

LNS Board Annual Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2021

Via Zoom

Attendees:

- **Present:** Mara Rus, Kate Brooks, Anique Lebel, Rebecca Blanchfield, Katherine Ruhl, Victoria Slingerland, Matt Hendrick, Clint Cherco, Mitch Brooks, Emily Lines, Gina Cherco, Kristie Fox, Lauren O'Neil, Kerri Schubert, Jessica Kaplan
- **Absent:** Jessica Callow
- **Also Present:** Nancy Fincke, Emily Cardy, Laura Mellen
- **Proxys Received:** See attached list

Call to Order and Welcome

- Mara welcomes everyone to the meeting
- Annual meeting is where we review the board progress and goals for the school year

Secretary - Katherine Ruhl

- Approve the minutes from the 2019-2020 Annual Meeting held May 5, 2020. Kate Brooks motions Vickie Slingerland (and others) second

President's Annual Report – Mara Rus

- President's notes are attached

Director's Annual Report – Nancy Fincke

- Special thank you to Kim Rajdev, our legal advisor who was called on this year many times and always gave thoughtful advice
- Director's additional notes are attached

Treasurer's Annual Report – Rebecca Blanchfield

- Treasurer's notes are attached

Nominating Committee Report – Jessica Kaplan

- Nominating committee consisted of Mara Rus, Kate Brooks, Kristie Fox, Vickie Slingerland, and Jessica Kaplan
- Board slate consists of mix of new and returning families
- Vote on Board Slate
 - Quorum of the community present
 - 17 parents present, 11 proxies received (see attached proxy list and voting record)
 - Kate Brooks motions to vote, Vickie Slingerland (and others second)
 - Board slate is approved unanimously

**President's Annual Report
Lincoln Nursery School
2020-21**

LNS Board Goals 2020-21:

1. Continue to make health and safety a priority at LNS. The COVID & Steering Committees in collaboration with the Director guided by DEEC guidelines will regularly review and assess our COVID response plans and inform the community of measures that enhance safety.
COVID Committee, President and Director **Target Date: Ongoing**
2. Foster a sense of community and support relationship building while keeping our school safe and respecting others.
LNS Board, VP of Programs, Director, President **Target Date: Ongoing**
3. Integrate and support the use of Storypark, an application that is a communication tool for teachers and parents to share documentation in the form of learning stories and moments about a child, studio and the LNS community.
LNS Board, Director **Target Date: Spring 2021 and Ongoing**
4. Integrate and support the use of Jovial, a cloud based software management system for cooperative schools, to streamline forms, accounting, committee responsibilities and other requirements.
VP of Operations, Director **Target Date: Spring 2021 and Ongoing**
5. Review our social media, marketing and communication plans to create a strategy that shares and promotes the LNS experience to surrounding communities.
LNS Board, Director **Target Date: Spring 2021 and Ongoing**
6. Strategic Planning Committee will assess and strengthen our partnership with the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and The Trustees of Reservations proactively in order to ensure our school's strong standing with both. Subsequently, use this standing to ensure LNS receives the support needed and required by both.
Strategic Planning, President, Director **Target Date: Spring 2021 and Ongoing**
7. Strategic Planning Committee will develop an understanding of market factors and financial models to assess the size of LNS.
Strategic Planning, President, Director **Target Date: Spring 2021 and Ongoing**

Continue to make health and safety a priority at LNS. The COVID & Steering Committees in collaboration with the Director guided by DEEC guidelines will regularly review and assess our COVID response plans and inform the community of measures that enhance safety.

Much, if not all, of our year was structured around dealing with the COVID pandemic. At the beginning of the year Steering along with Nancy sought out the formation of a COVID Committee to aid in LNS's evolving COVID response plans. In September a committee of seven volunteer parents including doctors, medical professionals, researchers, scientists and other skilled professionals was formed. They lent their expertise and time to LNS regularly, diligently and effectively.

The COVID Committee met almost weekly on zoom calls that were open to the entire community to discuss everything from studio air ventilation, a community travel policy, quarantine policies, testing requirements, teacher vaccinations and more. Hours were spent offline triaging cases as they arose and prescribing courses of action based on current CDC and state and local guidelines. Hours were also spent offline scheduling vaccination appointments for each teacher.

Nancy and I attended every meeting. Any COVID Committee recommended policy change that required approval was subsequently brought to Steering. A major example of this is our testing program. COVID Committee recommended and Steering approved implementation of our initial mandatory PCR surveillance testing program in the fall and eventual mandatory CIC pooled testing in the winter. This testing strategy was viewed as a success by all of LNS staff and most of the community.

To date, while our community has been touched by COVID cases, our studios and school have remained open throughout the year. We are thankful for teachers, parents, children and especially the COVID Committee who worked together to keep our community safe.

Foster a sense of community and support relationship building while keeping our school safe and respecting others.

Entering the school year, this seemed like a particular challenge. Our community is central if not integral to LNS yet with social distancing and cohort requirements we wondered what would our community look like during this pandemic and what could we do to support relationship building. Steering and the COVID Committee along with Welcoming and Social, Room Parents, Staff Appreciation and the Gala Committee came together this year to make sure that fostering a sense of community while remaining safe was a priority.

In person outdoor gatherings were sought out when possible and safe. Welcoming and Social helped navigate the intricacies of safe get togethers by seeking out advice and guidance from Steering and the COVID Committee when necessary. The fall pumpkin event at Flint Farm was a great safe success and the following playdates and get

togethers that occurred throughout the year were because Welcoming and Social and LNS set the tone that Community would not be lost. Due to cohort requirements more fell on room parents as well to foster community. This included planning parent fire pit nights in the fall which were created in lieu of parent potlucks.

When in person events were not possible, our community made an effort to gather virtually. Teachers held studio updates which were a great way to learn about what is going on in the studio as well as hear from other parents about their experiences. Committees frequently met over zoom to conduct LNS business but in the process built relationships as well. And last but not least, the strength of our Community was most visible at our virtual Gala. The gratitude our families had for the past year and what LNS was able to provide really came through in the event's celebratory tone.

While this year was different, Community remained central to LNS and we were able to continue to build and support relationships safely.

Integrate and support the use of Storypark, an application that is a communication tool for teachers and parents to share documentation in the form of learning stories and moments about a child, studio and the LNS community.

During a year of COVID, connecting families to their children, studios and teachers was a priority. Storypark was introduced as tool to be used by both parents and teachers to share documentation and engage in a discussion about our children in and outside the studios.

From the parents' perspective, feedback to the Board and teachers has been largely positive. Parents like that Storypark is an application which makes it very user friendly. Parents loved that they could easily open up Storypark without logging in to get a wonderful glimpse of what is going on within their child's studio. Parent participation as far as commenting on images and providing feedback is also greater than in past years when a blog format was used.

From the faculty's perspective, it seems too early to have an assessment of Storypark. Consensus is that this year there was limited time for them to process the application both formally and informally. Time was spent this year getting used to the basic platform and there is way more for the faculty to learn from each other about this tool. That process is ongoing. While teachers agree that Storypark is working well as a communication tool and sharing moments with parents the implementation of learning stories seems to be different for each co-teaching team. Learning stories is the next phase of their work as a faculty.

Integrate and support the use of Jovial, a cloud based software management system for cooperative schools, to streamline forms, accounting, committee responsibilities and other requirements.

Throughout the current 2020-21 academic year, Jovial has been gradually brought in to help manage LNS's internal systems. It is currently being used by Nancy for current year families' contact information and all current students are enrolled in classes/studios in Jovial.

For the upcoming 2021-22 school year all students are enrolled in classes/studios, tuition management is up and running, invoices have been sent to next year's families and payments have been received into Jovial. Soon enrollment documentation will be up and running as well. This means incoming parents will receive the required enrollment documents for student information via Jovial and will be able to complete these forms electronically. This should be out to families in early May.

This is full implementation of our goal for this year. While the process of full integration continues we are pleased with Jovial thus far and are confident that families will appreciate our new streamlined process. Future work includes investigating the application process which is currently submitted via the LNS website and determining how that might work in Jovial instead.

Review our social media, marketing and communication plans to create a strategy that shares and promotes the LNS experience to surrounding communities.

LNS implemented a marketing and communication strategy for the 2020/21 school year that included social media marketing, family association marketing, local media placements and a virtual informational session on transitional kindergarten.

Weekly posts on Facebook and Instagram were created to showcase the pedagogy of LNS, the partnership with deCordova and the various Studio offerings like a transitional kindergarten program. August 2020-December 2020 there was a heavy emphasis placed on marketing for enrollment through advertisements and posts on family associations social media accounts. We saw an increase in social media engagement through purchased advertisements and targeted marketing. Instagram followers grew from 290 to 442 and Facebook followers grew from 310 to 351.

We updated the LNS website as well. There is now a page dedicated to LNS COVID Response which includes a our "LNS During COVID" video. The Enrollment section of the website was also updated.

In addition, effort was placed in marketing through local town family associations. In Lincoln we participated in the Winter Carnival which was advertised through social media and received much participation. Through the Concord Family Network, LNS will be hosting an outdoor COVID safe playdate hosted by Nancy. And as a sponsor of Wayland Children and Parent Association LNS was invited to include a branded item in WCPA's welcome basket.

Lastly, marketing for enrollment was a focus this year. Instagram and Facebook advertisements were created to attract new families. Yard signs and sandwich boards were also designed and distributed to market the start of enrollment. A live Zoom presentation was created for families interested in LNS' Transitional Kindergarten program. And, LNS Friday Enrollment tours were promoted through social media prompting families to sign up online.

Strategic Planning Committee will assess and strengthen our partnership with the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and The Trustees of Reservations proactively in order to ensure our school's strong standing with both. Subsequently, use this standing to ensure LNS receives the support needed and required by both.

The Strategic Planning Committee has engaged in a series of productive conversations throughout the year focused on re-establishing a mutually supportive relationship between LNS, deCordova Sculpture Park, and The Trustees of Reservations (TToR). This has included a reaffirmation of our joint desire to keep LNS located on the grounds of the deCordova, and to work collaboratively to find opportunities to lean on each other's strengths and resources to amplify our respective reach in the community. The Strategic Planning Committee is currently in the process of creating a Declaration of Intent which outlines our shared intentions, approach, and conditions for success with respect to the LNS/TToR relationship (this will supersede a Memorandum of Understanding from 2012, when LNS moved to the deCordova campus).

The Strategic Planning Committee is also spearheading efforts to enter into a new lease agreement with TToR under more sustainable terms (rent escalation, maintenance, etc.), to supersede the current lease which is set to expire next year. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee have also been instrumental in working with our alumni community and other LNS allies who hold positions of influence with deCordova and/or TToR to help represent our interests with respect to a successful long-term partnership between LNS and deCordova.

Strategic Planning Committee will develop an understanding of market factors and financial models to assess the size of LNS.

The Strategic Planning Committee has begun preliminary discussions around understanding the ideal size of LNS going forward. The impact of COVID-19 has presented significant challenges with respect to market analysis, long term planning, and financial modeling. We are pursuing a new lease that contemplates the same physical space as we have now (i.e., 4 studio spaces and an office), so we expect no major changes in the near term. As market factors (hopefully) stabilize in the coming 6-12 months, we expect to have a better understanding of demographic and other factors impacting demand for enrollment in LNS going forward. Other factors that will need to be evaluated in greater detail include our revenue model (combined tuition and fundraising), competitive environment (i.e., local nursery schools and other early-childhood care providers), and our ability to continue to attract and retain top quality

dedicated teachers and staff as several of our current teachers and staff contemplate retirement plans. We believe these analyses will have less uncertainty as COVID-19 immunization rates increase and we adapt to new routines and lifestyle choices.

Summary

In reflecting back on our board goals for the year it is easy to see we have made many positive changes that will benefit our community for years to come. While facing a pandemic our school not only survived, we thrived.

I would like to recognize the hard work of our teachers and staff. This pandemic gave us all insight into what teachers do every single day for our kids. They are the backbone of our community and what we value most. We will never be able to thank them enough for what they provided us this year. And as always, Nancy, this year more than ever, what an incredible job she does leading our community and embracing change and new ideas. We are lucky to have her ongoing support and vision for our community.

Additionally, Lisa Canning keeps everything running smoothly, even remotely, and supports not only the interworking of the school but also our committees. This is her last year and we cannot thank her enough for all she has done for LNS, she will be missed.

With this year arose the need for a COVID Committee and we cannot thank these seven parents enough for how hard they worked and what they accomplished. From formulating and implementing a surveillance testing program, scheduling vaccines for our faculty and staff, improving air ventilation in the studios to addressing teacher anxiety and parental concern, they never shied away from the work. Thank you Amy Funkenstein, committee chair, Leonora Balaj, Emily Drazen, Neel Maden, Andy Porter, Johan Skog and Bryan Wynn for your dedication to our community this year.

I would also like to recognize the hard work of our Gala team. Matt Hendrick did an incredible job taking on the task this year of creating our first ever virtual Gala. The Gala was not only a successful fundraising event for LNS but more importantly it was a wonderful celebration of our year together as a community. It really was a great event.

Thank you to Vickie Slingerland and her Enrollment Committee for all the hard work they put into the entire enrollment process during the time of COVID (which resulted in a lengthy waitlist I might add). From meetings, to open houses to tours to follow-up communication with prospective incoming families. It is a big job that continues throughout the school year.

Thank you to Annie Magee and the Staff Appreciation Committee for providing truly wonderful monthly gifts to our teachers. These gifts served as wonderful reminders to our teachers during this difficult year that all they do for our children and community is appreciated.

Thank you to John Magee along with his Maintenance Committee for helping with various building and maintenance jobs this year.

Thank you to our Secretary, Katherine Ruhl, for always keeping us informed with Board Meeting announcements and minutes.

Thank you to our Staff Search and Development Chair, Lauren O'Neil, for the hard work and professionalism she brought to this role. This year has had its challenges and staff/faculty search is one of them. With her help the process has progressed smoothly and with success.

Thank you to Jess Kaplan for taking on the deCordova Liaison role and working hard to maintain our relationship with the Museum during this difficult year. And thank you for chairing the Nominating Committee this year as well.

Thank you to our Strategic Planning chairs Clint Cherco and Mitch Brooks for their support in assessing our relationship with deCordova and the Trustees as well as proactively working towards strengthening our relationship together, especially as we work towards entering into a new lease agreement with terms more favorable to LNS.

Thank you to the many individuals who worked extra hard to plan and organize in person and virtual events to connect us this year. Kerri Schubert for Welcoming and Social, thank you for constantly seeking ways to safely get us together as a community. And thank you Room Parents - Emily Lines, Gina Cherco, Kristie Fox, and Jess Callow. More fell on you this year under the cohort model and we appreciate everything you did to foster a community within the studio.

And last but certainly not least, a very special thank you to the incredible and tireless Steering Committee: Nancy Fincke, Rebecca Blanchfield, Kate Brooks and Anique Lebel. These ladies are so dedicated and give so much of themselves to LNS. And in my opinion, they don't get thanked enough. It has truly been my pleasure to work alongside them this year.

Lincoln Nursery School's Director's Annual Report
2021-2022 - The year of the Covid -19 Pandemic!

The MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) guided the reopening schools from the state mandated closures of March, 2020 due to the COVID-19 Corona Virus and the declared state of emergency. Using the COVID-19 Child Care Playbook, the LNS Director submitted plans to EEC that addressed how the program protects staff, children and their families from the spread of COVID-19. The teachers returned to school on August 25th to prepare for the opening of school on September 8. Many changes were put into place:

-Preparing the Environment

- Class sizes were reduced to 12 children.
 - Four portable ventilation units were installed in each studio. We increased outdoor air ventilation by opening doors and windows. Indoor physical spaces were arranged to promote physical distancing.
 - Spending time outdoors was maximized by each studio group. The outdoor playspaces were zoned and assigned to a studio. Studio Groups spent time in the Sculpture Park and on the conservation land. Our frequency in the woods led to the neighbors requesting that we enter into the Pertzoff Field Agreement to memorialize certain agreements between the School and the Pertzoff Field Owners.
 - The office is designated as a space for isolation of sick or symptomatic individuals.
 - Materials that increased the likelihood of transmission were eliminated.
- Frequent hand hygiene is promoted

- Screening and Monitoring of Children and Staff daily at the point of entry.

- All parents or guardians are required to complete a Health Attestation form for each child every day prior to arriving at school. We use a digital system requiring a QR code and a mobile phone. Paper copies are also available.

-Strategies to Reduce Risk

- Physical Distancing- at least 6 feet of physical Distance is required during times when masks cannot be worn.
- Children and staff are assigned to the same discrete group each day. This strategy changed the afternoon Extended Day Program/ Stay & Play. All children using extended day were grouped together creating a mixed age group in Studio Purple.
- Implement routines that facilitate robust hand hygiene or if handwashing is not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol with written parent permission.
- LNS requires face masks for all adults and children attending LNS.

-Cleaning and Sanitizing

- Targeted and enhanced cleaning in specific instances with increased COVID-19 risk.

Faculty

-The co-teaching team in Studio Purple shifted to 3 teachers to accommodate a teachers request for reduced hours and coverage for Stay & Play.

Alice Edwards informed the school that she is retiring at the end of the year. Alice has taught at LNS for twenty years! Emily Yaffe informed the school that she will take a maternity leave the beginning of of the '21-'21 school year and requested a leave of absence for the remainder of the school year. The leave will be

Granted

Staff

Lisa Canning, LNS Office Manager will be leaving LNS at the end of the school year after 8 years of service. Her role will be expanded and titled Assistant Director. Sisy Thomas has been hired for the position. Sisy is currently in a 40 hour paid orientation to her role and responsibilities.

Professional Development

The faculty has been meeting with Natalie Kleefeld, consultant and independently to work on "Reimagining Parent Connections at LNS." We have missed not having parent helpers in the studios this year. This year long pause in parent helping and some of the new practices put in place due to COVID-19 created an opportunity to re-think our routines and approaches to incorporating parent helpers into the studio. The faculty has asked parents to join us in this work by asking the current parent community to join us in this work. Ten parents responded creating a committee of parents and teachers that will meet for 2 evenings at the end of May to discuss and give input to the project.

Three teachers, the director and 3 parents are participating in Community Antiracist Advocate Training (CARAT) sponsored by the Town of Lincoln. The intention for the training is to have organizations do a self-assessment around diversity, equity and inclusion and develop a plan for an antiracist journey.

LNS Partnership with deCordova

-Due to COVID-19, the Learning and Engagement liaisons worked from home. Our collaboration was put on hold until the return of L&E. Curator tours were given to the faculty for the fall and spring exhibits

Studio Red- PreK-K

Twelve children enrolled for the full day program. Eight children are enrolling in kindergarten and 5 children are enrolling in first grade for the the fall.

Extended Day Programs

-This was the first year that Early Arrival occurred in each child's studio. This program change was planned before COVID-19, however it supported the children staying in cohorts for the day.

All children enrolled in afternoon programs Monday- Thursday were contracts and placed in Studio Purple creating a mixed age group.

Enrollment

Thank you to Vickie Slingerland Enrollment Chair for writing this report

Because of COVID, our annual open house on November 7 looked a bit different. We had timed slots for parents to attend without their children. 24 families signed up in advance through our website and about half actually attended. It was an unusually warm and beautiful November weekend. We had 27 enrollment tours either via Zoom or on Friday afternoons once school was out for the week with again only parents attending. Those were fully booked from November through February, approximately 3 a week. We weren't able to admit all of the interested families and currently have a waitpool. In addition, we had many families reach out to us once all of the tours were booked hoping to be considered. We asked them to come to our open house this coming October or told them we'd be in touch should we have an opening that we could not fill from the waitpool. LNS has 59 children enrolled for next year - 13 entirely new families, 7 families that started mid year this year, the remaining 39 are current or alumni families. We received 89 new student applications for the 21-22 academic year and have emailed with well over 100 families this year regarding enrollment.

**Lincoln Nursery School
Treasurer's Annual Report
May 11, 2021**

The 2020-21 school year budget was set during a time of uncertainty—safety guidelines mandated lower teacher:student ratios than our operating budget could sustain, and extended school closures seemed likely. LNS was granted the PPP Loan at the end of last fiscal year, which helped cushion the predicted operating shortfall. Against this backdrop of financial uncertainty, we set a conservative budget for the school year with respect to both expected revenues and expenses.

- **TUITION REVENUE** above budget target
 - Were able to add 4 more tuitions as teacher:student ratios allowed
 - Extended Day slightly exceeding budget

- **FUNDRAISING** **far** exceeded budget!!
 - Set modest fundraising budget going into the year very little certainty about potential school closures/what fundraising opportunities could look like
 - Annual Appeal (to alumni only) brought in ~\$17K
 - Gala net income was \$57K!!

- **EXPENSES** are mixed relative to budget
 - Salaries, Rent and Utilities expenses at level expected
 - COVID-related expenditures exceeding budget
 - Staff development and Office expenses under budget

- **NET OPERATING RESULTS**
 - Projecting to run a surplus this year
 - Additional revenues/expenses not expected to materially change this result

- **ENDOWMENT**
 - Given fundraising/tuition exceeded budget, we did not need to draw on the endowment as budgeted
 - Endowment has benefited from a strong market and is currently at ~\$420K as of 5/10/21
 - Switching from self-directed Fidelity account to Sawyer & Company (LNS parent Ben Webber's investment firm)

Submitted by: Rebecca Blanchfield, Treasurer, 5/11/2021

**Board Slate Voting Record
Annual Board Meeting
May 11, 2021**

PARENT FIRST NAME	PARENT LAST NAME	PROXY RECIEVED	MEETING VOTE
Rebecca	Blanchfield		Y
Mitch	Brooks		Y
Kate	Brooks		Y
Emily	Cardy		Y
Clinton	Cherco	X	Y
Gina	Cherco	X	Y
Kyle	Dandurand	X	Y
Dan	Drazen	X	Y
Emily	Drazen	X	Y
Kristie	Fox		Y
Matt	Hendrick		Y
William	Kaplan	X	Y
Greta	Kaplan	X	Y
Jessica	Kaplan		Y
Anique	Lebel		Y
Emily	Lines		Y
Peter	Mellen	X	Y
Laura	Mellen	X	Y
Lauren	O'Neil		Y
Rebecca	Redington	X	Y
Jeremy	Richmon	X	Y
Anna	Richmon	X	Y
Katherine	Ruhl		Y
Mara	Rus		Y
Kerri	Schubert		Y
Victoria	Slingerland		Y
Ben	Webber	X	Y
Alice	Webber	X	Y