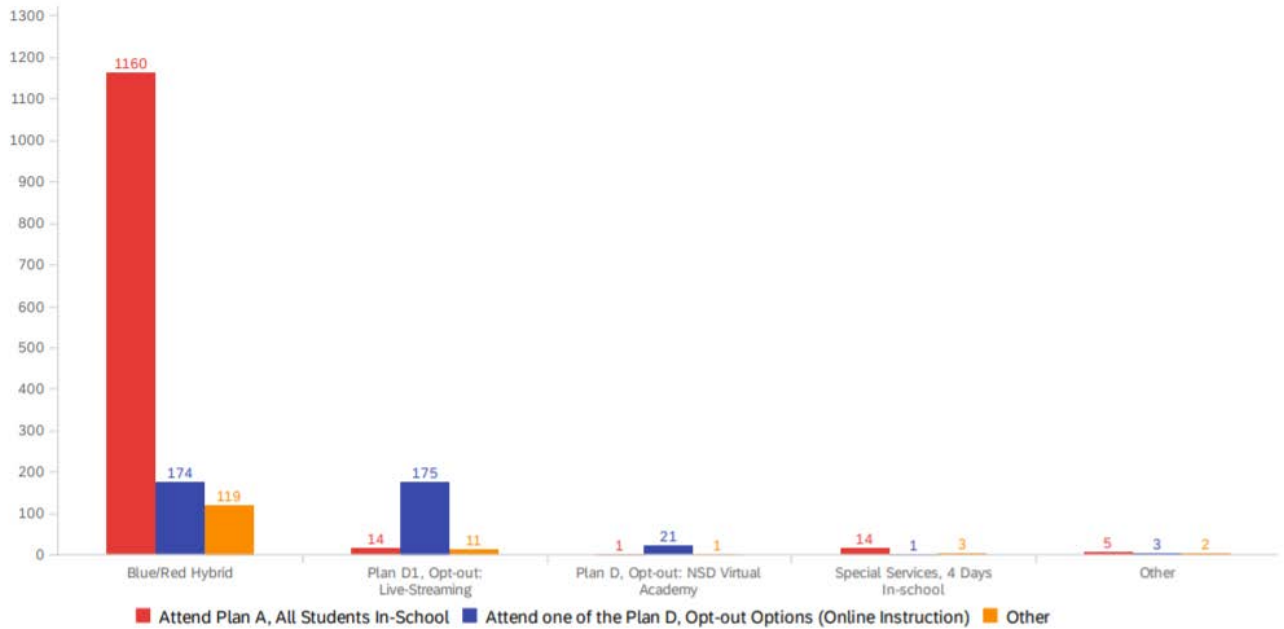
Grade K - 4 Responses: Grouped by the Instructional Model the student is presently participating in, if Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, eliminating the Blue/Red Hybrid Model, this student would...



Grade 5 - 8 Responses: Grouped by the Instructional Model the student is presently participating in, if Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, eliminating the Blue/Red Hybrid Model, this student would...



Grade 9 - 12 Responses: Grouped by the Instructional Model the student is presently participating in, if Neshaminy moved to Plan A, All Students in School, eliminating the Blue/Red Hybrid Model, this student would...



Q7 - Student's School

