

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, Chair, Lawrence Alliance for Education/School Committee member, Julia Silverio, Silverio Insurance, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, Vice President of NECC Lawrence Campus, Maria Moeller, CEO, The Community Group and Jessica Andors, Executive Director for the Lawrence Community Works. Absent, Mayor Brian DePeña

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

Chair, Ms. Patricia Mariano, called the meeting to order at 6:26 p.m. The Chair acknowledged Dr. Ventura Rodriguez for being a board member since its inception and for serving as a chair. During the two years of his tenure, he led the board during the Covid Crisis, remote learning, and ultimately the safe return to school. Huge thank you to him for his unending support and his dedication to LPS and the students he served. Good luck Dr. Ventura.

Public comment: Ms. Mariano called the following:

1. **Homayoun Maali**, Parent, 33 Chester Street, Lawrence. Spoke about his support to the LPS teachers and support staff demanding that their proposal is accepted with fair compensation.
2. **Suzanne Suliveras**, President of the Lawrence Federation of Paraprofessionals, 70 Little River Road, Kingston, NH. Spoke about asking the board to approve the bargaining proposal given to LPS in August 2022. In addition, she noted that paraprofessionals are currently making \$17.00 per hour which is less than the starting rate in the surrounding communities.
3. **Vivian Bonet**, President of the LPS Support Staff Association, 33 Dartmouth Street, Lawrence, MA. Asked the board for a living wage increase since many of the members are paying high daycare costs, sending their kids to college, and food is very expensive, gas etc. Explained that people are working multiple jobs when one should be sufficient.
4. **Amparo Silva**, Paraprofessional. 9 Brown Street, Methuen, MA. Believed that it is disrespectful that paraprofessionals earn a mediocre wage; further explain that they are everything: students, nurses, counselors, educators, and parents to the students. She asked how it is possible when they do so much. Also shared in Spanish, “Las para-profesionales no le están pagando el sueldo que ellas merecen, necesitamos tener un cheque como lo que somos. Paraprofesionales”.
5. **Maria Bones**, Para-Parent Liaison, 36 Freeman Street, Haverhill, MA. Explained that she has been working in the system for over 29 years and does not make a living wage; to please consider their contract.
6. **Morre Xangre**, Para-Crisis, 357 Pawtucket Street, Lowell, MA. Talked about Lawrence Public Schools wanting to push out restorative justice practices and how they do restorative justice. Starting with the five Rs, explained that DESE caused harm to the LPS community and that the relationships are damaged.
7. **Francisco Wellington**, Paraprofessional, 33 Bowdoin Street, Lawrence, MA. Talked about understanding how hard paraprofessional work is because he is also living it; how paraprofessionals work as hard as everybody else. Also talked about the superintendent going into the schools and not saying good morning or hellos; not to mention she is making her salary for the people of Lawrence.

8. **Brigid Reyes**, Lunch Aide, 103 Haverhill Street, Lawrence, MA. Spoke in Spanish, “Habló que ella fué una de las personas que buscó a los demás para que fueran a protestar porque nadie los había escuchado acerca de los sueldos. Expresó que las escuelas grandes obtuvieron un aumento mientras las pequeñas no, explicó que a ellos los pisotean como una cucaracha. Además Quiere preguntarle al abogado porque él dijo que ellos no necesitaban un aumento”.

Translation: She talked about how she was one of the people who sought out the others to go and protest because no one is listening to them about the salaries. The big schools got a raise while the small schools did not, she explained that they are being stomped on like a cockroach. Also, I want to ask you why the lawyer said they don't need a raise.

9. **Sandra Ruiz**, Para-Parent Liaison, 24 Dana Street, Lawrence, MA. Expressed that she wanted to talk about equity and true power, and that she is also part of the bargaining agreements. Ms. Ruiz said that the district had offered \$1.50 to paraprofessionals who had been working for 10 years while paras in the neighboring areas are getting paid \$30.00 an hour. She clarified that the rent in Lawrence has become a luxury at \$1,500, childcare to \$1,800. She concluded by asking the board to motion a living wage increase for the paraprofessionals.
10. **Heidy Castillo**, Crisis-Paraprofessional, 90 East Haverhill Street, Lawrence, MA. Spoke about the many work responsibilities she had carried out while working as a para; added that she had been educating herself to achieve an associate degree and continuing her education. She pointed out that currently the cost of living went up to 5.9% and that salaries stay the same.
11. **Beth Kontos**, President of the American Federation for Teachers in MA; 237 Center Street, Danvers, MA. Expressed that she came to support the paraprofessional and the parents. Added that the AFT of MA stands behind everyone there. Talked about the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) which was a landmark for public education in Massachusetts and how many of the people who were present conducted phone calls in 2019 indicating that Lawrence has the money and will continue to receive it. She concluded that as the Receivership in charge of Lawrence, needs to meet the needs of your own people who are living in Lawrence and paying taxes, they also deserve respect, deserve the love and appreciation for caring for the children day after day.
12. **Marlene Rodriguez**, Paraprofessional; 52 Everett Street, Lawrence, MA. Spoke about the many responsibilities she had to carry out; even substituting because teachers are leaving. Added that adding 0.60 cents in her check is a slap on her face whereas she had to train new staff who are receiving \$22.00 an hour and she is under \$19.00. Concluded saying that they should be better compensated.
13. **Mason Pekarovich**, Paraprofessional; 100 MassMills Drive, Lowell, MA. Spoked about loving his job; and how one of his students was in distress because he was pulled into a negotiation session where he was upset with Attorney Connelly whom he said has to go. Mr. Pekarovich expressed that Attorney Connelly does not recognize the difference when a person makes \$17.00 an hour and \$23.00 concluding that he was wondering if he should go to work after having the meeting.
14. **Samaria Cruz**, Paraprofessional; 46 Chester Street, Lawrence, MA. Talked about her history since 1997 of working as a teacher in LPS until the No Child Left Behind Act when she got laid off, Ms. Cruz said that when she gets paid, it is a disgrace and that last year she sold her jewelry to pay for her rent; and that after so many years she deserves better.
15. **Julio Ramos**, Paraprofessional, Coach, and Mentor; 21 Exeter Street, Lawrence, MA. Spoke about being in a crisis and how there's a need to have a livable wage. Adding that if they don't have a livable wage, they get affected, but the students and working conditions also get affected. Also

