

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, April 8, 2010
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

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

Absent: Rob Orgel.

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Mr. Sander, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

A. Board Election and Reorganization

Mr. Sander congratulated Mr. Christenfeld on his election and welcomed him to the Committee. Mr. Sander asked for nominations for the Chair of the Committee. He nominated Ms. Glass to be Chair of the Committee for the next year. Mr. Schmertzler moved, and Mr. Christenfeld seconded, the nomination for Ms. Glass to be Chair. The Committee voted unanimously for Ms. Glass as Chair.

Ms. Glass appointed Mr. Sander as Vice Chair. He expressed willingness to serve. The Committee voted unanimously for Mr. Sander as Vice Chair.

Ms. Glass noted that she will attempt to follow in Ms. Dobrow's illustrious footsteps.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Schmertzler said that the Safe Routes Committee held its first walk to school yesterday. Mr. Creel will talk to DPW about making the Lincoln Road route safer. Mr. Steve McKenna, Smith School Principal, has put together a grant proposal for games for students on their walks to school.

Mr. Schmertzler attended the EDCO Forum on the 21st Century Classroom focusing on technology in the classroom. The principal speaker urged schools to let students use cell phones during class to deepen their education. For example, a cell phone application could be used during a biology class to show how a cell works, and make students more interested in science. Mr. Schmertzler noted that this is distinct from other issues with cell phones (paying attention, security, etc.). Mr. Brandmeyer said that the school needs to continue to invest in the professional development to use the technology effectively and not just purchase hardware.

Mr. Sander attended the elementary school's Science Share on Tuesday: he noted that the projects were of high quality, and the students were engaged and knowledgeable but it was disappointing that more students were not doing projects (only 5-6 projects). He "shouted out" Mr. Christenfeld for coaching a project. The attendance was reasonable, and the students who attended came to learn too. Mr. Christenfeld asked how they could increase the number of students who participate in the event next year. The students learned both about hypotheses and how to test them.

Mr. Schmertzler said that he and Ms. Glass attended a meeting of a foundation supporting science in schools, and he invited someone he met there to attend Lincoln's Science and Engineering Fair on April 13.

Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Brandmeyer and the Administration for their work and attendance at the Annual Town Meeting and thanked Mr. Sander for giving Ms. Dobrow a wonderful send-off.

Ms. Glass attended the G4 meeting, and their next one will be on April 12.

Ms. Murdock arrived at 7:15 pm.

Ms. John asked when the School Committee's meeting would be held in Boston. Mr. Brandmeyer said the next two meetings will be held at Hanscom and in Lincoln, so the Boston meeting would likely be held in May or June.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gift

The School Committee was asked to accept the donation of \$1,000.00 from the Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation for the Lincoln School grade 5-8 Drama Program. Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to accept the gift. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the gift. Mr. Brandmeyer will write a thank you letter on the Committee's behalf to thank them for their generous contribution.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on English Language Learner Program and Assessment Plan

Ms. Sterling said that preparing for tonight's presentation was a trio effort with teachers Ms. Linda Lipton and Ms. Rita Trotta. The English Language Learner [ELL] Program occurs every day in the schools. In 2005, the state conducted a Coordinated Program Review. Ms. Trotta was a key player in that Review, and Ms. Lipton joined the staff thereafter. Their report covered seven questions, and she noted that the appendices were helpful.

Mr. Christenfeld asked about the average number of students enrolled in ELL on each campus, and Mr. Sander asked whether the numbers fluctuate. Ms. Sterling said there are 18 in Lincoln and 12 at Hanscom; the number shifts because of transitioning students. The number of ELL students is higher than in 2005 but numbers are hard to forecast. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the military brings ELL students to our District? Ms. Trotta noted that the Boston area offers many opportunities, and many of their parents are at area universities.

Ms. Sterling said they provide initial screening and preliminary assessment to identify students who may need ELL services when they arrive at the schools. Ms. Trotta and Ms. Lipton deliver direct services to students individually or in small groups, and they collaborate with classroom teachers to provide additional resources for Sheltered English Immersion [SEI] instruction in the regular classroom. This year, the students' home languages are: Chinese, Mandarin, Tagalog, Korean, Bangla, Hungarian, Japanese, Haitian-Creole, Hindi, Chammarro, Romanian, Dutch, Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and German. They closely monitor the students and measure progress along the way. These students take the MCAS exams in math in addition to the annual state-mandated assessment for ELL.

Ms. Trotta said that some students at the Lincoln schools have left the ELL program because they have attained proficiency. There are several students at the higher end of the intermediate program level, and there are students in the middle grades who are less proficient. Ms. Lipton said that Hanscom's program is more of a primary program; students are generally at the beginning levels of English. She also explained that there is common oral English that we use every day [Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, BICS], but there is also an academic proficiency [Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, CALP] that is needed for the ELL student to succeed in school. Typically, students can seem proficient in conversational English but still need additional years to develop CALP (which takes 4-7 years on average).

Ms. Lipton presented a case study of one student with whom she works. The student's first language is Spanish, and he is energetic, creative, and enthusiastic. When he arrived at Hanscom in December, he did not speak any English. Ms. Lipton does not speak Spanish, but is able to connect with him; 40% of English and Spanish words are similar, and language structures are similar. The first goal is to acclimate the student to the school's culture. The Rigby program encourages words and the feelings for them. Feelings are very important, and they have cards that they can hold up for feeling happy, confused, and other feelings. The cards have expressive faces with the words below. They pantomime often, and it works. Once he had a paragraph to say, and she could not understand him; being able to point to the face for frustration was a help in progressing further.

They work with vocabulary first. The students' learning strategies push them to think. They learn antonyms (messy / neat), rhymes (night / tight), prepositions, comparatives, and superlatives. ELL teachers try to honor a student's culture and encourage English as an additive language to their native language. They have interpreters in 7th and 8th grades who speak Spanish and help this student. They are monitoring his development, and he is in the "early production stage," saying things like "Evan ball" rather than "Evan has the ball." They expect he will soon be in the extended production stage.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether other students assist ELL students to learn. Ms. Lipton said yes. The classroom teacher labeled all the items in the room in Spanish, and he reads in Spanish to students. Mr. Sander asked how much time is spent in classes with this student, or one-on-one? Ms. Lipton has

eight sessions with him out-of-class a week for half an hour to an hour per time. Students who have progressed further spend two times a week out of class. Ms. Glass asked how successful they are in pitching to ELL parents to keep their first language. Ms. Lipton said they get some resistance from those parents who want to assimilate to the United States, but in general they have good luck. Ms. Murdock noted when she lived in California, it was frustrating because the undocumented students did not learn English. She asked if they send homework for parents to see, and Ms. Lipton said she does.

Ms. Leister left the meeting at 7:50 pm.

Ms. Trotta presented a case study of one of her students, who attends the Lincoln School. The student left China at age 11 with her family in 2007. She was fluent in Mandarin and spoke little English, and was a strong student but quiet and reserved. Her interests are math, music, piano, computers, and art. Her parents communicate with the school in English. She reads and writes at an intermediate level and is more proficient in academic English than in common English. Ms. Trotta works with her five times a week in place of French or Spanish class. Another student is helping her with social interaction. Math concepts transferred easily to English, but science was more of a struggle because she had no background. Ms. Trotta joined her in science class and met with the teachers to discuss strategies. Project work was a brand-new concept for her. By the spring of her first year, her MEPA [Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment] score had grown 23 points, and she was stepped up to intermediate. Ms. Trotta had her reading many books to keep her reading level high. She learned about prefixes and suffixes, how some words have many meanings [bills], homophones [seller vs. cellar], world geography and religions. They are sensitive to her culture, which has no concept of religion. She's diligent and motivated, and they will keep her immersed in literature. First year ELL students are exempt from the ELA MCAS, but she took it and scored proficient in reading and writing. In math, her MCAS scores were advanced. Her speaking and listening are approaching proficiency, but she needed help. Ms. Trotta coached her to advocate for herself; she needed to feel comfortable speaking to others. She's now going to graduate from Lincoln, and they will create a smooth transition to Lincoln-Sudbury by talking to the school and parents. The teachers know her test scores. She will take Spanish in high school. If her skills continue to be high, she will exit the ELL program, but they track her progress for two years to make sure her skills remain high.

Ms. Murdock asked whether and how they explain goals to students and parents, especially when they do not speak the same language. Ms. Trotta said students know what they need. Mr. Sander asked if there were families who refuse ELL services. Ms. Trotta said they can refuse, which happens rarely, but they also allow students to start the program and decide if they want it or not. Mr. Sander asked how similar the ELL program in the District is to other districts' programs. Ms. Sterling said that while Lincoln has many different home language students, we are a low incidence district. Our ELL program is fully compliant with the state's expectations. We provide a comprehensive service but unlike some high incidence districts we do not have a board of parent advisors. The school meets with all ELL parents. Some teachers, but not all, are trained to handle ELL students. Other districts that have more ELL students train all of their teachers. Ms. Sterling is proud of the program; they do well with our ELL students.

