

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Twelfth Baptist Church

160 Warren Street

Roxbury, Massachusetts

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash, Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee Members Jessie Steigerwald, Alessandro Alessandrini, Judith Crocker, William Hurley, Student Representative Abigail Schwartz

The minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary

The meeting convened at 7:05 pm

Call to order and welcome: Chair Margaret Coppe welcomed everyone to the Twelfth Baptist church and introduced the committee members.

Public Comment:

Tommy Locke: He praised the school committee and the Town of Lexington on being voted one of the top places to work. A great job is being done; it is much appreciated and keep it up.

Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash noted he would speak before his presentation.

School Committee Member Announcements:

Margaret Coppe: Tonight is Dr. Ash's last meeting in Boston, and we are very proud of all the work he has done, the achievements, and the care he has shown. The process of looking for someone to replace Dr. Ash has begun and information will be in the newsletters soon.

Jessie Steigerwald: She and Judith Crocker are on policy subcommittee and all policies are being reviewed. If there is any policy people want to add input too, please contact them. She thanked everyone for hosting the committee in Boston.

Judith Crocker: She thanked everyone for having the committee in Boston. Everyone has been very welcoming and there is such positive energy. She would like Lexington folks to see it. She mentioned the Ad Hoc School Master Planning Committee and the work they are doing. Lexington has added 500 students within the last 5 years and there is an overcrowding problem.

The committee is looking at different ways to deal with it. Checking the school committee minutes is a good way to keep up to date.

William Hurley: He feels welcomed here. He worked with the METCO program while he was Superintendent at Lincoln-Sudbury. His children graduated from Lexington High and the METCO program has meant a lot to him and his family.

Abigail Schwartz: This is her first year as student representative for the school committee and it is great to see how involved everyone is by coming to this meeting. This meeting should be viewed as a model for students.

Superintendent's Presentation of METCO Achievement Data

Dr. Ash shared some history of the METCO program over the last 10 years. In 2007, 40 percent of the MCAS scores were needs improvement or failing. It was happening in other METCO communities as well. Dr. Ash wanted to close the gap for the district. Bringing students to the proficient or advanced level was goal.

The presentation was shows the the achievement gap, which is very significant for a difficult testing state like Massachusetts has been closed at grade 10. Science, ELA, and Math scores have all improved without teaching to the test. The SAT test results have also had a statistically huge increase.

Our students are performing at much higher levels. We have very dedicated leaders, and the best teachers. Newsweek selected LHS as the number 1 school in Massachusetts, and number 19 in the USA.

Three Perspectives on the METCO Program – a Parent, a Teacher, and a Student

Barbara Nobles showed a video on the Jumpstart program with the students at work over the summer. It is a transition program for kindergarten and first grade students, helping them to feel a connection to each other.

Parent, Cassandra Jerome: Both of her children attend Hastings. She chose METCO because she knew the struggle she had to go through while attending the Boston schools. It is very difficult being an African American boy, so she had her sons try the METCO program and has loved it. During April vacation her husband suffered a heart attack in front of his children and the first person she reached out to was Ms. Crowder. She and her family had support when needed during a very hard situation. Her children have a great support system here and she is very grateful that they can go to the Lexington schools.

Jennifer Dugan-Agne, 5th Grade Teacher at Hastings: She is a former student in Lexington and had a very close relationship with her friend Lisa, a METCO student while in school. They are still friends forty years later. She is also a parent of two children at LHS who have also developed great relationships with METCO students, making some very close friends. As a teacher she views how the METCO students participate in and out of the classroom with the program she's a part of, pairing up a Lexington student with a Boston student. Having diversity and having different perspectives has been very positive.

Student Elijah Dasilva: He has been in METCO since the first grade and is now a senior at LHS. He explained the benefits of being a METCO student: having access to high quality education; teachers who care; schools with resources allowing them to get the most of their education; enrichment programs; a good chance to experience a new culture; diverse groups of people he never would have met; great viewpoints, perspectives, and opportunities for future success.

One of the challenges he feels is the long commute, which discouraged him from doing extracurricular activities. He would be coming home too late, although those who do participate do not mind it. He has also never really felt part of Lexington community, feeling some sort of separation he did not fully understand.

But overall he is really grateful to be in METCO, and when he has his own children, he would definitely want them be a part of the METCO program.

Barbara Nobles acknowledged that while there are some bumps in the road, great things are being done, and the students are doing great things. She then recognized some of her METCO staff.

LaDawn Dubose of the METCO parent group presented Dr. Ash with a plaque thanking him and congratulating him on his retirement.

Barbara Nobles stated that Dr. Ash has been a blessing and she has truly appreciated his partnership with her. She asked that as the school committee is interviewing and searching for their next superintendent, they find someone just as committed to ALL students.

Motion to adjourn (Steigerwald, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda; Longitudinal MCAS and SAT Comparisons for Lexington High School and Nearby Communities

Voted by the School Committee January 6, 2015