

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 15, 2008 – Open Session
Hanscom Primary School

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice-Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative), Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative)

Absent: Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent)

Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance)

I. Greetings and Call to Order –7:05pm

Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Julie Dobrow reported attending the Lincoln 1-4 choral concert and congratulated Pam Roberts and all the children.

Al Schmertzler reported that he attended the public meeting for the introduction of the Everyday Mathematics program, acknowledging that the program is very insightful with regards to the different ways that there are to learn and teach things.

Sharon Gillespy reported that she attended the Kindergarten music concert and credited Ms. Anzaldi for her work with the students and how well they sang, played instruments, and danced to the music.

III. Public Comments

None

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gift

The SC was asked to accept the following donations:

- a. \$2,500.00 from the Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation for the Lincoln School Grades 5-8 Theater Program;
- b. \$2,500.00 from the Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation for the Lincoln School Instrumental Music Program; and
- c. \$200.00 from the Jacobs / Akillian Family Foundation for the Lincoln Instrumental Music Program

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to accept the gifts.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Special Education Program Review

(Report: *A Review of Specialized Education Programming by the Department of Student Services*)

***Recap: It is required that school districts evaluate one or more components of their special education program annually. Lincoln Public Schools focused on K-8 in-district programs for students with substantial disabilities requiring intensive programs and services. Arrangements were made with Dr. James Earley, an experienced special education program evaluator and consultant, to conduct a special education program review which consisted of reviewing documents, observing programs, and interviewing staff and administrators on Hanscom and Lincoln Campuses.**

Ed Orenstein introduced Dr. James Earley, the Director for Walker Partnerships, who conducted the special education program review.

Dr. Earley presented an overview of his evaluation of the special education program within the Lincoln Public Schools. He appreciated being able to speak with the SC and extended his appreciation to all the staff members he had worked with, complimenting their professionalism and inviting personalities. Dr. Earley reviewed the process of his evaluation, noting that the scope of his report was not lengthy or in-depth but gave great detail to the special education program with regard to the staffing, budgetary spectrum, students, and overall setting within the schools. He noted visiting each campus and interviewing faculty, 23 in all, which allowed him to receive insightful information and receive issues and concerns from those that are involved with the program on a daily basis. He noted that once this was completed, he was able to complete his recommendations which were within the report that he had composed.

Dr. Earley stated that overall he was very impressed with the program, noting that the district had really focused on the needs of the students with regard to inclusion. He stated that he found only a few areas of concern. He acknowledged that having a smaller district lends to issues given there are smaller cohorts and a lower percentage of students with similar special needs.

He stated that one issue focused on the struggle of providing a comprehensive education for a student that has very specific needs given the he/she is the only student with those needs within his/her cohort. With these needs, most students would have to be removed from the classroom which could remove the student for a longer period of time. Dr. Earley stated another concern was with regard to the faculty that assists that students and how they assist from year-to-year. He stated that there needed to be an emphasis on professional development so that the staff could be reassessed from year-to-year allowing for areas of expertise that would be specific to the child they would be working with in the current year or upcoming year. For example, if a staff member was going to be assigned to an autistic child for the upcoming year then he/she needed to have professional development specific to that child's needs. Then, for the following year, that same staff member may need professional development specific to another area if he/she was assigned to a different student with different needs.

In all, Dr. Earley provided eight recommendations, adding that the recommendations should not have any budgetary impact given that the staff was already in place.

Julie Dobrow thanked Dr. Earley for his very comprehensive and clear report, noting that it was very insightful. She also extended a public appreciation for all of Ed Orenstein's hard work, noting his upcoming departure from his position.

Tom Sander inquired about which items were most critical when determining special needs student placement. Ed Orenstein replied that, given there are so few children with special needs at times, the district needed to determine when it was more justifiable to place a special needs student out of the district versus within the district. Dr. Earley recommended formulating a committee that focused on the data and budgetary effects of the special education program that could make a better determination on the outcome for the program. He gave the example of combining the special education students to one campus and not spread out between the two campuses, especially if there are students with similar needs. Julie Dobrow commented that the suggestion of combining the two campuses with regard to the special needs population was one to be considered but there were also things to be considered such as transportation, scheduling, and the turnover on Hanscom campus. Dr. Earley acknowledged those concerns.

Rob Orgel acknowledged recommendations that were made and inquired about what happens now. Mickey Brandmeyer replied that Dr. Earley's report would be helpful in determining if education can be provided to the scale needed for the special education student's needs within the district versus the private sectors around the district. He added that this conveniently came at a time when the Lincoln Public School system was introducing Stephanie Powers, the new Administrator for Student Services, which can aid her in the direction of the special education program.

Jennifer Glass inquired about the LEVELS program. Mickey Brandmeyer replied that it was a 5-step, or level, process that helps to move students to a general environment based on their behavior and academics.

Louann Robinson asked if there was a LEVELS program at Hanscom. Mark Kaufman responded that there has not been a need for one at the Hanscom campus. Mickey Brandmeyer stated that if there ever was a need for the program then it would be implemented.

