

1                   MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
2                   LINCOLN SUDBURY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
3                   SUDBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
4                   TRI-DISTRICT PUBLIC FORUM  
5                   COMMUNITY FORUM ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
6                   Monday, October 23, 2017  
7                   Reed Gym, Lincoln Public Schools, Ballfield Road, Lincoln, MA  
8                   OPEN SESSION  
9

10 Lincoln School Committee Present: Tim Christenfeld (Chairperson), Peter Borden (Vice  
11 Chairperson), Tara Mitchell. Also present: Becky McFall (Superintendent), Jessica Rose  
12 (Assistant Superintendent), Mary Emmons (Administrator for Student Services).

13  
14 Absent: Al Schmertzler, Jena Salon, Laurel Wironen (Hanscom Educational Liaison),  
15 Simone Johnson (METCO Representative), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business  
16 and Finance), Robert Ford (Director of Technology).

17  
18 Lincoln-Sudbury Regional District School Committee Present: Kevin Matthews (Chair),  
19 Gerald Quirk (Vice Chair), Radha Gargeya, Craig Gruber, Nancy Marshall, Patricia  
20 Mostue. Also present: Bella Wong (Superintendent and Principal).

21  
22 Absent: None.

23  
24 Sudbury School Committee Present: Christine Hogan (Chair), Richard Tinsley (Vice  
25 Chair), Margaret Helon, Lisa Kouchakdjian. Also present: Anne Wilson  
26 (Superintendent), Kim Swain (Assistant Superintendent).

27  
28 Absent: Lucie St. George.

29  
30 1. Welcome and Introductions

31           Mr. Christenfeld, Lincoln Chairperson, called the open session to order at 7:13  
32 pm. He thanked Ms. Hogan, Mr. Matthews, and all those attending. The forum is the  
33 third that the districts have held. The forum was taped and will be available for viewing  
34 on Sudbury TV and on the Lincoln School Committee's website, [www.lincnet.org](http://www.lincnet.org).

35           Mr. Matthews noted the tremendous turnout and said he hoped it would spark  
36 more interest in attending their Committee meetings. He said they would like to have an  
37 even more successful forum next year.

38           Ms. Hogan thanked Lincoln and Dr. McFall for hosting the event. She said that  
39 Mr. Christenfeld and Mr. Matthews are the best gentlemen with whom she has worked.  
40 She thanked Dr. Smith, who was the Principal of the Curtis Middle School in Sudbury  
41 and is now the Executive Director of the National Center for Race Amity. She said that  
42 the topic of diversity is near and dear to their hearts.

43  
44 2. District Demographic Overview

45           Document: None.

46

1 Mr. Christenfeld said that the three chairs began discussions in July that led to the  
2 forum, sparked by a *Boston Globe* article about Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School  
3 and the METCO program. Since the August events in Charlottesville, Virginia, the local  
4 conversation about diversity has become a national conversation.

5 Mr. Christenfeld asked what is meant by diversity. Some of the areas include  
6 ethnic, religious, sexual identity, neurodiversity, economic, and racial. He said that  
7 METCO and racial issues were not a focus of the evening; the focus was on diversity in  
8 many parts. He read statistics for the three districts. In the Lincoln School, 15.4% of the  
9 student body, or 84 students, are Boston students. In Sudbury K-8, 2.5% of the students  
10 are from Boston families, and at the Lincoln-Sudbury High School, 5.8%. He noted that  
11 Lincoln has seen an increase of the number of students on Individualized Education Plans  
12 [IEPs]; 21% of students are now in Special Education. At the high school, it is 15.4%,  
13 and in the Sudbury schools, 14.1%. 5% of students in each district are classified as  
14 'economically disadvantaged' by the state. In Lincoln, 6% of the students are English  
15 Language Learners – compared to 3.1% in Sudbury and 3.6% at L-S. Students with high  
16 needs make up 23.6% of the Lincoln student body, 22.3% of the high school student  
17 body, and 19.5% of Sudbury students. When the current students and their families self-  
18 select their race, 58.9% choose “white” in Lincoln, 79.8% choose “white” in Sudbury,  
19 and 80.6% at L-S.

20 Mr. Christenfeld said that confidentiality and privacy concerns can limit how  
21 much can school officials can discuss specific incidents. He said tonight’s forum would  
22 be important because collaboration among the three districts is healthy, because the  
23 dialogue itself is important, and because the Committees could hear what works and what  
24 might not work in the schools.

