

SCHOOL COMMITTEE UPDATE

LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL COMMITTEE BULLETIN #3 SPRING 2021

We are among only 3% of MA school districts to hold in-person classes all year 5-days-a-week!

Here's how we stayed open full-time during COVID-19:

We used all available indoor space for general classrooms – despite Lincoln School construction – and added a third METCO bus route to provide physical distancing in classrooms and buses. Mask wearing has been universal, even among the youngest children.

We added teachers and class sections to allow 6-foot distancing between students and assigned one consistent learning coach for each small cohort. All cohorts, in-person and remote, used the same curriculum.

Each student received a school computer tablet, pre-loaded with approved software, whether they chose to learn in person (80% of students) or remotely (20%). Some remote students returned in-person this spring.

Faculty assumed new roles as learning coaches. They delivered content created by their peers, built on collaborative innovative instruction and became proficient in using technology in new, inventive ways.

Services for English language learners and for students with IEPs continued in person and virtually.

Food service used federal pandemic funds to provide free take-out lunches for all students, including remote students.

Ventilation systems and sanitation protocols have been at or above recommended safety levels, and the state provided room air purifiers at no cost to the District.

Working with the Town, we used federal emergency grants to mitigate the budget impact of added class sections, buses, technology, and protective equipment and disinfection.

We practiced and prepared so individual students, cohorts, grade-levels, and even entire school buildings were able to “go remote” smoothly and continue learning during quarantine if someone or a close contact tested positive for COVID-19.

Dedication, flexibility, and cooperative efforts from faculty, staff, administration, school nurses, the Lincoln Educators Assoc, families and students made it possible. Thank you!



To limit exposure to the virus, classrooms (Lincoln pictured above, Hanscom below) use distancing, masks, and small cohorts of 10-15 students with one teacher and additional virtual instruction. 20% of students (and those in temporary quarantine) learn in all-remote cohorts and share the same curriculum.

All students and faculty are expected to return in fall with adjusted precautions.



MA Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Riley visited Hanscom Primary School this spring



In the old video game “Frogger,” a frog is on the way to a lunch of delicious flies, when suddenly it must first cross highways, ford streams, and avoid being hit by a MACK truck!

Prior to the pandemic, our district had an aggressive strategic plan, too. Then COVID-19 suddenly demanded a complete change in direction, a few *hops* back as we switched to *Learning at Home Together*. To return students to school safely in the fall and provide parallel remote learning, we needed a new plan. After a summer of preparing imaginative new strategies, our teachers, staff and students began the new journey together in late September amidst construction and modular classrooms!

Along the way we’ve had *hops forward* (free air purifiers & pool testing), *side-steps* (changing guidelines, contact tracing) and never a moment to catch a breath as the desire to address racial equity and social-emotional needs of our community were ever-present. Yet learning continued and progress was made on our long-term goals through professional development and completing a comprehensive race/equity audit, all while swimming in the uncharted waters of a pandemic. I am proud of the way our administrative team, led by Superintendent Becky McFall, has navigated these harrowing crossings and how the faculty and students have responded with compassion, dedication and perseverance.

With the proven agility and foresight our district has displayed over the past year, I am confident that we will *hop-to-it* and arrive at the grassy meadow.

Tara Mitchell, chair Lincoln School Committee

Budgeting for uncertainties of COVID-19

The School Committee has approved two different budgets for the Lincoln schools in 2021-22:

- A “best case” budget within the Finance Committee’s guideline and assuming a return to a pre-COVID-19 number of classrooms and educational model
- A “worst case” budget if COVID-19 restrictions return to pandemic levels

We expect the actual situation will be somewhere in between when most faculty are vaccinated, but most students are not. Town Meeting will be asked to approve the “best case” budget for a return to traditional models and within the FinCom’s 2.5% increase guidance. FinCom will propose creating reserve funds specifically allocated for use if needed to meet additional school COVID-19 safety measures in FY22.

Voluntary pool testing for COVID-19

began in our schools in February in order to detect asymptomatic cases that could spread the virus. Once a week, participating students and staff swab their nostrils in school and collect the samples in groups. Pooled samples are then sent to a lab for PCR testing.

If any one person is infected, the pool test shows a positive result. When that happens – and it has several times – members of that pool are tested again individually to identify the infected person. Close contacts are notified, and a class and teacher may switch temporarily to remote learning to quarantine.

The state-sponsored testing program is free to school districts with appropriate administration. Without the detailed planning by our district team and community experts, the pool testing could have cost our district about \$200,000 for the spring semester.

Many thanks all staff and families who participate in the program.

Facing dual traumas of racism and inequity

Racism and inequality have heightened the emotional toll of 2020-21 for many of our children. Our schools are focused on examining and deepening our capacity over the upcoming years for anti-racism, inclusion, and helping students cope with trauma.

The school community is involved at many levels and is taking steps forward.

- Beginning last summer and continuing all year, faculty and staff have engaged in professional development around foundational work in anti-racism, inclusion, diversity, and equity (AIDE).
- A district-wide “equity audit” is underway by an advisory group of teachers, administrators, parents, community members and students with the leadership of Asst. Supt. Jessica Rose and METCO Director Marika Hamilton. This audit of classroom, curriculum, community, and school leadership will guide a multi-year path for our journey as an anti-racist district.
- School Committee members have committed to our own anti-bias training, to reexamining school policies with an equity lens, and to working with the district administration, town Select Board, Lincoln WIDE and others to build a welcoming community.
- The PTO, Boston Parents Group, and METCO Coordinating Committee have supported friendships and family networks and have sponsored programs of learning and dialogue on issues of racism, inclusion, and intersectionality.
- Middle school students organized a Black Lives Matter group, and Hanscom students elected a Diversity Council to promote an inclusive school community.

We recognize that these are beginning steps towards our objective to work together to build a school culture that values, respects and responds to students’ identities and develops the social and emotional well-being of all students. We are committed to the journey.

Remote cohorts provide structure and camaraderie for students who chose to learn at home this year

About 20 percent of our students learn from home this year, and they have the same school hours and curricula as their in-person classmates. Remote learners are grouped in cohorts of 10-15 students who “google meet” every school day with a dedicated remote learning coach. Other teachers video conference in for specific subjects or services.

All students are issued computer tablets with school-installed software, tech support, and Internet “hot spots” if needed. In-person students may join remote cohorts if quarantined.

Families chose remote learning for a variety of reasons, and some students returned in-person this spring. Fall plans call for all students and faculty to return to in-person classes.



LINCOLN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
Ballfield Road
Lincoln, MA 01773

Lincoln School
Committee

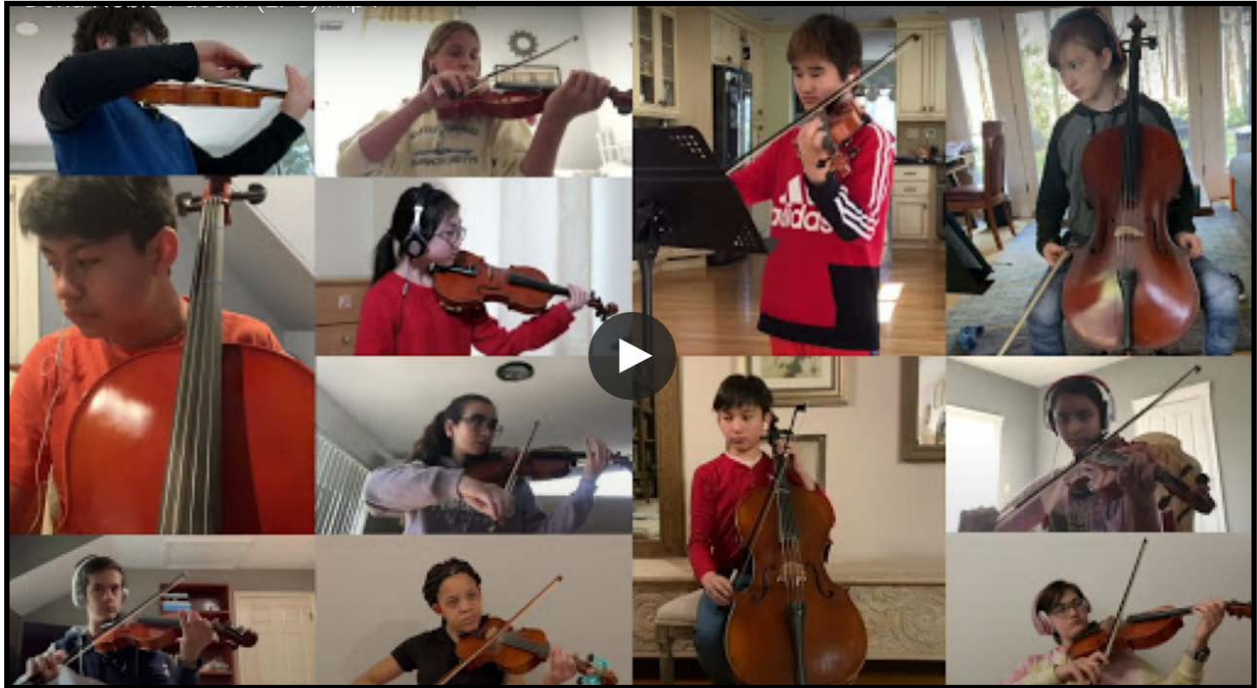
schoolcomm@lincnet.org

POSTAL PATRON
LINCOLN MA 01773

Non-Profit Org
U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Lincoln MA 01773

Permit No. 8
EDDN



Lincoln School Spring 2021 Orchestra and Band Virtual Concerts

