

LNS Board Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2021
Via Zoom

Attendees (based on Zoom participant list):

- **Present:** Mara Rus, Gabrielle Emanuel, Kate Brooks, Emily Lines, Laura Mellen, Vickie Slingerland, Abigail Flanagan, Sasha Dages, Clint Cherco, Greta Kaplan, Caroline Nordstrom, Annie Magee, Katherine Ruhl, Emily Cardy
- **Absent:** Anique Lebel, Bryan Wynn, Mitch Brooks, Kristie Fox, Lauren O'Neil
- **Also Present:** Nancy Fincke, Andrew Alan West, Diana Abata, David Henry, Hugo Beekman, Jennifer Rogers, JMB, Kate Kelly, Lauren Lane, Nathaniel Heald

deCordova's Head of Learning Environments: Emily Silet (see Mara Rus's introduction below)

- Emily introduced some of the exhibits and spaces at deCordova, including Infinite Indigenous Queer Love and The Lab.
- She encouraged families to seek out upcoming programs including Make it ARTfull (monthly in-person weekend artmaking workshops for kids 2-5s and 5-12s) as well as Winter Solstice at deCordova activities and stargazing (12/17, 12/18 and 12/21 5-7pm) among many other programs.
- She mentioned that Twisted Tree is moving into the café space, perhaps in December

President's Welcome and Thank You: Mara Rus (see full notes below)

- Thank you to various people for their hard work over the past few months, including the Welcoming and Social, Development, Strategic Planning and Enrollment teams as well as the room parents.

Secretary: Gabrielle Emanuel

- Approved Sept 21, 2021 meeting minutes. Katherine Ruhl motions and Kate Brooks (and others) seconds

Treasurer: Bryan Wynn (see slides below)

- Bryan was not able to attend but recorded a video presentation that was played
- Three months into the year we are roughly on budget, expecting a \$55-60K loss for the school year
- Discussed LNS's long-term financial plan and various options for balancing fiscal prudence and LNS's three strategic priorities (securing our long-term home at deCordova, increasing diversity, ensuring the best education)

VP of Development: Kate Brooks

- LNS kicked off its annual appeal with a letter from Nancy (see letter below)

- Tuition does not cover the full cost of operating the school and fundraising plays a critical role in keeping our budget balanced and our school running
- Thank you to Kate Kelly, our annual appeal coordinator, for all her work in putting together our annual appeal mailing
- A big thank you to those families who have donated so far!
- It is our hope that all families will support LNS with a gift that is meaningful to them. We're a small school and that means each gift has a large impact. To donate, you can mail a check to LNS at the address below, drop off a check in the office, or visit <https://www.lincolnnurseryschool.org/giving-2/>.

Lincoln Nursery School
PO Box 6075
Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773

- Comment from Abby Flanagan: It would be helpful for new families to know how fundraising works throughout the year, so they can plan their giving
 - Kate Brooks agrees and says that is what we are working toward. Annual appeal in the fall and Gala in spring are LNS's two big fundraising efforts

Director: Nancy Fincke (See full notes below)

- Overview of the state-level Common Start legislation that would dramatically increase the affordability and quality of early education and childcare for all Massachusetts families
- Overview of what the federal-level Build Back Better effort could mean for childcare
- Nov. 21-Dec. 17 – A story walk will be displayed on the trail behind deCordova's Building and Grounds headquarters (enter at the end of the parking lot and turn right)

LNS COVID Update: Mara Rus (See full notes below)

- Emily Drazen and Amy Funkenstein were not able to attend, so Mara Rus provided an update
- Two changes to COVID policy:
 - update to masking policy such that masking outdoors is optional
 - update to Return to School policy to help allow "close contacts" to safely attend school

Call for Updates/Questions

- Enrollment update from Laura Mellen:
 - 22 families came to the Open House, and many of them filled out applications
 - Program update: We are seeing demand for a longer day option beyond Studio Red. Next year LNS is planning to pilot, in Studio Purple, a mixed ages environment with the option of three long days (M/T/Th), in addition to 2 short days (W/F). The current Studio Purple model (5 days, mornings only) will also be an option for families who prefer that.

- Reminder to please complete your returning student application before 12/3
- Strategic Planning update from Clint Cherco
 - We have a new lease with The Trustees
 - Prior lease had an extreme rent escalation structure. Now there will be more predictable increases and lower increases
 - Continued progress on a long-term plan to find a physical place for the school, still working toward that. One of the challenges is that the Trustees is going through a major leadership transition right now.
- Room Parent updates from Greta Kaplan (B), Caroline Nordstrom (Y) & Annie Magee (P)
 - So far three of the studios have had nice fire pit evenings. Caroline added that Studio Yellow had a nice afterschool picnic and a coffee is next. Annie said a zoom evening was well attended.

****** FULL NOTES PROVIDED BY RPRESENTERS**

MARA RUS'S INTRODUCTION FOR EMILY SILET:

To many of you she needs no introduction. Emily Silet is a former parent of the LNS Community and the current Head of Learning Environments for deCordova. She has been with the Museum for over 15 years, dedicating her career to making art more accessible to visitors through open-ended interpretation and hands-on learning. She is the curator of the Process Gallery and The Lab, two interactive learning spaces located in the Museum. Out in the Park, Emily oversees the cell phone audio tour and other self-guided initiatives to enhance the visitor experience. Emily is the primary partnership liaison with Lincoln Nursery School, and works closely with our faculty to make sure the children are engaged with the art and staff of deCordova, as well as making sure the partnership is visible to the public.

At LNS, we truly cherish our partnership with deCordova and how current art exhibits become incorporated into our children's curriculum. Emily is here to introduce these exhibits to our community. Thank you for joining us Emily!

MARA RUS'S PRESIDENT UPDATE/THANK YOU

Thank you so much Emily! What a treat to have you with us and to have such an insight into what our kids will be discovering and exploring at deCordova.

It has been about two months since we all last met together on zoom. Since then our community has been hard at work and I'd like to take a moment to thank them.

1. Welcoming and Social: I really want to thank Emily Cardy and Katherine Ruhl for pulling off a successful Fall Fun event at LNS last month. It was such a beautiful day and it's wonderful to see our entire community together enjoying a pre-COVID LNS tradition. Thank you Emily and Katherine!
2. Individual studios have gotten together for picnics coffees and coffees. Thank you room parents, Greta, Caroline, Annie and Kristie, for helping to organize many of these events.
3. Each studio (besides Studio Red) has also had their fire pit gathering with great attendance! This was something we picked up last year in lieu of potlucks and it's been a great way to foster community building at LNS while maintaining safety. Thank you to all our potluck/firepit planners and hosts for putting these nights together! Hopefully Studio Red can catch a break with some weather!
4. I want to thank our VP of Development, Kate Brooks, and Kate Kelly for all their hard work related to the Annual Appeal (which many of you I am sure received in the mail). Fundraising is a crucial component to the maintaining the quality of education our children receive. Thank you Kate!
5. Strategic Planning: while many of us are busy thinking about the current year at LNS we are lucky to have Mitch Brooks and Clint Cherco thinking about or school's future. Thank you Mitch and Clint, I know you have an update for us later.
6. Last but definitely not least our Enrollment Open House was held October 23d! Thank you to Laura Mellen and Vickie Slingerland along with the Enrollment Committee for helping it go off without a hitch! And thank you also to all who came to volunteer their Saturday morning to help give tours to prospective families. I was at the Open House and you represented the school so beautifully. I felt particularly proud to be a part of LNS that Saturday and it's because of Enrollment so thank you! It was really great!

BRYAN WYNN'S FINANCIAL UPDATE

Financial Summary

~3 months into the year we are roughly on budget, expecting a \$55-60K (6% of expenses) loss for the school year

There are a few puts and takes on performance vs. budget:

- Expecting a one-time benefit of \$35-80K from ARPA (one-time COVID support)...
- ...offsetting ~\$40K shortfall of extended day program due to policies designed to limit cohort mixing

LNS level of net assets is healthy and inline with peers; we are shifting our portfolio towards liquid investments vs. cash

LNS' three strategic priorities come at a cost that we need to budget for, and at times can be in tension:

1. Securing our long-term home at the DeCordova
2. Increasing diversity at LNS
3. Ensuring the best education

Long-term financial plan aims to balance these priorities with generally fiscal prudence across a multi-year plan

Budget Disposition

	<i>LNS post COVID</i>	<i>Recommended '22-23</i>	<i>Recommended '23-24+</i>	<i>LNS 12-20 + Peers</i>
	Leverage assets to accelerate near-term strategy	Deficit offset by endowment gains	Balanced primary budget	Consistent surplus
Description	Run structural deficits annually, eating into the net assets ~\$65 annually (~\$100K deficit offset by ~\$35K in endowment gains)	Endowment estimated to produce ~6% annual gains over the long-term (~\$40K), which will fund annual recurring operating deficits	Realize a balanced budget annually with revenues offsetting expenses without utilizing the endowment	Consistent with LNS and peer historical performance aim to run a small but consistent surplus which will enable net assets to compound over time
Surplus / deficit				
\$ thous.	~(\$100K)	~(\$40K)	~\$0	~\$40K
% of expenses	8 - 10%	4 - 5%	~ 0 %	3 - 5%
Pros & Cons	+ Best teachers + smaller classes = great education + More diversity + Limited tuition increases - Less well positioned for change – legislative, real estate or otherwise	+ Executes on strategy, although likely more slowly +/- balances salaries with tuition - Positioning for change likely reliant upon fundraising	+ Well positioned for change: legislative, real estate or otherwise - Requires meaningful tuition growth <u>or</u> limited salary growth	+ Well positioned for change: legislative, real estate or otherwise - Requires meaningful tuition growth <u>and</u> limited salary growth

NANCY FINCKE'S DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Massachusetts Common Start Legislation,
Hearing Date: Tuesday, Nov.23 at 11:00 am

If you want to submit written testimony, please email info@commonstartma.org The Common Start legislation, H.605 (filed by Representatives Gordon & Madaro) & S.362 (filed by Senators Lewis & Moran), would establish a system of affordable, high-quality early education and child care for all Massachusetts families, over a 5-year timeline. This system would cover early education and care for children from birth through age 5, as well as after- and out-of-school time for children ages 5-12, and for children with special needs through age 15.

Programs would be available in early education and child care centers, private homes, and schools – the same settings where early education and child care is provided now. The bill provides a framework to increase the scope of public investment in early education and child care with an incremental roll-out over 5 years that prioritizes the lowest-income, highest-need families.

The Common Start legislation would dramatically increase the affordability and quality of early education and child care for all Massachusetts families. The bill's framework uses a combination of direct-to-provider funding and ongoing family financial assistance to reduce costs to families while compensating providers for the true cost of providing quality care.

- **Bedrock Funding:** The legislation would create a new direct-to-provider funding allocation based on provider capacity (not attendance) that directly offsets provider's operating costs, including higher educator pay.

- **Family Subsidy:** Once fully implemented, families below 50% of statewide median income (50% of SMI today is \$62,668 for a family of four, or \$42,614 for a single parent with one child) would be able to access early education and child care options for free. Families with incomes above that threshold would pay no more than 7 percent of their total household income.

What Does This Mean For...

Families:

Lower-income families can access high-quality care free of cost, while most other families can access financial assistance to significantly lower the cost of care Enhanced earning opportunities, financial security, and long-term wellbeing

Children:

Participation in high-quality early education and care programs

Access to comprehensive wraparound services

Increased education attainment and life-time earnings and longer-term health benefits, including improvements to children's brain development

Providers:

Public investments in providers raised to help meet the true cost of providing high-quality care

Direct-to-provider Bedrock Funding provides stable source of funding and promotes delivery of higher quality care

Educators:

Higher salaries and expanded professional development opportunities
Support for higher credential and/or degree attainments

Businesses:

Critical support to labor pool
Benefits talent recruitment, retention, and productivity
Advances corporate commitments to racial and gender equity in the workplace

Federal Level- Build Back Better - To be voted on

The most transformative investment in children and caregiving in generations:

Offers universal and free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, the largest expansion of universal and free education since states and communities across the country established public high school 100 years ago.

Preschool in the United States costs about \$8,600 per year. The Build Back Better framework will enable states to expand access to free preschool for more than 6 million children per year and increase the quality of preschool for many more children already enrolled. Importantly, parents will be able to send children to high-quality preschool in the setting of their choice – from public schools to child care providers to Head Start.

The program will lead to lifelong educational and economic benefits for children and parents, and is a transformational investment in America's future economic competitiveness. In fact, research shows that every \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood care and education can yield \$3 to \$7 over the long-run, as they do better in school, are more likely to graduate high-school and college, and earn more as adults.

Makes the largest investment in child care in the nation's history, saving most American families more than half of their spending on child care.

For decades, child care prices in the United States have risen faster than family incomes, yet the United States still invests 28 times less than its competitors on helping families afford high-quality care for toddlers. The Build Back Better framework will ensure that middle-class families pay no more than 7 percent of their income on child care and will help states expand access to high-quality, affordable child care to about 20 million children per year – covering 9 out of 10 families across the country with young children. For two parents with one toddler earning \$100,000 per year, the framework will produce more than \$5,000 in child care savings per year. Nearly all families of four making up to \$300,000 per year will be eligible. And, better access to high-quality child care can increase the likelihood that parents, especially mothers, are employed or enrolled in education and training beyond high school, while also providing lifetime benefits for children, especially those who are economically disadvantaged.

Nancy's Notes:

-Education is free to families whose income falls below 75% of the states

median income.

- Increase teacher compensation, 3 year phase in, 6 year program that is renewable, states opt into this bill

At the local level...LNS

Sunday, Nov. 21-Dec. 17 -A story walk will be displayed on the trail behind deCordova's Building and Grounds headquarters (enter at the end of the parking lot and turn right). Cindy Heaney, LNS Extended Day Teacher has coordinated with staff at deCordova and the Town of Lincoln Conservation Dept. to obtain a permit to install a temporary Story Walk using the book I Am A Birch by Scott Kelley. The book is about the coming of winter.

We hope many visitors enjoy the Storywalk along the trail and experience the pairing of literature with an outside adventure.

MARA RUS'S COVID UPDATE

During our November meeting with Dr. Emanuel, we updates to 2 of the LNS COVID policies:

First, regarding the masking policy, we removed the outdoor masking requirement based on case counts in our communities. We discussed that outdoor masking may need to be put back in place if there is an uptick in cases following thanksgiving but that we will monitor the numbers closely. There was a slight increase in case counts during this past two week period, bringing our case counts to slightly over 10/100,000. We did consult briefly with Dr. Emanuel who felt that this increase, especially in context of the overall trend, did not move the needle in bringing outdoor masking back, but that we should keep a close eye on the numbers following thanksgiving.

Second, regarding the Return to School policy for LNS students with a close contact in the household, the LNS student may now remain in school if the **close contact**:

a) is asymptomatic **AND**

b) takes a BinaxNow rapid antigen test, receives a negative result, and shares that negative result with the Director each morning before the LNS student comes to school through Day 7.

This policy will allow students with a household member who is designated a "close contact" to participate in school with minimal risk of bringing Covid into the classroom. It will apply to all household contacts, including but not limited to siblings who are in a Test & Stay program in the public school system.

We will continue to meet monthly with our COVID adviser and will assess each policy at each meeting. Also, we are concerned about the possibility of increased COVID spread after the Thanksgiving holiday and ask that the community be mindful our the LNS travel policy which states that:

All unvaccinated students who travel must provide negative PCR or rapid molecular test taken after returning to MA. This does not apply to students who have no new significant exposures during travel (for example, travelling by car to a family house in NH, staying with people who are vaccinated or within their current bubble or household).

ANNUAL APPEAL LETTER FROM NANCY FINCKE

Dear Families,

What captures a child's curiosity?

Mixing dirt and water? A mark on a page? A classmate with a story? Smooth bark or a rough pinecone? A walk in the woods? A musical fence? An engaging teacher or a new family partner?

At Lincoln Nursery School, we intentionally hold a space for the dynamics of early childhood to unfold and be nurtured. Every day, children are noticing and engaging, and teachers are nearby observing, supporting a social connection, or helping make visible a child's emerging theory.

As any parent of an older child will tell you, this time is fleeting. Children grow up fast. There are few places where they are given the time, the environment, and the respect to learn and grow the way children are meant to at this critical age. In the past year and a half, the value of this work has been brought into sharp relief. The joy of children coming to LNS to play provides hope in an uncertain world.

At this time of year, you can feel the community coming together. Teachers and family partners are collaborating. The children are settling into their studio groups. When they arrive in the morning, they are eager to see friends, connect with their teachers, and explore the studios and outdoor spaces. We see a growing confidence, a "knowing" that "I belong here."

This is also the time of year when we ask for the community's financial support. At Lincoln Nursery School, like at most independent schools, tuition does not cover the full operating cost. We rely on giving to hire and retain talented faculty, to ensure small class sizes and low teacher-student ratios, to create beautiful studio spaces filled with inspiring materials, to steward the buildings and grounds, and to ensure LNS stays an unparalleled place for learning and exploration.

I thank you for your support!

Nancy