

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, December 4, 2012

Twelfth Baptist Church

160 Warren Street

Roxbury, Massachusetts

Present: Dr. Paul Ash, Superintendent, Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice Chair; Members Bonnie Brodner, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart; and Sam Alpert, Student Representative

The Minutes were taken by Jean Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting convened at 7:10 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome:

The Chair called the meeting to order and invited public comment

There were no public comments.

II. Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash announced that this was his favorite meeting of the year. There are so many individuals who are dedicated to this meeting and it shows how much you care for your child's education. Dr. Ash also thanked all the Lexington residents who came out tonight as well. He had two brief announcements:

1. Update on Minority Hiring

Dr. Ash shared that last year the percentage of nonwhite hires in the Lexington Public School (LPS) system was 4.8% or 63 teachers which included zero African Americans and two Asian teachers. This past year LPS doubled those numbers to include two African Americans, two Asians and two Hispanic teachers which represent an increase in minority hiring from 4.8% to 10%. Dr. Ash is very pleased with these increased hires, and it was with the help of Mr. Robert Harris, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources that LPS now participates in the National Employment Network, a regional diversity network to assist minority students and professionals to find employment. LPS will be participating once again in a recruitment fair on Saturday, February 2, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. at the Winsor School in Boston.

2. MCAS Results

Dr. Ash announced that for the second year in a row, 100% of grade 10 students were rated as proficient or advanced in English Language Arts and this included special needs students, English language learners, African American and Hispanic students. LPS is closing the achievement gap and 97% scored as proficient or advanced in math. Dr. Ash thanked everyone who helped made these scores possible.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Margaret Coppe announced that on March 16th, all 8th grade students are invited to attend an All-town Eighth Grade Mock Town Meeting to be held at Cary Hall. This is scheduled on a Saturday and the Committee is working with Mrs. Nobles to arrange for transportation to Lexington.

Jessie Steigerwald announced that Lexington was incorporated in 1713 in March and this coming year marks the 300th anniversary. Lexington will be celebrating all year and each school is having an opening ceremony and in 8th grade, students study government which in Lexington is a Town Meeting. The Town Meeting Members, along with the League of Women Voters will host a Mock Town Meeting for all 8th grade students on March 16th at Cary Hall. All eighth grade parents will receive information in December and January.

Mary Ann Stewart asked Dr. Ash to speak to the fiscal cliff and the automatic cuts that will happen at the end of December and what will be the budget impact for Lexington students. Ms. Stewart shared that she thought it will be \$2 million in school budget and 8.2% across the board cuts. This cut is going across all districts and towns in all states and is a very active issue and is changing constantly. Her hope is to protect education and lobby representatives in Washington to protect education cuts and has also asked the School Committee Chair to put this issue on the agenda for December 18th so that we can be updated to this issue.

Dr. Ash shared that Governor Patrick, today announced that he expects a \$540 million state budget gap and would begin immediate efforts to cut local aid. They include \$9 million less in the local aid funding used to pay salaries for teachers, \$11 million less than budgeted for special education funding, and reductions in local reimbursements for towns to bus homeless students. Dr. Ash stated that this issue should be on the agenda for the December 18th meeting.

Sam Alpert shared that he grew up in Lexington, went to the Hastings Elementary School and is now in high school he has been able to make connections which has been an integral part of his student career and is looking forward from hearing the METCO student's experiences.

IV. Agenda:

1. The METCO Experience – Presentations by Current and Former Lexington METCO Students

Dr. Ash introduced Mrs. Nobles, Academic METCO Director who will introduce her three student speakers.

Mrs. Nobles shared that she is excited about these three students as they share their experiences and contributions.

