

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 25, 2010
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Al Schmertzler, Jennifer Glass, Debbie John (Boston Representative).
Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services).
Absent: Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Rob Orgel, Deb Leister (Hanscom Representative), Joe Connell (Hanscom Representative), Cecily Murdock (Hanscom Representative).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Schmertzler urged people to read *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. It teaches a moral lesson, encouragement, and teamwork and is a fabulous lesson for 4th grade and older students. He also attended yesterday's EDCO meeting; the agenda included a video presentation of Winchester's preparation for their superintendent's review. He thought it would be to our advantage to see how they handled their meeting. Ms. Dobrow will call the Winchester School Committee's chairperson.

Ms. Glass thanked Principal Sharon Hobbs for hosting a coffee, at which there was a good discussion with parents.

Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Brandmeyer attended a Council on Aging meeting to do a budget presentation. There was discussion and interest about the potential school building project. Mr. Schmertzler added that there is a meeting on March 10 with the appropriate people.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on Responsive Classroom

Ms. Randy Davis, Hanscom Primary School Principal, did a presentation on the Responsive Classroom. Responsive Classroom is a way of teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth. She said it has been an exciting first year of implementation. They are training all teachers and looking at their approach and will focus on school-wide implementation. They welcome students into the school building each day with a poster that has a positive message. Students can post messages on the poster too, and they are starting to use it for this purpose. Responsive Classroom schools adopt certain practices, and the first six weeks of school are used to establish the routines and rules of the school community. For example, signals are taught for quieting the entire school quickly when needed, lunch routines teach self-management skills to students, and morning meetings provide a daily structure and help build unity and an understanding of the school's values.

Mr. Steve McKenna, Lincoln K-4 Principal, thanked Mark McDonough for putting together a video to show some Responsive Classroom parts. He showed four vignettes: a morning meeting greeting in 3rd grade; a morning message in kindergarten; a music class where teaching and modeling were taking place; and an end of day meeting that was a calm way to end the school day. Mr. Schmertzler commented that the last group of students was quite calm.

Ms. Rose Vignola, Hanscom Primary School teacher and Lincoln Public School teacher since 1992, said that Responsive Classroom is the best program she's seen; it's an approach to teaching that builds on the belief that students learn best when they have social and emotional support. It is comprehensive and different from other approaches, and they can overlay any curriculum over it. Responsive Classroom meshes nicely with the learning standards. In each morning meeting, they use four components. They focus on student interests and needs. The program embraces inclusion and welcomes differentiation of instruction. The morning and end of school meetings recognize the

students as individuals and also recognize the group, which builds a cohesive school culture. The principals establish trust between teachers and students. She said Responsive Classroom establishes effective school and home links, and parent/student hopes and dreams are shared with teachers. The program has constant teacher evaluation that enables teachers to examine their actions. For example, the language she uses when giving instructions to students is clear about when students have options and when they do not. The teachers have expectations of students. Responsive Classroom promotes positive energy. She has noticed how well the program has taken hold and sees a difference. She said it is a pulse and it is contagious.

Ms. Becky Eston, Lincoln School Teacher, has taught for more than 18 years. She commented that in today's standards-based world of high expectations, it is important to recognize that students are human beings and are social. The program helps teachers to thoughtfully support their students and help them to achieve. It is wonderful to have so many teachers trained in Responsive Classroom because it is a common language for students and teachers. She said the program has made a huge difference, and the teachers are very interested in it and want it to continue. She likened it to a recipe that prescribes pieces to help students feel safe and comfortable at school. Getting to know students and their families makes a huge difference.

Mr. Schmertzler asked if students were more successful or completing things better as a result of Responsive Classroom. Ms. Vignola said yes, one example is academic risk-taking occurs more often. They are starting to talk about redoing report cards. Ms. Glass asked if they were starting to see spillover into the big public areas in the school. Are students talking about logical consequences or problem solving? Ms. Davis said she hears some evidence in the lunch room, where teachers are working with students at lunch to discuss how to have conversations with a partner. They are playing with language. Students are learning from their mistakes and are using the data to make changes. The students are modeling the Responsive Classroom language; instead of their previous statement, "I can't do this," students are now saying, "That's tricky." The two statements show that students had a negative attitude, but will now try those same difficult things. Mr. McKenna said the trainer is coming soon and will teach more language of the Responsive Classroom so that it is infused into the common areas. He hopes to see more progress, and there is a parent presentation about it on Monday.

Ms. Dobrow said she's delighted to hear about Responsive Classroom. It is important to have a common language, and it is wonderful that that language is filtering through to students. She's a social scientist; could they synthesize the research other than the anecdotal evidence on Responsive Classroom? At Hanscom with its' student turnover, how is Responsive Classroom is going over? Can the students get enough of what they are trying to do for them? Ms. Davis said it's an approach, and one piece of Responsive Classroom is the community piece. They welcome the students into the circle. She said the students pick up routines quickly and feel safe, and there's clarity about teachers' words. Ms. Vignola said it gives them calm in a chaotic life. She said that she's better at helping students feel safe, being themselves, and being part of the community when they arrive at Hanscom. Ms. Davis said that Responsive Classroom lays the foundation for anti-bullying at school.

Ms. Dobrow thanked them for their report.

B. Proposed METCO Enrollment for 2010-2011

Mr. Brandmeyer introduced Ms. Christina Horner, METCO Director, to present the proposed METCO Enrollment for 2010-2011. This year they will have one of the largest graduating classes, and 13 METCO students will be graduating or leaving. Ms. Horner, Dr. Hobbs, and Mr. McKenna met to discuss the METCO enrollment last week, and Mr. Brandmeyer has endorsed the proposal. She is recommending that 14 students start at the Lincoln Schools: 6 METCO students enter kindergarten, 2 METCO students enter 2nd grade, and 6 METCO students enter 7th grade. Each one would be a new student to the Lincoln Schools. She said that admitting 6 students into the 7th grade is unusual and is high. Ms. Dobrow asked what additional supports would be needed to take in the 7th graders. Ms. Horner said there would be much support. She's worried about the curriculum, especially with Everyday Math. They will place the students in the two-year algebra program. She will use resources during the summer to help all incoming students with math. She explained that the families were open to it, and four of the families visited last night.

Ms. Dobrow said it sounds ambitious. She's concerned that the students could feel marginalized, and wondered if they have enough resources to handle these issues. Mr. Brandmeyer said that next year they will have a full-time academic advisor. He likes the summer idea even though they have not budgeted for it. He agreed that it is a concern when they enroll METCO students in the

later grades, and they need to think about it. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the students would be inclined to stick together as a cluster. Ms. Horner said they will not know each other, and they will do team building before they get here. She said the 6th graders have been very welcoming and are terrific at reaching out, which augurs well for including the six students in the class next year. The social worker, academic advisor, and Ms. Horner meet with them. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the Sargeant Camp trip that the 7th graders do in the fall will help to integrate the new students and allow them to make relationships.

Ms. Dobrow noted the Middle School will have begun work with Developmental Design (the Middle School counterpart of Responsive Classroom) She encourages there to be an assessment of their progress of the new students in October and November, and she is concerned that there is no budget for additional supports. What if these students have extra needs? Ms. Horner said that she and the academic advisor meet with the students regularly by October. The first four weeks of school they should have a handle on how they are doing, and they check in with the parents each week. They have had students come in in the later grades, and they have done very well. If there are issues that come up, there are tutoring services. They keep a handle on it, but she agreed that it is a challenge. Mr. McKenna said they have strong math specialists, and they can realign them to help if needed. Ms. Glass asked if there would be any pre-placement testing. Ms. Horner said she gave them the 6th grade math assessment, but it has not been corrected yet. They will see the results next week and they will make plans for opportunities during the summer to support the students. Ms. John asked how many students have been chosen. Ms. Horner said she's not chosen any of them yet. Four students came to the informational meeting yesterday, but there are no guarantees. Many people are involved in choosing the students for the program. Ms. John asked if the seats are approved, will students be placed by the end of this school year, and Ms. Horner said yes. Ms. John explained that her daughter started at the Lincoln School when she was in 6th grade, and she had some difficulty with math but was able to get extra help, which was great. She asked whether that would be available and said that the summer program is a good idea. Ms. Horner said the students are excited about going to school with the extra math. She said the METCO grant from the state is now at level funding, but they will wait to hear what happens.

Mr. Brandmeyer hopes Governor Patrick recommends level funding for the METCO grant. He said to what extent will they have to cut local aid? Mr. Creel said they've received some foundation money. Mr. Brandmeyer said they are predicting a \$3 billion shortfall, and he hopes METCO receives level funding. Ms. Glass reminded the Committee that Lobby Day was going to be held on March 15. Mr. Brandmeyer said his recommendation, given the class sizes, is to begin with this plan and to continue to review folders. Ms. Dobrow is uncomfortable about the funding and that they might be hit with cuts. There's not much room in the budget. It is hard to bring students into the school at their age, and it doesn't help them if there's not enough support. She suggested that they come up with contingency plans and find an external funding source. She suggested that they raise money for the buses. Mr. Brandmeyer said there was a possible collaboration with the G4 group. From the floor, Laura Kempke asked what determines whether or not another section to the 2nd grade is added. Ms. Horner said they do not open an extra section to include the students; the spaces already exist.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Horner for her report. Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to enroll eligible Boston resident children through the METCO program for the 2010-2011 school year. The Committee voted unanimously to enroll the students.

C. 2010-2011 School Year Calendar: First Reading

Mr. Brandmeyer presented the first draft of the 2010-2011 school calendar. They have decided to start school before Labor Day for the second year in a row. There are new items in the calendar as a result of the work the G4 group (Lincoln-Sudbury, Sudbury, and Wayland). They are considering aligning the faculty curriculum days with Sudbury and also the professional development days to possibly share costs and resources. He reiterated that this is the first draft of the calendar; he has given the draft to the Lincoln Teachers' Association, and they will vote on it soon, which they have to do in order to approve a pre-Labor Day start.

Ms. Dobrow said that the Hanscom representatives have asked for an additional day for the December recess for travel. Mr. Brandmeyer said the calendar breaks out the way it did two years ago. It's a shorter vacation, but there are lead days before Christmas. Ms. Glass asked about Institute Day (teachers' professional development), which is penciled in for November 29, January 14, or January 18. She asked that if January is chosen, whether it is less disruptive to choose the 18th because there would

be one short week instead of two. Mr. Brandmeyer said if they use consultants on Institute Day, it is a matter of when they are available. He'll bring the calendar back after the Lincoln Teachers' Association approves the calendar.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer met with Lt. Colonel Randy Robertson, Colonel David Orr, and Town Administrator Timothy Higgins about the housing development at Hanscom Air Force Base. The point of the meeting was to see where they can collaborate on preschool issues. He noted that the meeting was a healthy exchange of ideas and was informative. The housing project remains on schedule; they are renovating and building new homes, but they will not be completed until August 2011. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether more military families would be moving to the Base. Mr. Brandmeyer said the goal is to fill the houses with military families. There are 500 families on the Base, and there will be 735 houses, which the military wants to fill with military families. If for some reason they do not get enough military families, the question is who pays the education costs if the families who move into those homes are not military ones. The federal government will not pay for them, and the Town can't pay for them.

Mr. Brandmeyer visited the Department of Education in Malden to see Commissioner Chester to explain the dilemma. How can they fund the students for school? Mr. Brandmeyer said that Bedford's situation is worse than Lincoln's. The Commissioner saw that the situation was not right, and now he has a sense of the history of this issue. The finance team and the legal office team attended the meeting. They will talk to the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and are looking at developing legislation.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for his report.

VII. Curriculum

None.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$605,188.72 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$148,441.21 for a total of \$753,629.93. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Ms. Glass seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. RFP for Lease of Hartwell Space

Ms. Dobrow thanked those who have worked hard on this issue: Ms. Glass, Mr. Orgel, Mr. Schmertzler, Mr. Creel, Magic Garden, Selectman Sarah Cannon Holden, and Town Administrator Timothy Higgins. Mr. Brandmeyer said it was a long conversation, during which they heard many points of view. The Committee and the Schools are bound by the legal process and need to issue a Request for Proposal [RFP] for the lease of classroom and administrative space in the Hartwell Building.

Mr. Creel presented the details of developing the RFP, which he took guidance from the last sessions with the School Committee and the Joint Working Group. The RFP was reviewed twice by counsel. The process in the packet requires the Committee 1) to declare that the space remains excess space; 2) to identify restrictions for the use of the space; and 3) to direct the Administration to solicit proposals for lease of the space. He reported that legal counsel requires the Administration and School Committee to follow the RFP process.

Mr. Schmertzler wanted to verify that the RFP presented tonight has been vetted by counsel and meets all state requirements. Mr. Creel said yes. He is looking for guidance. Mr. Brandmeyer said their goal was to be sure the RFP was structured in a way that addressed the outstanding issues. They have been clear and precise, and the specific requirements will be in the lease document. Mr. Schmertzler liked the timing of the RFP in case they have a school building project. Mr. Brandmeyer said that in the earlier draft of the RFP, they gave the lessee two years notice of termination. That has changed with the MSBA's invitation to Lincoln to have a feasibility study on the school buildings. The

range of the renovation could be cosmetic finishes and modest renovations to some new space or to a new school building, but they will not know until they get through the study. They are at the second step of a 31-step process. Depending on the types of renovations, they may need to reclaim the Hartwell and Pod space to house students. There may also be a building project at Hanscom too. Mr. Brandmeyer said they may have to give one year's notice if there is to be a building project on campus. He said it would be two years' notice to terminate the lease in a case other than the building project.

