

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, May 19, 2015
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash, Chair Jessie Steigerwald, Vice Chair William Hurley, Alessandro Alessandrini, Margaret Coppe
Student Representative Abigail Schwartz, Carl Valente, Town Manager
MEMBER ABSENT: Judith Crocker

The Minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary
The meeting convened at 7:00pm

Call to order and welcome: Chair Jessie Steigerwald called the meeting to order, and introduced committee members. She noted that tonight's meeting had been added and Ms. Crocker was unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

7:01 p.m. Motion to go into Executive Session

Ms. Steigerwald stated: I move that the School Committee to go into Executive Session under Exemption 3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining regarding the Lexington Education Association, Unit A Negotiations, to return to open session, and further, as chair, I declare that an executive session is necessary to protect the bargaining position of the School Committee.

Mr. Alessandrini seconded the motion.

Coppe AYE; Hurley AYE; Steigerwald AYE; Alessandrini AYE; Valente AYE

The Minutes for this Executive Session were taken by Jessie Steigerwald, Chair and are in a separate document.

7:48 p.m. Motion to adjourn Executive Session. (Coppe, Alessandrini)

Hurley AYE; Coppe AYE; Steigerwald AYE; Alessandrini AYE; Valente AYE

7:48 p.m. Executive Session Ended

Returned to Open Session at 7:48 PM

Consent Agenda

Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of April 17, 2015.

Vote to Approve School Committee Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2015.

Coppe noted need for a global edit to April 28, 2015 minutes to correct DiNisco's name. Committee voted to approve the minutes as so amended and the remainder of the Consent Agenda.

MOTION Alessandrini moved, Hurley seconded.

The Motion was approved 4-0.

Public Comments:

Kevin Johnson, speaking as a Town Meeting Member: He sent the School Committee an email over the weekend about the World Language study. He is not opposed to reintroducing the program, but is concerned with the reasoning behind introducing it in elementary school. Why would studying a foreign language, as opposed to something else, be a gain in academic achievement? In the October report it was listed as giving cognitive benefits/gains in academic achievement. The reference used was from 1995. More recently in 2003, there was a study on 1,000 students and essentially at the end, statistically there was a decrease in math and science, and small increases in English scores. He is open for feedback and opinions in the future.

Alessandrini responded that he was representative on the World Language Committee. There are lots of studies out there. Some people, as they learn languages, notice it helps in logic, and other benefits. He will send other studies to Mr. Johnson.

Dr. Ash stated that he never gave an opinion previously. He is inconclusive whether one way or the other is best. His opinion is that it has to do with the importance of the program itself, and it would not compete with English or Math or any other subject.

Superintendent's Announcements:

Tomorrow at 9:00am, at the track at LHS, the annual Special Olympics will take place. Children in the LABBB program are paired with their buddies from LHS. It is a wonderful, fun event. It is a special time, and is open to the public.

School Committee Member Announcements:

Steigerwald: Showed everyone her bookmark from Estabrook's Read Aloud Day, which went very well. She read to 4th graders and thanks the teachers and staff who create this opportunity. Last week she attended the Lexington Education Foundation "LEF" board meeting. This is the time of year you can give a teacher or staff member a special gift – a star from the LEF. Go to the LEF website for more information. If people in the community have opinions, suggestions, for the School Committee's Goal Setting, please let the committee know. Some people wrote in after the Hastings information session regarding sample testing for mold concerns. There will be testing of air samples and Dr. Ash will provide updates. Upcoming School Committee meetings: a retreat tomorrow night on goal setting, an evening meeting on May 26th, June 2nd is a special event – an afternoon meeting with discussion to explore a youth coalition, and evening meetings on June 9th, and June 16th.

Agenda

School Improvement Plans

Dr. Ash introduced the nine principals and shared that the Principals will focus on one thing that was significant this year, and one that is significant for next year. Members had some questions and comments for the principals.

High School

Principal Laura Lasa began by saying she is very proud of the faculty and all they accomplish through the year, and also her leadership team who are her unsung heroes.

Significant this year is the rewritten/redrafted course level descriptions. They are now accurate descriptors that give everyone consistent information. Also, the Guidance Department putting together a 10 minute meeting with every student to pick/decide on courses for next year. There has been positive feedback from students.

Homework discussions have begun. The self-reflection of faculty members has been great. The discussions will continue into next year, and they hope to make a cohesive statement on the value and purpose of homework at that time. Aspen is updated twice per quarter, and 49% of teachers are keeping it open more. They are trying to work out all of the pieces on the averaging/inputting information and addressing some kinks in the Aspen software.

The challenge for the upcoming year will be patience. With the size of LHS and trying to have meaningful thoughtful discussion, feedback from almost 2,000 students takes time. It is very important to her and the faculty.

Elementary Schools

Principal Mary Anton, Bowman Elementary School: Their most important accomplishment is the 5th grade Leadership Seminar. They set a schedule when a lot of 5th graders and specialists could be together. They spent the first half of the year in building blocks, including how to become a leader, and collaborative assignments. The second half of the year included small group activities and students discovered what they want to be involved with. They are showing incredible leadership.

She thanked the LEF for the Teacher's College Reading and Writing. This year they piloted and next year they hope to do more with Lab Wednesdays. It is when grade level teachers come together and work together to plan a lesson. They then go into one teacher's classroom and one teacher tries out one part of the curriculum. The others come in and engage in active coaching. Teachers are in essence becoming peer coaches. It is a really exciting structure and will create a wonderful new model of professional learning.

Challenge for next year: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education "DESE" and possible change to PARCC from MCAS. It makes planning more challenging. She is dreading a possible move to a new assessment system. It may take time and shift our focus.

Principal Meg Colella, Bridge Elementary School: Last year she went to Chicago and began to rethink their All School Meeting, which is held once each month. She changed the All School Meeting to a different format. They begin with an energizer in the gym. Different people from the school lead it, not just her. They have also increased and instituted a ticket system where classes earn tickets for positive behavior. It has helped in the café and at recess. It is empowering students when issues arise. The 4th and 5th graders have been trained in a peer mediation process. They wear t-shirts and help problem solve, becoming leaders and giving them more responsibility. They have also implemented a student council this year. The students act as representatives and do more community service. All of these have empowered students. Their challenge for next year will be the new traffic mitigation. They will be looking for support as they implement it and help community members learn the different protocols.

Principal Sandra Trach, Estabrook Elementary School: This was the first full year in the new Estabrook building. They were awarded LEED Silver Status and they are a green school. They started "Bee the Change" and encouraged the school to go green at school and at home. The faculty started a green team and it has helped to support eco-literacy goals. As children graduate from Estabrook they will have learned about all the green that Estabrook has. After lunch, kids go through a sorting room and sort all trash to recycle as much as they can. They have begun worm composting and solar panels were added to the school. Over half of the Estabrook population takes the bus and the school's bike racks are filled. Walkers continue to participate in a "Walking School Bus" which starts from each of the neighborhoods and they all walk together. Their challenge for next year is the data teams. Estabrook has been working with data teams to focus on closing the achievement gap. They have students who would benefit from increased learning, and project based learning. Her goal is for every student to have a personalized learning plan, not just those below benchmark.

Tom Martellone, Fiske Elementary School: The past three years they have focused on students who have needed extra time and he is proud of the staff for orchestrating that work. Each grade level has an intervention time, built in during the day, and teachers work collaboratively. It has really blossomed and continued to grow, not just academically but also socially/behaviorally.

They are doing a lot of work to positively recognize students. They are at a 50% decrease in discipline and have increased academic performance.

They are looking to promote innovation by giving staff the opportunity to visit other staff members and hopefully try the different things they see. It is a good opportunity for teachers to implement best practices.

Members asked Mr. Martellone to please keep them up to date on the impact and loss of space.

Elaine Meade, Harrington Elementary School: She is very appreciative of her faculty and staff and her Site-Based School Council. The Harrington faculty and staff are very engaged as learners, always sharing practices. They have a Parent Engagement Goal, which is when all goals of the school have a parent outreach component. They have seen improvement around safety, academic needs, social and emotional needs, and staff are doing a good job communicating with parents about students' progress.

Their challenge for next year will be policies on attendance. They are given guidelines from the state law and School Committee policy. Families are getting themselves into attendance trouble very quickly. They have lots of meetings with families with attendance problems caused by extensive travel.

Louise Lipsitz, Hastings Elementary School: Thanks to the amazing faculty, and their amazing leadership. Teachers College came and did extensive work on the writing process. They work with a classroom of students and also the teachers from two schools, administrators, faculties, and special education teachers on the best practices for teaching children how to write.

Their challenge for next year is trying to balance the work the district thinks is important with the requirements of the state. Attendance, supervision and evaluation, are also challenges. She is grateful for the School Committee being willing to listen.

Anna Monaco, Clarke Middle School: This year, they are doing work in the secondary Response To Intervention "RTP" process. It was the first year they gained some traction and movement. She is proud of the student response team. They revamped it and changed the process of how students get supports. It is easier to access and much quicker. They also focused on the social/emotional realm. Increased social work support has made a big difference and allowed them to be proactive rather than reactive. Their social worker is better able to work with kids and be in classrooms. It is wonderful to see the success. Many different teams meet at the secondary level. They have tried to pull data from all of the different groups, and the team is trying to pull it all into one data source. She is very proud of the staff at Clarke.

Their challenge next year is social and emotional issues, and unhealthy stress. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey was done for the first time this year. They need the School Committee's continued support in this as they try to maintain good academic achievement/healthy learning environments.

Anne Carothers, Diamond Middle School: Ms. Carothers gave a huge shout out to the staff for helping each child in the building learn and grow. Bringing in the support and intervention piece has been great. All the teams are using their time and expertise efficiently. Curriculum design meetings have been excellent in finding ways to have all students work learn and grow.

Maureen Kavanaugh has been very helpful and they are also looking to study how kids are learning, and considering areas to redesign that could become even more effective.

Their challenge next year: How do we help kids think about finding a healthy balance and also help families with the balance. And they need time because deep adaptive change takes time.

