

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 20, 2007
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander, Sharon Antia, Al Schmertzler, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative), Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

Absent: Laurie Manos (Vice Chair).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

None.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gifts from Friends of the Lincoln Library

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to accept the donation of \$900 from the Friends of the Lincoln Library. The funds came from the March book sale and will be used to purchase circulating and/or reference material for the Lincoln School library. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the donation.

Mr. Brandmeyer added that the School appreciates the Friends of Lincoln Library. The School allows the Friends to store their books for their monthly book sales in one of the Pods, and for this, the Friends donate one month's worth of sales to the School. He will send a thank you letter.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on Nutrition and Wellness Fair

Ms. Cathleen Higgins, Food Service Director, presented information about the Nutrition and Wellness Fairs being held in honor of March is National Nutrition Month. Higgins worked with the Health Advisory Council, physical education teachers, and school nurses to broaden the fair to include wellness.

Four fairs were planned for the month at the Brooks Café, the Hanscom First Grade Breakfast, the Smith Café, and the Hanscom Café. She reported that the kids were interested and responded well to the healthy snacks they prepared; they even requested the applesauce cake recipe. Local farm produce and beverages were used in making the food for this event.

Higgins reported that obesity has increased in the 6 to 11 year old age group. The point of the fair is to let students know that they have food choices. Kids can log on to mypyramid.com to track their nutrition charts, which ties into the physical education curriculum. There are many websites with nutrition information. While kids waited in line for lunch, there was a multimedia presentation of them at the fair.

Mr. Schmertzler thanked Ms. Higgins for her presentation. Ms. Sterling reported that she attended the Hanscom Breakfast and that the school nurse and librarian also helped with the information. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the message about good nutrition really comes home. Ms. Gillespy reported that her son likes fruit instead of cookies for snacks, even when she offers cookies! He's also interested in logging on to mypyramid.com. Ms. Higgins reported that kiwi was a big hit. Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Higgins for her report. She said that it was great that all could work together to integrate the information into education. She also asked that the *Lincoln Journal's* editor, Ben Aaronson, be contacted so that he could cover one of the other fairs for the newspaper. Ms. Dobrow asked that Ms. Higgins thank all who were involved in the fairs and tell them that they did a great job. Mr. Sander thanked Ms. Higgins for her efforts and indicated on a lighter note that his kindergartener took away the message from the wellness activities that "you can eat unhealthy things every once in awhile."

The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

B. K-5 Math Update

Mary Sterling updated the Committee on the progress of the Mathematics Materials Review Committee. 40 percent of the parents returned their questionnaires regarding the trial use period of new materials. The teachers volunteered to help with the project, which has made much extra work for them. The Committee is working on the data analysis to assist them with the decision making process for choosing a new program. They have whittled the choices to three programs. In April they will tell Mr. Brandmeyer which program they chose. They will give him a two-part recommendation. The first part will recommend one of the programs under consideration. The second part will be recommendations for professional development to support use of this program, as the key to success is a strong implementation plan that involves the teachers and parents and strong communication. It will be important that everyone is on board with the new program. She asked the School Committee for their input.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether any of the programs had anything special to help close the achievement gap. Ms. Sterling said yes, but none of the programs they have chosen do enough. He asked whether the program could be practiced at home. Ms. Sterling said that they are looking at programs that have strong technological complements and agreed that that is critical. All parents and students would have access to it. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether kids' progress could be monitored so that they could get extra help if their work was not up to par. Ms. Sterling responded that she did not know. He said that Lexington monitors their students' work. He said that whichever program is chosen, the contractor will need to be able to update the program. Ms. Antia said that she liked the point that they could see which students were struggling and which ones were bored by the math. Ms. Sterling said they wanted to purchase the best program now with the strongest company support. Two of the programs have track records and research, whereas one of them will have its final printing in June and has no track record. Ms. Antia asked whether parents could learn this new way of doing math too. Ms. Sterling responded that two of the companies have on-line student resource manuals that would be available to parents and students who had internet access. Ms. Antia asked whether Hanscom parents and students had that access, and Ms. Gillespy said that the Base library has access if parents don't have computers at home. Ms. Sterling said that she did not know whether all Boston students and parents had internet access and what type of access they had. Mr. Schmertzler suggested that they find out from Ms. Horner, the METCO representative. Mr. Creel said that it would be important to find out whether the students had access to the computer. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they needed internet access that had reasonable speed.

