

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 27, 2008 – Open Session

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Al Schmertzler, Sharon Antia, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative) and Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative)

Absent: Laurie Manos (Vice-Chair), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), and Tom Sander

Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance)

I. Greetings and Call to Order – 7:01pm

Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

II. Interview Administrator for Student Services Candidates

(Documents: *Working Draft of Criteria for Administrator for Student Services Search Committee, Job Description, Superintendent's Letter to Parents and Caregivers, Resumes, Interview Questions for Candidates*)

Julie Dobrow greeted the SC and explained the procedure for the first part of the meeting. She mentioned that each of the candidates for the Administrator for Student Services would be present to introduce themselves and answer questions. She explained that afterwards the SC members would take a short adjournment, adding then Mickey Brandmeyer would make a motion and there would be a vote and an offer would be made. The questions were decided prior to the meeting and were divided up among the SC members to ask.

Mickey Brandmeyer introduced each candidate, giving a brief background about the candidate's employment history and current work status. In turn, the SC members introduced themselves, including their direct link to the Lincoln Public Schools. Afterwards, the candidate was given time to give a brief opening introduction.

A. Stephanie Powers

Highlighted information in introduction:

- Currently the Interim Co-Director for Pupil Services in Newton Public Schools (9/07-present)
- Formerly Assistant Director for Pupil Services in Newton Public Schools (6/02-8/07)
- Currently Part-time instructor at Boston University (has been for ten years)
- Started out as Special Education teacher
- Felt Lincoln provided an excellent environment for inclusion, a full sense of community, excellence in learning, and felt that it was a very supportive workplace.

Questions from the SC members –

1 – Ms. Powers stated she felt Lincoln was good choice based on the knowledgeable people and parents that she had met and knew she would be working with and their energy that was shared and demonstrated in the classrooms. She noted her observations of the thoughtful and in-depth evaluations process that went into choosing the programs and units, commenting specifically on the recent process to select a new math program. She added that she liked the resources that were available to the children with disabilities, especially the extension to the social and emotional needs.

2 – To answer how to maintain quality services in a cost effective manner, Ms. Powers simply stated “creative thinking” but elaborated that it helps to already have the student-teacher ratios low within the Lincoln Public Schools. She commented that coming from a large school system meant that she had to be creative to stretch the dollars when trying to be cost effective and she learned from what worked and didn't work. She mentioned looking at cross-grade mentoring opportunities and programming for small groups when making it homogeneous grouping based on skills.

3 – With regard to high achieving students, Ms. Powers stated that she works in a system with high achieving students that doesn't have a separate “Academically Gifted” program and knew that it was important to work closely with the curriculum leadership in each curriculum area so that it could be tailored to these students. She noted that it was important to change the content and process of the lesson, not just add onto the assignment to give more work to the high achieving students.

4- Ms. Powers commented that quality PD required one to look at the targeted area for the PD first and not to always introduce something new and innovative if it can't be implemented throughout the school, adding it was a waste of money to train a few teachers and then not share and implement the learning from PD. She noted the importance of tapping into prior knowledge to avoid repetitive PD (course of subjects that teachers have already taken and are just named differently). Ms. Powers reiterated the importance of teaching how to integrate the new materials so it is not forgotten and to let the teachers teach the other teachers.

5- For her own growth, Ms. Powers stated she felt PD that addressed general education curriculum gaps would be important because she has always been involved in special education curriculum but not always fully aware of the general curriculum area.

6- Ms. Powers explained that she would use technology as a means to communicate, acknowledging that she has already been viewing the Lincoln website, which she likes, to track how information is sent out to families. She added that an organization with which she is affiliated had ongoing workshops for families which could be added to give families more outlets and resources. Ms Powers also noted that the newsletters that were being sent out were good. She commented that she would incorporate

monthly meetings with the parents of autistic children like she does now. She explained that she requests the questions beforehand so that will have time to obtain the answers the before the meeting. Al Schmertzler asked how she would communicate with the families that do not have access to Internet. Ms. Powers replied that MEDCO counselors could help to get info out, send flyers, make a phone call, or even drive out to the residence, if need be.

