

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12, 2009
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). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services).
Absent: Rob Orgel, Joe Connell (Hanscom Representative), Cecily Murdock (Hanscom Representative).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

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

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Dobrow welcomed Deb Leister, Cecily Murdock, and Joe Connell, the new Hanscom Representatives. She also welcomed Debbie John, the new Boston Representative. She said they are thrilled and pleased to have them aboard; it is a real struggle to find representatives to the Committee from Hanscom and Boston. She said it is a big time commitment and thanked them for their willingness to step up and for their service to the Lincoln Public Schools.

Mr. Schmertzler attended the safe rides to school forum hosted by the state. Schools presented ways to have students bike and walk to school. When students walk or bike to school, they are well behaved and do better in school. Mr. Schmertzler found that it is easier to do in an urban setting than in a suburban setting. He spoke to DPW Superintendent Chris Bibbo to stripe Lincoln's roads better. People at the conference suggested that the 12-foot wide traffic lanes be narrowed to 10 feet. Mr. Bibbo told Mr. Schmertzler that Lincoln's traffic lanes are only 10 feet wide. Mr. McKenna will try to have another day in December and they will pursue the idea further in the spring. Mr. Brandmeyer said the Lincoln Gearicks (First Lego League Robotics Team) are researching the challenges of walking to school and noted that the issue is getting traction.

Ms. Glass attended the keynote address of the service learning conference on November 4. She thanked the people who worked very hard putting the conference together. She said it was great to see the students together; she said they were an extraordinarily respectful group who listened to the speaker, and it was enjoyable to be at the conference. Teachers Janice Fairchild and Claudia Fox Tree were instrumental in setting up the conference. Ms. Sterling thanked the *Lincoln Journal's* Ben Aaronson for the article. She said the students were fired up, and it was a special day.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on 2009 MCAS Results

Ms. Sterling presented the Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP] report. She said overall the district meets AYP and has done so since 2001 and is a strong-performing district. However, if there are any disaggregated subgroups that are not doing well in two consecutive years even if it is not the same subgroup, the district is in Improvement Year 2. They are looking at whether there are common causes that could be tackled or whether they should focus on particular individuals who are underperforming. The district has tiny subgroups. A subgroup is reported to the state if there are 10 students or more in the subgroup. The results call their attention to look at the results and what can be done to make them better.

Her report was written in three parts: part I provided district and school-level MCAS performance level results for the Lincoln Public Schools; part II described the districts Student Intervention Plans, developed for each student who receives a Needs Improvement or Warning score in English or Mathematics; part III offered a preliminary discussion of the state's new Growth Model

and Student Growth Percentile scores. She noted that the state sent them the Growth Model information on October 27 and those scores are not included in this report.

She called attention to Part I, page 7. Overall, there is an upward trend of improvement in English Language Arts [ELA] scores from grade 3 to grade 8 on both campuses. In 8th grade, 97% of the Lincoln students scored proficient or higher, and 80% of the Hanscom students scored proficient or higher. Students get better at these measures, the longer they have been in the Lincoln schools.

Mr. Schmertzler asked how, with the turnover of a third of the Hanscom student body each year, do these scores correlate, and how do they track their progress? Ms. Sterling acknowledged his point. Ms. Leister, who lived in Alabama and Virginia, disputed the notion that transient students can't perform well. Ms. Sterling agreed; they give top teaching to the Hanscom students while they attend the schools. Ms. Sterling said it was better to know the students while they are here, and when they struggle, they have interventions for them. Ms. Dobrow voiced concern on the MCAS open response questions. She wants to ensure that they maintain the integrity of how they teach ELA and not teach it just to get top MCAS scores. Ms. Sterling said the open response questions are great because they teach students to think, to marshal evidence, and to write. Tackling the open response questions is something they are working on with teachers: the question is how to help students handle these questions in different ways that will strengthen them as learners. Teachers and principals are discussing the similarities of the cognitive and writing tasks in different subjects. She noted that they are looking into individual 5th grade students because fewer of them scored proficient in ELA. 4th grade teachers will be working with students to strengthen their weaknesses. She also said in general, students who have IEPs are having trouble with proficiency on the tests and that situation exists statewide. They can do some alternative assessments of these students.

Mr. Sander asked about the bottom of page 6, in 7th and 8th grades, where it looked like a smaller percentage of students in recent years were in the top category: what kinds of actions can be taken so that students on the higher end are continually challenged and strengthened? Ms. Sterling said they need to look at the cohorts to get more meaningful data here. The ELA content specialists are looking at the test scores to see if there are patterns to the students' responses. Statewide there was a dip in scores. They are looking at the categories and are starting to hone in this and how they account for the drop in the advanced scores. Ms. Glass asked about page 3, in 3rd grade at both campuses, whether the downward trend from 2005 to 2009 was significant enough to examine, or did it reflect just a few students? Ms. Sterling said they are looking at the response patterns and individual students, especially in grade 3 at Hanscom. She noted when students took the test, it is one snapshot. They will also look at local standards, and this item is a priority. Ms. Leister said the scores were consistently lower at the Hanscom campus, and she asked whether there are more challenging courses for those students. Ms. Sterling said they are wondering why the scores are lower at Hanscom and are discussing how to look at the results and are correlating them with what they know about the students.

On the Mathematics part of the MCAS, Ms. Sterling mentioned page 12; the Lincoln students are doing well, and on the Hanscom campus, there is an up and down pattern. They will look at the overall growth over time. Five strands of mathematics are assessed: number sense; patterns, relationships and algebra; measurement; geometry; and data, statistics, and probability. On the Lincoln campus, grades 5, 7, and 8 show strength in patterns, relationships, and algebra. On the Hanscom campus, there are no relative strengths in any strand. The open response questions are harder, and they are going to work on that, but across the district and the state, schools score lower on these types of questions. They ask students to explain their thinking. They had some subgroups whose scores were low and are examining that issue. The Hanscom Middle School principal, Erich Ledebuhr, is working with their math teachers. She reminded the Committee that one student can belong to several subgroups, and each time the student is counted in a group, their score gets counted each time, which can bring results down for all students.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the state was making the tests more difficult. Ms. Sterling explained they raise the bar in achieving AYP every two years, and this was a bar-raising year. She does not know whether the test questions are harder. She feels it is more important to look at patterns, and they will investigate further.

Ms. Sterling went over the science portion of the report. The 5th grade scores on the Lincoln campus were significantly higher. She speculated that the reason was that Terry Green did a three-week review of the science they learned in earlier years to help them recall the material. They are in their second year of restructuring the science curriculum, and it will take time to see its effect in the test scores.

Part Two of her report describes the district's Student Intervention Plans, which are developed for every student who receives a score in the Needs Improvement or Warning categories in ELA or Mathematics. They now have these plans in a database to make them available to teachers and administrators, and then plans to have each student's strengths and weaknesses, local assessments to round out the MCAS performance, and strategies to use to help the student. She said the students have to attend regular classes, making it tough to get extra time for them. Ms. Glass noted it is great to have that information together and accessible to all involved. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have started to import previous MCAS scores into the database so that as students move through the grades, they can watch their improvement over time. Mr. Sander said the database sounds great and asked whether there was room to include what interventions were helping the student. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have not gotten into that level of detail, but they have regular progress reviews and they keep the plans and students front and center. He agreed that it would be good to do. Ms. Sterling said they do have that information informally; there's lots of collaboration and informal discussion about the students and their plans. Mr. Brandmeyer said the database will blend common assessments and other information. Mr. Sander asked whether the common assessments could be quantified since at the moment MCAS is the only quantifiable data and thus gets outsized attention. Ms. Sterling said they are working with common assessments, and aim ultimately to be able to quantify them. She noted that Appendix One is a sample intervention plan. Mr. Brandmeyer said it takes time to build the database, they have progressed to build common assessments and in the next year they will see more information.

Mr. Brandmeyer said they received the growth model statistics on October 27. The growth model tracks cohorts over time. Using MCAS scores, it is hard to track an individual student's progress from year to year. When MCAS began, the Department of Education released more items than they do now. The question is how to compare tests over time; for example, in 4th grade, the tests and students changed, so how do they measure progress? The growth model enables them to look at a student, school, or district progress over time. The model only tracks those students who have taken the MCAS for two or three years, and it compares the student with the student's peers. It measures how much the student has grown compared to their peers. The 40 to 60 percentile is the middle range. Below the 40th percentile means low growth, and above 60 percentile means high growth. Even if a student falls below the 40th percentile, they could still be making progress. He noted that in the higher performance band, it is hard to show growth because of a ceiling effect. Students can have low performance but be in a high growth band, which is better than low-performance, low-growth. Those students will eventually get to proficiency. The model allows AYP to be influenced by the numbers of students who are growing. This is the first year they have had access to all students' growth percentiles from the Department. Ms. Sterling said they correlate what band a student is in: is it a high or low growth band. They still need to pick out individual student information out of the statistic. She noted there aren't any subgroups in the growth model statistic, but both tell a story on how they get students to improve performance to a proficient level. They will break the numbers down, and the growth model is a new measurement strategy. They have worked very hard on mathematics, and they see that strong growth in the subject has taken root. Ms. Glass asked whether both statistics will exist for the time being and will the growth model statistic be considered too when the state identifies which districts are in Improvement Years. Mr. Brandmeyer said the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE] has not been clear on it, they have developed the new model and are encouraged by how the model works. Federal stimulus money, available through the Race to the Top grants, has influenced states. States are rushing to get in place so they can get the money. He said the question will be how they will use the new growth model statistics to report to parents. They will know how students will do compared to others. Two years of MCAS scores have been taken in the state, but not in the same district.

Ms. Dobrow thanked all who have been involved in looking at the student data. She said there is tons of data for them to go through. She asked the principals to thank the faculty for the Committee. They know it takes extra time and effort away from their teaching time, and they appreciate their work.

B. Presentation of FY2011 Preliminary Budget

Mr. Brandmeyer said it was the initial kickoff of the budget presentation for FY11, and he said it was an early start. Hanscom's budget will be presented at the December 10 meeting when the Committee will hold the meeting at Hanscom. He noted that the proposal is a combination of work from many people. He thanked Mr. Creel for his good work. As the Committee knows, the total

operating budget includes several funding sources for the Lincoln and Hanscom school budgets; the Lincoln schools receive funding from the Town, state grants, and fees, and the Hanscom schools receive their funding from the federal government. They build the two budgets simultaneously; the teachers for both campuses belong to the same union, and they need to have the process move forward together. This year will be more of a challenge to get the needed funding for the Lincoln schools than the Hanscom schools. The budget drivers are that the Finance Committee has said the schools can have a minus half percent for the Lincoln budget. He said that there will be a 4% increase in the Hanscom, but lower enrollment bands mean a smaller amount of dollars, so they will need to budget reserves. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that from year to year, a 4 to 6 % increase with in personnel contracts will be a challenge because they will have a funding level below FY10. They want comparability on both campuses and are obliged to do so by their contract with the federal government. It may be hard to maintain level funding; the Lincoln budget has already been reduced by \$212,000, and if they drop an enrollment band at Hanscom, that means a loss of \$350,000 per band. Special education is a big concern; they have reserve funds, but they have some challenging students who have high costs. He has asked his staff to give some improvement initiatives to move the program further and make it stronger. They do not want to keep the status quo. The Lincoln gap is \$230,000 to \$416,000. He turned the floor to Mr. Creel to review the drivers, staffing adjustments, and site-based funding.

Mr. Creel echoed Mr. Brandmeyer’s sentiments that there was much collaboration in putting the budget proposal together. He noted that the outside sources of revenue have been projected with a 0% increase, and user fees will stay the same as in FY10. The drivers used to put together the proposal are: small class sizes, personnel, special education transportation and out of district placements (CASE), and the cost of utilities. They are concerned about the impact of decreases in state Chapter 70 funds, METCO (which would impact the program) and full-day kindergarten grants (personnel and program enhancements), reimbursements such as the special education circuit breaker (usually receive 72-75% but now only receive 40%), and flat enrollment projections. They used the reserve to offset FY10 reductions for the special education circuit breaker. There are high hopes among Hanscom housing developers that there are high hopes they will open new units, but they do not know whether there will be an influx of new students, and whether these will be children of active military personnel that qualify for educating under the Hanscom contract. In Lincoln, they are looking at kindergarten, grades 4 and 7 students; overall, the demographics are the same.

Mr. Creel said they have had 9C cuts from the state in FY10, and they may need to cope with additional cuts this year. The Hanscom contract has employee benefits that are budgeted in the Town’s budget. Personnel accounts for 74% of the budget; the improvement initiatives account for 2% of it.

They have reduced staff by reducing the number of sections; one in Kindergarten and one in Fourth Grade on the Lincoln campus, and one in Kindergarten and three in the Middle School on the Hanscom campus. They will also reduce 1 FTE Special Education teacher and 4.7 FTEs in Special Education tutors at Hanscom. Hanscom will retain 25 teacher FTEs so that they can respond to unexpected increases in one of the grades. Mr. Creel said the picture could change and does not include the staff they will seek for the improvement initiatives.

The next piece is the site-based management [SBM] funds, the monies that the principals distribute to pay for consumables, textbooks, supplies and other published materials, and small durable items. The SBM monies represent 1.4 % of the total operating budget.

Site Based Funds	#Students	\$ per student	TOTAL
Preschool	55	\$305	\$16,801
Lincoln K-4	314	\$178	\$55,790
Lincoln 5-8	298	\$290	\$86,359
Hanscom Primary	191	\$311	\$59,425
Hanscom Middle	199	\$383	\$76,168
			\$294,543 FY11 Allocation

There is a difference between the two campuses because the Lincoln PTA and Lincoln School Foundation assist with these costs. On the Hanscom campus, there isn’t enough money available, and they are contractually obligated to provide the funds.

Mr. Creel noted they use the three-year cohort survival model and the October 1 enrollment data to project the number of students in each grade. With Hanscom’s housing development, they have included an extra teacher in case they need to open a new section quickly.

LINCOLN BUDGET

Base budget	\$9,464,454
Finance Com Guideline	\$9,234,319
Base budget gap	(\$230,135)
Improvement Initiatives	\$186,515
Improvement Initiative Gap	\$416,650

HANSCOM BUDGET

Base budget	\$9,568,779
Contract Allocation	\$9,778,661
Base budget gap	
Improvement Initiatives	

Ms. Glass said it was more important to have smaller class sizes in younger grades, noted that the number of students per class in 5th grade seemed small, and wondered about the decision to reduce the number of sections in 2nd grade versus 5th grade. Mr. Sander asked whether they could trade a teacher from grade 5 to an earlier grade. Mr. Creel said they could do it, but it wouldn't help close the gap. Mr. Brandmeyer said everything is on the table; they can't maintain what they have right now. He said no decisions will be made tonight; the focus is on getting the information out. Mr. Creel presented the prioritized Improvement Initiatives from his office for FY11 on page 17: Sanitizing materials-\$8,000.00, Increase Food Service hours-\$4,818.06, Restore Night Custodian-\$20,349.00, Restore Summer Custodian-\$3,600.00.

Ms. Dobrow asked about the process. Mr. Brandmeyer said they would keep things at a high-level tonight, and they will hear from the administration on the challenges. They will come prepared to answer questions at the December 10 meeting and potentially bring gap closing measures. He said if the Finance Committee decides to bring a Proposition 2 ½ property tax override to Town Meeting, they will go for the preferred budget. They will meet with the Finance Committee on December 2; January 12 is a tentative meeting with the Finance Committee; and the School Committee will vote on the budget at the January 14 or 28 meeting.

Ms. Sterling presented information from the Curriculum Office. She reminded the Committee that their program is standards-based, and in their base budget, they need to sustain their efforts in curriculum leadership, grades K-5 Mathematics and Science, grades 6-8 Mathematics, Science, and Engineering, and professional development. She has aligned their improvement initiatives with their goals. She presented 5 initiatives totaling \$37,209.60. The initiatives in order of priority are: English Language Arts Assessment-\$4,345.00, English Language Arts Professional Development-\$7,706.00, Standards-based Reporting System-\$2,400.00, Differentiation Professional Development-\$9,000.00, and Foreign Language in Elementary School [FLES] \$13,758.60. Ms. John asked what types of professional development the Education Collaborative [EDCO] provides. Ms. Sterling said she trades information with other assistant superintendents. There are 20 other professional development groups that hold conferences and discussion groups.

Ms. Powers, Administrator for Student Services, presented information about student services. The schools act in accordance with federal and state laws regarding the needs of students with disabilities. She has spent a lot of time with the students. The schools are at an all-time low in the numbers of students who need special education, and the biggest drop is at Hanscom. They matriculated out a group to the Lincoln-Sudbury and Bedford High Schools. She explained that there's a great variation in needs so that creative groupings of students with similar disabilities can't work because they are in different grades.

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS BY SCHOOLS

School	Number of Students
Preschool	12
Lincoln K-4	26
Lincoln 5-8	34
Hanscom Primary	22
Hanscom Middle	25
Out of District	4

DISTRICT TOTAL 123

It is a weighty decision on whether to place a student into special education. Many students can get support and help without being labeled as special education students. They have assessed 47 students who are not eligible for special education, but they receive other support. It takes 45 school days to put together a special education student program. She noted that they have stability on staffing needs. The number of students with emotional disorders has increased this year, and supports for them are more expensive. For all students with special needs, they focus on individual needs, give them maximum access to general education and focus on inclusion with high expectations of each student. For FY11,

they will reduce the number of faculty by 5 paraprofessionals and one teacher. She presented one improvement initiative for paraprofessional professional development for \$5,000.00 in collaboration with the Curriculum Office.

Mr. McKenna, Lincoln K-4 Principal, presented 4 improvement initiatives totaling \$69,888.00. The initiatives in order of priority are: Responsive Classroom [RC] Training-\$20,375.00, Technology Initiative K-8-\$33,163.00, Math Camp 2010-\$9,750.00, Furniture Replacement-\$6,600.00.

He explained that they had RC training for 12 teachers last summer, and they said it was the best professional development they've ever had. The initiative would get the rest of the teachers trained. He said teachers and staff are using technology much more, and they would like to equip classrooms with IBoards and more document cameras to replace overhead projectors. Math Camp would be for grades 3 and 4 to extend math concepts through games. They propose a ten-year plan for the replacement and upgrade of furniture, replacing two classrooms per year.

Dr. Hobbs, Lincoln 5-8 Principal, sent greetings from the 7th graders, who were at Sargent Camp and it has been a good few days. She presented 4 improvement initiatives totaling \$42,468.20. The initiatives in order of priority are: Developmental Design-\$20,375.00, After School Activities Stipend-\$5,000.00, Spanish Textbooks-\$6,996.00, Orff Instruments-\$10,097.20.

She explained that Developmental Design is the program that follows Responsive Classroom; they would train 5th and 6th grade teachers. The After School Activities are the elective activities that they used to offer during the school day, and they need the money to pay teachers after school. They need updated Spanish textbooks that would cover grades 6 through 8, and the book they would get, *Avancemos*, has been purchased for the Hanscom Middle School. The musical instrument request is for 14 instruments and stands.

Mr. Creel asked that people bring the budget books to the next meetings. Ms. Dobrow thanked them for the presentation.

C. Proposal to Formalize a Collaborative Working Group with Sudbury Primary School, Wayland Primary School, and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School

Ms. Dobrow updated the Committee on the Consolidated Working Group. They have met several times and want to move forward with their thinking. She presented a draft mission statement for the G4 group. The four districts "have formed a working group to expand and formalize efforts to operate in a more streamlined and cost effective manner." They have started thinking how they could save money and increase collaboration to be more powerful. Other districts are members of other collaboratives. She said they would report on their meetings to the respective Committees and to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees. The Superintendents have already shared things informally. They have brainstormed on 20 to 25 different initiatives that they could talk about, and they are targeting 6 or 7 initiatives to work on. They want to be transparent and get the information out to the public and will prepare a press release. She reported that it was going well. Mr. Schmertzler suggested that if the proposal for a new Wayland High School passes, the Lincoln-Sudbury building committee could offer suggestions. Mr. Sander said the statement was great, but suggested that in the press release, they be up front and state that the group was not making policy. Mr. Brandmeyer said it was exciting to formalize the group, which he characterized as productive, and they want to improve the school programs. Ms. Dobrow said there was creative thinking and she thanked Mr. Brandmeyer for his leadership on it. Mr. Brandmeyer said areas they are looking at are professional development, technology, general operations, adult education, and METCO.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer said there will be a concert at Hanscom in December. Tomorrow afternoon they will have a conference call with the MSBA, and they will discuss the timeline for the feasibility study. The Selectmen, Mr. Schmertzler, Finance Director, and Town Administrator will be in on the call. He will report on the next steps in the process at the next meeting.

He recognized Hanscom Middle School Principal Erich Ledebuhr's work in holding a Veterans Day assembly for the whole school. Mr. Brandmeyer said it was a warm and moving ceremony, and he said they much appreciated the ceremony.

Mr. Brandmeyer thanked the Lincoln School Foundation [LSF] for funding the Community Service Conference, and said they will benefit from the conference by ongoing work.

They held H1N1 flu clinics tonight at Hanscom; 34 students received the vaccine. They received more vaccine than they thought they would. He thanked Stephanie Powers, School Nurse Maureen

Richichi, School Nurse Eileen Duran and their volunteers. The Board of Health was supportive and helped them work through some sticky situations. He reported that the flu stage has been low--only 6-8 students have had it, and they think they're ahead of the disease at this point.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for his reports and thanked Stephanie and Maureen, who went above and beyond the call of duty for the flu clinics.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling reported on the Community Services Learning Conference. She said the quality of student questions was significantly better. She also visited a round of Impact math classrooms. Each student gets homework and homework-plus and comes home with a full range of homework. Students self assess their progress and use more practice on their regular skill building.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$1,234,828.10 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$403,617.41 for a total of \$1,638,445.51. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Ms. Dobrow seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to approve the October 8, 2009 meeting minutes. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Mr. Sander, 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. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary