

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 14, 2009
Hanscom Primary School, Hanscom Air Force Base, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative), Cynthia Nunes-Tajeron (Hanscom Representative), Thadine Brown (Boston Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services).

Absent: Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm. She thanked Randy Davis, Hanscom Primary School Principal, for hosting the Committee.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Sander attended a session at Bemis Hall to teach children about nature and integrate it into our schools. It was an informative session, which Ms. Sterling attended, that discussed how to make nature a learning opportunity so that children don't suffer from "Nature Deficit Disorder" and talked about the "No Child Left Indoors" bill that has been introduced in Congress to accompany "No Child Left Behind." Ms. Dobrow and Ms. Glass attended the 5th and 7th grade band concert and congratulated the students and teachers. Ms. Dobrow suggested that they should coordinate with Lincoln-Sudbury so that concerts aren't held on the same evening. Mr. Sander and Mr. Brandmeyer attended the Lincoln-Sudbury Task Force meeting, at which they went over the Lincoln-Sudbury organizational chart to see if functions could be merged. The working group may ask for information on the Lincoln-Hanscom schools. Mr. Schmertzler and Ms. Glass attended the Science Fair on the Lincoln campus and reported that the students were articulate, involved, and prepared their reports, and the science part was excellent. They thanked all who made it happen and encouraged attendance at Hanscom's Science Fair on June 3. Mr. Orgel was at the well attended Rock Rodeo at the Smith School and thanked the organizers. Ms. Robinson attended the elementary music program at Hanscom and also the Road Race.

III. Public Comments

Julie Lynch is confused about the Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] request process. She confirmed with an attorney that she has the right to examine and get copies of the documents, and he felt that 20 hours was too much time to charge to make copies. Her goal is to have an objective unbiased perspective of the non-military, non-Lincoln families who attend the public preschool. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the public records law states that they can charge the lowest rate of the lowest qualified personnel to get the records and make copies. It took the person 30 hours to get the records. He said that they only charged her for 20 hours of work. Mr. Sander agreed to talk to her about the situation after the meeting.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gifts

The School Committee was asked to accept the donation of \$500.00 from the Masons Angel Fund for the Grade 8 Washington, D.C. scholarship fund. The Committee was also asked to accept the donation of \$2,000.00 from the Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation: \$1,000.00 for the Lincoln Grades 5-8 music program and \$1,000.00 for the drama program. Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to accept the gifts. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the gifts with gratitude.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Program Recommendations on Technology/Engineering Program Grades 6-8

Ms. Sterling said they have worked hard to integrate these new classes into next year's schedule. She introduced Dave Joseph, K-8 Science Content Specialist, and Terry Green, Lincoln School Science Specialist. Mr. Joseph recognized two people: Mr. Brandmeyer, whose vision was a guiding force on the project, which many schools do not do, and Chris Rogers, a Lincoln resident and Tufts professor who has guided the frameworks and put together the program. Mr. Joseph said that what happens in the technology classroom is absolute magic, and he brought two students to demonstrate their mag-lev vehicle and show their movie about making the vehicle.

Ms. Green teaches grades 1-6 engineering and acknowledged the support of the administration and the Committee. She also brought two students to show their mousetrap car. She said that the country needs thinkers and problem solvers. Why is engineering important for students to learn? It fosters thinking skills, creativity, and self-esteem. Children learn to design and redesign prototypes and they figure out how to make things better and dream of solutions. She said the program is great for girls, where they all learn team building skills, and it gives them a chance

to consider careers that they may not have thought about. The two girls demonstrated their car, which traveled 30 feet, and explained that the longer lever trades distance for speed.

Mr. Joseph's students showed a movie about making their magnetic-level vehicle. He said they are solving problems by using the natural world and are applying science to solve transportation problems. The girls explained the many tools and processes used to build their vehicle. She said that engineering class is different because it is hands on, no textbook is needed, and they use their imaginations to build things. Mr. Joseph said that they learn tradeoffs and the most efficient ways of building things.

Ms. Dobrow thanked the students for their terrific demonstrations. She asked Chris Rogers to talk about how engineering teaches teamwork. Mr. Rogers said that giving students hands-on problems is great, but tough to teach. It's more of a coaching job. One must teach students to identify their goal, work together, and realize when they are wrong. Students learn how to fail and then redesign their projects. Ms. Green said students serve as experts on the teams. Ms. Sterling thanked them all for coming to the meeting. She said their demonstrations were a great way to herald the beginning of their Grade 6-8 Technology and Engineering Program in September 2009.

B. Program Recommendations on Science Restructuring for Grades 6-8

Ms. Sterling said they will be building on the good science units and materials that they have. They have looked hard at re-aligning the cutting-edge science and engineering portion of the STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math] curriculum within and between both campuses. They decided that the students need exposure to different domains of science at all grades instead of one full year in one science topic like biology. They will teach every domain every year, to make it easier for students to enter school at different times of year and will have a unifying theme over all grades. A couple themes are structures and systems of all living things and change over time. They also want to peak students' interests. They are finalizing units, and they will have common assessments and a common language that ask whether the students understand the material. He said that the teachers are excited, and their program is atypical for middle school.

Ms. Sterling said that this program development has been truly collaborative with teachers, and she explained that common assessments in science are performance based. She also publicly recognized and thanked Dave Joseph for his extraordinary work on this project. He has been a great leader on this reshaping and is stepping down as science content specialist to return to his love of teaching engineering in grades 7 and 8 next year.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Joseph and said that her children loved him in the classroom. This is amazing work which is very exciting. She asked how every domain every year would help with the 8th graders going to Bedford and Lincoln-Sudbury High Schools? Mr. Joseph said they tweak instruction when the students go to high school to prepare for the MCAS, and there will be a transition period. The teachers put all state standards on the whiteboard so that they know what students have had; teachers will be sensitive to this issue and collaborate on it. They will have a transition plan ready for the last meeting.

Mr. Schmertzler, an engineer, thanked them for changing the process of teaching engineering. He was pleased to see four girls demonstrating their projects. Mr. Joseph said they intentionally invite all students to present but these were some of his high flyers. One highlight of his year was listening to the girls making their movie. He gives the students the problem, process, tools, and guidelines, and they go full steam ahead.

Ms. Nunes-Tajeron asked about professional development for the teachers. Ms. Sterling said they had a science consultant and Mr. Joseph is the other professional development person. She said teachers know their content, and they will bring in the science consultant as needed. Ms. Nunes-Tajeron asked how they were going to accommodate the mobile Hanscom student population and whether there are teaching assistants to help. Mr. Joseph had a new student two days ago, and they have decided that they need to be specific about what they want students to know, and Ms. Sterling and Mr. Kaufman, Hanscom Middle School Principal, said that the every domain every year helps transitioning students. Ms. Robinson and her family are moving and she thanked them for planting the seed in her children. Jillian Darling urged the administration to have the students make presentations as part of their assessment include this in their portfolios. The Committee and Ms. Sterling thanked Mr. Joseph for his work.

C. Program Recommendations on PreK Math

Lynn Fagan, Preschool Coordinator, said it has been fun to see what preschoolers should be taught in math. They have looked at the research and watched their students, and the teachers and students are excited about the process. She said the students really like graphing things. The teachers decided unanimously to accept EveryDay Math because of its link to literature, themes, games, and resources. The multiple entry points are also good for transitioning students. Ms. Sterling said they have had dialogue during the year, and they went through a good process. The Committee thanked Ms. Fagan.

D. Program Recommendations on Grades 6-8 Math

Ms. Sterling said that they had a collaborative process to recommend a core set of math materials for grades 6-8. She recognized the members of the selection committee and said that they spent considerable time on this recommendation which Mr. Brandmeyer has accepted. Dr. Sharon Hobbs, Lincoln Middle School Principal, explained

that they will teach all students in sixth grade together, in seventh grade they will have two tracks of math classes (Pre-Algebra and Pre-Algebra part A), and in eighth grade there will be three math tracks (Advanced Algebra, Algebra I, and Pre-Algebra Part B). Mr. Orgel asked what the prevailing best practice was about teaching math to sixth graders. Ms. Sterling said it was typical not to separate students in sixth grade. The selection committee recommended the *Impact Mathematics* program by McGraw Hill/Glencoe. It is taught in Newton, Arlington, Sudbury, and Westborough.

Ms. Ellen Metzger, K-8 Math Content Specialist, said they liked that *Impact* was developed to follow *Everyday Math* and carries some of the same strands along. It is an inclusive curriculum with a strong focus on algebra, and teachers get a lot of information to guide students individually, in teams, and groups, and communication tools about math concepts. Ms. Sterling said the curriculum has strong integration, and is highly interactive. Teacher Rosemary Heffernan said that she likes the balance between concept and procedures and skills development. Students can internalize the rules instead of just remembering them: it's not a "drill and kill" program. Ms. Sterling said a math handbook comes with the program for reference. Teacher Kathy Maloblocki likes the way *Impact* teaches math's application in real life. It makes middle school students decide for themselves to be responsible. The program teaches students to gather and evaluate information and make a decision with confidence with that information. Ms. Sterling said that there is strong support in Lincoln-Sudbury High Schools for *Impact*; students who have gone through it seemed to be better problem solvers and are better at working with their peers than with other math programs. Ms. Sterling mentioned that no single math program they looked at differentiates for all students. It's the quality of teaching that makes the difference, and they will be using ancillary materials for those students who are more advanced or for those who need more help.

Teacher Susan Totten addressed the way *Impact* gives advanced learning opportunities. She said there are several options for enrichment and challenge to connect the strands, and they will use all of them in class. She explained that they will use other resources for 8th grade, such as the Drexel Math Forum, the Olympiad, Exeter Math, and Math Counts. They will continue their research this summer and work with their math consultant to pull the course together. Ms. Sterling said *Impact* is the core math program, but Advanced Algebra will have a different textbook. Teacher Charlotte Berger said that *Impact* is great for all learners, but they need to figure out how to bridge the gap for students who have trouble with it. The depth of concepts is great for all students. Special Education Teacher Daphne Eston is excited about *Impact* and said that it engages special needs students. There is intensive intervention, which gives students a lot of practice. Ms. Sterling said there is strong ownership of this program, and they have sustained teacher support for it this summer and throughout year one for its implementation. Mark Kaufman, Hanscom Middle School Principal, discussed the communication plan with parents. Parents are invited to attend class to see the program in action, and the school will put stories in the newsletter at the beginning of each unit. They will also have a fall meeting for parents and will use electronic means to show parents the new curriculum.

Ms. Sterling told the Committee that Fay Ruopp is a well respected math author (and co-author of *Impact*) and coach who met with teachers about the program when they were considering which one to select. She will meet with teachers during the summer and will be available on a monthly basis to all teachers. She thanked the Materials Review Committee for their work on choosing the program and said that they have made a good decision for the District.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Sterling and the Review Committee and said she was so appreciative of the time, thought, and care that went into the report and the choice. She understands the rationale for the choice and trusts it will be rolled out comprehensively, the way that the K-5 *Everyday Math* program was this year. Mr. Orgel thanked Ms. Sterling and asked what the reputation of the different math programs was. Ms. Sterling said her March report addressed the reputations, and *Impact* is a reform-based math program that balances procedures and skills and thinking out of the box. It pushes mathematical thinking and other schools that use it are pleased with the students' engagement. Teachers essentially become coaches with the material. Ms. Robinson asked about the homework. Ms. Totten said that the students felt it was doable and demanded their focus. Ms. Heffernan said that the time the homework took was fine and comes from the textbook.