Tim Christenfeld, Magic Garden Board President, said he was grateful for Mr. Creel's work. He asked what the status was of the sample lease and whether it was binding. Mr. Creel said it is a sample of the contract to be signed. When it says it is binding, the sample is the essential form that the lease will take. Not everything in the RFP is directly spelled out in the lease. Mr. Christenfeld said he understands there's uncertainty about the potential building project, but what is the best guess as to when shovels would be in the ground? Mr. Brandmeyer said the feasibility study takes roughly 12 to 18 months, and after that, the Town has a 120-day time frame to decide what to do. Mr. Brandmeyer said they will comply with the MSBA's time line so that the Town gets reimbursed 40% for the feasibility study, and they have to go through this process. They may have to knock down the school building.

One parent from Magic Garden asked what chances are that the Administration would have to invoke the one-year notice. Mr. Brandmeyer said if they have to relocate students, they will need to use the space, and he cannot give further details because they need to go through the MSBA process first. Sheila Webber said Magic Garden wants more certainty and asked if it could be there in the lease. Mr. Creel said they will have an idea of what kind of project will happen probably 18 months before it happens, and there will be much discussion in Town before it happens. Mr. Schmertzler said that all of it has to go before Town Meeting and be on the ballot two times before anything is approved. The MSBA will have to approve the project in concept and design, and they are not sure when they will be chosen by the MSBA to build or renovate anything. Ms. Webber asked if they could get language to figure out what the lease says under termination on page 14 of the RFP. Mr. Schmertzler said it specifies a public school building. Mr. Brandmeyer said that counsel recommended that the statement be written in the way it is. Ms. Webber said she does not trust that it is specific enough. Mr. Brandmeyer said there are boundaries, and Magic Garden has to decide whether to apply to lease the space or not. He cited an example of last year's fire in the science lab, where they lost the use of the space for the rest of the school year. They need to maintain flexibility in a crisis in case they need to house students in a different area to hold school. He said they could not commit to anything more.

Ms. Dobrow understood Ms. Webber's point, but the Committee and the Administration need to maintain flexibility. The MSBA process is out into the future. Mr. Schmertzler said it wasn't to their advantage to just bump out the tenant. Ms. Dobrow reiterated that if there are extraordinary circumstances, they need to maintain their flexibility. She suggested that they insert a word and a phrase to ease their concern and also to maintain flexibility. Mr. Brandmeyer said they do not know what the project will be, and it could be highly disruptive in that they will have to move students, and in that case, they will need all of the school buildings. They cannot commit to anything further.

Mr. Creel suggested that they include language about relocating students and/or administration. Ms. Webber said they want to put in language, and she said that the Joint Working Group made good progress. She asked that they look at page 18 of the sample lease that mentions the playground equipment. She wants the statement taken out. Ms. Dobrow asked if there were any other questions.

Mr. Creel said that counsel asked him whether the sample lease was being structured for a particular proposer. They have to have a general RFP in nature because there could be more than one proposer. They have been concerned with the issues that have been raised, and now they need to move on. The RFP process is about competition. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the current 10-year lease states that once the lease is over, does it have a statement about what happens to the playground equipment? Mr. Brandmeyer said it was unclear. Mr. Creel stated that the schools paid for the playground equipment.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the RFP needs to comply with Massachusetts General Law. His understanding is they keep the playground equipment. Ms. Dobrow said if they send it back to counsel, they will delay the vote until March 11. Mr. Brandmeyer proposed a modification to page 14, number 7 that says, "requires relocation of students or staff at any of the school buildings." He said that does not need to be reviewed by counsel. Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Schmertzler liked the language addition.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion that the space in the Hartwell Building currently occupied by Magic Garden continues to be surplus space and available for lease, that it desires the surplus space be used for programs with an educational purpose harmonious with the proper functioning of the adjacent Lincoln Preschool, and directs the Administration to solicit proposals for lease of the space in compliance with Massachusetts General Law. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

Ms. Dobrow asked the Committee to make suggestions for the presentation at Town Meeting the end of March. She and Mr. Brandmeyer will present. They will bring an outline to the Committee.

Ms. Glass mentioned that METCO Lobby Day will be held on March 15 at the State House. They will write letters to encourage the funding. She asked that the members let Mr. Brandmeyer know if they would like to attend. He said that METCO is a great program, and it needs continued resources from the state.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Ms. Glass, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purposes of legal issues. Ms. Dobrow, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Ms. Glass, yes; Ms. John, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary