

# LEADING the NATION

## Celebrating a 50 year partnership with METCO

Hingham is one of 38 communities from around the state (like Wellesley, Weston, Cohasset and Scituate) to participate in a voluntary desegregation initiative. METCO, which stands for the METropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, is a state funded voluntary program designed to eliminate racial imbalance through busing of children from Boston and Springfield to participating suburban towns. The METCO program is among the oldest and most successful voluntary school desegregation programs in the country. Hingham currently has 42 METCO students enrolled between South, Plymouth River, Foster, Hingham High and Hingham Middle schools.

METCO students represent a wide range of socioeconomic standings and come from all areas of the Greater Boston area. The METCO program benefits students attending by providing enhanced academic environments. "The METCO program has enriched the life of our community for a full half century," said Hingham High School principal Rick Swanson. "Its mission remains as urgent -- and its contributions to our school remain as vital -- as ever before. Moreover, the program works. Year after year, all of our METCO students graduate on time and go on to secondary education. While doing so, they make our school a better place for everybody. We should all be proud and grateful for the ongoing partnership between METCO and Hingham Public Schools."



Receiving districts like Hingham benefit from these students being among their student body by increasing their schools' racial diversity. Receiving districts are historically considered racially isolated, and METCO provides a learning environment where all students learn and socialize with peers from other races and backgrounds, allowing the students a truer reflection of real world circumstances. METCO CEO, Milly Arbaje-Thomas states: "METCO is far more than an academic program. When students of different backgrounds, colors, and creeds are given the chance to work together, to strive toward common goals, to participate in the same after-school activities, or play on the same teams, lasting friendships are born. The result: stereotypes break down and misconceptions fade away. METCO has been called "...an answer to the divisions plaguing communities across the Commonwealth and nation."

To enhance the benefits for both the METCO students and the Hingham community, current METCO Director Andrew Nyamekye has introduced the Parent Partner Initiative (PPI) which is an extension of the Parent Host Program that Hingham had originally established with METCO Boston and Hingham parents. TaWonia Wright (Boston parent) and Pam Harty (Hingham parent) serve as Hingham PPI co-chairs. TaWonia has a deep history with Hingham, as a Hingham METCO alumna, class of 1997. She has a daughter at the Middle School and her son graduated from Hingham High last year and now attends Quinnipiac University. Pam has a son and a daughter at the High School.

The initiative seeks to give Boston and Hingham students and their families a chance to socialize outside of school hours with curriculum-focused activities. While each family pairing can tailor their relationship to suit their needs, they are encouraged to stay in touch periodically for encouragement, parent and student connectedness, play-dates, emergency contacts, etc.

This year has seen Boston and Hingham students getting together for various social activities such as the Black Nativity performance in Boston, thanks to a grant from the Hingham Education Foundation; a bowling party; and a screening of a documentary on the METCO program "On the Line." Both TaWonia and Pam are committed to raising awareness of the METCO program, and to encouraging a sense of connectedness and belonging among METCO and Hingham students and welcome the communities support. To learn more about the METCO program or the Parent Partnership Initiative please contact Andrew Nyamekye at [nyamekye@hinghamschools.org](mailto:nyamekye@hinghamschools.org).