

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Thursday, September 25, 2008  
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA  
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

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

II. Public Comments

Jillian Darling, PTA liaison to the School Committee, asked that the School Committee minutes include comments from the audience. Ms. Darling also would like all audience members listed in the minutes. Ms. Dobrow responded that a discussion about minutes would occur later in the meeting.

III. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Superintendent's Response to the Recommendations from the Task Force on High Achieving Students

Mr. Brandmeyer's September 2008 response to the report, requested by the School Committee, was presented. He thanked the Task Force members for their hard work on the report. The focus of their report, presented to School Committee in June 2008, is to focus on advanced learning activities for all students. He explained that low-barrier activities are those that do not require prerequisites for a student to participate. High-barrier activities have prerequisites. The teachers use multiple criteria to decide which students can participate in the high-barrier activities. Mr. Brandmeyer reiterated the report's recommendation that mathematics be focused on first. They are committed to differentiating instruction in class. They agreed that celebrating excellence is important as is encouraging students to take appropriate risks. They have short and long term goals. Currently they are cataloging the opportunities for advanced learning in each of the schools.

The four school principals, Randy Davis, Mark Kaufman, Steve McKenna, and Sharon Hobbs, presented the low and high barrier activities that their schools are offering to students. Ms. Davis said that their discussion about high-achieving students has widened. They are focusing efforts on getting first and second graders who are advanced learners to learn advanced information with Everyday Math. In their core curriculum, they are looking at students who need more, and the conversation is occurring. One low-barrier activity they are offering is after school math clubs. As they get further into the new mathematics, the content of the clubs may change. They also have a high-barrier after school session. With the Flex Time part of their teacher contract, they can now offer these after school activities. They have expanded the Science Share from last year's offering. The creative arts offer low-barrier activities. She said that the discussion on high-achieving students is now front and center.

Steve McKenna, K-4 principal, said that he met with his fourth grade team of teachers, and their discussion had similar themes to those Ms. Davis mentioned. They are collaborating with the math specialists and the middle school. The low barrier opportunities in math for fourth graders are done during the school day. It's appropriate to have full participation in the activities. He said that they have high-barrier activities for fourth graders and others. They are going to start a Math Club and have posted jobs for leaders. They would like 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics teachers to lead it. Continental math will be the focus of this activity. They may expand the activity for second graders. They have continued to have the Science Share program. A grant from the Lincoln School Foundation [LSF] funds the program. Mr. McKenna plans to solicit parental support for the program, which they hope to expand.

Sharon Hobbs, 5-8 Principal, said that seventh grade teacher Keith Johnson has obtained a LSF grant to start a school newspaper. She called it a medium barrier activity. She explained that it will take one to three trimesters to do it. They have a staff of excited students. The target date for the first issue is the middle to end of October. Susan Totten is doing the Math Counts program with 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. They are preparing for a Saturday math competition with other schools on collaborative and individual bases. They also have a grant for the Science Fair. Lincoln will host the Education and Leadership for a Nonviolent Age [ELNA] this year. They are also piloting the Virtual High School [VHS] with Lincoln-Sudbury this year for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Five students are participating; their classes are number theory, contemporary Irish literature, and introduction to government. This program takes commitment outside the school day. Ms. Hobbs has asked the students how they could open up this opportunity for other students. Keith Johnson has also gotten students to read *Ishmael*. The activity is low barrier, but can also be high barrier. In the creative arts, Kristen Hall is teaching kids technical theatre, which includes learning about sound, lighting, cuing, and other things.

Mark Kaufman, Hanscom Middle School principal, explained that his 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders are preparing for the one-day American Math competition, which is a low barrier activity. The fourth to eighth graders are participating in another math competition. Fourth graders are doing the Science Share, and fifth graders may also do it in groups. The Science Fair is a low barrier voluntary activity. They do not have an ELNA group but may send students to the conference in Lincoln. They also have leadership training with the Middlesex County District Attorney's office for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. He indicated that

they are interested in the VHS once the pilot is completed. They also have the Junior Great Books program for 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> graders; he said it is a low barrier activity. The students just need to read the books.

