

LNS Board Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2021
Via Zoom

Attendees (based on Zoom participant list):

- **Present:** Mara Rus, Gabrielle Emanuel, Kate Brooks, Emily Lines, Anique Lebel, Bryan Wynn, Laura Mellen, Vickie Slingerland, Sasha Dages, Clint Cherco, Mitch Brooks, Greta Kaplan, Caroline Nordstrom, Annie Magee, Kristie Fox, Lauren O'Neil, Katherine Ruhl, Emily Cardy
- **Absent:** Abigail Flanagan
- **Also Present:** Nancy Fincke, Emily Drazen, Amy Funkenstein, Abigail Adams, Andrew West, Diana Abata, Emily, Elizabeth Heald, Emily Beekman, Jenna S., Kate Grindlay Kelly, Philana Gnatowski

President's Update – Mara Rus: (See full notes below)

- Welcome to the new school year
- Thank you to Nancy, Sisy, the steering committee and the faculty

Secretary – Gabrielle Emanuel:

- Approved May 11, 2021 meeting minutes. Katherine Ruhl motions and Kate Brooks (and others) seconds

Director's Report – Nancy Fincke: (See full notes below)

- It's great to have the children at school. They are working hard integrating all the aspects of being a member of a group
- Professional Development: This year the faculty has enrolled in a year long study with Story Workshop Studio

Strategic Planning Update -- Mitch Brooks: (See full notes below)

- Find a permanent home for LNS on the grounds of the deCordova.
- Maintain exceptional standards for teaching and culture through an anticipated period of higher staff turnover.
- Preserve and improve accessibility of LNS to families of diverse backgrounds and income levels.

Board Goals Discussion 21'-22' -- Mara Rus, Clint Cherco, Emily Lines, Kate Brooks: (See full notes below)

- Continue to make health and safety a priority at LNS. The Steering and COVID Committees along with the Director will follow guidance from our external COVID Advisor and local healthcare consultant who will regularly review and assess our COVID response plans and inform leadership of measures that enhance safety.

- Foster a sense of community and support relationship building while keeping our school safe and respecting others.
- Strategic Planning Committee Goals:
 - o Renew short-term lease
 - o Propose plan for long-term occupancy
- Anti-Bias:
 - o To engage in a thoughtful process to develop a 3-5 year Anti-Bias Learning Implementation Plan for LNS. The Plan will support LNS's commitment to "elevating (and implementing) anti-bias culture and education."
- Fundraising:
 - o Create a development plan that will thoughtfully organize LNS fundraising in order to support the strategic goals and operational needs of the organization.

LNS COVID Update -- Mara Rus, Emily Drazen & Amy Funkenstein (See full notes below)

- This year we have a different structure where there is an outside advisor who makes recommendations to a steering committee as well as a local consultant
- This change happened over the summer when there was a realization that LNS needed professional guidance
 - We found ourselves in an echo chamber of minutia every week. This was necessary for us to continue doing this.
- There are a lot of diverse options and not everyone is happy. We are asking for your kindness and understanding. The hope is that this set up means there is less time debating and more time building community
- Generally, MA is in a really good place and the fact that vaccines will soon be available to kids as young as 5 is very encouraging.
- Hopefully, we will soon turn the corner on delta but we are not out of the woods yet
- LNS is taking a layer approach to reducing risk meant that we are combining various different strategies including maximizing outdoor time, masking, a fully vaccinated staff
- The way breakthrough COVID is manifesting is as a cold, sometimes even a mild cold, so please get tested even if it feels minor
- LNS Protocols:
 - Outdoor Masking. LNS is requiring outdoor masking since delta is very contagious and when kids are playing they are often in very close contact. Hoping to remove this requirement soon. What LNS is looking for is a 14-average incident rate of less than 10 in 100,000 people and trending downward
 - Travel Policy. If there is new and significant exposure, you need a PCS test once you return to MA. This does not apply if you leave the state for less than 24 hours or your kids do not have significant new exposure (for example, you drove to your vacation in Maine)
 - Quarantine and Isolation: Must isolate 10 days from positive test, quarantine for 7 full days, test on day 5, exposure counts as day 0. Contact tracing counts back

two full days (positive test or symptoms on Wed, go back to Monday for contact tracing)

- We were given feedback that it is very helpful to have someone to call and ask question
 - will continue to be available

Call for Updates/Questions

Andrew West expressed appreciation for the work of the covid committee and the decision to wear masks at all times. Elizabeth Heald raised concerns about outside masking and its impact on the children. She said it felt like there was a lack of transparency in how COVID decisions were being made and she was concerned that the decision to use an outside advisor eliminated parents from the conversation. Amy Funkenstein and Emily Drazen explained that the decision to move to an outside advisor was made over the summer because things were changing rapidly with the delta variant. There was a need for professional guidance and to make decisions quickly which was challenging with the COVID committee model used last year. Nancy Fincke added that the teachers had requested outside masking so they would not need to interrupt play in order to enforce distancing, and last year children were able to form meaningful relationships even while wearing masks. Many expressed excitement about when it will be safe to stop wearing masks outdoors.

Call for Other Updates/Questions

Nancy Fincke: We've started planning for enrollment with an open house 10/23 9-11am. We will be asking community if you are going to be returning or have siblings come. It's great for us to have an idea before we do enrollment tours.

Laura Mellen: We will likely need volunteers inside and outside studios.

Katherine Ruhl: The welcome committee will organize social events by studio, including a parents' firepit and a casual coffee at drop-off. We're excited for everyone to get to know each other.

Nancy: Director of grounds will tell us if the hayride is on for mid-October.

Sasha Dages: As the decordova liaison, I am working to organize a tour of the museum.

**** FULL NOTES PROVIDED BY PRESENTERS:**

MARA RUS:
WELCOME

Welcome everyone to our second Board meeting of the 2021-22 year! It was so nice to see so many of you at LNS over the past couple of weeks as we re-opened our gates once again.

I want to take a moment to thank all of you for your patience and understanding as we navigated the changing COVID climate this summer. I know many of us didn't expect the start of this year to resemble last fall as much as it does. But I also know that when I see our kids join each other in play with the guidance and care of our amazing faculty I am reminded of what brings us all together: our children. We have done this before and we can do it again!

THANK YOU

I would also like to thank a few others before we get started:

- Nancy: We are so lucky to have you and I don't personally what I would do without your ability to always see the forest through the trees. You never forget why we are here and your dedication to this community, our kids and to your work is truly remarkable.
- Steering: Anique, Emily and Kate - your dedication to LNS cannot be thanked enough. You do all you do (and that's alot) because you truly care about this school. Thank you guys, I am so excited to do this year with this amazing team.
- Sisy, our new assistant director, joined our team in the middle of a pandemic! A former parent of children at LNS, it feels as though she has always been here. Thank you Sisy for your dedication to LNS, we are so happy to have you with us!
- Faculty: our wonderful teachers! They as always put so much of themselves into LNS and their dedication to our children and the school always shows through. I know we all know this, but we are beyond lucky to have the faculty we do.

GABRIELLE EMANUEL:

Secretary:

Approved minutes from the previous board meeting.

NANCY FINCKE:

Director's Report:

The beginning of a new school year asks children to separate from their family, develop attachments to their teachers, learn new routines, play with peers, become comfortable in new environments and develop independence in their activities of daily living. The children are working hard integrating all the aspects of being a member of a group. We are off to a great start!

Our teachers are alongside the children giving each child the amount of support they need to meet his/her individual challenges. When I reflect on the work of the teachers, I feel grateful to witness the modeling of respectful communication, collaboration and

encouraging agency in the children.

Thank you to Mara, our President and the Steering Team for leaning in to the complicated terrain of administering a school during Covid. I trust we will get through this complicated time.

Professional Development

This year the faculty has enrolled in a year long study with Story Workshop Studio. Story Workshop Studio is an online community filled with colleagues eager to grow with you. Weekly, you'll find inspiring, provocative invitations that catalyze reflection and encourage innovation. Members come from all parts of the world, teaching and leading a wide range of schools for children (usually ages 3 to 11 - sometimes younger and sometimes older). We share images and stories, read a range of texts, and connect with each other through an inviting platform and realtime meet-ups. Together, we support each other to create the kinds of learning communities upon which healthy living depends. Story workshop is an approach to developing literacy through immersion in the arts, investment in play, and sharing stories. Studios are places where people come together to experiment: to imagine greater possibilities, try out new ideas, and share experiences.

Story workshop grew from Opal School - a studio dedicated to teacher research. In creating Story Workshop Studio, Susan Harris MacKay and Matt Karlsen build from what they've learned during their decades at Opal School to create a worldwide meeting space.

MITCH BROOKS:

Strategic Planning Chairs present 3 LNS Strategic Goals

- Find a permanent home for LNS on the grounds of the DeCordova.
 - o For those of you who don't know, LNS rents its studios from the Trustees of Reservations (formerly deCordova), and is now reaching the end of its second five-year lease.
 - o This short-term lease structure is not ideal for us as a tenant. It makes it difficult to think and plan long-term, and contributes to challenges with maintenance and capital investments. For example, our aging systems (such as HVAC) are near the end of their useful lives. LNS could be on the hook for significant repair bills if something fails, and neither LNS or TTOR have strong incentives to invest in large capital improvements under the current lease arrangement. The LNS studios are a small part of TTOR's portfolio, and face stiff competition for maintenance and capital improvement funds. Repairs and investment in our buildings can be slow to come.
 - o That said, our location at the deCordova has become a big part of our identity as an organization - giving the children continuous access to nature and art. It's hard to imagine going anywhere else.

