

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP

Monday, May 5, 2014

Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA

OPEN SESSION

Present: Jennifer Glass (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Tim Christenfeld, Jena Salon. Also present: Becky McFall (Superintendent).

Absent: Preditta Cedeno (METCO Representative), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Robert Ford (Director of Technology), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services), Lisa Pizarro (Hanscom Civilian School Liaison Officer).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Glass, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:23 pm. She welcomed Ms. Salon and noted that one aspect of the meeting was to help her to understand the Committee's work, and to exchange ideas about the work of the Committee and how to allocate Committee time.

II. Review of Current Subcommittees and Liaison Positions

Document: Memorandum to Members of the Committee from Jennifer Glass, Re: Subcommittees and Liaison Responsibilities: Draft, dated September 26, 2013

Ms. Glass asked the members to look at the list and decide if they could take on Ms. James' and other responsibilities. Ms. Glass is attending the Hanscom PTO meetings as the Committee does not have any Hanscom representatives. The Committee wants to have Hanscom representatives because their viewpoints are very helpful. Dr. McFall said that the Base Commander is changing again, and they will have to start asking a new Base Commander for Hanscom representatives. The Committee suggested that Hanscom parents be asked to send a representative.

Ms. Glass said the Pod C RFP duty is finished for now. The bottom liaison positions on the document—MASS/MASC Conference, L-S School Committee liaison, and Suburban Coalition—have not been filled but may become important next year. Ms. Glass asked that the members talk to her if they are interested.

III. Outreach to/Input from the Community

Documents: None.

Ms. Glass asked if there was any communication that they should do differently to get the community involved. Meeting minutes were discussed, and Ms. Salon volunteered to review the drafts. Dr. McFall said when the Committee will decide on controversial topics, it would help to have a "heads up" to the community to get them to attend the meetings before the decision is made to avoid surprise after the decisions are made. Ms. Glass noted there are many tools to notify the community, and it can be tough to predict which issues will be controversial and which communication methods bring people to the meetings. Ms. Salon moderates the lincolntalk.org website and will

mention upcoming issues. Dr. McFall highlights meeting decisions in her weekly superintendent's bulletin, which focuses on faculty members. She receives feedback from parents. Ms. Glass asked that members give her any ideas on communication.

IV. District Strategic Plan

Documents: 1) Lincoln Public Schools Strategic Plan 2013-2015, Approved by School Committee June 20, 2013; 2) Core Values Document, dated March 28, 2013

The Committee discussed the process for the Strategic Goals meeting on May 13 from 8-11 am. Dr. McFall said the new staff members Denise Oldham, Special Services Coordinator, and Patricia Kinsella, Assistant Superintendent, will be at the meeting, at which they will discuss whether the right items are on the two-year strategic plan. The feedback she has received indicates that the plan may take more than two years; it may take five to seven years. They want to focus on what has the greatest impact on students and how to phase the work on those right steps.

Mr. Christenfeld suggested the focus be on what they want to do versus what they have to do. Ms. Glass said at the legislative panel breakfast, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees [MASC] is working on getting the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE] to give districts two years to implement new requirements. She noted that towns like Lincoln that are not quite as tied to state money could push back on some of these requirements. She asked if there are things that the state asks that we could do as a mere compliance exercise or things that the district will decide not to do. Dr. McFall said the kindergarten grant (\$65,000) requires that kindergartens receive NAEYC accreditation. Dr. McFall noted that the early childhood department is a federal government department, not a state one. There is an online assessment tool that is one size fits all, and all the kindergarten teachers have to attend a two-day training to use it, and they need substitutes to fill in for the teachers. The district assesses two elements, not ten, and it costs them money in the form of substitute salaries, member fees, and the NAEYC process, and it is a significant burden. Dr. McFall said if all districts will be required to use the assessment, they will comply so as not to lose the grant money. There was discussion if the assessment is not mandatory there might be a community discussion on whether NAEYC accreditation is a cost effective use of time. Dr. McFall noted that the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents [MASS] is meeting with DESE Commissioner Mitchell Chester to see if they can move the timelines back.

Dr. McFall mentioned the changes with the English Language Learner requirements. The state's Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners [RETELL] says that Massachusetts is not complying with the federal ELL regulations, and the state had to change them and has to change them again. It requires all teachers to attend courses to be certified to teach ELL students, and the district needs a quota of ELL trained teachers. In order for each teacher to be trained, they have to have an ELL student in their class, but to comply they have to place an untrained teacher with an ELL student, yet DESE wants all teachers trained. The district is offering a course with Sudbury.

V. Big Ideas

Document: None.

Ms. Glass asked what the members wished they could discuss, and whether there are things that they do not get to talk about in current meetings. Mr. Sander asked that they create time to have more open-ended discussions. They read the agenda items in advance and should not have to review the material with a verbal report. He thought four or five times a year they could have an hour to hour and a half during a meeting to talk about something such as where is technology going, or a long-term exploration of a topic, but he does not want to burden the administration. Dr. McFall has ordered copies of the book, *The Essential School Board Book*, for the members. It suggests different ways to have meetings, and they could have working sessions on different topics.

The Committee discussed four topics: 1) how to ensure that reports are productive for the administration and represent purposeful and meaningful work for the staff and the Committee; 2) the educational vision; 3) the division of responsibilities between the superintendent and the Committee; and 4) the productive use of Committee meeting time.