Mr. Orgel responded that he thought the schools had some great programs in that they were based on projects and events as well as events in school. He wondered how teachers were going to monitor these activities to see whether kids were receiving differentiated instruction in class. How will we measure how this differentiation is working? Ms. Davis responded that the lens of differentiation in mathematics is their focus this year. As part of the evaluation, the principals do walk throughs in classrooms, and they are not one-time events. Mr. McKenna said that students learn about the opportunities because parents and teachers ask for them. He said that they have added a .4 math specialist to work with students who need more experience. To follow through is their charge, and they will be more vigilant to identify what is going on in the classrooms so that students who are able to achieve more will be identified and helped. Ms. Davis said they are highlighting data collection as part of Everyday Math. The math specialists are collecting assessment data at the end of each unit. Mr. Orgel asked how many students are getting differentiated assignments because they are at a higher level? Ms. Hobbs said that in middle school, students have a lot of social and academic pressure. Their students tend to hide their prowess with academics because of the pressure to be popular. Her challenge is to get kids to excel, and to keep pushing them to see that it is ok to do well. Mr. Kaufman said they use flexible subgroups in class. They are looking at assignments and the expectations. They hear conversations about which students do well in which subjects.

Mr. Sander thanked the principals for their time and attention to this subject. He echoed what Mr. Orgel said. He would like the students to be asked at the end of every week whether they have been challenged. He would like to gather data about the numbers of students who are not challenged. Ms. Hobbs responded that in Everyday Math, there are pre-tests for students so that those students who have mastered the material can be put into higher-level classes. Ms. Davis said she thinks that that will happen. Mr. Sander said that the goal is to have students be challenged. He understood that there will be some weeks where students will not be challenged. He said he was sharing his concerns so that they become mainstream concerns. Ms. Dobrow said that the Committee and the district made a huge investment of money and time for the Everyday Math program. She wanted to make sure that the Committee feels that the investment will be spent in the best way. She's heard from teachers that it is tough to teach a new program, and it takes all the teachers' focus so that they do not have enough time to look at the students who are able to accomplish more. Her concern is whether teachers will have the time and resources to identify extra opportunities for the students who need them. Ms. Hobbs said that teachers are talking about it and are on to unit 2 of the new program; this issue is on their radar.

Ms. Sterling said that the rollout of the new program is very tough, but the teachers' spirit is good. Each grade level of teachers has met with math specialists, and they are talking about differentiation. The math specialists' jobs are to figure out how to be a step ahead and bring the teachers the information on differentiation. The instructional technology is a resource for math and can be used as an ancillary project. The key piece is for the math specialists to get the instructional technology piece ready for the teachers. The front and center question now in all classrooms is how do we meet the range of learners in the room?

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether Everyday Math has technology measurement devices. Ms. Sterling said yes, the teachers are learning the software. The first round of unit one has been completed, and they are compiling the data. He also asked Ms. Davis whether the students who are advanced could be placed in a special class. She said yes, and she's looking at the challenges. Some kids need extensions on certain material, but there is a subgroup of students who are off the charts and need something separate and more advanced. When they take those kids out of the regular classes, other students step up. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether parents were hearing about the accomplishments. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that they are working on describing and cataloguing the extra activities for parents so that they are aware of the opportunities and that the schools are clear as to how students can be involved in them. Now that they have more parent email addresses, communication is increasing. He noted that their systems are more functional than they were last year.

Mr. Orgel said he thought it was great that this discussion was taking place early in the year. He said that the success of this initiative is important. Mr. Brandmeyer said that he was hearing the Committee say that they want to be updated on this issue. Ms. Dobrow said that as it is budget season, and all at this point is still on the table. She wants to make sure that there is enough money allocated to programs that will support high-achieving students and professional development for teachers to develop them. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have sufficient money to do these things and said that there would be more occurring. He said that the Committee needs to give teachers more time to get the Math Clubs going and that there will be new activities that help the new initiatives that the school has taken on.

Mr. Sander warned the budget should not drive the activities that are possible for high-achieving students. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the Virtual High School [VHS] was not directly budgeted for, but if the pilot program is successful, they must find a way to fund it. Ms. Sterling mentioned the professional development that will take place so that teachers can work on spotting advanced students and how to differentiate their instruction. They have just finished a flyer to advertise a teacher study group. She applied for a \$10,000 grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The grant would support the professional development and expanded on-line learning opportunities for expanding advanced learning opportunities. Elizabeth Graver commented that she was struck by the strong emphasis on math opportunities. Will there be discussions and activities about other subjects? She would like Mr. McKenna to look into Junior Book Reading. He responded that he would.

Ms. Dobrow thanked those who produced the report and said it was an incredible undertaking. Ms. Dobrow moved to accept the report, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

## B. District Work Plans 2008-2009: Presentation and Approval

Mr. Brandmeyer explained that the work plans do not represent everything that the administration does, and they are not meant to do so. He turned the floor over to Ms. Sterling, who asked whether the Committee remembered last May's workshop. She said that the district impact statements are goal statements. The work plans show this year's high priority items. She said that many things are on the front burner. She explained that implemented work plans become part of their days and they go off the plan. She went over the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment plan. Under the Assessment and Reporting rubric, she said that they have standards and learning expectations in place and then they will accomplish this piece. It is a big year for them; they will be able to use the evidence they have collected to make the decisions on how to better assess student performance. She's proud that they are this far with the assessments. Mr. Brandmeyer said that it's not only that teachers are able to better assess their students, it is also what the teachers and the district can learn about their academic program. Ms. Sterling said that they cannot compare on a macro level, but it is important to compare apples to apples with a coherent curriculum. Ms. Glass asked that they edit the aspirational goal and operational goal because they are hard to read. Mr. Brandmeyer said he would. She also asked what indicators do they use to assess student engagement? Mr. Brandmeyer said that the principals do this at each school, and their indicators are based on the Tripod structure of five learning targets. The indicators are based in part on the Tripod data about student perception. He said that the principals will come to the next meeting to talk about the Tripod survey.

Mr. Orgel asked whether they were embarking on the same level project of revamping grades 6-8 math review as they did for the K-5 Math last year, and if so, what did we learn from the way it was rolled out last year. Ms. Sterling explained that they are following the same process that they did for K-5 Math. They will have a preview of the new curricula they are considering. Mr. Orgel said that it was good to reflect on the critique of last year's process. Ms. Sterling said his input was well taken. They will communicate this process and will have fall focus groups for parental feedback on grade 6-8 math. It's very important to have the feedback. Mr. Orgel said that a good process for deciding on a new curriculum reflects well on the school.

Ms. Robinson mentioned that with the grade 6-8 math review, it is good to keep in mind that Hanscom students need to be prepared to enter Bedford High School, and that Lincoln students need to be prepared to enter Lincoln-Sudbury High School. Ms. Sterling said that they would make sure that the program would have students well connected no matter which school they attend. Their goal is to have students succeed in algebra. She has found that the offerings at Bedford and Lincoln-Sudbury are similar.

Mr. Brandmeyer talked about the Teacher Excellence and Professional Development work plan. They have more diverse teachers this year, and there is ongoing evaluation. He said there have been some eye-opening sessions in consistency. Under personnel management, Ms. Glass asked that they edit the goals by taking out the phrase "People of Color" and use "culturally and racially diverse faculty." Under Supervision and Evaluation, Ms. Sterling said that their goal is to get enough evidence to fine tune teacher evaluations. She mentioned that they needed to support the science teachers with professional development. She's not sure it is needed as much for math teachers. She stated that they are making a serious effort for teachers. They are also preparing a professional development program for the paraprofessionals that teachers supervise: assistants and tutors.

Mr. Brandmeyer discussed the Leadership and School Culture goal. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether they were going to team up with town government so that students understand how the Town works. Mr. Brandmeyer said yes.

Mr. Creel presented the Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety work plan. He said that they wanted interested parents to participate in an evaluation team to look at the food service program, not in terms of wellness and health, but to identify opportunities for improvement. He asked whether Ms. Darling of the PTA would get the word out to parents to get team members.

Mr. Schmertzler said that he received a call from the Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee [CLRPC], and they requested that the School Committee talk about how to get students to ride the school buses. Mr. Schmertzler explained that they now have cameras in them to keep students from being unruly, which is one reason why students do not ride the buses. The CLRPC's concerns are that there is too much congestion around the school, and using buses is more efficient than cars. Mr. Schmertzler floated the idea of having parents pay for permits to drive their children to school. Mr. Creel added that the green aspects of that policy are important, and there are financial reasons for students to ride the bus. He suggested that a study be done, and mentioned that parents should be asked how and why they drive their children to school. Mr. Schmertzler also suggested that students walk to school as some do in Newton and Boston. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that it's a nice ideal, but operationally it is a challenge. He asked whether the work plans as amended reflected the work that the Committee wants the administration to focus on. Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Brandmeyer, Ms. Sterling, and Mr. Creel for their work.

Ms. Dobrow moved to accept the report and approve the work plans as amended. Ms. Glass seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report and approve the work plans as amended.

## IV. Facilities and Financial

### A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$594,592.77 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$233,205.19 for a total of \$827,797.96. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Ms. Dobrow moved to approve the

warrants, with Ms. Glass seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

#### B. Approve Capital Projects Submission for FY 10

Mr. Creel presented the Capital Projects Submission for FY 10, an eight-page memo dated September 16, 2008 and a 63-page document, entitled "FY 2010 Capital Budget and Plan," for the Town's Capital Planning Committee [CPC]. Mr. Schmertzler is the School Committee's representative to the CPC. He asked Mr. Creel whether he would attend the CPC meeting on Tuesday, September 30. Mr. Creel accepted the invitation. Ms. Robinson asked whether they had considered building a new school instead of spending money fixing something. She said that she thought the Hanscom Middle School could be bulldozed. Mr. Orgel said that the list was good with great documents. He was concerned looking at the dollar amounts needed for these projects. Ms. Dobrow said that it is all a negotiation. Now the Committee needs to ask for more, but will probably accept less. She said that the time for trade-offs was later. Mr. Orgel responded that he saw it as classroom assistants versus school maintenance. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that Capital Project money is firewalled from school operations money. Mr. Creel said that the projects are important and need to be considered.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Ms. Glass seconded, the FY10 Capital Projects Plan. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the FY10 Capital Projects Plan.

#### C. Report on Lincoln Campus Facilities Projects: Summer 2008

Mr. Creel presented a report on the Lincoln Facilities Projects that were completed during the summer. His nine-page memo, dated September 13, detailed with photographs, showed the progress that has been made on CPC-Approved FY09 Capital Projects and Facilities Projects. They spent \$4,800 on the Reed Field House roof, but he does not want to spend any more money on repairs; he thinks it should be replaced. He reported that they had good painting bids, and as a result, the painting will be only a two- to three-year process instead of a four-year process. Ms. Dobrow said that it was an impressive list, and she thanked Mr. Creel for his work. Mr. Creel said that Michael Haines has been an asset with keeping all the projects moving along. Mr. Haines has brought in new contacts and resources for these projects, and Mr. Creel was pleased with them.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Orgel seconded, to accept the report. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

#### V. Old Business

##### A. Update from Facilities Master Planning Committee and Discussion of District's Statement of Interest [SOI]

Mr. Creel explained that the SOI is the first step in the process of deciding whether to build any new project. He wrote a two-page memo, dated September 18, and included four documents on this subject. He said that the Committee needs to engender community support for such a project, if it indeed happens. To that end, the School Committee is hosting a meeting on Wednesday, October 1 with the Finance Committee, the Selectmen, and other town boards to talk about the facilities subcommittee's work. He said that the School Building Authority has a new process. They need to clarify the 1994 school project and look at what it did and did not do to address students' needs. The School Committee and Selectmen need to vote on the SOI, and it needs to be signed by Mr. Brandmeyer as the Superintendent and Timothy Higgins, the Town Administrator.

Mr. Creel explained that the SBA has eight priorities, and he thought that our school could fall under four of the eight priorities. The Symmes Maini and McKee Associates' [SMMA] master plan study showed that the students need collaborative workspaces, and the staff needs better support areas in which to carry out their academic programs.

Mr. Schmertzler said that starting this year, the SBA will not have as much money as they did. Mr. Creel responded that the SBA has \$2.5 billion. We cannot get any money unless we submit an SOI first. Mr. Schmertzler thinks that given their process, if we undertook a significant plan, we would not get the money for it. Mr. Creel responded that we need to follow the SBA process.

Ms. Robinson asked whether it was possible to build one big school that would have enough room to include the students from Hanscom in the Lincoln Schools, which might have the federal government fund part of the school building costs. Mr. Brandmeyer said that would be complicated. They would need to ask the Town's boards. They are also in the first year of the current five-year contract. We can think about this idea to combine the Hanscom and Lincoln schools later. Mr. Brandmeyer, Ms. Dobrow, and Mr. Creel will attend the October 1 meeting and asked whether others would attend. Ms. Dobrow responded that Mr. Creel did a great job putting everything together. The Committee will vote on the submission at an October meeting, as the deadline to submit the SOI is November 15.

#### VI. New Business

##### A. State of the Town Message: First Reading

Mr. Brandmeyer wrote the draft of the State of the Town message, and Ms. Dobrow thanked him for doing so. The meeting will be held on Saturday, November 8. She asked that he include class size in the message. She asked that the Committee call or email their suggestions. They will vote on the message at the next meeting.