7- Ms. Powers described one of her proudest accomplishments as being when she was first at the Newton Public Schools and noticed there were very few students getting summer services due to haphazardly placed programs and a lot of fluctuation. She noted that 2200 children were in special education and she wanted to create some stable summer programs for as many of them as possible to avoid substantial regression during the summer months. Ms. Powers stated she was given a summer budget and there are now 1500 special education students in summer services that range from twice a week meetings, various camps, and volunteering jobs done by the students.

8- Ms. Power's philosophy of education encompassed excellence in learning and inclusion since she felt she was an advocate for children with disabilities. She strongly supports inclusion because she believes inclusion helps those with disabilities to be in a regular classroom setting and further promote higher functioning as well as giving exposure to those that don't have disabilities, which promotes interaction and acceptance of others. She added that by having regular classroom children work with special education students, they have more acceptance of them in adulthood.

9 – With regard to characteristics or skills when hiring teachers, Ms. Powers stated that she first looks at the applicants' skill set and prior training. She noted having asked interviewees to write their philosophy because she feels it is important to be able to communicate it verbally and in writing. To address the SC's questions about hiring and retaining a diverse staff, Ms. Powers commented that diversity is very important, but difficult to achieve in small districts. She discussed some innovations that she would attempt to institute.

B. Sandra Einsel

Highlighted information in introduction:

- Currently the Director of Pupil Services in Walpole Public Schools (7/00-present)
- Formally Out-of-District Coordinator in Walpole Public Schools (9/95-9/00)
- Implementation of the *Walker Program*
- Noted looking for smaller district

1- Ms. Einsel commented that her preference for Lincoln stemmed from the enjoyment the people she talked with in working within Lincoln Public Schools. She added that there were intelligent and curious questions which showed the thought process among the people and parents she would be working with. She felt Lincoln's support of social workers would align with her counseling background. Ms. Einsel noted that her direct work with curriculum directors would aid her in remedying the MCAS concerns for special needs.

2- With regard to maintaining special education services in a cost effective manner, Ms. Einsel explained that her current job required her to be cost effective for their program and added that as Out-of-District Coordinator she had to be even more conscious of the budget and spending but at a distance which was more difficult. She stated that since having that position, she is an advocate for in district placement to allow for more monitoring of the special education programs to ensure that the staff is working at a high performance level and that the students are happy.

3- When discussing high-achieving students and how she would work with curriculum leaders to support it, Ms. Einsel explained that one must model how staff members can cross-train and not always work under "one hat". She mentioned that it is important to "redeploy" personnel to allow for as much student support as possible.

4 – With regard to quality PD, Ms. Einsel stated that you must serve a staff based on what they feel they need and have data driven PD. She added that PD has to be created based on what the district's goals are and how you are going to get there, explaining that one must investigate it and provide in depth PD to avoid placing a "band-aid" over the issue(s).

5 – When asked what PD she was interested for her own personal growth, Ms. Einsel replied that PD on Middle School Special Education math issues would help her know how to bring up the math scores and she is fortunate to already have something lined up for the summer addressing that.

6- Ms. Einsel stated that her best way to communicate information to the families of the Lincoln Public Schools was to do it face-to-face. She stated she would accomplish this by being present in the building, available to staff and parents during the day, and attend almost all meeting to hear what was being said and try to address and remedy as many issues and concerns as possible. She commented that it was important to go to the Administrative Counsel to collaborate and work as a team.

7- Ms. Einsel stated that her development of programs that will support social/emotional concerns and minimize developmental delays was her proudest accomplishment. She added that it was important to change the programs to better them and not just add more programs that may cause them not to work as in depth. She stated that she liked thinking outside the box and felt that the programs encouraged and allowed for that.

8 – Ms. Einsel defined her philosophy of education as learning being lifelong and that it should be done beyond school and outside of school. She stated that there was a need to engage students so that they stay engaged in learning by providing positive

school experiences that encourage students to learn outside of the school building and beyond the school years, especially to teach the students to give back to society.

9 – When asked about what was important when hiring, Ms. Einsel replied that eye contact, the ability to have a candid conversation, and their education philosophy and how they apply it were the most important. She added that there was a need for a clear educational background to look for the skill set that was needed for the position. To address the question about hiring and retaining a diverse staff, Ms. Einsel stated that she would promote conversations among a diverse staff, build community to share experiences, allow people to see others as colleagues and not from separate cultures.

C. Martha Bakken

Highlighted information in introduction:

- Currently PreK-5 Student Service Department Head (7/04-present)
- Formally Special Education Coordinator (9/01-6/04)
- Bilingual (Spanish-fluent, Chinese-proficient, American Sign Language-courses)

1- When Ms. Bakken was asked why she wanted to work in Lincoln Public Schools, she replied that it had the best community sense, adding that she got a chance to talk to the staff and parents which allowed her to see the sense of community and communication across multiple campuses. She commented that the parents and staff were very involved, knowledgeable, and had interesting questions and comments which gave an insight as to how intelligent and creative the community was. Ms. Bakken said that she felt her diverse background would match well with the diversity in Lincoln.

2- Ms. Bakken stated that it was a challenge when asked how to maintain quality services in a cost effective manner with regard to special education services. She stated that you don't ever want to sacrifice quality for cost. She suggested specializing in a program development that would cost the district less and to look at a higher level of service within the district which is more cost effective than out-of-district placement. Ms. Bakken commented that she felt she had done well with a very tight budget without sacrificing student services.

3- With regard to high achieving students and working with curriculum leaders to support it, Ms. Bakken noted that she is definitely familiar with it and gets involved given some of her special education students are high achievers in areas. She commented that traditional PD would have the training for the regular classroom instructors and then for the special education instructors and that the two had rarely shared ideas. She stated that it was important to have them work together and create the best instruction to reach these students. Ms. Bakken added that it was equally important to work with professional and non-professional staff (tutor, assistant) and put together training for them, too.

4- Ms. Bakken stated that to have quality PD, one must collaborate with curriculum developers to create the best curriculum and mesh the regular classroom and special education teachers. She stated that it was important to promote the staff to do their own research when issues or concerns arise, adding that the staff has to want to learn and seek the resources and information to help them grow. Ms. Bakken added that it was necessary to align special education goals with the regular classroom curriculum to ensure that, for example, fourth grade special education students are leaving fourth grade knowing what is expected from fourth graders.

5- When addressing which area of PD she was interested for her own growth, Ms. Bakken replied that technology PD was important to her to keep current with the resources. She added that curriculum and differentiating PD was also needed to meet individual student's needs, noting a focus on "middle ground" students that are between the line of regular classroom and special education.

6- Ms. Bakken stated that communication between the school and the families can be a big challenge but felt that communication is an effective skill set that she has. She noted that she has to be an effective communicator given that so many parents turn to her when there are issues, even beyond the school setting. Although some call with issues, many call for advice and she likes doing that. She has had the "mediator" role and feels that she can cross not only the language divide being bilingual but also the cultural divide. She added that she attends meetings, art shows, concerts, etc. because you have to show presence.

7- Ms. Bakken noted her program development for autistic children as being her proudest accomplishment. She explained that the issue was the out-of-district placement where the autistic children were being bused 45 minutes away which put a distance between the parents and the school, therefore parents couldn't get to the schools meetings or meet with the instructors as readily. She stated that she wrote a grant that allowed for the hiring of teachers and brought 10-12 autistic students back into the district, especially since she felt her district could potentially do a better job. She was proud that the students were within just a few miles of his/her home and she had saved the district over \$140,000.

8- Ms. Bakken stated that her philosophy education is based on meeting the needs of children and making sure that they have access to the highest quality of education. She felt that her role was to be the person that supported that in a way where she was present, as needed, but has quality staff members that she trusted would take the same amount of care and interest into the student's best interests as she would.

9- Ms. Bakken stated that when hiring, especially hiring and retaining a diverse staff, it was important to advertise widely to get the word out. She felt that by working in so many places, she knew a lot of people to get the word out and to receive referrals from. She mentioned a resource for recruitment was to check with reputable colleges to recruit student teachers to get exposure to them and expose them to your program. She stated it was always important to look for someone who can answer the why with

intellectual answers and negotiate a path to find the best solution through creative problem solving; think on their feet. Ms. Bakken added that it was important to see them work before you hire so have them spend a day in the workplace, in the position; test them out. She stated you can learn more from that than an interview.

***Break in Meeting**

Julie Dobrow asked the SC to debrief before the recommendation by Mickey Brandmeyer. She complimented all of the teams that did the interviewing, noting that the three candidates were very strong and notable for various reasons. The School Committee shared their observations about each candidate.