B. Hanscom Middle School Improvement Plan: End-of Year Review

(Documents: *Hanscom Middle School Improvement Plan (2) 2007-2008 and 2008-2009*)

Mark Kaufman reported on the improvement plan for the Hanscom Middle School, starting with the 2007-2008 Improvement Plan and then progressed into the 2008-2009 Improvement Plan. He noted that the goals have remained consistent with very few changes although improvements were ongoing and he highlighted those improvements. The goals were as follows:

- **Goal 1:** To improve instruction and student learning through focused professional development, examination of student assessment results and student work products.
- **Goal 2:** To improve student health and safety, and reduce non-academic barriers to learning.
- **Goal 3:** To improve and enhance communication between Hanscom Middle School and stakeholders.

Tom Sander asked what the outcomes were versus the process steps, stating that the report only seemed to show a series of steps and not any concrete results which made it impossible to gage success even if the goal was important. Mr. Kaufman responded that he does receive feedback from the teachers although placing it in a form that was trackable, but gathering data was challenging. He added that with the MCAS results, the tests are given in the spring and the results are received in the fall whereas most students are no longer at the Hanscom campus, which can make it difficult and lead to somewhat skewed results. Julie Dobrow suggested putting this concern down for a bigger discussion when the SC can brainstorm to find some solutions at a collective meeting.

Sharon Gillespy stated that she felt the transition of military students was causing the administrators to not look closely enough at the MCAS scores. She acknowledged the 30% turnover at the Hanscom campus but noted that there was still an

average of 70% of the population that returned the next year. Mr. Kaufman stated that the MCAS scores can only be used by tracking the cohort itself as opposed to comparing one year's 4th grade to the next year's 4th grade.

Louann Robinson inquired about the long-term process of new facilities for Hanscom. Mickey Brandmeyer replied that there was a facilities condition report prepared by the Baker Corporation for DODEA in 2004. He noted that this report resulted in a recommendation to completely replace the Hanscom Middle School. He added that although it had been acknowledged that it would make more sense to build new than to repair, there are other schools that are in worse states of disrepair than Hanscom that take priority.

Rob Orgel inquired about "emergency communication" with regard to inclement weather and other events. Mickey Brandmeyer stated that there used to be a "call list" but it was during the era when many parents were beginning to be on a "do not call list", therefore the website became the most reliable and acceptable way to communicate. He acknowledged that the "call list" should be reviewed again given that feedback has shown that not everyone accesses the website.

Jennifer Glass inquired about the way the behavior expectations were outlined in the handbook. Mr. Kaufman replied that it was consistent with other districts but that it was still reliant on student interpretation and implementation by the staff.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC voted unanimously to approve the Hanscom Middle School Improvement Plan.

C. Hanscom Primary School Improvement Plan: End-of-Year Review

(Document: *Lincoln Public Schools School Improvement Plan - Hanscom Primary School, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009*)

Randy Davis and Beth Yurkewecz presented the improvement plan for the Hanscom Primary School. Ms. Davis highlighted the following goals that were in place for the 2007-2008 school year:

- **Goal 1:** Improve student learning through the lens of differentiation (Year 3)
- **Goal 2:** Improving mathematics instruction and student learning (Year 4)
- **Goal 3:** School theme, *Every Voice Counts*, to support social emotional learning, academic achievement, and professional development

Rob Orgel asked what concerns parents had that could be addressed and measured for improvement. Randy Davis requested that attending parents address the question. Four parents responded with positive feedback, stating that all the members of the HPS staff were more than supportive and very knowledgeable of the students and the students' needs. Sharon Gillespy expressed her concern only being with regard to the current math program and hoped that the newly adopted program would remedy those concerns.

Ms. Davis continued her report by highlighting the goals for the 2008-2009 school year, which are as follows:

- **Goal 1:** Improving mathematics instruction to improve student learning (Year 1)
- **Goal 2:** School Theme, "Math Matters" to support academic achievement, social emotional learning, civics and professional development
- **Goal 3:** Improving student learning through student engagement

Al Schmertzler inquired about the exposure of the math program, Everyday Math, stating that the more the parents are exposed to the program, the more they will know what to look for, which would promote involvement and communication. He asked about the anticipated turnout was for the meeting that allowed parents to learn about the new math program. Ms. Davis replied that the turnout could not be predicted at this time given this was a busy time for many families. She added that this would not be a one-time event, though.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC voted unanimously to approve the Hanscom Primary School Improvement Plan.

D. Preschool End-of-Year Review Report

(Document: *Lincoln Preschool Program Improvement Plan 2007-2008, End-of-Year Report*)

Lynn Fagan reported on the improvement plan for the Lincoln Preschool. She acknowledged that the most critical and ongoing issue with the preschool was the waiting list, which was a direct result of the military families that move-in/out and dates are shifted. She highlighted the goals for the 2007 year and beyond.

- **Goal 1:** The Lincoln Preschool will plan program and activities to promote community outreach and parent involvement in the preschool classrooms.

