

**LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES
March 22, 2007**

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Laurie Manos, Al Schmertzler, Sharon Antia, Deneen Trask (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Paul Naso (Assistant Superintendent), Buck Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

Absent: Sandy Hessler (Vice Chair), Leta Allen (Boston Representative), Mary Goldstein (Hanscom Representative).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:07 P.M.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Report

Ms. Dobrow reported that she and other School Committee members had just come from the International Banquet. She congratulated the students and teachers on a great event.

Ms. Manos reported that she and Ms. Antia attended the coffee at the Lincoln School to talk about behavior in school. She said it was well attended and well directed by Principal McKenna.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gifts from Friends of the Lincoln Library

Documentation of Gift from Friends of the Lincoln Library

The School Committee was asked to accept the donation of \$1133.51 from the Friends of the Lincoln Library as a result of their March book sale to be used to purchase circulating and/or reference material for the Lincoln School library.

B. Field Trip Proposal for Lincoln School Grade 5 to Cape Cod

Documentation regarding proposed field trip

The School Committee was asked to approve an overnight trip to Cape Cod National Seashore/Cape Cod Sea Camps, Brewster, MA for grade 5.

Ms. Dobrow moved that the School Committee accept the consent agenda. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor of the motion with Ms. Trask concurring.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Recommendation for Assistant Superintendent Appointment

Mr. Brandmeyer said Mr. Naso has provided four years of hard work and that this position was challenging to fill. He recommended that the School Committee vote to appoint Mary Sterling to the position of Assistant Superintendent of the Lincoln Public Schools. Mr. Brandmeyer said both finalists were very qualified but that he was recommending Ms. Sterling because her experience was a bit broader, deeper and more varied than the other candidate and because she is best positioned to continue Mr. Naso's work. Ms. Dobrow moved that the School Committee vote to appoint Ms. Sterling to the position of Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Schmertzler seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor, with Ms. Trask concurring.

A short recess was held during which Ms. Sterling was informed by telephone of the School Committee's vote. Ms. Dobrow reported that Ms. Sterling accepted the offer of the position.

B. Middle School Renewal – Recommendations to the Principal

Documents: Memorandum from Sharon Hobbs, Principal, and Middle School Renewal Initiative Team to Lincoln School Committee, March 12, 2007; MS Renew Team Chronology of events; MS Renew Recommendations about Balanced Program

Sharon Hobbs, Principal Lincoln K-8, and Gina Halsted, parent member of the Middle School Renewal Initiative Team joined the Committee for this discussion. Pam DiBiase, teacher member of the Middle School Renewal Initiative Team, arrived during the discussion.

Ms. Halsted explained the history and composition of the Middle School Renewal Initiative Team (MSRenew). The group determined to consider three questions: (1) Balanced Program—How does the school ensure that the program elements address all of the needs of students this age? (2) Student Engagement—Are students appropriately/effectively/optimally engaged in learning? (3) Quality of Interactions among Faculty, Staff, Administrators, Students and Parents—Is communications constructive and effective?

Ms. Halsted said on May 31, 2006 a parent/teacher program was held on balanced program that consisted of a speaker, Paul Jablon, small discussion groups with process to capture discussion points and comments, and collection of comments. Participants were provided with information from an analysis of how academic time is spent and were asked to comment on time on core subjects and time on other facets of the program. Members of the community who were unable to attend the May 31 program were provided with the opportunity to view information presented at the program and to provide their comments on the question of balance. Mr. Naso said all materials were posted on the web site and that emails in the District News said comments could be made by email. MSRenew analyzed and summarized the information.

Ms. Halsted said on the question of balance, three strong themes emerged: (1) Individual—self-esteem, responsibility for learning, emotional well-being, character; (2) Community—community orientation/respect, empathy, social justice, appreciation of others; and (3) Academic—ensuring excellent academic skills and creating lifelong learners.

Ms. Halsted said in the fall a survey of all middle school students was conducted. The survey consisted of two questions. One asked what skills does it take to be a successful middle school student. The second asked what is it like to be a middle school student. Ms. Hobbs said answers changed with the progression through middle school. Fifth graders were more concerned with being students. Older students indicated more concern about interactions with their peers. Students indicated that family support is important. They said part of what makes you successful is that you have family or adult support. Ms. Halsted said fifth graders reported little about stress. Eighth graders mentioned stress frequently and seemed to feel a lot of pressure.

Ms. Hobbs said trust has grown between parents and faculty on the Team and a deeper understanding has developed allowing the group to look at how to improve in a way that is meaningful. She reviewed the recommendations on balance: (1) Communicate a grade 5-8 way of thinking about two competing needs: maintaining academic demands and addressing social-emotional needs; (2) Improve the descriptions and explanations of the overall 5-8 program so that the reasoning about program elements, balance of program and distribution of time are more evident; (3) Articulate the intended educational value of classes that are sometimes regarded as peripheral (e.g. electives, exploratory classes Connectors) and communicate the impact of these of these experiences on students; and (4) Build commitment among teachers to incorporate real-life problems and experiences to make connections between school curriculum and the community.

Ms. Hobbs said the recommendations are structured to provide a lens to look through rather than a checklist. Ms. Hobbs said they will lead to re-examining the program of studies, looking at time again, as well as other efforts. Ms. Hobbs will have an action plan by next fall. In the spring the Team will look at how to consider student engagement and communication.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether there has been any consideration of differences in how boys learn and of the impact of television on how students learn. Mr. Naso said it is anticipated that gender might be part of the discussion about engagement. Ms. DiBiase said teachers talk about and deal with gender based differences in learning on a daily basis.

Ms. Manos asked about the research and data gathering on time on core subjects versus other facets of the program. She asked: Whether the Team is saying that the middle school has the right balance? How they know? What evidence there is? Mr. Naso said while the feedback MSRenew received did not raise any flags regarding balance between core subjects and other areas, Ms. Hobbs and the faculty might determine to change time allocations. The conclusions do not rule out changes in time allocations. Ms. Hobbs said she plans to look at whether appropriate time is being given to core subjects and other areas. Ms. Manos encouraged Ms. Hobbs to look at how time is being spent.

Ms. Dobrow said she remembered that MSRenew was going to look at data about how other districts allocate time and asked about this. Mr. Naso said Judith Glassman had teachers work on getting information about other schools. This data turned out to be difficult to use because descriptions from school to school are not consistent. Ms. Dobrow suggested it might be useful to look at how other towns allocate time. Ms. Hobbs said she has looked at information from middle schools from all over the country about time allocation. The Lincoln middle school is very small and other schools have more teams enabling them to offer more options.

Ms. Manos suggested not enough parents were involved in the data gathering to get a reliable read on parents' views on the balance between core subjects and other offerings. Ms. Hobbs replied that many people are already frustrated with the pace of this effort and that gathering more data could further slow the renewal.

Ms. Antia asked about the middle school model versus the junior high model. Ms. Hobbs said many districts have moved to the middle school model using grade level teams rather than subject departments. The middle school model better satisfies middle school students' need to be known well by a core group of adults.

Ms. Antia asked whether ninth grade students have been asked about how prepared they feel for high school. Ms. Hobbs said this has not been done but that it is a good idea.

Ms. Dobrow said the School Committee has heard comments about the pace of the middle school renewal. She said it would be helpful for the parent community to hear a timetable with specifics. She suggested finding opportunities to share the recommendations with the community. She also suggested that the recommendations be shared with the Hanscom Middle School.

Ms. Manos asked about meeting the needs of highly capable students. Ms. Hobbs said next year the School Council would look at how the school serves highly capable students.

Maria Hylton asked why there were no math or science teachers on MSRenew and whether this was a conscious decision. Ms. DiBiase said teachers were asked to volunteer and it happened that math or science teachers did not come forward. Ms. Hylton also commented that she was surprised that there was less emphasis on academic concerns. She said some years ago when Ms. Dobrow conducted a survey parents were concerned about academics and about poor or declining test scores. She said she is also surprised that it has taken two and a half years to get the answer to one of three questions. She wondered whether other parents who were concerned about academics were not among the parents who provided feedback for the balance question and wondered whether the data is representative.

Ms. Hobbs said she does not anticipate that it will take as long to address the additional questions. Ms. Hobbs said good and thoughtful work has been done which will send the school forward and the school needs to move forward with what they have. Ms. Manos suggested as Ms. Hobbs goes forward she provide as much information and background as possible, such as information about Paul Jablon's talk on May 31, so that people can feel confident with the recommendations.

C. Superintendent's Evaluation

Document: Superintendent Evaluation 2006-2007

Ms. Dobrow said the process has been streamlined to provide useful feedback in a transparent way. Ms. Dobrow received comments from all School Committee members and weaved them into a document that is reflective of the consensus of the School Committee. Ms. Dobrow read the executive summary of the superintendent's evaluation stating that "overall the School Committee remains quite pleased with the directions in which the district is going, and with the Superintendent's leadership and stewardship of the district." Positive mention was made of curriculum integration and implementation, the Technology Integration Project, fine administrative hires, ongoing support for teacher training and professional development, fiscal management, efforts to procure a successor contract to run the Hanscom schools, emergency planning, upgrading of food services, implementation of wellness policy, and communication with other boards. Suggestions for additional progress included progress on the mission vision statement, establishing a clear educational vision for the District, making academic excellence a top priority, and working to develop a plan that will move all children toward achieving the highest possible standards.

Ms. Manos moved that the School Committee vote to accept the superintendent's evaluation. Ms. Antia seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor with Ms. Trask concurring.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer reported that Mark Kaufman, the Principal of the Hanscom Middle School, recently made a presentation at a national conference on Improving Math Teaching and Learning.

A. Findings of the Plagiarism Investigation

Documents: Letter from Joseph E. Buckley, Ed.D., to Michael Brandmeyer, March 9, 2007; Report: An Investigation into an Allegation of Plagiarism, Prepared for Michael Brandmeyer by Joseph E. Buckley, March 9, 2007.

Mr. Brandmeyer said on January 30, 2007 Gail Eddy sent an email to Lynn Fagan and copied the Lincoln School Committee among others alleging that Ms. Fagan "lifted" the Magic Garden (MGCC) philosophy and key phrases from the MGCC website for inclusion in the Preschool brochure. Ms. Dobrow directed Mr. Brandmeyer to conduct an investigation stating "Plagiarism is a very serious charge and I trust you will investigate this thoroughly and fairly, and report back to us soon." Mr. Brandmeyer hired Dr. Joseph Buckley to investigate and prepare a report.

Dr. Buckley examined all relevant printed materials and conducted interviews. Mr. Brandmeyer read certain portions of Dr. Buckley's report. In Dr. Buckley's interview with Ms. Eddy, "[w]hen discussing the wording that was allegedly lifted from the MGCC Parent Handbook and the MGCC website [that] actually appeared in LPS printed materials as early as 2001, Ms. Eddy ...stated that she knew it (the lifting) wasn't intentional." Dr. Buckley concluded that "all wording, that was alleged to have been 'lifted' from MGCC materials during the 2006-2007 timeframe, was wording that appeared in the MGCC Parent Handbook dated 2/2001." He further concluded that if "unauthorized copying or lifting of MGCC printed materials took place at all, it occurred in 2001, long before Lynn Fagan had anything to do with overseeing the LPS Early Childhood Program." He found "the charge that Lynn Fagan plagiarized by lifting the MGCC philosophy and key phrases from its website and placed them in the Lincoln Integrated Preschool Brochure unsubstantiated and without merit."

Dr. Buckley recommended that the Lincoln Public Schools: (1) expedite the review process on Integrated Preschool materials, (2)

develop new wording to differentiate the Integrated Preschool from MGCC, (3) spell out operational changes that will occur as the result of the School Committee vote to operate its own integrated preschool program, and (4) date stamp revision dates of materials.

Ms. Hylton commented that the allegation of plagiarism is a serious charge and can be damaging even if the person alleged to have plagiarized is exonerated. She said it is important to publicize the conclusions including quotations from Gail Eddy.

VII. Curriculum

A. Report on Monitoring for Proficiency in Reading/ELA and Mathematics

Documents: *Monitoring for Proficiency in Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics from Paul Naso to Lincoln School Committee, March 16, 2007; Attachment A--Descriptors for "Proficient" Performance Levels; Attachment B-- Monitoring Reading/ELA Proficiency; Attachment C—Monitoring Math Proficiency; Attachment D—MCAS Assessment Follow-up Documentation*

Mr. Naso presented a report providing background on the meanings of "proficient" for state and federal requirements and a description of efforts to coordinate local assessments related to proficiency in Reading/ELA and Mathematics. Mr. Naso noted that when a student scores at the "warning" or "needs improvement" levels in Reading/ELA or Mathematics, the process requires that the principal and/or her designees conduct a review of the student's MCAS scores in light of other local assessment data and a consideration of which accommodations or supports should begin, continue or change. Mr. Naso said in the future technology (e.g. the Massachusetts Department of Education's data warehousing program Cognos or X-2, the software package the District is in the process of implementing) may present opportunities.

Ms. Trask asked whether Attachment D, MCAS Assessment Follow-up Documentation, is ever shared with parents. Mr. Naso said this is not required but would be at the teacher's discretion. He said the conversations with parents should be informed by the thought that has gone into filling out Attachment D.

Ms. Antia said Christina Horner has monthly meetings with parents of METCO students that are geared toward what parents can do at home to support learning. Ms. Antia said she and perhaps other Lincoln parents would be interested programs of this type.

Ms. Manos said Mr. McKenna and Kathy O'Connell, Math Specialist for the Lincoln School, gave a presentation on math. At this presentation there were many questions on MCAS open-ended response questions. Ms. Manos suggested a parent program be given on this. Mr. Naso commented that most MCAS questions are not like the math problems parents are familiar with and said a program could be done on MCAS math questions.

VIII. Policy

A. Policy for Advertising and Commercialism

Document: *Advertising and Commercialism*

Ms. Manos said this is actually a first reading rather than a second reading. The Subcommittee has reworked the policy in accord with the School Committee's feedback. Ms. Manos asked whether the policy provides the right balance between restraining ads and providing flexibility. Ms. Dobrow said as the policy is currently written she still wonders whether it could be read to bar students from wearing clothes with corporate names or logos. Sabra Alden asked how this policy would pertain to the products purchased from vending machines. Mr. Brandmeyer said the District is attempting to find products that do not have advertising. Ms. Alden also asked about clothing promoting harmful products such as tobacco. Mr. Creel said this could be addressed in the dress codes.

Ms. Dobrow said it is important to teach media literacy and to give students the tools to become careful and critical consumers. Jonathan Hoch said children under seven or eight do not understand persuasive intent. He said he is interested in there being safeguards ensuring initial and ongoing compliance with the policy. Richard Jewett said that the Policy Subcommittee is not considering implementation or the series of activities that you do to see that a policy is being enforced.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Ms. Manos said she has examined the warrants and they appear to be in order. She moved that the School Committee vote to adopt warrants in the amount of \$803,889.56. Mr. Schmertzler seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor with Ms. Trask concurring.

B. Update on Request for Variance from the Lincoln Board of Health

Documents: *Letter re gymnasium at Smith School from Michael J. Moore to Buckner Creel, March 14, 2007; Notice of Variance to State Sanitary Code*

Mr. Creel reported that the Lincoln Board of Health held a hearing on March 7 to consider requests for variances from certain aspects of the Food Code to permit the continued serving of lunches in the Smith gym. Mr. Creel reported that the Board discussed the variances at length and ultimately voted variances of one year making it clear that this was to be a temporary

solution. The Board asked that the school report to them after the next capital planning process on the efforts to secure funding through a reserve fund transfer or the capital budget process beginning in August 2007. The Board also agreed to provide a letter of local jurisdiction approval of the District's request for a DEP Variance for Schools to cover the flows into the Schools' septic system. The District's consultant, GZA, will prepare the application for a DEP variance.

Mr. Creel said the first choice to secure funding the needed improvements is to ask for a reserve fund transfer. If this is not successful, requests would be put as part of the capital planning process. Mr. Creel said at the time the variance expires the District will know whether a warrant pertaining to this was approved.

X. Old Business

Mr. Brandmeyer said he and Ms. Dobrow have put together the presentation for Town Meeting. This was provided to the School Committee for comment either in the meeting or by the next morning. Ms. Dobrow said the presentation attempts to provide information on the type education students are receiving in addition to presenting the numbers. Ms. Manos commented that leading with small classes sizes troubled her in light of the size of the second grade classes next year. Ms Dobrow said they could re-order this part of the presentation.

XI. New Business

Mr. Brandmeyer recommended that middle school graduations be held on June 13 for Hanscom and June 14 for Lincoln. Ms. Dobrow moved that the School Committee vote to approve holding the Hanscom middle school graduation on June 13 and the Lincoln middle school graduation on June 14. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor with Ms. Trask concurring.

Ms. Dobrow said she received a phone call from State Representative Tom Conroy expressing support for the work the School Committee is doing, and his desire to attend a future meeting to speak with the Committee about their priorities.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

XIII. Information Enclosures

XIV. Adjournment

Ms. Dobrow moved that the School Committee adjourn to executive session not to return to open session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations. Ms. Manos seconded the motion. A vote was taken by roll call:

Ms. Dobrow – yes

Ms. Manos – yes

Mr. Schmertzler – yes

Ms. Antia – yes

Ms. Trask – concurs

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Rolley, School Committee Recording Secretary