



72 Pilgrim Road, Pembroke, MA 02359  
[www.pembrokek12.org](http://www.pembrokek12.org)  
[pembroke@pembrokek12.org](mailto:pembroke@pembrokek12.org)

**PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, November 2, 2021**  
**North Pembroke Elementary School Library**

**7:00 PM**

**Call to Order**

Mr. Tropeano called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**Present from Administration:** Erin Obey, Superintendent; Marybeth Brust, Assistant Superintendent; Jessica DeLorenzo, Director of Student Services

**Present from Committee:** Michael Tropeano, Chair; David Boyle, Vice Chair; Susan Bollinger, Secretary; Susie Scholl and Lance Kennedy

**Acknowledge & Schedule Visitors**

Mr. Tropeano welcomed the audience members.

**Adjustments to Agenda**

None

**Communications**

None

**Approval of Bill Schedule**

Warrants were sent out electronically for approval.

**Consideration for Approval: School Committee Meeting Minutes October 5, 2021**

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Lance Kennedy, it was unanimously voted to approve the school committee meeting minutes of October 5, 2021.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, Lance Kennedy and Susan Bollinger

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

**Superintendent's Report**

**Social Emotional Learning Update**

Mr. Tropeano said the committee is getting an update tonight from Ms. DeLorenzo and the principals. Mr. Talbot thanked the two PHS social workers for the data he has tonight. There has been 364 counseling sessions with the social workers and 50% of the sessions are for anxiety, depression and stress management and this is higher than the previous year. The data shows the percentage of sessions are spread out pretty evenly among the four grades. The number of students being seen that are not on an educational plan has increased over past several years. Types of social emotional supports being provided include DBT, CBT, self-care and mindful strategies and behavioral interventions. He added that families are having a hard time getting appointments with therapy providers, so it is falling on schools. Psychiatric hospitalizations are decreasing dating back to 2017 believed to be because of fewer availability. Clinical observations are showing a need to monitor depression due to an increase in anxiety and an increase in students having a hard time sleeping as a result of the pandemic. The positive side is that there is an increase in teachers' awareness of the impact of the pandemic on mental health and on learning. Another positive is

having Bauer the therapy dog, at PHS twice a week. Mrs. Scholl asked how staff are holding up and managing the frequency of these visits. Mr. Talbot said he is incredibly proud of the staff and their work. Ms. DeLorenzo said there is professional development offering for staff around wellness and she will talk about it later in the presentation. Mr. Tropeano said the district has to think about what else can be done this year for students. Mrs. Obey said the district is proactive, but sometimes has to be reactive. Mr. Tropeano asked what summer programs will look like to engage students and families and Mrs. Obey said this discussion will happen during the budget cycle. She added that outside services are hard to come by now.

Dr. McGarrigle thanked the committee for the opportunity to talk about this. She explained that at PCMS the guidance counselors teach, and they started the year with team building and communication, then moved to goal setting and study skills. It was noticed that students making poor choices with social media the curriculum was adjusted to include an upcoming unit on digital literacy, that will be followed by gratitude and then substance education and prevention. Counselors are a daily presence at lunch to help students acclimate to school expectations. Term 1 check ins are completed for both grade 7 and 8 and from check ins students can be identified as needing more supports. There is more of a need for reactive responsive services as a result of student drop ins. The staff are dealing with much more at this point in year than they typically would be dealing with at this point. The school psychologist has done 45 evaluations so far this year and there were 45 total last year. There are about 20 special education students with counseling services in their IEP versus 16 last year. There is also a significant increase in general education students and 504 students needing counseling services up to 20 for this year from 12 last year. The plan is to continue to connect with students and build relationships and also work with families to educate and support them as well as support teachers.

Mrs. Scholl asked about main triggers and Dr. McGarrigle said there is a significant increase in anxiety and depression with all the pressures the students are feeling both academically and socially. Mrs. Bollinger asked about addressing students struggling with social skills and Dr. McGarrigle said the students are identified through counseling if they need additional supports. She added that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills addresses issues and builds on them from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and in addition the staff members meet weekly to discuss students and they can be identified through conversations as need additional supports. Ms. DeLorenzo added that staff have been trained in the Social Thinking curriculum, so a set curriculum is being used in social skills groups. Mr. Boyle asked if students seem more isolated and Dr. McGarrigle said this is seen at lunch and staff will either check in with the students or ask "leader" type students to get involved. Mr. Talbot said PHS staff also monitor this at lunch. Mr. Tropeano asked what doing PCMS is doing about social media so that students understand what is and is not reality and Dr. McGarrigle said 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills covers digital literacy, and the teachers facilitate classroom conversations. Mr. Tropeano suggested principals remind families of the supports available. Mr. Tropeano asked what is being done to check on students not doing well and Dr. McGarrigle said at progress report time she runs a D and F list and an A+ list and she talks to the elementary schools about students coming up. Mr. Tropeano confirmed there is enough capacity at PCMS to provide the necessary supports.

Mr. Murphy said at Hobomock the addition of the .5 social worker has been instrumental as it has allowed other staff time to step up and help out with students that need extra support. The psychologist has nine students, and the social worker has 30 students. The psychologist provides counseling to students, does testing of students, provided consultation to teachers on a daily basis. The principal, assistant principal, psychologist, social worker and school nurse meeting once a week. Kindergarten and first graders are presenting with the most need. They are coming in to school dysregulated because they may not have had a formal educational experience, but the teachers are meeting the needs of students where they are at. The most common reasons for counseling are anxiety, behavior and emotional management. Students did not have enough of the daily learning needed and teachers are working on that. Interventions used include student check ins to gauge where they are at during the day. Therapy dog, Obadiah, is scheduled to come tomorrow. Crisis and de-escalation techniques are used to stop behaviors upon entrance to school.

Mr. Murphy said at North Pembroke the percentage are similar to Hobomock. There are the same issues with kindergarten and first graders. Grades 5 and 6 are having the same level of need and teachers are utilizing restorative justice techniques. Special education and general education students are equally needing the services and the reasons for counseling are mainly emotional management and social skills. The lack of outside therapeutic services has families asking the school for therapy and the school will work with families on outside services and anything that can be provided in school. Students are struggling with separation from their parents, especially at drop off. Also, there is an increase in social conflict between students requiring adult support to mediate.

Mrs. Simmons thanked the committee and said the work of the social workers is unbelievable. Bryantville is also seeing separation issues especially in kindergarten and also seeing social conflicts between students as well. Staff is working with families of students in the younger grades. The psychologist has 28 students; most are IEP students, and the social worker has 42 students and works more with general education students. The reasons for counseling are mainly emotional management and social skills. Student check ins are the main intervention similar to the other elementary schools. Also, Obadiah the therapy dog is used during counseling sessions. Lunch bunch groups are working on social skills and social media. Mrs. Scholl asked if there are resources for families around the interventions and Mr. Murphy said the psychologists and social workers are having conversations with caregivers and offering resources. Mrs. Scholl asked if students having difficulty staying on task is taking up learning time and Mr. Murphy said conversations are being had at grade level team meetings to prioritize where students need to be. Mr. Kennedy said he would like to see the reasons for counseling over the past couple of years and asked why Hobomock's reasons for counseling are different. Ms. DeLorenzo said Hobomock has the substantially separate programs that have students with more behavioral needs. Ms. DeLorenzo added that there is an increase in functional behavioral assessments for school and home and for BCBA for school and home and most of these assessments resulted in increased services. She said there is grant money to fund the .5 social worker at PCMS and to expand the behavioral consultation model at the elementary level. Also, grant funds have been allocated for SEPAC for outside professional development for parents and grant funds for district staff professional development on the behavioral special education piece.

#### Update on PCMS Lockers

Dr. McGarrigle said PCMS will assign lockers at beginning with Term 2. Student can lease a combination lock for \$5 and they will get the \$5 back when they return the lock at the end of the school year. Students can drop off stuff to their locker that they don't need in the morning and then go again at the end of day. Titan Time teachers examined back packs to make suggestions on the bulk. PCMS bought one inch binders for students to exchange their bigger ones and next year teachers will be more specific about binders. An update will come out from PCMS about all this information. Mrs. Bollinger asked if students can go to their lockers during lunch or Titan Time and Dr. McGarrigle said she will monitor the process as is for a bit and then decide on that.

#### Update on DESE Masking Requirement and Current Vaccination Rates

Mr. Tropeano said on 10/26/21 DESE extended the masking requirement to 1/15/22. There is a waiver available for schools with at least an 80% vaccination rate based on students and staff regularly in the school building. The municipal vaccination data is based on the Town, and this can include students from private schools. PCMS is at 54.5% vaccinated and PHS is at 69.1%. The district will start collecting staff attestations this week. Only 490 families have completed the self-attestation form. On 11/5 the district will begin tracking the vaccination rate on the website COVID dashboard.

#### Consideration of First Read & Approval: Masking Discipline Policy

Mr. Tropeano said he and Mrs. Obey met with parents around masking and had good discussion. The parents asked the district to consider a policy around masking discipline. Mrs. Obey reached out to 42 superintendents, and none have a policy as they are using their student handbook. Mr. Tropeano reached out to the school committee group he is a part of, and none have a policy either. He asked if the PPS committee wants to consider a face covering policy in regard to discipline. Mrs. Bollinger asked what the point of a policy would be and Mrs. Obey is EO said it provides clear expectations and parents want to minimize distractions in class around masking. She understands parents but said there has not been any discipline beyond a verbal warning. Students are frustrated about wearing masks and do need several reminders and there is frustration from staff around proper mask wearing. Mr. Tropeano said the concern is around a more consistent message around what it should be and what it shouldn't be and also to make sure it's not punitive. Mr. Kenney said there may not be a need for a policy seeing as 42 other districts haven't created one, he suggested more communication on the issue. Mrs. Obey said she doesn't think a policy is needed as a policy may not change behavior but instead work to improve the message to students about appropriate mask wearing. Mrs. Scholl said it can be handled within the current structure and satisfy those concerned. Mr. Tropeano suggested creating a draft regarding the way the district is going to communicate.

Mrs. Jasie thanked the principals and said she was thankful for homecoming. She asked about masks and outside groups and Mrs. Obey said outside groups are not required to where masks in the school buildings, it is up to the group themselves.

## **Future Meeting Dates and Topics**

11/9/21

VOTE: At 9:18PM, on a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susie Scholl it was unanimously voted, to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, Lance Kennedy and Susan Bollinger

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

**APPROVED: December 7, 2021**

### **MOTIONS**

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Lance Kennedy, it was unanimously voted to approve the school committee meeting minutes of October 5, 2021.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, Lance Kennedy and Susan Bollinger

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

VOTE: At 9:18PM, on a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susie Scholl it was unanimously voted, to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, Lance Kennedy and Susan Bollinger

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none