Mickey Brandmeyer thanked everyone that was involved in the interviewing process, noting the numerous hours that they put into the process. He stated that over the three months, there were interviews, reference checks (onsite and off-site), and reference checks with co-workers. He acknowledged that he had planned to narrow the three candidates down to two but felt that all three candidates were too strong to make that determination prematurely. Therefore, all three candidates were invited to present to the SC. He noted that the process allowed for multiple opportunities for discussion with the candidates. He added that the choice could not solely be made on a candidate's resume but also the matching of personality, goals, and processes of the candidate. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that he felt appreciative to have three strong candidates and wanted to determine who would make the best impact not just immediately, but also over time. Although all seemed to possess great skills, he felt the focus should be on who would have the most impact and provide growth in the right direction. Mickey Brandmeyer recommended Stephanie Powers to the SC due to her ability to bring so much to the table.

On the motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC, by majority, voted to offer the Administrator of Student Services position to Stephanie Powers.

III. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Julie Dobrow informed the SC members that she and Al Schmertzler attended the L-S school committee meeting, complimenting the presentation. Ms. Dobrow noted that there were two different proposed overrides for Sudbury, and that their SC had reported if neither passed there would be many cost cutting measures put into place that would affect the L-S educational program. Al Schmertzler stated that among all the discussion, Mr. Richie stated that it was very disappointing to see the uncivil behavior and anonymous blogs that smeared the L-S actions and questioned the school's financial status.

Julie Dobrow informed the SC staff that Laurie Manos and Sharon Antia were not seeking re-election. She thanked them for all their support, involvement, and consistency on issues that they both felt were important. She particularly thanked Sharon Antia's commitment to the issue of the achievement gap. In addition, she wanted to publicly thank Laurie Manos, although Ms. Manos was not present at the meeting, and state her appreciation for her involvement on the Class Size Policy subcommittee, noting how instrumental she was to this and other SC endeavors over the past few years.

Al Schmertzler reported attending an EDCO meeting. He commented on the discussion about how to bring new school committee members up to speed, adding that many school districts were starting to discuss how to go about this. He added that some have discussed and/or having off-site meetings to accomplish this. Mr. Schmertzler also reported that on May 1st, in the EDCO facility, EDCO is going to have a conversation on technology, teaching technology, and teaching with technology. He noted that there will be three speakers that are accomplished in those areas to present. Finally, Mr. Schmertzler wanted to inform the SC members of a ballot question that could impact the school system concerning a binding initiative to eliminate the state income tax.

Louann Robinson reported that she and Sharon Gillespy went on the 2nd grade field trip to the Worcester Art Museum (W.A.M.), noting it was enjoyable.

IV. Public Comments

None

V. Consent Agenda

None

VI. Time Scheduled Appointments

None

VII. Superintendent's Report

None

VIII. Curriculum
None

VIII. Policy

A. Use of School Buildings Policy: Second Reading and Vote

(Documents: *Attorney Correspondence – Review of Building Use Policy, Use of School Buildings, Regulations Governing Use of School Facilities, Fee Schedule for Use of School Facilities FY’08-’09, Building Use Priorities, Guidelines for Use of School Facilities by Non-Profit Child Care Program*)

Buck Creel addressed questions raised by the School Committee at the prior meeting concerning the policy on the *KFB Use of the School Buildings*. He noted revisions, commenting specifically on the supplementary category, “Audio/Visual Needs”. He added that many times when the AV equipment is returned, it needs to be reconfigured and repaired, sometimes simply due to possible wear and tear. Al Schmertzler asked about the equipment damage and the responsible party. Mr. Creel explained that there is always a person there to supervise and operate the equipment to avoid possible misuse.

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Sharon Antia, the SC voted unanimously to accept and approve the revised policy *KFB Use of School Buildings*, to approve the *Regulations Governing the Use of the School Facilities* and the *Schedule Fees* for FY’09, and to delete policies *KFBA Building Use Priorities* and *KFBB Guidelines for Use of School Facilities by Non-Profit Child Care Program*.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Sharon Antia, the SC voted unanimously to approve warrants totaling **\$769,160.95**.

X. Old Business

None

XI. New Business

None

XII. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Sharon Antia, the SC voted unanimously to approve the minutes for the SC meetings held on January 31st, February 14th, and February 28th, 2008.

XII. Information Enclosures

All were disbursed at the beginning and throughout the course of the meeting.

XIV. Adjournment –

On motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Sharon Antia, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Waters, School Committee Recording Secretary