Abby Schwartz: She appreciates the focus on stress reduction and mental health. Many of the causes are rooted in middle school.

Steigerwald thanked all of the principals and she appreciates how child-centered all of the schools are. With so much time in recent School Committee meetings spent on capital projects, it is very helpful to bring our attention and focus to the educational areas that were highlighted tonight.

Abby Schwartz had to leave the meeting so she gave her comments for the policy discussion that will take place later in the meeting:

IHAE – Physical Education: Students believe they should get Physical Education credit for their sports involvement. This would promote greater balance in their lives. It is worth it for the School Committee to consider.

IJND: - Technology: There have been very large problems with things being censored, websites that shouldn't be censored being censored, and it is not reasonable to have so many barriers for students. Teachers don't have passwords or the ability to update software and they should be given the ability to do it.

Members recessed for 2 minutes

The meeting resumed at 9:58pm.

Update on School Building Projects

DiNisco Design Team presented an update on the school construction plans. Ken DiNisco answered questions from committee members regarding parking at Bridge, Hastings and Clarke, proposal for Hastings with a preschool that would eliminate the playing field, and the need for space with the changing special education program sizes.

Kate Colburn: There is an underlying policy decision related to the target number of students to accommodate and a fair amount of data at this point for the projections. Will there be another discussion about building for the mid point projections? During the master planning process, the concept was to only fill 90% of the school to keep space for growth. If every project gets done, we would be over 90% today. This needs to be revisited before the plan/projects don't meet our needs.

Colburn also asked if soil borings been done on the Hastings site. Mr. Dinisco said it would be done shortly. Within the next month they will perform and confirm what the impact is.

Members agreed that it makes sense to have another conversation with Joe Pato about the enrollments. Dr. Ash urged them to have Mr. Krupka join as well, and said they really have to wait until September or October 1 for comparable numbers.

Vote to Request the Town Manager Use the Chapter 149A Procurement Method for Multiple School Building Projects

MOTION that the Town Manager, subject to recommendation of the Permanent Building Committee, be authorized to execute one or more contracts with a construction manager at risk contractor, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 149A and plans and procedures to effectively manage and ensure competitive fairness, evaluation and reporting in the procurement of such contract or contracts, for construction of building expansions to the Bowman, Bridge, Fiske, and Harrington Elementary Schools, the Clarke and Diamond Middle Schools, and a new Hastings Elementary School, and other planned improvements for those sites in accordance with the process established in the Lexington School Project

Consensus Plan dated March 4, 2015 and the Lexington School Department Five Year Capital Program. (Hurley, Alessandrini)
The Motion was approved 4-0.

Alessandro Alessandrini left the meeting at 11:15pm.

Review and Approve in Form the Following Policies from Section I – Instruction

IB – Academic Freedom
ID – School Day
IE – Organization of Instruction
IGA – Curriculum Development
IGB – Support Services Programs
IGD – Curriculum Adoption
IHA – Basic Instructional Program
IHAE – Physical Education
IHAI – Occupational Education
IHAM – Health Education
IHAM-R – Health Education
IHAMA – Parental Notification Relative to Sex Education Policy (L)
IHAMB – Teaching about Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco
IHB – Special Instructional Programs and Accommodations
IHBA – Programs for Students with Disabilities
IHBAA – Observations of Special Education Programs
IHBD – Compensatory Education
IHBEA – English Language Learners
IHBF – Homebound Instruction
IHBG – Home Schooling (MASC)
IHBH – Alternative School Programs
IHCA – Summer Schools
IJ – Instructional Materials
IJ-R – Reconsideration of Instructional Resources
IJJ – Textbook Selection and Adoption
IJL – Library Materials Selection and Adoption
IJLA – Library Resources
IJNDB – Standards for the Acceptable Use of Technology in the Lexington Public Schools (L)
IJOB – Community Resource Persons/Speakers
IJOE – School Volunteers
IK – Student Progress Report to Parents/Guardians
IKE – Promotion and Retention of Students
IL – Evaluation of Instructional Programs
ILD – Educational Research in the Lexington Public Schools
ILD-R – Procedures for the Policy on Educational Research in the Lexington Public Schools
IMA – Teaching Activities/Presentations
IMD – School Ceremonies and Observances
IMDC – Religion in the Lexington Public Schools
IMG – Animals in School

MOTION to approve in form Policies I, as amended (Coppe, Hurley)
The Motion was approved 3-0

MOTION to adjourn (Coppe, Hurley)
The Motion was approved 3-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda; 2014-2015 School Improvement Plans/End of Year Reports from Bowman, Bridge, Estabrook, Fiske, Harrington, Hastings, Clarke, Diamond and Lexington High School; 2015-2016 School Improvement Plans from Bowman, Bridge, Estabrook, Fiske, Harrington, Hastings, Clarke, Diamond and Lexington High School; Dinisco Designs Schools Construction Project Report; Memo from Pat Goddard for Chapter 149A Procurement Method; J, I Policies; School Committee Minutes from 4/28/15.

Voted Approved by the School Committee 2.2.16