

**MINUTES OF THE
LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 15, 2007**

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Sandy Hessler (Vice Chair), Laurie Manos, Al Schmertzler, Sharon Antia, Leta Allen (Boston Representative), Mary Goldstein (Hanscom Representative), Deneen Trask (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buck Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance). Paul Naso (Assistant Superintendent) joined the meeting after interviews with candidates for Assistant Superintendent were completed.

I. Greetings and Call to Order

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

II. Interview Assistant Superintendent Candidates

Documents: *Possible Interview Questions for Assistant Superintendent Candidates, March 8, 2007; Job Description Assistant Superintendent; Criteria for Assistant Superintendent Search Committee, February 6, 2007; Cover letters and resumes of Mary Sterling and Sharon DeCarlo*

The Committee discussed the format for the interviews and determined the questions that would be asked by School Committee members. Mr. Brandmeyer said although the School Committee is not involved in personnel decisions except for certain positions he wants the School Committee's impressions because they have an interest in the leadership of the District.

A. Mary Sterling

Ms. Sterling made an opening statement. She said two themes emerged in her day at Lincoln. First, there is widespread appreciation for the curriculum leadership that has been provided by Mr. Naso. Second, she is impressed with the professional development opportunities that are available to teachers in Lincoln and with the value the teachers place on these opportunities.

Ms. Antia asked about at-risk learners and the achievement gap. Ms. Sterling said time and structure are important so that teachers can meet together to discuss how to make sure learning is happening for special needs students. Ms. Sterling said she is excited that Lincoln will be looking at the achievement gap next year. She said it is important to look at evidence of student learning such as examples of student work in addition to MCAS scores.

Ms. Manos asked about meeting the needs of high achieving students. Ms. Sterling said all children have capacity to perform at high levels. She would look at the programs offered to make sure they are high performing. She said in true differentiation of instruction there is no ceiling for anyone in the room. It is important to create a clear profile of students in classrooms early in the year so that teachers know where students' strengths are so they can make sure there is a stretch for all students. It is important to encourage high performing students to go the extra mile.

Mr. Schmertzler asked about difficulties some boys have performing in the classroom. Ms. Sterling said she has three brothers, two sons, and one grandson, and that she knows that boys are itchy as a group. She begins by accepting that boys have a lot of energy, ideas, spark and that there is "wiggle" in rooms with boys. It is important to build movement into the day of learning. She recommended Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain and the Mind*. Girls can be too passive and too complaint. In her work in Lowell, Ms. Sterling works with beginning teachers and helps them to deal with these issues.

Ms. Trask asked Ms. Sterling to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of working with the three distinct communities, Lincoln residents, Boston residents through the METCO program, and military families who attend the Hanscom schools. Ms. Sterling said she views the three cultures as a great resource and that each group can benefit by knowing the other groups. She said another theme that emerged in her day in Lincoln was the value that teachers place on work across the two campuses and their desire for more of this. She is interested in possibilities for students to work across campuses.

Ms. Goldstein noted Lincoln parents' tradition of volunteering in the classroom and asked Ms. Sterling to comment about working with parents. Ms. Sterling said in her former position as a principal she was able to open a new school and in this school each year began with a message to parents in each classroom about how they were invited to volunteer in that classroom. At this school, parents were invited to the school's Monday morning meeting. She used the school newsletter to involve parents. She said parent involvement is critical. The challenge is how to get the busiest parents to feel connected and how to best use the parents who have time to be more involved.

Ms. Allen asked about Ms. Sterling's experience with mentoring. Ms. Sterling said in her job in Lowell she has run a mentoring program for 127 new teachers involving around 60 mentors. Each new teacher takes a course on teaching in a urban setting. All first year mentors take a course and second year mentors participate in a seminar every month. Time and structure are important.

Ms. Hessler asked about curriculum review and development asking specifically how Lincoln as a small district can continue to renew curriculum with finite resources. Ms. Sterling noted that she had worked as a Principal in Wayland which is a small district.

It is necessary to remember that elementary teachers cannot do curriculum work on every subject at the same time. She is interested in knowing more about how the teachers on assignment work in Lincoln. She said when coming into a new context it is important to understand what you are coming into and to develop a plan with benchmarks for understanding. She has spent five years as a consultant to develop standards-based curriculum and assessments.

Ms. Dobrow asked about diversity. Ms. Sterling said as a principal she emphasized finding the diversity that existed in the school and celebrating it. Honoring diversity is a core value for her. She is attracted by the diversity at Hanscom.

Ms. Dobrow asked whether Ms. Sterling had any questions for the School Committee. Ms. Sterling asked what is important to Lincoln as a district with three cultures. Ms. Allen said that she appreciates Ms. Sterling's attention to culture and that it is important to take background in consideration in the learning process. Ms. Dobrow said she was taken with Ms. Sterling's idea that the three communities are an untapped resource.

B. Sharon DeCarlo

In her opening statement, Ms. DeCarlo said that from her previous work in Sudbury as a middle school housemaster, English language curriculum specialist, and reading specialist, she has knowledge of Lincoln. She said she loves the K-8 learning environment. Her experience ranges from Kindergarten through grade 10.

Ms. Antia asked about at risk learners and the achievement gap. Ms. DeCarlo said the achievement gap means different things in different contexts. It can be English language learners, special needs, African American students, or any gap between identifiable groups. Factors affecting achievement gaps are at the following levels: cultural, school, teacher, student, and family. Ms. DeCarlo said learners who did not make AYP in her current district were given more time and attention. Analysis of areas of difficulty on the MCAS resulted in incorporation of different math vocabulary and problem solving methods into the classrooms. Funds were provided for before and after school tutoring and Ms. DeCarlo herself was a tutor of a disabled child. The school as a whole must believe that all students can achieve and act on that belief.

Ms. Manos asked about meeting the needs of high achieving students. Ms. DeCarlo said this question comes up on a daily basis now. Massachusetts is now giving gifted and talented education more funding and encouragement than it has in recent years. In language arts it is easier to differentiate than for mathematics. In mathematics pre-testing and flexible groupings can be used. Teacher teaming can be used to create the ability for students to work in higher level groups. Software and online courses can be used but it is important to make sure high achievers are not put off in a corner or with a computer.

Mr. Schmertzler asked about difficulties that some boys have performing in the classroom. Ms. DeCarlo said most high quality teachers are aware of differences in the ways boys and girls learn and build ways to address this into the classroom. She favors use of understanding by design and performance assessments to make sure all students are progressing.

Ms. Trask asked Ms. DeCarlo to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of working with the three distinct communities, Lincoln residents, Boston residents through the METCO program, and military families who attend the Hanscom schools. Ms. DeCarlo said anytime a district has diversity it is an opportunity for students to grow and learn from each other. Teachers can draw on all things students bring to school including travel, experience in other districts, and coming from other cultures. Teachers need to be aware that not everyone has the same cultural background.

Ms. Goldstein noted Lincoln parents' tradition of volunteering in the classroom and asked Ms. Sterling to comment about working with parents. Ms. DeCarlo said parents are a fabulous resource. In a second and third grade school, Ms. DeCarlo found that parents participation in the math tutor task force, the writer's workshop, and curriculum review committees to be helpful because of the expertise parents were able to offer. Keeping parents informed is important through meeting with parent groups as well as special educational nights.

Ms. Allen asked about mentoring and specifically about mentoring students. Ms. DeCarlo said students mentoring other students are a great way to create community and a way for students to know and appreciate each other. When someone you admire pays attention to you it internally motivates you. This works on an adult to adult basis or on a student to student basis.

Ms. Hessler asked about curriculum review and development asking specifically how Lincoln as a small district can continue to renew curriculum with finite resources. Ms. DeCarlo said in the district she currently works in professional development is linked to curricular initiatives and school based initiatives. She recommended the work of Robert Marzano who has articulated eleven factors that support school achievement. One factor that is important is a guaranteed and viable curriculum. She favors developing enduring understandings, curriculum mapping and benchmark assessments. In her day in Lincoln she learned that teachers value opportunities to meet together in different configurations. In the first year in Lincoln, she would want to continue the technology initiatives, curriculum mapping, curriculum by design, and looking at student work.

