

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 12, 2009
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Jennifer Glass, Rob Orgel, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative), Cynthia Nunes-Taijeron (Hanscom Representative), Thadine Brown (Boston Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

Absent: Al Schmertzler.

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Sander attended the PTA's math night and reported there was a good turnout and attendees enjoyed it. Ms. Robinson, Mr. Schmertzler, and Mr. Sander attended the parents' forum to meet Erich Lederbuhr and Marguerite Connally. Ms. Robinson said it was great and expressed appreciation for Lincoln's long intensive interview process.

Mr. Brandmeyer informed the Committee that while there were two great finalists, he offered the job of principal of the Hanscom Middle School to Erich Lederbuhr, who enthusiastically accepted. He has a passion for middle school education, and significant experience, and Mr. Lederbuhr really connected with Hanscom students. Mr. Lederbuhr looks forward to starting his new position on July 1. Ms. Dobrow congratulated and thanked Mr. Brandmeyer for his work.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on Evaluation of Food Service Program

Mr. Creel introduced Mrs. Mary Jo Cutler, Food Service Evaluation consultant, who has performed evaluations for many of the Commonwealth's schools. He thanked the Committee for its support on this project. Mrs. Cutler offered her observations of what's working and what needs improvement. She reported that the Food Service is doing an excellent job, especially with its space constraints, the menu offers greater variety—including vegetables, grains, and local foods—than most districts. The staff is knowledgeable about food safety, and the lunchrooms are clean. Areas for improvement include: long lines in the Brooks cafeteria, and an incomplete and confusing menu. She noted that the Hanscom kitchen produces fewer meals than is recommended by the state, and also that the storage areas are not secured. Her *short-term* recommendations are to develop an action plan, discontinue the unpopular whole wheat crust pizza, include a salad bar once a week, use a new, more attractive menu template and the state-recommended production form, and secure storage areas, which are a problem at Hanscom. Mr. Creel noted that they are working on securing the areas.

Mrs. Cutler listed eight *long-term* recommendations. 1) Develop a good whole wheat pizza crust; 2) address the long serving lines at Brooks, potentially through "grab and go" lunches; 3) review Hanscom staffing levels and increase participation; 4) increase the meal price to recoup the costs to produce the meals; 5) modify the menu and give more sandwiches and vegetarian options; 6) automate the point of sales with new registers and computer system; 7) introduce Nutrient Standard Menu Planning to enable more flexibility in reaching nutritional targets; and 8) enhance staff training with ServSafe and food allergies. Mr. Creel added that the school is losing money on food service which is atypical, but noted that students eat a healthier array of higher quality foods than most communities. He thinks they can address the loss by raising food service prices somewhat.

Food Service Director Cathleen Higgins has talked with 5 to 6 vendors of advanced register and computer systems and mentioned that students will be able to go through line faster because they can pay for their meal online, and it will also take away the stigma of meal tickets for those who receive them. Ms. Dobrow suggested that she speak with the Lincoln-Sudbury food service about their new register and computer system. Ms. Higgins would like more training for the staff in the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points [HACCP].

Mr. Orgel thanked Ms. Higgins and asked her to watch out for corn syrup in prepared foods. Ms. Glass asked whether a chance to buy snacks was an option for students. Ms. Dobrow noted that the portion size was not large enough for the middle school students, and Ms. Cutler recommended the size increase. Mr. Creel will develop an action plan on the recommendations, noting that some of them require procurements and RFPs. Ms. Dobrow told Ms. Higgins that they are very pleased with her work and asked for her to come up with a plan to share with parents. The Committee thanked them for the report.

B. Update on 6-8 Math Review – Trial Use Materials

Ms. Sterling presented the update on the trial-use materials for the new mathematics program for grades 6-8. In January, Mr. Brandmeyer, Ms. Sterling, and the two principals decided on the program structure for the range of learners. They recommended continuing one program in sixth grade even though some fifth graders are struggling with the new curriculum, having not had some of the underlying concepts. They will monitor the situation and plan to ensure that there is adequate attention both for advanced and struggling learners. Seventh graders would have two tracks: PreAlgebra and PreAlgebra Part A, and eighth graders would have three tracks: Advanced Algebra, Algebra I, and PreAlgebra, Part B. It would be the first time they have committed themselves to a separate class of Advanced Algebra, and it would depend on how many students qualified and were ready for it. There would be four criteria for placement in the different classes: 1) report card grades in a student's current math class; 2) in class performance and work; 3) state testing grades over multiple years; and 4) diagnostic math assessment. They will send letters to students and parents later in the spring. The faculty has been notified, and the principals are working with it.

Mr. Orgel said the report was great. He asked whether there could be two tracks in sixth grade for high-achieving students. Ms. Sterling said they had a great debate over it. They are committed to rigorous sixth-grade math, but what would they do with students who were having a hard time. She explained that fifth graders are still fluid developmentally, and there is research that shows that if schools level students at that age, they internalize that they cannot do the harder course, which is why they decided not to have different levels in sixth grade. Ms. Hammett-Ory noted that students of this age or younger are very aware of who is good at math and wanted to ensure that math prodigies got the challenge they need; Ms. Sterling said that they have moved students grades ahead when it is needed.

Ms. Brown asked whether students could have materials for the summer to prepare for the next courses. Ms. Sterling thanked her for the suggestion and said they are working on it. Mr. Sander thanked Ms. Sterling for her time on the subject and asked whether there would be one textbook and program for all three grades. Ms. Sterling said that she did not know yet.

Ms. Dobrow said she wanted to ensure that the new math programs would prepare students for ninth grade math at Lincoln-Sudbury and Bedford. Ms. Sterling said the programs would. She told the Committee the three programs that were tested: 1) *Impact* by McGraw Hill/Glencoe; 2) University of Chicago School Mathematics Program [*UCSMP*] by McGraw Hill/Wright Group; and 3) *Middle School Math* by Holt McDougal/McDougal Littell. Today was the last day of the trial-use period. She thanked parents for returning their questionnaires and looks forward to hearing student comments. They will form a recommendation for Mr. Brandmeyer and have a report on the chosen program at the April 30 meeting. Ms. Sterling attended the classes that were using *Impact* and *UCSMP*. The students' reactions depended on the learning styles: some students like to think first and get instruction later, and some students like to be told how to do it before diving into problems. She noted that all programs have assessments.

She shared math materials and characterized the programs as follows. *Impact* and *UCSMP* are reform math programs, and *Middle School Math* is a traditional math program. *Impact* has the most research behind it and gives guidance after students have had a chance to think about problems. *Impact* is a highly cumulative program that goes through grades 6-8 and was developed to follow Everyday Math. *UCSMP* has stronger guidance for students up front, and their new edition is revised to align with Everyday Math. *Middle School Math* is not focused on research as the other two programs and gives clear instruction up front. There are lots of options, and it is easier to differentiate with additional materials. Ms. Sterling said that one program is not harder than the other, they just emphasize different learning. She said that *Impact* is not chosen for less than the three grades. *Middle School Math* can stand alone on a year to year basis. *UCSMP* is in the middle.

Mr. Sander noted that in K-5 programs there is a big difference between curricula that emphasize student investigation and those that aim to teach more efficient problem-solving. He asked whether this spectrum narrows in Math grade 6-8 curricula and Ms. Sterling said it did. Ms. Glass asked whether there was a significant difference in programs for parental support. Ms. Sterling said *Impact* is the only program that has a family letter. Ms. Dobrow asked if there was enough money to purchase textbooks if they do not choose *Impact*. Ms. Sterling budgeted for the highest expense and said there was enough money. She added that for the Hanscom campus, *Impact* might have a downside because of its cumulative nature and the high turnover of students. Ms. Dobrow thanked her for the terrific update and asked her to thank the Math Committee for their work.

C. Evaluation of the Superintendent

Ms. Dobrow explained that the Superintendent's evaluation reflects the District's goals and reflect the way that Mr. Brandmeyer spends his time. The five goals are: 1) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, 2) Teacher Excellence and Professional Development, 3) Leadership and School Culture, 4) Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety, and 5) Operations of the School District. She compiled the forms that the Committee members filled out, and she is pleased to report that they all are pleased with Mr. Brandmeyer's performance. Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Sander will meet with him to talk in greater depth.

Ms. Dobrow moved that the Committee vote to accept the evaluation, and Mr. Sander seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the Superintendent's evaluation.

Mr. Brandmeyer thanked the Committee for recognizing the efforts that the Administration has made. He said that he cannot accomplish his job by himself, and he thinks of his colleagues as a team and thanked Ms. Sterling, Mr. Creel, and Ms. Powers. He is heartened that the Committee sees the progress, and it indicates their effort to advance the school program the way they all desire.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer congratulated Ethan Blackwell, a Lincoln School student, who scored 41 out of 152 students in the Math Counts competition. The following Hanscom Middle School students were selected for the Massachusetts Music Educators' Association Eastern District Junior Festival recently held at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School: Jordan Curry, Lydia Hirzel, Rebecca Huff, Kathryn Murdock, Bailey Orr, Leslie Richardson, and Beau Sloane.

A. Request to Enroll Employees' Children

Mr. Brandmeyer brought a recommendation under Policy JFAB, Admission of Non-Resident Students, to enroll 11 students of dependent children of Lincoln School employees. Two or three of the students are tentative and their requests may be withdrawn later. 9 of the 11 students would enter kindergarten. This year they have the greatest number of requests, and there is enough room for the students. He thinks parents are interested in enrolling their children here because of the economic situation in many communities. He asked that the Committee consider this request now even though they do not need to vote on it until later, but a vote now makes their planning easier.

Mr. Sander said he was not comfortable with the financial implications of such a decision and noted that this occurs because of a confluence of four factors: 1) accepting a very large cohort of employee children; 2) most of these children are kindergarteners who the school would then need to educate for nine years; 3) the uncertain financial times; and 4) the fact that the LPS has a more flexible class-size policy so it is harder to determine exactly when you are incurring additional cost (since using up one of the two exceptions per cohort makes it that much more likely that a new section will be mandated down the road). He said he is all for educating the students of Lincoln teachers and town employees when there is space, and thinks that in general smaller class sizes are great, but he wants to make sure that the District is not signing a blank check for nine years that limits our financial flexibility. He noted that he thinks the JFAB policy needs to be reworked to state our intention to educate these children and try to keep these students in the Lincoln schools if we start them here, but make sure that such children of employees need to annually get permission to stay in the schools, depending on the financial situation and cohort size that year.

Ms. Darling asked whether the children's home districts pay for their schooling. Mr. Brandmeyer said no. Mr. Orgel said he would like to keep the class size down because students benefit from small classes. Ms. Robinson said that they should accept the students.

Ms. Dobrow said that the Committee was not comfortable voting on the recommendation and needed more information, especially as kindergarten registration is just starting. She asked Mr. Sander to look at Policy JFAB and report back to the Committee.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling told the Committee that Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester has cancelled the MCAS history exam, which changes the MCAS schedule. His decision will help the fifth graders. She also reported that they have hired and stipended two teachers for the 6-8 grades to run the Science Fair on both campuses. She will let the Committee know the Science Fair dates when they choose them. The Committee thanked her for her report.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$581,924.17 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$126,129.70 for a total of \$708,053.87. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Ms. Dobrow moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Sander seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

A. Review Presentation for Town Meeting

Mr. Brandmeyer said that the Town Meeting presentation will be kept at a high level with a budget overview, mirroring last year's Town Meeting presentation. He said they need to work out the specifics. Ms. Dobrow suggested that they have videos or photos showing students doing different things. Mr. Brandmeyer said the presentation would have a separate slide for each warrant article. Some of their money requests will be on the consent calendar, and the largest

request will be for the Field House Roof. They will be prepared with details in case any articles get pulled out for discussion.

Ms. Dobrow called the Committee's attention to a letter written by the parent of a METCO student, who said she will attend the Lobby Day for METCO. Mr. Brandmeyer said they sent their letter to the Governor. He said the program has been cut for Lincoln by \$28,000 for the current year, and it is likely \$40,000 to \$50,000 more will be cut from the METCO grant for next year. METCO advocate and State Representative Jay Kaufman advised them to ask for level funding of the 2009 budget before the cuts were made. State superintendents support this, and they will place these recommendations before Commissioner Chester. Ms. Dobrow asked that Ms. Horner put out the word about Lobby Day.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Sander moved to approve the minutes of February 5, 2009 with the corrections, and Ms. Glass seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the February 5 minutes with the corrections.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Mr. Sander, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations. Ms. Dobrow, yes; Mr. Sander, yes; Ms. Glass, yes; Mr. Orgel, yes; Ms. Robinson, yes; Ms. Nunes-Tajeron, yes; Ms. Brown, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary