



PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CENTRAL OFFICE
27 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CONNECTICUT 06786

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Plymouth Public Schools is to challenge, inspire, and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.

PLYMOUTH BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS AND CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF ONLY
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786

VIRTUAL MEETING

JOIN ZOOM MEETING: <https://zoom.us/j/91552026345>

PUBLIC PLEASE CALL: +1 929 205 6099 US
MEETING ID: 915 5202 6345
PASSCODE: 669981

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

Present: Mr. Seaman, Mrs. Kulesa, Mr. Showers, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Foote,
Mr. Elsaghir, Mrs. Kremmel and Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

Absent: Mrs. Lucian

Also Present: Dr. Semmel, Superintendent, Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Ms. Aronheim, Director of Pupil Personnel & Special Education Services, Mr. Hendrickson, Business Manager and Mr. Trudeau, Director of Technology

1. **Call to Order & Pledge to the Flag**

Mr. Seaman called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

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Plymouth Board of Education is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider.

2. **Adoption of the Agenda**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adopt the Agenda as presented. Motion Mr. Foote, second Mr. Showers, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion passes.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 19, 2020. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any abstentions (Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani abstains) motion passes.

4. **Superintendent's Update**

Dr. Semmel informed the Board Members on the re-opening of schools; complemented the staff, the USDA extension of funding program for all students up to the age of 18 for free breakfast and lunch until on or about December 31, 2020 or until funding runs out in Plymouth (parents still need to go through the application process of completing paperwork); and the scoreboard at Terryville High School has been installed, waiting for power, however, it should be ready for use by the time soccer begins on October 1, 2020. Also, Lisa King, Plymouth's Paraeducator of the Year was named as a state finalist. Dr. Semmel helped Lisa to prepare for this by scheduling a mock interview with her.

Dr. Semmel thanked the entire Board for their support during his 5 years in Terryville. Special thank you went to Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Kulesa who have been on the Board during his employment the longest. Best Wishes went out to Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent, Mrs. Holleran, Acting Principal at Plymouth Center School and Mr. Hendrickson, Business Manager who is leaving Plymouth to take another position in another district.

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction. She shared her remarks with the Board Members regarding New Teacher Orientation and Professional Development Days in the district.

5. **Student Representatives**

Tyler Mendela – not present

Lilyana Ricardo – Senior at Terryville High School. Vice-President of the Student Council; Painting Parking Spaces for the Seniors to be free of charge this school year.

Gena Buckley – Senior at Terryville High School. Secretary of the Student Council. Life Matters, Suicide Prevention Walk – September 27 – October 3 anyone can send in their video showing they are walking.

6. **Public Comment** (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

Brandee Gaetano - 282 Main Street, Unit 8, Terryville, CT -

First – Total confidence in everything the Board is doing, and she thanked the Board for keeping our kids safe and making sure that everything runs smoothly.

Parent of an 8th grade student currently at Eli Terry Jr. Middle School who expressed her concern about high school credit regarding Spanish. Son was supposed to get high school credit for Spanish class. Wants to make certain her son receives credit that can help him in high school.

Dr. Semmel – The district was looking for a Spanish Teacher but it has been difficult to find one. Since a Spanish Teacher could not be found, a posting for an additional English Teacher was posted and filled to help with the social distancing, etc. On-line Spanish for students was looked at as a possibility, however, the individual working with our on-line program indicated it was very, very challenging to take Spanish 1 on-line. Although the district is not against it, it can potentially connect a child to that course, however, understand it is very difficult. Spanish 1 in grade 8 would actually not get a child an actual high school credit. It would not be serving to help with graduation once the child got to the high school. The district did want to offer Spanish 1, but it just became the situation we are in currently. It is unfortunate, but this is where the district stands at this point.

Parent – Most colleges want two years of a language. If the child was able to take it in grade 8 and one in high school, would that – two languages it does not matter when you take them would it count?

Dr. Semmel - No, the Spanish 1 in 8th grade does not count as high school credit for colleges. You typically need to take two years in high school. So, if the child had taken Spanish 1, he would need to take Spanish 2 and 3 here at the high school. When the child comes up as a freshman next year, he can take Spanish 1 and 2 and have no issue. He can continue to take Spanish 3 and 4.

7. **Unfinished Business**

Ms. Aronheim – Director of Pupil Personnel & Special Education Services

When Title IX decisions are made, basically there is an investigation that occurs and then the new policy includes a formal report, a decision maker makes a decision. The decision needs to be made on the standard of evidence. Previously, the standard of evidence was clear and convincing up to 2011. In 2011, the Office of Civil Rights changed that to allow for a preponderance of evidence. Now, after the final rule which was released in April, the Board needs to make a decision on the standard of evidence that the district uses in all of our investigations. So, Title IX investigations can be student to student, teacher to student, student to teacher or teacher to teacher. So it could be any of those four matchups in a Title IX investigation. So the same standard needs to be used when the district is investigating all of these situations. The difference between the two: Preponderance of Evidence – basically means more than 50% likely. It is a lower standard of evidence than Clear and Convincing Evidence. Clear and Convincing means that it is substantially more probable to be true than not, or well over 50% likely. Both of these are below the standard of unreasonable doubt which is what we would use in court. The Board needs to make a decision in policy and

regulation which standard of evidence the Board wants to use. Preponderance which means more than 50% likely or Clean and Convincing which is well over 50% likely. This decision needs to be made before the policy and regulation is adopted.

DISCUSSION

- A. preponderance of evidence standard (previous existing standard)
or
- B. clear and convincing evidence standard (a higher bar)

After lengthy discussion the Board agreed to take action tonight on this matter. Therefore, the following motion was made:

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the following:

Policy P4000.1/P5145.44 – Personnel – Certified & Non-Certified (Students/Title IX) and Regulation R4000.1/R5145.44 – Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified/Students/Title IX: Grievance Procedure/Complaint Process selecting the following language for both the policy and regulation “option A preponderance of evidence standard, the previously existing standard.

Motion, Mr. Foote, second Mrs. Johnson, discussion on the motion.

ROLL VOTE: Mr. Showers - yes Mrs. Johnson - yes Mr. Foote - yes

Mr. Elsaghir - no Mrs. Kremmel - yes

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani - yes Mrs. Kulesa - no

Yes - 5 No - 2 Abstentions - 0 Motion carries.

8. **New Business**

- a. Draft of Board of Education Meeting Dates for 2021

9. **Board Member/Committee Reports**

- A. Finance/Operations - Mr. Hendrickson, Business Manager

Through August the district has spent 11% of its budget or roughly \$2.7 million. Last year it was 9.1% of the budget or \$2.2 million. The difference of 2% is really 60% of the spend side. We spent \$354,000 paying the September health benefits invoice in August. We did not do that last year. The remaining is reflected in encumbrances. These were largely in Special Education and Tech evenly split. Special Ed – Outplacement/Diagnostic Services and Face Shields, etc. Tech – Tech materials and equipment. Encumbrances at year end were \$900,000 which is roughly down to approximately \$300,000 at this point.

Mr. Hendrickson thanked Robin, Linda and Rachel in the Business Office who have been instrumental in helping him during his tenure in Plymouth and also in installing and making the transition to Infinite Vision Accounting System. They spent approximately 2 days a week, on-line with a teacher learning the system. This took away from the time that they could have spent on their normal duties. We have gone through payroll with very little difficulty. Thank you went to Jim Mazon for his leadership both last summer and this summer, Alicia DaPonte, Director of Food Service who has done a great job in identifying opportunities for funding, for teaching staff and equipment replacement and lastly, Dr. Semmel for bringing him on board. Plymouth staff and students have been very welcoming.

1. The Finance/Operations Accounts-by-Facilities Report

- * Review of Accounts-by-Facilities Report for August, 2020.

The Accounts-by-Facilities report will be forwarded to the Town of Plymouth Board of Finance.

- Facilities Update – Dr. Semmel, Superintendent

Projects mentioned at last meeting have all been completed.

2. Personnel Report – Dr. Semmel, Superintendent

No Questions from Board Members

10. **Public Comment** (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

None

11. **Board Liaison Reports**

Mr. Seaman -- Harry S. Fisher Elementary School

No Report – Meeting September 15th

Mr. Elsaghir -- Plymouth Center School

No Report

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani -- Eli Terry Jr. Middle School

Budget being set up; welcome back for staff; setting up with the bank for membership and fundraisers; and next meeting September 22nd at 7 p.m.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani -- Booster Club

No Meeting

Mrs. Kulesa -- Terryville High School

No Meeting

Mr. Foote -- SEPTA

No Report

Mrs. Kremmel -- CABE

Annual Convention is being postponed. Four webinars coming up in October focusing on legal issues and COVID.

Mrs. Johnson -- EdAdvance

Meeting – September 3, 2020. It was decided to hold the next 2 Board Meets via Zoom. EdAdvance Reopening – They are at 70% - 75% capacity throughout the day. No traditional convocation – held 5 days of small meetings. All four Special Education Programs ran in person all summer and did well, learned a lot so when they reopen it will go smoother. They are open and ready to go. DDS granted \$95,000 for Birth to 3 during COVID for staff coverage and programming. Employee Retention Tax Benefit from the Federal Government helped to keep cost down during COVID recovery. EdAdvance is struggling with new hires, as are other districts, especially in transportation. Jonathan Costa explained usually there are curriculum meetings with all of the curriculum directors but this stopped between May and September but this year they did it every three weeks. Richard in the Tech Department have been working alongside our Tech Department on hybrid model. The renovation has been completed at the old Main Street School, 1st floor for FRC and Headstart. The 2nd floor offices will be completed this week. Also, a playground has been installed.

Mr. Showers --- District Safety Committee

No Report

12. **Board Comments**

Well wishes to Dr. Semmel and Mr. Hendrickson.

Honor working with both individuals. Much congratulations and best of luck. Great experience. Both will be missed a lot. Due to your leadership (Dr. Semmel), it's really been enjoyable to be on the Board working with both individuals. Best of Luck to Sherri as she takes over. Paul has been a steady force in our town, he has helped the Board to understand and your charts will be missed. Dr. Semmel "I've seen a lot of superintendent's come and go but it is really appreciated how you took over during a very difficult time in our district and turned things around completely for the district. Community Leaders and parents have spoken very highly of you. Thank you for signing off of documents that we sent to you. You will do well in Trumbull. Proud that this district has become one that she is proud to send her children to. Excited for the work that has been done. To Mrs. Turner, hope you will continue with Dr. Semmel's success. Paul thank you for all that you have done. Dr. Semmel has always been very professional and you are a great leader. Wishing you a great time in Trumbull. Good Luck. Paul we have learned a lot from you, you were always there if anyone had a question. Dr. Semmel was always there for any concerns the Board had. Mrs. Turner has the skills and drive to keep the district moving forward.

Other comments, school year has started off well. Complaint, children are not getting enough school work, per parents. Scoreboard and track looks great.

13. **Next Board Meeting** –The next Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education is on Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria at Terryville High School.

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 8:08 p.m. Motion Mr. Showers, second, Mr. Foote all in favor, any opposed, motion passes.

Respectfully Submitted



Patricia Piskorski
Recording Secretary
Plymouth Board of Education