Jenise Warner shared that she is a junior at Lexington High School (LHS), a METCO Scholar, a member of LHS Debate Team during her freshman year, a member of the

National Honor Society, part of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), a Co-President of the Spanish Club and on the School Senate as a METCO Representative. She thanked her parents, teachers, school staff and all the supportive parents in Lexington who go out of their way to help students achieve success. She shared that it was a blessing to a part of the Lexington public school system but that it was also a hard transition where she had to learn new ways to adapt, make new friends, and learn what it is like to be friendly and take a long bus ride each day. When she needed extra help with the honors and AP courses in which she was enrolled, she had trouble making arrangements for tutoring. She thanked Ms. Nobles for helping her to obtain academic tutoring. She hopes that it becomes easier in the future for METCO students to get this type of tutoring. Miss Warner believes that LPS METCO has prepped her for her future in college and shared how she would like to study chemical and mechanical engineering or meteorology. She also shared that LPS has a lot of club choices which allows students to have experiences that lead them to what they want to do in the future and appreciates that very much.

Ms. Nobles shared that Mr. Harris has initiated a new program at LHS called Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers (TSTT). This is a career exploration program for students of color beginning the ninth grade and there are currently five students from Lexington in this program. TSTT is a school-based mentoring program that recruits and mentors culturally diverse and economically challenged high school students who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching. It is their hope that these students earn scholarships in teaching education and come back to Lexington to teach.

Daunyelle Morales shared that she is a sophomore student at LHS who is participating in the TSTT program. She chose to be in this program to help her fulfill her career as a teacher. She shared that school has been difficult for her due to being dyslexic and could not understand why everything did not come as easy to her as to everyone else in the class. The program at Bowman taught her a different way to learn using different techniques. Daunyelle also shared that her mother has told her she can do whatever she wants to do, but didn't believe her at first until she helped her brother with his homework and he ended up getting a good grade on a test. She is happy to be in this program but she is still trying to figure out what she wants to do.

Ms. Nobles shared that the TSTT meetings are held on a monthly basis and along with other high schools. One of the goals is to provide these students with opportunities to explore teaching opportunities and they will shadow a teacher and also attend workshops. Ms. Nobles believes that Daunyelle's struggle, determination and tenacity will lead to great things.

There were questions and comments from the Committee for Ms. Nobles, Jenise Warner and Daunyelle Morales, regarding tutoring, program decisions, budgets, student stress issues, bussing, and remote participation for PTA meetings.

Bria Dubose shared that she is a recent graduate of LHS, a former METCO Student and METCO Scholar who is currently attending Lesley College. She shared that looking back she now sees how prepared she is for the real world, but in the beginning she could not see the light at the end of the tunnel. Her skills in note taking, real time planning and being able to advocate on behalf of herself has been enormously helpful in college. LPS is very challenging, but she now appreciates her experiences. She is not struggling as an African American student and being a minority in a classroom. Her communication skills have helped her to speak up and learn how to communicate effectively.

Ms. Nobles stated that what Bria shared tonight is important because students do not always enjoy the journey. Bria worked hard, was a METCO Scholar and in her junior and senior year hated school, but she has already visited LHS twice since graduating and has even asked for a METCO bus pass to ride home. METCO is not for everyone, but if you give the students the support they need to be successful they can achieve great things. Ms. Nobles then spoke to the other part of the METCO program which is the host family and the friends and family program.

Mr. Huff, a METCO parent and former METCO student in Newton shared his experience many years ago as a METCO student and now as a METCO parent. He shared that you cannot argue that the program is not a success because of the proven results. The children and families end up forming relationships and networks that might not have happened had they attended Boston schools.

Ms. Nobles thanked the Committee for making the trek into Boston and believes that the new meeting format was a success and that Lexington and only one other district makes the effort to have a meeting in Boston. She then shared the district is upgrading all cell phones for bus drivers, but tomorrow they will be without them. After tomorrow all bus drivers will have new phones, but if there is an emergency, please reach out to her. The phone numbers will stay the same.

Motion to Adjourn (Stewart, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

The meeting ended at 8:18 p.m.

Documents: Meeting Agenda

Voted by the School Committee January 8, 2013