



LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MICHAEL F. BRANDMEYER
SUPERINTENDENT

April 25, 2011

To: School Committee
From: Mickey Brandmeyer
Re: Proposed METCO Program Reorganization

Introduction

At the School Committee meeting of April 14, 2011 I proposed a reorganization of the Lincoln METCO Program which is designed to address two important issues: (1) to focus scarce resources on academic supports in an effort to ensure greater academic success for all students but particularly in an effort to begin to address issues associated with an achievement gap between students of color and white and Asian students at the Lincoln School, and (2) to address the projected shortfall in grant funding for FY12.

The proposal was developed after a series of meetings in Boston and Lincoln this past winter and spring. METCO parents, MCC representatives and others participated.

Responses to questions and comments

This memo is structured to answer specific questions or to respond to claims that have been asked or made either directly during the last School Committee meeting or in correspondence received since the proposal was distributed.

1. Will this proposal change Lincoln's commitment to the METCO program?

Lincoln is one of the founding METCO districts and continues to enroll the highest percentage of METCO students of any of the participating suburban districts. Lincoln is authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to enroll up to 91 Boston resident students of color through the METCO program.

Over past the several decades, Lincoln has undertaken several community-wide discussions regarding the value and effectiveness of the METCO program. Each time the community has reaffirmed its commitment to METCO. This proposal maintains the same level of commitment and proposes enrolling 91 students for SY 2011-12.

Unless there is a significant triggering event related to state funding or other such substantial issues, e.g., legal issues, etc. there is no reason to expect that the Town of Lincoln or the Lincoln Public Schools will adjust its commitment to METCO.

2. How confident am I that a new half-time "tutor" will be sufficient to close the achievement gap?

The proposal calls for the addition of a half-time teacher who will have a higher level of training and skills than a tutor. Currently students in grades kindergarten to four do not receive academic support from positions funded through the METCO program. The district's Academic Advisor provides support primarily to students in grades five to eight.

It is broadly accepted that intervention in earlier grades has a greater effect on academic performance in higher grades. The establishment of an additional half-time academic teacher is a positive first step in providing additional academic support to students in an effort to narrow the achievement gap. It will be the responsibility of the Academic Advisor to provide specific direct instruction to students identified by district assessments as “at risk for lower academic performance.” The Principal and Curriculum Specialists will coordinate the direct instruction for literacy and mathematics.

Concurrently, the Principal of the Middle School will be directed to review the role and responsibilities for the Academic Advisor who is assigned to work with students in the intermediate and middle school grades and to develop a plan to use this resource as effectively as possible. The district’s assessment data in combination with the newly proposed enrichment/intervention block in the five – eight schedule approved for SY 2011-12 will be important tools available to the school in providing supports and instruction.

This initial step to provide more academic support and direct instruction is only a beginning. As the district moves forward and when resources are available it will be the recommendation of the Superintendent to continue to focus those resources to academic support when possible and practical. These supports may be in the form of school day and school year programs, summer or vacation week learning opportunities and/or after school academic supports.

3. *How will the district know if this new staffing model is working and include parent perception in an evaluation?*

In each of the last several years the METCO program staffing has been adjusted. Initially, transportation was restructured, the secretary’s position was first reduced and then eliminated and discretionary spending was eliminated. Following each of these changes adjustments were made and supports modified.

Given the nature of the proposed reorganization a more formal evaluation of the program will be required to understand the impact of each adjustment. I am proposing that we form an implementation team that is responsible for the coordination of the plan’s implementation and also to undertake an evaluation of the model. The team will be responsible for issuing two reports; one at the beginning of the school year, not later than September 15th, detailing the roles, responsibilities and expectations for faculty and staff regarding the METCO program and an evaluation report, not later than April 1st, assessing the effectiveness of the METCO model.

4. *How does the proposed staffing model compare to staffing models from the last two years?*

	FY 10 (last year)	FY 11 (this year)	FY 12 (next year)
Administration			
Director	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	--
Secretary	1.0 FTE	--	--
Coordinator	--	--	0.5 FTE
Faculty and Staff			
METCO Academic Advisor	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.5 FTE
METCO Social Worker	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE
Special Education Staffing	\$34,400 Offset ¹	\$56,000 Offset	\$56,000 Offset
Instructional Assistants	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Bus Monitors	\$18,000	\$20,176	\$20,176
Late Bus Monitor	\$2,568	\$3,750	\$3,750
Transportation			
Regular transportation runs	\$123,120	\$129,240	\$134,400 ²

5. *How the METCO grant has been impacted by State reductions?*

The METCO grant is comprised of two allocations for participating districts, one for programming and one for transportation. Strict DESE regulations govern the transfer of funding from one component of the grant to another. The number of METCO students enrolled each October 1st effects the program allocation the following year.

The following chart displays actual and projected grant allocations as projected as of April 25, 2011. FY 12 is impacted by both an 8.5% projected grant reduction and enrollment of 83 students on October 1, 2010.

Fiscal Year	FY 10	FY 11	FY 12
Total Grant Allocation	\$465,985	\$446,126	\$386,483
Total Change from Prior Year	(\$22,721)	(\$19,859)	(\$59,643)
Program Allocation	\$304,871	\$285,012	\$225,369
Change in Program from Prior Year	(\$22,721)	(\$19,859)	(\$59,643)
Transportation Allocation	\$161,114	\$161,114	\$161,114
Change in transportation from prior year	-0-	-0-	-0-

6. *How will the responsibilities of the half-time Coordinator differ from the responsibilities of the current full-time Director?*

The Director's responsibilities are varied and are outlined in the attached job description. It is clear that a Coordinator working half time will not be expected to perform at the same level as a full-time Director. This will require shifting some responsibilities to others including the METCO staff, classroom teachers, Principals and office staff.

¹ Difference covered by ARRA Federal Stimulus Grant Funds

² Projected transportation expenses, contract out for bid

Responsibilities	Director (full-time)	Coordinator (half-time)
Coordinate activities related to METCO in the school system	Key responsibility	Key responsibility
Prepares and manages METCO grant and budget	The Director was responsible for writing the annual grant application and managing the budget on an annual basis	Grant writing and management responsibilities will be shifted to the Administrator for Business and Finance with input from the Coordinator. The Administrator for Business and Finance has, for the past several years, submitted the grant application, requests for funds and EOY grant reports.
Works with school administrators, METCO Inc, and DESE for planning, programming, policy and budgeting.	The Director represents the district at METCO Directors' meetings (monthly) and with METCO Inc.	The Coordinator will represent the district at METCO Directors' meetings (monthly) and with METCO Inc.
Provides reports for DESE, METCO Inc and the Superintendent as needed	This has consisted primarily of preparing an annual improvement plan for presentation to the School Committee and responding to METCO Inc.'s request for student data	This will remain the responsibility of the Coordinator with the annual improvement plan integrated with the Principals' School Improvement Plans
Works collaboratively with other administrators and shares in responsibility for hiring, supervising and evaluating METCO staff	The district has not hired many positions in this area and the evaluation load is relatively small	Will remain a responsibility of the Coordinator
Communicates with parents, develops orientation meetings for students, parents and staff and communicates the goals of METCO in Lincoln	Parent communication and outreach are key activities for the Director who also works with METCO Parents and METCO Coordinating Committee	Communication and outreach will remain key activities for the Coordinator. Will continue to work with METCO parents and the MCC.
Analyzes data to support program development	Contributed to the data analysis for identification of the achievement gap	Will work with academic advisor, curriculum coordinators, principals and teams to use data to inform instruction
Coordinates acceptance and placement of new students from METCO Inc.	The Director has been responsible for coordinating this activity and meeting with parents	The Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating this activity and will work with Principals and Social Workers
Coordinates and supervises transportation	The Director works with Eastern Bus to established bus routes and assignments	The Coordinator will be responsible for bus routes and assignments and will work with the Principals for issues related to student behavior and discipline
Participates in Special Education and/or IST meetings	The Director attends special education team and IST meetings	The Coordinator will attend special education and IST meetings as needed and share attendance at meetings with the Academic Advisors and/or Social Workers. The schools Coordinator for Special Education will be responsible for the special education process.

7. *How will reporting to the Principals and Administrator for Student Services impact the Coordinator?*

In larger districts, with several schools, the METCO Director is often a central office administrator. This can be important since the METCO Director must oversee programs in several schools, often of different grade levels and with different Principals. Lincoln's program is on one site and the school principal is responsible for the overall educational operations of the one school. In Lincoln's organizational structure the school-based leadership team consists of the Principals, the Special Education Coordinator and the METCO Coordinator. Direct access to the Central Office for student services issues will be through the Administrator for Students Services who supervises and manages programs in special education, health services, counseling services, preschool, Title I, and homeless supports, etc. This organizational structure fits with the desire for one school – one program – one budget.

8. *Can the half-time Coordinator and half-time Academic Advisor share the position, would they work 2.5 days each or 5 half-days each?*

The staffing is designed to have coverage for each position 5 days per week. The same person, providing they have the appropriate training and licensure for each position, can potentially share the Coordinator and Advisor positions. It is not likely that each could work 2.5 day per week. Consistency and coverage for all school days is important.

9. *Who will Boston parents contact at times when the Coordinator is not working?*

Just as Lincoln parents do - general contact by METCO parents - will be made through each of the school's main offices by contacting the school secretary or Principal. For issues relating directly to METCO, parents will contact the Coordinator or leave a message (voice, phone or email) with the Coordinator for follow up the next day.