

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, June 5, 2012
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Dr. Paul B. Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice-Chair; School Committee Members Bonnie Brodner, Mary Ann Stewart, and Jessie Steigerwald, and Noah Coolidge, Student Representative

The minutes were taken by Jean Curran, School Committee Secretary

The Meeting Convened at 7:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome:

The Chair called the meeting to order and invited public comment.

There were no public comments.

II. Superintendent's Announcements

Dr. Ash announced that Anna Monaco will be the new principal of Clarke Middle School beginning on July 1, 2012 and thanked Dr. Flynn for his work at Clarke.

Dr. Ash provided an update on the new program entitled "Today's Students / Tomorrow's Teachers." There is funding that will allow four African American high school freshman to participate in a program that tries to recruit ethnically and economically diverse students to become teachers, by giving them exposure to and preparation for the field, helps them get into college and in many cases qualifies them for tuition discounts. There will be an open house this Thursday in the Library Media Center from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. Dr. Ash would like to put this item on the agenda for next Fall so the Committee can meet and listen to the students and advisor's experience.

Dr. Ash announced that the Director of Special Education search did not produce the right candidate for Lexington. Dr. Ash believes that leaving this position unfilled is better than hiring the wrong person. Diane Pelletier, a candidate for Interim Director of Special Education will be visiting the schools and meeting with faculty, staff and parents. If this process yields strong support he will be making a recommendation next Tuesday for appointment. He will then come back with steps for next year.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Mary Ann Stewart announced what a pleasure it was for the High School Commencement and congratulated Noah Coolidge and all the 2012 graduates and thought it was a wonderful experience. She also wanted to know from Dr. Ash if there

was a Committee meeting next Tuesday, if he would provide a short update on school bus registration signup.

Jessie Steigerwald congratulated all the *a capella* singers at the spring jam and thought they were all amazing singers.

Alessandro Alessandrini congratulated all high school seniors on their graduation. He then presented Noah Coolidge with a gift from the Committee.

Margaret Coppe reminded everyone that bus sign up for next year is going on now until June 15th. Signing up now guarantees a seat on the bus and after that it is on a seat by seat basis. If anyone has questions, please call the business office. She encouraged everyone to sign up for the bus.

IV. Agenda

1. Vote to Approve 2012-2013 Clarke Middle School Grade 8 Spanish Field Trip to La Guácima de Alajuela, Costa Rica, March 7-16, 2013

Dr. Steven Flynn, Principal Clarke Middle School presented next year's 8th grade Spanish Field Trip for students to travel to Costa Rica for approximately thirty students and three chaperones. There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding financing, donations, financial aid, and host families.

Motion to Approve 2012-2013 Clarke Middle Schools Grade 8 Spanish Field Trip to La Guacima de Alajuela, Costa Rica, March 7-16, 2013. (Stewart, Brodner). **The Motion was approved** (4-1, Steigerwald opposed)

2. Discussion of 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 School Improvement Plans

Dr. Ash invited all principals to come forward and explained why these plans are so important as it looks at how they can build a more effective school. He wants school goals to align with district wide goals. If teachers look at student performance and work, use that information in real time to modify their instruction more, then students will achieve at a higher level. He stated that this really reflects what they are trying to do at the district level and believes that it will be a long lasting goal. Increasing student pro-social behavior and resiliency, and reducing sources of unhealthy student stress will improve student academic performance and well-being. He believes the schools are more intentional about what healthy behavior looks like. The Committee posed questions to the principals regarding pro-social goals and how the schools address the individual needs of children, technology in the classroom, school facilities, the iPad project, capital budget needs, SPED staffing, and ECOVE software. The principals spoke about their individual schools and what steps would be taken to monitor and assess goals. The Committee also inquired about each principal's work with site councils.

Thomas Plati, Director of Education Technology and Assessment, addressed the Committee on school and district websites as well as the need for more trainers to assist the teachers in technology training.

3. Report on Improving Professional Relationships

Dr. Ash presented the Report on Improving Professional Relationships PowerPoint presentation to the Committee. He thanked Phyllis Neufeld, teachers, and staff on thinking of ways to create a better school system. His presentation discussed what needs to be done to build positive relationships and went over the LPS core purposes (i) academic excellence, (ii) create a caring and respectful environment and (iii) continuously improve the school district. This happens because we hire fabulous faculty and staff, performing and working together and promoting the students' pro-social goals and helping teachers be the most effective teachers. Culture should be respectful, safe, supported, innovative, and continually building improvement for professional learning. Mr. Wellman's report cited multiple causal factors for influencing morale (external – economic, policy, policy pressures; internal (district history, personnel changes, shifting goals, changes in working relationships). Dr. Ash shifted his remarks from the Wellman report to what they are doing within the District. The report cited three themes (i) culture of high expectations, (ii) collaboration for success and (iii) leadership capacities. His handout tonight, which he believes should be the focus over the next year, will be available online.

Dr. Ash then presented the next steps which included (i) Steering Committee (LEA & Administration), (ii) district focus, and (iii) school focus. The district level includes (i) clarify the district vision, (ii) prioritize projects (concepts known as fragmentation and initiative fatigue) what do we really want to focus on to increase morale and effectiveness; too many initiatives create frustration leading to low morale, (iii) clarify key terms (be clearer about what we mean), (iv) improve K-12 Meetings (i.e., special education), (v) enhance skills to manage difficult conversations, (vi) expand leadership skills for all staff members. Professional development programs to include (i) expanding leadership training for existing leaders, (ii) emerging leaders, (iii) and teacher leaders without a formal role. He believes that this will take time to implement and is willing to take the time to develop these skills.

At the district level Dr. Ash intends to (i) increase visibility by K-12 administrators, (ii) improve K-12 special education meetings, (iii) clarify the district's long-range vision and leverage short-term goals consistent with long range planning, and (iv) model caring and respectful relationships at all times Everyone must respectful.

At the school level Dr. Ash would like to see (i) communication (open and honest, increased listening, refining work with difficult conversations/managing conflict), (ii) celebration (ways that people can be seen and recognized) this is very important for teachers, (iii) concentration (prioritize high leverage goals), (iv) clarification (what is mandatory versus voluntary time, roles/responsibilities, decision-making processes, key terms), (v) climate (caring and respectful relationships), and (vi) continuous improvement (a culture reflection, conversation and collaboration). This also means change which can be a problem if it is not stated clearly, managed and implemented.

The next steps include school level – priorities, sufficient time and resources, building trust in a caring atmosphere, increase opportunities for meaningful involvement through improved communication, clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making. He is looking forward to this summer with the LEA and Committee and working with principals next year to develop action steps and periodic sharing with the Committee. There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding next steps, training and collaboration.

4. Superintendent’s Evaluation by School Committee Members

The Chair gave a brief overview of the evaluation process, which included public comment, survey, self-evaluation by Dr. Ash as well as individual evaluations by the members of the Committee. Each member orally presented their evaluation to Dr. Ash. The Chair agreed to combine the evaluations into one document for the public record. Committee members had until Friday to submit their evaluations to the Chair for inclusion.

5. Vote to Approve Recommended 2013-2014 School Calendar

Motion to Approve Recommended 2013-2014 School Calendar (Brodner, Alessandrini) **The Motion passed** (5-0).

Carol Pilarski addressed the Committee regarding shading of extra days in June on the school calendar and will look into updating those days throughout the year as snow days are used.

6. Vote to Approve Recommended Contract for Food Services

Dr. Ash and Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business addressed the Committee regarding new food service regulations and introduced Whitsons Culinary Group, the recommended new food service provider for the Lexington Public Schools, the current process for finding a new service provider and community expectations. There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding the new contract, cafeteria staff, vending machines and nutrition education.

Motion: Whitsons Culinary Group is awarded a five-year Food Service Management Company contract pending successful execution of contract documents with the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education, the district and the Food Service Management Company (FSMC). (Stewart, Steigerwald). **The Motion passed** (5-0).

7. Vote to Accept an \$845 Donation from a Wilson Farms’ Shop at Wilson Farms School Fundraiser to Lexington High School

Motion to Accept, with gratitude, an \$845 Donation from a Wilson Farms’ Shop at Wilson Farms School Fundraiser to Lexington High School. (Steigerwald, Brodner) **The Motion was approved** (5-0).

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 p.m.

Documents: Meeting Agenda; Lexington Public Schools Field Trip Request Form from Grade 8 Spanish at Jonas Clarke Middle School for trip to La Guacima de Alajuela, Costa Rica March 7th – 16th, 2013; 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 School Improvement Plans; PowerPoint Slides on Improving Professional Relationships; 2013-2014 Lexington Public School Calendar; Memorandum from Mary Ellen Dunn to Dr. Paul Ash dated May 31, 2012 regarding Required Action for School Food Authorities (SFAs) Contracting with a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) – Award for Five Year Contract; Letter from Natalie K. Cohen, Principal Lexington High School dated May 18, 2012 to Dr. Paul Ash regarding donation from Wilson Farm.

Voted by the School Committee _____ July 17, 2012 _____