

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 28, 2009
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Al Schmertzler, Jennifer Glass. Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance) and Stephanie Powers (Administrator of Student Services).

Absent: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Rob Orgel, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative), Cynthia Nunes-Taijeron (Hanscom Representative) and Thadine Brown (Boston Representative).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Glass chaired the meeting and called it to order at 7:05 pm. She noted that there will have to be a special meeting to vote on the items on tonight's agenda because they did not have a quorum of voting members tonight. She said that the meeting may not be held on a Thursday evening, but it will be posted in keeping with the Open Meeting Law.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

None.

III. Public Comments

Jason Felsch wanted help with understanding the leases at the Hartwell Building and asked whether the LEAP lease was granted below cost. He wanted a copy of their lease. He thinks of the spaces at the Hartwell Building as civic space, not just school space, and asked what the School Committee's role is in overseeing the space. He worried that Magic Garden was going to be priced out and he encouraged them to present a marginal cost analysis for all of the preschools at the Hartwell Building, and he wanted uniform standards on how the space was used. Mr. Brandmeyer asked him to make a separate appointment with Mr. Creel to discuss these issues.

Jillian Darling asked that the Committee undertake a stakeholder survey about the most valuable things on campus and that they take exit interviews when students leave the school system. She wants data because she hears about many Lincoln families taking their children out of the Lincoln schools and she wants to know why. She also asked about SCNews and wished that parents were automatically signed up on it instead of them having to choose to subscribe. If it's to be the school's main news source, the School Committee's agendas should be on it, and she also suggested that when the website is updated, please send emails to SCNews subscribers.

Turid Horgan asked that the Committee delay the RFP for leasing the Hartwell space one year and have an evaluation of the costs and benefits of the social and monetary issues. She also asked that they develop a comprehensive education plan for the Town and urged that the private and public systems work together. She asked how she could put an item on the School Committee's agenda. Ms. Glass explained that they set out an agenda for the school year in the fall. Ms. Darling asked that it be placed on the website.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. School Calendar June 2009

Mr. Brandmeyer said that the last day of school was originally scheduled for June 23, but now June 26 is the last day of school. He noted that it was a challenge to keep students focused and recommends that they have a half day of school on Friday, June 26 with dismissal at 12:35 pm.

B. Summer Schedule 2009

Mr. Brandmeyer said that the Town Offices switches to a four-day work week for the summer, with days extended to 10 hours, and offices being open Monday to Thursday. He requested that the School Department receive the same treatment, with the adjustment taking place from July 3 to August 21.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. End-of-Year Report on K-5 Math Program

Ms. Sterling presented the report on the implementation of the K-5 Math Program. She extended her appreciation to the teachers, who were all extraordinary in their efforts to make the new curriculum work. She said they made good on what they promised, and they have been incredible team players. She thanked them on Wednesday for all of their work. She also thanked Ellen Metzger, K-8 Math Content Specialist, for her leadership on implementing the new curriculum.

Ms. Sterling said that the K-5 Program Evaluator, Dr. Donna Buonopane, kept them focused on their goals. Dr. Buonopane reported that Lincoln had a thorough and comprehensive plan, and they successfully attained each one of their goals. This is significant because it is not what usually happens in school districts.

Ms. Metzger said since the mid-year report, they adjusted the program's scope of materials, in the number of meeting times and the structure of the team-level meetings. They also had the math specialists available to teachers on an individual basis, and they focused more on the pacing of the new material and on consistent scoring of assessments.

Ms. Sterling said the report is helping them to consider ways to sustain and grow this level of implementation. They will focus on five key areas next year. Ms. Metzger said the first one will be to refine the math specialists' role as the teachers' needs change; the second one will be to develop teacher learning with coaching and workshops, and also to train and support new teachers. Ms. Sterling said the third area is to purchase and develop ancillary materials; the fourth area is to work on the differentiation of instruction for students. Teachers can now be more nimble with the program as they have been through it for one year. This summer they will hold a two-day institute that the math specialists and coaches are planning. The fifth area is in the use and assessment of student data, which they are tracking to gauge student progress. They have changed the scoring track and will look at patterns of achievement.

Ms. Glass thanked them for their work. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether they were prepared to make course corrections in the second year because teachers will be familiar with the program. Ms. Metzger said they will make corrections, and some issues will correct themselves. Dr. Buonopane has guided them to address a few other items. Ms. Sterling responded that the teacher can take the students further into mathematics; the *Everyday Math* program offers much more. Ms. Sterling said they are thinking about how they will bring new students and teachers on board with the curriculum, and they have a common process to do it.

Ms. Glass said that in year two, there will be another big effort to implement the program, but wondered how in subsequent years the program would continue to be strong and not have the differentiation and ancillary materials dilute the original math program. Ms. Sterling responded that there is a commitment to keep the program strong, and there will be training and supports for teachers. They need a steady framework. She mentioned that she talked to a colleague from another school that is using *Everyday Math*, and Ms. Sterling asked whether the students were engaged in and enjoyed math class. The colleague said they did. When students have a stronger foundation, they can accomplish more and that builds confidence.

Ms. Glass asked whether they have collected enough data to get a sense of changes for individual students. Ms. Sterling said they had hoped to know more about student achievement than they do now, and MCAS is another yardstick. She noted that when a district implements a new program, there can be a dip in the MCAS scores. *Everyday Math* was hard for many students this year. Ms. Metzger said the end of year assessments look at different concepts than the mid-year assessments do. She said that the open response questions at the end of each unit give them a chance to look at progress through the year. She said it is not an exact science; they are looking for patterns. Ms. Glass thanked them for their work and said that she has enjoyed watching the program be implemented.

Linda Hammett-Ory congratulated Ms. Sterling and Ms. Metzger for the implementation and asked how it could be improved. She asked whether they would focus on high-achieving students next year. Ms. Sterling said this issue is constant, and they are working with ancillary materials for them. These students want more work, and they are trying to reach a range of learning styles. She explained that they assess students' mathematics abilities in 6th grade. If a student is at an 8th grade level, they can take the 8th grade class, and they have done that for a few students.

Jillian Darling asked about the cost of the licenses for the online component of the program and asked how many parents use the resources. Ms. Metzger responded that a parent survey gave them a variety of responses, and many are still not familiar with them. They will not drop them, but anticipate making better use of them in the coming year for the teachers too. Ms. Sterling said the license is an all or nothing one, so they can't pick and choose the online resources they want. They plan to use it next year.

B. Request for Lunch Price Increase

Mr. Creel said the Food Service Evaluation showed that the financial underpinnings of the food service program are shaky. He explained that food costs increased last fall, but the price for lunch has not increased. The goal is to have the food service be a self-supporting operation, and they have been on the edge of turning a profit. Ms. Cathleen Higgins, Food Service Director, said that she has put together a plan to implement the changes, and they recommend an increase in the school lunch price from \$2 to \$2.50. They cannot continue to charge \$2 and implement the changes that the Food Service Evaluation recommended; there won't be enough money. The new price of \$2.50 will give them a break-even point. The last increase was in 2005. Fresh produce is expensive, but it is what students and parents want. She said the recommended price is the lowest lunch price in the area. Mr. Creel said they met with the student councils, and the students are for the Food Service

Implementation Plan. He explained that \$2.50 is the model price of lunch for 48 school districts in the Commonwealth. He also said they would see how the new price was working out in the first four to five months.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether there was something to help students who were financially strapped and asked whether \$2.50 is enough to cover the lunches for those students. Ms. Higgins said that the National School Lunch Program bases lunch assistance by income. Either all the meal is paid for by the program, or the meal is partially paid for by the program, and they will publicize that there is help. Mr. Creel said they get more money from the federal government for meals than what they collect in money. Mr. Brandmeyer explained that the federal government gives the money for the program; the district does not bear any costs for it. Mr. Schmertzler was delighted that they use local sources for ingredients and asked whether that has impacted costs. Ms. Higgins said local ingredients can be cost prohibitive at certain times of year, such as in November. She tries her best to compare prices and strikes a balance between the two.

Turgid Horgan asked whether they had considered making the lunch price \$3, which would make it less complicated and would give the food service more financial resources. Mr. Creel responded that Hanscom and METCO students and 10 % of Lincoln students are in low and moderate income housing units, and \$3 is a lot of money. The object is to break even and to support the improvements. They also want a uniform cafeteria program between the campuses. Ms. Horgan asked that they ban sugar, and Mr. Creel responded that the students want cookies with all meals.

Ms. Glass thanked Ms. Higgins for her work.

C. District Goals and Workplans for 2008-09: End-of-Year Review

Mr. Brandmeyer said generally speaking, they accomplished the goals they set out to in the beginning of the year and will review the highlights tonight. It took much coordination to make things work, but they did, and the teachers were wonderful. He noted that they will have the same goal categories next year.

Ms. Sterling discussed the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment goal. They have chosen new Pre-K and grades 6-8 core curricula for mathematics. They will also expand the technology and engineering program for grades 7 and 8. They have planned the implementations and professional development for all new programs for the next school year.

Ms. Powers said they are meeting with 12 students a week on their Individualized Education Programs [IEPs]. Each special education student receives individual instruction to help with their needs.

Ms. Sterling said that the K-5 math, grades 4 and 5 Foreign Language program [FLES], and the K-5 Science programs were fully implemented and well-supported. They have cultivated a culture of excellence (it's great to do a good job) and have offered advanced learning opportunities for students. Karina Hansen, the foreign language teacher, will report on the foreign language program on June 11. Mr. Brandmeyer raised the point that students can be advanced in one subject one year and average in the same subject the next year. Students grow and learn in spurts. All students have these cycles, meaning that offering advanced learning opportunities for all students is helpful.

Ms. Powers reported that the preschool implemented the Deveraux Early Childhood Assessment [DECA] program for all students. The program gauges student social and emotional development, and teachers reported that the results inform their instruction and guides the differentiated intervention for each student.

Mr. Brandmeyer said they will use different language about the achievement gap. He said they will no longer say "close the achievement gap," but they realize it is a long-term project, and will focus on "narrowing the achievement gap." They will have local research teams to assess student performance to identify the gaps the students have. They will use a research-based assessment, and it will be a multi-year initiative. He mentioned that at the Hanscom Primary School, some work on math intervention, where the students are shown the material before they need to learn it, shows promise. They will try different solutions and shift resources to help these students. He will bring in more information in the fall, and noted that their efforts may be eligible for federal stimulus money.

Ms. Sterling said they are working on a standards-based reporting system of report cards and conferences. The system means how a child's progress compares with the learning expectations and the state standards. These standards are set for all students. She said the project is a multi-year one, and they need parental feedback on the system. Mr. Schmertzler asked how they measure progress in *Everyday Math*. Do they change their expectations and how do their expectations mesh with state standards? Ms. Sterling said there's coherence with the state standards. He asked whether their expectations were higher than the state's. She responded that their goals are more calibrated and detailed, but they will recalibrate Lincoln expectations. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that the state's curriculum frameworks are the most rigorous in the country, and Lincoln's are even more so. They do not want to teach to the test. If they teach to the standards, the students can do the test. They have no bell curve; they have high standards for all students.

Mr. Brandmeyer went over the Teacher Excellence and Professional Development goal. On Supervision and Evaluation, he said there has been much peer review, and they are getting closer to a consistent evaluation and interpretation of teacher performance. They rank teachers on a scale of 1 to 4. They work on how to be a

continual learning organization, and their system is working well. Ms. Glass asked whether the paraprofessionals go through the same evaluation process as the teachers do. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have for the past 2 or 3 years.

Ms. Powers surveyed professional development needs for paraprofessionals, and they had three workshops: Rethinking Recess, Meeting the Needs of Children with Social Skill Deficits, and Including Students with Challenging Behavior in the Classroom. They want to make sure they have the best people in the classrooms. Ms. Glass asked whether the paraprofessionals could teach those workshops to a wider audience or whether there's a formal way of sharing the information. Ms. Powers said they share information informally. Mr. Brandmeyer said their goal is to make more connections between teachers and paraprofessionals and that is happening with common planning.

Ms. Sterling said teachers received professional development to develop expertise in teaching elementary math, to examine student work from common assessments in all subject areas, and to use new teaching materials in K-5 Science. This summer, they will have Responsive Classroom training for 20 teachers. The mentoring program helped new teachers.

Turgid Horgan said she is impressed with the language the first graders use and thanked them for what is going on in the classroom.

The Leadership and School Culture goal was discussed by Ms. Sterling. Civic engagement discussions lead to include principals of community service learning. Middle school Social Studies teachers proposed a greater emphasis on these principles, and they completed a student survey, and there's been much outreach. They will have a conference in November and will have students participate in community service learning.

Mr. Brandmeyer discussed School Culture. School culture is covered in principals' newsletters, and they celebrate student success in community meetings and in many activities. For Communication, parent email addresses are included on their email list serves. The District uses the automated phone system and has been successful in keeping current phone numbers in it. They used it for an announcement about the swine flu.

Mr. Creel discussed the Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety goal. The capital projects were approved and the projects to implement the plan are in procurement. Town Meeting approved the budget. The Food Service Evaluation report and a follow-up on the action plan have been presented. They are negotiating with the secretaries and the custodians. On Health and Safety, they have used the emergency communications and public health coordination procedures. The school nurses have trained 18 people in using the AEDs, which has revitalized CPR and first aid training.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer said the 8th grade is in Washington, DC, and he has received favorable reports. Two of the students, however, have come down with the flu.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling reported that the Lincoln campus had a concert, and she thanked Pam Roberts for her work; it went well. She also invited people to view the artwork in the building.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

There was no discussion on this item.

B. METCO Bus Contract-Exercise First Year Option

There was no discussion on this item.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

A. Report on the Scheduling and Use of Common Planning Time

Ms. Sterling reported that the group who met to review common planning time (Hanscom Primary Principal Randy Davis, Ms. Sterling, and Lincoln Teachers Association members Kathy O'Connell and Sarah Wood) recommended that they continue with the new structure. They reported that each group uses it differently, but it helps to work together collaboratively.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Glass, seconded by Mr. Schmertzler, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The open session adjourned at 9:35 pm.