### 25 26 3. Introductory Remarks

27 Document: None.

28  
29 Dr. William Smith welcomed everyone. He said that Mr. Nix and Ms. Merra  
30 were his students when he was the Curtis Middle School Principal.

31 He hoped that the audience would ask questions and bring ideas to move the  
32 communities forward for more access and equity. A question is how to diversify the  
33 faculty, and out-of-the-box thinking on these issues is welcome. He noted that raising  
34 funds for these issues is necessary.

35 Dr. Smith said that when people hear race amity, it means friendship. They chose  
36 amity in the sphere of human relationships. While we love and treasure our families first  
37 in our relationships, we can love and treasure our friends even more than family members  
38 because friendship allows people to support, to advise, to correct, and to help friends  
39 become better humans. He said that cross-racial friendships are important and are in our  
40 history, as evidenced by the PBS documentary, *An American Story: Race Amity and*  
41 *Tradition*.

42 Dr. Smith said that we all know that there is racism in our country. He noted that  
43 we know much less about the parallel moral counterweight of cross-racial, cross-cultural  
44 friendships that are key. He said that we need to explore, to understand, and to celebrate  
45 these friendships. He noted that we need to push back and grab the mantle. It was his  
46 wish that tonight, questions and ideas are critical and creative.

1 Dr. Smith said his wife served on the METCO Board of Directors, and she did  
2 many things to make these cross-racial friendships happen. He said we should draw on  
3 her ideas and experience. He said he was delighted to be in attendance and he hopes the  
4 evening does not begin and end on mere words instead of actions.

5  
6 4. Invited Community Member Presentations

7 Document: None.

8  
9 Reverend Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Senior Minister at First Parish in Lincoln, and  
10 a Lincoln resident and parent, reiterated the importance of amity and friendship. He said  
11 there is amity across any difference, and in the spirit of love, each person can give the gift  
12 of their presence.

13 Reverend Mishra-Marzetti said it can be uncomfortable to hear about the  
14 experiences of others when they are not good experiences. Sharing experiences is a  
15 vulnerable thing and is hard in a way, but it is in the sharing of hard experiences that we  
16 learn and grow. Rev. Mishra-Marzetti said that he read the Boston Globe article about  
17 the METCO program in the Lincoln-Sudbury school, and he said that the vibe resonated  
18 with him, and he extrapolated from it.

19 Rev. Mishra-Marzetti shared two stories about his and his family's experience.  
20 As a newcomer to the area, there are get togethers, and he and his family met other  
21 families with students in the same grades as his two children, who are of African-  
22 American heritage and who have been adopted. He was talking with one parent, who  
23 was white, and another white parent came up to them and talked with the white person  
24 and ignored Rev. Mishra-Marzetti. This third parent invited the white person's children  
25 for a playgroup space. All of their children are the same age. Rev. Mishra-Marzetti was  
26 ignored and talked around as if he was not there. He noted that it was clear that all  
27 people are not welcomed to Lincoln in the same way. He said that they have been here  
28 for three years now, but his son has yet to be invited to a play date. While they have tried  
29 to get play dates for their son, it has not happened. He wonders about that.

30 The second story was in May; Rev. Mishra-Marzetti's son went to school on  
31 photo day and came home in tears for a long time. His son said he was not handsome,  
32 and the students said his skin was the color of poop, not brown. Rev. Mishra-Marzetti  
33 asked what has been created in Town, and he does not want any students to fall through  
34 the cracks. He said that the school staff and superintendent are very talented, but he  
35 asked what the social context is when some people are included more than others. He is  
36 concerned about his children's self esteem and whether being excluded will impact them.  
37 He hopes the focus on social-emotional curriculum will include an examination of self-  
38 esteem.

39 Ms. Judy Merra, a former content specialist at the Lincoln Public Schools and a  
40 Sudbury resident, grew up in Sudbury. She said she has lived with privilege because she  
41 is a white woman. She said she has never experienced doors being shut to her, or being  
42 followed around in a store because someone was afraid she would shoplift. She and her  
43 husband have four children, three of them are her biological children, and they adopted  
44 one child from Ethiopia, so they have a transracial family. She said she has been at the  
45 intersection of roles as an educator in Lincoln, which is a unique district.

1 Ms. Merra said the friendship piece was important to her. She lives near the high  
2 school, and her children have friends from Boston who have enriched their lives. She  
3 noticed the differences between her white sons and black son. She said that at age five,  
4 only her black son was followed in the store, and she has had to address the “n” word that  
5 was uttered on the playground with her children. She noted that she has had similar  
6 experiences to Rev. Mishra-Marzetti. She is concerned about the implicit bias of white  
7 teachers and is working on a doctoral degree in the subject.

