

March 9, 2022

### 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: Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee member, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, Vice President of NECC Lawrence Campus, Maria Moeller, CEO/The Community Group, Lawrence, Brian de Peña, Mayor, virtually present: Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair, Jessica Andors, Executive Director for the Lawrence Community Works (arrived at 6:32 p.m.), Naomi Salcedo, LHS Student Representative. Absent: Julia Silverio, Silverio Insurance

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

Patricia Mariano, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Ms. Mariano held the Pledge of Allegiance; also reminded the audience that during public speaking, participants should state their addresses and that the time was for two minutes.

#### Public comment: Ms. Mariano called the following:

In person Public Participation

1. **H. Maali, Parent** 53 Chester Street, Lawrence, MA, talked about praying for Ukraine during this critical time. Lawrence teachers deserving the best contract, Horace Man quote “Education is the best equalizer”, the citizen being upset about the paraprofessional painful testimony of the hardship, demanding the best compensation for Lawrence paraprofessionals, demanded that Lawrence Alliance for Education direct communication with the governor of MA to get post pandemic funds to help teachers and paraprofessionals.
2. **Kelly Stanisewski, Parent** 47 Hamlet Street, Lawrence, MA. Spoke about learning from Commissioner Riley granting authority by the Board of Education to institute masks wearing a mandate for all Massachusetts schools, the approval was renewed several times, always with an end date stated at the end of the last extension, one which ran out on February 28, 2022 renewal was not sought and the mandate expired. The memorandum did not reference local control as an option although the prevailing thought seems to be now the school committee has the responsibility and the right, they did say maybe under the city ordinance or Mass General Laws, but everything that I’ve read shows that you guys don’t even have the authority to be voting on this. I think the masks definitely hurt a lot of students in Lawrence, being English as a second language they can’t see mouths they can’t see faces they haven’t seen their classmates in two years I really think it should be back to the parents to decide, it should be a choice at this point. I’m asking our kids too it also has stopped their own immune system from recognizing these virus
3. **Jean Zembruski, President of the Lawrence Administration Association**, expressed a concern that many veteran administrators are leaving Lawrence to go to work in other communities due to contract negotiations, asking the board to advocate for administrators since there is no recognition or compensation to come to a win-win situation for all.

Online Public Participation

4. **James W. Jackson, Para-Sub Separate, Upper School Academy.** The mask mandate should be lifted, the masks are harmful to student's expression and mental wellbeing.
5. **Nicholas Rucci, Teacher, Parthum M.** Per mask mandate by CDC and local governmental policies, masks should be optional for staff and students in Lawrence Public Schools.
6. **Angel Cruz, Parent,** believes that for the wellbeing of the children, it is crucial to wear the mask, given that children do not have the age to be vaccinated.
7. **Amy Porter, Parent,** wrote, masks should be a choice each family should make at this point. It is time for kids to breathe and get some normalcy.
8. **Anny Gonzalez, Parent,** is in disagreement with the removal of the masks.
9. **Antonio Castro, Parent.** It is better that they continue wearing masks to make sure children are not facing any health issues.
10. **Carolina Garcia, Parent,** wrote that it is time to put an end to the masks.
11. **Brenda Newbrough, Parent,** it should be left to the parents if they choose to have their children wear masks or not, teachers as well if they choose to continue to wear masks, but if teachers, parents, and children choose not to wear masks, then it should be allowed.
12. **Monica Hernandez, Parent,** is in disagreement in removing the masks.
13. **Silvio Uliano, Parent,** there is not reason to keep our children masked
14. **Ana Martinez, Parent,** this mask mandate is way overdue and must be lifted.
15. **Jennyfer Suero, Parent,** please stop the mask mandate, my children don't want to go to school because of the mask mandate.
16. **Andres Platon, Parent,** my family has been very disappointed on how this situation has been handled, we were happy to finally hear that the state mask mandate was lifted.
17. **Daniel Viellieu, Teacher, Guilmette Middle School,** strongly urged the district to continue enforcing an indoor mask mandate for at least the remainder of the year. Hoping that for the safety, health, and wellbeing of our community, the indoor masking mandate remains in effect for the foreseeable future,
18. **Erin Antonopoulos, Teacher, Parthum Elementary,** wrote that she is all for a mask free classroom. However, she emphasized that if she was at risk, she may choose to wear a mask.
19. **Annaliese Jaffe, Teacher, UP Leonard,** supported ending the mask mandate.
20. **Soribel Tejada, Parent,** is in favor of removing the mask mandate from the schools; also added that it could be optional if a student does want to continue to wear masks.
21. **John Stanisewski, Parent,** requested the mask mandate be lifted and parents finally be allowed to parent. In addition, he explained that if Lawrence is really concerned about equity, leaders need to stand up to remove the mask mandate and make it optional and understand that the children are suffering socially, emotionally, and MCAS scores have dropped significantly.

**Superintendent Report:**

- Superintendent Paris expressed some of the highlights that took place during the past week and half regarding the budget process which started in December. Superintendent explained that these meetings included very detailed and thoughtful goals that schools had been drafting; the goals are connected to the budget priorities the team voted on back in the Fall. In addition, the superintendent shared some patterns that were seen and tied directly to funds that were addressed as a community, specifically the extra funding and SOA funding.
  - Many leadership teams were advocating for additional interventionists, in addition they advocated for instructional coaches.
  - Both student facing supports are being requested in the form of interventionists and supports for these teaching staff so they can also develop their skills sets.
  - The co-teaching model, many team requested additional tech co teaching teams both for special education and for the multilingual learners
  - Next step, a leadership team meeting will take place to review every single request to build the budget internally.
  - The budget book will be presented in the budget hearing meeting in April.
  - Budget will be presented to the City Council for final vote.

VOTED: To rename the Oliver Partnership School back to its original name Henry K. Oliver School effective immediately, to align it with the new construction, the project, and to bring back the name considering it will be a K-8 school.

Vote: Upon the motion to approve the Oliver Partnership School back to its original name to Henry K. Oliver School made by Patricia Mariano; So move by Brian de Peña and Seconded by Noemi Custodia Lora

The Vote      Yes - Maria Moeller  
                    Yes - Noemi Custodia-Lora  
                    Yes - Brian de Peña  
                    Yes - Patricia Mariano



**Motion Passes**

VOTED: To Lawrence Public Schools not to participate in the Massachusetts School Choice

Vote: Upon the motion made by Patricia Mariano, LPS not to participate in the Massachusetts School Choice; So move by Noemi Custodia; Seconded by Brian de Peña

The Vote        No - Maria Moeller  
                      No - Noemi Custodia-Lora  
                      No - Brian de Peña  
                      No - Patricia Mariano

### Motion Passes

**Melissa Spash**, Assistant Superintendent provided an outline of the February 2022 Acceleration Academies focused on academy and social engagement, intensive small group instruction, and learning acceleration. Ms. Spash also provided detailed information of the program overview, enrollment allocations, staffing, students schedules, and pictures of students engaged in the program.

**Dr. Ventura Rodriguez**, in person present at 6:32 p.m

**Kinnon Foley**, Director of English Language Learners provided a general overview of the Multilingual Learner (ML) new term recently changed in recognition of an asset-based connotation that highlights the amazing strengths the students bring to the classrooms and culture. Ms. Foley also explained that the term English Learner in all compliance and discourse, and documentation process will continue to be used. She added that the department has expanded consisting of a facilitator, instructional and professional development, operations and families, and a family engagement coordinator; comprised of school based teams (principals, coach/AP/DCI, language acquisition team, facilitator, ESL teachers, students, and families

**Michael Armano**, Director Board Health, and **Martha Velez**, Director of Health and Human Services for City of Lawrence, MA, provided a summary regarding Covid - 19 vaccines in the population. Mr. Armano pointed out that 75% of the eligible population was vaccinated. There were a total of 40, 000 cases reported in the City; one case in the month of march was reported for the population of 5-19 years old, the 30 + population which is the most vulnerable population is almost fully vaccinated. Two testing sites will remain open in Lawrence until May 15, 2022. Based on medical data, Lawrence is also under 4% of positivity rate. The city also has at-home vaccination programs: 978-857-3409. Martha, the city also has rapid tests, please stop by at the center located at 155 Haverhill Street, M-F. Open from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. or call at 978-620-3550.

VOTED: To remove the masks wearing mandate and make wearing masks optional in all Lawrence Public Schools and buildings effective immediately.

Vote: Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura to remove the masks wearing mandate and make wearing masks optional; So moved by Jessica Andors; Seconded by Noemi Custodia-Lora

The Vote:        Yes - Maria Moeller  
                      Yes - Noemi Custodia-Lora  
                      Yes - Brian de Peña

Yes - Patricia Mariano  
Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez

**Motion passes**

**Dr. Mary Toomey**, Assistant Superintendent, provided a presentation update on grade expansion RISE SY 2022-2023 approved to add grades 6-8, Spring SY2022 pilot a small cohort of middle school (up to 5), the need to expanding integrating LPS Pre-K, early intervention had a makeover: this team includes evaluators, school psychologist, occupational therapist, speech, and language pathologist, and physical therapist, early intervention at the Rollins School

VOTED: To approve the minutes of February 9, 2022

Vote: Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura to approve the minutes of February 9, 2022, so moved by Patricia Mariano; seconded by Jessica Andors

The Vote Yes - Jessica Andors  
Yes- Noemi Custodia-Lora  
Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
Yes - Brian de Peña  
Yes - Patricia Mariano

**Motion Passes**

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Vote: Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura to adjourn the meeting at 7:56p.m, so moved by Jessica Andors; seconded by Brian de Peña

The Vote Yes - Jessica Andors  
Yes - Maria Moeller  
Yes - Noemi Custodia- Lora  
Yes - Dr. Ventura Rodriguez  
Yes - Brian de Peña  
Yes - Patricia Mariano

**Motion Passes**

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Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair  
Date:

