

LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S STATE OF THE TOWN REPORT

School Committee's Report Card

Our memo to the 2003 State of the Town meeting listed the following four goals which were presented at the 2002 State of the Town meeting. We reported progress towards these goals at the last year's meeting, but stated at the 2003 meeting that these are important ongoing areas for priority attention.

1. Continue to improve teaching and learning.
2. Focus on the efficient utilization of resources.
3. Create an environment that promotes diversity and inclusion.
4. Promote more effective partnerships between and among constituencies.

In addition, our 2003 memo listed the following four areas of attention for the 2003/04 year:

5. Developing a strategic plan for educational improvement.
6. Budgeting for the operations of the school district in a time when resources are limited.
7. Review of policy and practices on several key issues, including: 1) Lincoln commitment to the METCO Program, 2) the organization of the Middle School and 3) class size policy.
8. Responding to new educational legislation, including the Federal No Child Left Behind Legislation as well as mandated testing and assessment programs on the state level.

Here is a summary of our progress against those goals during the past year.

1. Continue to improve teaching and learning.

- Hired highly qualified assistant superintendent, Paul Naso, to fill the Assistant Superintendent position that had been redefined to focus on teaching and learning.
- Paul Naso and Superintendent Brandmeyer improved the effectiveness of Institute Day, a full day devoted to professional development of all district teaching staff, and a significant portion of our overall professional development spending in the recent past.
- Paul Naso met to discuss the district's programs and curriculum with faculty and parents, and then used that data to create a curriculum improvement plan for the district that spans grades and subject areas. He is now in the midst of implementation of that plan, along with teachers and administrators.
- FY05 base budget increased funding for professional development compared to prior year, and FY05 override added additional amounts in that area.

2. Focus on the efficient utilization of resources.

- Adjusted schedules and assignments of teaching staff to better utilize their contractual hours of instruction
- Reduced discretionary central office spending in FY05 budget
- Initiated electrical energy conservation program
- Increased collaboration between Lincoln and Hanscom teachers in curriculum development work

3. Create an environment that promotes diversity and inclusion.

- Co-sponsored METCO forum to provide information and insights to the community regarding the METCO program, a core element of our educational program aimed at increasing racial and economic diversity in our school population
- Sponsored a warrant at Town Meeting and a non-binding referendum question at Town Election to help measure support for the METCO program
- Reaffirmed existing commitment to METCO program as a result of what was heard via these data collection activities
- Initiated a letter writing campaign with other METCO districts to lobby for increased state funding of the METCO program. So far, so good- the FY05 proposed state budget includes an increase from \$13.6M to \$15.8M.
- Continued our focus on effective inclusion of special needs students in the regular classrooms and activities.

4. Promote more effective partnerships between and among constituencies.

- Held special meetings in Boston with parents of METCO students to discuss the plans for reassessing the town's commitment to the program
- Held special meeting with Hanscom parents to hear what was on their mind regarding the schools
- Held School Information sessions (evening and morning) to help convey the vision for the schools, and within that context, the thinking behind the proposed FY05 budgets
- Established a subcommittee of the School Committee, which includes community members, to focus on improving communications between the community and the Committee
- Brought School Committee web pages into compliance with the spirit of the 2002 Town Meeting resolution regarding posting of minutes and agendas online
- Worked closely with Fincom on budget and spending issues

5. Develop a long range strategic plan

- Did not put focus on this activity until late in the year

- Made developing a process and a first version of strategic plan a major priority for FY05

6. Budget for the operations of the school district in a time when resources are limited.

- FY04 was another year of sound fiscal management, finishing within budget while delivering the educational program elements that were intended when the budget was created.
- FY05 budget allows the existing program to go forward, with modest improvements in some program areas (professional development, technology teaching, instrumental music program, arts enrichment, and after-school athletics). This was done with a modest 2.7% increase over FY04 spending through aggressive pursuit of state and federal grants and application of state SPED circuit breaker reimbursements in addition to a modest override from the Town.

7. Review of policy and practices on several key issues, including: 1) Lincoln commitment to the METCO Program, 2) the organization of the Middle School and 3) class size policy.

- Review of METCO program completed, see item 3 above for details.
- A task force composed of an administrator, middle school teachers, and parents analyzed the results of a student, parent, teacher survey concerning the Lincoln middle school. The task force report was received and discussed in June. It is one set of data that will guide efforts to improve the middle school education in both Lincoln and Hanscom schools. Creation of a middle school improvement plan is a major goal for FY05.
- Class size policy was discussed in the context of budget development and the METCO program evaluation. Planning for the 2004/05 school year indicates that the average class size in each grade is at or below the target levels established by the School Committee's class size policy.

8. Responding to new educational legislation, including the Federal No Child Left Behind Legislation as well as mandated testing and assessment programs on the state level.

- The focus on overall curriculum development work is consistent with requirements of the Federal NCLB act which are phasing in.

Goals for the Coming Year

The School Committee and the Superintendent have placed emphasis in 2003/04 in improving the processes used to set and manage to goals. We now establish goals for the District and for the School Committee at the end of the

school year and work to make sure that these goals are mutually aligned. The District goals will in turn guide school-based goals. A view of the 2004/05 goals will give insight into the areas that will receive priority and focus in the coming year. Work plans that indicate what specific targets we intend to achieve for each goal and what actions, resources and milestone dates are involved will be presented, discussed, and adopted at public meetings of the School Committee during the fall of 2004.

FY05 District/Superintendent Goals

Goal Category 1: Program Improvement, Academic Achievement, Teaching and Learning

This category addresses the central mission of the district and refers to efforts to expand and strengthen the learning experiences and academic performance of students.

1. Evaluate the Middle School program and develop a program improvement plan.
2. Establish new learning expectations in selected grades and content areas, to adopt curricula aligned with those expectations, and develop a process to measure student achievement against expectations.
3. Improve teaching and learning through professional development procedures and opportunities for faculty and staff in combination with revised evaluation protocols for all staff
4. Develop a district-wide technology plan for the Lincoln Public Schools
5. Evaluate the district's special education programs for the purpose of ensuring that the district is meeting the needs of all students, providing access to the general curriculum and complying with state and federal regulations

Goal Category 2: Leadership

This category refers to the establishment of strong and effective leadership for the district. This includes bringing clarity of expectations for all levels of leadership (School Committee, Superintendent, Principals, etc.) and the effective use of leadership systems such as School Councils, Team Leaders, and other school/district based positions.

1. Develop a strategic planning process for the district and publish the first version of the District Strategic Plan
2. Develop School Improvement Plans that align with district goals and with the evolving District Strategic Plan.
3. Review and articulate the roles and responsibilities of leadership positions and advisory groups, e.g., school councils, team leaders, department heads

4. Evaluate the leadership structure of the Lincoln School, define the preferred model and hire permanent leadership

Goal Category 3: Communications

This category refers to the development of clear and effective communications methods among all stakeholders. This includes improving access to information, increased quantity of communications, the use of varied channels of communication and the establishment of norms for respectful conversation.

1. Improve district-wide communication by developing the use of print and electronic information, increased presentations and discussions, and opportunities for community participation.

Goal Category 4: Compliance and Operations

This category refers to the necessary activities that are required to comply with Federal and State regulations (e.g., NCLB and DOE Regulations) and to operate the schools (e.g., delivering the educational program, teacher contract negotiations, Hanscom contract negotiations, etc.).

1. Develop the budget for FY2006
2. Negotiate successor agreements with the Lincoln Teacher's Association and AFSME (Custodian's Union)
3. Implement administrative software systems to improve operational efficiency and access to information
4. Complete facilities studies of all school sites, on the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses, provided adequate funding can be obtained
5. Initiate the process to begin preparation for negotiations with the Federal government on a successor agreement to operate the schools at Hanscom Air Force Base
6. Comply with the mandates of NCLB and Massachusetts Department of Education regulations

FY05 School Committee Goals

1. Adopt FY06 Budget
2. Oversight of District operations, and provide support for achieving District/Superintendent goals
3. Oversight of program improvement, academic achievement, teaching & learning
4. Revise existing, or establish new, policies as needed
5. Guide creation of strategic planning process and first version of strategic plan for the District
6. Improve communications
7. Make School Committee operations more effective and efficient
8. Negotiate contract with LTA, AFSME
9. Prepare for negotiating next Hanscom contract

How does the Lincoln School system help to fulfill the Town of Lincoln's Mission?

The Lincoln School District's activities relate in the following ways to the following aspects of Lincoln's Vision Statement.

Fostering economic, racial/ethnic, and age diversity among its citizenry through its educational, housing and other public policy

In the development of curriculum, programs, and instructional practices, our faculty makes a concerted effort to bring a multicultural perspective, anti-racist practices, and awareness of race and culture to all students in the Lincoln Public Schools.

One key element of the district's initiative to fulfill this element of the Town's mission is METCO, a voluntary desegregation program. The school system views this as a core element of its overall educational program. The community beyond the students participates and benefits from the METCO program in a variety of ways.

Lincoln Public Schools is a founding and current member of the EMI (Empowering Multicultural Initiatives) collaborative. The collaborative provides Lincoln and the other 10 member districts with professional development and training for staff in areas related to race and culture.

In addition, the school district is committed to hiring qualified minority candidates to fill teaching and leadership positions, in order to provide role models for the students and to provide valued career opportunities for the candidates.

Excellence in its public educational system

This is the main objective of the school system. Our schools are fortunate in that Lincoln has a tradition of valuing public education, and backing this belief with continuing generous financial support through taxes and private fund raising.

The school system is on a continual quest to improve teaching and learning.

In the past year, focus has increased on providing leadership and management of both professional development and curriculum improvement across the district. In addition, additional resources to support these key activities have been budgeted for FY05 to further accelerate progress.

In the coming year, serious work on creating a strategic plan will be carried out and a first version of the plan will be developed. The strategic plan will serve to

provide a high level view and framework for a broad set of initiatives that will help guide the continuing efforts to improve teaching and learning.

In addition, in the coming year, attention will be paid to the School Improvement Plans, to make them more vital and effective paths to improving teaching and learning in our schools.

The Town Meeting form of government and the traditions of civic leadership and volunteer public service

The presentation, discussion, and voting of the school budget and other ancillary school-related warrant articles is an important aspect of the annual Town Meeting. The school system works hard to support intelligent discourse on these topics through public meetings and mailings prior to actual deliberation at Town Meeting.

The school system works hard to coordinate its activities with the rest of the Town government in as open and transparent a way as possible. Members of the Fincom have remarked that they see an increased degree of transparency and partnership with the school system on budget and spending matters.

The School Committee and the School District have both adopted as a major goal for the 2004/05 year to improve the quality and effectiveness of two-way communications on school-related matters with the community.

The School Committee strives to conduct its business in an open and transparent manner. The Committee will continue to work to improve the openness and accessibility of its work in an effort to reach all interested parties in our community.