



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 SPECIAL MEETING

VIRTUAL MEETING – AUDIO ONLY

NOVEMBER 19, 2020

7 P.M.

MINUTES

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

Absent: Mrs. Johnson

Also Present: Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent, Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Mrs. Aronheim, Director of Pupil Personnel & Special Education Services, Mr. Tencza, Business Manager, and Mr. Trudeau, Director of Technology

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

Mr. Seaman called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. **Adoption of the Agenda**

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

3. **Possible Change In The Learning Model**

Mrs. Turner – Background Information

Mrs. Turner indicating the district has been experiencing an uptick in the community spread which is pretty much of what is occurring around the State, Plymouth especially. Mostly, in household cases, family members, which has really impacted our schools. EdAdvance Data is sent out twice during the week as an update. For last Friday, there were 38.27 new cases with a 4% positivity rate. Just this past Tuesday, there were 57 new cases with a 5% positivity rate. A new update will be received tomorrow, November 20.

The impact has been quite a bit on the increase on the number of staff in quarantine that we have in the district.

- 20 staff members in quarantine
- 3 staff members out with COVID symptoms or getting tested
- Staff members out to care for children whose districts have closed due to COVID
- Few substitutes are available
- Limited number of staff members in our schools that are available to substitute

Example: The high school has been in remote for the past two weeks. The absences of staff just in the past 2 weeks for the other 3 schools have been a total of 97. We have filled only 24 of those positions which is a fill rate of approximately 28%. So, the average number of daily staff absences is 12 with a daily fill rate of 3.

The number of students in quarantine has increased. We have 49 students in quarantine because they are contacts. We have 12 students with COVID symptoms. The reason, and this is only the rationale for what Mrs. Turner is proposing, many of you have heard that districts across the State are moving to remote learning until sometime in mid-January.

Proposal by Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent of Schools:

- All student PreK – 12 enter remote learning beginning November 30, 2020, which is the week after Thanksgiving
- Terryville High School students, who have remote for 2 weeks, stay remote until January 11, 2021
- On December 7, 2020, PreK – 8 students return to school in a hybrid model from December 7, 2020 until December 22, 2020.
- Since December 23 is a half day for staff and students, Mrs. Turner recommends a remote learning day for all students.
- All students remote January 4, 2021 – January 8, 2021.
- All students back in hybrid model on January 11, 2021.

Basically, her recommendation would be to have everyone go remote until January 11, 2021, however, she feels the district needs the younger students in school as much as possible. This is the reason why the district would like to try and return them back to hybrid for those 2 weeks during December. This will allow the opportunity for students to be in school and learn as we know how advantageous this is for these students. Therefore, Mrs. Turner feels at this point making these plans, this proposal, is really what is going to help the most.

However, at any given day, we may need to close due to the high number of staff absences. Plymouth Center School is able to be open and running tomorrow. However, Mrs. Turner indicated she is receiving updates from the Principal at Plymouth Center School who is concerned about the number of absences climbing even as she is checking during tonight's meeting.

Mrs. Turner indicated she would rather be proactive so that parents can plan. Rather than closing the night before because she receives an e-mail from a principal or even that morning indicating that the principal has 10 staff members out and no substitutes.

Mrs. Turner hopes the Board will be willing to approve this proposal she has brought forth to them. She believes this to be the safest avenue at this point. She feels it is important to note that we can still hope to educate our students in person. As she said at the last Board Meeting regarding the change in remote learning that the State had structured for us, this is a very different plan than the one used in the spring. She went on to explain in the spring, the students only had an hour or 2 contact with their teachers during the week. The plan now for remote learning would call for synchronous learning at all grade levels so students would be on-line with their teachers for a good portion of the day. This is a big change from the spring which is a positive change.

Mrs. Turner presented some items to consider. She realizes she has presented a lot for the Board to consider and would really appreciate their feedback.

Board Comments

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – She emailed Mrs. Turner to notify her she was not having her children return to school after Thanksgiving. She feels individuals will be seeing family members, traveling and college students will be coming home for the holiday. For that reason, she feels it would not be safe for her children to return to school. However, she will be following that one week to see where the numbers stand. The numbers are climbing very fast. She knows of a couple of individuals that currently have COVID. They are very ill and are having a difficult time. She definitely feels we should take the week after Thanksgiving off and then move to hybrid, since the children need to be in school and many parents are going through a lot especially with the holidays approaching. Being hybrid would be a nice way for parents to check in with their children and make sure that if they are falling behind that they are able to catch up quickly.

Mr. Showers – He agrees. If it is getting this bad, let's do what we have to do to keep everyone healthy. That is his main concern. Keep everyone healthy. Let's do what we have to do if that means closing the schools. He is all for Mrs. Turner's recommendations.

Mrs. Kulesa – She is fully supportive of whatever our Superintendent decides is the best course of action.

Mrs. Kremmel and Mrs. Lucian – Both are in agreement.

Mr. Elsaghir – He respects everything that Mrs. Turner proposed and what she has said does reflect a lot of what educators and politicians and everyone, not equating educators and politicians, just to be clear. Educators and politicians happen to be saying the same things. But as much as he respects what Mrs. Turner has said, he is firmly opposed to it. He thinks everyone needs to get back to school as quickly as possible. If parents do not want their child in school, they have every right to keep them at home. But, he does not think we should be closing on our own. He thinks we should keep our schools open. Children need to be in school. The longer they are out the more difficult it is going to be for everyone, i.e. parents, children, everyone across the board. So, he strongly opposed to the recommendations. However, he does respect everyone's opinion.

Mr. Foote – He thinks Mrs. Turner has a tough enough job to begin with and he appreciates what she is doing and fully supports what she wants to do.

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the Change in the Learning Model as presented by the Superintendent. Motion Mr. Foote, second Mr. Showers, any discussion,

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

Mr. Elsaghir – no Mrs. Kremmel – yes Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani - yes

Mrs. Lucian – yes Mrs. Kulesa - yes

Vote: 6 - yes 1 - no motion passes

4. **Public Comment (limited to 3 minutes per individual)**

None Seen

5. **Adjournment**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn

Mrs. Kulesa – Mr. Chair, there is someone for public comment.

Mr. Seaman – I withdraw my motion

Public Comment (limited to 3 minutes per individual)

Christine Greaney – Special Education Teacher at Plymouth Center School – Indicated she supports Mrs. Turner's recommendations. Today she lost several students and paras to quarantine. This is very stressful on the teachers, parents and students. Mrs. Turner has done a great job as superintendent. She thinks Mrs. Turner has the students, families and teacher's best interests at heart. Mrs. Greaney fully supports Mrs. Turner's recommendations.

Adjournment

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 7:18 p.m. Motion Mr. Showers, second, Mr. Foote all in favor, motion passes.


Patricia Piskorski
Recording Secretary
Plymouth Board of Education