##### B. School Committee Long Term Agenda

Mr. Brandmeyer asked for the Committee's approval to have certain meetings in certain locations, such as the

October 16 meeting in Boston and the December 4 meeting at Hanscom. The Committee asked that the Role and Responsibilities of the Curriculum Leadership Team include learning expectations and be discussed at the October 30 meeting instead of on October 16. They asked that at the November 13 meeting, he add analysis of data. They also added reporting of summer projects at the December 4 meeting.

Ms. Glass said that at her first day of School Committee training, one subject of discussion was Question 1, the elimination of the state income tax, on the November 4 ballot. School Committees may publicly state their positions on the question. She asked whether the Committee wanted to state a position. Ms. Dobrow said that they should discuss the question. She asked Ms. Glass to collect information on it for the discussion and suggested that she get information from Michael Widmer of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation and from Carla Howell, the proponent of the question. Mr. Brandmeyer said that he will contact other superintendents to see what their school committees are doing about the question.

Ms. Dobrow said that she is concerned that the discussion of trade-offs for the budget is scheduled for the December 4 meeting, when the meeting will be at Hanscom. She wants to be sure to get the word out to the community about the budget so that interested parties can attend.

Ms. Dobrow moved to accept the long-term agenda with the edits, and Ms. Glass seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the long-term agenda with the edits.

## VII. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

None.

## VIII. Consent Agenda

### A. Field Trip Proposal: Lincoln School to Gettysburg and Washington, D.C.

Ms. Robinson asked whether Hanscom students could attend the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that field trips are tied to the curriculum; they need to be learning experiences. He said that her concern was a good one, and he and Ms. Sterling would talk to Mr. Kaufman. It was mentioned that the Lincoln 8<sup>th</sup> graders study U.S. History, and Hanscom students study world history in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Robinson thanked them for their willingness to talk about the issue.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether there was enough money for the trip. The students and their families pay the cost of the trip; the only cost the school pays is for the six teacher chaperones at \$360 each. Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the 8<sup>th</sup> grade field trip to Gettysburg and Washington, D.C. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the field trip.

## IX. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer reported on his attendance at the EDCO meeting. He met the new Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mitchell Chester. He said the meeting was a healthy exchange of ideas. His impression of Mr. Chester was that he was saying the right things, and he has a good compass. Mr. Chester has also hired good people. Mr. Brandmeyer was encouraged by the meeting.

Mr. Brandmeyer also discussed Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP] for No Child Left Behind [NCLB]. He said that 2014 is the year that all need to be passing. He said that 80 percent of all schools nationwide will fail. The district is in improvement year one. The letter about that will come out in two weeks. He said that with a new presidential administration, it will be interesting to see what happens. Massachusetts has the highest standard with the most difficult tests. He said that for MCAS, the schools are performing well, but a few kids' poor performance skews the numbers. As a District, they will have to respond. He said that Hanscom and Lincoln are scored together, but they still represent a small cohort, which also skews the numbers to their disadvantage. They will be sending a letter to parents about MCAS and AYP. They met aggregate AYP, but certain subgroups of students did not. The letter will explain differences from last year. He explained that a couple of points make a huge difference. They are looking and analyzing the results with Datametrics software. Ms. Dobrow responded that part of the way things are set up, the change in cohort makes a big difference even though many student groups are meeting AYP. Ms. Sterling said that all conversation about students ends up on those students who need improvement because of MCAS and the federal government. They would like to spend their time on their range of students. They want to position the district to do well with all students.

## X. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling said that MCAS scores and a letter will go out to parents shortly. She attended a second-grade math class with principals in the class too. She said that the students are doing well with the math vocabulary. They are working on the concept of equivalencies [greater than and less than]. She played a game called Addition Pop It, and while playing, one student said, "I just love math!" The teacher was differentiating the instruction for the students, and Ms. Sterling was pleased.

## XI. Policy

None.

## XII. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Glass said that the requirement for minutes was that they be action minutes. She asked where the happy balance

was. Ms. Dobrow wants to streamline the minutes and will talk with Recording Secretary Sarah Marcotte about it. She said that she would obtain minutes of other school committees and pass them along. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the minutes of September 11, 2008 with the corrections mentioned at the meeting. Ms. Dobrow seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes with the corrections.

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 purpose of contract negotiations. Ms. Dobrow, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Ms. Glass, yes; Mr. Orgel, yes; Ms. Robinson, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary