

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The METCO Program

**Education Policy Initiatives:
Boston and Springfield METCO Program
Located in 38 Participating Massachusetts Communities**

January 19, 2007

Submitted by:

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**Education Policy Initiatives:
Boston and Springfield METCO Program located in 38 Participating
Massachusetts Communities**

For forty years, the Massachusetts METCO program has been transforming the lives of hundreds of thousands of students by providing access to quality education for urban students and fostering more diverse classrooms in 190 suburban schools located in eastern and western Massachusetts.

METCO, the largest voluntary school desegregation program in America, serves approximately 3,300 Boston and Springfield students and their over 100,000 classmates in the 38 participating communities. As educators, administrators and service providers, we look forward to working with the incoming administration to foster high expectations for all students and broaden the opportunity for students to benefit from an integrated learning environment. Over 15,000 students are on the waiting list to get into the Boston and Springfield METCO programs. Until there are sufficient levels of affordable housing in suburban communities – the need for METCO will remain.

In the last three years, some progress has been made in closing the gap in equitable funding of the METCO program. However, the participating communities have received only \$3,700 per student in education funding this year. We hope the new Patrick/Murray Administration will address the need to achieve equitable funding by revising the annual grant mechanism for Item 7010-0012 - Programs to Improve Racial Imbalance, the METCO program with the incorporation of new language containing a funding formula. Supporters of METCO, along with members of the METCO Legislative Caucus are seeking an additional increase of \$5 million for the coming fiscal year to address the on-going education funding inequity and anticipated transportation needs. This figure would supplement the recent increases of \$2 million per annum approved by the Legislature and Governor Romney in the previous three years.

In addition to requesting a \$5 million increase for education, transportation and support services for a total funding allocation of \$24,615,313 in FY 2008, the METCO Advisory Committee, the METCO Directors Association, the METCO Superintendents Committee and METCO Inc. plan to:

1. Work with the Administration and the METCO Legislative Caucus to establish a base or benchmark level of METCO education funding at \$5000 per student (*in current value 2007 dollars*) per actual METCO student as of October 1 of the preceding year with an annual escalation index set to the United States Department of Commerce State and Local Government Price Deflator, the same index specified for Chapter 70 funding in Massachusetts General Laws, adequate transportation and payment for services rendered by METCO, Inc. and Springfield public schools.

The METCO grant allocates \$3,700 per student plus the transportation cost and service provider support in FY 2007. (This initiative is outlined in the attached January 19th letter addressed to Governor Patrick)

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2. Implement and evaluate recently adopted standards for academic excellence and participation.
3. Undertake a study of current transportation costs in order to seek efficiencies.
4. Recommend expanding the available “seats” in current participating METCO communities to lower the waiting time and open more opportunity for the 15,000 Boston and Springfield children on the METCO waiting lists. Support interested new communities in their efforts to join the METCO program.

Mission Statement

Since its beginning in 1966, the mission of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc. (METCO) has remained focused and unchanged:

To ensure access to quality suburban public school education for students of color from urban school districts and to enhance the educational experience of suburban students by providing an integrated learning environment.

METCO Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, administers and supports the Boston METCO program with over 3,150 students placed in 32 communities:

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| ❖ Arlington | ❖ Bedford | ❖ Belmont | ❖ Braintree |
| ❖ Brookline | ❖ Carlisle | ❖ Cohasset | ❖ Concord |
| ❖ Dover | ❖ Foxborough | ❖ Framingham | ❖ Hingham |
| ❖ Lexington | ❖ Lincoln | ❖ Lynnfield | ❖ Marblehead |
| ❖ Melrose | ❖ Natick | ❖ Needham | ❖ Newton |
| ❖ Reading | ❖ Scituate | ❖ Sharon | ❖ Sherborn |
| ❖ Sudbury | ❖ Swampscott | ❖ Wakefield | ❖ Walpole |
| ❖ Wayland | ❖ Wellesley | ❖ Weston | ❖ Westwood |

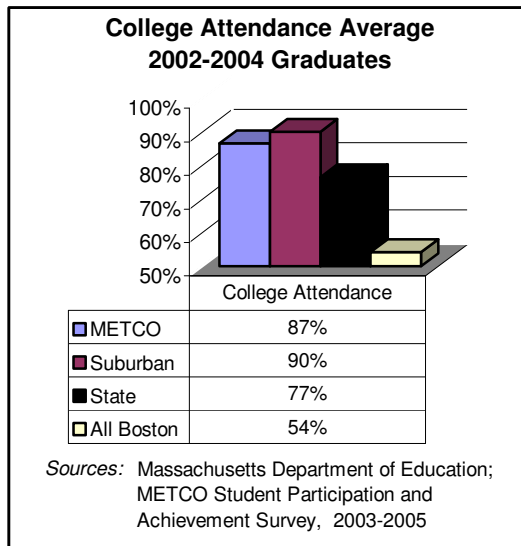
The Springfield School District administers the Springfield METCO program with approximately 150 students placed in six communities:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| ❖ East Longmeadow | ❖ Hampden | ❖ Longmeadow | ❖ Southwick |
| ❖ Tolland | ❖ Wilbraham | | |

METCO Accomplishments

The METCO program has raised student achievement scores, enhanced graduation levels and fostered college attendance for Boston and Springfield students of color since 1966. In turn, it has brought an integrated learning experience to predominantly white student populations in suburban classrooms.

The table below provides a comparison of the average college attendance levels for Boston METCO students, the aggregated “Suburban” students in participating communities, all Massachusetts students and the Boston School District between 2002 and 2004.



METCO Students Attend College



METCO students attend college at nearly the same rate as their suburban classmates.



Ten percent more METCO graduates attend college than the statewide average.

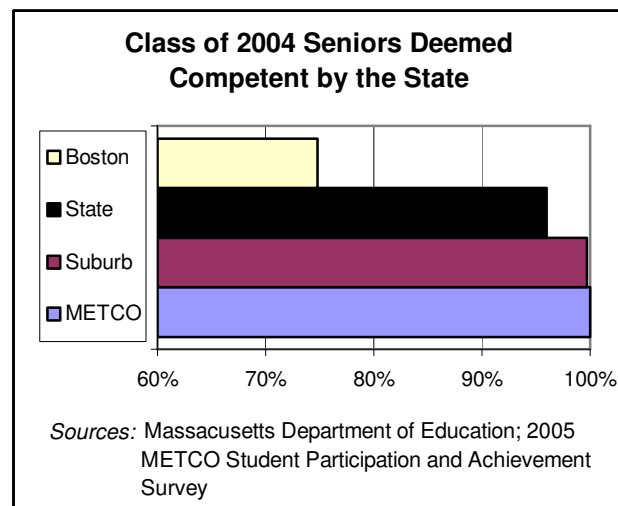


METCO students select four-year, degree granting colleges nearly twice as often as their friends and neighbors attending Boston schools.


The Massachusetts English and Math MCAS graduation requirement is no barrier to METCO students. Their passing rates exceed the Massachusetts state average as illustrated on the following page.

MCAS: A METCO Success Story




- ★ 100% of METCO seniors in 2004 passed the 10th grade English and Math MCAS enabling them to graduate on time.
- ★ Nearly 100% of their suburban classmates also passed the MCAS requirement.
- ★ While 25% of their Boston-educated friends failed to clear this hurdle.



The table below illustrates METCO’s funding history under the 1992 Educational Reform Act that established a foundation level for the minimum education funding of public school students in Massachusetts. METCO students fall outside the state mandate because the program was not included in the education reform legislation.

 Participating METCO communities receive only **\$3,700 per METCO student in educational funding in FY 2007.**

METCO Funding History under Massachusetts Education Reform

	Fiscal Year	Total Allocation	Increase/Decrease %
 The 1993 Education Reform Act did not address the METCO program in any manner.	1992	\$12,031,328	-
	1993	12,031,328	0%
	1994	12,031,328	0%
	1995	12,031,328	0%
 Between 1992 and 2006, increases in METCO’s funding have failed to keep up with inflation.	1996	12,031,328	0%
	1997	12,031,328	0%
	1998	12,031,328	0%
	1999	12,371,328	3%
	2000	12,371,328	0%
 Since 2003, the Massachusetts Board of Education has agreed that METCO is under-funded and recommended increases to the METCO grant.	2001	15,319,156	24%
	2002	15,319,156	0%
	2003	15,128,126	-1%
	2004	13,615,313	-10%
	2005	15,615,313	15%
	2006	17,615,313	13%
	2007	19,615,313	11%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

As the United States Supreme Court revisits *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the 1954 ruling that found “separate schools” were “inherently unequal,” an April 2004 study released by the Harvard Civil Rights Project revealed:

White students in Metro Boston attend very segregated schools, and over the 1990s, school segregation remained at high levels. Seven in ten white students attend schools in the outer suburbs- schools that are over ninety percent white. In contrast, more than three quarters of black and Latino students attend schools in the City of Boston or in one of the urbanized satellite cities.

Influential policy writers including the Harvard Civil Rights Project, legislators, and the *Boston Globe* have all recently advocated for the Commonwealth to expand the METCO program in order to address the pervasive pattern of region-wide segregation.

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- ❖ Without METCO, the 32 greater Boston communities become 89% white while the African-American student share shrinks by over 50%.
- ❖ In suburban classrooms, METCO increases the Hispanic/Latino student population by almost one-half and augments the existing Asian student base.

At the November Board meeting, the Commissioner of Education submitted a preliminary budget for FY 2008 to the Massachusetts Board of Education with a recommendation of a \$1 million increase for the METCO program. While we appreciate the support the Department has given the METCO program with its second consecutive recommendation for a funding increase, we believe this figure is insufficient to address the on-going inequity in program funding.

The *Programs to Improve Racial Imbalance* education grant that provides the student transportation and education funding to the participating METCO communities, must be renewed annually. At present, the METCO program enabling legislation provides no benchmark/funding targets, earmarks, inflation index, or an even multi-year funding commitment. The grant provides funding for education funding on a per student basis, transportation funds, and the support services provided by METCO Inc. and Springfield Public Schools.

METCO Program Requests

For 40 years, the METCO program has provided one of Massachusetts' largest and most successful gateways to opportunity and the American Dream to its more than 12,500 graduates of color. At the same time, it has prepared hundreds of thousands of nascent citizens for the challenges and responsibilities of our increasingly diverse Commonwealth and country as the world's boundaries continue to shrink.

Annually, the families of the 12,000 Boston children on the METCO Waiting List have had to compete for the average 460 openings. The typical wait for an open seat in a participating Boston METCO community public school is nearly five years. In Springfield, the annual METCO lottery attracts over 50 applicants for every open seat.

In FY 2007, the Department of Education lifted an eight-year cap on METCO enrollment by dedicating some of the additional funds for 50 to 60 additional students. No new communities have been permitted to join the METCO program since 1975.

The stage is set for the new Executive Team to renew METCO's promise to students of color throughout Massachusetts, by bringing equity to the METCO program. The leaders of the METCO Legislative Caucus believe that a FY 2008 funding level of \$24,615,313 is reasonable based on the program's long history of mostly level funding and the state's improving fiscal condition. The \$5 million increase (27%) would enable participating communities to attain more equitable education reimbursement, address the ten or more communities facing transportation contract renewal in this period of volatile energy prices as well as to foster potential program expansion.

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The METCO families, administrators and service providers request the establishment of a predictable funding formula based on a viable educational funding benchmark or target with an escalation index for future years set to the same index specified by Chapter 70 funding under the Massachusetts General Laws. This proposed formula would also incorporate transportation adequacy and develop adequate resources to support further program expansion within the current METCO framework as well as to emerging satellite communities such as Brockton, Haverhill, Lowell, Lawrence, Lynn, and New Bedford. These communities might benefit from a program model, which raises college attendance levels for urban students on par with their suburban classmates, narrows the “achievement gap” and opens the door to more racially and culturally diverse classrooms. Citizen-initiated voluntary school integration requires a tremendous investment of time and energy on the part of the sending and receiving communities to accomplish successfully.

Education indeed transforms lives! The founders of the METROPOLITAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY included urban and suburban visionaries who saw the need to open the door to educational opportunity for Massachusetts’ school children. Together we can revitalize and expand its gateway for the nearly 15,000 waiting to enter this unparalleled education program. The expanding growth of our satellite cities and on-going interest from neighboring Boston and Springfield-area suburban communities look to the METCO program for inspiration in improving classroom diversity and educational opportunity for their students.

To move METCO forward to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century requires the commitment, vision and experience of our METCO educators, administrators and service providers. With your support we are ready to continue our efforts.

Respectfully Submitted this Nineteenth Day of January in the Year 2007,

Mr. Michael Brandmeyer, Chair, METCO Advisory Committee
Mr. Stephen Gomes Pereira, President, METCO Directors Association
Dr. Peter Holland, Chair, METCO Superintendents Committee
Dr. Jean M. McGuire, Executive Director, METCO Inc.
Dr. Kahris McLaughlin, President, METCO Inc. Board

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METCO Advisory Committee

Convened by the Commissioner of Education, the METCO Advisory Committee members include urban and resident parents, Superintendents, Directors, METCO Inc. & the MDOE Liaison

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**Metropolitan Council for
Educational Opportunity**

METCO Inc.

Opening the door to educational opportunity since 1965