- o For that reason, we're exploring what options might exist for making our presence more permanent. This will give us the stability and security to plan and invest in our space for the long term.
- Maintain exceptional standards for teaching and culture through an anticipated period of higher staff turnover
 - o Several of our staff members have been with the organization for decades, and we must face the reality that some will likely retire over the next several years. Much of Lincoln Nursery School's identity is tied to our fantastic staff, so it is critical to be thoughtful about turnover in order to preserve the institutional knowledge, the practical application of reggio emilia philosophy they embody, and other value and characteristics that are not easily replaced.
 - o As an organization, we will need to be proactive in our efforts to attract and retain the staff who will continue to sustain the spirit of LNS.
- Preserve and/or improve accessibility of LNS to families of diverse backgrounds and income levels.
 - o In the last LNS Family Survey pre-covid, almost 20% of respondents cited a "lack of diversity" as LNS's biggest weakness. This was the top response for that category.
 - o This goal should inform both the small, incremental changes we can make throughout the year, as well as the bigger choices we make in pursuit of our other strategic goals. We need to consider how those choices, even inadvertently, impact the accessibility and appeal of LNS to families of all kinds.

MARA RUS: **BOARD GOALS**

This year in an effort to have the Board Goals be more of a collaborative effort we will be doing things a little differently. Nancy and I came up with the first 2 board goals and then we are calling on other Board members to help formulate the others.

The two 2021-22 Board Goals from Nancy and I are:

1. Continue to make health and safety a priority at LNS. The Steering and COVID Committees along with the Director will follow guidance from our external COVID Advisor and local healthcare consultant who will regularly review and assess our COVID response plans and inform leadership of measures that enhance safety.
2. Foster a sense of community and support relationship building while keeping our school safe and respecting others.

The other areas we've identified as areas that could use a Board Goal include:

CLINT CHERCO: **Strategic Planning**

Renew short-term lease - This is a basic requirement as our existing lease expires at the end of this year. We don't foresee any major obstacles to achieving this under similar terms as we have today, but with the recent departure of Kord Jablonski as Business Director for the deCordova, it may take some cycles to build a relationship and get something signed with a new Business Director or other stakeholders from TTOR.

Propose plan for long-term occupancy - During lease and relationship discussions with Kord last year, we started conversations around different scenarios whereby LNS might secure a more permanent home at the deCordova. We expect to re-engage in these conversations shortly to better understand our options and work to develop a path forward.

EMILY LINES:

Anti-Bias

KATE BROOKS:

Development

Development - Board Goal

Create a development plan that will thoughtfully organize LNS fundraising in order to support the strategic goals and operational needs of the organization.

Why is Fundraising Important?

At Lincoln Nursery School, like most independent schools, tuition does not cover the full operating cost, so we rely on philanthropy to ensure we can deliver the LNS experience and curriculum with the excellence we are known for.

LNS must attract outside support to balance our budget in order to hire and retain talented faculty, to ensure small class sizes and low teacher-student ratios, to create beautiful studio spaces and purchase inspiring materials, and to steward the physical campus of the school to ensure it is accessible into the future.

Creating a Development Plan

In the Spring of 2021, LNS hired Brightspot Consultants to help create a development plan for the school.

Goals:

Help articulate LNS's "case for support." Getting stakeholders on the same page around organizational values and how to describe our impact is an essential building block to a strong fundraising effort.

Create a comprehensive development plan and related tools that will help build the structures and systems to support a consistent, sustainable development operation that can weather leadership transitions and position the organization to steadily grow support over time.

How Board members will be involved

Brightspot Consultant, Kelly Delekta will be reaching out to a number of Board members and LNS families to hear their thoughts on the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead as we think about becoming more intentional with our fundraising effort.

Board members may be asked for help with grant writing, running focus groups, and hosting events during and after the Development Plan is finalized.

Support our school and spread the word. LNS is a wholly unique place, offering an unparalleled space for learning and exploration. We count on all families to donate in order to help us continue with this important work.

MARA RUS:

Are there any comments on these goals? More broadly, is there anything not captured here that you think should be considered for future goals?

Thank you all for your feedback and thoughts here!

LNS COVID Update

As you all know things are structurally different this year than last. Our COVID Committee is not like last year. Instead we have a COVID Advisor who makes recommendations to Steering as to how best to keep everyone healthy and safe and how best to ensure we keep studios open. In addition we have our local general healthcare consultant who is available to weigh in when needed. Lastly, we have Emily Drazen and Amy Funkenstein, former COVID Committee members from last year, serving as COVID Co-Chairs (our much smaller COVID Committee this year), who are here as support to the community should there be exposure and/or cases. They also attend meetings with our COVID Advisor.

This structural shift occurred over the summer as it became progressively clear that we really needed the professional support. As many of us know, our LNS Community can be very resourceful. So when Dr. Emanuel, who happens to be our secretary's (Gabrielle Emanuel's) father, offered his assistance we were thrilled to have the guidance of an expert who has worked and continues to work in creating COVID policy.

As we all know within this pandemic there can be a diverse number of opinions. By having an expert guide us we hope to spend less time debating Covid policies and more time working together as a community to support why we are all really here, our children.

Emily and Amy are here to briefly lay out our school's COVID related policies.

EMILY DRAZEN:

Hi, I'm Emily Drazen and along with my friend, Amy Funkenstein, we make up your covid co-chairs. It is really nice to see so many of you here tonight. For those of you whom i haven't

met yet - i am mom to Lily in studio Red, this is our 3rd year at LNS. I am also a family NP, my practice is in Hudson MA. I spend a lot of my time thinking about COVID through work and also raising 3 kids in a pandemic.

I'm gonna take a couple mins to talk about 3 things: COVID in kids, COVID as i see it my primary care practice and then I'll touch our protocols briefly.

Generally, we're in a good place in Massachusetts, last I checked our fully vaxed rate for 12+ in middlesex county was 79%. Recent news has made me hopeful yet again about vaccine availability for kids down to 5 in the near future, and I suspect we may be turning a corner on the delta variant soon.

However, we're still not totally out of the woods with Delta, kids are contracting COVID at a higher rate than with the wild type or alpha variant of SARS COV2. In fact we had 240,000 cases of COVID in kids 2 weeks ago. Fortunately, mortality rates remain very, very low in kiddos. I'm not telling you all this to scare you, but to remind all of us that COVID isn't done yet. We may be really sick of it, but COVID doesn't care.

There is no zero risk, we are all inherently incurring some risk by enrolling our kids in school (amongst other things), but at LNS we have a layered mitigation strategy to minimize this risk, including masking, maximizing outdoor time, air filtration systems, and a vaccinated teacher workforce.

Amy and my goal, which i think we share with you all is to keep our kids healthy and safe and to keep school open.

I want to make a couple points about what i am seeing in my clinical practice - breakthrough covid is presenting like a cold - nasal congestion, some fatigue . So my message to you is please get tested if you have even mild symptoms and even if you are vaccinated. You do not need to wait for a high fever or hacking cough to warrant a test. Current common symptoms in kids - fever, fatigue, ST, headache. So, also, don't be waiting for kids to have respiratory symptoms before getting a test in kids either.

OK, some of our policies:

Outdoor masking

Regarding our policy of outdoor masking - the reasons that Dr. Emanuel recommend this are 1)the contagious nature of Delta variant, and 2) the fact that our kids play so close together, often sharing air space. It's true that there is a dilution effect outdoors, but when people are in close quarters this dilution is much less. We will continue to re-evaluate this policy and look forward to a time when we can remove masks outside again. For transparency, we are looking for 14 day average daily incidence rates (which is basically daily case counts) less than 10/100,000 people in the towns that we pull from and trending downward - at that point we will circle with Dr. Emanuel again to discuss.

Travel

Essentially we should be thinking about our travel policy as an exposure policy. This does not apply to kids who travel out of state for less than 24 hrs or kids who have no new significant exposures during travel (ex. traveling by car to an air bnb NH, staying with people who are within their current bubble). We do require a PCR test in this case.

Isolation and quarantine

Isolation - 10 days from start of symptoms or positive test

Quarantine (applies to unvaccinated), 7 full days with negative test at day 5, exposure is day 0, free on day 8

Unvaccinated household member stays home til negative test at day 5

Contact tracing counts back 2 full days - so if person has symptoms or positive test on Wed, we could back to Monday.

Amy and I are available to you if you have questions about how to navigate the policies, in particular regarding how to handle exposures, quarantines, isolations, etc. Don't hesitate to reach out.

MARA RUS:

I would now like to open up the meeting for any general questions or thoughts you may have.

(SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS ABOVE)

MARA RUS:

One of my favorite quotes from last year was: Community is the place where you keep showing up. Thank you all for joining tonight and I am looking forward to our year together.