Ms. Dobrow asked about diversity, inclusion and multi-cultural education. Ms. DeCarlo said we live in a diverse world and it is to the advantage of all students to have a diverse world in classrooms and school districts. For students who are in the minority culturally or racially it is important that everyone know that school is for all students. When teachers talk about curriculum they need to envision classes with participants from diverse backgrounds.

Ms. Dobrow asked whether Ms. DeCarlo had any questions for the School Committee. Ms. DeCarlo asked how the School Committee works with the Assistant Superintendent. Ms. Dobrow said Mr. Naso has been very accessible to the School Committee and has been a resource for the School Committee and has been influential in developing goals for the District of academic excellence, all students achieving their academic potential, curriculum renewal and professional development. Ms. Hessler added the goal of developing facilities that meet the needs of the twenty-first century.

III. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Hessler said that this would be her last meeting as member of the School Committee since she will not be standing for re-election. Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Hessler for her many contributions to the School Committee and for her partnership.

IV. Public Comments

None.

V. Consent Agenda

A. Field Trip for Lincoln School Grade 5 to Cape Cod

Mr. Brandmeyer said this item will be held until the next School Committee meeting.

VI. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. School Choice Hearing and Vote

Mr. Brandmeyer recommended that the School Committee vote to withdraw from the Massachusetts School Choice program for the 2007-2008 school year. Mr. Brandmeyer said he was making this recommendation for the following reasons: (1) potential financial loss because of the significant discrepancy between the reimburse figure and the actual per pupil cost in Lincoln; (2) potential special education costs to the District, (3) commitment to maintain small class size; and (4) classroom space and staff constraints.

Mr. Schmertzler moved that the School Committee vote to withdraw from the Massachusetts School Choice program for the 2007-2008 school year. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor of the motion with Ms. Allen, Ms. Goldstein and Ms. Trask concurring.

B. Superintendent's Evaluation

Ms. Dobrow said she received feedback from School Committee members and she has compiled this information in a document that reflected the consensus of the School Committee members or articulated the lack of consensus as appropriate. She asked School Committee members to comment on whether the document accurately reflects their comments. Multiple School Committee members said the document was an excellent summary of their comments. Ms. Dobrow said the superintendent's evaluation will be voted at the next meeting and two School Committee members will meet with Mr. Brandmeyer to go through the evaluation in detail.

VII. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer said he and Ms. Dobrow had participated in budget presentation with other town groups before the Selectmen, the PTA, and the Council on Aging. A budget roundtable discussion was taped for cable broadcast but will not be shown because of technical problems. Mr. Brandmeyer will craft slides for town meeting with Ms. Dobrow and other School Committee members who wish to be involved. Ms. Dobrow said it has been a pleasure to work collaboratively with other town boards to craft consistent messages around common themes. Mr. Brandmeyer provided the School Committee members with copies of the budget mailing.

Mr. Brandmeyer announced that Teresa Watts will be leaving the District since she has been appointed the Executive Director of the Case Collaborative. Mr. Brandmeyer said her position as the Administrator of Special Education and Student Services will be a challenging position to fill and that he is committed to finding an excellent replacement.

VIII. Curriculum

Mr. Naso said that he, Mr. Brandmeyer and eleven teachers attended a conference on streamlining curriculum in which Heidi Hayes Jacobs was the keynote speaker. Mr. Naso said there was value in exposure to new electronic tools for fine tuning curriculum and to curriculum mapping for use in helping to close achievement gaps by showing disconnects.

IX. Policy

None.

X. Facilities and Financial
A. Warrant Approval

None.

XI. Old Business

Ms. Dobrow said the School Committee minutes will now be shorter but will provide a good historical record of the School Committee's proceedings.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Dobrow moved that the minutes of February 15, 2007 as amended and of March 1, 2007 as amended be approved by the School Committee. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor with Ms. Allen, Ms. Goldstein, and Ms. Trask concurring.

XV. Adjournment

Ms. Hessler moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Antia seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor, with Ms. Allen, Ms. Goldstein, and Ms. Trask concurring. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM.

XVI. Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Rolley, School Committee Recording Secretary