

The Weston METCO Program turns 50!

Fifty years ago this September, in the fall of 1967, nine children from Boston arrived in a station wagon at the Brook School in Weston to start kindergarten. These brave students were trailblazers in a voluntary desegregation program called METCO. METCO, which stands for Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, was formed out of the need to give black urban students a quality education while enhancing the educational experience for white suburban children. This year Weston Schools have 169 students in the program, kindergarten through 12th grade.

The 50th anniversary of Weston METCO is an important benchmark for the METCO program and for the Weston community. It is a tribute to the families in the 1960s that had the vision that Weston could make a significant impact on the lives of Boston children and also broadens the educational experience of their own children.

Numerous Weston families felt frustrated by the “pervasive racism” that was happening all around them as Weston remained in an isolated bubble. The Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, but many Weston residents felt alienated and powerless. In 1965, these families decided to take action by starting a day camp made up of 50 children from Boston and 50 from Weston. Camp activities took place in both Weston and Boston. It was logistically challenging but important that everything about the camp be fully integrated, with the full collaboration of the Roxbury families. Out of this summer program came the Weston Roxbury Preschool, now housed at First Parish Church.

When the Weston School Committee and school administrators saw first hand the success of the integrated preschool, they decided to reverse their decision from the previous year and accept the invitation to join METCO. Today 31 towns across Massachusetts participate in METCO. More than 250 Boston students have graduated from Weston High School.

Over the next few months, the *Town Crier* will be highlighting these Weston METCO graduates and where they are now. The Friends of Weston METCO Committee will also be celebrating the 50th anniversary by sponsoring a series of workshops, speakers and special events throughout the year.

On Thursday, November 9, the Weston Historical Society will present “A History of METCO in Weston: 50 Years,” at 7:30 pm in the Weston Public Library Community Room. The panel will include Imogene Fish, a founder of Roxbury Weston Preschool; METCO Directors Roland Gibson and David Fuller; and METCO Scholarship Fund Trustee Don Pierson. Refreshments will be served, and all are welcome.

If you are interested in getting involved or would like to know more about the Weston METCO program, please email, Madelaine Kenyon, Chair, Friends of Weston METCO, madelaine.kenyon@comcast.net