

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 17, 2011
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Jennifer Glass (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Tim Christenfeld, Jen James, Deb Leister (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Stephanie Powers (Administrator of Student Services). Absent: Debbie John (Boston Representative), Joe Connell (Hanscom Representative).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Glass, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. The meeting is being taped.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Documents: 1) Letter from the Lincoln-METCO Parent Group to School Committee, dated January 14, 2011; 2) METCO Fact Sheet

Ms. Glass attended METCO Lobby Day at the State House and noted there were twelve METCO and Lincoln parents present, and many others from other districts. They met with legislators and gave them a METCO Fact Sheet. Mr. Schmertzler, Mr. Brandmeyer, and Ms. Glass attended a March 14 meeting in Boston to discuss METCO. She also thanked Sharon Hobbs for her good discussion at one of her coffees. She noted the upcoming "Race to Nowhere" movie coming to Lincoln on May 5.

Mr. Christenfeld thanked the PTA for Tuesday's well-organized K-4 Family Math Night. There was a great turnout, and it was fun.

Ms. James and Mr. Sander praised the student engagement for the 3rd Grade Wax Museum, on which teachers and students worked very hard studying their "figure," sported terrific costumes, and had a great time.

Ms. Glass announced that there will be 85 Lincoln and Hanscom projects at the Science Fairs and Science Shares events.

III. Public Comments

Document: None.

James Craig, Farrar Road, voiced concern about the projected class sizes.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Conversation with Representative Thomas Conroy

Document: Memorandum from Mickey Brandmeyer to School Committee, dated March 14, 2011 RE: Representative Thomas Conroy's Visit to School Committee

Ms. Glass welcomed Representative Thomas Conroy, an ardent supporter of education and a wonderful advocate with the Massachusetts School Building Authority [MSBA]. Rep. Conroy, father of four school-aged children, noted the government's vital role in education and thanked the Committee for the invitation. Rep. Conroy said that while state revenues are increasing, Medicaid enrollment is increasing too and siphoning off government funds. He advocates for sharing more federal education revenue. He hesitated to forecast final levels of Chapter 70 and circuit breaker funding, but he has advocated for increases. The Governor's budget level-funded Chapter 70 and provided up to 72% reimbursement for special education costs. It is a high priority to reimburse towns more than the 40% they currently receive under the circuit breaker. Mr. Brandmeyer asked that transportation costs be included in the circuit breaker reimbursement. Mr. Sander asked that costs of educating special education students in their home districts be eligible for circuit breaker funds when it meets their IEPs since it saves on expensive out-of-district placements.

Rep. Conroy was pulled off the Ways and Means Committee, and having new chairmen has slowed the process. The House budget should be printed Wednesday, April 6, and it may be finalized May 1. The Senate should take up the budget the end of May. It will have to be wrapped up by June 30.

Rep. Conroy asked if they were comfortable with the projected enrollment numbers that they had to submit to the MSBA, and Mr. Brandmeyer said the projected enrollment is now 600.

Mr. Sander asked about a long-term strategy to fund METCO which continues to be cut below the incremental costs of educating METCO students. Rep. Conroy said the Governor's budget drives the funding, and Governor Patrick has never increased the funding and has usually decreased the funding for METCO. The Governor and his team need to be asked how they view METCO vis-à-vis pilot and charter schools. Is METCO lumped in with those programs, or has the need for METCO been de-emphasized because there are more charter schools? Rep. Conroy emphasized his commitment to METCO. Mr. Sander noted that it costs more to educate charter school students than it does to educate METCO students. Ms. Glass noted that the state spends more money on charter schools, yet METCO gets a good return on the investment. Rep. Conroy said there are 33 METCO towns, and there is not much noise from them; METCO is considered a special interest program.

Changes in teacher evaluation measures, brought about because of the Race to the Top federal grants, have been implemented statewide. Rep. Conroy said the goal is to have the best quality teachers they can have, and the changes have worked. Mr. Christenfeld is leery of mandates that take away leeway for districts with teacher evaluation. Ms. Glass said they want to encourage collaboration rather than competition between teachers. Rep. Conroy said they are creating measurements that demonstrate poor performers can be improved. They want to make improvements but preserve local autonomy and control.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the federal government will renew their option to educate military students at Hanscom next year. Rep. Conroy indicated his willingness to advocate on the state and federal levels.

Ms. Glass thanked Rep. Conroy for his visit and advocacy.

B. Report on Paraprofessional Demographics and Professional Development

Document: Memorandum from Stephanie Powers to School Committee, dated March 10, 2011

RE: Report on Paraprofessional Demographics, Qualifications, Longevity and Professional Development

Ms. Powers reviewed her report on the results of the survey of the district's well-educated paraprofessionals. Most of them love working for the district and do not use their jobs at the district as stepping stones to positions elsewhere. They are interested in working with students who exhibit challenging behavior and are struggling with mental health issues. As a result of the survey, workshops for these paraprofessionals will be held Wednesday afternoons from March to May, funded by the federal ARRA grant. Each paraprofessional is eligible to attend three workshops for pay and others without pay. Teachers and paraprofessionals decide together which workshops are most appropriate for the situations they face. Mr. McKenna, K-4 Principal, noted that they look to have licensed teachers to teach the workshops. They have developed the workshops using local talent, which cuts the cost.

Ms. Glass thanked her for her leadership on this very important program. She also asked that Ms. Powers thank those who are offering the workshops.

C. School Choice Hearing and Vote

Document: None.

Mr. Brandmeyer recommended that the district not participate in the Massachusetts School Choice program for four reasons: 1) potential financial loss because of the significant discrepancy between the reimbursement figure and/or actual per pupil cost in Lincoln; 2) potential special education costs to the district; 3) commitment to maintain small class sizes; and 4) classroom space constraints. If the Committee votes not to participate in the program, it will not prohibit Lincoln students from being eligible to participate in the School Choice program at other participating schools.

Mr. Schmertzler moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to withdraw from the Massachusetts School Choice program for the 2011-2012 school year for the following reasons: 1)

potential financial loss because of the significant discrepancy between the reimbursement figure and/or actual per pupil cost in Lincoln; 2) potential special education costs to the district; 3) commitment to maintain small class sizes; and 4) classroom space constraints. The Committee voted unanimously to withdraw from the School Choice program.

D. Enrollment of Employee Students

Documents: 1) Policy, File JFAB, Admission of Non-Resident Students, Revised March 30, 2003; 2) Letter from Gwen Blumberg to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated March 5, 2011; 3) Letter from Scott Burke to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated February 21, 2011; 4) Letter from Elizabeth Clancy to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated January 19, 2011; 5) Letter from Stacey Clarkin to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated January 19, 2009 [sic]; 6) Letter from Mary Day to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated March 9, 2011; 7) Letter from Pamela DiBiase to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated March 7, 2011; 8) Letter from Sharon Hobbs to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated February 28, 2011; 9) Letter from Christina Horner to School Committee, dated February 28, 2011; 10) Letter from Jennifer Mastrullo to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated March 2, 2011; 11) Letter from Suanne Peterson to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated March 2, 2011; 12) Letter from Karen Sheppard to Mickey Brandmeyer, dated March 13, 2011

The discussion about the employee student enrollment and METCO enrollment was done together and voted on in one motion. Please see below.

E. Proposed 2011-2012 METCO Enrollment

Documents: 1) Policy, File JFABC, Admission of Interdistrict Transfer Students (Enrollment of METCO Students), Revised May 6, 2004; 2) Memorandum from Mickey Brandmeyer to School Committee, dated March 16, 2011 RE: Recommendations for METCO Enrollments and Adjustments to Grade Level Organization for 2011-2012

Mr. Brandmeyer made three recommendations: 1) adjust the number of sections in kindergarten and first grade from the number of sections approved in the budget; 2) accept school and Town employee students; and 3) enroll greater numbers of METCO students in the younger grades. He recommended that they change the number of kindergarten sections from three to four because there are 19 kindergarteners for whom they do not yet know whether they will register for kindergarten in the district. He also recommends that they cut the number of sections in first grade from four to three, reaching the preferred class size of 20. There are no extra seats, and there would be no change to the staffing or to the budget.

Mr. Brandmeyer explained that enrolling METCO students earlier in their school years can help to lessen the achievement gap by giving the METCO students a more consistent Lincoln education and providing greater support at the younger ages. They enroll 91 METCO students to sustain the grant money, and they place at least two METCO students in each classroom.

Sheila Webber was opposed to cutting the number of sections in first grade and warned that they could get into the same scenario as they did with the third grade (where a new class section was required after school started). She noted there's less differentiation of instruction in kindergarten than there is in first grade. John Gibson and Jason Felsch wanted METCO students spread out through all grades. James Craig was frustrated that he was told by Steve McKenna last week there would be four sections of first grade, but now there will be three.

Ms. James asked how the student achievement gap would be affected if they lose METCO students in sixth grade to the exam schools and do not backfill for these students? What would the impact be on the remaining METCO students if they do not enroll older students? Mr. Brandmeyer said the policy is to have two METCO students per class, and while some students enrolled in older grades who have done well, it is far more risky.

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that school assignments are coming out soon in Boston, and there will be no new information on the 19 potential kindergarteners before the next meeting, so he felt that a vote on these issues was needed tonight. Mr. Sander noted that the agreement with the Finance Committee and their good will depends on leaving adequate number of sections to enroll these potential 19 kindergarteners rather than coming to the Finance Committee late in the summer with an emergency fund transfer.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the employee requests for enrollment of their children at the Lincoln School for the 2011-2012 school year subject to the

continued employment of their parents as required by School Committee policy, and to enroll eligible Boston resident children through the METCO program for the 2011-2012 school year, and to switch the number of sections for kindergarten to four and the number of sections for first grade to three. The Committee voted to approve the motion with Mr. Christenfeld abstaining.

Mr. Brandmeyer will notify the employees of the approval, conditional upon their continued employment.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Establish Graduation Dates

Document: None.

Mr. Brandmeyer said they have used four snow days on the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses. The 180th day of school is scheduled for Thursday, June 23, and it will be a half day. The preschool and kindergarten will have their last day on Friday, June 17. He recommended that the graduation date for Hanscom Middle School be Tuesday, June 21 and the graduation date for Lincoln School be Wednesday, June 22.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to establish the graduation date for the Hanscom Middle School as Tuesday, June 21, 2011 and for the Lincoln School as Wednesday, June 22, 2011. The Committee voted unanimously to establish the graduation dates.

VII. Curriculum

None.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

None.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

Document: Draft, SBC Press Release, dated March 18, 2011

Ms. Glass indicated that the press release is similar to the *Lincoln Review* article. Mr. Brandmeyer said they will submit the press release to the *Lincoln Journal* Monday for the School Committee. Edits to the draft included adding meeting dates for community input and two anecdotes about why the current buildings are not sufficient without giving an impression that the buildings are currently unsafe.

Mr. Schmertzler moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to approve the press release to the *Lincoln Journal*. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the press release.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

Mr. Sander moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm. The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary