

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 11, 2010
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Jennifer Glass, Debbie John (Boston Representative), Deb Leister (Hanscom Representative), Joe Connell (Hanscom Representative), Cecily Murdock (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).
Absent: Rob Orgel.

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Glass attended the morning parent session about the Responsive Classroom on March 1. The speaker presented a morning meeting. She said that 25 people attended and enjoyed hearing about the program from the Northeast Foundation speaker and what's happening in school with it.

Ms. Glass reported that the G4 group met and is thinking of ways that the schools could be supported by outside people to think through the different issues. G4 has 13 subgroups that are meeting in the towns with reports due Monday, March 15. More information will be shared publicly.

Ms. Glass attended the Foundation for MetroWest [FMW] Conference, which focused on ensuring a great future in science, math, and technology education. The Secretary of Education, Paul Revell, was in attendance. FMW discussed how business and schools can work together. Ms. Dobrow sits on the board that administers grants, and reported that most grants go to arts organizations in the MetroWest area, but they may expand into education grants. Mr. Schmertzler said FMW has invited students to come to their labs to get students interested when they are in middle school. He would like more students participating in the Science Fair and would like them to be encouraged at a younger age. Mr. Brandmeyer said this year's Science and Engineering fair will be on April 13; 5th to 8th graders will display and demonstrate their projects all day in school, and the community is invited in the evening. Mr. Sander suggested that they invite people from corporations. Ms. Dobrow suggested that Meg Ramsey, Chairman of the FMW, be invited.

Ms. Leister said the Hanscom Middle School's meeting with parents about the reproductive health classes was well received, albeit a bit contentious. Ms. Sterling characterized the meeting as a frank and helpful dialogue where the Administration and the wellness teachers learned about parents' concerns. She reminded all that it is state law that any parent who is uncomfortable with their student being taught this information can opt out for their student. The curriculum starts Tuesday at Hanscom. Ms. Murdock thanked Ms. Sterling and said it is well received; she appreciates their work on it. Ms. Sterling said Lincoln's meeting on the same subject will be on March 16.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on K-8 Literacy Program Assessment Plan

Ms. Sterling introduced Ms. Judy Merra, Content Specialist for English Language Arts, and thanked her for her research in putting together the ELA assessment plan. They are now implementing their first plan, a comprehensive plan that needs to serve three purposes: 1) to inform classroom instruction; 2) to provide data for entry and exit criteria for literacy services; and 3) to track progress in literacy learning at the district level. It will take two years for the plan to be fully operational. This is the first year they have used "writing prompts" (for example, Tell me about your vacation) to assess student progress, and they will continue to use them in all grades. They are developing a district-wide database to track student progress on state and selected local assessments.

Ms. Merra explained that they are teaching teachers how to assess student progress during classroom time with the grade-appropriate assessment tools, and the teachers have responded well, especially those teaching grades 3-5. They do not want to overassess students, but they need

information to teach students to read and need to assess various dimensions of reading literacy. In kindergarten to grade 2, they use the DIBELS assessment tool to see how well the students use *phonics* and *word recognition*. In grades 3 through 6, they measure how *fluent* the students are when reading a story. How many words per minute do they read? Are they pausing appropriately in the text? Another assessment tests the students' *comprehension* of the material they are reading. Ms. Merra works with the literacy specialists to help students who need extra help.

Ms. Murdock asked if there is a national testing assessment for students. Ms. Sterling said that MCAS, the state examination, is the assessment. They use MCAS as one assessment, but their local assessments give them more detail to determine what a student needs to succeed. Ms. Murdock asked what they do for 7th and 8th graders. Ms. Sterling said these tools can be used for all grades, but they do not have anything focused on 8th graders. Ms. Merra explained that the comprehension in reading is different for those grades. They assess all 3rd to 5th graders, and they build the assessments into their reading instruction time without stopping instruction for these assessments. These assessments are completed twice a year. Ms. Murdock asked if they continue to follow the students' progress, and Ms. Merra said they use the information to pass on to the teachers for the next school year. Ms. John asked whether the DIBELS K-2 letter on nonsense word fluency was going to be used for a baseline in September of the next school year. Ms. Merra said they are using pieces of it for kindergarteners and 1st graders.

