

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Thursday, October 30, 2008  
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA  
OPEN SESSION

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

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Dobrow welcomed Cynthia Nunes-Tajeron as the second representative from Hanscom. She and the Committee are grateful for her willingness to serve. Ms. Robinson and Ms. Dobrow will give her a primer on the School Committee.

Ms. Dobrow heard that Principal and Superintendent of Lincoln-Sudbury, John Ritchie, has announced his retirement at the end of the school year. She thanked him for his service. Dr. Ritchie has been a tremendous friend and a great advocate for children. He has been an inspirational leader and is going to be missed terribly. We thank him for his many years of dedicated service to the two towns. Ms. Dobrow will draft a letter of thanks to be presented at a future meeting. Committee members may also attend a Lincoln-Sudbury School Committee meeting, at which they may present him with a token of their appreciation.

III. Public Comments

Ms. Jillian Darling of the PTA asked that comments be allowed throughout the meeting. Ms. Dobrow responded that we will try to, but the budget process is a long one. She encouraged the audience to offer comments, but there is not enough time to have much back and forth discussion. There needs to be a balance.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gifts

The PTA donated \$1,500 for the Principal's Gift account, \$2,000 for the Field Trip Scholarship, and \$500 for new teacher support. Niketown Boston Nike 5K donated \$15 from entry fee. Mr. Orgel moved, and Ms. Glass seconded, the motion to accept the gifts from the PTA and Niketown Boston. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the gifts.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report from School Committee Appointee to Scholarship Committee

Meg Ramsey, the School Committee Appointee to Scholarship Committee, presented the report on the Lincoln Scholarship Committee's activities for the past year. The Committee is comprised of Nancy Marshall, Sarah Bishop, and Ms. Ramsey. Their activities have included sending a town-wide appeal in early April. The Committee can contribute funds to any student for any post high school education. They award four awards: Codman Scholar, which is funded by the Ogden Codman Trust, the Sumner Smith Community Service Award; the Fanny Campbell Academic Achievement Award, and the Rosemary Fichera Nadolski Award. The Codman Scholar Award is \$4,000 per year for four years, and the other awards are \$500. They also awarded \$15,000 to eight needs-based applicants. In May and June, they interview the candidates with two people from the town and the chairman of the Committee. Ms. Ramsey said they try to give meaningful contributions for the needs-based applications. She said they have raised \$8,600 to date, and she expects the figure to rise by \$1,000 to \$2,000 by year's end. She explained that their monies are down by \$25,000 because of the economy, and said that it would be tough this year if there's no improvement over the next six months.

Mr. Orgel asked whether they gave the same amount of money for the needs-based students. Ms. Ramsey said they did not give the same amount to each student. Mr. Sander asked about their endowment. She explained that the non-expendable portion is \$120,000, and the expendable part is \$100,000. She said that the Codman monies are separate. Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Ramsey. She said that she and the Lincoln Scholarship Committee do very good work.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, a motion to reappoint Meg Ramsey for a third term on the Scholarship Committee. The Committee voted unanimously to reappoint Ms. Meg Ramsey as representative on the Scholarship Committee for a third term, ending April 1, 2011.

## B. Roles and Responsibilities of the Curriculum Leadership Team and Presentation of Learning Expectations

Ms. Sterling said she was pleased that all nine teachers on the Curriculum Leadership Team [CLT] were in attendance. Each teacher is a content specialist or a teacher on assignment. The subjects covered are: music, social studies, foreign language, science, art, technology, English language arts, mathematics, and wellness: health and physical education. Ms. Sterling used the interactive whiteboard to present their unveiling of Lincoln's Learning Expectations. All of this information is on the school website, [www.lincnet.org](http://www.lincnet.org). She explained that the District has been moving toward standards-based learning. It is a gradual and iterative process; her graph showed that there are three stages of development in a standards-based education. During stage one, they identify desired results by developing learning expectations with standards, big ideas, and key outcomes. She explained that the standards are based on the Massachusetts state standards. The big idea portion answers the question, why meet these standards? The District has specified key outcomes for each subject in each grade that the students should meet. The CLT discussed all three phases of stage one.

Ms. Sterling said that this is the first time they have had consistent learning expectations for the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses. This is also the first time that they have had nine content leaders, one in each subject, that have become a team to support their work, to develop and to refine a common vision, and to lead. They have developed professional development for teachers to get the instruction consistent between both campuses. We are celebrating this success tonight.

She showed the school's website. On the curriculum link, and the learning expectations for each grade, including the state standards, the big ideas, and the key outcomes for each subject and grade are there. Judy Merra, English, showed the four state standards on the website. Choose a grade level, and it shows how the grade level fits with the state standards. Ellen Metzger, math, explained that big ideas are the enduring knowledge that they want students to take with them from grade to grade and into life. She showed the example of probability and how it gets introduced in the younger years and builds in each subsequent grade. Janice Fairchild, social studies, showed that the big idea at one grade level is the five themes of geography. They were developed by the National Geographic Society in 1994. Students can use the framework throughout their studies to understand the different regions and countries. In foreign language, Karena Hansen showed the key outcomes for a student who studies languages: interpersonal communication, speaking and listening the language, and being able to present something in writing or in person. To demonstrate language communication, students can email penpals. Melissa Nordstrom, wellness, showed that the key outcomes are to have health topics integrate into physical education. She explained that the Lincoln campus does not have a separate health class, but Hanscom does. They teach the food pyramid and want students to know the importance of an active lifestyle. In fifth grade, they learn how companies advertise their food products to them.

Pam Anzaldi, music, showed that key outcomes are set up by grade level. They have created common assessments for these key outcomes. With music, the assessments are looked at a little differently than for other subjects because they are performance based. She showed how students are expected to improvise. In kindergarten, students learn to sing a song and do movements to it. After they have learned the song, they are asked to come up with another word that shows movement and incorporate that into the song and the movement. This method also increases the students' vocabulary. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students know what a rest is and what notes are. They are asked to prepare a piece with criteria, such as eight measures, using rhythms, and then they play the piece for class.

Ms. Sterling explained that they have been working on stage one for two years, and this year they will move to stage two: determine acceptable evidence. This piece captures teachers' professional development. The CLT designs assessments based on the key outcomes. They select student work samples that show the student did not meet expectations, one that shows the student met expectations, and one that shows the student exceeded expectations. They choose the anchor examples to decide how the teachers can adjust their teaching to get students to meet expectations. This piece will spread to stage three.

Dave Joseph, science, showed how they go about their assessment tasks. They start with the state learning standard and use precise language to come up with the key outcome statement. They ask how to get students to that point, and then they come up with the key learning experiences. He explained the assessment task for physics in the second or third year. One assignment is to create a new instrument, explain the component parts of it, and use it in a new and novel way. Cindy Matthes, technology, showed the technology common assessment. Math, statistics, and technology combine so that students understand how to use, interpret, and construct data by using Microsoft Excel. They show the criteria for success. Donna Lubin, art, showed how they examine a piece of student work and that they explain to students how art could become a career for someone. For example, someone who enjoyed drawing could illustrate books, and that would be their job to earn the money to support themselves and their families.

Ms. Sterling said that Institute Day will be January 20, 2009. Student work samples will be brought with the teachers this day to make learning expectations live. As a result of this meeting, the teachers may adjust key outcomes. Ms. Dobrow said it was a fabulous presentation and that they have done excellent work. We appreciate

your leadership. You have made what is happening in school come alive tonight. Ms. Glass thanked them for the website, which is user and parent friendly and not overwhelming. She asked whether all of this feels like a cultural shift to Dave Joseph, who has taught at Lincoln for a long time. He said not this year; there was one about a year to year and a half ago. He said Ms. Sterling has been very helpful at getting the teachers to articulate the language for these assessments. Ms. Anzaldi responded that what is new is the common assessments. The teachers are sitting together and discussing it. She said that every teacher is doing it and the same thing, and it makes it better. Ms. Hansen said that now connecting disciplines is happening, before it was not an option. There is no escaping it now. She said that each campus will have an election assembly. Ms. Matthes said that now there are common language and standards that bring the teachers together. Ms. Sterling said that now they have a foundation, they can make the interdisciplinary connections. Without the foundation, it's impossible to make the connections. One assessment makes several subjects come together. Mr. Schmertzler asked as they go through this process, are there points where they can figure out where to adjust their teaching? Ms. Sterling responded yes. Some areas are still in development, and they need to be nimble enough to respond to the results so that they can make changes if need be. She's expecting that they will revise key outcomes, and hopes that they will. Ms. Dobrow said that their work is great, and they have showed exciting ways to move forward. To what extent are the big ideas communicated to students? She said that it's important that the students are also part of the common language so that they can make the connections too. Ms. Fairchild said that her students know the big ideas. Ms. Sterling said assessment tasks are in clear student language. They will develop essential questions from the big idea to draw students in and hook their curiosity. They are heading there. Ms. Dobrow thanked the Curriculum Leadership Team and Ms. Sterling for their excellent presentation.

Ms. Dobrow made a motion to accept the report, and it was seconded by Mr. Schmertzler. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

#### C. Presentation of the FY 2010 Preliminary Budget

Ms. Dobrow prefaced the budget presentation by telling all that FY 2010 was going to be a tough year. The Finance Committee has told the School Committee that they can only have a 2.5 percent increase over FY 09 for their base budget. We already have a gap between what the administrative team wants and what the School Committee can give. We will talk about that gap at a later date. We know that there are difficult decisions and we will have trade-offs to make. The Committee will develop good strategies to communicate to parents and non-parents alike. She's asking School Committee members to participate in parent meetings to discuss the budget. While they cannot do School Committee business at these meetings, they need to listen to people's thoughts, concerns, and ideas and will communicate more broadly about their thought processes.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that it's important to interact with the community at this time. The preliminary budget has been drafted with an eye on the economic climate. He said that they have visions to sustain and improve the academic program, but he knows that they won't have enough resources. He thanked the school principals and program directors. They will be sharing their thoughts at the next meeting. He's going to frame the overall look at the budget tonight. He emphasized that there were many things that they don't yet know, such as how the state may cut funding for certain grants and programs. He stated that they know they will have to trim the budget. They have presented a close to balanced budget. The Committee will have to vote on the budget in late December into early January. In past years, the Finance Committee asked Town departments to present two budgets: a base budget and a preferred budget. In the years when the Town was going to have a Proposition 2 ½ override, the preferred budget would be the one that they went with if the override passed. Mr. Brandmeyer said that there probably won't be funds for a preferred budget; the Finance Committee said that they were probably not looking at having an override. The Hanscom budget is included, even though their revenue stream is different; it comes from the federal government. They are in the second year of a five-year contract. They enter into year three in FY 10. Hanscom's budget has been increased by 4 percent over FY 09's, even though the base housing has dropped. The school has dropped by one enrollment band, decreasing the amount of money received.

Mr. Brandmeyer explained that they can use the reserve fund by going back to the Finance Committee if there is an emergency. Health insurance for the Hanscom staff is included in Hanscom's budget, while health insurance for Lincoln staff is included in Lincoln's Town Budget instead of the school budget presented tonight. The budget has level funding grants. Given the guidance of the School Committee, they prepared it with several priorities: maintain small class sizes. They have also budgeted for known issues or improvement, such as Special Education. There are no contingencies. The budget book is on the website. They are keeping the same fee structure for transportation and athletics as they have in FY 09. Health insurance costs are increasing by 15 percent. They are in contract negotiations with the IAC representatives of the employee unions in Town. They should come to agreement by the end of November. As a result, there may be changes in benefit programs. The Special Education transportation assessment may change. While Mr. Creel locked in utility costs last spring, they still might increase. It is possible that there will be decreases in Chapter 70 state aid, decreases in the METCO and full-day kindergarten grants, decreased reimbursements, such as for the special education circuit breaker. Special Education is a

mandated program that is supposed to be reimbursed by 75 percent now, but they receive 72 percent, and that may get cut further.

