

Back to school



Staff photos by Ann Ringwood

It was back to school for teachers at Lincoln Public Schools attending the new teacher orientation this week. From left, Technology Integration Specialist Lisah Schmidt Rhodes, kindergarten teacher Renee Koschnick, and first grade teacher Christine Marshall.

New teachers ready for class

By Geoff Moore

Correspondent

New teacher orientation day provided more than the opportunity to put faces to names and names to buildings for 16 newcomers to Lincoln Public Schools.

Among many things on a packed agenda last Tuesday, the new hires got a first glimpse of the district's teacher mentoring program, met some of Lincoln's elected officials and learned the role of the Lincoln Teachers Association.

Leading the all-day session was Assistant Superintendent Mary Sterling, who, despite being only three weeks into her role in Lincoln, demonstrated all the poise and confidence that comes from a 33-year career as an educator. Prior to coming to Lincoln, Sterling spent two years designing and leading a mentoring program in Lowell geared to more than 100 new teachers that district hires annually.

"This is cozy," she said, adding that it great that Lincoln cares enough to make the mentoring program work.

Renee Koschnick, who came from a school district in California with



Technology specialist Mark McDonough speaks at new teacher orientation on Aug. 28. Technology was a major focus of the staff training session.

11 elementary schools, said she was excited to start the school year in Lincoln. Koschnick will teach kindergarten at the Hanscom Primary School.

"I feel a real sense of community, collaboration and cohesion between schools here, in terms of curriculum and goals," she said.

Christina Marshall, an experienced teacher from Lowell who had been teaching in Fairfax County, Va., said she decided to come to Lincoln for

the chance to teach in a community that values education, having provided funding for Special Education, classroom assistants and modern technology resources.

Technology is likely to play an increasingly important role in the schools, not only for internal communications but also as teaching aide. Earlier this year, Town Meeting voted to fund a \$700,000 Technology Initiative, allowing the school district

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to purchase new equipment and make network infrastructure improvements. As a result, every teacher in the district will be issued a laptop computer.

Ensuring that this capital investment bears fruit will be the responsibility of new technology specialists Lisah Schmidt-Rhodes and Mark McDonough.

Schmidt-Rhodes, who will serve as the Technology Integration Specialist on the Hanscom campus, stressed the importance of the schools' investment in modern education.

"The capital improvement is huge [in Lincoln Public Schools] based on my previous experience in Cambridge Public Schools," she said, adding that up-to-date technology is important in creating a streamlined collaborative environment between content and curriculum to help students learn.

"Technology has to deliver, work the first time, and load fast for children to learn

through its use," she said.

McDonough, who will be based on the Lincoln campus, decided three years ago that while he enjoyed teaching middle and high school Spanish, he loved technology. That revelation led him to reconsider his career path. In Lincoln, he will split his time between teaching technology and aiding other teachers in implementing it for their own teaching requirements.

"There is so much content out there on the Internet. Part of my role will be to help other teachers find what's available and how to use it," McDonough said.

Also on hand to provide information were Police Chief Kevin Mooney and School Resource Officer David Regan. Mooney outlined the close relationship between the public safety departments and the school district. By sharing information, potential issues can be avoided, he said.

"We are the conduit for you to get an overall picture of life outside the school," said Regan, who is also responsible for the D.A.R.E. and stranger awareness programs.

Lincoln Teachers Association representatives Fred Lipton and Kerry Green provided teachers with information on the association's role in negotiation and dispute settlement.

"We are a professional association rather than a union," said Green. "In our community, we work things out," she said, adding that the children benefit from a strong association.

Summing up the morning events, Sterling said she was pleased with how the orientation was going.

"I liked the tone of those speaking. It gave a sense of community, not only as teachers, but also of the larger community of Lincoln and Hanscom," Sterling said.