

# Annual Town Report: Lincoln Public Schools

## Executive Summary

### FY '16

#### 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, and 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: Unless otherwise noted, the information provided is based on the 2014-2015 school year. Where we refer to Lincoln Public Schools (LPS), the district, we are including the Hanscom schools, while 'Lincoln School' refers only to the Lincoln campus.]

**Enrollment:** The current (as of October 1, 2015) K-8 student enrollment at LPS is 1,133 students, including 531 students at Hanscom Air Force Base and 602 students on the Lincoln campus, an increase of 25 from the previous year. The Lincoln student population includes 88 children who attend the Lincoln schools through the METCO program, 32 non-resident children of school employees, and 6 children who attend through the CASE Collaborative. In addition, there are 119 preschool students attending programs at Hanscom Air Force Base and on the Lincoln campus.

**Staffing:** LPS salaries are comparable to our peer communities and reflect the high number of experienced, senior teachers. In 2014-2015, LPS had 121.4 full-time equivalent teachers (down from 123.4 in the previous school year) with an average teacher salary of \$82,938, up 1.5% from the previous year.

**Class Size:** In 2013-2014, LPS had an average class size of 15.2, while our peer communities had, on average, an average class size of 17.7 (ranging from 14.8 in Bedford to 20.2 in Sudbury K-8).

**Diversity:** Lincoln has a longstanding commitment to the METCO program, and now enrolls 88 Boston residents at the Lincoln School through this program (the highest percentage of any community in the Boston metropolitan area), to supplement the diversity of Lincoln's resident students. In addition, Lincoln has the second highest level of low-income enrollment among the comparison communities (and the highest level if one includes the Hanscom schools).

**Per-pupil Expenditure:** The residents of Lincoln provide generous support to the public school district. Lincoln remains above most of our peer communities in per pupil expenses, but as responsible stewards of Town funds, the School Committee aims to ensure that tax dollars are used effectively and is trying to moderate budget growth slightly over the next 5 years, while still making important strategic investments in our budget.

In 2014, the LPS per-pupil expenditure increased slightly, to \$19,923. At the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year, careful fiscal management allowed the school administration and School Committee to return \$122,399.95 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 has enviably *small class sizes* and an unusually high level of *instructional assistant support and training*.
- Lincoln is a pre-K-8 district, while most of our neighbors have a single school system to serve students through the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 enrichment, art, music, and technology/engineering. 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.

Another fiscal measure is total annual education spending per resident (which includes not just LPS, but also the town contributions to Lincoln-Sudbury High School and Minuteman). In 2013, Lincoln's education spending per resident was \$2,097, markedly lower than in the comparison towns, where the education spending per resident ranged from \$2,361 in Lexington to \$3,010 in Weston.

### 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. Because much of this effort is relatively new in Lincoln and statewide, the Lincoln Public Schools is still in the process of developing 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 have identified other performance benchmarks for future years of the Annual Report. A summary of the District work on identifying the 'Key Yearly Measures' can be found at [5.4 2014-2015 Key Yearly Measures Report](#)

**MCAS:** In the spring of 2015, 100% of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders at the Lincoln School scored 'proficient' or 'advanced' on the English Language Arts portion of the MCAS. The median

Student Growth Percentile (a measure of students' growth relative to peers with similar performances on prior MCAS assessments) for the Lincoln 8<sup>th</sup> graders on this test was 69.0. This surpasses the State's typical expected growth percentile of 40-60%.

On the Math portion of the MCAS in the spring of 2015, 81% of the Lincoln 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored 'proficient' or 'advanced'. On the Science portion of the MCAS, 71% of the Lincoln 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored 'proficient' or 'advanced' in the spring of 2015. Many of the school districts in Massachusetts, including 5 of the 6 comparison towns, administered a different state test last year – the PARCC test rather than the MCAS – so it is not possible to benchmark the performance of the Lincoln students against that of the students in the neighboring districts.

**Special Education:** It is a legal and philosophical tenet of American education that students with special needs should be educated in the least restrictive environment available. An indicator of the district's success in this regard was that, in the 2013-2014 school year, 92.4% of the LPS students in Special Education were in full inclusion programs (up from 90.6% the previous year), which means that they spent 80% or more of the school day in general education classrooms. That the district has the skilled professionals, administrative leadership and programmatic supports that make this level of full-inclusion education possible is a point of pride. The average full inclusion rate for the six neighboring towns was 72.5%, ranging from 57.6% in Bedford to 85.6% in Wayland.

#### **IV. Achievements and Challenges**

The Lincoln Public School district has continued to maintain a high level of student achievement (as indicated by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS scores) while working with a non-override budget within Finance Committee guidelines. For each of the past four years, LPS has been able to return unspent funds to the town and has been able to make significant additional contributions to the town's fund for retiree post-employment benefits other than pensions.

The main challenge facing the School Committee is to develop a plan, in cooperation with other Town boards, to address the serious facilities needs on the Lincoln campus. At the same time, the district is managing two building projects on the Hanscom campus (fully funded by the Department of Defense). Within the schools, the administration and faculty continue to work together to create opportunities for faculty collaboration, buttressed by professional development, with a view to enhancing teaching practices and improving student learning. You can find the District's current strategic plan at [the web site for the Superintendent's Office](#).

The full school's annual report (complete with annotated graphs and charts) can be accessed at: [Lincnet.org](#).

**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](#).**