Dr. McFall asked what does engagement and differentiation look like? They align their tasks with the strategic plan. Mr. Christenfeld suggested that the conversation be expanded to the teachers in the classroom: why are we doing what we are doing? He said there was confusion about the use of technology in the classrooms, and noted that parents should be asked what they think about it. Mr. Schmertzler said they need to communicate more effectively with parents. Many parents drive their children to school. Color coded signs on Routes 117 and 126 that notified parents about meetings on specific topics to get their input for important subjects. Ms. Salon indicated that many do not attend the PTO meetings where they do discuss these subjects.

Ms. Salon would like more discussions on innovative teaching practices because they get cut short. Where would the district like to go with differentiation, and what are the options? Dr. McFall likes to discuss vision, but the timing is challenging because she has to sequence discussions with what she will present to the faculty without striking a negative chord with them because teachers feel that expectations are set that they may not be able to meet. She noted the teachers want to do well. When she sets a vision, teachers have taken it as a criticism when it is not meant that way. Mr. Christenfeld said they could have a general conversation about different subjects, and Ms. Glass suggested that she talk with the faculty first on subjects and then come to the Committee and the community.

Mr. Christenfeld said with good homework, the aim is to get students and teachers at their best. Dr. McFall said their work is to define the meaning of authentic learning, which means to take the rubric and boil it down to its essential pieces. What is the cognitive demand on students? The day to day work, are students reading books?

Mr. Christenfeld said the district is making reasonable progress toward their goals, and there is a capacity to improve but the time is key. There are many evaluations, such as the new educator evaluation system, English Language Learners, and the data to collect the information is a huge distraction and frustration. Dr. McFall said the data piece is important: what measures will the district use to say they have focused on the right things and have been effective? How do they make sure that they give students what they need? They need consistently great teaching in each class each day, and she does not think they are quite there yet. Mr. Sander said it is the non-cognitive and the

cognitive growth of students, and it is hard to have a summary statement. Mr. Christenfeld wanted to get this issue into the details of how Dr. McFall spends her time to free her up for the big important vision. Ms. Glass said they all want excellent teaching and happy, well-adjusted students. Is the money being spent in the right way to get those things?

The Committee talked about the dangers of very simple messages with the new expectations by the state. A *Lincoln Journal* article on the issues the Committee has dealt with that explained the nuts and bolts of making decisions and one on a part of the strategic plan might help.

Ms. Glass suggested that another workshop meeting to discuss how to map out what things discussed tonight could look like would be helpful. Mr. Christenfeld said they should look at the current long-term agenda and streamline some reports, mark the valuable ones, and he also asked whether it was good for the staff person to write the report or if it was more of a burden to do it.

VII. School Committee Policy

Documents: 1) Section B, "Board Governance and Operations," School Committee Policy Book, with Policies: File BA, Annual School Committee Goals, Revised and Approved at School Committee Meeting of January 7, 2004; File BB, School Committee Legal Status, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of October 30, 1989; File BBA, School Committee Powers and Duties, Revised at School Committee Meeting of November 13, 1989; File BBA-R, School Committee as Employer, Revised at School Committee Meeting of October 16, 1989; File BBAA, School Committee Authority, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of November 13, 1989; File BBB, School Board Election, Added Lincoln METCO Representation at School Committee Meeting of October 29, 1990; File BBBE, Procedures for Filling School Committee Vacancy, Revised at School Committee Meeting of December 4, 1989; File BCB/GBEA, Conflict of Interest, Revised at School Committee Meeting of November 27, 1989; File BDA, Board Organizational Meeting, Revised at School Committee Meeting of January 22, 1990; File BDB-R, Role of the Chairman of the School Committee, Revised at School Committee Meeting of January 22, 1990; File BDC-R, Role of the Hanscom Representatives, Approved at School Committee Meeting of December 4, 1989; File BDD, School Committee-Superintendent Relationship, Revised at School Committee Meeting of February 5, 1990; File BDD-R, School Committee-Superintendent Relations, Adopted at School Committee Meeting of February 5, 1990; File BDE, Board Subcommittees, Revised at School Committee Meeting of March 4, 1985; File BDE-R, Subcommittees and Liaisons of the School Committee, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of March 4, 1985; File BDE-R2, Guidelines for School Committee Liaisons, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of December 17, 1984; File BDF, Citizens' Committees Appointed by the School Committee, Adopted at School Committee Meeting of January 21, 1985; File BDF-R, Procedures for Establishing Citizens' Committees, Adopted at School Committee Meeting of January 21, 1985; File BDFA, School Councils, Voted at School Committee Meeting of September 27, 1993; File BE, School Committee Meetings, Revised at School Committee Meeting of November 21, 2002; File BEDA, Notification of School Committee Meetings, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of December 17, 1984;

File BEDB, Agenda Preparation, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of December 17, 1984; File BEDBA, Consent Agenda, Adopted at School Committee Meeting of January 13, 2005; File BEDC, Quorum, Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of December 17, 1984; File BEDH, Remote Participation Policy, Adopted at School Committee Meeting of November 7, 2013; File BGC, Policy Review and Maintenance, Revised at School Committee Meeting of October 26, 1987; File BIA-R, Procedures for New Committee Member Orientations, Revised at School Committee Meeting of December 17, 1984; Massachusetts Association of School Committees [MASC] Reference Manual

Ms. Glass said that it was time to update the School Committee Governance policies, as some have not been updated in 30 years. She asked that the members use the MASC wording in the drafts and examine the wording. They can also decide whether to reaffirm the policies. Ms. Glass will split up the policies to be reviewed between Mr. Sander and Ms. Salon, who volunteered to do it.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 pm.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary