

Annual Town Report: Lincoln Public Schools

Executive Summary

FY '17

I. Initiatives

Lincoln has a high-achieving K-8 school and a lot to be proud of. The administration of the Lincoln Public Schools, with the support of the School Committee, continues to work to improve the quality of the Lincoln education. Over the past year, this effort has had several key areas of focus, including:

Technology

As digital technology becomes increasingly important in education, both as a tool and as a subject, the District is working to implement a nuanced integration of technology into instruction, with an effort to differentiate the areas in which technology substitutes for previous tools and methods, where it augments, where it allows for a significant redesign of instructional tasks, and where it allows for the creation of whole new ways of learning.

The District is also working to improve the systems that teachers use to record and retrieve student data. A more effective system, which we hope to have in place by the beginning of the next school year, will create data-entry efficiencies for teachers and will allow for more effective differentiation of instruction.

Collaboration

The District is continuing to support and encourage the use of collaborative practices by faculty. Effective teams can reduce teacher isolation, can fuel academic and professional growth, and will lead to a more complete understanding of the individual needs of each student.

Innovation

In collaboration with the Lincoln School Foundation, the District is working to create a culture and to develop structures that support innovation and risk-taking to improve student engagement and learning. This effort includes the provision of funding for new approaches to instruction, and the creation of forums for sharing the innovative practices with colleagues.

II. Outcomes

The administrative team has identified a set of Key Yearly Measures, in-district measures of proficiency in English and Math for all grades, that will provide crucial information about performance and growth with greater validity and immediate applicability than the state standardized tests. Once the District is confident that the assessments are being applied with consistency, then we will start to publish the aggregate results as one set of measures of the effectiveness of our initiatives.

Students at the Lincoln Public Schools continue to take the annual MCAS exams, while the students at many of the neighboring districts have taken a different statewide exam (PARCC). So we can compare the MCAS results from the spring of 2016 with previous years at Lincoln, but our ability to compare Lincoln's results with those of the neighboring districts is very limited.

In 2016, 79% of the 8th grade students at the Lincoln School scored Proficient or Advanced on the Science and Technology MCAS, up from 71% in 2015, and above the statewide average of 41%. On the Mathematics MCAS, 87% of the Lincoln 8th graders scored Proficient or Advanced in 2016, up from 81% in 2015, and above the statewide average of 60%. 98% of the 2016 8th graders in Lincoln scored Proficient or Advanced on the ELA section of the MCAS, down slightly from the 100% who received top scores in 2015 (60 out of 61 students in 2016, compared to 52 of 52 in 2015).

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 2014-2015 school year, 92.2% of the LPS students in Special Education were in full inclusion programs, 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 59% in Bedford to 87% in Wayland.

III. District Profile

Enrollment

On October 1, 2016, there were 577 students in grades K through 8 on the Lincoln campus, including 89 Boston-resident students enrolled through the METCO program, 23 children of non-resident employees, and 4 students enrolled through the CASE collaborative. An additional 5 Lincoln students are enrolled in special-needs programs outside the District. The 2016 enrollment is 20 lower than the 2015 enrollment, and 5 more than the 2014 enrollment. The District also has 524 children in grades K through 8 on the Hanscom campus, and 117 children in pre-schools (57 on the Lincoln campus and 60 at Hanscom).

Staffing

In the 2015-2016 school year, the District (Lincoln and Hanscom) had 117.5 full-time equivalent teachers, down from 121.4 the previous year, and the student-teacher ratio rose slightly from 10.2 to 10.4. In 2014-2015 (the most recent year for which the DESE has compiled the data), the average teacher salary at the Lincoln Public Schools was \$86,451, up from \$82,249 the previous year (a 5.1% increase). Among the 6 neighboring districts, the average teacher salary was \$85,889, and among the four nearby towns with comparable populations and comparable levels of commercial activity (Carlisle, Cohasset, Dover and Sherborn), the average teacher salary was \$92,433.

Class Size

In 2015-2016, the average class size in the District was 15.8, up slightly from the previous year. The six neighboring communities had an average class size of 17.4, ranging from 14.5 in Bedford to 21.5 in Sudbury. Among the comparably small districts, the average class size was 19.5.

Per-pupil Expenditure

The residents of Lincoln provide support to the public school district in line with our commitment to educational outcomes. In 2014-15, the per-pupil expenditure (PPE) for the District was \$20,982, a 5.1% increase over the previous year. Among the neighboring districts, the average PPE was \$18,109 (a 4.5% increase from the previous year), ranging from \$14,710 in Sudbury to \$22,768 in Weston. Among the comparable small districts, the average PPE was \$19,196.

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 2015, Lincoln's education spending per resident was \$1,988, which is a decrease from 2013 (\$2,097), and is markedly lower than in the neighboring towns, where the education spending per resident ranged from \$2,637 in Lexington to \$3,197 in Weston. (The per-capita education spending is even higher in Carlisle, Dover and Sherborn.)

IV. Challenges

At the 2017 Town Meeting, the residents of Lincoln will be deciding whether to proceed with the planning for a comprehensive renovation program for the Lincoln school buildings. The effort to find a solution that serves the educational program and constitutes a valuable investment of town resources will require a significant dedication of time and energy by the town and by the LPS administration. At the same time, the town will be planning for a community center, and the school administration will be managing the construction of a new primary school on the Hanscom campus (fully funded by the Department of Defense).

Meanwhile, the basic educational challenges continue: how to build effective collaboration among teachers, how to increase student engagement, how to maintain the high quality of service for the increasing population of children with special needs, how to encourage innovation in instruction, how to make the most of the new technologies. While we recognize that these challenges are in front of us, we are thankful for the partnership with the District Administration, the Lincoln Teachers Association, the Lincoln School Foundation, and the PTO in facing them and are confident regarding our collective ability to rise above them for the benefit our children, our families and the town overall.

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.