Ms. Dobrow noted that the new mathematics curriculum will take much effort by Ms. Sterling and teachers to get themselves and the students up to speed. She suggested that Ms. Sterling be able to explain the selection of the program once it's made and why to parents. She warned her to gauge the expenditure of her time because she's concerned about protecting her time. Ms. Sterling agreed. She has lined up all three publishers to launch the program with the staff on May 14. The Mathematics Committee will be at the May 1 School Committee meeting with their recommendations. The following week there will be a meeting for parents. She wants to think about the meeting's timing. Parents will also receive a letter about the recommendation and the new curriculum. Ms. Dobrow asked that it be put on the PTA and PTO calendars for June to present the new program. Ms. Sterling asked whether the Committee would like a workshop with the winning program, and they responded yes. It would be held in the May 1 to May 20 time period. Ms. Dobrow suggested that communication about the program to the non-parent community through the *Lincoln Journal* and the *Hansconian* newspapers. Ms. Antia asked whether there was a demonstration of the program at the company website. Ms. Sterling was not certain.

Mr. Sander said that he fully supported the plan to communicate with parents about the new curriculum. He said that no matter which program is chosen, they won't please all parents. He suggested that they pull out the key bullets of what the new program will do that the old one won't do. Ms. Sterling agreed that some parents will be unhappy. She used as an example the Math Advisory Panel; a Lincoln resident is involved with them. There are a range of views about mathematics curricula in schools. She mentioned that whether or not the parents agree with the selection of the new program, they should all be invited to be part of the process of bringing it to fruition. Mr. Sander said that once the choice is made, the Committee should say that it tried to choose one program that would fit all of the needs. There is a range of learning tools available to augment the program that will be taught. Ms. Sterling responded that ancillary teaching tools will be needed no matter which program makes the cut.

Ms. Sterling said that the Mathematics Committee looked at 10 programs before picking three; one of those programs, Singapore Math, is in the news, but did not make the list of three. The reasons why are that it is not aligned with Massachusetts' requirements. There are big holes in it even though kids in Singapore have done well with it. It might be an ancillary program for Lincoln. There is only one research report on Singapore Math's effectiveness with a sample size of four towns. In the report, only two of those towns' students did well. Mr. Schmertzler asked how many more days and hours per day do kids in Singapore spend in school? Ms. Sterling responded that they spent more time in school than our kids do.

Ms. Dobrow suggested that Ms. Sterling and the Mathematics Committee should put together bullets in anticipation of what some parents have already said. One Lincoln resident's perspective is that kids should do many math drills. The Committee needs to have reasonable responses to those concerns of parents. Also consider your answer to how will it improve Lincoln's MCAS scores? Ms. Sterling asked that the School Committee members be at the public presentation with the parents. There are math wars going on. Mr. Sander mentioned that in Singapore, teachers who teach math specialize in math and do not teach any other subjects, unlike our teachers. Their responsibility in Singapore is that teachers spend 80 percent of their time with their students and 20 percent of their time with other teachers. Our teachers, by contrast, spend 97 percent of their time with their students. He also suggested that for disgruntled parents, maybe their energy can be channeled into extracurricular activities. Ms. Robinson noted that it's a parent's prerogative to do different things with their kids at home. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that when they introduce the new program, they have to get into it fully. He doesn't want parents teaching kids another way to do math because it sends a confusing message to them. He agreed that he would love to channel their energy.

Ms. Robinson asked whether there was a difference in the amount of homework each program gave. Ms. Sterling responded that the Committee is looking at the amounts and kinds of homework. Ms. Antia said that she thought the current math homework was weak. She suggested that they have useful worksheets. Ms. Sterling said the Committee can decide on the correct amount of homework. They are also looking at how often it needs to be assigned, what is the purpose, and what gives useful practice and has world application. Mr. Creel said that in Asia, schooling is so carefully orchestrated and it is so

different from mapping things here. Ms. Sterling said that California just approved Singapore Math in the lower grades. She noted that Massachusetts' standards are rated A, one of the top.

Ms. Gillespy asked whether this trial period has helped Ms. Sterling and the Mathematics Committee to hone things. She is concerned about the money the program will cost. She also warned that they should make sure that the study questions are defined for the program's evaluation. Ms. Sterling said they were working on the questions and will shape them in September with the baseline data. She noted that it takes phases of feelings and time to see how perception and performance happen. Things must play out as the program goes forward.

Mr. Sander noted that one frustration for parents is when the students go to the next grade, it takes teachers time to figure out what's needed. He asked whether technology could be used to gauge where the kids are. Ms. Sterling said that there are no strong pre-assessments available on any of the three programs, but they will have to create some. Mr. Schmertzler said that with Dash Board, you can know where kids are each day. Ms. Sterling said that FastMath helps with that. Mr. Brandmeyer said that with homework, they are going to reshape the math specialists' role. They will have a combination of responsibilities that will include coaching teachers and helping kids. They will also be adding a math content specialist to ensure that the implementation of the new curriculum will go well. The role will be district-wide.