Mr. Connell said it is helpful what they are doing with these literacy assessments. Ms. Dobrow noted the exercise in scoring common assessments that Ms. Merra brought to the Committee at her last appearance was so inspiring that she brought it to the college level. Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Sander thanked them for their report and their work.

B. 2010-2011 School Year Calendar: Second Reading and Vote

Mr. Brandmeyer said the Lincoln Teachers' Association voted to come back to school before Labor Day. The proposed calendar complies with the Commonwealth's requirement that school be in session for 180 days. There are five extra days included in it. He is not proposing an alternate calendar in the scenario that they close school beyond those five extra days for snow, flu, flooding, or other circumstances. They do not yet know what they will focus on for Institute Day, and the choices are November 29, January 14, or January 18. Mr. Sander asked when they would know which day Institute Day would be held, and Mr. Brandmeyer responded they should know by early April. Ms. Leister requested that it be held on January 14 since Bedford High School has that day off. The date depends on when speakers are available.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for the report. Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to approve the 2010-2011 school year calendar. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the calendar.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that the Hanscom Primary School received the early childhood accreditation from NAEYC. He congratulated them for their hard-earned success.

He reported that EDCO will have a conference at the State House on March 31 about the 21st century classroom and how to get there. There will be a speaker on the use of technology in the classroom and a workshop at Bentley College. He expects it to be an interesting topic and discussion, and he hopes to attend.

A. Enrollment of Employees' Students

Mr. Brandmeyer reported that he sees no pressure on class size with the requests from employees' students. He recommends that the Committee accept the requests. There are five students who will continue their pre-2009 enrollment (in grades 4, 5, and 8), eight students who will continue their 2009 enrollment (in grades 1, 3, 6, and 7), and three students who will be initially enrolled in the Lincoln schools in grades 2, 4, and 6. Ms. Glass noted that grade 5 will have 3 sections, and the report erroneously noted that there will be 4 sections. Mr. Brandmeyer acknowledged that she is correct, but they still will not go over the maximum number of students in the grade. Mr. Sander asked Mr. Brandmeyer to let the employee parents know that the intent is to have their children stay enrolled in the school, but there is a possibility that they may not be able to if there are funding problems. Mr. Brandmeyer will tell them.

Mr. Schmertzler moved, and Ms. Glass seconded, the motion to approve the enrollment of the employees' children at the Lincoln School beginning with the 2010-2011 school year subject to the continued employment of their parents as required by School Committee policy. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the enrollments.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling reported that she had a fascinating one-on-one session with English language learners. On April 8, there will be a report from the English as a Second Language [ESL] teachers to the Committee.

She attended 6th grade science labs, where she observed students working hard on developing hypotheses, identifying variables, and trying to use the scientific method. She said it was striking to see student diligence and curiosity. They are learning about osmosis and diffusion.

Ms. Sterling also reported that in the advanced learning opportunities rubric, the Drexel Math Forum allows students in grades 3-8 to have accounts to do their math problems. Twenty Lincoln students have active accounts. One 5th grade student received a mentor response from a Drexel professor that the student did well on some math problems, but urged the student to explain how he knew the answer, and to reflect on his answer.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$576,749.07 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$201,829.70 for a total of \$788,578.77. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Sander seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. RFP Selection Committee Discussion

Mr. Creel said that he advertised the RFP for the Hartwell Space in today's and next week's *Lincoln Journal*. They will receive proposals by April 12, 2010. The Committee needs to approve members to the RFP evaluation and selection committees. They can finalize the appointments at the March 25 meeting.

The Preliminary Evaluation Committee will be a three-person committee that consists of two School Committee members and himself as the Administrator for Business and Finance. They will review proposals, check references, and prepare a preliminary ranking.

The Final Selection Committee will be a five-person committee that consists of two School Committee members, two Town citizens with no connection to any proposer, and Mr. Brandmeyer. They will review all proposals, rank them, and make a recommendation for award to the School Committee. Mr. Creel will serve as a non-voting secretary to this Committee.

Ms. Glass is willing to serve on either committee and noted that members could serve on both. Mr. Schmertzler said he would serve on one of them. Mr. Sander offered to be on the Preliminary Evaluation Committee, noting that his daughter had attended Magic Garden, but he still believed he could be impartial. Mr. Creel said that Sarah Cannon Holden would be good on the Final Selection Committee. Ms. Dobrow asked that they advertise for committee members to be on the Final Selection Committee to avoid any conflicts. Mr. Creel estimated that the meeting for the Phase 2 evaluation for the Final Selection Committee would take place April 26-28. Mr. Creel said he will advertise to solicit interest to be on the Final Selection Committee. Applicants for the committee will need to sign an affidavit that their interests are not in conflict. Mr. Sander noted that he's comfortable having Mr. Creel serve as the secretary on the Final Selection Committee.

Ms. Dobrow noted that the Preliminary Evaluation Committee would consist of Ms. Glass, Mr. Sander, and Mr. Creel. The Final Selection Committee would consist of Ms. Glass, Mr. Schmertzler, Mr. Brandmeyer, Mr. Creel, and two Town members. Ms. Dobrow thanked them for their continuing work on the RFP issue.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

A. Review Draft Town Meeting Presentation

Mr. Brandmeyer presented their Town Meeting presentation, which he noted mirrors last year's. They will share the values, goals, and key gains. The slides will show where they get the money to run the schools and the breakdown on how the money is spent. They will compare it to other districts and show the salaries, per pupil costs, and class sizes. He will also show a staffing summary that will show they are down 5.5 FTEs for the 2010-2011 school year. The total operating budget is \$9.2 million; they have \$1.1 million other monies that support the schools.

He will show slides of students in action, such as the 4th grade poetry unit, science and engineering, FLES (foreign language in elementary school), and performance. They will capture student voices thanking them in many ways. He will include some professional development information. Ms. Sterling commended Faye Ruopp whom all the teachers like and who has made a huge difference. Ms. Glass suggested that they include a photo of a morning message from Responsive Classroom. Ms. Dobrow said they should only mention the whole student rather than Responsive Classroom.

Mr. Sander suggested that they mention the community service conference, and thank the Lincoln School Foundation for their grants. They should mention whether the sources of revenue have changed. He also said the staffing summary should explain whether they are letting staff go or whether the staff will be leaving by attrition. They need to mention that they are cutting special education teachers, based on the population being served. He suggested that they mention the Improvement Initiatives such as the implementation of the new math program and the resources allocated to do it well.

Mr. Brandmeyer showed the second presentation on the school building feasibility study. He noted that they used this presentation for the PTA. He laid out what brought them to the Statement of Interest and that the MSBA invited them to do a feasibility study. They will give the project background from 1947 to 1994 and some information from the SMMA study. Mr. Sander suggested that they color-code school buildings to show which ones were beyond their useful lives according to SMMA. Ms. Dobrow said there are pieces all over campus that are failing. Mr. Brandmeyer said he can highlight them. Mr. Schmertzler asked him to emphasize the building inefficiency and show that they want to be green and part of the project is to improve the energy efficiency in these buildings.

Mr. Brandmeyer said they will explain that it's a process; there's no commitment to building anything new, and the feasibility study is just a study. He has a timeline for the project that shows the next steps. He will show that there are 31 steps in the MSBA's school building process, and the schools are on step two. The study will be paid for by the state and the Town. Ms. Glass suggested that they address why the cost of the feasibility study could be as high as \$650,000. Ms. Dobrow suggested that they include slides that say, "What is a feasibility study?" and "Why does it cost so much?" Ms. Glass thinks Town Meeting will think we are really looking for a new building. She suggested that they explain that the MSBA tells the district what they can build, that they partner with the district, and that they are part-and-parcel of this process. Ms. Dobrow said they should say they are cognizant that there are many projects in Town, and they are working in concert with the Town. Mr. Creel noted that members of other Town boards will sit on the MSBA's committee. They will prepare a handout for Town Meeting that shows the MSBA's process.

Ms. Dobrow thanked them for their work.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2010 meeting. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

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. Sander, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Ms. Glass, yes; Ms. John, yes; Ms. Leister, yes; Mr. Connell, yes; Ms. Murdock, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary