

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Thursday, April 28, 2016

Hartwell Multipurpose Room, Hartwell Building, Ballfield Road, Lincoln, MA

OPEN SESSION

Present: Jennifer Glass (Chairperson), Tim Christenfeld (Vice Chairperson), Al Schmertzler, Jena Salon, Laurel Wironen (Hanscom Educational Liaison). Also present: Becky McFall (Superintendent), Patricia Kinsella (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Robert Ford (Director of Technology), Linda Chase (Interim Administrator for Student Services).

Absent: Peter Borden, Preditta Cedeno (METCO Representative).

1. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Glass, Chairperson, called the meeting, the 2nd Annual Strategic Priorities Community Forum, to order at 7:05 pm. The meeting was not being shown on television.

Ms. Glass said they will discuss where the district is going without the line items of a budget discussion. They want to share their vision of where the district is going and what they are doing to meet their goals. She said tonight they will highlight different things that have occurred in the classrooms this year.

Ms. Glass said that the information and feedback gleaned tonight will help the Committee and the Administrative Team to determine what the Strategic Plan will be for the coming year. She thanked the faculty and the Administrative Team and the audience for attending.

2. Overview of District Vision and Strategic Plan

Documents: 1) District Strategic Plan & Budget Cycles, undated; 2) Strategic Planning Process for the 2016-2017 School Year, undated; 3) Lincoln Public Schools Strategic Plan, approved by School Committee June 18, 2015; 4) Lincoln Public Schools, Core Values, undated; 5) Strategic Priority Map for 2015-16, A1, dated April 24, 2016; 6) Strategic Priority Map for 2015-16, B1, C1, dated April 24, 2016; 7) Priority Measures of Success in the Lincoln Public Schools, undated

Dr. McFall said that one objective of the forum was to raise awareness of the Strategic Plan process. The faculty members will share their work with students this year, and she thanked them for attending. Assistant Superintendent Patricia Kinsella will lead a discussion activity to elicit feedback and ideas.

Dr. McFall explained the packet of information, using PowerPoint slides. She said the documents are used as guides, and the Strategic Priority Maps help them stay on track with their work. The Plan & Budget Cycles document shows the process. The Administrative Team asks what progress are they making? What are the next steps? How can we use the information received tonight to help us move forward as a district? What does student engagement look like, and what does student engagement really mean? The Priority Measures of Success document asks how will we know if we have met our vision? From student feedback to faculty members, the MCAS scores, and other measures will help the district know if they have met the vision. She noted that the School Committee and the Administrative Team write the Strategic Plan together, and the Committee votes on it. This year, the goal is to have the School Committee

vote on the Strategic Plan at its June 23 meeting. She said it is also their goal to be transparent and to get feedback from the community as they work on these items.

Dr. McFall said the vision has been in place for four years, and they have focused on their theory of action and key priorities. She noted that research shows that it is more advantageous to go deeper into fewer items and set three priorities instead of spending less time on more items. They have eight strategic priorities total, but this year they have gone deeper into priorities A1, B1, and C1. She noted that much of the Strategic Plan is aspirational, and it takes several years. They are managing complex change, which requires vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan, and if one of those pieces is missing, they do not make the change.

Dr. McFall said the Strategic Priority Maps show the specific work they have done this year. The faculty was there to demonstrate some of this specific work.

3. Faculty Presentations of Current Classroom Practices That Represent Our District Priorities Document: None.

Dr. McFall introduced the principals, Beth Ludwig of the Hanscom Primary School [HPS], Erich Ledebuhr of the Hanscom Middle School [HMS], Sarah Collmer of the Lincoln School K-4, and Sharon Hobbs of the Lincoln School 5-8.

Ms. Ludwig introduced the HPS 3rd grade team, who worked on the grade 3 reading pilot which asked how the district could support the needs of students better? Rose Vignola said that although they had an expectation that they could spend time with every student every day for reading, the reality was that that was not happening. In order to change this, the teachers collaborated with each other, the instructional assistants and the tutor, English Language Arts [ELA] Content Specialist Judy Merra, Coordinator for Student Services Denise Oldham, and Dr. McFall, to create an hour each day of uninterrupted time for reading instruction. They needed to decrease the range of readers within a group, to increase capacity with all teachers involved, and to revise their service delivery. They created flexible groups of students based on reading needs, and moved students in and out of the groups as students' needs changed. Students also worked on words, writing, reading, and fluency. Teachers used formative and summative assessments to see how their plan worked, and in 10 weeks, 78% of the 3rd grade readers have grown. Ms. Vignola noted that they read Carol Ann Tomlinson's *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. She sees relief from students, and they are taking risks to grow their reading skills. The model addresses all levels of student reading, and the model continues to evolve.

Ms. Collmer introduced the 1st grade team, who discussed their Project Based Learning. Students were able to choose their own extensions, and teachers did hands-on teaching that was inquiry based. It was a 30-minute block of time once a week for eight weeks, with the eighth week having students share what they had learned. The extensions worked on creating a shared community and asked what a shared community looked like. In the fall, students had a choice of Readers' Theater, Fairy Gardens and House, Nature All Around, and Digital Photography. In the spring, they offered Cartooning, Yoga, Experiment with Science, and Coding. Students were very invested in their choices, and there will be one more extension term. The 1st grade is now involved with putting on the musical, *Where the Wild Things Are!*

Science teacher Terry Green provided science enrichment for grades 1-4, which was offered 45 minutes once a week for all students. 1st graders made slime to show properties of materials, 2nd graders made snail bots to examine simple machines and gears, 3rd graders worked

with NXT Lego Robots to learn about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math [STEM], and 4th graders were citizen scientists and journeyed north to plant tulips and did a global study on when seasons change.

Dr. Hobbs and 6th grade science teacher David Trant focused on authentic and project-based learning. 6th graders in technology and engineering class are building and installing a chicken coop. Mr. Trant said the goal is to give students a chance to be part of a big engineering project from design to building through the year. Students work on the coop during their lunch period.

Mr. Ledebuhr introduced the 4th grade team, who worked with flexible groupings of students in mathematics. The teachers have a shared vision of the new Hanscom Middle School and showed their new techniques and how they have used the different spaces. Carolyn Shannon said as the 3rd grade team did, they grouped students differently and pre-assessed students. Teachers collaborated differently, and they noted that students have different strengths and learning styles. Teachers also moved around to teach the different groups, which is good. Mrs. Welton said as a result, there is a deeper exploration of math. Students who needed extra time with concepts could get that time, and those students who understood could move to other groups. Teachers tailored homework for students. She said students liked working with each other and were excited about going to math.

Mr. Ledebuhr introduced the 8th grade team, who has created an interdisciplinary unit. Social Studies teacher Jason Peledge said their new space and new professional development with collaborative practices has been great. Their learning has a service component to it, and they have created the theme, the Faces of Inequality, and have asked students for a solution to solve the crisis. Students are doing authentic learning with a practical application to their daily lives. The entire 7th and 8th grade teams, the students and the community, and the student groups themselves have collaborated to generate solutions for inequality. In English class, students are reading *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich. Students have also seen the film, *A Place at the Table*, about food inequality. Ms. Martes said students link language to culture, and students are analyzing texts to support their ideas with facts, and all school subjects are involved. The new building allows for flexible groupings of students, who work in small groups and all together. Students participate in service learning in the community, and they will hold a final presentation on June 1 which will be a community wide event for the Base.

Ms. Kinsella and Art teacher Colleen Pearce, Lincoln K-4, discussed the importance of collaboration. Working with students and working with adults requires many skills, and the facilitative leadership training [SRI] that they have had with Gene Thompson-Grove has made collaboration easier to do. 25% of the teachers and administrators are being trained this year. Ms. Pearce said it was the best training she has ever had. They have learned ways to structure meetings and get past the inevitable hiccups. They work on what makes an effective team. All have a chance to talk and to connect with each other, which develops trust, and they can discuss many issues in a meaningful way. Dr. McFall said they ask how to engage students at higher levels so that all students get what they need each day.

Dr. McFall and Ms. Glass thanked the teachers for their presentations.

4. Community Conversation about Hopes, Expectations, and Priorities for the District to Consider for the Coming Year

Document: School Reform Initiative: A Community of Learners, Wagon Wheels
Brainstorm, undated

Ms. Kinsella led the audience to split into groups of eight to discuss among themselves the following three prompts:

- 1) The sign of an effective education is that all students _____.
- 2) At the end of my child's pre-K-grade 8 education, I want them to be able to _____, and I want them to be _____.
- 3) I want my child/student to be engaged in learning in these ways _____.

Each person talked with one other person, answering the prompts on a sticky note and placing them up front. After ten minutes, the inside circle moved to talk with another person about the prompt. Dr. McFall said they will use this information when putting together the Strategic Plan.

One parent said they enjoyed the cross pollination of ideas with things that work well is exciting, and she wanted to make sure this was shared with others. A gentleman loved the chicken coop and said it builds a fire for learning, which is what matters. Another parent said she wants her child to feel safe to learn.

Dr. McFall said they are building collaboration, which empowers teachers to know students and take risks to work with them. She said this was new professional development that builds capacity to differentiate. Dr. McFall said they are getting these pieces started, and they need to look at the end of year data to see if this work had a positive impact on students. She said in next year's Strategic Plan, they will go deeper on how it impacts student learning. The 3rd through 8th grade students have just completed feedback surveys on their teachers yesterday.

Dr. McFall introduced Ms. Mary Emmons, who is the incoming Administrator for Student Services.

5. Adjournment

Ms. Glass said they have heard that risk taking and failure in learning is okay; it is a subject that the Committee talks about often. She thanked everyone for engaging in the conversation and the process. The session adjourned at 9:35 pm.

The next School Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 12 at 7:00 pm in the Donaldson Room, Lincoln Town Hall, Lincoln Road, Lincoln.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary