

**MINUTES OF THE  
LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
December 7, 2006**

**Present:** Julie Dobrow (Chair), Laurie Manos, Al Schmertzler, Sharon Antia, Leta Allen (Boston Representative), Deneen Trask (Hanscom Representative), Mary Goldstein (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Paul Naso (Assistant Superintendent), Buck Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Teresa Watts (Administrator of Special Education and Student Services).

**Absent:** Sandy Hessler (Vice Chair).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Manos said she attended a coffee for parents on mathematics given by Lincoln School Principal Steve McKenna. She said it was an excellent discussion and was well attended.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gift from DeCordova

***Document: DeCordova Donation from Cathleen Higgins, Director of Food Services, to Buck Creel, November 28, 2006.***

The School Committee was asked to accept the donation of a refrigerator and coffee maker to the Lincoln Public Schools to support the Smith lunch program. Ms. Dobrow moved that the School Committee accept the consent agenda. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor, with Ms. Allen, Ms. Trask, and Ms. Goldstein concurring.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. FY'08 Budget Discussion

***Document: FY08 Budget Gap – Phase 1 Recommendation for Reductions from Mickey Brandmeyer to School Committee, December 3, 2006.***

Mr. Brandmeyer said last night there was an extensive discussion of the Lincoln School preliminary budgets at the Finance Committee hearing on town departments proposed budgets for FY'08. The current base budget of \$9,185,132 and preferred budget of \$9,394,948 are both over the 8,604,402 recommended by the Finance Committee. Mr. Creel, Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Brandmeyer also met informally with John Robinson and Robert Steinbrook of the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee is keenly aware of the financial challenges the District is facing and is thinking creatively about these options.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the cost for level service personnel will increase by \$305,500 from FY'07 to FY'08. This increase alone exceeds the Finance Committee recommendation by \$54,888. The cost for special education staff and services will increase \$658,831 from FY'07 to FY'08. The greatest increases in the special education budget are for out of district tuition (\$483,859), collaborative programs (\$8,578), transportation (\$38,411), summer school personnel (\$17,646), and professional salaries (\$98,518). These special education increases must be in the base budget.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the solicitation for the contract to run the Hanscom Schools arrived this week and that it has a short turn around time. The Hanscom budget discussion will be put aside while the contract is being secured. A vote on the Hanscom budget cannot be scheduled yet but might take place the week of December 18.

Mr. Brandmeyer asked that tonight's discussion focus on the first round of reductions for the Lincoln School. He began by referring the Committee to the proposed reductions and stating that for tonight's discussion he was taking the proposal to reduce assistants by 60 hours for a savings of \$25,000 off the table because it is possible that the Finance Committee may be able to provide additional funding. With the alterations suggested tonight, the total proposed gap reductions would be \$292,095 leaving a revised base budget gap of \$288,635 and a revised preferred budget gap of \$502,000.

Mr. Brandmeyer said central office reductions detailed in his memorandum and additional funding from Medicaid reimbursement (\$30,000) and E-rate reimbursement (\$5,000) could yield \$159,995 to begin to close the budget gap.

Mr. Brandmeyer said because of possible additional funding as a result of possible Finance Committee recommendations, he was suggesting another change in the numbers in the memorandum for tonight's discussion. The decrease in per pupil expenditures for the Lincoln School should now be 7 percent instead of the 10 percent detailed in the memorandum setting forth possible reductions.

Mr. Brandmeyer said he recommends closing a section of second grade at a savings of \$46,000. The class size would go from 17 to 22 which would be at target under the class size policy. If there are unexpected additions, the school could seek a reserve fund transfer. Mr. Brandmeyer said he does not make this recommendation lightly and that he would prefer not to have to reduce a section.

Mr. Brandmeyer recommended reducing memberships, dues and fees for grades K-4 and 5-8 by \$3,600 each. He recommended reducing library purchases by \$6,000. He said the librarian would be sorry to lose these funds for acquisitions but welcomed the opportunity to use this year to create a purchasing plan. There would continue to be funds from a variety of sources outside the budget for library book purchases. Regarding the proposed reduction in funds for library acquisitions, Ms. Dobrow recommended there be consultation between the Lincoln School librarian and the town librarian to prevent duplication.

