

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, October 13, 2015
Salvation Army KROC Center
65 Dudley St, Dorchester

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Mary Czajkowski, Chair Jessie Steigerwald, Alessandro Alessandrini, Margaret Coppe, Judy Crocker, Bill Hurley
ALSO PRESENT: Assistant Superintendent Carol Pilarski; Interim Finance Director Ian Dailey; Director of Special Education Ellen Sugita; Director of Planning and Assessment Maureen Kavanaugh; Director of Technology Tom Plati; nine building principals, numerous building staff and curriculum coordinators.

Following a light dinner and breakout sessions between individual school principals and staff with families, the assembled parties began the meeting. Meeting minutes were taken by Judy Crocker.

At **7:12 pm**, the Chair called the meeting to order.

METCO Coordinator Barbara Nobles gave opening remarks. March 15, 2016 will be METCO lobby day at the State House. She reviewed extended day procedures, parent sign-in for this meeting, and asked if principals could email her with questions or comments for their November meeting.

METCO Parent Chair Karly Sheffield welcomed all in attendance.

Ms. Steigerwald also thanked staff and everyone in the METCO program who helped organize the dinner and the evening program. She noted that it was a special tradition for which Lexington's School Committee was grateful to be invited to Boston, as not all METCO program partners have this opportunity.

Mr. Hurley read the Lexington Mission/Vision statement.

Superintendent Announcements:

- Dr. Czajkowski thanked all for celebrating the successes of the METCO program. Previous superintendent Paul Ash worked with staff to address the achievement gap and she will continue that work. She thanked Barbara Nobles and others for their energy and dedication to the students and the program. Successful and meaningful links have been formed between parents and the schools, and each benefit from learning from each other – including teachers, formation of friendships, and students and families being part of the school community. She reviewed programs which particularly benefit METCO students:
 - Professional Learning Communities for staff
 - Common Formative Assessment
 - Response to Intervention
 - METCO Elementary Learning Program (MELP)

- Extended Day for middle school students
- African American and Latino Scholarship Program
- The Superintendent thanked Carol Pilarski for orchestrating the second annual Lexington Learns Together Day where all staff participated.
- There is a public forum on October 15 at Clarke at 7pm that will outline the proposed capacity expansion for Clarke and Diamond Middle Schools.

School Committee Announcements:

- All members thanked our hosts, faculty, and staff for this high-energy and thoroughly enjoyable evening. Members acknowledged: the dedication of the METCO parents and students, the student's very long days, for entrusting the students to the Lexington teachers and staff so far away from home, for attending this event at the end of a workday.
- Ms. Crocker reported that October 14 is the annual International Safe Routes To School Walking Wednesday. All students are included, no matter if they are bussed, walk, bike, or are driven to school. She also mentioned that the Lexington Education Foundation (LEF) Trivia Bee is approaching.
- Mr. Alessandrini explained what LEF is and how it has been a great benefactor for all Lexington students. Ms. Crocker, Ms. Coppe, and Mr. Alessandrini compose this year's School Committee team.
- Ms. Coppe thanked all those who attended the Estabrook School gym dedication naming for Jim Banks, long-time physical education teacher and mentor.
- Ms. Steigerwald thanked those METCO parents who attended the July "Jump Start" meeting. She explained the premise behind the Lexington Community Coalition and gave an update on its first town-wide meeting. Selected topics for 2015-16 include: reducing unhealthy stress; mental health and suicide prevention initiatives; alcohol and substance abuse prevention. She also explained how to access the multiple school capital project presentations and other information online through the Town website.

Agenda:

1. Superintendent Transition

A) Core Beliefs and Values - Dr. Czajkowski expressed how it is an honor to be in Lexington. The term "O.I.L." (Only In Lexington) sums up the flavor of the Town in some ways but overall, she has found the district and community to be incredible. She values how parents understand the importance of being engaged. She is actively learning to understand the culture and develop relationships.

She is entering her 35th year as an educator and 15th as a school superintendent. As she discussed her professional background, she shared that she enjoys being engaged and challenged everyday. Her theme for her first year is "Listen, Learn, and Lead with Balance." She is taken by the level of stress for students, teachers, staff, and parents and spoke on how the

community needs to develop resiliency; to learn to cope in healthy, positive ways. It is OK to fail and some of life's greatest successes can be failures.

As the new Lexington superintendent, she fully supports the METCO program. Parents and staff will see her in the classrooms and in the schools. Her door is always open. Parents should always address student concerns with teachers first, followed by principals. It is important to allow them to resolve problems first before a parent comes to her.

B) Consolidated Goals – The goals of the School Committee, District, and Superintendent need to align toward a common vision. There are some large issues facing the district. Student enrollment is growing at a rate that is not sustainable. The School Committee is therefore advocating for substantial funding in order to meet our buildings over capacity needs. Homework policy is another example. She is having conversations with principals, teachers, administrators, and parents and also asked that parents discuss homework with their students in order to create a policy more in line with District values.

One method she likes to employ in order to get to know her community and parent concerns are Superintendent House Calls. Hosted by community members, the conversation covers the challenges and issues important to parents today in an informal setting. The common goal for all attendees is the welfare of the children. She asked if any Boston parents would be willing to host and Ms. Nobles said that she had a few names.

C) Winter procedures – It is always a difficult decision when cancelling school due to weather conditions and Dr. Czajkowski prefers to err on the side of caution. Safety comes first. She considers the number of students being transported every day and the timing of the storm. She begins making calls to verify weather events around 3:00 am and makes a decision by 5:30am. The superintendent is looking to use a different notification system for she finds the current system to be cumbersome.

It is important that if a parent feels that weather conditions will make for unsafe travel out of the home to attend school then that child should stay home. This type of an absence should not be counted against the child. However, it should be noted that this does not give carte blanche to keep students home.

2. MCAS Results for METCO students – Elementary, Middle, and High School

Maureen Kavanaugh, the Director of Planning and Assessment reviewed the 2015 MCAS scores for Lexington's METCO students.

- MCAS are given in grades 3-8, 10 and 12.
- There are four performance levels – warning/failing, needs

- improvement, proficient, and advanced.
- The SGP is the Student Growth Percentile. Typical growth is an aggregate score of 40-60.
 - Parent MCAS reports provide specific information about your child.
 - Lexington Public Schools uses multiple data points, including MCAS scores, to evaluate and customize instruction for each student.

The trends of improving scores were discussed as students move from elementary to middle to high school. High school scores are expected to be higher than elementary or middle for they are the accumulation of all academic efforts. The district is not concerned with the 39.5 high school SGP score for steady growth is consistently demonstrated. Ms. Kavanaugh congratulated teachers, administrators, families, and students for their continued hard work.

English Language Arts: Proficient and Advanced student standings

- 52% elementary
- 76% middle
- 100% high school

Mathematics: Proficient and Advanced student standings

- 49% elementary
- 46% middle
- 96% high school

English Language Arts: Lexington's SGP

- 48.5 elementary
- 53.5 middle
- 39.5 high school
- 45.5 all

Mathematics: Lexington's SGP

- 53.5 elementary
- 49 middle
- 81.5 high school
- 55 all

3. The Value of METCO from a Student's Perspective

Two individuals spoke on the benefits of the METCO program to Lexington students.

Maya is a current LHS senior who expressed how her circle of friends has

widened considerably due in great part to the METCO program. Each student has taught her something, ranging from struggles to successes to different personal perspectives from her own and her home community's. She has enjoyed engaging in different activities with her Boston friends that she cannot experience with her Lexington friends. She is most grateful for her METCO friends who have taught her to adapt to different perspectives.

David Walsh is a former Lexington student who now teaches in Lexington. He thanked Ms. Nobles for her remarkable work in implementing programs, particularly for middle-high school transitioning and for getting staff involved through the Homework Club. Such venues allow students to work with their peers in and out of school. He highlighted how invigorating the students are and how staff looks forward to working the African-American and Latino Club meetings.

Public Comments:

Karly Sheffield – as a parent, she has experienced a range of benefits for her student going through the Lexington schools, from instrumental music to academics to friendships. After her older son was murdered, she was particularly touched by the outpouring of support by the Bridge community (especially from teacher Deb Sabin).

Barbara Nobles – asked if Lexington would consider rethinking the 51A policy – mandated reporting. Ms. Steigerwald and Dr. Czajkowski replied that LPS tries to address its policies in a thoughtful manner. A future conversation can be scheduled with her and the superintendent will inquire with superintendents in other towns to learn of their practices. There can also be a conversation with the principals over their filings and can look over the data with Ms. Kavanaugh. The policy can be thoughtfully reviewed.

Julie Flavin-Schloch – commented that when emails are sent to parents for evening meetings, it is often difficult for Boston parents to attend. How can parents receive the same information if they are unable to attend? Ms. Steigerwald said that the Committee has recently hired a full-time secretary to improve communications and timeliness in posting meeting minutes. She will also ask all PTA/PTO presidents to communicate their meeting notes. Ms. Crocker mentioned how all power point and other presentations on the multiple school capital project can be found online via the town or school website. In addition, meetings are available on demand from LexMedia. Mr. Alessandrini floated his longtime idea of using Skype as a satellite way of attending meetings live.

David Crawford – attends as many meetings as possible and appreciates teacher and principal communications on his child's education. He stressed that it is important to care about education.

Micea Brown – appreciates how her children’s schools of Estabrook and Clarke have made them feel happy and ensure that this is true on a daily basis. Making sure that all children are OK, smiling, and are in a good place academically and emotionally.

8:21pm Adjourn: On a motion made by Steigerwald and seconded by Hurley, the School Committee voted unanimously 5-0 to adjourn at 8:21pm.

Materials:

Lexington Goals 2015-2016

2015 MCAS Highlights

Voted approved by the School Committee November 17, 2015.