Mr. Christenfeld asked to what extent the state standards need to be followed. Ms. Sterling said they do rigorous testing and have to follow state mandates. Paul Naso, former assistant superintendent, and Ms. Trotta formed the program in 2005. Ms. Murdock asked what they do if ELL students need special education too. Ms. Lipton said the children have many challenges, and quite often they are working with remedial teachers and counselors. These students can also have IEPs. Ms. Trotta said they have protocols in place to make sure they do right by the students. Mr. Christenfeld asked if they can use the Reading Specialists if an ELL student is not enrolled in special education, and they can. He asked what happens if there is a spike in the number of ELL students. Ms. Sterling said they had one a few years ago, and they put students with similar proficiencies together, but these students were not necessarily in the same grade.

Ms. Glass thanked them for their work, saying that it is amazing what they do; she can sense the energy that they have for their work.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Establish School Building Committee

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that the Committee needs to form a School Building Committee [SBC]. Mr. Brandmeyer said Ms. Glass will need to sign the compliance certificate for the MSBA. The MSBA

regulates the committee's make-up. Mr. Brandmeyer proposes that the School Committee send written requests to the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen, and Finance Committee requesting a designation of a member to serve on the SBC. He will advertise for 4 to 6 community members with architectural, engineering, or construction experience. The school administration will be represented by the Superintendent, Administrator for Business and Finance, and one of the Principals.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the Building Inspector serves on the Committee. Mr. Creel responded that the school maintenance person will serve. Mr. Brandmeyer will make the recommendation. The MSBA has to approve the SBC's make-up. Ms. Glass asked when the deadline was. Mr. Brandmeyer will bring back the names of the new committee's members to the May 13 meeting. He said there will be enough work for all the members, but they do not want an unwieldy SBC. Mr. Sander suggested that the advertisement specify that people who plan to bid on the eventual school building project should not apply to be on the SBC to avoid any downstream conflict of interest. Mr. Schmertzler said the SBC should hire a project manager and select a designer through the RFP process.

Mr. Schmertzler moved, and Ms. Glass seconded, the motion that the School Committee authorizes the Superintendent to begin the process to convene a School Building Committee according to the plan he presented. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

B. School Committee Representative to Holistic Community Needs Facilities Study Committee

Mr. Brandmeyer said the Town is convening a Community Needs Facilities Study Committee to work quickly to assess individual agency facility needs within the context of the overall needs of the Town, but the Selectmen have not yet formed the committee. The MSBA requires that the feasibility study period be completed within 12-14 months, and that clock starts ticking when they sign the grant within the month.

The Committee did not vote on a member.

C. Establish Graduation Dates

Mr. Brandmeyer said they have used one "snow" day on the Lincoln campus, and the last day of school is scheduled for June 22. The "snow" day was used to handle the flooding at the Smith School in March. The Hanscom campus did not use any "snow" days, and their last day of school is scheduled for June 21. The campuses normally finish school on the same day.

Mr. Brandmeyer proposed that the School Committee vote to establish the following graduation dates: Wednesday, June 16 for the Lincoln School and Thursday, June 17 for the Hanscom Middle School.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to have Lincoln's graduation on Wednesday, June 16 and Hanscom's on Thursday, June 17. The Committee voted unanimously to establish the graduation dates.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling reported that she attended a 2nd grade math extension class, which is a high barrier opportunity. Students miss class to participate with the math specialists. They are a lively group that is very involved in math; they were working on proportional reasoning. She had great fun with them.

She has attended two conferences. The first one was with a co-author of a book about the power of professional learning communities to enhance student learning. When they function well, it has a big impact. The conference discussed how administrators can support those learning communities. The second one was about assessing professional development and how it helps in assessing students. She's reflecting on their data models and how to improve them.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$609,020.16 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$117,843.41 for a total of \$726,863.57. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Sander moved to approve the warrants, with Ms. Glass seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. Appoint Hartwell RFP Selection Committee

Mr. Creel reported that he attended the meeting of Massachusetts Business Administrators, and he is struck how great it is to be in Lincoln. He really appreciates the Town's support of the schools. He asked the Committee for a vote on the Hartwell Space Request for Proposals evaluation and selection committees or for their guidance.