Mr. Brandmeyer stated that he will support the Mathematics Committee's recommendation as long as the work is good. He admitted that part of the decision will be political but that 99 percent of it will be made for educational reasons. The choice is between the traditional basal math programs, Envision; and the reformed math movement, Everyday Math or Investigations. Everyday Math has been in practice for ten years. Both of the programs have been reworked. He knows that in making the decision, there will be some unhappy people. Myths will need to be dispelled. If the choice is vilified, they are up against a problem.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether they were going to acquire the new program by the end of the year and asked how they would evaluate the implementation and make course corrections after the first year. Ms. Sterling responded that changing the curriculum is a multi-year prospect that requires sustained effort. She said there is a two-year program evaluation and professional development that continues. There is a strong expectation that all teachers will use it. There needs to be a consistent approach from year to year. All teachers and students will be in this program. Ms. Antia asked about the consistency from grade to grade. Ms. Sterling responded that inconsistent teaching leads to lower math progress, and they expect that that will change.

Mr. Schmertzler asked how they will deal with the students who are exceptional learners? Ms. Sterling said that the High Performing Student Task Force will handle that, but it is a tough thing to do. It's more difficult than helping students who are struggling. She hopes that the technology piece will help challenge these students. She thanked the Committee for its help.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Sterling and indicated that she and the subcommittee have made great progress. Mr. Sander asked that they give feedback to the math publishers. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

C. Evaluation of the Superintendent

Ms. Dobrow said that the Committee would discuss the draft document about the Superintendent's performance and vote on it at this meeting. She asked whether there were any edits to the draft. In summary, the School Committee remains pleased with Mr. Brandmeyer's leadership and supervision of the school staff. She asked whether there were any edits to the draft. There being none, Mr. Schmertzler made a motion to vote for the report, seconded by Mr. Sander. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

Mr. Brandmeyer thanked the Committee for their validation of his work. He stressed that the people he has hired to help him are great. They are very important to his work. He appreciates the support and said that Lincoln is a great place to work. He finds the work satisfying. He noted that he will take the feedback seriously. Ms. Dobrow again thanked him for his work.

D. School Choice Hearing and Vote

Mr. Brandmeyer informed the Committee about the Massachusetts School Choice Law and recommended that Lincoln withdraw from it for the 2008-2009 school year. He told them that withdrawing from it does not mean that a Lincoln student cannot go to another school, it just means that Lincoln does not have to have students from other communities. This program does not include the commitment that Lincoln has made to the METCO program. He stated that now there is a good balance, and part of the reason to withdraw is for space considerations. The school simply does not have enough space. Mr. Schmertzler moved to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to opt out of the School Choice program for the 2008-2009 school year, and Mr. Sander seconded it.

Ms. Antia asked whether students from other communities could pay to attend the Lincoln schools. There is no open enrollment. The students who come are admitted to the school on a first-come, first-served basis, said Mr. Brandmeyer. The school cannot pick the students who they want to attend the school. He said that the state would give the school only \$5,500 per student. Lincoln spends \$15,000 per child, and therefore the state's reimbursement is not enough. He stressed to the Committee that Lincoln spends money on METCO students even though the district is only reimbursed for the transportation costs and \$4,000 per student.

The Committee voted unanimously to withdraw from the School Choice program for the 2008-2009 school year.

VI. Superintendent's Report and Old Business

Mr. Brandmeyer asked that the Committee vote on the school calendar for the 2008-2009 school year. He said that the major items were decided; only open houses and conferences were not on it yet. They were not sure whether they would have one or two institute days or when the faculty's professional day would be held.

He stressed that teaching and learning continue to the very last day of school. Ms. Dobrow moved to accept the 2008-2009 school calendar, and Mr. Sander seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the 2008-2009 school calendar.

Mr. Brandmeyer informed the Committee about new last school days and graduations for this year because of the fire at the Brooks School. On the Lincoln campus, the last day of school will be June 20 with graduation held on June 19. On the Hanscom campus, June 19 will be the last day of school, and graduation will be held on June 18.

Mr. Brandmeyer also told the Committee that the school budget for Town Meeting went into the mail today. Ms. Gillespy suggested that one should be sent to Hanscom families also because there are many misunderstandings about it. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that he would do that for the Air Base. Ms. Gillespy said that she hears all kinds of rumors about it. Ms. Dobrow asked her to forward the comments to Mr. Brandmeyer via email.

Mr. Brandmeyer also told the Committee that they were continuing their search for the Administrator for Student Services. They have it whittled down to three finalists. Each one of them is a high quality candidate, and each of them has visited the campus. They are checking the candidates' references and districts now. The three finalists are Stephanie Powers, Interim co-director for Pupil Services in Newton Public Schools; Dr. Sandra Einsel, director of Pupil Services at Walpole Public Schools; and Martha Bakken, Department Head of Pre-K to 5 Student Services at Westwood Public Schools. He said that they planned to bring each finalist to the Committee's March 27 meeting for interviews.

The interviews will be 40 minutes each, and then the Committee can recess and recommend a candidate and vote on a candidate. After that process, Mr. Brandmeyer will offer the winning person the position. Ms. Dobrow asked whether the Committee will have a quorum, and they will. Mr. Brandmeyer will have questions for each candidate, and the Committee is allowed to ask their own questions also. The questions will be asked the same way to each person. Mr. Sander indicated that he will not be there, but he is thrilled that they have such great finalists. Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that each one was great, but he was confused as to which candidate was the best fit for the position. The good thing is that they will not lose no matter which person they choose.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling mentioned the elementary science program and that it was consistent on all school campuses. She mentioned two classroom visits she has had. The first one to an 8th grade class that created podcasts, which brought together collaboration, stretched the use of technology, and put together music and history in a terrific way. The second visit was to sixth grade classes with teams putting together vehicles from the design phase on. She said that both projects were terrific.

Ms. Sterling reported on the school's Institute Day, which was well received. Ten Lincoln graduates participated on the panel. Ron Ferguson was the keynote speaker, and his topic was the theory of targeted engagement in the classroom. Ms. Antia attended the session and said that he was a great speaker. She regretted that the graduates could not continue to speak; once they got started, they were hard to stop. There were six sessions for teachers on how to engage students in the classroom. The sessions also went well. Paul Naso was there. The sessions brought coherence to teaching and looked at what the raw data tells them about their teaching practice. The lunch was nutritious and served on recycled products too.

Ms. Antia said that Mr. Ferguson discussed the reasons for students acting up in class. Those who act up are trying to be "cut ups" to hide them from looking stupid or looking smart to their peers. Students just want to fit in with the others, which means that anyone who excels or falls behind does not fit in. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the teachers were reenergized from the sessions. The message that they got was that they needed to be demanding yet supportive of their students. Mr. Creel said different kids need different things from teachers in order to participate and be engaged in class. The story will be in the newspaper.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that the Tripod report will be concluded shortly, although he was not sure exactly when. As her term on the Committee will be over, Ms. Antia will be invited to hear the report when it comes out.

Ms. Sterling reported that Institute Day, while very valuable, was very expensive, especially where it concerned her time. It was like planning a conference for 150 people. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the reports.

VIII. Use of School Buildings Policy

Mr. Creel presented a draft of the KFB Use of School Buildings policy. He is looking for guidance from the Committee. He separated the fee schedule and regulations out of the existing administrative documents, KFB Use of School Buildings and KFBA Building Use Priorities, on the subject. The policy is coordinated with the Recreation Department and

the Administration. If the Committee approves the policy tonight, they will be approving the fee schedule to go into effect in September 2008.

Mr. Schmertzler raised a question about the last sentence under Implementation, paragraph two, that reads: "However, religious organizations will not be permitted to establish their primary place of worship at school facilities." He's concerned that religious organizations can slip and their teachings can come through at the school, and he does not want that. Mr. Creel responded that the lawyers said that the school cannot omit religious organizations from renting school facilities if they want to rent them to any community groups because it would be considered discrimination. The schools are Lincoln's largest community buildings. Mr. Schmertzler responded that he believes in separation of church and state and he's concerned about religion. Mr. Sander said that he does not support Mr. Schmertzler's view, but he said that they should include something that indicates it is incumbent upon all who use the school facilities that they cannot leave any materials lying around after they have used the space. He does not want materials to be discovered by students when they come to school. He said that groups that leave controversial materials more than once should be restricted from renting space.

Ms. Dobrow indicated that there needs to be a provision that Mr. Brandmeyer and the Recreation Director need to approve the group to use the space. Mr. Creel explained that common practice was that outside groups use only common-use areas; they do not use classrooms. He said that he would create another regulation on materials left behind. Mr. Brandmeyer said that any worship services that occurred on school grounds have a very limited time period in which to use the buildings. He asked that the last sentence under implementation, paragraph 2 be clarified. Mr. Creel will revise the language. Mr. Schmertzler said that he doesn't want the school district challenged on it and urged that the administration set up the policy right.

