

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
AUGUST 19, 2021**

Present

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

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

Public Comment

Dawn Solowey, Sudbury

I would like to urge the committee to focus on vaccination to ensure an uninterrupted school year. LS should impose a mandate requiring faculty and staff to get vaccinated. Lexington enacted such a mandate two weeks ago. There is no reason for any unvaccinated staff person to be in the building to threaten students' uninterrupted learning. There is no need to wait for a state mandate, districts can and should impose the staff mandate on their own. Is the LS Union for or against a staff mandate? Even the MTA has supported mandates. Second, LS should be offering student vaccination clinics right now as DESE suggested. While Sudbury's teen vaccination rates are high, the same is not true for Lincoln or Boston. Brookline's clinic was yesterday. Third, LS communications to families should be urging students to get vaccinated. Instead, to date, the communications have been about rare breakthrough infections which reinforces vaccine hesitancy. Fourth, LS should be gathering and reporting the vaccine status of students. Lexington has transparently gathered such data and communicated it to its community. It will allow for better decision making. There is no HIPAA or other legal reason for not doing so. Finally, the committee should communicate the specifics of the mask mandates Ms. Wong is intending to impose on vaccinated kids. Why are we deviating from the recommendations of DESE and public health officials? When will the mask mandate for vaccinated kids end? Is the proposal to keep vaccinated kids in masks all year? What are the negative effects on vaccinated kids of masks when in the classroom, socializing with peers, learning a language, IEP's, and/or music lessons. If the committee is inclined to support a masked mandate, it should insist that on clear metrics and re-evaluate every 4-6 weeks as circumstances evolve. Thank you.

Karen Guderian, Sudbury

Even though my second and last child just graduated from LS, I am heavily invested in this town and am a realtor in town and care deeply about the quality of education of our children. After 1.5 years of disappointment, frustration, and bewilderment at how this administration and school committee were handling the education of our children, it seems

that it is continuing into the new school year. The lack of transparency, planning, and creative thinking is still rampant. No plans have been made clear regarding how you will keep the students safe in school. Why is there no talk of requiring vaccines for teachers and staff when other school systems are enacting such mandates? Most recently the MTA has come out in support of this. The governor just announced a mandate for vaccination of all state employees by the first of October. What are you waiting for? Why did Bella Wong in her one and only email to parents deal with only a mandate for wearing masks at school? Simply put, you should have issued a statement that you are mandating vaccination for teachers and staff. Vaccines are the only way to protect ourselves as a whole. They are the only way we will get out of this nightmare yet there has been no conversation about what LS is going to do other than wearing a mask. I would like to know the reason why you are not considering this. What is your reason for not tracking vaccine data of the LS community. I have written to the Town Manager, the Board of Health and the Select Board expressing my frustration with your lack of leadership and told them of our concern. Please don't allow a repeat of the 2020-2021 disastrous school year to happen again. There is too much riding on it. Thank you.

Fawn Gracey, Marlborough

I am the parent of an LS student and an SPS student. I would like to thank you for keeping our students safe last year. I sent Ms. Wong and the committee a letter in support of keeping face coverings optional this coming school year. I would like to address the Superintendent's reasons regarding mask wearing for students. "We have known since the beginning that children are not vectors for spreading COVID. It is well known that masks are not capable of filtering anything as small as COVID aerosols. Some of our loved ones cannot be vaccinated yet masks cannot materially make a difference. In controlled mask studies, it is not convincing that they make a vast difference. Negative effects in controlled studies, overwhelming numbers of children cited adverse effects of mask-wearing – some of them serious including: excess CO2 in the bloodstream, profound cognitive impairment, confusion and loss of consciousness. Let's not make this year one of a show of mask wearing. Let's give students the option of coming out from behind their masks if they are comfortable doing so. I am asking for mutual respect and the ability to make choices for my child.

Paul Landry, Sudbury

I have to LS students. I did send an email to the board members today. I wanted to share that I am opposed to a mask mandate primarily because of the physiological and psychological damage to students. I agree with DESE, if you have a student who is vaccinated, they should not be required to wear a mask. We need to look at percentage of COVID positives here in the town. The positive rate for Sudbury is 1.29 percent members of the population which is significantly low. My suggestion is that if your family is concerned, wear a mask or get a vaccination. Options to get a vaccination should be offered at LS. Parents should address these concerns. The Superintendent and Committee members should concentrate on education.

Information and Discussion

Recommendations for the upcoming school year.

Ms. Wong's recommendation, subject to periodic review, is that universal indoor mask wearing for all students and staff regardless of vaccination status will be required effective August 30, 2021, unless prohibited by behavioral, medical or religious reasons with the following limited exceptions:

- Indoor athletic team members while on the court in play as long as the member is participating in weekly COVID pool testing.
- For indoor drama practice and performance on the stage as long as the performer is participating in weekly COVID pool testing.
- Pool testing will be provided by LS at no cost to the family.

The rationale for universal masking requirement:

- COVID infection rates have increased over the summer with the advent of the Delta variant.
- Vaccinated persons tend to experience less severe outcomes when infected but can still transmit infection.
- Many family units include members who cannot vaccinate at this time.
- Implications of waning immunity for the vaccinated affecting rates of infection are not fully understood.

A review of contact tracing and quarantining updated by state of Massachusetts:

- Unvaccinated persons who are in close contact (less than 6 feet more than 15 minutes within a 24 hour period (or less than 3 feet if both parties are masked) with a person who has tested positive for COVID must quarantine.
- Asymptomatic close contact vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine.
- Asymptomatic vaccinated individuals must monitor self for symptoms and quarantine if symptoms appear.
- Bus close contacts do not have to quarantine if masks are worn and bus windows are open.
- Individuals who are close contacts and previously tested positive for COVID within the last 90 days and are recovered do not have to quarantine.

The state is providing testing options such as BiNAX antigen tests and weekly pool testing at no cost to individuals.

Masks must be worn on buses at all times as well as in school at all times, including in the Health Office. Mask refusal consequences are progressive and begin with conversation with student, ASPEN incident report, communication with parent/guardian, temporary removal from class, suspension, and/or additional consequences determined by Associate

Principal. The policy will remain in place until rescinded by the School Committee. The Sudbury Health Department is in full support of a universal mask policy at the school. There will be a periodic review of the mask policy.

Face masks should:

- Reach above the nose, below the chin, and completely cover the mouth and nostrils
- Fit snugly against the sides of the face
- Be made of at least two layers of fabric (if cloth) that you can breathe through
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damaging the material or shape (if cloth).

Neck gaiters, open-chin triangle bandanas and face covering containing valves, mesh material or holes of any kind will not be considered appropriate face coverings. If a staff member or student does not have a face covering, they will be provided with a face covering by the school district.

Ms. Endyke-Doran recommended promoting the message to the LS community to get vaccinated. Discussion ensued regarding possible mandates for vaccination, pool testing, possible vaccination clinics, and the importance of data transparency. Ms. Wong has applied to participate in pool testing and for availability of BiNAX testing.

Action Items

VOTE: Heather Cowap moved that the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District School Committee support Ms. Wong's application for State COVID testing resources. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and all were in favor via roll call vote.

Future Agenda Items

Vote on a mask policy at the next School Committee meeting.

Ms. Miller requested that mental health impacts of the continuing pandemic be considered in future.

Public Comment

Brenda Hart, Sudbury

There is a lot of discussion about misinformation, yet it would be helpful if mask guidance was more specific for maximum efficacy. If we focus on the facts of the size of the virus and the size of the space that the virus particles can pass through. If you want the best mitigating factor, using the encouragement of vaccination. What is the incentive for the students if

they get the vaccination but still have to wear masks. It seems as if the priorities are out of order. Why do vaccinated students have to wear masks when the masks provide a false sense of security.

Adjourn

Candace Miller offered a motion to adjourn, seconded by Heather Cowap. There was no further discussion and all were in favor via a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Francy Zingale

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