

**Seymour Board of Education
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

January 21, 2021

Zoom

7:00 pm

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kristen Bruno
Christopher Champagne
James Garofolo
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Peter Kubik
Beth Nesteriak (7:48)
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michael Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Business Manager
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Derrick Martin, Technology
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS
Jodie Roden, Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Stacey Albertson, Assistant Principal, CLS
Rebecca Bennett, Head Nurse

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Stanek called for a moment of silence to honor the 406,000 lives lost in the United States due to COVID19.

II. DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Budget Presentation

Mr. Wilson thanked his Central Office team and the administrators for their work and contributions to putting together this budget. He introduced the Cliff Notes pages of the budget that outlines the process and shares all of the requests. This was done due in part to the feedback that was received from the Board over the last couple of years. He said this was a true collaborative effort and the needs of the students were at the forefront. Administrators are able to answer questions if necessary. Ms. Holmes reviewed the Cliff Notes section for the Board. She reported that the Central Office team had met to carefully review all of the requests that were made and added in what they felt was needed to move the district forward and to meet the needs of all of our learners. The Central Office team also went back to Administrators to confirm the non-filling of certain staff positions due to retirements. On January 5, 2021, we learned from our insurance brokers of the new numbers to place in the budget. The renewal rate is 9.5% as opposed to the original number of 13% that had previously been provided. The budget was then re-run with this information as well as the items that were kept on the list. She discussed the retirement of Eric DeMarco (Social Studies, Christine Alcutt (Social Studies) and Elaine Roche (French) and disclosed that these positions are not being replaced. The need for these positions will continually be evaluated by building administration and central office to determine if they will need to be filled in the future. She noted that the insurance rate was an 8% increase over last year. She also discussed the items that made it into the 2021-22 education budget such as:

1. One Special Education teacher plus three Instructional Paraprofessionals for Seymour High School. This is due to the movement of two students who have been participating in the ABA program and will be transitioning to the high school.
2. Four Permanent Building Substitutes with Benefits. These positions were previously funded through a grant. Having them in each building is critical to establishing consistency in our schools when teachers are out. At the high school, the position will be split into a 0.4 ELA teacher and a 0.6 permanent building substitute to cover classes when teachers are out.
3. Increase Music at Seymour High School from 0.4 to 1.0. This will provide SHS administration the ability to offer music classes and allow dual certified staff to teach in other content areas.
4. One nurse floater position with benefits. This position is needed to help whenever one of our nurses are out. When all nurses are in, this person will rotate between buildings to assist with day-to-day operations.
5. One library media position with benefits split between the high school and the middle school
6. Social Emotional Materials that are needed to support the work that has been done with the SEL pilot program in grades K-12.
7. Provide stipends to our teachers who are grading the Capstone projects at Seymour High School.
8. Provide Guided Reading materials to meet the needs of our young struggling readers in CLS.
9. Provide Math Resources materials to Bungay and CLS to replace the older textbooks that are currently out of date and no longer available.

Ms. Holmes said after adding in these items, the budget is at 4.35% that represents a \$1,509,481 increase from last year's budget. She said we would like to add more into the budget but recognize the fiscal responsibility to the Town of Seymour. She said this budget provides for the needs of all of our students. Mr. Garofolo asked why those positions of those retiring were not being filled. Mr. Wilson said our administration agrees that we can cover these positions with other staff that are cross-certified. Mr. Garofolo asked if this might cause grievances due to extra prep time. Mr. Wilson confirmed that there would be no extra prep time needed. Mr. Garofolo said he has serious reservations that we will be granted a 4.09% budget increase. Ms. Harmeling said she agrees with Mr. Garofolo 100% saying it is all about allowing the Town to hold to a no raise increase and she feels we have no shot at an increase. She asked if the Town gave us a number and Mr. Wilson said it was closer to 2% and he knows they would like closer to a 2%. He said we worked very hard to keep the budget low and we understand that decisions have been made to meet the needs of the students. Ms. Bruno asked if the retirements would cause courses not to be available to the students. Ms. Roden said there is low interest in French A, French B and C can be taught through Edgenuity. Spanish A, B, C will be taught. French will come back if student interest determines it. Mr. Freund explained that extending Music would make it possible to utilize cross-certified teachers. The permanent building substitute will free up teachers who are cross-certified which will provide more flexibility while maintaining classes. Mr. Champagne asked if we are satisfying our safety obligations. He also inquired as to what savings we have realized from the Johnson Controls projects. Mr. Wilson said we have not seen any savings yet due to the delays and the Board of Finance will be looking into this. Ms. Holmes said she would have to rework the budget to get down to 2.25% and would probably have to eliminate some positions in line items to a zero increase to get it down. There are some choices but everything else is contractual. Mr. Champagne said he felt it was important to get a baseline then work in critical things. He also agreed that he does not see a 4% increase happening. He wondered about attrition and additional retirements. Ms. Holmes said she has not received any additional retirements. Ms. Harmeling said that in years past we did a level services budget. However, we have gotten away from this since it provided an artificial number. Ms.

Harmeling asked about the suggestion of losing or reducing existing staff in order to get to 2%. Ms. Holmes said cross teaching and eliminating some of the items previously mentioned such as the library media position, nurses, permanent building subs would have to be eliminated. Mr. Wilson said he understands 4% is high but we feel it is necessary. He said they can look at items if they have to scrape down but reminded the Board that this is very difficult. Mr. Strumello asked Ms. Roden to explain moving away from the team model at the middle school. Ms. Roden said doing this would free up teachers to teach content areas throughout the building. She said as long as the teacher is certified, they can teach grades 6, 7, and 8. Mr. Hatfield asked for some further information on using Edgenuity for French classes. Ms. Roden said we currently have nine students in French classes. Ms. Freimuth is familiar with Edgenuity. We would look to the high school for guidance to accomplish and have students be ready for high school. There would be a person in the class to monitor but not to instruct. The person could be a non-certified teacher or a tutor. Mr. Hatfield asked about other courses that might have to be lost but said he guessed that would be another conversation. Ms. Harmeling asked why not have students stay in their respective wings, for example have 7th grades stay in the 7th grade wing. Ms. Roden said they have to look at class sizes. Ms. Harmeling said this would be a good conversation to have but we would not have an answer tonight. Ms. Bruno said teams are not in the summary of the budget and she would like to hear the pros and cons. Ms. Roden clarified that this is not an idea that was presented by the middle school administration and she needs more time before she can discuss it. Mr. Wilson thanked Ms. Harmeling for her idea. He said the cons are the loss of a team of teachers and the relationship they have with each other. The pros include the ability to lower the number of staff. If the numbers go down this is a way to meet the learning needs. We still need to look at this. Administration is advocating for all nine items. They feel these nine items will move the district forward and could not strip them out of the budget in good faith. It is understood this is a tough job for the Board. Ms. Harmeling asked why the four permanent building subs are being put in the operating budget. Mr. Wilson said it is for more consistency and less strain when a substitute is needed. He said putting them into the grant might be risky. If we didn't get the grant, we would lose these valuable positions. Ms. Holmes mentioned that she is still waiting on guidelines for the grant. The guidelines would enable us to know exactly what we can use the money for. Ms. Holmes said she will share the guidelines as soon as she receives them. Ms. Harmeling asked if the permanent building subs would be in the bargaining unit. Ms. Holmes said they will not be part of the bargaining unit but will get a contract that is similar to the teachers' contract. They would receive \$115 for 182 days plus benefits. Ms. Bruno asked about the retirement costs vs. retiree payments. Ms. Holmes said longevity payments come into play and this is something we have not negotiated out of the contract. Mr. Strumello asked about offering an early retirement package and Ms. Holmes said one has already been offered during this contract and the language provides for us to only do one per contract. Ms. Harmeling said she would like them to check the contract on this because she feels the language is different. Ms. Holmes confirmed she will check it. Mr. Garofolo said he feels, based on some of the letters we have received from dissatisfied parents, that there is a good chance we have lost the base of support and parents will speak with their vote. He asked how we can convince our parents to support the budget. At this time, Mr. Strumello suggested we have another meeting since there is more information needed from the team. Ms. Harmeling asked about the timeline for the budget. Mr. Wilson said the Town would like our budget by January 25 but we can ask for an extension if we need it. He suggested we meet on Monday. He said he can get the administration together and reprioritize the nine requests with figures included. This will take a lot of work tomorrow from the administrators but he thinks it is doable. They can bring the budget back to the Board so that the Board can make recommendations and we can have a budget ready to be taken to the Town. Mr. Strumello said this is satisfactory. Ms. Harmeling agreed and asked that the changes be reflected in Excel which would be easier for the Board. Mr.

