

Lincoln-Sudbury Safety Review Committee
Meeting Minutes of May 30, 2007
Meeting held in Conference Room B, L-S

Members present: Sheila Calkins, Sarah Cannon Holden, Scott Carpenter, Hal Chapel, Eric Harris, Bill Keller, Tucker Krone, Ron Nix – Vice Chair, John Ollquist, Barbara Pedulla, Dennis Picker – Chair, Alexandra Sliwowski, Gary Taylor, Karen Thomsen.

Alternates present: Tom DeNormandie, Tim Garvin, Bill Ray.

Absent: Mark Collins, Claire Daly

9 members of the public were present.

Dennis Picker called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm. and opened the meeting for public comment. No comments were made.

Committee Discussion:

CASE programs and procedures: Dr. John Ritchie and Joanne Delaney, Director of Student Services, were invited to speak on the CASE (Concord Area Special Education) program. Dr. Ritchie offered to answer all questions openly and honestly, in hopes that committee members would feel that they had been able to get the information they seek. He explained to the committee that all proper procedures were followed in accepting Mr. Odgren into the CASE program and that there was nothing in his application that would be cause for concern or indicate that he would be a risk at L-S or that the school was a bad fit for him. Ms. Delaney handed out information on CASE programs and procedures for members to review and she discussed each document. She explained the process for placing students in out of district special education programs, and the range of special education services and programs offered by area schools, including the GO program at L-S.

Ms. Delaney explained that the same discipline policies and practices apply to CASE students as for other students. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all students to be treated fairly and equally. Student records from previous schools are provided to L-S for each student who is applying to enroll at L-S. Dr. Ritchie and Ms. Delaney explained the types of information that is and is not contained in the student records. The content of the student records is governed by state law. In some situations, individual staff members at L-S will have conversations with counterparts at a former school to gain additional insight and information about a student who is enrolling at L-S. Scott Carpenter mentioned that the L-S staff routinely meets with staff at Curtiss Middle School in Sudbury and the Lincoln School to get additional information about incoming classes at L-S.

The present executive director of CASE, Ed Orenstein is retiring this summer. Teresa Watts has been hired to fill the executive director position.

After the January 19, John Ritchie re-reviewed all of Mr. Odgren's files, and found nothing that would have changed his opinion about the appropriateness of the placement. Dr. Ritchie gave an account of Mr. Odgren's time at L-S. On the first day of school, John Ritchie met with about 20 new students, including John Odgren. He spoke to Odgren frequently during his time at L-S, as did Scott Carpenter, counselors and classroom teachers. Odgren appeared to be happy at L-S, and they saw signs that he was making progress. All the external signs were positive. Mr. Odgren was repeatedly asked if he was being bullied and he said no. His teachers were asked if they saw signs of bullying and they said no.

Barbara Pedulla commented that there are many students in the district both sped and not sped students, who are emotionally troubled. She said that some do not qualify for special education services, and some are not getting services because their parents won't allow it.

The committee discussed the desirability of collecting information about the behavior of individual students, and also discussed issues relating to attempting to acquire more information about certain categories of students than others.

John Ritchie noted that at the beginning of the school year, L-S had six CASE students enrolled in GO; and he explained how various students left the program during the year, with three remaining, who are graduating this year. He has reviewed all three of those student's files thoroughly to reconfirm for himself that their enrollment at L-S is appropriate, and he noted that their files reveal stories of progress and inspiration.

The group considered what the limitations are regarding the information available to the school as part of the application process. It also asked about the kinds of background information the school may legitimately obtain. Dr. Ritchie emphasized that information is shared openly and honestly between school districts in an attempt to find the best placement for students.

Whitman Hansen HS visit: Scott Carpenter, Karen Thomsen and Tucker Krone of the committee, along with Dr. Ritchie and other staff, recently visited Whitman Hansen High School to observe their approach to school safety. That high school was brought to the attention of Dr. Ritchie as an example of a newly built high school that had invested heavily in various physical security measures. Video surveillance cameras were installed to cover in all public areas of the building except classrooms or bathrooms. Mr. Krone felt that the cameras were too obvious, and indicated a lack of trust and separation between faculty and students. He felt a culture of separation, not a culture of community and openness. When asked, students and faculty at the high school felt the cameras helped prevent fights and they seemed to accept them. Faculty had reported signs of incipient gang behavior. Scott said that he did not see anything in place at Whitman Hansen that he feels would improve safety at L-S, without bringing in damaging side effects.

Whitman Hansen has one entry point to the building for visitors. They must show an ID through a glass window before being allowed into the building. Visitor passes are written with ink that lasts only for 12 hours so that they expire automatically. Regarding their weapons policy, if a weapon is turned over voluntarily, parents are called, police are not notified, and the weapon must be picked up by the parents. If a student is found with a weapon, they hold a hearing in a format similar to that of L-S. Staff wore ID badges, while students carried Id's to get into different parts of the building. They need prior approval to access the building after hours. Their ability to access certain facilities, such as the school library, is restricted to certain times within the school week.

The Committee discussed the fact that Whitman Hansen has taken a very different approach to security and ways to ensure student safety than L-S has, and that it reflects a different type of culture. Members discussed the ways in which the two different cultures affect the development of students and their preparation for the next steps in their lives. The Committee did not reach any specific conclusions regarding the measures in place at Whitman Hansen. The committee did note that many of those measures would cause profound changes in the climate at L-S and that it was not clear whether or not those measures would effectively contribute to improved safety at L-S.

The Committee discussed the need to explore the possible unintended consequences of any recommendations it might make and agreed to make such a discussion part of any recommendation it puts forth.

Process and Planning:

The group discussed what it would do for the rest of June and how it might discuss and adopt some recommendations for inclusion in a preliminary report. Barbara Pedulla made a **motion** that the Committee incorporate a proposal submitted by Hal Chapel regarding recommendations into the recommendations process that the group has previously agreed upon. Sarah Cannon Holden seconded the motion. The group discussed whether it has had sufficient time to gather enough information to make recommendations by the end of June. The group agreed that they could not make any solid recommendations about topics that have not been discussed. Topics that need to be looked into further could be listed with more open-ended recommendations. The group briefly discussed the types of information that belonged in a preliminary report. The motion was **Approved**. Dennis Picker agreed to draft a revised recommendations process document that reflected this motion by merging in the substance of Mr. Chapel's proposal.

The Committee agreed to attempt to select 3-4 areas to focus on during June in an effort to come up with recommendations in those areas for a June preliminary report. It was decided to allocate time at the June 6 meeting to discuss and select what those 3-4 areas would be. Dennis Picker suggested that members could, at their option, send list of their recommended areas out to the committee prior to the next meeting. He stressed that on June 6, we would not attempt to vote on specific recommendations, but only to vote on

the areas that would be the subject of possible recommendations. The actual recommendations would be discussed and voted at a later meeting.

Student and faculty focus groups have met, but notes are not yet available due to some difficulties with the individual hired to take those notes. The subcommittee running that input process is hoping to provide information about those groups at the next meeting.

The Committee agreed that the focus of the 6/6 meeting would be on two areas: receiving and discussing results of the student/faculty/staff focus groups and on selecting the list of areas the group would focus on during June for potential recommendations.

Minutes: Sarah Cannon Holden made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 23, 2007. Ron Nix seconded the motion. The minutes were **approved**.

New Business: Ron Nix asked for comments on a document that he circulated summarizing pros and cons of a secret service agreement.

Adjourn: Ron Nix made a **Motion** to adjourn. Sarah Cannon Holden seconded the motion. The motion was **approved**, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.