Ms. Dobrow asked how much they were charging and asked if they were market rates. She was not advocating that Lincoln groups necessarily be charged market rates. Mr. Creel responded that they do not charge the Friends of Lincoln Library for their use of the Pods, but custodian fees are charged for weekend use of the facilities. He stated that they did not want to make a lot of money on this, but asked if the rates were in line with others, such as those considered in Group D, non-Lincoln community for-profit groups, defined as for profit groups with less than a majority of the participants residing in Lincoln. Ms. Dobrow asked whether Mr. Creel was anticipating the possibility of what could be coming down the line. He responded that he will do some comps and propose a new rate structure for the next meeting. He mentioned that groups can request a waiver from the fees under the first bullet under rental fees. They also need a clear cut description of groups.

Mr. Schmertzler asked about the category 3 B Group B, Lincoln Community For Profit groups. Are these groups running activities for Lincoln residents, not outside groups? The answer was yes. He then asked about paragraph five, line two: "assume responsibility for all liabilities." He asked whether liability included damage done to the school property by a group. Mr. Creel responded that the school has an umbrella policy that is required insurance. Mr. Schmertzler recalled an incident a few years ago when the boy's locker room was damaged and wondered whether the school would be covered for an incident like that. Mr. Schmertzler also raised in the Fee Schedule document, Regulations Governing Use of School Facilities, under number 3, "School facilities may not be available during vacation recess." Mr. Creel explained that maintenance occurs during vacations, and that is why the sentence reads as it does. He will change the wording and will come back to the Committee with a new version that takes the concerns into account. Document KFBB is appropriate. Mr. Sander said that they should wait to revoke any current policy until the changes have been made to it and the vote taken.

The Committee did not vote on the policy.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$537,696.57 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$154,920.79 for a total of \$692,617.36. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

X. Old Business

Mr. Schmertzler reported on the Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee [CLRPC]. He said that by 2010, there could be over 200 housing units on Winter Street. The Town won't be able to avoid Chapter 40B developments. If that happened, there would be an impact on school facilities. Smith, Maini and McKee Associates [SMMA], the firm that did the Master Plan study for the Town, did not include the housing in the Groves Retirement Community as counting toward the 10 percent of Lincoln's affordable housing stock. The community is significantly at risk, he said.

He said that he has started on the FACT subcommittee of the CLRPC. One of the matters that has come up is the need for a community center. Mr. Schmertzler does not want it located on Ballfield Road. He thinks that the Pierce House is the best place for that. Mr. Sander responded that as they think about rebuilding the school facilities, it might be easier to talk the Town into money for those renovations if they helped out with a community center. Mr. Schmertzler said there is talk of the Council on Aging moving out of Bemis Hall, which would free that space during the day. Mr. Brandmeyer agreed with Mr. Schmertzler that with the traffic congestion, he understands why the school would like protection, but if the school helped out with the community center and the Pods could be gotten rid of and a new community building built in their place, it could be good overall.

On the traffic issue, Mr. Schmertzler asked how could we get folks to use public transit. It would be nice if we had

something like Lexpress in Lexington. He wondered why so many parents drive their kids to school instead of putting them on the buses. Mr. Sander said that they take their kids to school because they have to make the train to go to work.

Mr. Creel said that with SMMA's master plan study, a new school facility would have kitchen equipment, and they could make one zone of the school more accessible with a multipurpose room and such things. He said that the interaction of generations is good, but what the FACT subcommittee wants to do conflicts with the school. There is still a concern with the school's septic system.

XI. New Business

A. Approval for Contract for A.F.S.C.M.E. (Custodial Union)

Ms. Dobrow moved a motion to approve the custodians' contract. Mr. Sander seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the proposed contract with A.F.S.C.M.E.

B. Lincoln Review Submission

As the deadline for submitting a piece had passed, the Committee did nothing about the draft.

Ms. Dobrow said that she received an email from Radha Gargeya of the Lincoln Sudbury School Committee, asking for support at a meeting on March 25 at 7:30 pm. At the meeting, there will be a state delegation and the subject is the unfunded mandates to schools. Ms. Dobrow will attend the meeting, and Mr. Schmertzler may be able to go too.

Mr. Brandmeyer reminded the Committee that Wednesday was the Moderator's Pre-Town Meeting Meeting. He and Ms. Dobrow will attend.

XII. Approval of Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes from the January 31, February 14, and February 28 meetings.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Ms. Antia, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 9:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Temporary School Committee Recording Secretary