talked about making dreams come true, also thanked the group of colleagues with dreams and goals being present at the meeting.

16. **Sue Lessard**, Paraprofessional, 161 Lakeview Avenue, Lowell, MA. Talked about coming to Lawrence for the past 15 years and how she loves her job. Added that she was there to present a challenge in which she was willing to give up a day of her paying for the board member to walk in her shoes so that after the experience, they could say that they don't deserve what they are asking for.
17. **Elizabeth Osborne**, Teacher, 90 Sutton Street, North Andover, MA. Spoke on behalf of the paraprofessionals and the inequalities when they do so much and get paid so little. Ms. Osborne concluded by saying that paraprofessionals are the backbone of the school community and how she will be nowhere without them
18. **Haydee Francisco**, Paraprofessional; 300 Methuen Street, Lawrence, MA. Spoke in Spanish, "La superintendente quiere pagar \$14.25 la hora a los paraprofesionales. Pregunto, cómo va uno a vivir pagando renta y el gas. Todo está alto y eso no está bien que ella quiera pagar ese dinero."

Translation: The superintendent wants to pay paraprofessionals \$14.25 an hour. I ask, how is one going to live paying rent and gas? Everything is expensive and it's not right that she wants to pay that kind of money.

Chair called for a five minutes recess at 7:09 p.m. Meeting resumed at 7:16 p.m. Chair acknowledged that she had been in attendance for the paraprofessional negotiations earlier during the day and although they did not reach an agreement, she was confident that both sides will come to a resolution and the terms of the contracts will be in agreement soon.

Chair's Report, Ms. Mariano brought up the collective bargaining agreements and voted.

VOTED: To approve the contract of the SEIU Local 888.

VOTE: Upon the motion made by the Chair Patricia Mariano; So move by Maria Moeller; Seconded by Dr. Noemi Custodia Lora.

The Vote	Yes - Maria Moeller
	Yes - Dr. Noemi Custodia Lora
	Yes - Jessica Andors
	Yes - Julia Silverio
	Yes - Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

VOTED: To approve the AFT Local 1019

VOTE: Upon the motion made by the Chair Patricia Mariano; So move by Julia Silverio;
Seconded by Maria Moeller

The Vote Yes - Maria Moeller

 Yes - Dr. Noemi Custodia Lora

 Yes - Jessica Andors

 Yes - Julia Silverio

Motion Passes

Superintendent Updates:

- Superintendent shared highlights of the schools opening during the past two weeks where she had the opportunity to visit the schools seeing students acclimate to new routines, structures, and staff members. She saw the younger learners dive into circles where she observed the students following the prompts of the teachers and their responses. She further invited the board to join her during the school visits.
- **Christopher Heath**, Grants/Title 1 Director, provided an update presentation regarding the ESSER's I, II, III Grand Funds. He further explained the percentage of total funds expended and the end date of each one. He highlighted being happy about the projections of the grants.
- **Juan Rodriguez**, Chief Partnership Officer, provided an update presentation on enrollment and attendance where he indicated an increment of enrollments based on last year numbers, also indicated the number of enrollments by grade to follow up with the year to date attendance numbers.
- **Melissa Spash**, Assistant Superintendent, provided a presentation on teaching and learning with the focus on district's pedagogy SY 2022-2023; further explained what is required to achieve the goal based on SQR reports and analysis to develop phases for implementation.
- **Maricel Goris**, Assistant Superintendent provided a preliminary report presentation regarding staffing, followed by resignations and hires. She concluded with a description of classroom vacancies on building based substitutes, paraprofessionals, teachers, and long term substitutes.

VOTED: To approve the minutes of June 8, 2022

Vote: Upon the motion made by Patricia Mariano to approve the minutes of June 8, 2022 with the following amendments, to correct the vote of Julia Silverio to Yes to go to executive session; So moved by Julia Silverio; Seconded by Noemi Custodia Lora

The Vote

The Vote Yes - Maria Moeller
 Yes - Dr. Noemi Custodia Lora
 Yes - Jessica Andors
 Yes - Julia Silverio

Motion Passes

VOTED: To go into executive session for the purpose to the open meeting law to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel

Vote: Upon the motion made by Patricia Mariano to go into executive session at 8:15 p.m.; So move by Jessica Andodors; Seconded by Maria Moeller.

The Vote	Yes - Maria Moeller
	Yes - Dr. Noemi Custodia Lora
	Yes - Jessica Andors
	Yes - Julia Silverio

Motion Passes

Ms. Mariano explained that the board members will not be returning to a regular meeting and that they will adjourn from the executive board session.

Next Meeting on schedule for Wednesday, October 12, 2022

Patricia Mariano, Chair
Date: