

Executive summary, Lincoln Schools Annual Report

I. Introduction

The Lincoln Public School District serves a diverse student population in preschool through grade 8 with children from four communities: Lincoln residents; residents of the Hanscom Air Force Base; Boston families in the METCO Program; and school and town employees. The Lincoln school district differs from the neighboring school districts – it is smaller, it includes the schools on the Air force base, it has a relatively high level of economic and racial diversity. Nevertheless, comparisons with the neighboring districts -- Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Sudbury K-8, Wayland, and Weston – provide useful information about the profile and performance of our schools.

II. District profile [Note: Information provided is based on the 2011-2012 school year]

Enrollment: The 2011-2012 student enrollment was 1,149 students including 523 students at Hanscom Air Force Base and 626 students on the Lincoln campus. In addition, there were 126 preschool students attending programs at Hanscom Air Force Base and on the Lincoln campus.

Over the last ten years, the number of students in grades K-8 on the Lincoln campus has declined, from a peak of 732 in 2003-04. However, the 1st grade cohort in 2012-13 is notably larger than in 2011-12 (up to 69 from 58), and the number of Lincoln births in 2011 was 29, up from 19 in 2009. These indicators, in addition to fewer students leaving the Lincoln public schools in the last three years, suggest that the trend of declining enrollment may be ending.

Staffing: Lincoln Public School salaries are comparable to our peer communities and reflect the high number of experienced, senior teachers. In 2011-12 we had 110 teachers with an average teacher salary of \$81,693 and starting salaries for those with a master's degree of \$58,000.

Class Size: The Lincoln Public Schools maintain a low average class size of 16.2, while our peer communities have, on average, a class size of 18.8.

Diversity: Lincoln has a longstanding commitment to the METCO program, and now enrolls 91 Boston residents at the Lincoln School through this program. In addition, Lincoln has the second highest level of low-income enrolment among the comparison communities.

Per-pupil Expenditure: The residents of Lincoln provide a high level of support to the public school district. The per-pupil expenditure in 2011 for the whole district was \$20,776.

As responsible stewards of Town funds, the school district aims to ensure that tax dollars are used effectively. The school administration and School Committee worked in 2012 to return almost \$200,000 from the school budget to the town. The Lincoln Public School District is committed to providing the community with a high quality educational experience that is a financial value. Our per-pupil costs are relatively high for the following reasons:

- Lincoln is a *small district* that does not benefit from economies of scale that a larger district obtains by spreading administrative costs across a larger number of students. Lincoln had only 1149 students K-8 in 2011 while the comparison districts have an average student population of 2429.
- Lincoln has enviably *small class sizes* and an unusually high level of *instructional assistant support and training*.
- Lincoln is a K-8 district, while most of our neighbors have a single school system to serve students through the 12th grade, which allows for further economies of scale.
- Lincoln provides a high level of *professional development and planning time* to teachers during Wednesday release days, weekly times for collaborative work with teams, summer work, and funds for conferences and courses. Teachers have at least 3 hours of planning time built into each week so they can prepare lessons, review and respond to assessments, connect with parents, and collaborate with colleagues.
- Lincoln's educational program is intentionally rich in "*specials*" including foreign language, science, art, music, and technology. These programs provide a broad and rich educational experience for

students. Secondly, the provision of specials provides the opportunity for teams of teachers to collaborate. This results in better teaching and more engaged teachers.

III. Outcomes

The Lincoln school district, with all the districts in the state, is developing outcome measures and performance benchmarks, an integral part of a new evaluation system for teachers and administrators that will take effect in 2013-14.

Because much of this effort is relatively new in Lincoln and statewide, the Lincoln Schools have developed few consistent and reliable measures of student performance beyond MCAS. We think MCAS is *a useful* measure but not *the only useful* performance measure and we are working to identify other performance benchmarks for future years of the Annual Report.

MCAS¹: First a note, Lincoln schools have a higher percentage of low-income students than any of our surrounding comparison districts other than Bedford. DESE notes that low-income students are a high-risk group and significant achievement gaps exist across the nation for such students. Thus, we have compared achievement at grade 8 when the Lincoln schools have had the greatest amount of time to make up for any early gaps in learning.

2012 MCAS scores for the Lincoln School show that 55% of our eighth grade students were advanced (the highest category) in math, a rank of #2 out of the seven comparison towns. In eighth grade English, 43% were advanced, and Lincoln was #3 out of 7, and in eighth grade Science 21% in Lincoln were advanced for a rank of #2 out of 7. The MCAS Student Growth Percentile (which compares the improvement in scores of students from one year to the next against their academic peers) indicates that the Lincoln school in 2012 had an eighth grade average SGP of 65 in English (better than almost two-thirds of their academic peers) and ranked #2 out of the 7 comparison towns and an eighth grade average SGP of 62 in Math, also ranked #2 out of the 7 comparison towns.

Social and emotional learning: The Lincoln Public Schools focus on educating the whole child, working on social/emotional development as well as more conventional academics. This social-emotional work positively affects a child's readiness to learn, but it is difficult to measure quantitatively. One example of the investment the district makes is providing training for all teachers in Responsive Classroom and Developmental Design. This investment has produced stronger class communities, increased student leadership, and students better able to concentrate on academics. School principals report a reduction in student discipline issues and a reduction in suspensions.

Special Education: In October, 2011, 88.4% of the LPS students in Special Education were in full inclusion programs. The average full inclusion rate for the six neighboring towns was 73.2%.

IV. Achievements and Challenges

Finally, we wanted to note some achievements over the past year (2011-12):

- We have moved to [standards-based report cards](#) for grades K-6 to reflect whether students have mastered the key concepts we expect to teach them; grades 7-8 are being addressed this year.
- We hired a new District superintendent, Dr. Rebecca McFall.
- We integrated English standards with new nation-wide common core standards; we are aligning math standards with new nation-wide common core standards over the current year.

¹ MCAS scores for Hanscom students are not included in the results provided. Because approximately one third of the Hanscom student population turns over every year, it is difficult to identify trends in the data that are not dependent on who the characteristics of students moving in and out of the district. That said, when data on Hanscom students who *have* been in the district for at least two years is analyzed, it shows that these students make faster progress as measured by MCAS than nearly 80% of their academic peers. This is demonstrated by the Student Growth Percentile provided by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

- We have undertaken significant innovation in use of technology in classrooms on both campuses, experimenting with the use of Chromebooks, iPads, and flipped classrooms (with the crucial support of the Lincoln School Foundation).
- Experimentation with short-term goal-focused intervention plans for individual students to narrow persistent achievement gaps at the school.
- Aligned professional development to build expertise in standards-based teaching, assessment and differentiation and increased teacher's aide skills in math and literacy.
- Student were provided leadership opportunities in Peer Mediation, the Model UN, the Great Eastern Music Festival, community service and civic engagement and Lincoln Schools hosted a district-wide conference on community service.
- We renegotiated new three-year contracts with teachers, custodians and school secretaries.
- We have supported the Feasibility study of a new Lincoln school building project and managed planning for new Hanscom Middle School (paid for by the federal government).

The big challenges facing us this year and next (2013-14)

- Facilities: 1) Addressing facility needs at the Lincoln Schools, either through a MSBA-funded project or through significant repair; 2) Managing a federally-paid Hanscom Middle School building project with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA); and 3) continuing discussions with DODEA about future building plans for the Hanscom Primary school.
- Addressing state mandates: developing new teacher and administrator evaluation systems that include student performance and engagement.

We welcome your feedback. For more information on the Lincoln schools, including our budget, Annual report to town meeting, complete MCAS report, visit Lincnet.org or DESE.