There are some variables that are difficult to predict in building the budget. With enrollment projections for Hanscom housing uncertain, there are different problems if the housing stock allows for more or fewer school-aged children. In Lincoln, kindergarten and grade one, they propose to add one section in each grade because both grades are on the bubble. While it is early to add the sections now, they need to consider it but know that kindergarten enrollment numbers are very difficult to predict accurately. Mr. Orgel asked whether there was any way to predict when they would know about some of these concerns? Mr. Brandmeyer said no. Mr. Sander confirmed that into the base budget were 4 sections of kindergarten and 4 sections in first grade. Mr. Sander does not want to be stuck without money from the Finance Committee if they decide to add a class in either grade. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they may need to have decision trees this year: if x happens, y, if a happens, b. He said that we are tight but we are not in terrible shape now compared to other districts.

Mr. Creel turned to the budget book. The Lincoln school's base budget for FY 10 is \$9,149,070. Their improvement initiatives total \$316,862. The Finance Committee's guideline is \$9,280,723. The base budget gap is \$131,653, and the improvement initiative gap is -\$185,208. He said that we are in a relatively enviable position; he thinks the gap is not impossible to overcome. Hanscom's base budget is \$10,497,909. Their improvement initiatives total \$232,785. The Contract Allocation from the federal government is \$10,476,451. Their base budget gap is -\$21,458, and the improvement initiative gap is -\$254,243. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether health insurance for Lincoln teachers and municipal workers will be combined with the state's health insurance program for state employees. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they will go through the IAC process. It may not work for the Town or be as cheap if they go with the state plan, but they will know more about it later. Ms. Glass asked what happens with Hanscom if their budget figures are over. Mr. Orgel asked if he planned the base budget with the higher enrollment band. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that they are squarely in the current enrollment band. He reminded the Committee that health insurance has gone up by 15 percent in both budgets. Mr. Sander asked whether the fact that Hanscom could not cover their base budget with projected revenue meant there would be no improvement initiatives. Mr. Brandmeyer responded don't make any assumptions. The principals will likely present improvement initiatives and off setting cuts at the next meeting.

Mr. Creel presented a pie chart entitled Proposed Expenditures. 70 percent of the budget goes for salaries, wages, and stipends, with another 10 percent for personnel benefits. Utilities take 4 percent; improvements (other than capital improvements) take 3 percent; and facilities take 1 percent of the total. In the personnel budget, teachers are 50 percent, administration is 7 percent. In the full-time equivalents, 57 percent of them are teachers, and 38 percent are support staff, which includes custodians, paraprofessionals, tutors, aides, secretaries. Five percent went for administration. The secretaries' budget will be broken down into those who provide educational support and those who provide support that is not educational support. This is the second year that the Town will not have a Proposition 2 ½ override. There are strong drivers to keep the budget down.

Mr. Creel showed a chart of the funding per school sites.

Site Based Funds	Number of Students	\$ per Student	SBM Allocation
Preschool	69	296	20,453
Lincoln K-4	307	172	52,958
Lincoln 5-8	301	281	84,688
Hanscom Primary	229	339	69,173
Hanscom Middle	249	512	115,530

Mr. Sander said he thought some SBM monies were higher than in FY 09. He said that he understood the approach, it makes sense. Mr. Creel said that he will provide amounts for science and math. Ms. Glass asked why the per pupil dollar amounts spent are different. Mr. Creel responded that the Hanscom contract is such that parents do not pay for athletic programs, the money comes from the federal government. Lincoln students receive support from the PTA, and Hanscom does not.

Mr. Brandmeyer discussed the enrollment projections. The enrollment figures for the year were as of September 30 and October 1. He explained that there is a three-year cohort survival and a five-year average. He gets the data for projecting the number of kindergarteners from the town census. He also figures out how many age eligible kids there are for METCO, and those children of employees. The number of sections per grade is based on the new class-size policy. The policy for Hanscom, dictated by the federal government, is that the average class size for K-4 is 18 or fewer, for grades 5-8 the average class size is 24 or fewer. They have a process to adjust the class sizes. Mr. Schmertzler said that Lincoln was two seats above the class size, and he thought we gave up maximums and targets. Mr. Brandmeyer said they did.

