

**LINCOLN-SADBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES
FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2020**

8:30am

Google Meet

Present

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

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:31am.

Action Item

The purpose of the meeting is to vote on a resolution regarding testing for COVID19. Ms. Joachim asked Cara Endyke-Doran and Candace Miller to present the resolution to the members.

Ms. Endyke-Doran presented a powerpoint "School Reopening and Testing". It is recognized that an in-person school environment provides educational instruction; supports the development of social and emotional skills; creates a safe environment for learning; addresses nutritional needs; and facilitates physical activity. The LS School Committee seeks to provide the best possible education experience for LS students. However, because COVID19 is a highly transmissible virus that can be spread by asymptomatic people infected with the virus; because children and adolescents infected with COVID19 are more likely to be asymptomatic; and because children and adolescents are capable of transmitting to both children and adults – all school districts are working to minimize transmission of the virus while providing a safe environment.

Key metrics for COVID suppression include epidemiologic measures: new confirmed case trend; case trend as an estimate from the new deaths trend; and new COVID hospitalizations. Responses to manage COVID transmission include testing, tracing, and supported isolation; use of masks and social distancing; protection of vulnerable populations; infection control and surveillance capacity. Most important of the above is testing, tracing and supported isolation. Lincoln and Sudbury have low positivity rates, which is fortunate but subject to change.

The purpose of the meeting today is to make the case for testing for LS students and faculty as rapid identification and supportive isolation are the keys to stopping outbreaks and maintaining schools open. Low sensitivity tests at high frequency are currently available and are cost effective. While high sensitivity PCR based diagnostics can

detect very low levels of virus and are essential for acute illness, they are less useful from a population-based perspective. Low sensitivity testing can be done in schools and homes as well as doctors' offices. Rapid identification of new cases will help keep students in schools.

The School Committee recognizes that in order to access reliable tests and funds to purchase the tests so that students can be tested twice per week, the assistance of the Commonwealth will be necessary. Ms. Miller and Ms. Endyke-Doran plan to share the LS Resolution with the Governor's Office, the Commissioner's Office, MASC, local governmental representatives and other school systems. Engagement of the Lincoln and Sudbury communities will be essential. Ms. Miller noted that finding cases before they become an outbreak is the goal in order to keep students in school. Wellesley and Worcester schools have issued a similar resolution. Massachusetts Association of School Committees Glenn Koocher recommended that the LS School Committee approve a resolution and then return it to MASC for distribution to other school committees for feedback. The resolution would then be shared with area regional school districts to enlist their support for funding and sourcing for testing for all schools.

Resolution

A RESOLUTION OF THE SEVERAL SCHOOL COMMITTEES OF MASSACHUSETTS

To His Excellency, Governor Charles Baker, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Chair James Peyser, and Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Jeffrey Riley

Whereas: children have a right to free public education, which is fundamental to academic, social, and emotional development, and

Whereas: public education also plays an important role in students' mental health, safety, nutrition, and care of children and adolescents, and school committees, school administrations, parents, and students across the Commonwealth are eager for a safe return to school this fall, and

Whereas: COVID-19 is a highly transmissible virus that can be spread by asymptomatic carriers and asymptomatic children and adolescents may transmit COVID-19 to both children and adults, reopening schools presents risks to public health. This is particularly concerning as there is no viable COVID-19 vaccine, no established cure for COVID-19, and COVID-19 may cause long-term morbidity affecting the respiratory, neurological, and cardiovascular systems. COVID-19 presents particular risk of morbidity and mortality among populations who have underlying risk factors. Despite these concerns, school districts are developing plans to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year with risk mitigation strategies within school

buildings to reduce exposure to COVID-19. These include social distancing, mask wearing, and improved HVAC systems and sanitation protocols, and

Whereas: Reducing transmission of COVID-19 requires a concerted and focused public health response which includes proactive COVID-19 testing of teachers, students, and administrators, contact tracing, and proper isolation of cases and quarantining of those who have been exposed to a COVID-19 case, and without these measures in place, we will not be able to stop broader community transmission and prevent **avoidable** morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 in our schools, and

Whereas: Recent modeling exercises show that low sensitivity tests when done at high frequencies can rapidly identify infected individuals, key to isolating the virus, stopping an outbreak and maintaining open schools. These cost effective, high frequency, low sensitivity tests are available.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

Before any district brings students back into session, we request the Commonwealth:

(1) allocate funding for regular proactive testing for teachers, staff and students in our schools;

(2) support school districts to identify and procure appropriate testing strategies and supplies, which may include low cost, low sensitivity tests to be used at high frequencies; and

(3) mandate that the MA Department of Public Health and local public health departments provide real-time data for decision-making including daily updates on the number and rates of new COVID-19 cases, percent positive tests for SARS- CoV-2, and exposed contacts in their district.

Public Comment

Q: Are you looking to require that all students be tested whether or not they are symptomatic?

A: Yes.

Q: What will be the penalty for students who will not accept testing?

A: This is not a subject for penalty but rather a strategy that enables students to remain in school. Achieving voluntary compliance will be something for discussion.

Q: Has this been done in other school districts?

A: This is early days for most schools so feedback has not been publicized.

Q: Have we gotten feedback from the Superintendent? And if so what is it?

A: Yes, Ms. Wong is very supportive of this resolution and is fully informed. Her specific comments are that she wanted to ensure that the state understood LS would like to institute testing before an outbreak.

Q: Are you planning to test before school begins or once it has begun?

A: Mr. Matthews replied that it depended upon how quickly the resolution can become an active policy

Q: With all the free testing available in the state, is it possible to have students tested before they come to school.

A: Free testing sites will only be open until September 15, 2020 in the state of Massachusetts. The testing facilities are crowded and the return of results is slow.

Vote on Resolution

Vote: Carole Kasper moved that the resolution be passed as it has been drafted with edits suggested as the Committee has so declared. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The resolution passed unanimously with a roll call vote.

Adjourn

Patty Mostue moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Candace Miller. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am with a roll call vote. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Francy Zingale