

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, January 31, 2008
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee Members Helen Cohen, Margaret Coppe, Tom Griffiths and Ravi Sakhuja. The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:38 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz)

II. Public Comment

Ilene Benghiat: PTAs' funding of technology.

Several members of the School Committee weighed in on this topic.

Jessie Steigerwald: Increasing the technology budget even further.

III. Superintendent's Announcements

At the School Committee meeting in Boston Vito La Mura presented his report on the achievement gap. Paul Ash believes this is the best piece of work on this topic in the United States. The report documents significant achievement gaps and gives 19 specific recommendations for closing the achievement gap. Solutions must be systemic. This must be a focus of the district for many years to come. Thanks to Vito La Mura for an outstanding job in writing this report.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Tom Diaz: Announced the upcoming meetings of the School Committee. Today the Parker lawsuit dismissal was upheld by a U.S. Court of Appeals.

Tom Griffiths: Thanks to Norm Cohen for assembling the warrants and making sure everything is in order.

V. Discussion

1. Public Hearing on the FY09 Budget.

Phyllis Neufeld: (president of the LEA): Mentoring coach program.

Ilene Benghiat: Full-day kindergarten.

Jill Gaspirini (Health Coordinator for LPS): Glad to see .5 nurse position on the supplemental list.

Alexandra Joseph: All day kindergarten.

2. Establishing One Full-Day Kindergarten Classroom in Each K-5 Elementary School Starting Next Fall

Paul Ash outlined his proposal for full-day kindergarten. He described the history. The full-day kindergarten program will include METCO students. He believes the funding would be in place for a long time. Class sizes would be 16-18. There would be an open lottery for one full-day class in each school. The recommendation is subject to state funding.

There was a discussion by Committee members on Dr. Ash's proposal.

This item will be an Action Item for the meeting on Monday, February 4th.

Dawn McKenna: Concerned that opportunity is driving policy. METCO was always on a space available basis. Also you are changing equity here. Not everyone who wants it will have it. We should have a community discussion.

Committee members commented on Ms. McKenna's comments.

Ilene Benghiat: Relationship between full-day kindergarten and the achievement gap. Difference between kids who did and did not go through the program when they are integrated in first grade? Our SATS are really great, why do we need full-day K? At Hastings not really a full-day, one class goes till 2:00. People need to know the assistant is being paid by METCO if 4 kids are from METCO.

Dr. Alexandra Joseph: I commend the Committee for supporting METCO.

Jessie Steigerwald: We have an excellent preschool program funded by the town who might need the program.

3. Recommended Adjustment to the Fee Waiver Policy

Paul Ash described Francis Gillespie's passionate and articulate description of problem with fees. He described the current fee structure.

Mary Ellen Dunn described the proposed change in the fee structure. The overall budget impact is \$19,288.

Discussion about this among Committee members.

Adjustment to the Fee Waiver Policy will be an Action Item for the February 4th meeting.

4. Recommended Changes to the Superintendent's FY09 Budget

Dr. Ash described the history of recent budget developments.

Mary Ellen Dunn discussed the budget gap, revenue projections and revisions to the superintendent's budget.

Dr. Ash discussed his high priority supplemental requests. Two elementary teachers are not recommended.

Tom Griffith's motion from the last meeting about the SPED reading program and the LLP program had been tabled.

Discussion on this.

Motion to remove from the table the support from the table K-5 LLP and K-5 reading (first 3 lines) (Griffiths, Coppe)

Motion to support the superintendent's motion is now on the table. [see previous meeting]

The motion was discussed.

The motion passed 4-1 (Sakhuja).

5. FY09 Budget Discussion

Brief discussion on how the School Committee will proceed in its budget discussions.

VI. Action Items:

1. Vote to Accept Donation of \$100.00 from Lueders Environmental, Inc.

Motion to accept donation of \$100.00 from Lueders Environmental, Inc. (Cohen, Coppe). **The motion passed 5-0.**

VII. Motion to go into executive session for purposes of collective bargaining (Griffiths, Cohen). **Cohen-aye; Coppe-aye; Diaz-aye; Griffiths-aye; and Sakhuja-aye.**