- **Goal 2:** The Lincoln Preschool will plan programs and activities to establish a specialist program (for example: music, movement, etc.), review, and implement an updates science curriculum and continue projects that support social and emotional learning.
- **Goal 3:** The Lincoln Preschool will plan programs and activities to address and improve transitions for all students and families. Transitions include from Early Intervention to preschool, preschool to kindergarten, and military transitions that impact students of Hanscom.

Lynn Fagan noted that an additional focus next year would be on mathematics, although the report did not highlight that. She stated that it was a recent discussion among the staff members.

Sharon Gillespy inquired about the specialists and ideas for the preschool. Lynn Fagan replied that the music specialist was important, noting she had been in contact with Stephen McKenna with regard to prospects but that the physical education specialist was the focus right now given so many children are unable to interact with others and play organized games involving certain motor skills.

Julie Dobrow inquired about the playground issues that had been presented previously, asking if there had been progress. Lynn Fagan replied that there was some improvement but that there were still struggles with multiple classes being out at a given time. She added that there was a tentative schedule in place and that moving the shed could give teachers better visual sightlines for monitoring the children.

Tom Sander inquired about the DECA surveys. Lynn Fagan replied that the survey was online, the child was coded for confidentiality, and it analyzed the progress of the child for skills and behavior.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC voted unanimously to approve the Lincoln Preschool Program Improvement Plan.

E. METCO End-of-Year Report

(Documents: *Lincoln- METCO Program Improvement Plan 2007-2008 End-of-Year Report*)

Christina Homer presented the improvement plan for the METCO program, which involves the 89 Boston students that are currently enrolled. The goals she presented for the 2007-2008 school year are as follows:

- **Goal 1:** Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment – To evaluate and research current and potential programs to better support students participating in the Lincoln-METCO program
- **Goal 2:** Leadership and School Culture (students) – To provide more opportunities for students to develop abilities essential for effective citizenship leadership and advocacy.
- **Goal 3:** Leadership and School Culture (parents and guardian) – To increase focus on opportunities for Lincoln and Boston resident families to learn from and about each other and to make better connections that support learning activities in school for their children.
- **Goal 4:** Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety – To evaluate emergency communication systems and crisis plans as they specifically pertain to the needs of Boston resident families.

Tom Sander inquired about the Lincoln Integrated Preschool (Goal 1) with regard to bus transportation; students being transported for long periods of time, finding new preschool rooms, and budgetary impact. Ms. Horner replied that no decisions have been made at this time regarding the funding of sources to support transportation costs and tuition for Boston resident students at the Lincoln Integrated Preschool. She acknowledged that there was a lot of research being conducted currently and they were finding a lot of issues could result in higher costs and drawbacks to funding. She highlighted the results that Weston had with their program. Julie Dobrow concurred with Tom Sander's concerns with budgetary costs with regard to not only the bus transportation but also the expansion of the preschool, the hiring of additional staff members, and the long bus trip for the preschool children. She added that she wanted to hear more about the research and learn how other districts in a similar situation were working.

Mickey Brandmeyer stated that he supported the fact that there was a need for an expansion to the preschool. He acknowledged that there was a great preschool program in place which explained the waiting list. He added that it would only frustrate parents to add their child's name to that waiting list without any way to forecast how long it would take to get their child in the program. Mr. Brandmeyer acknowledged that he and Ms. Horner would have to continue working together to expand the preschool to get families off the waiting list instead of the waiting list growing but that the project would take time.

Al Schmertzler inquired about implementing a tuition that would cover the costs of the expansion. Mickey Brandmeyer explained that it would result in a temporary "inflation" to the tuition but that others with children already in the program

would now have to pay higher tuition costs which seemed unfair. Buckner Creel added that one appeal of the preschool was that it gave an opportunity to those within the community who otherwise couldn't afford higher tuition costs to enroll their child in preschool.

Lynn Fagan stated she was concerned about the sliding scale fee because she knew that the preschool would lose about 50% of its families, which would defeat the purpose of the extra room anyway. Mickey Brandmeyer added that the preschool tuition structure was comparable with others and most often was lower. He suggested that between now and the budget cycle next year, there be a recommendation developed to be presented to the SC.

Al Schmertzler inquired if there were any prospects for the METCO representative position on the Lincoln SC. Ms. Horner stated that there were people that were interested but that they could not commit to the entire year. She offered that the position be split. Julie Dobrow stated that the position was difficult to split given there was such a learning curve. Ms Horner suggested a split of one person for the first 6 months and another for the second part of the year. Julie Dobrow replied that that arrangement could be considered.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC voted unanimously to approve the METCO Improvement Plan.

VI. Superintendent's Report

None

VII. Curriculum

None

VIII. Policy

None

IX. Budget and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to approve the warrants in the amount of **\$650,462.96.**

X. Old Business

Julie Dobrow proposed May 22, 2008 for the Collaborative Meeting among the SC members and the administrative for a goal setting workshop.

XI. New Business

None

XII. Approval of Minutes

None

XII. Information Enclosures

All were disbursed at the beginning and throughout the course of the meeting.

XIV. Adjournment –

On motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Waters, School Committee Recording Secretary