

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2021**

Present

Cara Endyke-Doran, Chair; Candace Miller, Vice-Chair; Heather Cowap; Harold Engstrom; Kevin Matthews; Mary Warzynski

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Public Comment

Dawn Solowey, Sudbury

Many of us are pleased to see staff vaccination on the agenda tonight, especially on the Executive Session tonight that indicates that LS is engaging in collective bargaining with the LS Union. A staff vaccine mandate is a very important step for LS to take right now. The benefits are great. It will reduce positives among the staff, help protect the health of the school and the community more broadly, reduce faculty and staff absences from positives and quarantines, protect staff community from absences, and insure that students can continue in school learning during the coming school year. Unvaccinated employees are expensive, they impose unnecessary costs on the district with absences, substitute workers, testing and health care expenses to name just a few. You have seen that Delta Airlines is charging unvaccinated staff \$200/monthly surcharge for the company's health care plan because those employees cost employers much more than vaccinated employees. Money saved via vaccinated LS staff could be better used to fund education for student. Please let the public know tonight what time frame is being discussed for all staff to be fully vaccinated. There is no reason to wait, anyone can walk into CVS tonight to be vaccinated. When the Philadelphia school committee voted unanimously to staff mandate, its Chair said "we believe that preventing COVID 19 infections through vaccines will lead to fewer missed school days, more in person learning days and ultimately to improved student achievement. The mandate should be a full mandate, like Lexington's, announced August 2nd as a condition of full employment full stop. Staff should not be given an option to refuse vaccination to be regularly tested instead. Testing is not nearly as effective a mitigation strategy as vaccination and testing still leaves LS with problems such as much sicker staff members, needless absences and quarantines, disruption for kids, finding and paying for substitutes, and health care costs. Only a mandate is going to insure that everyone in the building has taken this critical step to protect public health whether it be a teacher, buildings and grounds personnel, facilities person or coaches. The SPS Superintendent has transparently told families that the SPS Union is open to a staff vaccination mandate. That's great news and good for them. We hope that tonight you will provide the public a similarly transparent update of the LS Teachers' Union's position. A petition is circulating in town in support of a staff mandate at both LS and SPS and has 131 signatures and counting.

With regard to the mask mandate, it is not clear why the Committee is still voting on the principal's position on mask wearing when DESE has come out with a mandate on mask wearing through October 1st. DESE's mask wearing mandate is subject to renewal by DESE past October 1 depending on public health conditions. At some point, DESE intends to make masks optional for students once a school has achieved an 80% threshold for vaccinations. This Committee would be better served to follow DESE's data driven expert-developed incremental policy tied to a specific vaccination rate. At least the Committee should vote on mandated mask wearing for kids only until October 1st and then revisit the issue at that point based on new data, vaccination rates and transmission numbers. There is no reason for the Committee to write a blank check tonight for an indefinite mandate without any specific metrics. Finally, please provide the public with an update from last week's discussion as to whether LS will be providing a vaccine clinic as so many of our peer districts are. Thank you.

Andrew Smith, Sudbury

I would like to know based on last year's data, which school activities or groups had the most COVID cases and what effect this data has on this year's COVID mitigation strategies.

Information and Discussion

Universal Masking for Students and Staff

Ms. Wong reported that since this item was placed on the school agenda, the Department of Education and Governor Baker have requested a mandate for universal masking indoors for K-12 Grades once the Board of Education approved the request. New guidance was issued yesterday, August 25th, which became the date that the requested mandate became effective through October 1st, 2021. Given the state's action, there is no longer a need to vote on Ms. Wong's recommendation regarding masks.

Mandated Testing for Participation in Certain School Activities

This item is also now moot given the above mandate for mask wearing. The testing mandate was intended to allow indoor sports players (girls' volleyball and cheer) the ability to not wear masks when performing.

The MIAA has issued guidance this morning, August 26th, that all indoor athletic participants should be masked. Consequently, the mandated testing for participation in school activities on the LS School Committee agenda has become moot. Participants in outdoor athletics need not be masked. There is no mask requirement for singing groups and wind instruments in the guidance provided by DESE. The Massachusetts Music Educators Association had previously sent out guidance for participants in chorus and wind instruments that they should be wearing masks. LS has already purchased the specialized masks for chorus and for wind instruments so masks will be worn at LS for students participating in chorus and students playing wind instruments in band and orchestra.

COVID Mitigation Strategies at LS

- Masks will be required indoors for students and staff regardless of vaccination status effective August 24, 2021. Information on suitable masks will be sent to students/families.

- Masks will be required on school transportation.
- Individual vaccination status of staff and students will be collected and shared in the aggregate
- A requirement for staff vaccination is in process
- Handwashing/hand sanitizing stations are available throughout the building
- Distancing where feasible especially when eating in cafeteria and encouraging students to outside when possible
- LS has been approved to participate in DESE sponsored testing programs
 - Weekly pool testing
 - Availability of antigen quick tests
- Contact tracing: within 3 feet of an individual who has tested positive more than 15 minutes in a 24 hour period:
 - Asymptomatic vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine
 - Symptomatic vaccinated individuals need to quarantine
 - Any unvaccinated individual needs to quarantine

An overview of community practices to mitigate spread of COVID:

- Self-monitoring and staying home sick
- Stay home if you have:
 - Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diagnosis of pneumonia/ARDS
 - Fever 100F or higher
- Stay home if you have two or more of the following symptoms:
 - Cough
 - Chills/Rigors
 - Sore Throat
 - Headache
 - Nausea/Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Nasal congestion/runny nose
 - Muscle aches
 - Fatigue
 - the school and Sudbury health department if you test positive to facilitate contact tracing.

A summary of the COVID protocols will be shared with students and families.

Upcoming parent/guardian evenings at LS

Grade 9 Parent/Guardian Night on September 9th is scheduled in person

Back to School Night on September 22nd is scheduled in person with a limit of one parent/guardian per student to both protect the in person opportunity yet diminish the number of people in a classroom and in hallways. Ms. Wong consulted with the Sudbury Health Department which felt that it was a reasonable method for making the evening possible. Ms.

Wong recognizes that both evenings are important as a means for parents/guardians to build connections with the LS community. Our grade 9 and 10 parents have had limited access to LS. The School Committee members felt that the one parent per family request was reasonable.

Ms. Endyke-Doran summarized that no action was currently necessary because of the timing of the Governor's request and the mandates sent by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding mask wearing in public schools. School Committee members reiterated the importance of community members, students and staff being vaccinated.

Action Items

Votes for mandated testing, superintendent's recommendation for masks, and other COVID mitigation strategies were unnecessary.

Future Agenda Items

There were no future agenda items.

Public Comment

Dawn Solowey, Sudbury

Why is Superintendent/Principal Wong recommending that we not do follow the "test and stay" strategy that DESE recommends?

Ms. Wong responded that if there are unvaccinated individuals who are close contacts, we would be testing them but if they remained in school it would put nurses, staff and students at risk of contracting the virus.

Andrew Smith, Sudbury

I didn't hear an answer to my previous question regarding which school activities have experienced the most COVID transmission and how is this data reflected in the mitigation strategies outlined by Superintendent/Principal Wong? Ms. Wong responded that she would contact Mr. Smith in the near future.

I think that mandated testing for the unvaccinated or for certain activities should be considered a mitigation strategy. If a close contact can provide negative test results do they still have to quarantine?

Brenda Hart, Sudbury

When is the appropriate time to have a dialog with the community so these questions can be answered. It would be helpful for participants to get simple questions answered. If the School Committee would consider that, it would be helpful. Thank you.

Adjourn

The committee will not return to Executive Session. Candace Miller offered a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Kevin Matthews. There was no further discussion. All were in favor based on a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted, Franci Zingale

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