8 Ms. Merra said there are things that we can do better. She noted that when we  
9 hear the word diversity, we first think of race, but she asked all to consider what  
10 challenges there are to diversity. She noted that there is a difference between equity  
11 versus equality. For example, one of her children needed glasses, but three of her  
12 children do not. Treating her children the same would require that she purchase glasses  
13 for each child, even if three of them did not need them. She said the question that should  
14 be asked is “Is this fair and equitable to all of our student communities?” The senior  
15 class at Lincoln-Sudbury hosts a Jamaican Jam, which is an all-night celebration that  
16 ends at 5:00 am, making it hard for Boston parents to pick up their students. The school  
17 found ways so that Boston students could participate, and they have for the past two  
18 years.

19 Ms. Merra said that parents and teachers need to ask questions so that they can  
20 include all students in activities. One of her sons participated in a math club before  
21 school started, but Boston students cannot participate. She said that as educators, they  
22 need to continually ask if things are equitable. She urged that the towns and schools  
23 ensure an equitable opportunity and meet the needs of all students.

24 Mr. Scott Nix, Sudbury Chief of Police and a Sudbury resident, grew up in  
25 Sudbury. He noted that he and his father are graduates of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional  
26 High School, and he has known Dr. Smith for a long time. He said that there is a basic  
27 understanding that each person has to respect others. All need to be respected no matter  
28 their opinions, but when voicing opinions, they need to be voiced respectfully. He said  
29 that he was a Marine, where he learned that it did not matter who you were, and you were  
30 there for each other, and each person was respected. He noted that in law enforcement,  
31 they need to rethink things, and they are reflecting across the board on how to gain the  
32 respect of residents. Chief Nix said that sometimes the police do not deal with a great  
33 clientele, but each person is treated with respect.

34 Mr. Jason Medeiros, Associate Principal of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High  
35 School, said that one lens for diversity at the high school is Project Lincoln-Sudbury.  
36 Students are being taught to have the willingness to ask tough questions. He said that he  
37 has heard voices this evening that echoed, “I don’t feel like I belong here.” He said two  
38 of the school’s core values are respect for human difference and cultivating community.  
39 He said the adults have to model these values for students. Mr. Medeiros said the Project  
40 started last year, and the school had two large assemblies, one for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders and  
41 one for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, during World Language Week. He said the 9<sup>th</sup> graders have  
42 had diversity training, which addresses how to have tough conversations. Some of the  
43 pieces covered in the training are that it is okay to not know what to say, that students can  
44 accept forgiveness, and that it is also okay to be uncomfortable. A muralist will be at the  
45 school in two weeks and will address with students the question: Who will we be now?  
46 The muralist will engage students on what he mural should say. He said that Lincoln-

1 Sudbury has a role in social justice, and there are murals in the school that address the  
2 role. He said they are reflecting on how to make reference to their core values in all  
3 classes at the school. He said that one of their jobs is to prepare students to have difficult  
4 conversations.

5 Mr. Medeiros said the school is hosting an event on Monday, November 20, and  
6 they would like all from Lincoln, Boston, and Sudbury to attend to set the stage for a new  
7 era to reframe the core values at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. There were  
8 flyers about the event.

9 Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent of Sudbury Public Schools, said it was  
10 important to have conversations on diversity and inclusion. She said that if there are  
11 individual issues, please reach out to school staff because they can help and they want to  
12 hear about issues. She said the stories can be very personal. The school staff hears  
13 stories, but the staff has a responsibility to maintain privacy. She said that there are  
14 federal and state laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act  
15 [FERPA], Massachusetts General Laws [MGL], and the Code of Massachusetts  
16 Regulations [CMR] that the staff and administration are bound by. She said they work  
17 together to figure out that each student is welcomed, and families are their partners.

18 Dr. Smith thanked each for their presentation and opened the floor for the public  
19 discussion.

## 20 21 5. Public Discussion

22 Document: None.

23  
24 Ms. Sharon Antia, Lincoln resident, said she is glad to have the conversation. She  
25 said that she thought Ms. Merra was asking the right questions and noted that the issues  
26 are about how adults model the core values at the schools. She asked how many people  
27 had friends and relationships with people who are different from themselves. She was  
28 thrilled that Mr. Medeiros told about the work at L-S on difficult conversations because  
29 she said she was raised that if one does not have anything nice to say, one does not say  
30 anything. She asked what the ways were to have these difficult conversations.

31 Dr. Smith said there are resources that teach how to have the conversations. The  
32 National Center for Race Amity developed Breaking It Down Towards E Pluribus Unum,  
33 a race dialogue board game to promote cross racial/cross cultural amity.

34 Superintendent Wong said that education comes from school, home, and the  
35 world, and each place contributes one-third. She said students need role models who  
36 show them how to talk about feelings and ideas. She said that adults have to step up and  
37 be the models. She asked that each person share his or her thinking and talk. She noted  
38 that the Facing History protocol shows people to trust themselves and trust their  
39 communities, and practice these conversations. She said that the communities are  
40 fortunate because we can practice with each other because there is a safe environment  
41 where people can express themselves.

42 Ms. Chris Damon, who grew up in Lincoln and has been a substitute teacher at  
43 Lincoln-Sudbury, has an adopted son from El Salvador who is very tolerant. She noted  
44 that the Lincoln Public Schools has done a great job educating him. She said that Lincoln  
45 is too white, and she worries that her son is losing his racial identity. She said that white  
46 parents of children of color work to find safe playmates, but as her son has grown older,

1 he was perceived as a bad playmate. She urged the schools to do more outreach to hire  
2 teachers who look like their students. She said when her son arrived, he had a tutor who  
3 looked like him, but there are no tutors who look like him now. She said she was  
4 concerned about the way those problems were solved at Lincoln-Sudbury, and that there  
5 was a choice on how to solve them. She has heard not great things, and conflict is pushed  
6 under the rug. She mentioned the students who call themselves confederates, and hiring  
7 decisions where a person of color was not hired and a teacher who was in an anti-group  
8 was not brought back. She is asking whether her son should go to Minuteman instead of  
9 L-S and is worried whether L-S is a safe environment. She said her son told her that they  
10 cannot talk about politics in school because the Republicans might be offended.

11 Dr. Smith suggested that there are strategies for hiring, and he wanted to keep the  
12 discussion going beyond tonight's meeting.

13 Mr. Gerald Quirk said that they could not comment on personnel decisions and  
14 noted that there are multiple sides of these stories. He said he has heard that some issues  
15 are swept under the rug. He said there are things floating around on social media that do  
16 not happen at school, but they do affect students at school. He said that the *Boston Globe*  
17 article discussed issues that are not unique to L-S, but students came to the Committee  
18 and told them that they did not feel welcome at L-S. He said that these conversations  
19 need trust, and it was good that the students came to them because at least there was trust  
20 there. Mr. Quirk said they talked with Ms. Merrra about the issue of Boston students  
21 being able to participate in evening and weekend activities, and that while it is tough,  
22 they can do things to help students. He said that this year, seniors have shuttled Boston  
23 students to Alewife. These activities build bridges to develop trust. He thanked everyone  
24 for coming.

25 Superintendent Wong said the *Globe* article gave perceptions to people in the  
26 room. She said that while she is usually reticent with reporters, she spent lots of time  
27 with the reporter. She said the schools are committed to deal with issues when they arise.  
28 She said there is a lot to say about their struggles, but they also do proactive work. They  
29 promote feelings of belonging and continue to work on it. She said students still face  
30 microaggressions even though the towns are committed to the METCO program. She  
31 said it was hard work to do together, and she acknowledged that some students feel that  
32 they do not belong. She said the *Globe* article did not represent the community.

33 Dr. Smith suggested that they not dwell on the *Globe* article, and he had heard  
34 only one person mention it this evening. He said they want ideas to advance the change  
35 that they want. Adults need to model behavior and set examples. He noted that a new  
36 law in Massachusetts has established Race Amity Day, which will be the second Sunday  
37 in June. The Governor will annually issue a proclamation to all 351 cities and towns to  
38 promote cross-cultural activities.

39 Dr. McFall thanked everyone for attending. She felt a thickness in the air and that  
40 there was something that the audience wanted to hear from the school committees and  
41 administrations. She said they were not here to talk about single events, but this was  
42 about the day-to-day interactions between students and families. She said there is much  
43 room for growth. Dr. McFall acknowledged that there are areas of challenge, such as the  
44 number of Boston students who are on IEPs and have had disciplinary actions taken  
45 against them. She said they do not know the answers, but students learn one-third from  
46 society, which amplifies all that happens at school. She said another issue is how to

1 guide the faculty in navigating the political and social terrain. She agreed that they need  
2 conversation, there are problems, and they want growth. How do we engage the right  
3 people in the room? Harvard graduate students are going to be working in the Lincoln  
4 Public Schools for the next four weeks, and they will ask what the experience of African-  
5 American students is and what the experience of white students is. They will look at how  
6 they identify students who need to have IEPs and the discipline. She will ask if they are  
7 approaching the students in equitable ways.

