

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, October 22, 2009
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Cecily Murdock (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

Absent: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Joe Connell (Hanscom Representative), Deb Leister (Hanscom Representative), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Mr. Sander, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Sander said Ms. Dobrow was called to a family emergency. Mr. Sander welcomed Cecily Murdock, the new Hanscom Representative. He said they are thrilled to have her aboard. He thanked her in advance for her service to the Lincoln Public Schools.

Mr. Schmertzler commended parents, students, and Principal Steve McKenna for the three walk to school Wednesdays in October. Students met at Donelan's and Town Hall, and at one meeting place there were 50 people. He gave credit especially to those who walked on the rainy Wednesday.

Ms. Glass attended Principal Sharon Hobbs' coffee, at which there were more parents than the prior coffee. She thanked her for hosting it.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gift

The School Committee was asked to accept the donations of \$200.00 for the teacher retirement fund to purchase books for the Lincoln School: \$100.00 in honor of Joan Yarro and \$100.00 in honor of Kathy Maloblocki. Mr. Sander moved, and Ms. Glass seconded, the motion to accept the gifts. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the gifts.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report from School Committee Appointee to Scholarship Committee

Meg Ramsey/McCluskey, the School Committee Appointee to the Lincoln Scholarship Committee, reported on the Scholarship Committee's activities. The other Scholarship Committee members are Nancy Marshall and Carolyn Dwyer; Sarah Bishop has finished her term. The economy's downturn hit the Committee's funds twice: they rely on the proceeds that come out of the endowment and need was higher. Since they faced a 40% downturn in available funds for 2009-2010, they applied for and received an award of \$7,500 from the Codman Trust. Donations from the Town were down slightly, although not as much as they had feared.

They awarded four graduating students with the following awards: Codman Scholar (\$4,000 for four years) to Fionnuala Seiferth; Sumner Smith Community Service Award (\$500) to Jessica Allen; Fanny Campbell Academic Achievement Award (\$500) to Michael Veling; and Rosemary Fichera Nadolski Award (\$500) to Geoffrey Tam.

In July, they awarded \$15,500 in aid to seven needs-based applicants, in amounts between \$1,000 and \$3,000 depending on need. Ms. Ramsey/McCluskey said the endowment and spendable accounts balances are starting to rebound.

Mr. Orgel thanked them for their efforts and asked how many applicants they had. Ms. Ramsay/McCluskey said they had a combination of 25 applicants and nominations for the awards. Mr. Sander thanked her for the report and the Scholarship Committee for their time.

B. Status Report on Implementation of New Middle School Math Program

Ms. Sterling presented a status report on the *Impact Mathematics* Program, which is being implemented in grades 6-8. They have been teaching it for seven weeks, and one of the co-authors, Faye Ruopp, has been

helping teachers with the new program. Ms. Sterling reported that all teachers are working hard, putting their best feet forward, and loving their work with Ms. Ruopp. They have three math specialists involved for both campuses, working on differentiation. Ms. Sterling said she is pleased to see the team working as well as it is.

Ms. Sterling said the students have a positive attitude about the new program. She has attended five classes of *Impact Mathematics* in the past two weeks. She noted that the students have been eager to let her know what they think about the new math program. The students have been diligent about carrying their binders back and forth to school. One student said that the repetition helps, and the concepts come back in different but connected ways. Another student reported the program was well organized, and that although there was a little more homework, he still liked the math program. Another student said that the math was harder and made her think more, but expressed confidence that they were getting better at math.

Ms. Sterling said the use of technology in the program is complicated, but all teachers are working with it. They are managing the assessment, although it will take teachers' time to learn it. The teachers are developing daily differentiation of student instruction, and it is occurring at different paces in each class. She explained that *Impact* has three calibrated levels of investigations for groups of students at different levels: 1) practice and apply skills; 2) connect and extend, where students work with non-routine problems; and 3) mixed review, which spirals back. Some students do more homework than others, and it can be tricky for teachers to determine what homework and how much of it to assign. Faye Ruopp will be working with them at least until Institute Day. Ms. Sterling has talked to teachers about the strong scaffolding *Impact Math* provides for explaining and talking about math ideas.

This is the first year Lincoln has offered an advanced Algebra I course in 8th grade. Students are recommended for it in 7th grade, and they have two Algebra I sections on the Lincoln campus. Three Hanscom students were eligible for the class, but subsequently moved. A new arriving student in September has been taking Algebra II through VHS. The schools assess the Hanscom students when they arrive at the Base. She reported that the students are working hard on this rigorous program and are motivated. Algebra I: Structure and Method is a strong math course, and teachers notice that students are willing to take more risks. She said that students who are facile with math in general have to work hard in advanced algebra to explain the reasoning behind their answers.

Ms. Sterling said Faye Ruopp worked with the Sudbury teachers, and both districts marshalled serious professional development resources to make implementation work. They have a good connection with Sudbury teachers, and she would ideally like to have teachers visit Sudbury again, but it is probably not feasible since it would take Lincoln teachers out of the classrooms for another day.

Mr. Orgel applauded the effort in creating two sections of algebra in 8th grade and asked whether it could be duplicated in 7th grade. Ms. Sterling said they will see this year whether through *Impact* they can differentiate effectively. She explained that creating different math classes can have the downside of excluding learners and she wants to ensure that all students are well served.

Mr. Schmertzler asked about how to assess the new program against the old one. Ms. Sterling said the only common measure was MCAS, and it may take a few years to see the difference. She said the New York City schools saw a jump in math scores with *Impact*, and Sudbury did too in three years. For now they have only anecdotal evidence.

Ms. Glass asked whether there was an issue with some students not having been fully taught in the *Everyday Math* program that *Impact* was built to follow. Ms. Sterling said *Impact* is rigorous, and that 6th graders who never had *Everyday Math* nonetheless like it. Ms. Sterling said they are reviewing whether additional materials are needed for struggling students. Ms. Murdock expressed support for the new program and her daughter's learning; she said Faye Ruopp, a former Sudbury math teacher, is phenomenal but indicated that she wasn't receiving unit introductory letters. Ms. Sterling said that these letters to parents are being sent home with the students at the start of each unit.

Mr. Sander thanked Ms. Sterling for her report and asked whether they are assessing students at the beginning of all units to differentiate. Ms. Sterling said they were. Mr. Sander asked whether there were key differences in the implementation of K-5 Math and 6-8 Math. Ms. Sterling said that differentiation in K-5 math is more difficult than in the 6-8 math program. The pace of differentiation differs in the later grades. He said that having a range of math abilities makes sense, but only if students at the lower end do not feel lost and those at the upper end do not feel bored. He indicated that he thinks differentiation within the classroom is difficult to do well. Mr. Sander asked if there was a built-in way to check in with the 7th graders in math in May. Ms. Sterling said they will check in with the students later in the year to see whether differentiation is working.

Mr. Sander thanked her for her report and the time they are spending on implementation.

C. Update on the Implementation of Nutrikids Point of Sale System

Mr. Creel and Ms. Higgins presented information on the implementation of the Nutrikids Point of Sales system for paying for school lunches. Mr. Creel said they chose the Nutrikids system based on cost and positive reviews from similar schools, including Lincoln-Sudbury. He said they had not anticipated as much help from the company and how smooth the rollout would be.

Ms. Higgins thanked the Committee for approving the purchase of the system, which was strongly supported by teachers, principals, and staff. She reported it was thrilling for 1st graders to use the system, and photos of the children will be uploaded shortly into the system. Nutrikids is user-friendly, intuitive, error-free and very exciting to use. She's had good feedback. It ties in nicely with their student database. She would recommend it to other districts. Mr. Creel said the system answered a pent-up desire of parents to pay for school lunches online, although parents can also pay by checks or cash. It makes accounting and state and financial reporting easier. Ms. Higgins said they have had one glitch: Lincoln-Sudbury also uses Nutrikids; they have not yet been able to link the two systems but are working on it. They are working carefully to make sure the students have the correct numbers when they use it to pay for lunch. Mr. Creel said the parents can use the system's reports to make sure that there are no errors.

Ms. Glass is pleased it is working well and asked whether the ease of using the system has increased participation. Initially, Ms. Higgins said there has been a decrease in participation because of the lunch price increase. Brooks, however, has recently increased its participation, although they do not know whether the system had an effect. She said there have not been any issues with money being lost, and the lunch lines move faster. She reported the kindergarteners use the system well at the Smith School. Mr. Creel said they will have a March update to assess the system's impact on participation. Ms. Sterling reported that Nutrikids was a main subject at the morning meetings, and all staff and teachers were well informed to make sure students were ready. There was a good implementation and support. Mr. Creel explained they did a mass mailing to parents.

Mr. Orgel thanked Ms. Higgins for her work and said that the students are very lucky; the food service does great work. Ms. Murdock asked why the price of lunch increased to \$3.00. Mr. Creel said they could not accomplish what they wanted to do with the wellness program since produce costs more than processed foods. They receive \$2.87 from the federal government for those students who receive federal subsidies and \$3.00 was in the range of what other schools are charging. Ms. Higgins said they have increased portion sizes, use more fresh fruits and vegetables, and do not use any products that have high fructose corn syrup.

Mr. Sander thanked them for their report and the care that went into the implementation.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. October 1st Enrollment Report

Mr. Brandmeyer presented the October 1 enrollment report. The numbers are important because they are used to calculate the amount of money the District receives from state Chapter 70 funds, federal IDEA funds and other funds. They have to report the enrollment figures five times a year for various reasons. The enrollment numbers are also used in Lincoln to project class sizes for the next year. They also report Hanscom enrollment, although these are less meaningful in projecting how many students will be there in the spring since on average one-third of the students leave each year. He expanded the report to include how many K-7 students leave the Lincoln schools before eighth-grade graduation. The percentage of students leaving the Lincoln schools is 3-5% a year, of which on average fewer than 3% have left for private school. Five years ago, Mr. Brandmeyer reported that these numbers were a shade higher. He noted that in grades 5-6, a logical time for students to go to private school, exhibit higher numbers of students leaving for private school of anywhere between 7 and 10 students leaving per year, but still a relatively small percentage of students. The numbers depend somewhat on the size of the underlying cohort. Mr. Schmertzler anticipates that the numbers of students in the public schools will increase; once the Groves opens, more housing stock will become available, and families with school-age children will buy those houses.

Mr. Brandmeyer said they have been gradually down in Hanscom enrollment because of the delays in the housing privatization project. He thinks they have hit the bottom. They are below the bottom band of enrollment in the current DoDEA contract and are two bands lower than when the Hanscom contract started. He reported that they have been assured they will still get the same amount of federal money this year as last, despite their low enrollment. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have hired the same number of staff, so they are not ahead of the game financially at Hanscom. He said he would address planning strategies for Hanscom for the FY11 budget later.

Mr. Orgel asked whether they do exit interviews with families who leave. Mr. Brandmeyer said they do not have a formal exit interview process; it is typically a family decision, but he said they could do it. Mr.

Orgel asked that they do exit interviews, and Mr. Brandmeyer noted he will consider it, adding that some students later return to the schools after leaving.

B. Feasibility Study for Massachusetts School Building Authority

Mr. Brandmeyer will be convening a conference call with the Massachusetts School Building Authority [MSBA] in the first two weeks of November to get the ball rolling on the feasibility study. Mr. Schmertzler was invited to be in on the phone call and accepted. Mr. Brandmeyer, Mr. Schmertzler, and Mr. Creel will meet to go over details before the call. There is some no cost work to do before they ask for any money from the MSBA or the Town. They will be prepared to have a proposal for the Annual Town Meeting in March.

Mr. Sander thanked him for his reports.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling has attended many classes. In the past week, she was in a 6th grade math class that was learning benchmark fractions to compare with unfamiliar ones; the useful concept was bringing students back to geometry benchmarks. An 8th grade math class was working on slope and students were asked how to measure the slope of a curved cable. One student responded that she would use a variable to represent the unknown number. Ms. Sterling noted that she observed a lot of strong thinking and learning. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether they were finding that girls functioned as well as boys with the new math programs. Ms. Sterling said the girls are extremely engaged in math, but she noticed that they more readily cede their ideas to other girls. She said now they were worrying about boys' engagement in general.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$608,217.34 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$96,585.17 for a total of \$704,802.51. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Sander moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Orgel seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. FY2010 Fiscal Report: First Quarter

Mr. Creel explained it was policy to encumber personnel expenses as soon as they can; personnel costs make up 77% of the budget. He said that 25% of the fiscal year has elapsed, and the staff figures represent a quarter of the year, but only 10% of the teachers' salaries have been paid. The largest impact to the budget has been the recent reduction of \$212,000 that occurred at the Special Town Meeting but that decrease was not included in his report. He is confident that even with that decrease they can meet the requirements. 90% has been expended and encumbered, and \$800,000 to \$900,000 of their money is unencumbered. Substitutes, custodians' overtime, and support areas are unencumbered because these expenses are paid as needed.

Mr. Creel said that the Hanscom budget was freed from having to put aside \$504,934 for payment of employee retirement assessments to the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System. The money will be held and transferred into the Hanscom reserve fund at the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Schmertzler asked if there are students at Hanscom who are not military for whom we are not reimbursed? Mr. Creel said yes. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have reserve dollars that support these students. If the numbers get to be 30, 50 or 100 students, it becomes a different structure for funding. They use the reserve dollars when they need resources to match Lincoln's resources, for example, with computer technology. He said the reserve is the same as the one the Finance Committee uses for special education funds. Mr. Schmertzler asked how they felt about having the budget cut. Mr. Creel said that a cut of several hundred thousand would have an impact, and they would need the Town to support them. They used the reserve portion stimulus money and would need to look hard to come up with a large amount of money.

Mr. Sander thanked him for the report.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

A. Review Ad for Library Board Appointee

Mr. Brandmeyer presented a draft of the advertisement to be published in the *Lincoln Journal* to seek applicants for the School Committee's appointee to the Library Board. They seek applicants for a three-year term; the person needs to be a registered voter of the Town of Lincoln and interested in the schools, the Town, and the Library. Marshall Clemens is the current appointee.

The Committee approved the advertisement.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Sander moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the September 24, 2009 meeting minutes. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Mr. Sander, seconded by Mr. Orgel, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations. Mr. Sander, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Mr. Orgel, yes; Ms. Glass, yes, Ms. Murdock, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary