

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Thursday, December 10, 2009  
Hanscom Primary School, Hanscom Air Force Base, MA  
OPEN SESSION

Present: Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Jennifer Glass, 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), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services).

Absent: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Al Schmertzler, and Rob Orgel.

#### I. Greetings and Call to Order

Mr. Sander, the acting chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. The Committee lacked a quorum (insufficient Committee voting members in attendance) to vote on agenda items, but discussed various items. Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Orgel were tending to sick family members, and Mr. Schmertzler was out of the country.

#### II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Sander welcomed Joe Connell, a new Hanscom Representative. He said they were delighted that he was serving on the Committee and looked forward to the wisdom he will share with them.

Ms. Glass attended the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade play and thanked Kristen Hall and the others for all their work. She said the two plays were very enjoyable.

Lt. Colonel Randy Robertson, Hanscom Air Force Base School Liaison Officer, welcomed the Committee to Hanscom Air Force Base. He said of the four school districts that have agreements with the Department of Defense to run schools for the military's children, Hanscom and Lincoln's relationship is the best.

#### III. Public Comments

Linda Fisher, Hanscom PTO President, said that the flu booster shot clinic was scheduled on the same night as the 1<sup>st</sup> grade concert and the Middle School play. Ms. Powers, who has been working with the school nurse, was aware of the situation, and indicated she will see if she can switch the hours. The scheduled clinic was the third one offered, and a small group of students were to receive their second shots at that clinic.

Ms. Fisher asked how parents are notified about school closings. She said the web site used to have the message "School is open today," or "School is closed today." She said the television information was not helpful. She tried to call the school. She asked if they could have a sentence on the web site again. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have a direct phone call system that calls families around 6:30 am with a pre-recorded message of Mr. Brandmeyer saying that school is closed today. They do not want to put the school closing message on the voicemail box because it ties up the phone system.

Ms. Fisher raised the issue that Base families are moving to different locations on the Base because of the housing privatization and sometimes don't receive information packages from the school. Ms. Murdock said that some families on the Base do not have computers at home.

#### IV. Consent Agenda

Mr. Sander said they did not need to vote on the Consent Agenda to accept the gift of a clarinet, two recorders, and sheet music in support of the After School Music Program. He thanked the Lincoln resident for the gifts. Mr. Brandmeyer will write thank-you letters.

#### V. Time Scheduled Appointments

##### A. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Lt. Colonel Randy Robertson presented the proposal by the Council of State Governments, a nonpartisan organization founded during the Great Depression that works to provide state leaders with public policy recommendations. Lt. Col. Robertson explained that there are other compacts about

state borders, driver's licenses, and emergency management. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children is an agreement between two or more states on a common issue, this one to ensure that children of military families are afforded the same opportunity for educational success and are not penalized or delayed in attaining their educational goals by inflexible administrative or bureaucratic practices. This compact, a new initiative, has been adopted by 26 states. Military children have to move, on average, every three years. Massachusetts is home to about 10,000 students; 3,000 students' parents are in active duty and 7,000 students' parents are in the National Guard. This compact attempts to address transitional issues, including student records, immunizations, placement and attendance for special education students, kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade issues, placement flexibility, and extracurricular activities, for those students moving from state to state and school to school. The states do not have to waive their statutes or test standards for these students.

Debbie John arrived at 7:15.

Lt. Col. Robertson asked the Committee to encourage the Massachusetts Department of Education and State Government to consider enacting the compact by writing letters in support of the compact to the Board of Education, Department of Education, and the Governor.

Mr. Sander lauded the existence of the compact and asked if there were ideas on how to improve things for Hanscom students. Lt. Col. Robertson said the state has leeway, but they need to enact the compact. Mr. Sander said he would like the administration to examine it and assess the impact on the budget and school policies, but noted that in general the compact seemed promising. Ms. Glass asked whether Bedford was looking at the compact too. Lt. Col. Robertson said they have endorsed it and sent letters to the State Board of Education. Mr. Brandmeyer indicated it was perfectly appropriate to encourage the state to approve the compact. He said that most of the issues mentioned in the compact align with the district's current practice at Hanscom. They will research the law on immunizations, talk to the Board of Health, and get back to the Committee with their findings. He recommended that the Committee send letters to the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Governor to consider adoption. Mr. Brandmeyer said the advocacy would be good; after the first of the year they will come back with a report. Lt. Col. Robertson thanked the Committee for its consideration. Mr. Sander thanked Lt. Col. Robertson for his report.

#### B. Hanscom Primary School: Principal's Update

Principal Randy Davis presented the update on the Hanscom Primary School. For the kindergarten program, they have been working on getting re-accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC]. Their application due September 30 was submitted. Applying for accreditation required a 50-page document that attested that all criteria are met. Teachers are working on a five-inch binder portfolio of the criteria to meet the terms of the kindergarten grant. Many preschools do not apply for the NAEYC accreditation because it is expensive and time consuming; HPS is proud of their work on it. She said that in the last five years, their new policies have enabled them to expand the documentation and evidence that they are meeting these criteria. 15 years ago, they did not have this evidence. NAEYC will visit on-site between January 4 and January 22.

The Hanscom Primary School's theme is "Growing Smarter." The staff's summer reading was Carol Dweck's book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, which stresses that the brain is a muscle that gets stronger with use. This concept is called the growth mindset and differs from the fixed mindset. They asked whether they could develop a growth mindset in even the youngest students. They did an action research project with 2<sup>nd</sup> graders and met with Allan Alson for the school-based staff workshop, "It's Always Too Soon to Quit." The kindergarteners are learning the concept. The principals received books that stress the growth model concept; one of those is "Giraffes Can't Dance." The growth mindset encourages risk-taking, which helps student learning, whereas "fixed mindset" students are afraid of trying new skills to avoid looking stupid. They want the students not to worry about looking stupid when they take learning risks. She said it is a work in progress.

Ms. Davis said that they have been making connections with the Hanscom Middle School. They are working with the content specialists and are using data in common assessments. They are using the other resources on the Base; on Veteran's Day, the entire Air Force Band of 35 pieces performed a first-ever concert. She said it has been an exciting first 60 days of the school year. Ms. Glass said they were doing many interesting things, and Mr. Sander said he looked forward to hearing more reports.

He liked the theme of the “growth mindset” and hopes it has traction. He thanked Ms. Davis for her report.

### C. Hanscom Middle School: Principal’s Update

Principal Erich Ledebuhr presented the update on the Hanscom Middle School [HMS]. Mr. Brandmeyer said Mr. Ledebuhr has great ideas and is beginning to make great progress. Mr. Ledebuhr thanked him for the opportunity and said it has been an exciting and busy time. He makes morning announcements, and the time is going fast. He acknowledged that the interview process was long, but it was great and gave him the chance to form impressions about what was going on at the school and what he needed to accomplish. He explained that he is a visual person and presented a graphic. He named the school goals: 1) create a mission statement for HMS, covering academics, culture, physical plant and collaboration with HPS; 2) build on the existing pride and school culture to make HMS a focus of Hanscom; 3) increase parent involvement; 4) increase student and teacher leadership. They have an enthusiastic school culture. He met each teacher separately and asked them to prepare in writing why they teach. He put together a PowerPoint presentation set to music with their quotes to expose teacher’s core values and start the year with a solid foundation. The theme is Hanscom Cares. He is trying to strengthen the culture of the Hanscom Gold Falcons, around sporting events, such as girls’ soccer and cross country. He’s conducted a lot of outreach to people on the Base to find linkages with school events. The students were involved in the Base’s September 11 ceremony, reading essays they had written. HMS hosted a Veteran’s Day assembly, which he hopes becomes a tradition, where each student wore a star for each veteran in their family. Col. Orr and the honor guard attended, and there was a patriotic sing along. They have visited the Fire Station. The choir sang at the tree lighting ceremony, and they will sing at the menorah lighting ceremony and the Heroes Ceremony. At the previous night’s concert, many parents attended; it was standing room only. He puts out his newsletter weekly.

In academics, they have challenges. They have committed and enthusiastic teachers who are empathetic to military families. He wants to especially use literature and novels to push the students academically in 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Cecily Murdock arrived at 7:50 pm.

He said that HMS is a unique population; the transitions need more attention, and they are asking how to find out as quickly as possible where the students are in their learning when they arrive. They have student Citizens of the Month. They have task teams of teachers working to define their mission. The teachers chose the groups to work on: culture, schedule, discipline and recognition of good deeds, academics, transitions, and parent communication. The task team concept comes from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Each team has a chair and a goal, with teachers committed to the process. Mr. Ledebuhr and Ms. Davis meet a lot and have closely aligned the visions for their schools. They work well together and have brought the teachers together. They are working across buildings and involve students with each other, and recognize the sports teams.

On the physical plant, they have done a good job, but yesterday they had buckets catching leaks. He said it has been a busy, exciting, and rewarding time. Ms. Murdock asked about the plan to address bullying. Mr. Ledebuhr said unfortunately, bullying has been part of the culture. He wants students to know there are consequences for bullying, and they will vigilantly call students on it right away. He said bullying was not as physical as it used to be. They tell students what is acceptable and what is not. They have an anti-bullying committee with a high percentage of students on the committee.

Mr. Sander asked about the theme of student leadership and whether students have roles on the task teams. Mr. Ledebuhr said students are not on the task teams because the teams are setting policy. The student council is where student leadership starts, and is the place for students to raise important issues. They need to give chances for students to step into leadership roles and recognize them for the good things they do. Mr. Sander asked where he has seen progress and where he has not. Mr. Ledebuhr said he was happy where they are with their teachers, culture, and students. He has seen progress with academic challenges, but they need to figure out what to do to get better. Ms. Glass thanked both principals for their work; their enthusiasm is infectious, and it is great what they have done with the schools.

#### D. FY2011 Budget Discussion

##### A. Hanscom Budget Presentation

Mr. Brandmeyer presented the FY2011 budget. There are three ways they get money to run the schools: 1) the contract with the federal government to run the Hanscom schools; 2) grants for the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses; and 3) Lincoln Town Meeting for the Lincoln schools. He said the Hanscom budget is unusual for school administrators: they know the exact amount of money they will receive from the federal government and they can't generate any property tax overrides. This year it has been challenging with the privatization project on the Base. They will have the same level of funds and support for their improvement initiatives. With the anticipated growth for students who may fill the housing, they need to be prepared to open classes if more students arrive for school. Ms. Davis and Mr. Ledebuhr will discuss their improvement initiatives, enrollment, and staffing levels.

Ms. Davis thanked Karen Kanter for her work on the budget. She said they will have 12 sections of students and 13 teachers. The 13<sup>th</sup> teacher is budgeted in anticipation of adding another section. If they do not need a section, the teacher will be an intervention specialist who will provide differentiated instruction to students in mathematics and reading. They will have a new science specialist for grades K-3. They will reduce a 1.0 special education teacher. The furniture was new in 1990 when the building was renovated. Her improvement initiatives total \$42,688, and are 1) Responsive Classroom training for \$20,738; Language Arts Skill Booster Summer School for \$8,750; and Furniture Replacement for \$13,200.

Mr. Ledebuhr said they were struggling with the schedule structure. It's straightforward for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, but difficult for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. When 5<sup>th</sup> graders go to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, it is a very small grade, handled by a split team. There are only two sections budgeted in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. They can look at the uniqueness of students and create flexibility to work on students' needs. He is working with Dr. Hobbs to do so. He said the situation could change rapidly if they get more students, and they are at the highest enrollment now. They have a person to assess Hanscom students when they arrive.

He presented nine improvement initiatives totaling \$100,751.52. They are: 1) Summer Program \$14,480; 2) After School Homework Club \$4,750; Developmental Design \$20,375; 4) MCAS Support Program \$4,750; 5) New Sound System for Multi-Purpose Room \$20,000; 6) Electronically Operated Projection Screen \$2,325; 7) Furniture Replacement \$13,200; 8) Stage Lighting for Multi-Purpose Room \$17,157; 9) Social Studies Texts \$3,714.52.

The Summer Program is funded by Title I and is for students with attendance issues. The students who attended the program now do not have attendance problems. He'd like to reprise it and possibly expand it. The Homework Club is in place, and they run mini-lessons to help close the achievement gap. Developmental Design is the program that follows the Responsive Classroom and is designed for middle school students. Ms. Murdock asked what opportunities there are for academics for gifted and talented students. Mr. Ledebuhr said there are some opportunities for students to do extra things, and they have teachers who do these. Mr. Sander asked about flexibility in scheduling and staffing levels and confirmed that HMS would have money for those items. Mr. Brandmeyer said once Mr. Ledebuhr is clearer on their organizing teams, they may have to hire someone. They receive students and get them settled into classes and have held money in reserve to do it. They have not gotten into staffing for the Middle School; they are comfortable where they are and are managing improvement initiatives. Mr. Ledebuhr is concerned about the facilities projects, there is some money available, and some projects are really needed.

Mr. Sander asked how student transitions were handled; Mr. Ledebuhr responded indicated that they handle this well socially but could improve on this academically. They need to define transitions better and determine sooner what they should do to help a student academically. Mr. Brandmeyer said they can partially use existing resources to do it, but they need to decide what the "it" is and how to structure things. He said it's more difficult to do for older students because there isn't a home base class. Mr. Sander was encouraged that HPS and HMS can fund their improvement initiatives in the base budget.

##### B. Budget Reductions

Mr. Brandmeyer explained that they need to cut \$416,650 out of the Lincoln preferred budget. They will meet with the Finance Committee next Tuesday, and they have some items at play. They will calibrate where they are and on December 17, they will present another plan. He said they will not cut class assistants because they know it's the "third rail." He said parents have told him not

to include improvement initiatives, but he feels if they don't propose improvement initiatives, the school won't get better. They need to find a balance and redeploy existing resources. They will shift some expenses to state and federal grants and not put them in the base budget.

He presented his memo that listed cutting four improvement initiatives, shifting three improvement initiatives to grants, and reducing spending for 15 items. The total amount of the cuts is \$293,742. They will use the web site to distribute more materials, such as the parent handbook, now that the web site is more effective. They have been monitoring students who need special education, and there are not as many students who need it, so the expenses are lower. Ms. Powers said they are tracking the students coming out of preschool, and there aren't as many who need special education services. They feel comfortable that they can cut the special education faculty by 1.0 FTE and provide what students need. Mr. Brandmeyer said the quality and amount of service will stay the same. They are taking a conservative approach of saving money when teachers retire.

Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Brandmeyer for attending the PTA meeting and speaking to parents about the budget. She asked about the Math Camp proposed for K-4 students and whether they had considered a sliding scale fee to mitigate those costs. Mr. McKenna said that was not under consideration because they need to give all students an opportunity, and he said fees were unfair. Mr. Sander asked whether they had surveyed target students or parents about the length of the camps, whether they would be half or full days, and what demand was for the Camps. Mr. McKenna said they talked about the possibility of offering a full-day experience with the Recreation Department, but they would need staff to teach. Mr. Sander said he liked the idea and asked him to do the survey to make sure there was a market for this. Mr. McKenna agreed that he would put some information together. Ms. Glass asked if it could be district wide. Mr. Brandmeyer explained that they would get funding from different sources for the summer, but they could look at it. It's at the idea stage, and they can do more planning if the Committee would like them to.

Ms. Glass asked if there were thermostat-lowering devices. Mr. Creel responded that state regulations require that the temperature be between 68 and 70 degrees. He said that univents will help, and they would be funded through capital warrant projects. They will cut costs by gaining efficiencies. Mr. Creel will use maintenance warrants, and the heating units are tuned much better. Ms. Glass asked whether there was an opportunity to collaborate with professional development. Ms. Sterling has talked with EDCO and Sudbury about these issues, but Sudbury uses Open Circle, not Responsive Classroom. They use Impact Math, and they could do combined sessions with Faye Ruopp. Mr. Sander asked whether collaboration with Wayland and Sudbury would yield any cost savings. Mr. Brandmeyer said it would not yet, but they may eventually turn up some savings. A parent said it would be tough to take the four sections of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders and put the students into three sections. She heard that this year's 1<sup>st</sup> grade class was a real challenge. Mr. Brandmeyer thanked her for the comments and suggested that if money materializes they may put the money into smaller class sizes in the younger grades. Mr. Sander thanked Mr. Brandmeyer for the memo.

#### VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer held his report.

#### VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling continues to attend classes. She attended art classes, and students are making interdisciplinary connections with art, which is terrific to see. The students were making maps and learning grids and coordinates. The kindergarteners were looking at tree bark and figuring out how to represent the texture of bark in art. She attended a morning meeting at Hanscom Primary School. Students brought up some issues with the growth mindset. In math classes, students are articulating the strategies they are using to do the computations. She noted that the teaching was differentiated in the class. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders have engineering displays in the Brooks school and in the lobby; the students are very engaged in designing and building things.

#### VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

The Committee could not vote on the warrants as there was not a quorum of voting members.

X. Old Business

A. MSBA Update

Mr. Brandmeyer explained that they will have to approach the Town to fund the feasibility study to determine the Lincoln Schools' building needs. The cost of the study is estimated to be \$450,000 to \$600,000; the MSBA will reimburse the Town for 40% of those costs. They will bring the feasibility study issue to the Town Meeting in March or in October. He reported there is tension in the Town because the Town Hall renovation also needs a feasibility study. He spoke with Town Administrator Timothy Higgins, who said they want both feasibility studies to move forward. They will have another conference call with MSBA officials later in the month. The Committee needs to approve the initial compliance certification by voting when they have a quorum. The vote will be held for the next meeting.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Approval of Minutes

The Committee could not vote on the minutes as there was no quorum of voting members.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Mr. Sander, seconded by Ms. Glass, the Committee adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah G. Marcotte  
Recording Secretary