Mr. Brandmeyer said there is a dip in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and they will track kindergarten and first grade. Mr. Orgel mentioned grade 6. Mr. Brandmeyer explained that they use the middle school model for sixth grade, which means

they have four teachers who are content specialists, and they cannot cut sections because of the content. The teachers in these grades need to have licenses to teach math and social studies. They can use the teachers in creative ways if need be. Ms. Sterling added that teachers with certification in their content are needed in middle school. Teachers need to have a certificate for grades 5 through 9 in one subject. They cannot have generalists. Teachers may teach 20 percent out of their certification with a waiver.

Mr. Creel put on his facilities hat next. He explained that the capital initiatives are outside the school operating budget. The operating budget includes regular maintenance on the school facilities. He wants to make sure that the budget reflects the needs. He will meet with the Capital Planning Committee [CPC] for Lincoln, and said that the Field House Roof is the biggest project. The improvement initiatives he would like to see are to restore a full-time custodian on each campus. They were cut last year. He would also like to add summer cleaning support, such as hiring college students. The custodians have been working harder to meet the cleaning needs. The union employees have vacation, and many of them take it during the summer.

Ms. Sterling presented the base budget for curriculum. There are four highlights: 1) curriculum leadership—they need to keep their full-time people; 2) learning expectations in math and common assessments; 3) elementary math and science—they want to keep the teachers with content expertise and it is important to continue the work; they want to maintain motion with the grade five science curriculum; 4) advanced learning opportunities. She said that quality teaching counts, and they need professional development to keep the quality. They use money wisely. Her improvement initiatives are getting a new math program for grades 6-8, which is her highest priority. Another one is advanced learning opportunities in middle school math, grades K-8 technology and engineering, where they would like engaging materials for students, grade 6 social studies in Lincoln and work on consistency in the two campuses' programs, and enrich the FLES [foreign language] program. Mr. Orgel said that it was a good list with great descriptions that are clearly helpful. Mr. Sander asked if the .2 math specialist was a new position. He agreed that it is important to align the two campuses. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they should ask the principals. He said that they have to get the best person they can, and they can be paid with grants, but they need to be careful with the hire. He said one improvement initiative was \$20,000 for a webmaster and a website master. There are no more grants for this, and we will have to find money to keep what we have this year.

Ms. Robinson asked what impact Question One would have if it passed. Mr. Brandmeyer said it would impact FY 10 if it passes. Mr. Schmertzler said states without an income tax face disastrous consequences. Mr. Creel said they do not have contingency plans if Question One passes. Ms. Dobrow explained there would be a big cut in Chapter 70 funds, which are allocated based on a town's wealth, if the question passes.

Ms. Dobrow said Governor Patrick is a strong supporter of full-day kindergarten, but the money for it could be on the chopping block. She asked if there has been any talk about changing the way they will allocate money? Mr. Brandmeyer said they have maintained all current full-day kindergarten grants so far. The full-day kindergarten grant is not distributed based on the wealth of a town. Ms. Sterling informed the Committee she received an email from the state they cut the grants for gifted and talented students, the grant she applied for in September.

Ms. Hammett-Ory thanked the administration for the documents. They are clear at communicating the goals and desires. What is the subtext of the 2.5 percent increase in the base budget from the Finance Committee? Mr. Orgel said look at the student program they have, there are no cuts: the music program is not gone. He said there may be additions to the program. Mr. Sander mentioned that the drama grant is ending, and they will need to find money for that. Mr. Brandmeyer said there's nothing that exists now that isn't in the base budget they have presented tonight. There are no programmatic or employee changes. Ms. Hammett-Ory asked about the central administration budget and if there were nine staff people. She asked about the role of secretarial support and how the time is delegated. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have five secretaries that support the Lincoln schools, and they are in the bargaining unit. There are 4 secretaries at Hanscom. There are five "secretaries" in Central Administration. One position is school-year only. While they are labeled secretaries in the bargaining unit, they do many other tasks, such as all the work of a human resources office, purchase orders, accounting, and providing support to the teachers.

Ms. Dobrow said that she has watched the secretarial roles evolve. They do not just answer the phones. They do a huge amount of reporting to the state and the federal government for No Child Left Behind [NCLB]. She said if we didn't have them doing this reporting, it would affect Mr. Brandmeyer, Ms. Sterling, and Mr. Creel and their work, and they would rather have them doing what they are paid to do instead of doing paperwork. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the secretaries are used to support other programs.

Ms. Darling asked about health insurance and the benefits covered by the Town that are not in the school's operating budget. She asked that they put in a footnote what those items are. Mr. Creel said that he files a report for the state with this information and has the amounts broken down. Ms. Darling mentioned that the Pods are in the school budget, and it is tough to see all the money that is spent on the schools. Mr. Creel said that Pod C is paid for by rental fees. Mr. Brandmeyer said that these were questions for Tim Higgins, Town Administrator. Mr. Schmertzler said that as a percentage of the total budget, she was looking at nickels and dimes. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that they have in-kind services with the Recreation Department; they do not pay rent. He said that he could get those figures, but to what end would it serve? Mr. Schmertzler said not to.

Ms. Dobrow moved to accept the report on the preliminary budget, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

## VI. Superintendent's Report

### A. Recognition of Teachers Receiving Professional Status

Mr. Brandmeyer presented the professional status awards, formally referred to as tenure, to nine teachers at the completion of the 2007-08 school year. Professional status is awarded to teachers upon the recommendations of their Principals and granted by the Superintendent upon completion of three consecutive years as a licensed teacher in a public school district. Mr. Brandmeyer said that he takes this concept very seriously, and he is proud to say that these teachers perform at the highest level. He and Ms. Sterling evaluate the teachers, and he reiterated that they have high standards when they hire people. He would like them to stay and is very pleased to have them on the staff. He sent letters notifying them of their status. There are six teachers at the Lincoln schools: Ryan Cassidy, Kristen Hall, Jennifer Herbert, Elizabeth Stanziola, Melissa Webster, and Sarah Wood. There are three teachers at the Hanscom schools: Sarah Dunfey, Sarah Manganelli, and Beth Ann Yurkewicz.

Ms. Sterling said that she thinks they are terrific too. The mentoring program is great, and it pays off to invest in good teachers. Ms. Dobrow moved to accept the report about professional status, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

## VII. Curriculum

### A. Progress Report: Implementation of Everyday Mathematics K-5

Ms. Sterling reported that students and teachers are adjusting to the new curriculum. One father said that his 5<sup>th</sup> grade daughter was appalled that she had to spend 75 minutes a day on math! Ms. Sterling said that the Committee met two key teachers who are implementing the new math curriculum: Cindy Matthes and Ellen Metzger. Ms. Matthes will send assignments to students to go online and look up information. She is working on whether there are students who do not have access to computers at home. The teachers meet Wednesday afternoons as a district. The teacher feedback about these meetings is great; they love the collaboration. The pedagogical aspects are different for teachers with Everyday Math. Teachers are seeing students progress with the program. Now they are doing a progress check. In Part B they have a preassessment.

Ms. Sterling was in a first grade math class today, and she participated in an assessment of students. The students are learning how to take these assessments. As the students cannot read the questions, Ms. Sterling read the questions to the students. They are confused, but the system is up and running. They will get conclusions on what the data says and use it in their program evaluation. They have hired an independent consultant, Dr. Buonopane, who has met with the implementation team.