Ms. Glass asked what was in the parent surveys sent during the trial period. Ms. Sterling said they got mixed results on all the programs, there wasn't consensus. It took students longer to understand the concepts, but *Impact* pushes creative and critical thinking so that students can articulate their reasoning, which makes them more active learners. Ms. Brown said she loves the resources for parents with *Everyday Math* and hopes there will be more.

The Committee and Mr. Brandmeyer thanked Ms. Sterling and the Selection Committee for their work and said they look forward to a progress report in the fall.

E. Hanscom Primary School Improvement Plan: End of Year Review

Ms. Randy Davis, Hanscom Primary School Principal, presented the End of Year Review. She thanked Ms. Sterling and the District for the most outstanding implementation plan on *Everyday Math*; it's the best she has ever seen. Today students completed the 3rd grade MCAS, and the students were very well prepared for the exam. She said they used Fastt Math for them later in the year. Their school theme for the year was "Math Matters," and they used the theme in other instruction, such as "Vocabulary Matters" and "Voting Matters." Ms. Davis showed a movie

with students wearing Dr. Seuss-inspired hats that illustrated new vocabulary words for students. Mr. Schmertzler asked what happened with the civics education. Ms. Davis said they held monthly community meetings and had students vote on ballots. She explained that most Hanscom families vote via absentee ballot in their home states, so they did not take students to the polls in Lincoln. Ms. Glass commented that the walking club was terrific.

For the coming school year, Ms. Davis said they will focus on how to differentiate instruction with *Everyday Math*, and they expect to continue their teamwork. They plan to look at programs for high-achieving students. She said that previewing the concepts was helping students who were having trouble with math. Next year's theme will be "Growing Smarter," i.e. that smart is what you get when you work hard. It will also bring in green school themes. Ms. Dobrow thanked her for her report.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the Principal's end of year report and school improvement plan. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the report.

F. Hanscom Middle School Improvement Plan: End of Year Review

Mr. Mark Kaufman, Hanscom Middle School Principal, presented the End of Year Review. He said that they got an after school Title I program grant that helped 21 students. They saw a difference in their work completion and quality of their assignments. They used Tripod surveys to promote student engagement and to improve student learning. This year's theme is "Hanscom CARES" [Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-control], which came from the Responsive Classroom for social-emotional development. They had several speakers during the year, including one whose message was "Believe in yourself, set goals, and move towards those goals one step at a time, and your dreams will come true." They also held an election and an assembly featuring student speakers.

Mr. Kaufman said that their new social worker, Jim McCarthy, has done an outstanding job working with the students and their families. He said they are seeing a reduction in behavior problems. He said that tardiness and absenteeism are problems and they reflect what happens with a military family. He said it was hard to say that the students can make up for the lost time there, and it is a challenge. Mr. Kaufman said the social worker has a new anti-bullying group. In his three years, he feels they have made substantial progress and strides on these issues.

Ms. Glass asked how the student discipline record worked. Mr. Kaufman said the students are required to write why they did a certain thing, but some of them don't take responsibility for their actions. The purpose is to build awareness of their behavior. Ms. Glass said she liked the idea.

For next year, he said that they will have the same issues as this year. He wanted to leave an opportunity for the new Hanscom Middle School Principal, Eric Ledebuhr, to think about what he observes and give him a chance to modify the plan. They have a two-year plan into effect.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Kaufman for his leadership. She said it has been a joy to work with him and to see the progress that he has made here in the academic and social-emotional areas. The Committee wished him well. He thanked the Committee.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the Principal's end of year report and school improvement plan. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the report.

G. Food Service Program Action Plan

Ms. Cathleen Higgins, Food Service Director, presented the Food Service Program Action Plan. She said they implemented many of the recommendations right away, and they have seen an increase in participation. They are working on portion sizes, and she mentioned that because of labor costs, they have made staffing adjustments due to attrition. They have a four-person staff at Hanscom. She is going to propose a meal price increase because the cost of each meal is \$2.47, but they charge only \$2.00. They had a huge response from the student surveys, and they suggested many things on menu planning and logistics on how to move students through the lines faster. They met with the Student Council.

Ms. Sterling mentioned that they had international week and served international foods, and she thanked her. Ms. Higgins said that the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning is complicated and involved, but they have started to work with it. Ms. Glass thanked her for the many initiatives and asked that they tell middle schoolers that there are lunch options. Ms. Higgins said they brought that up at the Student Council, there has been coverage in the Knightly News, and they have been working on getting the word out. She said the elementary school students know what to do. Mr. Orgel thanked her for the good work and said he hears that the lunch period is too short. Ms. Higgins said that more popular items mean longer lines. Ms. Sterling noted that students talk a lot and aren't eating. Mr. Brandmeyer congratulated Ms. Higgins on her ambitious plan. He noted that she is industrious and has already applied for federal stimulus money for a walk-in freezer.

Ms. Dobrow thanked her for the report.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer warned the Committee that the budget issues continue to change, and he is monitoring them at the state level. He attended the Selectmen's meeting Monday. The latest from the Selectmen is that the Town may get fewer revenues by \$200,000-\$500,000 for FY 10, which begins July 1. Chapter 70 funds and State Aid will

be decreased, and the contribution the Deaconess was going to make to the Town in lieu of taxes will come later than expected because the project is not completed yet. The METCO grant, the full-day kindergarten grant, and the special education circuit breaker will be reduced by the state. The Town may hold a Special Town Meeting to have an override vote, and the Finance Committee might use the reserves for the school or reduce the school's budget. One bright note was that federal stimulus money will be coming, but they do not yet know what they can do with those funds. He will monitor the situation and will update the Committee.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for the report.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling mentioned that the Hanscom Primary School and the Brooks School had concerts this week, and there is an art display of student work that they have displayed upstairs. She encouraged all to look.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$1,139,155.54 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$349,473.57 for a total of \$1,488,629.11. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Sander seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. FY 09 Financial Report: 3rd Quarter

The report was postponed until the next meeting.

X. Old Business

A. Status of RFP to Lease Hartwell Building Space

Mr. Brandmeyer informed the Committee that legal counsel recommended against the Committee meeting with bidders to review and shape the structure of the RFP as it could be construed as collusion in the process. They made two changes to the RFP based on the April 30 meeting: 1) options regarding utilities and custodial services, and 2) termination of the lease language to give reciprocal rights.

Mr. Schmertzler asked that they ensure that if they separate the electricity to Hartwell that the entire service is split at the lessee's expense and is done to code. The power needs to be broken before it comes into the school's meter.

Mr. Brandmeyer asked how to move to the next step with the RFP. He hopes they can vote on the RFP at their May 28 meeting. Mr. Orgel asked if there was some way that they could have a dialogue with interested parties so that the Committee could answer questions. Ms. Robinson suggested that people submit questions in advance. Ms. Dobrow noted that they cannot negotiate with potential bidders. The bidders' conference occurs after an RFP has been voted on, and they do not have an RFP yet. Mr. Orgel asked about the \$5000 capital allocation. Mr. Schmertzler, an engineer, said that Mr. Creel's estimates on services and expenses are about 5 percent low, and he thinks the calculation is very fair. Mr. Sander suggested a hybrid of having people submit questions in advance and the Committee could answer those that they were permitted to address or were proper, and in addition letting community members make comments at the meeting as well.

After hearing comments about giving the public more time to ask questions, Ms. Dobrow said they would put out a call to the public for questions, and they will address the questions they are allowed to answer in a document. This would bump their vote to the June 11 meeting. Mr. Orgel said the RFP was good now. Ms. Dobrow suggested they could hold another meeting May 21 from 7 to 8 pm and have the RFP be the only agenda item. The Committee liked the idea.

XI. New Business

A. Review Ad for Library Board Appointee

The review was postponed until the next meeting.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2009 and April 7, 2009 meetings. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Mr. Sander, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The open session adjourned at 10:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary