

Lincoln Vocational Education Options Working Group

Site Visit Questions

Enrollment

1. What are the enrollment trends and projections?
2. Are you accepting non-member (out of district) students? What is your capacity for additional students?
3. What is the ratio of member district students to non-member district students?
4. Are member district students given any priority privileges? i.e. admission, program selection
5. What is the history of the district membership? i.e. stability, additions, withdrawals

Membership and Tuition

6. Is the district open to potential new members in the future?
7. What is the current tuition for an out of district student?
8. Is there a capital fee in addition to the out of district tuition?
9. Is there an additional fee for students requiring special education services?
10. How are transportation costs handled?
11. Would you provide support with coordinating transportation amongst several districts?
12. It is unlikely that current Minuteman students would transfer but, would you accept transfer students?

Program

13. Programmatically, what sets your school apart from other vocational high schools? i.e. unique programs, internships, structure of the school, supports for students, extracurricular opportunities, etc.
14. What are the primary paths that students take after graduation? i.e. 2 year college, 4 year college, apprenticeship, work, military, etc.
15. What are the demographics of your faculty? i.e. years of experience, stability and turnover, background prior to teaching, etc.
16. Do you have any student feedback you can share? i.e. student surveys regarding their experiences in their programs and the school

[SITE VISIT TO NASHOBA VALLEY REGIONAL
TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL](#)

On January 21, 2016, VEOWG members Becky McFall (Lincoln Schools Superintendent), Tim Higgins (Lincoln Town Administrator), and Peter Braun (Lincoln Selectman) made a site visit to the Nashoba Valley Technical High School, located on Littleton Road, Westford. We spent over two hours meeting with the Nashoba Superintendent Judith Klimkiewicz, and Nashoba School Committee Chair Jennifer Rhodes, followed by a one-hour tour of the facility.

The School is located amidst the booming commercial development along Rt. 110 in Westford, near I-495 exit 32. If you have ever enjoyed the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, the School is about 3.5 miles northwest of where the Rail Trail begins at the intersection of Rts. 225 and 27. It took us about a half hour to drive to the School, going through Concord Center and using Lowell Rd. and Westford Rd. to get to 225.

The current In-District towns are Ayer, Chelmsford, Groton, Littleton, Shirley, Pepperell, Townsend, and Westford. More information is available at www.nashobatech.net. The School reported to us that this group of communities is the second most affluent (as measured by DESE criteria) voke-ed district in the Commonwealth (second only to Minuteman's district).

Current enrollment is 760 students, consisting of 705 In-District and 55 Out-Of-District students. The building's capacity is 950 students. They also offer post-grad classes for students aged 18-22 (at no tuition if In-District). The School has experienced a 34% enrollment increase during the last five years, which is the second highest growth rate for voke-ed schools in Massachusetts and reflects the growth of the member-towns. The School has not perceived the need to market itself outside its District towns, yet it warmly welcomes Out-Of-District students and stated that it would welcome Lincoln students. They stated that all students are evaluated for admission and provided access to programs regardless of residency within or outside the District, and that it is rare that a student is not provided access to his/her first choice of program. The School reported to us that it has a 0% drop out rate.

The current operating budget is approximately \$13 million. They have the lowest cost per student of all 29 voke-ed high schools in Massachusetts. Their current State-capped tuition rate for Out-Of-District students is \$14,341, and there are no additional fees for special education or capital. They have a stabilization fund of \$1.2 million, with a goal of \$2 million. They have begun to fund an OPEB Trust against their current \$6.2 million OPEB liability. They are tied with Concord-Carlisle Regional High School in having the highest school bond rating in Massachusetts (Moody's AA1).

If Lincoln students attend Nashoba, we would be responsible for arranging and paying for the transportation, but Nashoba would assist with coordinating our transportation with other towns and offered to help us work with the School's transportation-vendor to try to achieve a competitive price.

The facility has been well maintained, and it shows. Our tour revealed a spacious, well-lit, pleasant, and clean interior, as well as newly-renovated playing fields. A major building addition and renovation occurred with MSBA support in 2005 and 2006, and they have done several additional MSBA-repair and other smaller renovation projects since then, including roofs, playing fields, refinishing

the gym floor, solar panels, and a greenhouse. They have a regularly-updated 5-year and 10-year building maintenance and capital plan, but do not anticipate any major capital projects. The only specific project they mentioned is repaving parking lots. Their stated long-term philosophy is to keep up with maintenance and repair needs, rather than let them accumulate and necessitate a total replacement. They have good wi-fi infrastructure and bandwidth.

We asked them to elaborate on their fiscal management policies and practices. They said that they focus on detailed, transparent dialogue with the public and the leadership boards of the member-towns. They take a zero-based approach to their annual budget, with the goal of limiting budget growth to 3-5%/year. Their administrative costs are relatively low. Their teacher compensation is close to industry average. They believe that their philosophy is successful. They experience relatively low turn-over of faculty and administration. They manage as much SPED needs in-house as they can, by hiring academic-subject SPED specialists and thus minimizing the need for SPED aides.

Nashoba offers an impressive array of programs. They stated that they continuously evaluate the needs of students and business, to stay current with the labor market, and have regular interactions with businesses to evaluate developing needs and identify partner-opportunities. They also focus on in-service training at the School. Their science and technology academy stood out, focusing on engineering, biotechnology, programming, and robotics, which is housed in a wing added in the 2005/20066 project. This is a growing program with 100 students. We also viewed their unique, new Veterinary Tech. program that they are about to open. In partnership with the MSPCA (Angell Memorial), which is providing significant funding and staff, including an on-site veterinarian, the School is establishing an on-site, full-service clinic, surgery and x-ray facility that will offer services for the pets of low-income residents and an in-service training facility for Vet Tech students.

Similarly, their culinary arts program operates an on-site restaurant that is open to the public. We also observed an in-house Lowell Five Savings Bank branch and a clothing retail store. In the 2005/6 project, they added a 500-seat performing arts theater, which still looks brand new, in connection with which the emphasis is less on training actors and script-writers and much more on training lighting, design, and other back-stage skills for which there is a perceived market need. We also observed a tv studio in which students regularly broadcast and handle production. They also provide the traditional programs for technical trades, health assistant, cosmetology, and the like. All students are required to take dance, music, and/or arts classes.