Ms. Sterling said that for the most part, the students are responding well. The principals are concerned because the pacing is fast and there is a rigorous timeline. The teachers have to keep moving with the material even though they want to spend more time on items. Mr. Orgel asked whether the consultant was hired by the publisher or is independent. Ms. Sterling said the consultant is independent. On enrichment, teachers can teach different things here. Everyday Math projects are reality based and show how things in class are relevant to the everyday world. With the family communication, they have been diligent about sending letters to parents. Ms. Sterling meets with the math specialists once a month. They will gather data on homework and whether it is working for the students with the time they spend on it. She's had parent feedback that they have been active online, and they appreciate the increased focus on math. The parent-teacher conferences are happening now. Some parents question whether there's enough of a challenge for their kids. The teachers are moving into differentiated instruction with the help of the math specialists. Ms. Robinson said that she thinks homework is subjective for parents and students; it can take one student half an hour on a page of homework that takes ten minutes for another student. Ms. Sterling said that they have a general guideline on the amount of time spent on homework, but they need to understand what is going on with it.

Mr. Sander thanked Ms. Sterling for the attention and the communication with families. He understands that the progress check assessment is in a learning curve, but he would like to see a distillation of these reports for the Committee in January and February. Ms. Sterling said she was happy to do one. Ms. Dobrow asked about the role of the consultant in parent communication. She asked whether there was anything to be gained by including the math specialists in the focus groups to hear parental feedback directly. Ms. Sterling agreed and said they would do that. Mr. Orgel said that they want to hear good and bad feedback. Ms. Sterling said ok. She said that the program evaluation ought to be formative, and Dr. Buonopane will do that. Ms. Sterling expects some fine tuning to be done in the spring. Mr. Brandmeyer said that Dr. Buonopane will come to a School Committee meeting to report in the spring.

Ms. Linda Hammett-Ory said she knew they were looking at differentiation of instruction in class. What if the high-achieving students enrichment plans are not enough? Ms. Sterling said that they have tried to make sure teachers use the enrichment with Everyday Math. They have just compiled the ancillary instruction materials and have asked the grade-level teams to think about them. She said they are using the program first, when they see

students who could benefit by using ancillary materials, teachers are starting to use them. The math specialists have been getting good ancillary materials, which is not easy to do.

Ms. Darling thanked Ms. Sterling for her descriptions of what happens in class and noted that the assistants are considered part of the core program. She is the parent of a second-grader and asked about the online resources for Everyday Math. She asked which games were appropriate and if they could prepare a letter that informed parents which ones were right for which grades. Her daughter thinks that the homework that is sent home two or three times a week is optional. She wonders whether there is a disconnect between expectations and whether the homework is required or optional. Ms. Hammett-Ory said that she doesn't want her kids online because there are not good things online. She suggested that the school send something home about the appropriate way to use the internet. Safety guidelines would help. Ms. Sterling said that Ms. Matthes is working on getting general clear guidelines.

## VIII. Policy

### A. Acceptance and Use of Gifts Policy: First Reading

Mr. Brandmeyer and Mr. Orgel discussed the policy draft on the acceptance and use of gifts. Mr. Orgel thanked Mr. Brandmeyer and Ms. Glass for the information about other schools' policies. He looked at Acton's, Sudbury's, Weston's, Concord's, Lincoln-Sudbury's, Wayland's, and other schools' policies. He will have a draft for the next meeting. He summarized the other schools' policies. They are one or two pages. They indicate who has the authority to make decisions for using money up to \$5000: the superintendent or the school committee. He asked what direction the Committee wanted to go. Some policies delegate authority for accepting money, some state an acceptable range of gifts. He noted that the mode was \$500. The gifts are aligned with district programs. A principle is that the money be used in an equitable way. The gifts accepted by some schools are earmarked for personnel, salaries, and other needs, also known as core operational expenses. Some policies have the right to reject any donations with commercial overtones. One side says that they won't accept money for salaries and the core program. Acton, however, accepted \$50,000 to \$100,000 to fund core personnel, such as assistants, librarians, and other items.

There are four ways the committee could go: 1) have an absolute ban of gifts for core personnel; 2) reserve the right to reject donations; 3) be silent about donations; and 4) be proactively in favor of accepting gifts. He said that he did not see any policies with the fourth way. He said that he likes the Lincoln-Sudbury draft best. Mr. Schmeitzler asked whether the Acton gift was used to provide a service that was not there before. Mr. Brandmeyer explained that Acton has an inter-district choice program where parents choose which elementary school their children go to. The district gives classroom assistants money, but parents can raise the money without having to worry that the money they raised will go to another Acton school; they do not need to distribute the parent-raised money equitably. Recently, one school couldn't raise as much money as its counterparts. Ms. Sterling said that in Wayland the schools raised money together and distributed it according to the number of students each school had. They prohibit the use of funds for core operations.

Mr. Orgel asked whether the Committee wanted to leave flexibility in the policy. Mr. Sander said that he had no strong feeling on a minimal amount of funding to defer to the superintendent, but he also said that accepting the gifts on the consent agenda does not take them much time during the meeting. He had no problem accepting larger gifts, but he does not want to accept gifts for ongoing expenses in general. Ms. Dobrow said that the Finance Committee told her that it is not their role to set School Committee policy, but their advice was that it is not good practice to accept gifts for ongoing expenses. She said this issue has come up before, and they have been consistent in that they have not accepted money for core operational expenses. We're all cognizant of the fact that we are in tough financial times, but we do not want to have a wishy-washy policy. Ms. Robinson said that she is in favor of a policy with teeth in it, and she does not think they should take money for core operational expenses. She thinks it is a bigger issue; you can't always throw money at an issue and buy your way out of it. It's not a good way to conduct business. Mr. Sander indicated that while he liked the L-S draft, he thought it lacked teeth by basically saying we don't typically take these funds for core operating expenses, but we do when we feel the benefits outweigh the costs. He suggested the Committee explore whether requiring a super majority was legal.

Ms. Glass asked about the equity issue for Hanscom and asked whether Lincoln parents could raise money for aides at Hanscom. Ms. Robinson said that the money is split between the two campuses. Ms. Dobrow said that the equity issue was a concern. Ms. Glass agreed that equity was a concern because they have worked at having Hanscom and Lincoln be one school district. Mr. Orgel said that parents can't earmark a gift that would create an inequity between the two campuses. He said it's how the money is distributed. He does not want to prohibit what they may need to do. He said he would vote against a strict prohibition of accepting money. Mr. Schmeitzler asked Ms. Robinson how she as a Hanscom parent would feel if Lincoln people raised money and distributed it to both campuses. Would it be embarrassing? Ms. Robinson responded that it was not a problem, she did not feel that it was bad. Mr. Orgel said that the goal between having the campuses cohesive is that the experiences for the students are the same on both.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that most policies set an actionable item or a requirement that the school committee do something. The policies are guidelines, but they cannot be rigid. The policy has to be clear. He asked the Committee not to create a structural deficit in the budgeting situation. He said to leave the Consent Agenda the way it is, especially given the economic situation. Mr. Creel agreed because it is easy for him to do the accounting if the Consent Agenda is in the minutes.

Mr. Sander said that they appreciate the generosity of people. Ms. Hammett-Ory said that the issue of cutting the classroom assistants this summer surprised parents. They wanted to feel that they were part of the discussion. The issue was not about any inequity on the Hanscom campus. She agrees that they do not want parents to have to fund assistants year after year. Ms. Darling said that there are inherent inequities in Town with Hanscom. She thinks there should be a clarification of where the money is spent. She said that it's great to have curriculum goals that are the same. However, she said that having a gifts policy limits the Committee; we don't know what will happen with the financial situation. The Committee doesn't need a policy that has loopholes. There have been many private-public partnerships for education that have been successful. Ms. Dobrow thanked her for her viewpoint. She asked people to direct their comments to Mr. Orgel, who will write a draft for the next meeting.

#### IX. Facilities and Financial

##### A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$574,310.84 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$241,803.82 for a total of \$816,114.66. 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

Mr. Brandmeyer reported that the District received a letter from the Massachusetts Department of Education stating that they have complied with their recommendations. He said that it was unusual for a school district to do so well.

#### XI. New Business

None.

#### XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

#### 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; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Ms. Glass, yes; Mr. Orgel, yes; Ms. Robinson, yes; Ms. Nunes-Tajjeron, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 11:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary