

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, June 16, 2009
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee Members Rod Cole, Tom Diaz, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart.
The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Margaret Coppe)

II. Public Comment

Phyllis Neufeld (LEA President): LEA members are dismayed at the administration's decision to lay off METCO Director, Cheryl Prescott-Walden.

The LEA is disheartened by the decision to reduce and eliminate many IA positions.

Carole Bromberg (Lexington resident and one of the head teachers of the PALS program at the Bridge school): Spoke in favor of the IAs in the PALS program. Three of our staff members have had their hours reduced to 19.5 hours so as to not include benefits. I am afraid we will lose these valuable staff members. Our vulnerable students will now be subject to multiple transitions. Full time IAs help prevent out of district placements.

William Huff (METCO parent): Presenting on behalf of the Boston METCO family. We do support Dr. Ash, the School Committee and the community at large. We feel our input was disregarded. We would like to meet with Dr. Ash over the summer. We want to understand how our transportation needs will be met. We want some say in how the new Director position will be filled before it is put into place. We hope to continue the open communication with Dr. Ash going forward.

Elizabeth Sackton (Chair of Lexington SPEDPAC): Reflections on the past year. Grateful for administration's participation with the PAC. Concerned with a pattern of communication where no parent input is sought for programmatic changes affecting vulnerable populations.

Myra Marshall (SPEDPAC Parent, ILP program at Clarke): There are ten of us. We want Lexington to meet our children's needs in district; we hope that they will be able to continue on to the high school. We would like to work collaboratively with you.

Sharon Kingsbury (Bridge School Literacy Specialist): We are lucky to have high quality people working as IAs in the PALS program, reducing their hours may be detrimental to the children.

Gretchen Seegers and Marcia Fox (PALS parents): Talked about the merits of the PALS program and the importance of the relationships between the IAs and the children. We agree there should be open communication with parents.

III. Superintendent's Announcements

1. We had a terrific dedication of the pre-K playground. Thank you to Town Meeting and the town residents for the funds for the playground.
2. Kudos to Josh Frost, chair of the Clarke Math Department and coach of the Math Counts Team, for the book he just published, "Practice Competitions for Math Counts" by Josh Frost.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Tom Diaz: The Ad Hoc Fiscal Policy Committee will issue an interim report at the end of this month and a final report in time for the fall budget process. We'll be talking about how the town should use its reserves. In the last several years town revenues have grown about 6% a year. Next year we are expecting about a half a percentage point of growth.

Rod Cole: Thomas Plati, the technology consultant, had not surveyed the students and I got a letter from a student, Liam G., about technology issues. Some of these tech savvy students could be involved in these tech issues.

Paul Ash: I forwarded the letter to Thomas Plati, who said it was a phenomenal letter and he absolutely wants to get students involved.

Rod Cole: I am concerned about how we do enrollment projections. I'll bring a proposal to the Committee in the fall about what a study would look like on this issue

Jessie Steigerwald: First, thank you to the Lexington Minuteman for updating us on the Washington D.C. field trip. I am glad they assured us of our students' safety.

I left our last meeting very unsettled, this is along the theme of trust. The same was true of the METCO meeting. I am committed to trying to make sure we have trust in all these sensitive issues. We need to figure out more of what we have been doing right. I ask Dr. Ash to reconsider Cheryl Prescott-Walden. I urge Dr. Ash to reconsider and include parents in the search for an interim Director.

There could be an ongoing annual Survey Monkey of parents about important roles and important programs that could be taken into account by the superintendent.

If someone is being let go, there should be a plan for the information getting out.

Mary Ann Stewart: The Board of elementary and secondary Education for the state is going to be considering a draft of parent involvement as a statewide policy.

I have typed up reports on my liaison assignments since the beginning of April.

Margaret Coppe: The Ad Hoc Facilities Committee had their first meeting and will report in the fall.

The annual evaluation of superintendent by the School Committee has begun.

V. Discussion Items

1. Update: Year 3 Mathematics Curriculum Review. The update was presented by Carol Pilarski. She spoke with gratitude about the members of the mathematics curriculum task force before focusing on the substance of her presentation by grade level. One hundred and seventy four teachers participated as well as Karen Tripoli, K-5 Math Department Head, Josh Frost, Clarke Math Department Chair, John De Marco, Diamond Math Department Chair and Gary Simon LHS Math Department Chair. Networking and collaboration among teachers increases student achievement. The finished report will be ready in Jan 2009. There were comments and questions from the Committee.
2. Update: Year 2 Science Curriculum Review. The update was introduced by Dr. Lynne Celli, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development and was presented by Fran Ludwig K-5 Science Curriculum Coordinator, Dr. Valerie Franks (Diamond Science Department Chair), Rick Tibault (Clarke Department Chair) and Whitney Hagins LHS Science Department Chair. Community members Charles Martin and Michael Adler—both retired engineers—also served on the committee. There has been investigation and development of the implementation of an appropriate technology and engineering program at the middle school level. Goals for year three were laid out for each level.

There were questions and comments from the Committee.

3. Report on Full-Day Kindergarten. Presented by Carol Pilarski. She reported on the parent and teacher surveys taken at the end of the year. Kathy McCarthy, Department Head K-5 Literacy, reported on some of the student assessments.

There were comments and questions from the Committee.

4. Student Activity Policy – Second Reading. Updates presented by Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent.

Motion to waive the third reading of the School Activity Policy and adopt the Student Activity Account Policy as we see before us (Steigerwald, Diaz). The motion passed 5-0.

5. School Committee Email

Motion to remove this from the table (Diaz, Steigerwald).

There was discussion about the issue of how to access the School Committee via email and who else has access to the School Committee's emails.

There was an agreement that there be a direct link to the School Committee Web page on the Lexington Public Schools' homepage.

VI. Action Items

1. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 24, 2009
2. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 28, 2009
3. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 5, 2009

Motion to approve School Committee minutes of April 28th 2009 and May 5th 2009 (Cole, Steigerwald). **The motion passed 5-0. Minutes from February 24, 2009 must be amended and will be voted on at the next meeting.**

VII. Motion to Adjourn (Steigerwald, Stewart). **The motion passed 5-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40.