

November 10, 2021

### Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board – LAE

The Lawrence Alliance for Education Board meeting was held in person at the South Lawrence East Educational Complex Auditorium with the following members present: Jessica Andors (arrived at 6:15), Executive Director for the Lawrence Community Works, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee member, Julia Silverio, Silverio Insurance, Maria Moeller, CEO/The Community Group, Lawrence, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair. Daniel Rivera, CEO/President MA Development. Absent: Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, Vice President of NECC Lawrence Campus

Also present was Superintendent Cynthia Paris and Maria L. Campusano, Recording Secretary for this meeting.

Chair, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. The Chair held the Pledge of Allegiance; recognized our veterans: “everyone who has served and continues to serve our country for everything they do.” Also reminded that under public participation he will hold the time to two minutes participation; wanted to make sure everyone who signed up; had the opportunity to participate.

#### Public comment: Dr. Ventura Rodriguez called the following:

1. **Mr. H-Maali**, 53 Chester Street, Lawrence, MA

Talking about parents supporting the paraprofessionals across the LPS who had not received a job review, or need a new contract, they work so hard that they need recognition. Wishing them the best of luck in their contract’s negotiations.

2. **Ms. Susan Suliveras**, President of the Lawrence Federation of Paraprofessionals, representing 371 paraprofessionals of Local 3900. Shared her concern about the district refusal to increase the paraprofessionals’ pay, as well as hiring above the pay scale of designated new employees. Made the point that they were not there to stop the district from hiring at these rates but to increase hourly rate above the dedicated paras across the district. They were told they fall under special categories. All they want is to be retreated fairly. It will provide a negative effect on the morale of paraprofessionals across the district. Adding that 98 paras had left the district; and asked the LAE board to work with the district to increase the hourly wages of the paras so that they can feel respected by considering all paraprofessionals under special circumstances.
3. **Antoniette Oellrich**, Para Sub-Separate, non verbal and no movil students at the LHS Campus. Talked about how difficult it is to work with these students on a daily basis. two paraprofessionals and four students. Think they need more money from everything they do.
4. **Enid Santiago**, Para Sub-Sep. 25 Belleview, Lawrence, MA 01841. Spoke about treating students and practicing the golden rules or treating others the way you want others to treat you; but, double standards makes you look hypocritical in front of the students resulting in those who stay with the system during Covid and not been treated the same.
5. **Michelle Hebert**, Paraprofessional. Spoke about how is it possible to hire new staff at \$22.00 an hour while having old staff with their masters in education, qualified teachers, but had chosen to be here with their certifications in MA to teach came here to support staff; how with the money

they are making is not enough to pay the rent, food etc. cost of living up. the meeting started with the pledge religions and the last frase is justice for all; we need justice

6. **Mason Pekarovich**, Paraprofessional at the LHS Campus spoke about working with students who are Autistic and explained that he sees himself as an essential worker not only for the students but also for his colleagues. Explained that he can't afford his medical bills, can't afford to buy his partner a gift for their anniversary nor a christmas gift. Explained that he can't continue like this, that if he does not see change; this will be his last year with LPS.
7. **Juleysis Marrero**, Paraprofessional, explained how disappointed she was of having to go to the podium to explain why the paras deserve better wages and better treatment. She recalls the district wanting to have members of the Latino community to be more present in the public system so that the students can relate to while they are failing them with support, guidance which makes it almost impossible for them to succeed.
8. **Julio Ramos**, SES coach and former LH Lancer. Inquired to the board members to reflect on what the paraprofessionals were saying; while having paras leaving the district at record numbers adding that they want to feel respected, treated with dignity, and have fair wage. suggested that the board needs to do what is right for the students and employees who are the biggest assets.
9. **Michael Bresnahan**, Paraprofessional. Talked about the continuity of the board which is an example of systemic racism, adding that the diversity in the school system is not in the teachers, but, in the paraprofessionals who are not being paid enough; also suggested to create an active recruitment, to support the paras with the MTEL; they are the diversity.
10. **Nina Faria**, Paraprofessional. Compared her actual salary of 22 years to what McDonalls pay to its employees currently. The cost of living has gone up since the pandemic; however, they have not received a pay increase while the newly hired paras are making more. demanded more considerations as they provide the best support to the children they work with.
11. **Jenna Farreher**, Paraprofessional. Spoke about her highly qualified credentials including holding a professional licensure to teach history in grades 5-12th. Added that the income she made barely makes her above the federal poverty level demanding the district to pay them what they deserved. She sincerely hopes that the board takes this into consideration.
12. **Felix Gonzales**, Paraprofessional. Surprised and unfair, we talk about it on a daily basis. You should consider that and practice what you preach. Many professionals are tired, pay paraprofessionals what they deserve for a better education
13. **Sandra Ruis**, Paraprofessional. Talked about the truth of being underpaid over the years. Yet they are giving it all; expressed that paraprofessionals are making less than \$16.00. Paras are filling in for teachers positions for months with no compensation taking advantage for years. The district has the money to give everyone a raise. Asked " What loyalty means to you" because that is what we have been loyal to you.
  - a. Dr. Ventura acknowledged and appreciated all coming to express their concerns, and experiences with the board. will work with the superintendent, so the paras feel valued, compensated and act, and work in partnership with the union; to continue to support the staff and kids.
  - b. Jessica Andors, explained that the board is not allowed to discuss all the comments; we are totally taking it in and we will address it.

VOTED: To add Play Ball-Fitness and Apparel Donation Letter to the agenda

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to: Approve adding the Play Ball-Fitness and Apparel Donation Letter to the agenda; so move by Julia Silverio and Seconded by Daniel Rivera.

The Vote            Yes - Jessica Andors  
                          Yes - Julia Silverio  
                          Yes - Maria Moeller  
                          Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
                          Yes - Patricia Mariano  
                          Yes- Daniel Rivera

Jessica Andors leaves the room at 6:48 p.m.

VOTED: To approve Play Ball-Fitness Foundation and Apparel Donation of the New Balance footwear and assorted fitness apparel with a market value of approximately \$160,953.

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to: Approve the Play Ball-Fitness and Apparel Donation; So move by Julia Silverio and Seconded by Daniel Rivera.

The Vote            Yes - Julia Silverio  
                          Yes - Maria Moeller  
                          Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
                          Yes - Patricia Mariano  
                          Yes- Daniel Rivera

**Superintendent Updates:**

- Maricel Goris provided an update presentation regarding a positive climate progress report which includes: Goals and action steps recommended by the task force team on implementation of policies, mental health, joy and celebration, and a calendar of meeting dates. Superintendent Paris also highlighted other groups who had been working with the taskforce with chief of police Vasque, and the SRO Sgt. Caraballo, and the student’s cabinet who also emphasized the importance of students understanding the code of conduct, understanding the role of the law enforcement in the campus, and the workshop for parents to better understand power school data as it relates to students attendance, etc. Superintendent also highlighted meetings with community members.

Jessica Andors returns at 7:23 p.m.

- Dr. Mary Toomey, provided a presentation on the annual update of the office of student support services which is comprised of tiers supports: Response of instruction and intervention (RTII), student health and wellness, school counseling, social emotional services (SEL), and special education. Dr. Toomey acknowledged the service and dedication of the critical support staff members who serve the most vulnerable students everyday. Also shared an opportunity through the Massachusetts Special Olympics on a year long initiative to become a champion school.

- Ms. Denise Snyder, Provided an overview presentation of the LPS SY 2021-2022 Enrollment currently at 13, 254; followed by enrollment by grade (number of students are down from years ago), enrollment variance by cohort, an analysis of withdrawal that sums up to 913 concluding that covid and variance sparked concern about in person learning for some parents who could chose to keep their children at home, did, enrollment number will continue to change
  - Dr. Ventura *suggested that if it is possible to have an analysis of how many students were affected by covid protocols*
  - Jessica A. explained the *importance of getting into the attendance campaign, but also added addressing the larger issue post pandemic and how people are disengaged.*
  - Maria Moeller *brought up the indirect cause of students not having transportation and added if this data could be desegregated.*

Dan Rivera leaves the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

- Superintendent Paris provided a presentation related to the FY 2023 Budget Process which includes the timeline for the FY 23 school planning, and the budget subcommittee goals overview.
  - Dr. Ventura *asked Jessica and Noemi to help in recruiting a student representative to participate in the LAE as soon as possible.*
  - Dr. Ventura *also informed the audience about the status of the Lawrence School Committee and support on ongoing developments.*

VOTED: To approve the minutes of October 13, 2021

Vote: Upon the motion to approve the minutes of October 13, 2021; So move by Julia Silverio and Seconded by Patricia Mariano

The Vote      Yes - Jessica Andors  
                   Yes - Julia Silverio  
                   Yes - Maria Moeller  
                   Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
                   Yes - Patricia Mariano

VOTED: To approve the minutes of October 20, 2021

Vote: Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura to approve the minutes of October 20, 2021 with the addition of Maria Moeller's name to be recorded in the adjourned vote. So move by julia Silverio; Seconded by Patricia Mariano

The Vote      Yes - Jessica Andors  
                   Yes - Julia Silverio  
                   Yes - Maria Moeller  
                   Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
                   Yes - Patricia Mariano

VOTED: To go into executive session

Vote: Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura to go to executive session at 8:35 p.m, and that the meeting will not return to open session.

The Vote      Yes - Jessica Andors  
                    Yes - Julia Silverio  
                    Yes - Maria Moeller  
                    Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
                    Yes - Patricia Mariano

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Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair  
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