

METCO Program Review Summary and Recommendations

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Agenda

- METCO in Needham
- Methodology for the METCO Program Review
- Summary of the Review
- Recommendations from the Review
- Questions and suggested district actions in response to the Review

A brief look at METCO in Needham

- 1966 - METCO (The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity) founded
- 1969 – Needham joins
- 2013-14 - 30 suburban districts in METCO
- Grant funded through Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Currently 159 METCO students in Needham

Purpose of METCO:

The METCO program.....provides the opportunity for children from racially-imbalanced schools in Boston and children from isolated suburban schools to learn together in an integrated public school setting.

METCOincreases the diversity and reduces the racial isolation in the receiving districts so that the students from different backgrounds can learn from each other in meaningful ways.

The METCO program.....closer understanding and cooperation between urban and suburban parents and other citizens in the Boston Metropolitan area.

Who and What?

- D Fuller and Associates
 - Mr. David Fuller, Former METCO Director from Weston Public Schools
 - Dr. Emmett Price, III, Assoc. Prof., Northeastern Univ.
 - Ms. Gina Fried, English Teacher, Weston High School
- What method did they use?
 - Review data and information
 - Interview staff, administrators, students, community members
 - Focus meetings with parents in Needham & Boston



Questions for the METCO Review

1. How are the METCO students progressing in our district?
2. Are the METCO parents satisfied with the support they and their students receive in Needham?
3. What is the perception of the METCO program within the schools and community?

1. How are the METCO students doing?

- Since 2010-11:
 - the proportion of enrollments in NHS upper level courses has increased
 - 83% of graduates have attended college, compared to 95% of all NHS graduates
 - 16 METCO students have withdrawn from NPS in order to attend other school programs

1. How are the METCO students doing?

- Elementary and middle school students benefit from school-based instructional supports provided by METCO and other school staff before and after school
- METCO students at all levels report successes, challenges and pride in being METCO students
- Students reflect emotional maturity and camaraderie with their METCO friends but are anxious about “getting in trouble”

1. Concerns Identified by Consultants

- Contracted bus service is limited and impacts before and after school activities
- Attrition within the METCO cohort can impact the feeling of being “the only METCO” student in a class
- Students are increasingly enrolling in Honors courses, but no change in enrollment in Accelerated and/or Advanced Placement courses
- Students expressed worries about getting in trouble individually and collectively. They reflected concerns for the burden it would place on their families were they to “get in trouble” and on METCO’s future if they were to not succeed in Needham

2. Are the METCO parents satisfied with district supports?

- Parents believe METCO is a priority for the district
- Parents are satisfied with the level of support given to their children
- K-8 parents feel children receive good academic support
- Parents report being positively engaged when their child is receiving special education services
- All interviewees expressed satisfaction with Needham's respect and appreciation for diversity₁₀

2. Concerns Identified by Consultants

- Some HS parents report confusion about who their primary contact is at the High School
- School leaders/teachers report that lines of communication with METCO parents are not clear – this confusion was also felt by METCO parents
- Staff want more training in cultural proficiency
- More opportunities for METCO parent and staff interactions should be provided to support the academic, social and emotional lives of the METCO students

3. What is the perception of the METCO program within Needham?

- Majority of staff (70%) interviewed support the METCO program, but requested more orientation and training regarding METCO and cultural proficiency issues
- Small percentage (4-5%) do not feel METCO remains a relevant program
- 25% of staff are fully committed to METCO, its students and staff

3. What is the perception of the METCO program within Needham?

- Staff expressed confusion as to who the point person is when a challenge arises (METCO Coordinator? Teacher? METCO Director? Guidance?)
- Community members value the METCO program and the diversity it brings to their children and the community of Needham
- School Committee members would welcome more data, measurable outcomes and district wide information on the METCO program to better inform district policy

Recommendations from the Review

To improve METCO student achievement:

- Develop summer programs to support student success in middle and high school courses
- Insure that effective supports are in place throughout the district
- Continue to use culturally sensitive curricular materials
- Develop middle school student programs to empower the voices of METCO students
- Consider additional late bus for METCO students ¹⁴



Recommendations from the Review

To increase parent satisfaction:

- Clarify expectations around communication among all stakeholders, making explicit the responsibilities for Needham and METCO staff vis a vis METCO parent communication
- District administrators should commit to supporting enhanced METCO parental involvement

Recommendations from the Review

To improve the community's understanding of METCO:

- Ensure a minimal level of training around cultural proficiency for all staff
- Recalibrate the job description of the elementary METCO Coordinator
- Provide information and training for all staff and students about METCO and its role in Needham
- Incorporate additional Needham staff into METCO parent information sessions, both in Boston and Needham

Question raised by the Review

+ Action Step to address the question

- How do we provide focused attention on the METCO program, our students' achievements and contributions to our school community?
 - The METCO Director will prepare and distribute an annual METCO district report, including short and long term goals and measurable outcomes, each May. This report will serve as the basis for budget planning for the following school year and summer.

Question raised by the Review

+ Action Step to address the question

- Given the communication concerns reported by parents, staff and administrators, can we clarify communication responsibilities for everyone?
 - The Principals, METCO Director and Director of Student Development will draft guidelines for school and district-based communication expectations for staff, parents and administrators
 - The guidelines will be included in the METCO Parent Handbook for SY 14-15 and will be distributed to all school-based and METCO staff

Question raised by the Review

+ Action Step to address the question

- Since the Review was based on interviews with small numbers of staff, parents and students, do the perceptions of these groups mirror those of the larger groups of staff, parents and students?
 - Survey staff, METCO and Needham parents and students about the METCO program structure, staff training needs, transportation, academic programming and supports and parent involvement
 - Accomplish this during the 2014-15 school year

Question raised by the Review

+ Action Step to address the question

- Are there more effective ways to prepare METCO students for entry into upper level courses by grade 8?
 - METCO Director convenes a short term task force comprised of administrators, teachers, METCO Coordinators and parents to analyze student achievement data, HS course enrollment and success and to develop summer and school-year academic support programs to further the academic achievement of METCO students
 - Recommendations to be made for school year 2015-16



We would be happy to answer
questions or respond to your
comments