Ms. Dobrow also asked about the impact of the possible reduction of per pupil funds. Mr. Brandmeyer said it is hard to say exactly what will be cut because these are funds which are allocated by the principals in the spring. Expenditures in this category include: paper, pencils, photo copy paper, and readers for classrooms. Ms. Dobrow said in the past the PTA has considered pre-purchasing school supplies which parents could buy from them for their children, and also that in the past some end of year spending had gone toward pre-purchase of some consumables, such as paper. As to whether the impact of this reduction might be reduced by pre-purchasing of supplies with funds at the end of FY'07, Mr. Brandmeyer said he and Mr. Creel have reviewed expenditures to date and based on this review he would expect there will be some funds for pre-purchasing and pre-payment of out of district tuition but there will not be as much as last year.

Regarding the proposed reduction of a second grade class, Ms. Antia observed that projected class sizes are such that there could be three sections for the next two years. Ms. Manos asked how Mr. Brandmeyer concluded that there would be 22 students per class rather than one class with 22 and two with 23. Mr. Brandmeyer said, in recruiting for METCO, students would be sought for grades other than grade two so that there would only be 22 per class. Ms. Manos said she is uncomfortable with class sizes of 22 for the second grade. She said this is a formative age and that of all grades in the school this would be the largest class size.

Cindy Sweetser, a Lincoln School parent, said class size really matters to parents. She suggested that other items included in the preferred budget such as the \$90,000 for technology support staff and \$25,000 for additional central office support are less crucial than maintaining small class sizes. Mr. Brandmeyer replied that funds for technology support staff and additional administrative clerical support are not in the base budget. Ms. Dobrow said the decision to reduce sections in the second grade is not a decision she would take lightly. She said small class sizes are a core value of the District. She said she has a child who will be in the second grade next year and that

the discussion around a possible reduction of section was something that she, along with the rest of the Committee, would only consider with much thought. Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Sweetser for her comments.

Ms. Manos suggested that the administration might consider keeping the fourth section of second grade and instead reduce assistants. Mr. Brandmeyer said to save \$40,000, roughly the cost of retaining the fourth section, 110 hours of classroom aides would need to be reduced. Mr. Brandmeyer said when the faculty has been asked in the past they have said they would prefer having classroom assistants with slightly larger class sizes to smaller classes sizes with no assistants.

Mr. Brandmeyer spoke about the discussions with the Finance Committee. He said there are various concepts and ideas being discussed but there is no commitment for additional funds. He said that the Finance Committee understands the impact of COLA increases under the teachers' contract and of increased special education costs driven primarily by out of district placements. The Finance Committee understands that out of district placements can spike at any time and that this is happening next year.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the budgeting is for the most expensive potential out of district placements. He said one option being discussed is to roll back the budget with some portion of the out of district placements being funded with reserve funds. Another strategy would be to use circuit breaker funds from previous years. The budget as put forth would use \$200,000 in circuit breaker funds. It is possible to use another \$200,000. If the Finance Committee determines to use these two strategies it could be possible to restore the assistants or a section for grade two. The administration will continue to talk informally with the Finance Committee.

Ms. Dobrow said last night the town departments reported on their budgets. There was a preliminary conversation, and whether there should be an override request has not yet been determined. The Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School budget is not as far along as the Lincoln School budget. The preliminary numbers indicate that there will be many funding issues. Ms. Dobrow said what happens with the Lincoln Sudbury budget could have an effect on the collective thinking about any potential override request, but that at this time this factor was unknown.

Ms. Dobrow suggested that as the School Committee puts out its agendas for the next few meetings more information on what budget matters will be discussed be included. Ms. Dobrow, Ms. Manos and Mr. Brandmeyer will work on this.

Ms. Sweetser asked why the School Committee would be voting on the base budget at the December 14 meeting. She asked if that vote could be moved to January so that parents would have the opportunity to know what is being considered and to make their views known to the School Committee.

Ms. Sweetser also suggested other cuts that could be made: the math specialist position could be eliminated; dedicated secretarial support for METCO could be eliminated; administrative secretarial support could be reduced. Ms. Antia said secretarial support levels could be examined. Mr. Creel commented that support staffing in the District is modest and that much of the work is administrative rather than secretarial with much work being done to meet increasing state requirements for record keeping and reporting. Mr. Brandmeyer said the District is not overstaffed compared to other districts. Ms. Allen said METCO already has a small amount of staff and should not be hit. Mr. Schmertzler asked if the district had increased state and federal reporting duties that occupy the work of the secretarial staff, and said recently a nearby town was penalized for failure to keep records as required. Mr. Brandmeyer said every three years the state conducts a coordinated review of special education, ELL, and civil rights and high levels of compliance are required; and that the majority of time of the secretarial staff is spent dealing with such increased reporting issues.

Regarding the timeline, Mr. Brandmeyer said the next discussion will be at the School Committee's December 14 meeting and that he still recommends taking a vote on the base budget at this meeting if possible. He recommends voting on the base budget at the meeting before a vote is taken on the preferred budget because there may be items

taken out of the base budget that the School Committee wants to put back into to preferred budget. The vote on the preferred budget could be on January 4 or 18. The Finance Committee will be meeting on December 19. They will hold a public hearing on January 23 and January 29 if necessary.

Ms. Manos asked whether the School Committee would be prepared to vote on December 14 if the Finance Committee is not meeting until later. Mr. Brandmeyer said the base budget could be voted based on assumptions that the Finance Committee will take certain actions. Ms. Manos said it would be nice to see the entire base budget put together at one meeting and vote on it at a second meeting. Ms. Dobrow said there are many facets to the town budget, that the town and library budgets are already in, and that the School Committee should try to move forward so that the Finance Committee can work to put everything together.

Ms. Sweetser commented that it is important to keep the community informed and the School Committee should not vote without the community knowing what is in the budget. She noted that the issue of whether there will be three or four second grade classes is open at the meeting before the meeting at which a vote will be taken.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the School Committee's vote would be to send the base budget forward to the Finance Committee. This does not establish the budget. In past years the School Committee has voted to commit to a base budget number and has continued the conversation about how to get there. Ms. Dobrow pointed out that even last year, the School Committee had voted a preliminary base budget only to re-vote the number at a later meeting when more data had come to light that changed the picture.

#### VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer reported that Mark Kaufman, the Principal of the Hanscom Middle School, made a presentation on collaborative leadership at the school building level at a conference in Tennessee. He wanted to recognize Mr. Kaufman and cite this as one example of the excellence of our principals.

#### VII. Curriculum

##### A. 2006 MCAS Results

***Document: 2006 MCAS and AYP Report from Paul Naso to Lincoln School Committee, November 30, 2006; Attachments A-D/Cycle IV Accountability Reports for all District Schools; MCAS Data to Principals from Paul Naso, October 30, 2006; Sample Lincoln Public Schools MCAS Assessment Follow-up Documentation Form.***

Mr. Naso presented a report on the spring 2006 MCAS results. The presentation focused on six questions.

(1) *What is the purpose of MCAS testing?* Information was provided about the history of MCAS and how it is being used under NCLB. Ms. Trask asked how MCAS compares with testing in other states and who determines how difficult the test will be. Mr. Naso said Massachusetts and a few other states are known for setting higher standards. The state sets the level of difficulty through the frameworks, the test, and the standards for the proficiency levels. Ms. Manos said in NAEP testing Massachusetts scores at a very high level compared to other states.

(2) *How did Lincoln Public Schools students do on the MCAS test in 2006?* Results and comparisons with other districts and the state were presented for all grades and subjects in which MCAS were received. A four-year performance level comparison by school was presented for ELA, math, and science. Graphs were presented which show improvements on fourth grade open response items at both the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses which are consistent with instructional changes that increased explicit instruction on open response items. Mr. Naso placed the students' performance into categories. ELA for Lincoln School grades 7 and 8 and the District grade 7 were areas of high performance. Mr. Naso defined high performance as where either 30 percent were advanced and 75 percent were advanced or proficient or where 25 percent were advanced and 80 percent were advanced or proficient. Results were encouraging for grade 5 science, grade 5 math, and grade 7 math. Third grade math was an area of concern with disappointing results. Eighth grade performance in science at the Hanscom Middle School

was an area of low performance. Mr. Naso said more analysis must be done. There is much movement in and out of Hanscom but it is hard to say that the poor performance is due to this since some new students scored high and others low.

(3) *What is the District doing so that more students meet the proficiency expectations?* The District uses three methods: (a) individual follow-ups, adjustments and supports; (b) other forms of monitoring and assessment; and (c) curriculum or instructional changes.

(4) *Are there conclusions about our programs that can be drawn from the results?* What can the District learn from these results to help rethink the teaching practices? The District needs to build confidence that collective tuning of instruction can make a positive difference. Mr. Naso cited the improvements in fourth grade math open response items as a good example of the impact of collaborative concentrated work with teachers deliberately digging in and tackling a problem. He said the District needs to improve the use of resources and guidance for school-level and grade-level analysis. Test-Wiz is available for this. The question of alignment or are we teaching what is on the test must be asked but that is not enough. Questions about instruction must be asked like what needs to be done differently to see results for students. Assessments in addition to MCAS must be used to inform changes. It is important to stay on message about curriculum coherence. There are long-term benefits to this work. What is done in grades K-4 makes a difference at the upper grades. Standards based curriculum is not enough. There must also be standards based instruction.

(5) *What is Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?* Mr. Naso talked about the definition of AYP under NCLB. He said AYP determinations are issued yearly. There are school and district AYP determinations in the aggregate and for subgroups in ELA and math. Mr. Naso showed a slide called “State Performance Target 2002-2014” that showed the progression of expectations through 2014. He described the AYP calculation formula. He showed a sample CPI calculation. He then reviewed the accountability reports for each school noting that each school has no status meaning none have been identified for special State monitoring of improvement. The Districts ELA performance rating is very high and its math performance rating is high.

(6) *Why aren't more students scoring at advanced levels?* Mr. Naso said the District has goals about proficiency because of federal requirements. He said setting the goal that more students score at advanced levels is not the best way to achieve this result. Excellence is a goal. A lot of work that is not visible goes into fostering excellence such as teacher evaluation, supervision, and mentoring. Mr. Naso said there are key questions in lesson planning. He wants teachers to understand what data they have that shows which students already know material which is going to be taught and which students do not. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether Mr. Naso is seeing benefits to enhancements to the teaching process or whether he is finding that some are not working. Mr. Naso said he sees both and there is re-grouping when enhancements are not working. Mr. Naso said students who are now in grades 6, 7, and 8 had inconsistent experiences in science with programs that were not well aligned and units that were not well defined. Now for grades 2, 3, and 4 there are better defined units, more alignment, and science is getting more time. Mr. Naso pointed to gradual changes in assessment, open response instruction, math technology, and the use of Fastmath as positive signs.

Ms. Manos noted that the seventh grade of the Lincoln School tied for fifth place in the entire state in ELA. She also noted that for eighth grade of the Lincoln School 98% of students scored at proficient or advanced. Mr. Naso said the district-wide ELA performance was strong as well. Ms. Manos was also very enthusiastic about the dramatic improvements in 4<sup>th</sup> grade math at both schools and thanked Mr. Naso, the math specialists, and teachers for their efforts.

Ms. Manos said she is concerned that over the last three years the numbers of students in the advanced category in the Lincoln School have declined substantially. She said she would like to see a goal of more students scoring at the advanced level.

Ms. Trask said she is concerned about math and science at Hanscom. She asked whether the science tested in eighth grade was what is studied in eighth grade or cumulative which could present difficulties for students who have moved from another state. Mr. Naso said it is cumulative. Mr. Naso said if a student is new to Hanscom the eighth grade material might be new or it might repeat what he or she might have already covered at a different school. There are assessments throughout the year and teachers try to target certain areas if red flags are present.

Mr. Naso said there are two threads: (1) for individual students if they are not at proficiency level the District builds a plan; (2) at the program level procedures are introduced to align the curriculum and to ask whether instruction is focused to get results. He said for eighth grade science at Hanscom there are several rewritten units in science and new science technology projects.

Ms. Antia recounted that when one of her children was in an earlier grade they had trouble with the MCAS test. The teacher and schools response was quick and thorough getting a specialist and plan in place. She reminded everyone that MCAS is a requirement for graduation from Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School (LS).

Ms. Antia asked whether the District follows how former Lincoln students perform on the tenth grade MCAS. Mr. Naso said there have been a number of reports on how Lincoln students do at LS but there has not been a specific inquiry regarding MCAS. Mr. Brandmeyer said essentially all Lincoln-Sudbury students are meeting the competency requirements for graduation from LS. Ms. Dobrow said she would not want the administration to look into tenth grade scores as there is already much MCAS data for them to analyze. Mr. Brandmeyer said the District does not have access to individual MCAS scores for individual LS students.

