

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 1, 2008 – Open Session

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice-Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative), Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative)

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

I. Greetings and Call to Order –7:06pm

Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

II. Chairperson’s and Members’ Reports

Julie Dobrow reported attending the Task Force for High Achieving Students “Focus Group Discussion,” stating it was interesting and well-organized. She felt that the conversation was very insightful. Jennifer Glass attended the focus group at Hanscom.

Al Schmertzler reported going to a METCO meeting that discussed the Governor’s initiative to obtain additional funds and mentioned math programs, specifically “Fast Math.” He stated that a study was done to determine what the industries wanted the students to be learning and the results were interesting. The key emphasis: increase in problem solving; decrease in computation. He added that he had requested the reports from the study.

III. Public Comments

None

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gift

The SC was asked to accept the donation of \$5,000 from the METCO Coordinating Committee to provide additional late buses to Boston.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to accept the gift.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report and Recommendation for the Selection of K-5 Materials

(PowerPoint Presentation and Document: *Mathematics for Core Mathematics Materials and Implementation Plan, Grades K-5*)

Mickey Brandmeyer reiterated the purpose for the review of the mathematics curriculum and the multiple needs for newer materials. He stated that the teachers and parents were not satisfied with the current materials, especially with regard to homework and teacher-parent communication. He commented that the previous assistant superintendent had prefaced the review by creating a four-phase process that included creating a Mathematics Materials Review Committee, criteria to select the program(s) to be trialed or piloted, the actual trial or pilot period, and the data processing and decision period. Mr. Brandmeyer acknowledged that it was a challenging and long process that was a lot for Mary Sterling to take on and complimented her leadership and the committee’s hard work.

Mary Sterling introduced the Mathematics Materials Review Committee members:

Lincoln Campus:

Steve McKenna, K-4 Principal
Ginny Flaherty, K-8 Coordinator for Student Services
Kathy O’Connell, Math Curriculum Specialist
Pate Pierson, Teacher Gr. 5
Becky Eston, Teacher Gr. K

Hanscom Campus

Mark Kaufman, 4-8 Principal
Carolyn Shannon, Math Specialist
Claire Groden, Math Specialist
Liz Clancy, Teacher Gr. 4
Diane Mitton, Teacher Gr. 2

Ms. Sterling then briefed the SC and public on the history of the committee and their work. She stated that success of a math program didn't just rely on the quality of the program but the implementation of the materials by the teachers.

Mark Kaufman spoke about the National Mathematic Advisory Panel. He stated that it was a two-year comprehensive review of research, policy and expert opinion. He explained that the membership was diverse in experience, expertise, and philosophy which contributed to the 45 findings and recommendations. He added that the timing of this report added to the Lincoln's Mathematics Materials Review Committee's findings because they were able to be compared.

Mary Sterling discussed the program selection, which was Everyday Math, and the rationale behind the committee's recommendation. This included:

- rigorous and engaging mathematics content
- clear emphasis on conceptual understanding and computational fluency
- ample variety of and good quality assessments
- use of manipulative materials to support student learning on a concrete level as they develop conceptual understanding that becomes increasingly abstract
- frequent and worthwhile homework assignments
- substantial parent communication through letters, instructions on "home links", and on-line information
- Plentiful resources for teacher development in content pedagogy

Pate Pierson commented on the rigorous academics stating that there was a consistent approach from K-5 which would allow the students to go year-to-year knowing how the program worked, the vocabulary, and the methods used.

Ginny Flaherty highlighted how the recommended program promoted student engagement with various activities that activated the preferred learning styles of every student in the classroom.

Diane Mitton reported that the structure of the program, computational practice, and the mathematical games provided the students with the vocabulary and the reasoning to explain the strategies they used to solve a problem.

Pate Pierson shared a student reference book that she recommended for students and parents that serve as a refresher. Mary Sterling stated that it was a book that was to be used at home and was also accessible online so that parents can refer to it to help with homework assignments.

Kathy O'Connell shared with the SC the school-to-home connections which included the reference book, which Pate Pierson had discussed. She added that there was a "Family Letter" that would be sent home prior to each unit that included the upcoming activities, vocabulary, extensions that can be done at home, and included some of the answers to the upcoming homework assignments. She discussed the "Home Links" (grades K-3) and "Study Links" (grades 4-5) which provided information to the parents and students on the homework that would link them to the classroom discussion and instructions for further understanding.

Stephen McKenna discussed the technology available with the recommended math program that provides games on line, the Student Reference Book on line, and an on-line parent connection website.

Al Schmetzler asked if the plan was for each student to have a Student Reference Book. Stephen McKenna replied yes. He added that the books were not the regular textbook but rather would be used as a reference book to aid with math lessons and homework.

Carolyn Shannon shared information on the Teacher's Reference Manual stating that it cross-referenced with the Teacher's lesson guide, was parallel with the student's books, and provided methods for teaching the mathematical skills.

Liz Clancy discussed the differentiation components of the recommended math program highlighting the "Differentiation Overview" at the beginning of each lesson that covers:

- English Language Learners
- Readiness
- Extra Practice
- Enrichment

She added that there were differentiation tasks and enrichment projects for each unit.

Claire Groden discussed the extensive assessment strategies suggested and provided by the math program throughout each unit and lesson. She highlighted the “Self-Assessment” that is provided at the end of each unit.

Becky Eston discussed the “Keys of Implementation” which included sufficient funding, purchased materials, dedicated instructional time, teacher support and professional development, timely parent and community communication, and ongoing evaluation of the new program.

Mary Sterling stated that there would be meetings set up at each campus for the program to be introduced to the parents. She added that books would be displayed for them to look through and committee members would be in attendance to present information and answer any questions. She mentioned that a letter would be sent in the fall to continue the communication about the program.

Julie Dobrow extended the SC’s appreciation of the hard work of Mary Sterling and the Mathematics Materials Review Committee, complimenting the presentation. She stated that she knew no program could be all things to all districts, and wondered what the math committee felt were missing components from the recommended program. Mary Sterling replied that there were some implementation challenges, noting that some teachers that participated with trial reported this but noted that they did adapt fairly quickly. She added that there was a professional development day that would be devoted to getting teachers familiar with the program. Ms. Sterling stated that the other disadvantage, though common with all the programs, was the inability to really reach the high-achieving students but felt that with evaluations done throughout the initial implementation and with the feedback, they could learn how to adapt and meet the needs of those students. She elaborated that there was always a concern for struggling learners but felt that the Everyday Math provided the resources to meet the needs of those students. Ms. Sterling emphasized that this will be a core program and that ancillary materials could be implemented for the needs of high-achieving and struggling students, if need be.

Al Schmetzler asked about the students that will be in the higher grades, 4th or 5th, when the program was implemented and didn’t have the program in the previous years. Mary Sterling replied that the “catch-up” challenge was always difficult when implementing a new program, especially in higher grades that have worked with other programs previously. She stated that was an important reason for the 75 minute daily instruction, especially for the first year of implementation.

Jennifer Glass inquired about the scheduling to determine if teachers had math during the same time of the day to help make the 75 minute instructional time parallel. Mary Sterling commented that the schedule was being reviewed now, noting the focus was on the special education and reading specialists and making sure they were accessible to the students for the subjects and timeframes needed and if it would benefit to have the teachers on similar schedules.

Rob Orgel asked what was being done for the high-achieving students, especially with regard to the math program. Mary Sterling replied that would surface as the Task Force for High-Achieving Students continued to meet.

Tom Sander inquired about the budget with regards to the Everyday Math program and its implementation. Mickey Brandmeyer replied that there was an estimate done in the fall of ’08 when setting the FY’09 budget which closely matches the actual cost for 08-09. He added that there were funds leftover from FY’08 budget and noted grants that were awarded. He added that the only assumed extra ongoing costs after first year’s implementation would be additional materials needed to be added to the program, any replacement of Student Reference Books, and additional training, especially for new staff that was not here for the initial professional development.

Tom Sander asked how 75 minutes would be feasible for math and where would those minutes come from without taking away time from other subjects. Mary Sterling agreed with Mr. Sander that it was a challenge to not take time from another subject to give to math but rather focus on making cross-curricular time when math can be used in science, social studies, etc. She added that it was still being researched with feedback from teachers.

Sharon Gillespy asked if the recommended program had examples or suggestions for cross-curricular activities. Mary Sterling replied that more would surface in the second year and many would be created by the teachers.

Sharon Gillespy inquired about the vocabulary and if it was significantly different than what the teachers currently used. Diane Mitton responded that when reviewing the program, the committee looked for programs that used generic mathematical terms, not program specific ones, and took note that more schools were currently or starting to use Everyday Math, adding that the possibility of a student coming into the district and already using the program would be more likely.

Sharon Gillespy questioned how parallel this program was to the structure of the MCAS testing. Claire Groden commented that the recommended program provided great preparation for the MCAS with similar test questions that would be found on the state test.

Ms. Dobrow opened the floor to questions from the audience. Maria Hylton suggested that anyone interested in knowing more about the Everyday Math program and reading reviews should Google search it because she had found many reviews to be negative, as opposed to what the committee was presenting. She acknowledged that all of the information may not be true but stated it was worth reviewing before completely deciding, if they haven't already, on a math program. She also questioned why so much funding was being placed into professional development when the teachers were simply teaching the students how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Mary Sterling replied that she and the committee had also analyzed the less positive reviews found on the internet and found most often that the basis for research was not as strong and was mostly done on older editions. She added that Everyday Math was the most adopted elementary math program in the country therefore it would receive the most comments, adding that one had to look at the credibility of the source and the thoroughness of the research. Mary Sterling also read excerpts from the ARC tri-state student achievement study of 2003 which described the research done on 100,000 students using Everyday Math in three states. Julie Dobrow replied that the SC has had a long term and consistent commitment to their teachers to provide professional development, especially when supporting a newly implemented program with completely new material.

Rob Orgel asked if there was a close second program that could have been recommended and if reviews of it might have persuaded the committee differently. Mary Sterling stated that out of the three programs, one program fell out early due to there being so many flaws which left basically two programs being reviewed. She commented that in the end, Everyday Math had the best components. Mark Kaufman added that reviews on Google tend to mainly be of opinion and less of research.

Another audience member, who declined to give his name, added that he, too, had looked on the internet and discovered numerous negative reviews and opinions of Everyday Math and mentioned that the negative statements were astonishing and a concern considering this was the math program being recommended. He acknowledged that they were mostly about Edition 2 and inquired about what the differences were between Edition 2 and 3 that made them sure that the newer edition that they were recommending, Edition 3, was significantly better. Mary Sterling replied that to remedy the two biggest complaints among parents of Lincoln students, the lack in a variety of homework and parent communication, the newer edition met those requests. She also emphasized how well Edition 3 focused on the flow from one grade to the next.

B. Lincoln School Improvement Plan: End-of-Year-Review

(Report: School Improvement Plan 2007-2009/Annual Report May 1, 2008)

Stephen McKenna and Sharon Hobbs presented the accomplishments and updates regarding the School Improvement Plan for 2008-2009. They only highlighted parts of the report given the SC members had already reviewed the report prior to the meeting.

Tom Sander inquired about "Fast Math" and if there was data that proved it was effective, adding that he has seen it become addictive to students even after mastery of basic facts. Kathy O'Connell replied that it had helped students get the basic math facts down, adding that once they had mastered it, there were other computer programs that were available to provide higher-level math exercises. Sharon Hobbs stated that it allowed for struggling students in higher grades to utilize the program in homeroom to aid them in learning the basics that they were continuing to struggle with.

Jennifer Glass asked how much it affected the student's scores if they were not typing the numbers quickly enough. Kathy O'Connell replied that the computer gave a typing test in the beginning of their session and adjusted the time to type in the answers accordingly.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted to approve the report of the Lincoln School Principals.

C. METCO End-of-Year Report

Postponed until the next meeting

VI. Superintendent's Report

None

VII. Curriculum

None

VIII. Policy
None

IX. Budget and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to approve the warrants in the amount of \$897,999.90.

B. Review RFP for Lease of POD C and Award Lease

(Document: *Recommendation for Award – Pod C Lease July 2008 –*

***June 2013, Proposed Request for Proposal (RFP) Process for Lease of Pod, Rental Agreement*)**

Buck Creel recommended continuing with the LEAP program, which was the only program proposing for the Pod C rental. He acknowledged that LEAP agreed to all of the requests by the SC as outlined in the contract.

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to accept the Administration's recommendation and enter into a rental agreement with LEAP for the use of Pod C for a 5 year period.

X. Old Business

None

XI. New Business

A. Review METCO Support Letter

Julie Dobrow requested approval by the SC of a letter she wrote to Representative Conroy to support Representative Jay Kaufman's amendment to increase METCO funding.

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to accept and approve the letter to support Representative Jay Kaufman's amendment to increase METCO funding.

XII. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC voted unanimously to accept and approve the minutes for March 20th and March 27th, 2008.

XIII. Information Enclosures

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

XIV. Adjournment –

On motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:00pm.

XV. Executive Session –

Contract Negotiations

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Waters, School Committee Recording Secretary