

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021**

**7:00 PM**

**ZOOM Meeting**

**Present**

Ellen Joachim, Chair; Carole Kasper, Vice-Chair; Cara Endyke-Doran; Harold Engstrom; Kevin Matthews; Candace Miller

**Also Present**

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal; Kirsteen Patterson, Director of Finance and Operations; Art Reilly, Director of Athletics; JK Park and David Grace, Global Scholars Program; Danielle Weisse, ExecTA; Riya Misra, Student Senate

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Presentation**

David Grace and JK Park, Co-Advisors of the Global Scholars Program presented an overview of the program which is currently in its sixth year. This year there are 14 students who will graduate as Global Scholars, 24 students in the Class of 2022, and 16 students in the Class of 2023. Despite the challenges of this pandemic year, the capstone projects have been a fascinating example of the creative endeavors of LS students. The goal of the program is for students to learn to reflect on their experiences as global citizens, the development of empathy and its concurrent increase in knowledge of the lives of fellow human beings in other parts of the world – their particular challenges and shared challenges despite cultural differences. Travel engenders a degree of self-reflection and sensitivity into the human condition in general. Students learn to examine their own culture critically and issues such as gun control, climate change, inequality and many others through a global lens. These issues are all part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The LS Global Scholars program, in alignment with the LS Portrait of a Graduate, promotes within its students a growth mindset, critical thinking, reflective self-awareness, and creative and innovative thoughts to improve the world for all its citizens. Despite current travel limitations and lack of cross-cultural service opportunities, LS students have found a way to connect through technology and have found creative and innovative ways to explore and reflect on global issues. Mr. Park and Mr. Grace would like to see a future in which every LS student becomes a Global Scholar to prepare them for being citizens of one world.

A number of the capstone projects involve research on comparisons of the effect of COVID19 responses in different countries; the effect on education of the pandemic among students in

other countries; the effect of social media on students and how it differs from country to country; comparing immigration policies from 1950 to today; and the power and influence of communication styles on international relations – to name just a few. Ms. Wong remarked that preparing LS students for the future – for their future – is one of the primary goals of educators at LS. Social entrepreneurship, creativity, problem solving, empathy and finding points of understanding are all skills that will be required in our increasingly interconnected world that is our students' future.

Mr. Park and Mr. Grace commended the students for their ability to make the most of technology and produce truly inspiring ideas for their capstone projects.

### **Public Comment**

#### **Kathleen McConnell, Sudbury**

Despite knowing that questions regarding Spring reopening have been requested to wait until the reopening plan has been discussed later in the meeting, I am going to now. LS students should be back in school full time on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Neither this committee nor this administration has prioritized the students enough. It has been exhausting to advocate for my child and these students. The pandemic has been difficult enough for everyone and the frustration of having to teach and support our students has been exhausting. And I am in health care. Schools all over the country with smaller spaces, more students, and fewer resources have been open to all students since the fall. The data and science have been consistently ignored, just as the students and parents have been ignored. The excuses for why our students are not engaged in full time in-person learning continue to pile up. Students are being tested weekly, spacing is now down to 3 feet, teacher and staff vaccinations are underway. Variants: this March was going to be the worst month yet, but Sudbury is now in the green, hospitalizations and deaths continue to decline. Teachers needing more time to prepare – It is my understanding that these plans had to be in place last June. Now I am being told that traffic is going to be an issue but this was apparently not a problem for the 4-day proposal last month. And finally, the repetitive concern about Cohort R, a minority of students. Where is the concern for the majority of students? Where we are now is just not acceptable. Many kids are struggling because of the inaction. Many students are struggling emotionally although to remind you according to Harold this is not the responsibility of the public schools. I am again asking you to do what you have been hired and elected to do. Get our kids back in school. I am again offering my time to help in any way possible to make this happen. I am actually going to Curtis tomorrow to build desks so that students can return to full time in-person on April 5<sup>th</sup>. I have time, whatever I can do to help. Please set the return date for April 5<sup>th</sup>, for all kids' sake, especially the seniors. Thank you.

#### **Christianne Murray, Sudbury**

For context, I would like to give you a list of Massachusetts schools offering six or fewer hours in school per week. Most schools offer double the hours that LS does. Blackstone Valley Regional Technical School, Blue Hills Regional Technical School, Canton, Four Rivers Charter School, LS, Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School, Minute Man Regional Technical School, Martha's Vineyard Charter, Maynard, North Adams, Pittsfield, Reading, Sturgess Charter Public

School, Tri-County Regional Technical School. I moved to Sudbury for the School Systems. It is unacceptable in my opinion that today we are still in the exact same hybrid model that we have been in since September 2020. This administration and this school committee has not provided for our children's education in any real capacity this year. I don't believe any of the School Committee members should remain on this committee.

**Dawn Solowey, Sudbury**

I want to start off thanking Commissioner Reilly and his staff for ordering that schools reopen for full in-person learning this spring. At least 28 area high schools have announced full reopening by or before early April. LS should not remain in the bottom 6% of in-person learning hours statewide but should reopen fully by April 5<sup>th</sup>. LS parents have offered to help. LS should not be searching at the last minute for districts with latest re-openings to excuse the delay. Under resourced towns like Framingham, Waltham, Maynard and Hudson are not similarly situated nor is Concord-Carlisle or Wayland whose students have enjoyed double the in-person hours. We certainly should not wait for the state to order LS on two weeks' notice to re-open. The only reason the state has not set a date is because some towns have been mired in financial disarray and deteriorating buildings. Others have K-12 to stagger. LS has massive resources, a huge modern building, every conceivable protocol, green/gray COVID levels and only 9-12. The state put on overwhelming expert evidence on March 5<sup>th</sup>, that kids need full time in-person learning asap. Study after study confirms this. LS kids and parents confirm it, a health practitioner who treats LS kids told you on March 4<sup>th</sup> that "it is time to get our kids back in school, reconnected to their social and academic world, and to chip away the deleterious impact that COVID has had on their development and wellbeing." So where is the sense of urgency? LS kids have been out of school for a year. The seniors' last day is May 27<sup>th</sup>. Every day that LS delays increases the damage to learning and mental health and gambles with the awful risk of a mental health tragedy in our midst. I urge you to do the right thing by the kids and fully reopen on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Thank you.

**Sharon Schmidt-Gross, Sudbury**

As we are over a year in the pandemic, I have come to some conclusions. We have a great team of teachers and school staff that went above and beyond in being creative in their work and personal lives. I can say in the same sentence that the school committee failed my students for failing to provide their education. By providing them only 6 hours of in person education per week. And failed us Sudbury residents financially because we paid the taxes but did not receive what we paid the taxes for. You have given us every excuse why not to add more personal hours. You have explained how complicated every move or change is. And are no giving us excuses of how much time it takes to move and measure classrooms. School Committee members, I would like to remind you that the taxpayers from both towns voted for you and you are supposed to represent us. The truth is most of you have failed the job. You should think how you can compensate the kids and parents. Thank you.

**Cara Cohen, Sudbury**

I talked to families and surrounding districts because I am an educational consultant. All districts are working to increase hours of students in school. I cannot say the same about this

district. Our children are supposed to be learning in person and in school. This is the norm. We have a pandemic, however, the ultimate goal is to get back to normal and have our children back into school. It is incredibly frustrating. Bella you gave comprehensive reasons: scheduling, freshmen, etc. This is insanity – it should not be parents and kids pushing to get kids back into school. Why has there been no planning for increased hours in school. We have heard repeatedly that our kids could be back in school full time.

### **Information and Discussion**

Spring Sports Update and Rugby Approval.

Art Reilly reported that Fall 2 was going well for Cheer, Football, Volleyball and Indoor Track. He thanked the Committee for supporting Athletics and came to request approval for rugby. At this point, Art fully endorses Rugby. His research shows that the only positive cases have had to do with social events. There are guidelines and protocols in place for rugby and coaches are on board. There are approximately 70 students signed up and registered. Coach Sarah Greeley is on the MIAA board. We have a very qualified staff. About 70% of student athletes are being tested regularly for COVID.

***VOTE: Carole Kasper offered a motion to approve the spring sport of Rugby, to begin with other LS spring sports on April 26, 2021. Harold Engstrom seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.***

Mr. Reilly made the school committee aware that bus transportation would be offered for athletic competitions once school reopened full time. We hope to use the vans and buses, use seating charts, and contact tracing.

### **Recognitions**

Ms. Wong recognized Virginia Blake, Peter Elenbaas, Tracy Ryan, members of the Learning Continuity Council as well as Susan Shields, Sandy Crawford, and Megan Notari for their work in preparing for full in-person learning. She thanked the Building and Grounds crew for their assistance in preparing classroom layouts.

SERF held a virtual college fair from March 14-20. It is a great resource for our students and was their 13<sup>th</sup> annual college fair.

Ms. Wong recognized the music ensembles that performed on March 12. Please access SudburyTV to view the extraordinary musical performances. Ms. Wong was impressed with the students abilities, after practicing as Cohort A and Cohort B, to then put their performances together. Thomas Grandprey, Michael Bunting, Kyungnam Oh, and Elyssa Putukian provided expert musical guidance for the students. Ms. Wong thanked the Orchestra Director, Kyungnam Oh, for including her in the orchestra performance.

In addition, Ms. Wong recognized the LS Counselors who have continued with the programming generally presented in person by retooling it for remote delivery. They have continued to address the mental health of students with the depression workshop presented during

Wellness classes. The curriculum on substance abuse will be presented to students later this month.

### **Student Senate Report**

Riya Misra reported that the student survey will not be distributed. Students are happy to be returning to school full time. A survey may be created later once the new learning model has been experienced. At the March 17 meeting of the Student Senate, Ms. Wong and two seniors joined the meeting to discuss re-opening. Lastly, the senate continues working on the Tshirt fundraiser. The LSPO and a SERF grant will be supporting the initiative.

### **METCO Parent Representative Report**

There was no METCO Parent Representative Report.

### **Teachers' Association Report**

Danielle Weisse reported that a Professional Development Day would be held on March 31<sup>st</sup> with a number of interesting topics provided by our own staff, centralized around the theme of Respecting Human Differences. The faculty thanks LSPO parents who have assisted in making vaccination appointments which has been much appreciated. Teachers are working with students on course selections for next year to make sure the students are well-placed. The scheduling process is individualized and intensive.

### **Superintendent/Principal Report**

Ms. Wong introduced the full in person learning plan. The DESE directive leaves the date for high school re-opening to be determined. Guidance for grades 9-12 will not be determined until April. A determination regarding MCAS will be announced in April.

We plan to return all grades fully in person on April 26<sup>th</sup> after the April break. Ms. Wong has read letters for and against returning fully in person from parents and students. She hopes to convey reasons for re-opening on April 26<sup>th</sup> five days/week with a shorter day on Wednesday's. Most significantly, there will be 3 foot distancing between masked students. However, when students are eating or having a mask break, the distancing will be 6 feet. Reopening depends on the level of COVID infection at the end of April.

Considerations for planning on reopening are:

- measured positivity comparable to November 20, 2020
- availability of vaccine expanding to age 16+ as of April 19, 2021
- concerns regarding long-term impact of remote learning
- majority of student population will not be vaccinated
- continued prevalence of COVID and variants in the community
- recent February spike in high school infections
- recent prevalence of infection among high school students
- modifications to safety guidelines offer greater flexibility
- safety protocols will be critical (masks, handwashing, testing, self-assessment)

- impact to remote learners
- access to safe learning spaces
- timely access to and from campus
- return of temperate weather
- return of remote staff

Virginia Blake reported on the schedule for re-opening at the end of April. The school day for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday will be from 8:25am to 3:14pm. Wednesday will also begin at 8:25am, though end at 1:40pm after the activity block. Classes will be 59 minutes in length. Students will have a 25 minutes lunch break (18 minutes on Wednesdays). Lunch breaks will be scheduled for the beginning, middle and end of the long block mid-day. Bagged lunches will be provided by the LS Cafeteria. Students may bring in their lunch. Students with “MaxEd” cards may leave campus. Seating will be available in the café and in outdoor spaces.

Classes too large for a specific classroom will be split into two rooms. Students will be in supervised spaces as much as possible when not in class. Temporary staff will be retained for supervision of students and there will be additional supervisory duties for teachers. Remote learning students will maintain current classes and will live stream into in-person classes and given asynchronous assignments during class time. There will be limits on gathering in indoor spaces (e.g. hallways).

Tracy Ryan reported on transportation issues. Buses will not have seat distance requirements, windows must remain partially open and students must wear masks at all times. Students who currently hold valid parking passes will continue to be allowed to park on campus. LS is working with Sudbury Police Department with traffic issues.

Contact tracing:

- A positive student per class will yield a minimum of 6 close contacts.
- A minimum number of close contacts on a bus will depend on the number of riders.
- Rules for athletic teams have not been changed
- We may not be able to finish contact tracing as quickly as has been possible now.

MCAS scheduling for 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders in May involves a tentative plan for 4 days in May in which in-person classes do not begin until 10:30am. AP exams are scheduled for May 3 to June 11.

No high school in a contiguous school district to LS is re-opening before April 26<sup>th</sup>. Plans are continuing for Senior end of year events. Free pool testing is available for all students and staff at no cost beginning in April.

### **Director of Finance and Operations**

Kirsteen Patterson reported that results of LS’ application for FEMA funds is still anticipated in the near future. The new open enrollment in the Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan continues and a

vote will be required for continuation of the new agreement for health insurance. The LS Adult Community Education Program has pivoted to virtual classes and the spring session is beginning. Ms. Patterson recommends community members and LS students take advantage of the programs being offered. Classes offered are listed on the LS website under Community.

#### **Action Items**

***VOTE: Carole Kasper offered a motion to approve the one-year Memorandum of Agreement between the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District and the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional Teachers' Association regarding Health Insurance Items for the 2021-2022 school year aligned with the current Teachers' Association contract. Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.***

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Carole Kasper offered a motion to approve the edited LS School Committee Minutes of March 9, 2021. Harold Engstrom seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.

#### **Future Agenda Items**

There were no future agenda items.

#### **Public Comment**

##### **Julie Whitehead, Sudbury**

I appreciate all the hard work for the planning for re-opening. I am wondering how the free blocks during the day will be managed and will students be able to meet with teachers. I know that you are still in the planning phases. I presume MCAS testing days will not be available those days. Will there be sufficient tents for outside for lunch breaks? Will tents be devoted to each class? Will there be hand-sanitizers near the tents? Thank you.

#### **Adjourn**

Carole Kasper moved to close Open Session and the Committee enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto; and to review and approve executive session minutes. Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via a roll call vote. The open meeting was adjourned at 10:05pm.

Respectfully submitted.

Francy Zingale

**To view video of the meeting, please go to: <https://sudbury.vod.cstus.tv/vod>**

