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**Name:** Yury Mashkovich

**Web Site Address:** <https://docyury.wixsite.com/mysite>

**Phone:** 781-791-7513

**Email:** DocYury@gmail.com

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## Biographical Question

1. *What can you tell us about yourself? Please include a brief outline of your relevant experience, including public offices held, and volunteer work.*

I am a psychiatrist who works for the Veterans Administration Hospital in Bedford. I would bring to the school committee my considerable expertise as a mental health physician. While other candidates may genuinely care about the impact of student stress, depression and drug abuse, I am the only candidate whose professional work focuses on how to help youth and adults learn strategies that will promote social-emotional wellness. If elected, I will work with the other school committee members and superintendent to expand the range and depth of Lexington's wellness programs.

I emigrated from Uzbekistan to America as a child. As a former non-English speaker from a very different culture, I am deeply aware of the many challenges that face new immigrant families as they enter Lexington. As a school committee member, I would strongly encourage expanding support to all new children and families from other countries. When I lived in New York, I worked as a College Community Leader, helping young immigrant men and women acclimate to college life in America.

In addition, I have held various leadership positions in hospitals where I was entrusted by peers and supervisors. Some of my leadership responsibilities have included:

- Chief resident - I was responsible for organizing/fine tuning the educational process for all residents.
- Medical director - HOPE Women's Unit in a hospital in western North Carolina.

- Medical team representative - I was the physician representative on a working committee to improve quality of patient care/staff morale.

## Candidate Platform

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### *2. Why are you running for the School Committee?*

As a practicing psychiatrist and strong advocate for public schools, I am running for school committee to improve both student social-emotional wellness and academic performance. Last September, the Lexington School Committee voted that the school system needs to improve social and emotional supports for all students. While some work has been done, much more is needed.

If elected, I will diligently work with the other school committee members, superintendent and community to expand social-emotional services for our students. With the proper safeguards in place, we can better identify and treat children who may be at risk and help them before it is too late.

I am also running for school committee to help the superintendent/school committee team increase their mutual respect and collegiality. On December 16, 2015, the Lexington Minuteman reported that the "Lexington School Committee members are trying to determine how to work together and avoid issues causing internal strife between themselves and with the new Superintendent of Schools Mary Czajkowski." Unfortunately, these interpersonal conflicts are still occurring and have reduced the school committee's overall effectiveness.

As a psychiatrist, I am trained to listen deeply to others and always show respect. As a school committee member, I will work with others to increase mutual trust, healthy debate, team decisions, mutual accountability and attention to results.

### *3. What are your short-term and long-term priorities for the Lexington school system?*

All of the priorities listed below are both short and long-term priorities.

- Ensure the high school has sufficient, high quality academic and core spaces within five years. The Lexington Enrollment Working Group has projected the high school enrollment will increase from 2101 students (September 2106) to 2467 students in five years (September 2021). An increase of 366 students will cause severe classroom crowding and overtax the remaining core facilities. We need to start the planning process now.
- Ensure the school system has sufficient finances to maintain Lexington's high quality education. As enrollment increases by approximately 2% per year, funds will be needed to hire new staff, renovate or build a new high school and maintain current levels of services.

- Expand student social-emotional wellness. In September, the school committee voted that the school system must do more to reduce student stress and unhealthy risky behaviors. As a practicing psychiatrist, I can provide the school committee with my medical knowledge and expertise to increase student wellness.

## Policy Questions

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4. *How do you view the relationship between school spending, the quality of our schools in terms of teaching, programs and facilities, and the desirability of our community as a whole?*

School spending is only one of many variables that can impact the quality of a school system. Without sufficient funding, a school system will not be able to hire high quality teachers, keep class sizes within appropriate ranges, and ensure adequate facilities and materials.

In addition, many other factors contribute to high quality teaching and learning, such as effective school leadership, ongoing professional development, a laser-like focus on student learning, and a culture of collaboration and respect.

One of the reasons Lexington is a great place to live is the quality of the school system.

5. *What is your view of the Lexington METCO program?*

For 51 years, Lexington has strongly supported the METCO program, which brings Boston children to the Lexington Public Schools each day. The program is the longest running voluntary desegregation and education program in the United States.

I strongly support Lexington’s METCO program since it is highly effective. According to a major 2015 report, “METCO students are able to match the average proficiency levels of the highest academically performing state (MA) in the country” (Apfelbaum, K., Robinson, G., Expanding METCO and Closing Achievement Gaps, Pioneer Institute, p. 20). The Lexington METCO program also expands cultural diversity within our schools.

6. *What should Lexington do to improve existing programs or to bring new programs to our public schools? How would you fund these changes?*

The Lexington Public Schools is a well-funded school system. Many new initiatives can be implemented without additional funding, such as the new academic intervention blocks. During these time blocks, students can receive extra academic or social help, work on current projects, or pursue advanced work. Many other school improvements can also be accomplished without

additional funding when administrators and teachers work together and identify student priorities based on their needs.

One improvement that will require additional funds is reinstating the elementary foreign language program. Unfortunately, the school committee recently dropped this goal for now. If elected, I would vote to support LPS efforts to build a first-class elementary foreign language using available Town revenues.

7. *What are your thoughts on the current efforts to increase the resilience, health and well-being of our students and to decrease their academic and social stress?*

In 2014, the Lexington School Committee received a report titled Recommendations for Reducing Stress, Building Resiliency, and Improving Services for Our Youth, from the Lexington Ad Hoc Committee for Youth At Risk. This report identified 40 action steps the schools could initiate to increase student resilience, health and well-being. The report also identified 25 recommendations for Town government, and 32 recommendations for the community groups to implement. While the school committee is currently reviewing ways to reduce unhealthy stress, as a school committee member, I would recommend we focus on four of the school recommendations:

- Expand, initiate and coordinate evidence-based Social-Emotional Learning programs to teach children how to manage emotions, stress, anxiety, and build resiliency.
- Establish best practices for homework and provide Professional Learning for teachers on homework best practices.
- Create additional preventive support programs in middle schools and at LHS for students with anxiety, stress-related, psychological, emotional or mental health issues.
- Partner with the Town and community providers to identify resources for school personnel to make referrals and do follow-up coordination.

8. *Is the School Committee on the right track regarding school construction plans to address overcrowding? What changes, if any, would you like to see in regards to the school construction plans?*

I am very pleased with the current grade K through 8 school construction plans. However, I worry that the high school will be severely overcrowded in four years if we do not accelerate the planning process. According to the Lexington Enrollment Working Group, the high school enrollment is projected to increase 366 students by September 2021 (2106 to 2467). An increase of 366 students will cause severe classroom crowding and overtax the remaining core facilities. I am concerned that the new or renovated building may not be ready when we need it. We need to accelerate the process.

9. *Is the School Committee on the right track in regard to redistricting as a mechanism for optimizing use of elementary and middle school facilities?*

I support the process that the school committee is using to redistrict elementary and middle schools.

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*All candidates are asked to limit the response to each question to at most two or three paragraphs, and to provide the questionnaire responses by end of day Sunday, Feb 19th, 2017. Responses will not be edited, and will run as submitted. They will be posted on [lex-wiki.org](http://lex-wiki.org) in PDF format and announced through other town media. Questionnaire coordinator Andrei Radulescu-Banu ([bitdribble@gmail.com](mailto:bitdribble@gmail.com), 617-216-8509).*

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