

December 8, 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, Executive Director for the Lawrence Community Works, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee member, Maria Moeller, CEO/The Community Group, Lawrence, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair. Absent: Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, Vice President of NECC Lawrence Campus, Julia Silverio, Silverio Insurance, Daniel Rivera, CEO/President MA Development.

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 6:20 p.m. The Chair held the Pledge of Allegiance; noted the board was in an executive session, one to talk about collective bargaining issues and that no votes were taken. 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 Talked about supporting the teachers' union in Lawrence. Further explained that we need the best contracts for all teachers and support the union. Also reminded that paraprofessionals need the support in their contracts.
2. **Casey Lebonti**, Teacher at Up Academy Leonard, talked about the challenges with teachers quarantining, overworking and how they are leaving instead of retaining them; requested funds to be opened up for the schools.
3. **Molly Schurgin**, Teacher, talked about the behavior challenges teachers are currently facing as a result of students being at home during the pandemic. Not having enough staff, which is to the detriment of the students. Problems have solutions if working together to resolve them.
4. **Annaliese Jaffe**, Teacher, talked about the students' behaviors; and struggles in the classroom. She added that students are in need of help, they feel exhausted, and uncared for; making it also exhausted for the teachers which also contributed to teachers leaving their jobs mainly for the coverage for other classes taking away planning time for students, and the time to connect with them.
5. **Jane Robinson**, RN, talked about always loving her job, but that the job for nurses had changed since the onset of Covid. Helping the CIC testing children which inhibits the ability for taking care of the students, in addition to testing children for Covid and how the parents received the messages. Also talked about nurses leaving the system.
6. **Kimberly Barry**, President of Local Teachers' Union 1019, talked about the collective voice is listened to. Federal aid over 80 m from ESSER fund; that the money is to deal and recover from it. Students need social and emotional support. Hundreds of people are leaving. Solution is that the district can pay educators and support staff.

7. **Shaun Steele**, Teacher, talked about problems that they had been experiencing over the past years; had dehumanized students by not giving them the same opportunities of other students in surrounding communities.
8. **Krista Crane**, Teacher, explained how she wanted to finish her career in Lawrence, talked about how difficult it is to come to work everyday when the opinions of scheduling, work partners, curriculum, and students' needs are not taken seriously. It will be easier to come to work if they feel supported and valued. Asking for a fair contract like the surrounding towns.
9. **Johanna Rodriguez**, Teacher, talked about Dr. King and Brene Brown's definition of power over leadership, increased cost of living, funds the district had received, and the need of students. Rodriguez demanded power with shared leadership.
10. **Hillary Lynch**, Teacher, talked about data she has been collecting and analysing on the composition of the LAE board. Cited under Massachusetts General Laws title 12 chapter 69 1K "the receiver must be an individual who demonstrates a record of success in improving low performing schools..." challenged using targeted measurable annual goals for appendix B of the 2015 turnaround plan with data from the 2012; concluded by asking where and what is the plan.
11. **Heather McDonald**, Teacher, spoke about her experiences and the hardships in coming to work everyday, how she is not making enough money to move out of her parent's house, or to pay for college loan payments. Also pointed out that teachers are forced to participate in training so they can roll out mental health interventions wellness and circle discussions. Concluded by asking the board to release the money to pay for the staff so that teachers can run the school properly.
12. **Mike Carney**, Teacher, talked about different incidents including the trauma of the pandemic, safety of the students, utilizing the \$80 million to raise wages of paraprofessionals, teachers, and staff. Asked the audience to stand up and pledge to the basic demands.
13. **Rebecca Veilleuy**, Teacher, recommended that to revitalize the LHS; you should take small actionable steps, and take care of the students, teachers, and staff. Questioned the district for not having clear evidence of the receivership improvement; as a result, it led to mass exodus of teachers leaving unengaging students in the classrooms. She pointed out that every change in leadership brings new curriculum and teaching methods that they are charged to implement without training, concluding that the frequency of changes is overwhelming.
14. **Katie Sugg Martinez**, Teacher, talked about how widespread the issues are since everyone wrote it's own speeches on their own and sounded the same. Added, that students deserve the same individual attention as other students in other surrounding towns, but that they don't get it because there are not enough teachers. Also cited an advisory from the attorney general regarding the mental health crisis youth are facing in the country; emphasizing that in Lawrence the efforts should be doubled since so many children are struggling.
15. **Kristin Colucci**, Teacher, talked about feeling angry because of the struggles teachers and students go through losing pre-time being utilized in the school hallways. Moreover, blaming the district to have \$80 million at its expense and not utilizing it.

16. **Heather Levine**, Teacher, talked about an incident that took place in the school hallway where she ended up with blood in her hands, mask, and the fact that no one was to come to support this student. Added that teachers are constantly forced to sub without any extra pay or little prep time; concluding the board needs to use the federal aid money to offer competitive living salaries that attract and retain educators.
17. **Laura Santana**, Paraprofessional, talked about going to college to come back to the city only to hear that they can be easily replaceable, feeling undervalued, misunderstood, and not listened to. Also questioned why she should stay in her job if other surrounding towns are paying 1 1/2 more concluding that paraprofessionals want to support the next generation of the city, not to be in what has become an abusive relationship.
18. **Suzanne Suliveras**, President of the Lawrence Federation of Paraprofessionals 3900 voiced her concerns on the district hiring new employees about the hourly rate while refusing to increase the wage of paraprofessionals. Also talked about an email sent Friday, December 3rd on a bonus retention of \$2,500 for only 90 special paraprofessionals demanding an increased pay to the maximum hourly rate.
19. **Sunny Ski**, Building union representative at the Spark Academy, talked about not feeling happy and how he thinks about the students every day. He also cited, there is only one counselor in the building for 468 students, how they have outsourced interns from Merrimack College which was a genius idea. Concluded that he had no confidence in Superintendent Paris.
20. **Luis Cruz**, Teacher, expressed his beliefs that all teachers should be treated right, and the need to give the time to adjust to different curriculums. Moreover, the need to retain teachers by giving them a more appropriate contract.
21. **Ednid Santiago**, Paraprofessional, expressed the need to work with the teachers for the benefit of the students and explained that if the students are the future, why can you put in the amount of money that is necessary. Also talked about her colleagues who could not be present due to extenuating circumstances.
22. **Julio Ramos**, Paraprofessional, Vice-President of the Union Paraprofessionals. Asked for a fair wage saying that anybody in the US with a college education degree should not have to work extra 20 hours to hold down a family, not asking for much, but for fairness; kids and educators deserve better.
23. **Daniela Ayala**, Teacher, talked about growing up and attending LPS where she found educators who provided her with the proper support and guidance so she could go to college and graduate; asked the board to think about giving people competitive wages; but, when making decisions to think about including the students and the families.
24. **Marlin Santiago**, Teacher, talked about her experiences while she attended LHS and what helped her the most: safety and consistency of teachers that were there for a number of years and how they knew what to provide to the students so that they also have the same opportunities as other students in more affluent communities.
25. **Josh Alba**, School Committee Member, expressed his frustration of what he had heard at the meeting addressing the board by saying “you know expletives what is happening here”

emphasizing that everyone in the expletive room knew what was expletive happening. Explained that people across the state had to fight to get \$15 expletive minimum wage while educators are marginalized or being mistreated, abused, and not included in the decision making, etc. Addressing the board of disenfranchising poor people communities this expletive has to stop. Also emphasized that if “We don’t fight for our rights, if we don’t continue this fight anything that we want to do, they are never gonna do what we need for people in power to do; they are never going to give us our schools back unless we make them scared, unless we hit them in their wallets, unless their ways of life are threatened because you’re making our lives hell”.

Superintendent Updates

- Masiel Jordan, Chief Financial Officer, provided an overview presentation regarding the FY 2022-2023 LPS Budget Priorities, multiyear goal, and current progress in four different categories: Student Achievement, support services, growing culturally and responsible workforce, deepening family and student partnerships.

VOTED: To approve the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to: Approve the FY 2022-2023 district priorities for the budget; so move by Patricia Mariano and Seconded by Maria Moeller.

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

Motion Passes

- Dr. Ventura Rodriguez provided a presentation on the Turnaround Plan Renewal which included the themes, stakeholder engagement, edits to the turnaround plan based on stakeholders engagement, and an additional theme on clarity on proposed plan of the receivership out of LPS.
 - Jessica Adors, asked what constitute all the benchmarks that LPS has to meet
 - Dr. Ventura wanted to make sure for this board, they don’t decide when receivership ends, it is the Commissioner and the Board of Education’s decision
 - Jessica Andors, asked what will be the mechanism on reporting back with the wider community as well.
 - Jessica Andors, what are the collective responsibilities in achieving these goals
 - Jessica Andors, talked about the restraints in which LPS is placed on when working with federal money and how to utilize the money. How can we make sure people understand the constraints we are operating under?
 - Pat Mariano, asked for an executive summary of the turnaround plan document and provided a monthly turnaround update in specific areas to ensure the goals are met and if not, then, there should be a meeting to brainstorm.

- Maria Moeller, asked if when providing the turnaround update; there should be a link document explaining what type of goal is being supported by i.e. student graduation etc.
- Recommendation to have the turnaround plan vote on the next meeting scheduled for January 12th.

VOTED: To approve the half day school on December 22nd, 23rd, and June 7th last day of school for seniors.

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to approve the calendar changes for this year; So moved by Jessica Andors; and seconded by Patricia Mariano

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

Motion Passes

- Dr. Ventura Rodriguez provided the superintendent’s evaluation for the school year 2020-2021. Added, that superintendent received a proficient review under a challenging year of heat, gas explosions, and covid where she placed systems in place to help the system grow.

VOTED: To accept the superintendent’s evaluation SY: 20-21 as written

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to approve the evaluation as written; So move by Patricia Mariano; Seconded by Jessica Andors

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

Motion Passes

VOTED: To approve the minutes of November 10, 2021

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to approve the minutes of November 10, 2021; So move by Patricia Mariano; Seconded by Jessica Andors

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

Motion Passes

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Upon the motion made by Dr. Ventura Rodriguez to adjourn the meeting; So move by Patricia Mariano; Seconded by Jessica Andors

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

Motion Passes

Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair
December 8, 2021

