

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, May 31, 2011
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Mary Ann Stewart, School Committee Members Sandro Alessandrini, Bonnie Brodner, Margaret Coppe and Jessie Steigerwald and student representative Noah Coolidge. The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Chair Stewart)

II. Public Comment

Paul Skerker (Winthrop Road): As a parent of two children in LPS. I am here to talk about the teachers in Lexington. We are lucky to have many wonderful teachers in Lexington. The classes my children love are those with high quality teachers. We need to keep the excellent teachers motivated and happy. Dr. Fiveash is one of those teachers who is outstanding. I know people who had him over 30 years ago who say he is the best teacher they have ever had. I was sad to hear he was retiring. We need to keep excellent people like him for as long as they want to be here. Dr. Fiveash is leaving not because he wants to but because others believe it is time for him to leave.

Ilene Benghiat (Sunny Knoll Avenue): I am also speaking on the recent retirements of some outstanding teachers. We encouraged our son to take Latin because Dr. Fiveash was the teacher. The impression I have gotten is that this is not his choice to retire. On a larger note there seems to be a trend of experienced teachers leaving the school system—perhaps some who teach in out-of-the box ways. This trend of standardizing is having a negative impact on our children. I am concerned that we are not paying attention to the strengths of the teachers who teach in a way that may not be the standard. These teachers have a lot to offer other teachers and students. I wonder if the School Committee is at some point going to discuss these concerns of parents about standardization and experienced teachers leaving.

II. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Jessie Steigerwald: Thank you to Suzie Barry and the Town Celebrations Committee for organizing the events. It was great to see so many people out: the LHS marching band, the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts and many veterans.

I wanted to thank the staff and students at LHS who put on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* this year. The adults who worked on this provide a great example of collaboration.

I encourage people to read the Minuteman article about Mr. Bogart.

I would like to request a discussion of teacher morale as an agenda item. We have seen enough concerns including Mr. Bogart's quote about a climate in which teachers do not feel comfortable speaking out if they have concerns. If LEA President Phyllis Neufeld could give a presentation or if we could see some data about this it would be helpful.

Mr. Bogart said that he did not feel over the years that anyone in the administration expressed direct appreciation, I greatly appreciate the incredible amount of time the staff puts in.

The Chair noted that there is a structure in place with regard to concerns and agenda items. If any member wants to have anything on an agenda they need to bring it forward to the Chair and/or the Superintendent. School Committee has a limited purview and not every subject is appropriate for School Committee members to bring forward in a public meeting. She indicated that she noted Ms. Steigerwald's concerns and will discuss with Dr. Ash.

Ms. Steigerwald: When Ms. Coppe was chair and someone brought forward a concern about a staff member Ms. Coppe gave a good explanation of the limited role that the School Committee plays in handling personnel decisions. I think the public would appreciate an explanation of our role.

III. Discussion Items

1. English Language Arts Curriculum Review – Year Two. Introduced by Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development. The goals of a curriculum review are to provide horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment. We want to ensure that a common core exists. Ms. Pilarski thanked the ELA curriculum review committee. This committee is the first to be using Atlas Rubicon, which allows the work of the Committee to be shared with a broader audience. Ms Pilarski thanked and introduced the committee members who were present. Kathy McCarthy, K-5 Literacy Department Head began the presentation. Ms. McCarthy outlined the main ideas from the Common Core State Standards, which had to be taken into consideration. Reading and writing non-fiction are very important. Starting in kindergarten students will be writing in three genres: personal narrative, informational and persuasive writing. She discussed a comparison of the 2001 and 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks. Technology has a much more prominent place today. Standards will be reviewed with a focus on: endurance, leverage and preparation for the next level. She described how Atlas Rubicon works. Because there are so many standards we must prioritize. The Committee also looked at assessments. There was a lot of Professional Development (PD) in ELA this year. They reviewed Response to Intervention strategies and are working on a standards-based report card.

Anna Monaco, Assistant Principal at Clarke presented the work of the committee with regard to the middle school. She thanked Tony Palladino and Barbara Beckett for their work as ELA Dept chairs at the middle schools. We looked at the data as they apply to the standards. Ms. Monaco discussed MCAS data, PLCs, and how PLCs and data teams relate to ELA curriculum review. Middle School collaboration has been very successful in giving the

children across the district a common experience. She discussed technology in ELA, demonstrated Inspiration software and then discussed next steps for the middle school level. Dane Despres will be the new ELA Department Head for both middle schools

Liz Crowell, LHS ELA Department Head, discussed the effects of switching from a content-based curriculum to a skill-based curriculum on both the teacher and the student.

Kathy McCarthy thanked the Committee and the administration and entertained questions.

There were questions and comments from the Committee.

2. Update on Anti-Bullying Intervention Program. Presented by Chris Greeley, Assistant Director for Student Services. Ms. Greeley thanked the committee that worked on this program including Tim Zhu, a junior at LHS who was present at the meeting. Our bullying plan and policy was accepted on first review by the state. We had extensive PD. Administrators have outlined procedures regarding bullying. There were a number of programs and initiatives that took place this year. Cyberbullying is a problem. There is still a lot of confusion about what constitutes bullying. Some of the procedural requirements have been found to be very cumbersome. Ms. Greeley discussed next steps including further education of LPS employees and citizens.

There were questions and comments from the Committee.

V. Action Items

1. Vote to Not Participate in the State's School Choice Program. Dr. Ash recommended that the practice of not participating in the state's school choice program be continued.

Motion to not participate in the state's school choice program (Coppe, Steigerwald). The motion passed 5-0.

2. Draft Animals in Schools Policy – First Reading. Presented by Margaret Coppe, Chair of the Policy Sub-Committee. After discussion the Committee agreed to add the words “or miniature horse” in line 36 add after the word “dog.”

At the next meeting we will have the second reading and vote at the same time.

Motion to approve the first reading of the Animals in Schools Policy (Brodner, Alessandrini). The motion passed 5-0.

3. Medication Policy – Third Reading. Presented by Margaret Coppe. Ms. Coppe explained that the LPS medical staff has standing orders on how to proceed in the case of an unknown life-threatening allergic reaction.

Motion to approve the third reading of the Medication Policy (Alessandrini, Brodner). The motion passed 5-0.

4. Vote to Accept a \$750 Donation from the Intel Involved Matching Grant Program to Bridge School.

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$750 donation from the Intel Involved Matching Grant Program to the Bridge School (Steigerwald, Coppe). The motion passed 5-0.

5. Vote to Accept a \$6,000 Donation to the Nick Barnett Science Olympiad from Shire Corporation.

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$6,000 donation to the Nick Barnett Science Olympiad from Shire Corporation (Alessandrini, Brodner). The motion passed 4-0-1 (Steigerwald).

6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 23, 2011.
7. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 28, 2011.
8. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 30, 2011.
9. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 4, 2011.
10. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 26, 2011.

School Committee minutes of 3/23, 3/28, 3/30 and 4/4 were approved by unanimous consent as presented.

Ms. Steigerwald had several amendments to the minutes of 4/26/11: Suzie Barry was misspelled and Mr. Alessandrini said "single" not "singular." Ms. Steigerwald requested that the Member Concerns she raised on this day be included. She stated that she spoke to Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of the MASC who said that the minutes belong to the full Committee and a majority of the members could decide to include Member Concerns, or not. She asked that Member Concerns be included.

Chair Stewart suggested that these concerns would best be discussed offline, and she believes this issue has been resolved. The Committee already has a structure in place regarding what gets recorded in minutes and it may be possible to take up the issue at a future retreat.

Ms. Steigerwald disagreed that the Norms offered guidance on the minutes and felt that the minutes were intended to reflect what happened in a meeting. Even if a norm was not followed, the minutes should record what took place at the meeting.

Mr. Alessandrini stated that it would be helpful if minutes would assist a person who could not attend or view the meeting so they would know what happened.

Ms. Steigerwald and the Chair agreed to discuss offline and to return to the 4/26 minutes at a future meeting.

Motion to adjourn (Steigerwald, Coppe) The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Documents: *Meeting agenda; memo from Kathleen McCarthy and The English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Review Committee, to Dr. Paul Ash and Members of the School Committee, re: Summary of the work of the English Language Arts and Literacy Review Committee, Year 2; memo from Christine Greeley, Assistant Director Student Services, to Superintendent Paul Ash, re: Status Report on Anti-Bullying Law; draft Animals in Schools Policy; third reading Medication Policy; letter from Bridge Principal Margaret Colella to Lexington School Committee re: \$750 donation from Intel to the Bridge School; letter from Craig Hall, Director, Lexington Community Education, to Members of the Lexington School Committee, re: \$6,000 donation to the Nick Barrett Science Olympiad from Shire Corporation; School Committee minutes of: 3/23/11, 3/28/11, 3/30/11, 4/4/11 and 4/26/11.*