8 Mr. Morgan Molloy, a Sudbury resident and parent, warned that when the  
9 community starts conversations like this, that we can think too broadly. He noted that  
10 there were some Sudbury residents, most Lincoln residents, and one Boston resident in  
11 the room. He urged people to make connections and make it easier for Boston residents  
12 to come in and connect.

13 A former Sudbury Superintendent said that some things have not changed. He  
14 said that we should continue to push our families and ourselves. He said they made  
15 mistakes 40 years ago, and while they increased the METCO program, they did not  
16 provide much help. He said the schools are doing a better job than before, and that the  
17 students go to wonderful schools, but the task is not ever finished.

18 Ms. Margaret Helon started her teaching career in 1995. She said diversity means  
19 all colors. The question is how do the students acclimate into the district. She mentioned  
20 that diversity has been an issue in the four school districts that she has taught in. She had  
21 one African-American 2<sup>nd</sup> grader tell her that, "I don't like white people." They need to  
22 prepare the students coming in and control as much as possible in the schools. She and  
23 her white husband have multiracial children, and she said that people should be proud of  
24 who they are individually. She said that the majority of students do not know their  
25 heritage.

26 Another woman was grateful for the forum, and she has four students in the  
27 district. She said that diversity is a community and not a school issue. She is upset that  
28 she has heard many say that Boston students should be grateful that they are coming to  
29 school in Lincoln and Sudbury. She said it is tough for African-American students. Her  
30 daughter dated an African-American student, but they broke up. She suggested that they  
31 get all stakeholders together. She is grateful for L-S, and she asked if there was a way  
32 that coaches and club advisors get a piece of this information. She looks to coaches to  
33 teach, but it feels like there are no checks and balances on coaches. L-S culture feels like  
34 belonging, but only if you are in that community. It can be a tough choice, for example,  
35 if a Boston student wants to go to basketball practice, they need a ride home or have to  
36 stay overnight.

37 Another woman from Sudbury said there is a Sudbury Action Group on Facebook  
38 made up of Sudbury parents and residents, and that the group should perhaps include  
39 Lincoln residents too. She asked that people please join the group. She commended the  
40 schools and said that we can do more. She said their group is a safe environment for the  
41 community, and we have a lot to learn.

42 Another woman, parent of two students in the schools, said that she applauded the  
43 1/3 of education from school, home, and the world and said we need to act. 1) It is  
44 important to celebrate differences and cultures, and she sees a lack of that. She said that  
45 students need to understand different cultures, and if the schools can do that, it is great.  
46 2) Teachers should choose books that make their students think, and they can make a

1 difference in the curriculum. 3) Open ended projects and questions are key because they  
2 promote give and take and the pushing of ideas and discussing differences of opinion.

3 Mrs. LaRonda Shedd, a Boston resident and parent of a Lincoln 7<sup>th</sup> grader, noted  
4 that many of the comments had focused on Boston families, but that there are children of  
5 color who live in Lincoln and Sudbury and who face the same challenges.

6 Another person asked where the men were as they were talking about diversity.

7 Ms. Kate Molloy, a junior at L-S, said they can do small things to influence. The  
8 Girls Rugby Team is the most diverse sports team at the school. She said they should ask  
9 themselves why it is the case. She said it was the coach who helps to organize rides and  
10 places to stay and provides support to the team. She said the coach and the team has had  
11 a great impact on her.

12 Dr. Smith reiterated that it was all about relationships. He said that in our homes,  
13 we should make every effort to address the question who are our friends. He said there is  
14 a National Amity Conference and clinic where they talk to students. His website is  
15 [www.raceamity.org](http://www.raceamity.org). He hoped that people would also attend in the spring.

16 Dr. Wilson said we all have biases that may not be ill intended but can have an  
17 impact.

18 Dr. Smith thanked everyone for coming.

## 19 20 6. Adjournment

21 The forum ended at 9:08 pm.

22  
23 The next Lincoln School Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October  
24 26, 2017 at 7:00 pm in the Hartwell Multipurpose Room, Ballfield Road, Lincoln.

25  
26 Respectfully submitted,

27 Sarah G. Marcotte

28 Recording Secretary