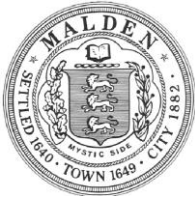


CITY OF MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



Rick Rogers, Interim Principal  
Monique Boudreau, Program Manager

**EARLY LEARNING CENTER**

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**ELC School Council Meeting  
Thursday, March 11, 2021**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Heather Cochran, Gregory Marton, Danielle Reilly, Rick Rogers, Imene Bouziane Saidi, Elizabeth Paulsen Tonogbanua

**Public Comment**

No members of the public attended.

**Approval of of [ELC School Council Minutes 01 14 2021](#)**

On a motion by Gregory Marton, seconded by Heather Cochran, the minutes for January 14, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.

**Principal's Report**

**1. Staff Update:**

- a. **ILP Remote LTS:** Amy Meserve was hired to be the long-term substitute for one of the remote ILP classes. This class will switch to in-person at the end of March. A second paraprofessional has been hired for when the class becomes in-person.
- b. **ILP LTS:** We are still seeking a long-term sub to teach a needed additional ILP classroom.
- c. **Remote PreK:** We have posted a new position for a remote PreK teacher in order that both full-day teachers can be in-person every day.
- d. **Coverage:** Daily substitute and floater coverage for lunches remains a major concern. We need a second Building Substitute and 2-3 floaters to provide lunch coverage for teacher prep time and lunches and paraprofessional breaks and lunches.
- e. **Principal Search:** The search for a permanent principal is expected to begin soon.

**2. Enrollment**

As of March 8, we had 249 students enrolled at ELC. 66 ILP students come in person 4 days a week and another 50 students in Integrated Preschool classes come 2 days a week in person under a hybrid model. We had a wait list of 30 students, but will not be accepting any new students this year except students as they become eligible

for special education services and turn 3. We have begun notifying families that we will not be taking anyone else from the wait list.

### **3. In-Person Update & New State Directive**

We had resurveyed remote families March 1<sup>st</sup> about whether they wanted to return in-person. As a result,

- One remote ILP class will become in-person later in March.
- Full Day PreK will add a cohort of in-person WHEN we have hired a remote teacher to take the remaining students.
- Half Day PreK: One teacher will add an in-person cohort two days a week.

We will begin working on addressing what the Education Commissioner's recent directive that all K-5 students return in-person full-time means for preschool. Whether required or not, we should do our best to align with practice in K-5. To start all remote Wednesdays will likely become in-person (offering third in-person day for 3 and 5 day students). Among the issues we need to address before a full return of all students:

- Can our PreK classes maintain 3' social distancing (6' for lunch) if we increase from 10 to 15 students per room?
- Need additional staff for coverage

The School Committee is voting on Monday on whether to apply for a waiver for K-5 requirements. Rick will communicate with families next week. In the meantime, those who requested a change to in-person have been notified it will be delayed past March 15.

#### Questions & Discussion

- Does that mean Wednesday group is bigger than the other days? We need to look at the numbers (2-day 3-day and 5-day kids) to make sure they fit.
- What if there is state guidance for preschool? Would we be eligible for a waiver? Probably not. However, filling our current staffing vacancies remains a concern.
- Some teachers are concerned about maintaining social distancing with 15 preschool students, as they are finding it challenging with the current 10.
- Other strategies for hiring besides TalentEd/School spring? We are also using staffing agencies, but turnover is high. Can we offer additional pay? Not with union contracts. We have flexibility on licensing this year, but need to have someone who is at least studying special education to be a teacher.
- Could the ELC be expanded beyond the current building? There is not space in the K-8 schools.

### **4. Next Year**

As part of the budget process, Rick and Monique are working with Assistant Superintendent for Student Services Pam McDonald on developing a configuration for ELC next year. This issue will be brought to the School Committee's Budget Subcommittee for discussion about community needs. Rick has recommended that the configuration be based on a 22 classroom maximum (18 full-size (14 with

bathrooms) and 4 half-size that could accommodate ILP classes. We need to plan for projected numbers in the ILP and then determine how to configure the remaining rooms among full-day and half-day classes.

Another unresolved issue is the future of before and after school care, which have been on hold during this pandemic year. Parent representatives on the School council spoke in favor of providing this for families.

### **Anti-Racist Education & Equity at ELC (Discussion)**

Council members engaged in a conversation around this focus question: *How can the ELC promote anti-racist education and equity and build capacity for more culturally responsive teaching?*

We used a protocol called “Council” that asks each person to respond to the question without problem solving or discussion. This protocol is designed to hear each person’s thinking on an important topic that will require lengthy discussion and problem solving in the future.

Among the themes and ideas that were raised:

- This work is not a one-time thing, but needs to be ongoing.
- White teachers need to root themselves in understanding that they are part of a system that is designed to perpetuate white supremacy and disrupt our own biases and better learn who our students are and who our families are.
- People are well intentioned, There may be discomfort, but it is structural – not personal.
- Need to look at representation in the curriculum and children’s books. We need to find more information and materials appropriate for young children.
- Need to hear from people who have been marginalized, but without asking them to carry the full burden.
- White people need to recognize their white privilege and use it to “make noise.”
- Learn from the work of Dr. Bettina Love (New book: *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*)
- Need guidance and resources for how to approach this work with young children.
- We celebrate cultural differences and use multicultural books, but how do we talk in a developmentally appropriate ways about anti-racism in an early childhood classroom? Not to mention structural issues and systemic racism. How much is enough, too much? With 3,4,5 year olds, how do you start? How to do that in a sensitive, thought-out, predictable process, to give kids tools they need to navigate it on their own as they get older.
- One place to start is looking at what we currently do, and what our own biases are at this point. We have them, whether they’re implicit or not, we need to take time to think about what those are. It starts with each teacher personally before it can come to the classroom. Each teacher needs to believe in it and work hard to make it happen. As uncomfortable as the conversation is, we have to do it.
- Staffing: Diversity in the community is not reflected in the teachers at ELC.

- Language richness in our community – not utilized to the extent it could be in the classroom. Find ways to bring diverse languages in— through songs, greetings, etc. Ask families to recommend books and stories.

The Council will return to this discussion in our April meeting with the intent of developing a school improvement goal for next year focused on anti-racist education and equity. The Leadership Team is also engaged in this conversation and will contribute to the development of an action plan.

Friday’s PD day includes a district-wide focus on examining curriculum materials for bias. In addition, teachers at ELC will engage in a shared reading and discussion of an article on diversity strategies.

**Upcoming Meeting Schedule – THURSDAYS 2:15-3:15 PM**

April 8

May 13

June 10 (if needed)