Mr. Sander asked Mr. Christenfeld as a matter of clarification and understanding any potential conflicts of interest if he has resigned from the Board of Magic Garden. Mr. Christenfeld responded that he had and has no conflict of interest, nonetheless, he recused himself from the discussion. He noted that he could participate in any committee with a declaration of interest.

Mr. Creel proposed the membership of the Preliminary Evaluation Committee to be Jennifer Glass, Tom Sander, and himself and the membership of the Final Selection Committee to be Al Schmertzler, Jennifer Glass, Mickey Brandmeyer, Sarah Cannon Holden, Paul Giese, and himself as non-voting secretary.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to appoint the following committees as part of the Hartwell Space RFP evaluation process: a Preliminary Evaluation Committee, to consist of Jennifer Glass, Tom Sander, and Buckner Creel, and a Final Selection Committee to consist of Al Schmertzler, Jennifer Glass, Mickey Brandmeyer, Sarah Cannon Holden, Paul Giese, with Buckner Creel serving as non-voting secretary to assist the committee with its work. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint the committees.

Ms. Glass thanked him for his work.

X. Old Business

A. Enrollment of Employee Students

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that the enrollment options for this student have changed, and the class sizes have changed. The request comes from a Lincoln Preschool Teacher, who would like to enroll her son in kindergarten. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that they have 57 students who will enroll in kindergarten. This request brings the number of students entering kindergarten to 58, which means one section will be at the maximum class size, and two sections will be at preferred plus one class size. They will be in an exception year and will have capacity for two remaining seats. He asked that they consider the request.

Mr. Sander asked whether most kindergarteners remain in the Lincoln Schools for first grade and Mr. Brandmeyer said that most do. Ms. Murdock asked if they could have a kindergarten-1st grade split section. Mr. Brandmeyer said they do not do that because they align the standards with the grades. Mr. Christenfeld asked if there were any other enrollment changes for the next year. Mr. Brandmeyer will update them on those in May. If approved, he will write a letter saying that the goal is to have the student remain at the Lincoln School until he graduates, but if circumstances such as budgetary problems arise, they may have to ask the student to leave.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to approve the enrollment of Sean Mullen in kindergarten at the Lincoln School beginning with the 2010-2011 school year subject to the continued employment of his parent as required by School Committee policy. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the enrollment.

Ms. Glass thanked him for his work.

XI. New Business

A. Discussion of School Committee Subcommittee Assignments

Ms. Glass asked for Committee members to serve on the following committees and subcommittees: MSBA Building Committee, Community Facility Needs Study Committee, LTA Negotiations, Finance Committee/School Committee Joint Group. The Policy Subcommittees are the Web 2.0 and Acceptable Use Policy, Policy on Electronic Devices in School, and Anti-Bullying.

Mr. Schmertzler expressed willingness to serve on the MSBA Building Committee and the Community Facility Needs Study Committee. Mr. Sander expressed willingness to serve on the LTA Negotiations and the Finance Committee/School Committee Joint Group. Mr. Christenfeld would also like to serve on the Finance Committee/School Committee Joint Group. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that he did not know what the Finance Committee/School Committee Joint Group's work would look like, and it is on the back burner for now.

For the Policy Subcommittees, Mr. Brandmeyer said some teachers were interested in the first two on technology. He offered that they could draft a policy for comment and consideration. The Acceptable Use Policy should look at efforts at other schools. Ms. Glass indicated that all three subcommittees should involve parents. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have no policy now.

Ms. Glass will decide who to place on which committees and bring her recommendations back to the next meeting.

Ms. Glass reported that the G4 joint meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 28 at 7:30 in Sudbury and asked if any members could attend. She said the agenda item comes up at 8:00-8:15, and thought they'd be there for an hour or so. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that recommendations will be announced at the meeting. Ms. Glass asked whether they needed a quorum for the G4 meeting. Mr. Brandmeyer will find out whether the Committee needs to vote at this joint meeting. Mr. Sander indicated he could not attend. He asked whether the purpose was to hear the presentation or to vote on something. Ms. Glass and Mr. Brandmeyer indicated they would get additional information on the goals of the meeting.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Sander moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2010 meeting. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Glass, seconded by Mr. Schmertzler, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary