

**Perquimans County Board of Education  
Special-Called Meeting – February 15, 2022**

The Perquimans County Board of Education met for a special-called meeting on Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the boardroom at the Central Office. Audio access was available to the public by dialing a telephone number and entering a meeting ID and passcode.

Chairwoman Dr. Anne White called the meeting to order. Russell Lassiter led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag and had prayer.

Board members present: Chairwoman Dr. Anne White (in person), Vice Chair Russell Lassiter (in person), Matt Peeler (in person), Amy Spaugh (in person), Leary Winslow (in person), and Arlene Yates (in person).

**Approval of Agenda**

Upon motion by Arlene Yates and second by Matt Peeler, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

**New Business**

**Face Covering Policy**

Superintendent Turner provided an update on the changes in the North Carolina Strong Schools Toolkit that were made by DHHS last Thursday. In her PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Turner said the map which illustrated the North Carolina LEA Face Mask Policies will probably be changing drastically in the next month. It has already changed significantly since last month. As of February 11, 2022, 40 school districts have masks optional policies and 75 school districts still have mask mandates. She provided monthly COVID counts in Perquimans County Schools as she does at each board meeting. The chart for January 14<sup>th</sup> through February 11<sup>th</sup> showed that student and staff positives have significantly decreased. She shared the cumulative totals that appear on the district website, which showed a significant difference in the numbers from last year to this year.

Dr. Turner said she texted board members last Thursday when the Department of Health and Human Services announced revisions that would take effect February 21, 2022. By setting February 21<sup>st</sup> as the effective date, it would give school systems time for school boards to meet, to communicate to parents and staff in the school system, and to prepare for the new procedures. The Toolkit gives districts more flexibility in almost everything except for positive COVID cases. For positive COVID cases, districts are still required to follow the current quarantine procedures.

The exclusion of asymptomatic students or staff from quarantine is the big change to the Toolkit. Students or staff who are exposed to COVID but do not have any symptoms no longer have to quarantine. The change applies regardless of exposure source, individual vaccination status or school mask requirement status. Individual contact tracing is no longer recommended, but schools should notify potentially exposed students and staff. There is flexibility in how students and staff are notified. Notification can be on an individual level, by group such as class or team, or at the school level. Information is currently provided at the school level in the Superintendent's all-calls and on the district website. After talking with school nurses and ARHS last week, they all agreed that the current reporting method is fine.

Dr. Turner said it is recommended that schools have a universal masking policy in place for everyone, in areas of high or substantial transmission, as defined by the CDC. Schools can consider moving to mask

optional when community transmission levels decline to moderate or low levels of community transmission. Dr. Turner provided a map that takes the new cases over the last 14 days and calculates the rate per 100,000 to get a baseline for comparison. According to the coloring on the chart, Perquimans is at the lowest level of cases per 100,000 residents. ARHS said that mask optional is reasonable considering our current metrics.

CDC's Order applies to all public transportation conveyances, including school buses. Regardless of the mask policy at school, all passengers and drivers should wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC's Order.

Dr. Turner also shared the results of a staff survey, "Should PQ continue the mask requirement? The majority of staff at PCS, HGS, and PCHS said "no." The vote was split at PCMS. At the request of a board member, Dr. Turner asked principals their thoughts about continuing with masks. All principals indicated that they preferred mask optional, but would support the Board's decision. A couple of principals said that it is getting difficult to keep students wearing masks properly and very few people wear them anywhere other than school. Another principal stated that students and parents are getting tired of it and it is becoming extremely difficult to manage.

Dr. Turner reminded board members about Senate Bill 654 that was signed into law on Monday, August 30, 2021, which requires school boards to vote each month on their pandemic-related mask or face covering policy. Dr. Turner stated that her recommendation each month is always made in collaboration with ARHS. Until this month, ARHS has supported our district continuing to wear masks based on the data. This month ARHS stated they were in full support of our district moving to mask optional based on the data. Therefore, Dr. Turner's recommendation was to make the wearing of masks optional but recommended for all students, staff, and visitors/spectators of Perquimans County Schools while inside school facilities and mandatory while on school buses due to federal law. Dr. Turner entertained questions and comments from board members.

Upon motion by Matt Peeler and second by Leary Winslow, the Board voted unanimously to make the wearing of masks optional but recommended for all students, staff, and visitors/spectators of Perquimans County Schools while inside school facilities and mandatory while on school buses due to federal law effective February 21, 2022.

#### Announcements

- Regular Board of Education Meeting – Monday, February 28, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. @ Central Office

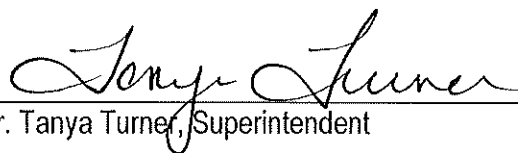
#### Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:26 p.m.



---

Dr. Anne White, Chairwoman



---

Dr. Tanya Turner, Superintendent