Wilson recapped: we will have a procedural meeting tomorrow, re-hash the list and throw it into Excel. Ms. Bruno said she had 5-6 questions which she will email and asked Mr. Wilson to get back to her. Mr. Wilson said he would respond to the whole Board. Ms. Bruno asked about the Athletic Director and Assistant Athletic Director and where they "lived" in the budget. Ms. Holmes said they are in certified staff, high school account 111. Ms. Bruno asked if they can be funded at the same level as last year and Mr. Holmes said this should be no issue. Mr. Strumello said the meeting will be on Monday and only the budget would be discussed. There was further discussion regarding the athletic directors and Mr. Holmes said she can break out their information.

B. Schools Reopening

Mr. Wilson said this is a discussion that the Board requested and he will remain brief. As everyone is aware rising numbers caused us to delay reopening. He said numbers are better now, going from 18 to 8 cases and the quarantine numbers going from 65 to 59. The state data tracker shows 74 to 86. It is concerning that we are at 22 of 168 towns. He took a moment to thank everyone on the team. He said he is open to a conversation with the Board. The health and safety of our staff and students is paramount and it cannot go unsaid. He said no one wants the kids back in school more than him and the members of this team. Mr. Strumello said he spoke to Jessica at Naugatuck Valley Health and she said they consider each town and sometimes each school in each town when looking at the numbers. Mr. Hatfield thanked Mr. Champagne for contacting the Valley Sentinel to correct the story they ran. Ms. Bruno said the parents need an answer now so they know if their kids are going to school on Monday. Mr. Wilson said just like when we closed Bungay School, we look at each school when it comes to staffing issues. Ms. Bruno asked if this was considered last week when it was decided to close the district. Mr. Wilson said it was considered. Ms. Harmeling said it is critically important not to reference the numbers without detail. Everyone understands what the numbers are. She was happy to know that Mr. Strumello was in on the call. She said when she looks at the State website she understood it to mean not only should we not look at individual town numbers, the color coding system has also been walked back. The schools are looking for stability and cannot react at the numbers each Thursday. Mr. Champagne asked what our staffing numbers look like at this point. Ms. Bennett said currently there are nine teachers in quarantine. Mr. Champagne said he felt a decision needs to be made tonight, parents were upset with the Friday decision last week. Ms. Bennett said lots of discussion goes into making the decision. Ms. Bruno said we need to address upset parents. She said families are suffering and the problems are beyond COVID. Experts say schools need to open for the health and safety of students. We need to follow our infection control guidelines. Ms. Harmeling said she echoes Ms. Bruno 100% saying we cannot exist from week to week. Mr. Wilson said the numbers were released tonight and other schools are in hybrid mode, some are in remote mode, some are switching back and forth between hybrid and remote. Some have said they will stay in hybrid mode until the numbers go down. Mr. Champagne asked what we are doing to protect our students and staff. Mr. Wilson said if we return to hybrid, we are in a good place with our mitigation strategies. However if we add students, it will be difficult to social distance. With regard to the next steps, we will have to see how it goes before we increase population and determine who can come back. He suggested we go to hybrid, see how it goes and then evaluate. Mr. Wilson said it's a tough decision to make and he would like to hear from each BOE member. Mr. Garofolo said to bring back the students on Monday. Ms. Nesteriak said based on the information heard tonight, we need to push forward. It is a difficult decision but let's move forward, monitor and be transparent. Mr. Stanek said this is difficult for Administrators to balance. We need to protect the health and safety of staff and students. After tonight, he is in favor of returning to the hybrid plan on Monday. Mr. Kubik said the issue of whether to return to school on Monday is difficult. He would like to see the kids back in school. People need to understand that it will be a roller coaster for a while. Let's see where it goes with the understanding that it could change week to week. Ms. Bruno said we need to seek input from the teachers and parents must help to control the numbers. Ms. Harmeling said she was nervous about what Mr. Kubik said about it being a week to week decision. She understands there could be staffing issues but she is opposed to using only Seymour's numbers. Mr. Wilson said NVHD shared that

Seymour's numbers need to be looked at but it is not the defining factor. All three factors are used and we always seek guidance from the health department. Ms. Bennett said they participate every Tuesday on a DPH call. Town level transmission rates is not a key factor but it does give you an indication of what is going on around you. She said she is worried about exposure. Masks definitely reduce transmission but they must be removed to eat which at the elementary level is at least three times a day. Mr. Champagne said what has changed from last week. Mr. Wilson said we went from 18 cases down to 8. Quarantines are going down. We are trending down in two of the three categories. Right now the factors are in our favor. Mr. Champagne said since we are constantly reevaluating, it has to be a week to week decision. Mr. Wilson confirmed that it is frustrating. Those decisions can happen at any time, we cannot say forever. Things are constantly changing and there is no time frame. We are going back to the hybrid model and looking toward doing more but data will dictate our decision. We will be transparent by saying "due to staffing issues, we..." Mr. Hatfield thanked everyone for their statements leaning to the hybrid approach. Everyone must understand the fluidity of the situation. Currently there are five teachers in quarantine. It is week to week and there is nothing else we can do. We are leaning toward opening but we need to be aware that things change. He said he feels the bigger government needs to have better metrics and put them on paper. These are the cards that we have been dealt. Mr. Wilson will notify everyone regarding coming back to school. Ms. Bruno asked if people were to quarantine 10 days or 14 days. Ms. Bennett said on Wednesday it was decided that the quarantine would be 14 days in the Valley so that exposure can be minimized. Ms. Nesteriak asked if they can test out of quarantine and Ms. Bennett said the Valley is not enabling people to test out. Ms. Harmeling asked what we have done to let the public know how to be substitutes in our district. Ms. Tencza said we are being creative with how teachers are working. Teachers who are sick can teach from home if they feel well enough. Teachers in quarantine can teach remotely and there are supervisors in the classrooms. Mr. Champagne asked if there is a certified teacher in the classroom when a teacher is teaching remotely. Ms. Tencza said it could be a tutor or a paraprofessional. We are trying to be as flexible as the State guidelines allow us to be. Mr. Strumello said Mr. Wilson will take care of the communication regarding the reopening of schools. Mr. Wilson said he will get a communication out tonight as soon as the meeting is over.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Champagne said there are an unprecedented number of emails tonight; probably close to 43 or 44 with many of them being very lengthy. Approximately 33 are dealing with the return to school. Mr. Champagne has asked that all be included in the minutes and filed with the Town however due to time constraints they will not be read at this time. He said we also received a letter that was signed by more than 100 parents. There was some discussion on whether this was public comment or a letter to the Board. Mr. Champagne will forward all the emails to the Board Clerk who will include them in the minutes. Ms. Bennett said the CDC preferred the gold standard of quarantine which is 14 days. Private sector has the ability to have quarantines of as little as seven days.

Eve Lisbin, 1 Glen Circle, Seymour - Hello, My name is Eve Lisbin and I reside at 1 Glen Circle. I have 6 children 4 of which are in each level of the Seymour public schools. I am concerned with the repeating postponement of the opening of our schools. This not only is a HUGE inconvenience for parents to continue to juggle the care of their children while working full time and having to explain to their bosses but also poses both mental and emotional risks to both children and parents alike. The home is not suitable for learning. Period. There are too many distractions and perhaps it would be doable to those who have expressed the desire to do so but not in a home with special ed children or 6 children for that matter. I also believe the rise in Seymour's Covid cases is obviously NOT do to our kids being in school where it is a more controlled environment but due to the fact that these kids are anywhere and everywhere with less cohorting being done. This needs to stop! My kids are not learning what they should be learning for our tax dollars! If anything, they are suffering from worsening attention and focus, emotionally and mentally from fighting with parents and have taken on an attitude of "who cares about school!" Please consider our plea for our children to get back to a normal life!

Alana Zhingri 140 mountain road seymour, ct. - The science says kids should be back in school. The science says kids are not super spreaders. The science says keeping kids on distance learning is detrimental to their mental health. Attached are links to articles that confirm these facts, by scientists.

We cannot keep postponing returning our children to in-school classroom learning for those that believe it is a safe and the best option for their children, while still offering the remote learning option to those that feel that is best for their child. The majority of towns in CT are doing this. There is a safe way to do this. Seymour should be able to learn from the towns all around them how to achieve this safely and creatively. These towns have been offering in-school learning for their students for months, some even from the beginning of the school year. Many of these towns and cities ALSO "follow the Naugatuck Valley Health Department" and ALSO speak with the same Director of Pediatric medicine at Griffin Hospital. I also find it *baffling* that New Haven--the biggest school district in the state, found a way to send their K-5 students back 4 days a week!! Let's make it happen in our little town of Seymour. The parents of Seymour's children deserve transparency immediately - exactly what is needed to get these students back to in-person learning? Is it substitutes? Is it bus drivers? The Covid numbers will continue to rise and fall daily and we cannot continue to damage the mental health of our children by being fearful of returning them to school. We must use the towns around us as guide models of how they have been so successful in their return to school while still remaining cautious. I firmly believe that all children, especially young children, should not be learning from home behind a screen all day. It is vital that these kids return to school as soon as possible. They need to be around their peers, socializing the best they can with the social distancing methods at school. They are in such a critical stage of life academically, emotionally and socially. We are taxpayers and some of us firmly believe the risks of having our kids stay at home, learning from a screen in a non-academic environment with no socialization with their peers, or by physically being around their peers, far out-weighs the risks of going back to school, where it has been scientifically proven that kids are the least at risk for contracting and spreading this virus, and if contracted, they have an enormously high survival rate. Let us make the choice for our kids. Offer all options. so that parents can choose what is best for their child!!

Here is the aforementioned articles/data: <https://theartofeducation.edu/2020/05/27/how-remote-learning-can-harm-students/> <https://www.colorado.edu/artsscience-advising/2020/05/01/how-remote-learning-has-affected-students-learning-environment-and-motivation-levels> <https://nypost.com/2020/09/16/remote-learning-is-a-disaster-and-terrible-for-children/Perspective | Remote school is putting kids under toxic stress>

Trista Gamble, 13 Skokorat St., Seymour, CT - To whom it may concern, I commenting on the continued extension to have the Seymour Public Schools remain full distance learning and the possibility of these closures continuing in the future. 1st: Timing Each time we have learned the schools are to be closed full-time has been with less than 72 hours notice, and in one case less than 48 hours. This sudden shift of closing has occurred after monitoring the numbers and one would assume with hours of meetings by the response team, yet the parent body and teachers are given very little time to uproot their lives as they make sure their children have the care that is required while learning outside the school. Surely, more time can be given? If you are monitoring and have protocols in place, you would be able to see the shift in metrics sooner than you are giving the parent body at this time? Children should not be marked absent on the Monday following the announcement of closures. Since so little time is given, parents should be given a grace period of one day of the work week to find proper accommodation for their children if necessary. We are asked to uproot our lives in short notice and more needs to be done to accommodate that fact. 2nd: Tracking Nearly each evening I receive a Covid Positive email about students and staff who are positive within the district. Yet these numbers are from people who are working from home. Is there any monitoring in how they are being exposed? For example, how many students are using daycares, neighbors, family members outside the home environment when attending online school? What is the percentage of positive cases against the whole student body and staff of each school? How are these numbers comparing to other districts that have remained open for five days since September? A more transparent manner of communication is needed. At the moment the positive Covid cases we are informed of isn't giving us informed data in terms of why we should keep our schools closed. Contact tracing would give more information and real data as to how people may be exposed and in turn give better data to the parent body as to why the district should remain closed. 3rd: Socialization

We are parents to a single child and he is new to the district. This pandemic has been devastating to the social and emotional growth of our seven year old child. We abide by social distancing and in doing so, our child has spent nearly a year on his own without being in the physical presence of other

children. At the moment there is very little “free time” for children online to communicate with each other. The day is heavily structured and the communication of children with each other in a free manner nearly does not exist. The children are only given 20 minutes on the occasional Friday. If we are to continue online, more must be done to ensure children are able to communicate with each other and socialize. The plain truth is that they need to be in the physical presence of each other. In person socialization of children set the foundation of how one communicates within our society. School is not just about learning the classic curriculum of language, mathematics, social studies, arts, and so on, the social and emotional development of the child is of equal importance. It is vital to the understanding of one’s culture and society and it is the interaction of peers that plays a pivotal role to this process. After nearly a year of adapting to living in the age of Covid, it is time we find a manner in functioning within our new normal. Masks are to be worn. Hands are to be washed frequently. Social distancing is to be done whenever possible. Our society will not continue to function if parents cannot work for fear their child will remain home or continue in this back and forth of when Seymour will open again. One way we could ensure our opening is to ask this board to focus on making sure our staff and teachers are vaccinated as soon as possible. My husband and I are very appreciative of the effort the teachers are providing in our son’s education, but it is not enough. It just isn’t and it is the youth of Seymour that will pay the consequences of your decisions for years to come. Schools need to be open safely and only close classrooms when active cases are present. Open our schools. Yours kindly,

Christine & Jeffrey Brenning, 57 Bunting Rd - Our students need to go back to IN SCHOOL learning. All our surrounding towns are in school learning. That includes the largest in our area NEWTOWN, and the smallest DERBY who have been in person learning since the beginning of the school year. Teachers do their best work in person and our children deserve the best. With all the surrounding schools in person learning, our students are only falling behind in the testing that the schools all hold in high regard. Don’t we want SEYMOUR to improve in our testing and not fall further behind other schools?? My son is begging to go back to in person school at SHS, what child begs to go back to school? Please have our children go back to in person learning at our schools.

Stacey Kempf, 8 Aspen Lane, Seymour - Listening to past public comments, I find it disappointing that our staff is putting their best interest in front of the kids. Teachers are considered “Essential” workers for a reason. Distant learning has not been proven to be as effective as in classroom learning. Most other districts are operating at the very least, hybrid model, otherwise full in with the option to do full distant learning. Our kids not only have academic needs, but social and emotional needs as well! Cases are rising because people are so sick of not having structure and interaction that they are moving from house to house, daycare to daycare to get support during the day for full time working parents. This is why cases are rising! Put our kids back in school with a structured day, wearing their masks and interacting in a learning environment. I work in a school district that has been full in for almost 2 weeks. Yes classes are full, but there is enough space between desks to where I feel safe the entire time while assisting them and the kids are thriving! Right know it is disappointing to be a resident of Seymour.

Tressyn Morgan, 47 Birchwood Rd., Seymour, CT 06483 - To Whom It May Concern: I am reaching out to the Seymour Board of Education to let you know how negatively my children are being affected by having to distance learn. instead of seeing happy students come off the bus each day, I see sad and discouraged kids who are not learning properly. They yearn to be learning in person. It is not ok or normal for a 10 year-old boy to tell me, “mom, I think i’m depressed.” It is not normal for my 7 year old to have meltdowns on a daily basis because he can grasp what his teacher is trying to teach him through a computer screen! it is not normal for my B student child to now be getting 30s and 40s as grades. There is a reason why kids get sent to school to learn, the home environment is not a place for kids to be learning what they are supposed to be taught in school. Not only are their grades declining but their mental health is as well. I am a Registered Dental Hygienist and pohave been forced to work part-time to be able to be at home to help my children with school issues/ work. My dental office has been open full time without having to shut down since June. We have hundreds of patients coming in and out of the office on a weekly basis. we have not had to quarantine, send staff home, or shut down. My point is, there should be a safe way for Seymour schools to be open, it is necessary for all students and families. i’m hoping that you take re-opening Seymour schools seriously for the sake of all Seymour students. Regards,

Daniel Rollinson no Address provided - To whom it may concern, My name is Daniel Rollinson. My wife and I have a child in 4th grade at CLS and distance learning has not worked for our child. It is a daily struggle for him. He has gone from being a happy go lucky child, to depressed. He hasn't learned or retained anything, as sitting in front of a computer screen for 6 hours a day is not beneficial. Our son has fallen so far behind that we had to hire him a tutor. This is extremely disheartening that we now have to pay someone (more than my wife makes an hour) just to compensate for where the school is lacking. Furthermore, due to school being closed, we are actually exposing members of our community to more people than we would be if school were open. We are constantly juggling our son around. One day he goes to our neighbors, another day to his grandmothers, etc. Other towns around us (with the same numbers or more) are doing in person learning with no issues. There is no reason Seymour children cannot be in school. If lack of teachers is the concern, multiple parents (including myself) have stepped up and are willing to substitute. I urge you to give parents the option of having our children attend school full time in person. Please make the decision to get our children back in school and stick to it! Sincerely,

Angelica Vega, Frank Gyongyosi, no address provided - To the Board of Education, I am writing on behalf of my two sons attending 1st grade and Kindergarten (Special Ed) at Bungay. I want to share our personal experience with distance learning as I echo the cry to open the schools immediately. I watch my eldest's progress steadily decline as we continue to push back in-person learning. I was told today he is still within average as consolation but as his parent I do not care about the average but his potential. The fact that he is still within average has nothing to do with the success of distance learning and everything to do with the amount of time and work we spend with him beyond the hours of 9am and 3:30pm. He is a very well behaved kid who now struggles to focus because the home is not a learning environment with all the distractions of everyday life. He has his learning disabled brother and his virtual class in the background. Headphones are not an option for his brother due to sensory issues. Both struggle with sitting still and I cannot risk having a Chromebooks accidentally yanked to the floor by headphones. My obligations in the home also continue in the background. I too have my own virtual meetings which not only add to the noise as I cannot mute my voice or leave them unattended but also limit my ability to assist him. His brother requires the majority of my attention just to keep him at the computer, also limiting my ability to help him. As the B.O.E, I do not have to stress the importance of socialization for their age group, but I will inform you I am already seeing the negative impact from isolation. Then we have my youngest. He was initially denied for Pre-K services. By the time he was kicked out of his private preschool and approved for services through the district, it was December, 2019. Add the holidays and Covid-19, he never had a consistent education. I expressed my concerns with fine motor skills from the start in Chatfield. I repeated my concerns with his inability to write/draw basics shapes into kindergarten and was told he would be tested "as soon as possible". *It is now end of January*. They failed to evaluate him when we were in school. Now they "cannot". I was not permitted to bring him in. They *would not* do it remotely. Last week I requested we do it when we returned today and was told "some time" this week. Now it's next Monday, *maybe*. He already struggles with focus and emotional regulation in a classroom setting. Remote learning is impossible without my complete and undivided attention as his substitute para. I am *always* at his side when I can but I have obligations that existed before the school decided to keep kids home. His speech teacher cannot clearly hear his pronunciations so I have to clarify. When he *is* approved for OT, how is that supposed to work remotely? Google meets are not social learning. This is affecting his integration plans and his ability to apply behavioral learning strategies to real life scenarios. He has lost the benefit of learning expected behavior in the classroom from his peers. His teachers are *amazing* but cannot break the barrier created by the computer screen and it is putting him at a greater disadvantage. He has a right to appropriate accommodations and distance learning has proven to be inadequate. On behalf of both of our children their father and I ask you to consider the long term impact this is having on the children's emotional and educational development and provide students the *option* to attend school in person. I understand the hope is "just" another week. I ask you understand, having heard this since March of last year, this wishful thinking is no longer enough and as their parents we have to advocate what is best for them. It is hard to accept that our town is unable to do what so many other schools seem to be able to do. Our children deserve better. We can do better.

Carrie Wilson, 62 Briarwood Dr., Seymour, CT 06483 - To the Seymour Board of Education: I am writing to ask you to give our children the option of returning to full time, in school/in person learning. My son is a 7th grader that is struggling with distance learning. He is the type of child that needs in-person attention. He is easily distracted and not fully focused, and being at home is not a suitable environment for learning. Although his teachers are doing an amazing job, he is not learning/retaining the same amount of knowledge that he would by being in school/in person. I am afraid he is falling behind. We need to get back to some sort of normalcy. Distance Learning is not normal and our children are suffering from it. Please give us the option for full time in school/in person learning immediately. Thank you for your consideration,

Susan C. Liscinsky, 6 Jay Lane, Seymour, CT 06483 - Dear Seymour Board of Education, I live Seymour with my grandchildren, ages 12 and 15 who have been in the hybrid learning since last year. My daughter (their mom), my husband, and I work full time away from home although each of us are home with them one day a week and help with their education those 3 days. I am imploring the Seymour Board of Education to reconsider the option for children to return to school 4 days a week. My reasons for concern are my grandchildren. My grandson, is special needs, he requires one on one with his teachers or a teachers aid. He is border line autistic, he needs reassurance and assistance daily. Some days he will just sit and stare at the monitor, lost, and he has sadly regressed. Not only that, he has so much anxiety, stress and anger we have never seen before. These beautiful children need to return to school on January 25, 2021. He was so excited to be going back feeling positive and strong. My granddaughter struggles so much, she has ADHD among other issues now an eating disorder. She tries so hard sometimes to keep up, feels lost and knows she is failing a few subjects. She has talked about quitting school all together if she has to continue on this hybrid education. We are aware you have not had to experience a health crisis such as this before and are concerned for safety while trying to consider all families and options. The change from going to school 4 days a week (per choice) was ripped out from under these children especially with special needs who were prepared to safely to return to school. All surrounding schools went back full time, as should Seymour. Not only the in-school education environment of learning, children need to socialize, we all do. I read more about this dilemma in this particular article from, "[J Psychiatry Neurosci](#). 2008 Sep; 33(5): 391–392. PMID: 18787656 [The neurobiology of human social behaviour: an important but neglected topic](#) [Simon N. Young](#) [Author information](#) [Article notes](#) [Copyright and License information](#) [Disclaimer](#) This article has been [cited by](#) other articles in PMC." "Humans are inherently social." "Although we may share some of the broader aspects of our social behaviour with more primitive species, human social behaviour is obviously more complex but no less important for our health and survival. Given the importance of social interactions for humans, it is not surprising that most psychiatric disorders involve some disruption of normal social behaviour, and that in several disorders abnormal social functioning is one of the central symptoms. Examples are autism, social anxiety disorder, borderline personality disorder and schizotypal personality disorder." This is so important for our family and others. These children are our future; the gigantic struggles they are going through now are real and scary let us help to get them through this wisely. Remember your childhood, and put yourselves in their place. What will they learn, fear and not to question, what will their future look like? Best,

Marlo Ruggiero, 8 Bungay Terrace - I am writing to express my disappointment with the recent postponement of in-person learning. I realize that safety is a top priority of everyones and it must be. However, at this point in the pandemic, children's needs and instruction must rate up there as well. Our students have lost so much instruction thus far between the closure at the end of last year and the varied learning models this year. While schools try to make every attempt to ensure that learning is occurring remotely, there is no substitute for in-person authentic learning. As a teacher, I agree with this 100% as I'm sure all teachers do. I realize that decisions are based on current metrics, however, there is also a level of uncertainty and an estimate model that we are basing decisions off of as well. No one knows what will occur when our students re-enter school but I feel from watching other districts do it, that we can be successful with appropriate mitigation strategies, thorough cleaning and families adhering to the quarantine guidelines. I would like Mr. Wilson and the Board to understand that not every child learns the same, not every child can access their education from home, and authentic teaching and learning can not happen remotely. Students at risk need to learn in school. This is

their future and the skills and instruction that is lost is going to affect them for years to come if not their lifetime. I am also so saddened for our younger elementary students who are learning to read and write. Again, while our teachers do their best efforts in providing appropriate and meaningful tasks to our students, it is not the same as in-person learning. Our students need to be back in school, not only for their academic livelihood, but their social/emotional livelihood as well. Other districts are doing it successfully and I feel that we can too. We can all come together to be creative in order for our students to learn and grow in school. I am committed, as I am sure each parent is, to aiding in the solution. Every family should have the choice of what they feel works for their families best but unfortunately the families who are choosing in-person learning aren't receiving that choice. I hope this postponement was just for this week and we will return to in-person next week as there is valuable time to make up and necessary learning to follow. Thank you for your consideration.

Erica Hoffman, 120 Maple Street - Hello, My name is Erica Hoffman and I live at 120 Maple St in Seymour. I am a parent to two students who attend Seymour schools. My son is in 6th grade at SMS and my other son is in 3rd grade at CLS. I feel very strongly that parents should have the option to send their children in five days a week full time. We know our children and we want the best education for them. Distance learning is NOT the best option for my children. My third grader does not have much of an attention span while at home and constantly gets up and does not pay attention. I know from past years speaking with teachers and conferences, he is more attentive and reserved in class therefore paying more attention. He also goes to a daycare center 3 days a week because my husband and I both work. So he's already out and around other children who come and go. At least in school in person he'd be with the same kids 5 days a week and not in a daycare center where he is not able to concentrate as well. My other son is in sixth grade and has reading/comprehension issues. I had met with his fifth grade teacher and other staff members when he was in fifth grade and explained how he never met the fourth grade reading/comprehension level per the MAP testing, report cards, and SBAC scores. They ended up giving him some reading help but then that ended when co vid started. His fifth grade levels show he never met his fifth grade reading/comprehension either so he is just being pushed along. I brought this up to his teacher and guidance counselor at the middle school who brought it up to the principal. They wanted to wait for MAP testing and to see how he did before they decided if he really needed the help. He has not received the help he needs. I have grades and testing to prove he needs help. He needs to be in school to be learning from an in person teacher. I feel distance learning is not giving him the help he needs. Distance learning/hybrid is not best for my children. Please consider us parents who knows what's best for our kids. I have been working through this pandemic and working with co vid so I know how it is first hand and the consequences of it. I am not downplaying it nor do I want anyone to get sick but it will happen. Children, teachers, staff can still get it in or out of school. I feel as long as safety measures are taken and enforced, they can all get through this. Our children's education is so important and being in school is what they need. Thank you for your time.

Angela McKirryher, 5 Country Club Drive - Dear Seymour Board of Education and Mr. Wilson, I am writing as a very concerned parent, as our children are not receiving the education they deserve. The state of CT COVID rate is below 5%, our case rate numbers are similar to surrounding towns who are all currently in school. The CDC and DPH are stating it is safe in schools. Who is making the decision to continue distance learning when the BOE voted to move forward to in person learning? I feel there is a total lack of leadership and communication. Although teachers are working extremely hard with remote learning it is not working. I have three children in this school district, one of which has an IEP that struggles every day. I urge the leadership of this district to stand up and move to full in person learning. I believe we should have the choice for in person learning, as those that want to remain with full remote learning do. I feel strongly about moving forward to in person learning and will not stop fighting until we do so, anything less is inadmissible. Thank you for your time,

Angela McKirryher - Mr. Wilson, I would like to see the metrics that we are currently following? The state of CT is below 5% per News this morning. Orange has rate of 67, Bethany has rate of 74, Woodbridge has rate 46.2 (small population), Oxford has rate of 61, Naugatuck has rate of 78 and Seymour has rate of 74. There is not much of a difference, so I would like to know how they can do it and we can not. I will tell you it starts with our leadership or lack of. I have many family members that are teachers who have done 1 week only of remote learning this school year and at that time teachers were still required to be in school. Teachers want to be considered essential then they should act as

such. COVID is not going away, therefore we need to learn how to live with it. Our children deserve an education and the current remote learning is not sufficient. This was pointed out at the BOE meeting when it was stated they are not giving the MAP secondary for the lack of instruction. I honestly can not fully express in words my disgust with this school district. I would like to have the choice for my children to be in school as those that want to stay home do. If the CDC and DPH say schools are safe how is it that you get to determine for our children it is not? You need to be an advocate for these students, for the majority would like to be in school and need to be in school. They should have that choice as stated before. It is absurd for you to even think making a weekly decision is feasible for working parents. I am lucky to have help but many other are losing their jobs or leaving their children home alone. This is not okay. You thanked me for my patience, well I will let you know I have zero patience left for this district and what's going on. It's time to step up like I mentioned previously or step down. Thank you, Debora Hennessy, 37 Fox Drive - Dear Members of the BOE, My name is Debora Hennessy and I live at 37 Fox Drive in Seymour. I understand that tonight's meeting (postponed until tomorrow) has a different agenda but wanted to take this opportunity to share my concerns about getting the students back in school. The decision to not return to school made Friday was based on rising numbers, but there is data that shows that kids are safer in school. I am including a link below to an article that reports that the rate of increase is considerably lower for students in school full time. My opinion is that we should be able to send our children back to school in person full time if we choose, receive more timely communication, and that decisions can't continue to be made based on what was decided in the spring (a response I frequently receive). As a help, I have spoken to Dr. Fred Browne, Chief Medical Officer and Vice President of Medical Affairs of Griffin Hospital who specializes in Infectious Disease, and he is willing to speak at a BOE meeting about the virus. He has done this for several organizations as well as at other BOE meetings in our community and I think his expertise will help us all. Best, John Nuñez, 26 Deerfield dr - I am a stay at home dad who has been witness to my children's daily struggle because of distance learning. Anxiety, inability to focus, eating disorders, loss of confidence and the fading spark of bright and exuberant young minds. The sad part is that these are true for all 3 of my children even though only one is enrolled in school. My 2 yo is forced into long screen times because i have to be a teacher to my oldest. My 4 yo is now an on call Baby sitter to her 2 yo sister so that i can assist in my child's education. My fist grader has to do classes in the car because i still have to pick up my 4yo from preschool. She is also trying to learn in her home. A home is not an environment for learning. A home where i have to choose between playing with my other children and asking my 6yo to ignore them playing or tell my 2-4 yo to be quiet because it's school time. Days on end this has been the struggle for them. I have watched my 1sh grader regress immeasurably. She has only attended 14 days of in school learning since March of her kindergarten year. She struggles with her confidence which was one of her strongest attributes. She is now depressed and has developed an eating disorder to cope!!!! At 6!!!!. We have an infrastructure to teach our children and it is vacant. This is no way to build a future for our children and our country. Please give an option for full time in school learning for students like her. Olivia Nuñez, a Bungay bee who's life and education is suffering because of decisions being made to 'protect' her. Decisions that are affecting all of our children well beyond their education and who's effects will stay with them long past their time at the Seymour school system. Please, save my child. Save our children . Save our community before the harm is irreversible and scarring.

Jackie Liposky, 12 Legion Rd, Seymour - Dear Seymour Board of Education Members and Administration:

It is with the utmost respect that I request you do not delay the return to in person learning again. I am the parent of a student in 3rd grade at CLS. I understand the pressures of ensuring a safe learning environment for all. Yet, even with my understanding, I fail to understand why Seymour has yet to return to hybrid learning. Our infection numbers are not vastly different than the other Valley towns who have remained or have returned to in person learning. Seymour is failing, with detrimental and lasting effects. Our students are suffering. Many students will be entering school next year well below expected levels for reading and math. They are missing opportunities for social growth. They are missing opportunities for learning how to appropriately navigate stressful situations. I've heard it said, and have said myself "everyone is behind" "this year is crazy, but kids are resilient", and "our kids will recover", etc. I believe these things to be true, however, if Seymour remains one of the only area towns

that stays closed with no option for in-person learning our children WILL be behind their peers. Though our kids will eventually get back to "normal", they will suffer. They will be at a disadvantage. Seymour will be impacted as test scores decline in the coming years- and they will certainly decline if students don't return to school. Students are already struggling to maintain their skills at or below grade level. Parents are not teachers. Teachers will face more pressure to recover lost time and increase scores. Good teachers will seek employment elsewhere with less pressure for recovery- they will seek employment in towns that remained in person during this trying year. If test scores decrease and teacher retention decreases, school ratings will decrease. With a subpar school district, property values will in turn decrease. The potential negative effects are endless. Remaining closed not only affects each individual child's future, remaining closed will impact the town's future. I am particularly fearful for our neediest students who literally are not receiving developmentally appropriate and specialized instruction. Pre Schoolers in need of early intervention? ABA students missing out on valuable face to face time with their instructors? Students with communication deficits forced to endure more time spent frustrated they have no effective way to communicate their most basic wants and needs? Students with social/emotional disorders who already struggle with leaving the home- now without somewhere to go? What will happen to them? Though all students are suffering and there will be lasting effects, these are the students who unfortunately may not ever recover from this extended period out of school. It is an abomination that these children were not allowed in the school buildings for learning throughout this time. Though it may be legally justifiable, it is not and should not be morally acceptable. If other towns have figured out how to serve their neediest students, then I'm positive the creative minds in Seymour can figure it out. If even one student never recovers from this extended school closure because they happen to live within the wrong zip code at the wrong time, it is one student too many. Are you willing to gamble with our children's and our town's futures? Please make the only correct choice and return our students to school in person. Sincerely,

Alison Brett, 11 Stanley Drive - To Whom It May Concern, As a parent of a senior athlete and educator for 22 years I am shocked by the events that have recently taken place. The disrespect that I have read towards teachers, staff, and the community of Seymour is heartbreaking! We have never been faced with a pandemic and hear we are dealing with COVID and instead of working together as a collective unit we are divided! We don't all have to agree, however we should respect the decision making process especially when it is based on the safety of children, and our community. When the numbers were posted on Thursday afternoon I was shocked! 74% Positivity is alarming, So I thank the Mr Wilson and his administration team along with our district doctors in making the difficult decision to push our reopening phase back. When reviewing the CDC guidelines that were updated on Jan 8th it discusses the importance of our community along with our school taking the necessary precautions to keep all safe. It also discusses in depth the importance of collaborating with state and local health officials when making difficult decisions which are being done, so again why would we question the decision making process when protocols are being followed? I understand the importance of our students being in school, so I ask that we return on a hybrid model once our positivity rate decreases. Yes surrounding towns are in person however when reviewing the data you need to consider the enrollment of students in each school/district or region. An example of this would be Laurel Ledge elementary school in Beacon Falls that has 355 students enrolled compared to CLS which has 540 students. This plays a significant roll when safely distancing our students within the buildings. So, I ask the board and administrative team if they can determine a criteria as to what would be considered safe to return to hybrid and then full time? I know that it may be difficult due to the ever changing data however some guidance is better than none!

Jessica Nunez, Mother of a proud bungay bee Olivia Nunez (1st grade), 26 Deerfield Drive Seymour - To the board of education and all involved in the decision making for our community I write this to you in hopes that my voice can be heard. It is my hopes that our emails and comments are not going unnoticed. I am a full time working mother to a six year old 1st grader. My daughter loved school. She walked on the bus so confidently and never looked back her first day of kindergarten. She had a sudden stop to her schooling just like the rest of the world. We coped, we dealt with the barriers when it was necessary. She is now in first grade at Bungay. We have watched kids go to school full time in other districts without problems, we have watched children have "exposures" and only the class affected is sent home on quarantine. Not Seymour. Seymour just closed shop and claimed "safety".

This is not a matter of safety. If stores, restaurants, bars, malls, ect can be open so can our school system. Wearing a mask is the protection that we use for every day life, why is this not considered safe for schools? Why is Seymour not allowing our children to be educated in the school building? There needs to be a full time learning option that NEVER closes because of fear or too high numbers. This is the new normal and we are failing as a town to adjust. The school system needs to control the controllable. Wear masks, get creative with plexi glass, ask for help from the parents who are here to fight for our children.

My daughter hates school. She is depressed at 6 years old. She can not focus while her sisters are playing in the other room. She can not focus when the classroom is on a computer screen. How do you expect 6 year olds to navigate a computer system by herself? Teaching is not only a full time job for the teachers it is a full time job for the parents on top of what they already do. How can the town mandate that we as parents have to stay home for the duration of a school day? My 2 year old was sick the other day and my husband,a stay at home parent could not take her to the doctors because olivia had school. I had to leave work early to bring her. This is just one small example of how the system is failing families. I urge you to make a commitment to us as parents and grant the full time learning option effective immediately regardless of the covid numbers we are seeing. I am required to go to work every day in a hospital with a mask as my PPE and minimal social distancing with my coworkers and patients as I perform my job. I have no fear for our teachers and students safety and I believe there is no reason that we can not be in the school building. With utmost respect,

Kiana Machnicz, 214 Mountain Rd. Seymour, CT, Mother of : Kaylii Adams (10 years old) and Autumn Wells (6 years old) My children need to go back to school full time. I have a 5th grader and 1st grader who both attend Bungay Elementary School. My youngest (in 1st grade) has barely obtained a kindergarten education because of distance learning. Her teacher has gone above and beyond trying to keep her students on track but it is an impossible task to expect our teachers to accomplish. My daughters lost their father 3 weeks before the 2019-2020 school year started. Both of my girls already struggled mentally and emotionally because of this but the socialization of being in school made a positive impact on their emotional struggles. Since distance learning started last year, both of my daughters have been drastically struggling emotionally. My 1st grader cannot sit still in front of the computer for more than 10 minutes, she is struggling academically and has constant daily outbursts and tantrums because of the stress of distance learning to the point I have had to make her take half days off or not participate in online school for an entire day for the importance of sustaining her mental health, though she thrives academically and emotionally during in person learning. It is unfair to expect Elementary aged students who are not yet tech savvy to base their entire educational career online, as well as our children needing the social interaction for a healthy development. We are in a pediatric mental health crisis with a 25% increase in pediatric psychiatric hospitalizations since the pandemic started in March of last year. With an average of 74 Covid cases per 100,000 in our town and Seymour having a population of 16,509 residents, that means you are keeping our children from receiving a full education because of a .45% chance of catching Covid. That is less than half of 1 percent of a chance of anyone in our district being exposed to this virus, while risking the long term effects of our children's mental health and education. Based on all of this data, it is clear that the most important plan of action for Seymour students is to bring them back to full-time in person learning.

Michael and Karen Blood, 61 Heritage Drive, Seymour, CT - Dear BOE members, As a healthcare educator, I teach my students that the only way for a patient to achieve their goals is to practice patient-centered care and include all members of the healthcare team. The central person of the decision-making team is the patient and their families. This is a successful model because all members discuss the plan, listen to each other, make recommendations, and work together to achieve the common goal. Perhaps the BOE members and superintendent should all attend courses on this because working together for the common goal of getting students to be successful has not been what has happened this past year in this district. Parents have been invited to be a part of a "Reopening Committee" only to be told it is a courtesy and we can attend but we are not allowed to voice our comments or concerns. The teachers were not invited to be a part of the conversation on allowing a safe return to full-time in person learning. Yes, I am well aware that there is a viral pandemic going on, but what consideration has been made to the other pandemic going on? Are you aware of Maslow's hierarchy of needs that states that we need security, food, safety prior to moving on to learning? Who is looking out for those

children who do not have those basic needs? They are not getting an equitable education. What about the recommendations for screen time of no more than an hour for children?

This palpable tension has made me make the decision to pull one child from Seymour Schools which breaks my heart because we love the teachers. But I have no faith in how the district moves forward due to clear lack of communication and teamwork.

Danielle Capozziello, mother of three, no address provided - In regard to the option to return to school full time at all times: Basically my 1st grader will be going into 2nd grade in the Fall with a 6 month Kindergarten education and my 4th grader going into 5th with a 3rd grade education. I thank their teachers for showing up for them daily but a home environment is not an educational one by any stretch... we have done our part... I'd like a choice. I'm also sick of being asked for snacks all day long and if I need to argue with my boyfriend I would like to do it without fear of being unmuted...kids aren't supposed to be in my business like this every dam day. There is too many distractions that are hindering their ability to learn... and truthfully they won't get these days back. Literally summer will be here in 5 months... I want to go back to being a good Mom not just surviving another day of school life in my home. We have an amazing community that are willing to do what it takes to get our kids back to school to really get their education. Lets work together you have our support... now the kids need yours.

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Christian White, 49 Sagamore Drive - It is unacceptable that Seymour's students have not yet returned to school in person. I am not alone in my opinion that the decision to move to remote learning in October was wrong. I am not alone in being furious that the decisions made by our educational leaders have led to my second grader physically attending school just 12 times this year. How can we possibly expect the students in the elementary grades to be ready for what lies ahead when they haven't been in school long enough to know who their classmates are? We hear a lot about metrics and statistics that suggest that it's unsafe to return to school, yet Seymour seems to be one of the few districts in CT to continue with remote learning. Even New Haven, who hasn't had students in the building since March 2020, returned to school today. There is little reason to believe that our students will be returning anytime soon given the decisions that have made to this point. I respect the voices of the teachers who have concerns about returning, but I also recognize the many teachers across the state with the same concerns who have been teaching in person all year long. How are our students going to be prepared for the upcoming Smarter Balanced Assessment when they aren't in school even taking assessments? Make no mistake, this school district's scores are going to suffer as a result of the decisions that have been made this year. District data, particularly Fall NWEA data, should be made public. Mr. Wilson has stated that our students are learning and that the NWEA metric is one that is used to gauge this learning. What percentage of SPS met their target goal in math and reading from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020? Furthermore, the NWEA should be administered to elementary and middle school students in math and reading this winter. This would show the number of students who are on the trajectory to meet their target RIT goal and those who are not. Intervention should then be the priority for the students in danger of not meeting their respective goal. These are the students who will also be in danger of falling short on the upcoming Smarter Balanced Assessment. This data should be detailed publicly so that the residents of this town can see firsthand the impact that months of remote learning have had on our children academically. Per governor's orders, our students will be taking the Smarter Balanced Assessment this spring. Remote learning is not preparing our students in any way to succeed.

Christian White, no address provided - Mr. Wilson and BOE, The decision that was made to continue remote learning is utterly ridiculous. During Monday's BOE meeting a comment was made regarding the need to protect the most important people in the school, who are the teachers. This is also ridiculous. As a teacher myself I find this logic selfish and offensive. The most important people in the school are the children, yet there was no mention of this. I have no faith that our children will indeed be back in the school buildings at the end of this month. Given the track record of decisions that have been made since October, how could one possibly expect the doors to reopen? As districts across the state have found ways to bring students to school safely, Seymour continues to fail its students at the taxpayers' expense. We continue to hear that students are learning, yet there is no data provided to prove this. I would agree that the teachers are teaching, but that does not mean that students are learning appropriately. The NWEA assessment was taken in the fall. I have asked Mr. Wilson to share

how this data compares to last year's data with the public. While this hasn't happened, it probably doesn't matter. What matters is that our students will be subjected to the Smarter Balanced Assessment this spring. I have serious concerns as to how our students will perform. My second grader has been in the school building a total of 12 times this year. It is mid January, as you are well aware. How is he going to be ready for district and standardized assessments next year as a third grader when he has only taken the NWEA in the fall of second grade? This is just one example of how our elementary and middle school students are being set up for failure in the years ahead. I would like you to give serious consideration to administering the NWEA assessment to our elementary and middle school students this winter. The data needs to be shared with the public so that they can better understand the consequences of the decisions that are being made to continue keeping our schools closed. What percentage of students are making their target RIT goal? How many made their target RIT goal this fall? My prediction is that these scores will be alarming and upsetting, and we cannot pretend any longer that things are going well and children are learning. You NEED to open the schools. Thank you for your consideration,

Heather Bkacha6, no address provided - Hello, I'm one of the 100's of parents in Seymour who are requesting our children return to in person learning. At this point, with the facts we have about how this virus is spreading, and weighing the benefits to returning with the declining learning and mental health of many, many students during online education, our kids need to be back in the classroom. Thank you,

Erin Perry, 16 Country Club Rd - Good evening, I am writing this email because I am fighting to get my children the education they deserve. Parents who want their children in the classroom are furious. I am furious. You mentioned in your email to the district that there are metrics that you are following...what are these metrics? There are numerous surrounding towns with similar numbers as ours, and those districts are either hybrid or full person, so why can't Seymour figure it out? Also, what exactly is our quarantine policy after contact with someone who has COVID? Is it being followed? Families are being instructed that their children who have been exposed are not allowed in school until they are quarantined for 21-24 days!?!?!? Where is this posted as a policy we are following? What exactly is the reasoning behind this? Is it to boost our quarantine numbers to help justify keeping kids remote? I sure hope not....Parents have actually begun to look into sending their children elsewhere for their education. This is what it's become. **OUR KIDS NEED TO BE IN SCHOOL.**

Josh Ivaldi and Jessica Daley, no address provided - To whom it may concern, Over this weekend, i've seen many people outside of the board of ed building and chatfield lopresti presumably protesting for schools to reopen. Please do not succumb to the ridiculous demands of the scientifically illiterate. The new strain of coronavirus has an estimated 70% increase in transmissibility relative to the first strain, and it's already been detected in New Haven. This kind of shortsighted selfishness and wanton disregard for the health and safety of others is why we're still dealing with the pandemic. It's why your staff are catching COVID. It's why kids are being put at risk. Thank you for your consideration,
Concerned parents

Elizabeth White, no address provided - Dear Leadership Team, I am writing to express my sincere disappointment with decisions made thus far. You can disillusion yourselves into thinking you are making the best and safest decisions, but you must be reminded that you are entrusted with EDUCATING our CHILDREN. Public schools do not function for teachers (nothing against teachers, both my husband and I are teachers) or in order for a select group of leadership to determine what is and isn't safe for our children. You are entrusted with multiple multiple million dollars of tax payer money to educate our CHILDREN. We should not be ignored. The recommendations of the governor, CDC, Commissioner of Education, and even Fauci should not be ignored. Schools have been deemed safe. Those that do not want to be in person do not have to be there. You should not have shut down in October. You SHOULD be thinking outside of the box and getting the kids back in. This virus is not going away. The vaccine is not going to be a magic bullet anytime in the coming months. We have to find a way to help our school community move forward. The measures taken have been extreme and our students will suffer on a number of levels for years to come. Please, visit other districts and see why they are so successful. You claim to be open to suggestions from the public, but they fall on deaf ears. Disgusted and disenfranchised,

Erin Schuette, no address provided, Good evening, By now I'm sure you have been inundated with emails and phone calls after your decision to prolong remote learning, but us parents who want our children in the classroom are furious. I am furious. You mentioned in your email to the district that there are metrics that you are following...what are these metrics? There are numerous surrounding towns with similar numbers as ours, and those districts are either hybrid or in person. You mentioned we have 74 cases per 100,000 people. Our numbers actually dropped from 108 to 63 in a two week period. Almost the entire state is red but once again, other districts are making it work. Seymour is an embarrassment. Also, what exactly is our quarantine policy after contact with someone who has COVID? The CDC recommends quarantining 14 days after last contact with infected individual. The 14 day quarantine was also the policy the district followed in the fall. However, Nurse Bennett has been telling families their children are not allowed in school until they are quarantined for 21-24 days!?!?!? What exactly is the reasoning behind this? Is it to boost our quarantine numbers to help justify keeping kids remote? This needs to be looked into. I sure hope this is not the case, because honestly, if our school nurse is afraid to be in school, then she shouldn't be our school nurse, let alone our head nurse. It is the same for teachers. I have the utmost respect for the job they do, but it is time to get back in the classroom. Millions of Americans put on their mask everyday and go to work. I am a nurse. I took a job away from the bedside about seven years ago. I received a phone call from my boss two weeks before Christmas informing me that I was being deployed to the ICU to care for COVID/non-COVID patients for a month to help with the nursing shortage thats going on. Mind you, in a unit and a hospital Ive never worked in. If I refused, I would be fired. So quite honestly, enough is enough. If teachers don't want to return, then they should have the same repercussions. I know I can only speak for myself, but I can tell you with much honesty, our patience is gone, and our disappointment in this administration and BOE is astounding...

LeeAnn Weston, no address provided - Another delay, most of our surrounding towns have already been back to school for some time now. I am a single parent and have already scheduled my office hours according to my son starting school next week. How are single parents supposed to sustain a stable job when the schedule keeps changing? My son is struggling and failing his classes due to remote learning. He needs to go back to school and actually learn something, he has regressed terribly. We take a chance every day when we leave our houses that we may catch the flu, a virus, or a cold, covid is no different. Let the parents who want to keep their kids home do so, and allow the children back in school.

Janel Blanding, no address provided Good afternoon Mr. Champagne! I am reaching out to you because you have responded to me in the past. I wanted to let you know that I agree with so many of your sentiments that you expressed at the last BOE and I truly hope the teachers and students are kept safe as schools are reopening. My children will be switching to full remote for now as I feel it is in their best interest. I am reaching out to you because myself and some other parents have had terrible luck getting any answers or any communication from schools and the BOE regarding this reopening. Myself, I reached out to the high school regarding the crowded classrooms there, with 36 kids in one of my daughters classes I asked how they could possibly space them out safely? I got the runaround answer, which was, no answer and skirting around the issue. I was told to contact the BOE. I called, no phone call back. I emailed, no email back. I had questions CLEARLY stated regarding returning to school to Cathy Guerra and she responded and COMPLETELY ignored my questions and just said "Are you switching them to remote I need to know". I clearly stated, I will decide when I can get my questions answered. Well here it is on Wednesday, the date I am supposed to let the schools know what my children will be doing and still no answers. I have reached out to other parents, at least 4 or 5 who have had a similar experience. The communication has been terrible. I cannot make a decision if I do not have all the information. All the parents out there that are just throwing parties for the kids to get on the bus I am sure don't really realize what full time school will be like for these students and teachers. My sister has been full time in school in Norwalk most of this time and she is beyond stressed, the kids are stressed the environment is terrible for these kids and teachers. Silent lunches? How does that help the kids socialize? I really wish the BOE would have not rushed to get the kids back full time. In person, yes, but hybrid! Too many kids and stricter guidelines will make it a miserable experience for the children and teachers. I know I am in the minority but I wanted to voice my opinion. Thank you for your time.

Dinalyn Garrow, no address provided - Good evening Board of Education Members, I am writing to you tonight with regards to the current reopening plan. I was surprised by the decision that Central Office created an action plan to return to teaching students in-person throughout the District schools without any representation from the Seymour Education Association. I know there were several teachers involved in the previous discussions for reentry at the beginning of the year, but it does not appear to be the same this time. It is important that representation from the SEA is invited by Central Office to sit at the table and be part of the discussion when an action plan as important as this is being developed so all stakeholders can have a voice. Thank you for your time. Sincerely,

IV. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: (Mr. Garofolo/sec., Mr. Champagne) to adjourn

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling

MOTION PASSES: 8-1

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk

<https://youtu.be/LxEEr8vT9gc>