Ms. Manos asked about the dip in third grade reading scores. Mr. Naso said the dip may be an anomaly and he would be surprised if the trend is in a negative direction. Ms. Manos said the third grade is the largest cohort in the school. She asked whether they are getting sufficient support. She suggested that there could be a workshop for parents of students in grade three and below on open response questions. She said Steve McKenna spoke about this in his math presentation and many parents said they really did not understand what the students are supposed to do for the open response questions in their homework. Mr. Naso said third and fourth grade teachers will be coming together to learn about what was taught in third grade last year.

Ms. Dobrow asked what the District is doing to prepare students not to panic about MCAS testing. Mr. Naso said the tone teachers take is important. He said he has not crafted district-wide messages. The principals think through what messages they want teachers to give students. Attention is given to scheduling MCAS so that not too much is going on in the weeks it is administered. Timing is planned so that there are not two testing sessions in the same day. Ms. Dobrow suggested that since there are three new principals thought be given to crafting a consistent message regarding tone about testing. Mr. Brandmeyer said faculty members stay calm about MCAS because they are using the kind of language that students will see on MCAS in their everyday teaching and they are teaching students strategies they will need. If good learning expectations and components are in place then students and teachers do not need to worry about MCAS.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Naso for looking into possible differentials between boys' and girls' performance on MCAS, and noted that with few exceptions, there didn't seem to be much difference, and that where there were the cohort sizes were so small that the percentages were probably not significant. Ms. Dobrow asked whether the form that teachers and principals use for tracking individual students MCAS performance will be shared with parents. Mr. Naso said it is not intended for this purpose but in some cases it might be shared with parents in conference.

Ms. Dobrow asked about a third grade math question that many students were unable to answer correctly. Kathy O'Connell, Math Specialist Lincoln School, said this and two other questions had to do with division notation. Teachers need to revisit the concept of division notation and the relationship between multiplication and division. She noted that third grade is the first time the concept of division is introduced to students. Ms. Manos suggested that students also need more subtraction and work with the relationship between subtraction and addition. Ms.

Trask said she does not understand why division is not taught and revisited throughout the year rather than just at the beginning of the year. Ms. Dobrow commented that the issue of consistent practice of basic mathematical operations has been brought up at many School Committee meetings.

Ms. Dobrow asked that information about MCAS results be communicated to the community. Mr. Naso said he plans to do this through the website and for principals to have campus or school based presentations. Ms. Manos suggested that the written report be made more available to parents by having a link to it in the District News.

Ms. Sweetser thanked Mr. Naso for including the section on advanced learners. She suggested data should be included on Weston as a comparable community. She asked about the performance of subgroups in 6 to 8. Mr. Naso said the performance gap is being addressed through specific supports for individual students, and the topic appears as a district-wide goal. In upcoming meetings the School Committee will hear from administration about additional efforts to improve the performance of subgroups. Mr. Naso mentioned that many efforts are already under way and cited as an example the after-school math support being provided to Boston students. Ms. Antia said the School Committee has had many discussions about the performance gap. She suggested that something be added to the report to make clear that the achievement gap is being addressed, that it is a priority and a district goal so that it does not appear that this is being ignored.

Richard Jewett asked whether the backgrounds of the third grade teachers are part of why student had trouble answering certain questions. Mr. Naso said the math program is putting more emphasis on communicating mathematical reasoning.

Ms. Sweetser asked what Mr. Naso thought it would take to get to 100% proficiency in math and ELA by 2014. She asked whether it might be necessary to spend more time in math and ELA and whether it might be necessary to extend the amount of time spent in school. Mr. Naso said districts where scores are very low are extending the school day. He said he is cautious about devoting more time to the subjects because it is hard to do this without compromising other subjects. He said it is possible that there will be a retreat from the 2014 directive to require that all students must be making progress rather than requiring 100 percent proficiency. Mr. Brandmeyer said the District will need to maintain the supports it has and continue to refine and develop its curriculum and instruction. Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Naso for his presentation.

- VIII. Policy  
None.
- IX. Facilities and Financial  
A. Warrant Approval  
None.
- X. Old Business  
None.
- XI. New Business  
None.
- XII. Approval of Minutes  
None.
- XIII. Information Enclosures
- XIV. Adjournment

Ms. Dobrow thanked Betty Green for videotaping tonight's meeting. Mr. Schmertzler moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor, with Ms. Allen, Ms. Goldstein, and Ms. Trask concurring. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sara Rolley, School Committee Recording Secretary