

I have created a new Yahoo Group entitled Lexington Education in case you wish to join. It is located at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/susankenyon>

Susan Kenyon

781.771.8375

P.S. The Lexington Patch has a good summary of the meeting. <http://lexington.patch.com/articles/school-committee-extends-ahs-contract>

If you wish to removed from this email distribution list, please let me know.

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From: maryann@redoniondesign.com June 8, 2011 7:22:56 PM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] Next SC meeting  
To: "Noah Coolidge" <noah@noahcoolidge.com>  
school-com-bounces@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
"School Committee" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
leorat@alumni.duke.edu

Congratulations on your award, Noah!

Thanks for the heads up - good luck on your finals.

Mary Ann.

Sent from my Verizon Wireless BlackBerry

-----Original Message-----

From: Noah Coolidge <noah@noahcoolidge.com>  
Sender: school-com-bounces@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Date: Wed, 8 Jun 2011 18:43:40  
To: <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>; Paul B. Ash<pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us>;  
<leorat@alumni.duke.edu>  
Subject: [School-com] Next SC meeting

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: Noah Coolidge <noah@noahcoolidge.com> June 8, 2011  
6:43:40 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Next SC meeting  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us

leorat@alumni.duke.edu

Attachments: Attach0.html 1K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Hello,

I will be late to the final School Committee meeting. I'm receiving an award at the Junior Awards Ceremony that night, which starts at 7. I'll proceed to Cary afterwards, if I think that the meeting will still be going on. Next week is also finals week though, so if it's late I may just go home.

I want to thank you all for a wonderful year, if I don't end up making it to the meeting. I will, as I told you, be back next year, and I greatly look forward to it.

Thanks again,  
Noah

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From: "Miriam Sousa" <msousa@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us> June 8, 2011  
2:48:47 PM  
Subject: [School-com] LPS School Committee Additional Meeting 6/15/11  
To: townclerk@lexingtonma.gov  
Cc: kobrien@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us manton@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
mmodoono@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us strach@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
patrick.ball@patch.com dharvey@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
tmartellone@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us tplati@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us guillermo@lexmedia.org  
mdunn@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us cpilarski@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
sflynn@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us pgoddard@lexingtonma.gov  
lchase@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us leorat@alumni.duke.edu  
mcolella@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
pilar48@aol.com  
llipsitz@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us emead@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
mphillis@cnc.com  
rharris@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us noah@noahcoolidge.com  
ncohen@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us neufeld@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
acarothers@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us jmclaughlin@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
josephjordimarques@gmail.com  
Attachments: Attach0.html 3K

Date: Wed, 8 Jun 2011 12:54:03  
To: <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Reply-To: jac224@cornell.edu  
Subject: [School-com] The best teachers shouldn't teach only the best students

To the Lexington School Committee:

I agree with the following message, which was posted to the Lexington Special Education Parents' Advisory Committee discussion listserv. Thank you for working to maintain quality education for all students.

>>

In the Minuteman, retiring LHS Latin teacher Dr. Fiveash was quoted as saying: "I was given a teaching assignment that was a disservice to my kids and my program." Although I can't confirm it, a number of the people who were advocating last night were under the impression that Dr. Fiveash was asked to also teach Latin 1 instead of just the highest level Latin classes he taught previously.

Whether accurate or not, I think it's important to let Dr. Ash and the School Committee know at this time that while Lexington needs to retain high quality teachers, it's important that the highest quality teachers not be assigned to teach only the highest performing students. High performing students are generally the easiest to teach and may win the teacher more recognition and accolades than teaching average, struggling, and special education students. It's my understanding that the best teachers have historically often asked and been assigned to teach the highest performing students, a problem that isn't unique to LHS.

Kevin Johnson

>>

Respectfully,  
Jane Current  
parent of Jon, LHS '10, and Ben, entering grade 6, Clarke

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Jane A. Current  
jac224@cornell.edu  
781-652-8873 781-929-4745

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us

<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: jac224@cornell.edu  
Jane A Current <j.current@rcn.com>  
June 8, 2011 12:54:03 PM  
Subject: [School-com] The best teachers shouldn't teach only the best students  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us

To the Lexington School Committee:

I agree with the following message, which was posted to the Lexington Special Education Parents' Advisory Committee discussion listserv. Thank you for working to maintain quality education for all students.

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Jane Current  
parent of Jon, LHS '10, and Ben, entering grade 6, Clarke

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Jane A. Current  
jac224@cornell.edu

781-652-8873 781-929-4745

-----  
School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: "Mary Ann Stewart" <MaryAnn@redoniondesign.com> June  
8, 2011 12:03:31 PM  
Subject: [School-com] thank you  
To: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Cc: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 7K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Paul,

Will you please forward my comments to all nine principals and also to the co administrative team.

Thank you.

Mary Ann.

\* \* \* \* \*

On behalf of the School Committee, thank you for attending last night's meeting. I appreciate that you so generously gave up one of your free evenings (!!!) to come out to support Paul. I know it meant a lot to him seeing you all there. It meant a lot to me, too.

It must've been very difficult to hear some of the things that were said by members of the community last night. I want to apologize especially for not addressing some libelous comments head on...in my defense, I wanted people to feel heard and didn't want to cut any speaker off; reflecting on it, though, that was a mistake and I will do better.

I think we all heard other things that we may wish to explore and consider in future meaningful dialogue about our schools. I know you will continue to share your thoughts and reflections with Paul, as School Committee members are also encouraged to do, so that we begin to share language and understanding about the continuous improvement of our schools.

With deep respect and gratitude for all you do,

Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart,

Chair | Lexington School Committee

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From: alessandrini@comcast.net June 8, 2011 11:17:18 AM  
Subject: [School-com] Fwd: Amy Patterson's Teacher Survey Questions  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 2K

This survey is completely optional.doc 31K  
Attach2.txt 1K

Hi All,

I'm forwarding you Amy Patterson's survey. I personally think it is impressive.

Our students are amazing.

Thanks.

Sandro

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: "Amy Patterson" <apatterskayak@msn.com>  
To: alessandrini@comcast.net  
Sent: Wednesday, June 8, 2011 10:28:23 AM  
Subject: Amy Patterson's Teacher Survey Questions

Mr. Alessandrini,

Thank you so much for your interest in my survey. I have enclosed the questions from the survey, and I have some preliminary results too, however I think it would be best if I finish my survey and statistically analyze the results before sending them to you.

Also, I am leaving for China on this Friday morning, so you may be in contact with Michaela Shtilman-Minkin for the final results, as I may not finish before I leave.

Best regards,  
Amy Patterson

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From: Theodora Martin <theomar@verizon.net> June 8, 2011  
11:53:22 AM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] No Confidence in the School Committee  
To: "Mary Ann Stewart" <MaryAnn@redoniondesign.com>  
Cc: selectmen@ci.lexington.ma.us school-  
com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us



Subject: RE: [School-com] No Confidence in the School Committee  
To: "Theodora Martin" <theomar@verizon.net> <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Cc: selectmen@ci.lexington.ma.us

Dear Theodora,

I will write you a letter addressing your concerns and I apologize for not responding to it sooner.

As I recall, your letter came in the midst of our Annual Town Meeting. I had just become Chair of the School Committee and had quite a lot on my plate with respect to preparing to present a major capital article to Town Meeting. In addition to preparing for Town Meeting sessions, the School Committee held meetings twice a week before those sessions and I was caught up with preparing for them as well. As I do all of this work voluntarily, I think it was a steep curve into doing more than I had previously done as a member of the Committee. Again, I am sorry that I didn't respond to your letter.

I have to go out of town through Sunday to attend a conference and will address your remaining questions below when I return.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ann.

-----Original Message-----

From: school-com-bounces@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
[mailto:school-com-bounces@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us] On Behalf Of Theodora Martin  
Sent: Wednesday, June 08, 2011 10:40 AM  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Cc: selectmen@ci.lexington.ma.us  
Subject: [School-com] No Confidence in the School Committee

Dear Mary Ann Stewart:

I sent you and your committee members a written letter over a month ago (copy attached). You never acknowledged it. I know other committee members received it because Noah Coolidge and Margaret Coppe had the decency to respond. You did not. In that letter, I asked you to investigate the administration's role in the forced retirements of Dr. Fiveash and Mme. Girondel. Not only did you fail to respond to my letter in writing, you failed to respond to it in spirit.

It is unconscionable that you refused to put teacher morale on the agenda the very same week that you held an executive session to secretly extend Paul Ash's contract. There can be no discussion of Paul Ash's merits without considering teacher morale. The stream of letters and articles in the Minuteman -regarding many of Ash's actions, not just the intimidation of teachers - should have made it clear to the entire school committee that now was not the time to renew the Superintendent's contract without public notice beforehand.

Why was his contract discussed and renewed at this time? When I read his contract online, the official time for reconsidering was January, not June, as it automatically renews July 1st unless a notice is given in January. Why was his contract actively renewed by a vote in the midst of a hailstorm of criticism? Whose idea was it to take up contract negotiations?

This time, I would like a response from you. Not a pro forma "thank you for your letter" response, but a response with real answers. And I want answers to the questions in my six-week-old letter, too.

Sincerely,  
Theodora Martin

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: Theodora Martin <theomar@verizon.net> June 8, 2011  
10:39:58 AM  
Subject: [School-com] No Confidence in the School Committee  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Cc: selectmen@ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Dear School Committee.doc 27K

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Sincerely,  
Theodora Martin

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: jerry@harris.name  
Jerry Harris <jerryharri@jerryharri.com>  
June 8, 2011 10:31:31 AM  
Subject: [School-com] Follow-up on spoken comments last night  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 11K

Attach1.txt

1K

Hello,

I'd like to follow-up my spoken comments last night with a written statement of my recommendation and thoughts on culture.

What I was not able to say last night, but had in my written notes, was that I appreciate the hard work the SC members put into a totally volunteer position. For most of the long hours you put in, you don't receive too much attention from your constituents, us parents and Lexington residents that voted you into these positions. We pepper you with questions for a short period during your campaign and then ignore you until the next election or unless a flash-point issue comes up, like the one before us now.

When an organization loses top talent, incurs fear of retaliation among its employees, and shows disrespect to experienced and valuable employees, there is something wrong with its culture. The anecdotal evidence is overwhelming in support that this exists today in LPS.

This is not a matter of "if" there are unhappy teachers, as Dr. Ash said in his comments; there are unhappy teachers. Decisions of deployment and management directly determine the culture of an organization. The SC cannot fall back on general principle of non-micromanagement in the case where a dysfunctional culture exists.

The SC should not change its collaborative approach with the Superintendent on matters of budget and the other areas that are working well. Data needs to be gathered in an atmosphere of trust to assess the state of the culture and the cause of dis-satisfaction.

Given the reports of fear of retaliation, this data needs to be independently gathered outside of the Administration's control. The Superintendent, SC, and the community all agree we want to foster a workable, functional culture that promotes the highest level of professional talent and trust. I don't doubt this. There's enough evidence to warrant action by the SC. The SC should take a surgical approach to this important issue:

- Demonstrate you believe the importance of culture by appointing an independent committee with an ombudsman to collect data and to assess the state of the culture.

- Teachers must trust their comments can be submitted without fear of retaliation;

- The Administration must trust that this committee is not a Witch Hunt that will amplify the more sensational comments;

- The School Committee and Parents must trust that this committee will be well-represented by parents and teaching professionals (eg, current and retired teachers, parent volunteers, etc).

A strong and balanced leader is required for the committee; an ombudsman, if you will; a person who acts as a trusted intermediary between an organization and some external or internal constituency, while representing not only but mostly the broad scope of constituent interests.

Provide direction to the Superintendent to develop plans for correcting the flaws / problems revealed by the independent committee

Work w/ the Superintendent on reviewing his plans to correct the problems that exist in his organization; ask for justifications for why his actions will correct the problems

Hold the Superintendent accountable for improvement by setting specific goals for the Superintendent that improvement on key areas need to be made.

Trust and fear are opposite ends of the spectrum. Parents who did not attend the meeting have admitted they're afraid of retaliation on their children. Some teachers feel the same. I challenge the School Committee to take seriously the fear felt in the community and the schools, and to take the correct path of action to regain the trust we all once felt. If there are problems with trust for which the Superintendent needs to be held accountable, do not hold off action for fear of appearing to micro-manage.

A strong budget and a strong culture together are key indicators for a strong educational system.

A weak budget and a strong culture can still produce a good education A strong budget and a weak culture cannot. Dr. Ash said in his report on his trip to China last year that the quality of Lexington's educational system is world-renown and attracts many people world wide to come and live in Lexington.

Lexington right now has a strong budget and signs that we have a weak culture. The SC needs to act promptly and respectfully with the Administration to correct the culture before the problems become institutionalized. If morale continues to drop, fear continues to rise, and we continue losing the enthusiasm or presence of great teachers, then this great educational system loses and our children will ultimately lose as well.

Regards,  
Jerry

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From: Mary Ann <f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com> June 10, 2011 7:13:02 AM

**Michael Berube, M.Ed.**

**Office Phone: 339.298.2185**

**Cell 781-775-6147**

**[michael.berube@cbinet.com](mailto:michael.berube@cbinet.com)**

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From: "Paul B. Ash" <pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us> June 8, 2011  
2:06:44 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Re: Teacher morale  
To: jaroney@comcast.net  
Cc: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 5K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear Jen:

Thank you for you very thoughtful email. This summer, the principals and I plan to look into the concerns raised during the past few months and will take appropriate steps. For example, this afternoon I will be meeting with teachers who belong to my

Superintendent's Roundtable. I have used this monthly forum to hear directly from teachers about their concerns. Over the summer and early fall, there are other ways principals can engage staff to learn more.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Ash

**Jennifer Roney <[jaroney@comcast.net](mailto:jaroney@comcast.net)> writes:**

I am a parent of one child at Clarke, two at Harrington, and one who will start kindergarten next year. My children have been fortunate to have a number of enormously talented teachers in the Lexington Public Schools, including some whom my family has been very sorry to see leave Harrington over the last several years. I am pleased and grateful that all of you are taking up the issue of teacher morale, since attracting, retaining, and motivating the best teachers is ultimately the best favor our school system can do for our children.

I understood Dr. Ash to say that a TELL survey will be measuring teacher morale (and teacher's specific areas of concern) sometime next year. I think that's an excellent and constructive first step, but I fear it's a first step that's unfortunately rather far into the future. I would suggest that a more prompt internal survey might be valuable in the meantime. Whatever problem areas might exist now could doubtless benefit from being discovered and addressed sooner rather than later. I also hope that the surveys are to be conducted on a regular and continuing basis, so that the administration and School Committee will have a regular, predictable system in place for discovering (and being able to address) any concerns before they become severe.

I regret the contentious tone at the School Committee meeting last night. It cannot have been an easy week for any of you. It is clear to me that all of us -- administration, teachers, parents, and School Committee, share the common goal of making Lexington an inspiring place for our teachers to teach and children to learn. I hope that all of the parties involved will be able to have constructive dialogue over the coming months on what steps we can take to ensure we are meeting that common goal.

Sincerely,

Jen Roney  
16 Lillian Road

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From: "Mary Ann Stewart" <MaryAnn@redoniondesign.com> June  
8, 2011 9:46:58 AM  
Subject: [School-com] following up  
To: <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 4K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Colleagues,

We turned a major corner together last night. The thing is, I felt as if the five of us had linked arms and walked in step, as we literally turned a corner. Very powerful - thank you all for your contributions to a difficult yet successful meeting.

There is clearly a lot of work ahead of us and I know we are all committed to it. I heard good feedback from students, parents, and community members. I encourage you to talk with neighbors about our schools and the challenges before us. Talk with Paul, too, as you reflect on everything you heard and felt last night. Our community cares deeply about preserving and maintaining all that is unique and special about our schools. The stars are aligned and each of us is on the Committee for an important and particular reason. I believe we are in the right place at the right time. We are fortunate to have as passionate an advocate for public education as we have in Paul Ash and he cannot do this important work alone or just with his team, no matter how committed they are.

There is much to do and I look forward to doing it with all of you.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann.



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From: "Mary Ann Stewart" <MaryAnn@redoniondesign.com> June 8, 2011 9:34:59 AM  
Subject: RE: [School-com] New Contract for Dr. Ash  
To: "Alan Seferian" <a\_seferian@yahoo.com>  
"Lexington Committee" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Cc: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 7K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Thanks, Alan.

The contract isn't signed, yet and I am heading out of town soon through Sunday. As soon as the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed, you will get a copy.

Best,

Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart,  
Chair I Lexington School Committee

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**From:** school-com-bounces@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us [mailto:school-com-bounces@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us] **On Behalf Of** Alan Seferian  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2011 9:27 AM  
**To:** Lexington Committee  
**Cc:** 'Paul Ash'  
**Subject:** [School-com] New Contract for Dr. Ash

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From: Alan Seferian <a\_seferian@yahoo.com>  
Alan Seferian <a\_seferian@yahoo.com>  
June 8, 2011 9:26:55 AM  
Subject: [School-com] New Contract for Dr. Ash  
To: Lexington Committee <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Cc: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 1K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Greetings School Committee Members:

The good news is I have absolutely no criticism to offer over the contract negotiations with Dr. Ash :-). I would like a copy, though. I've also asked Dr. Ash for a copy, so whoever sends it to me first, the other party can ignore this request. Thanks!

Regards,

Alan

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From: "Mary Ann Stewart" <MaryAnn@redoniondesign.com> June  
8, 2011 9:36:14 AM  
Subject: RE: [School-com] Dr. Ash Feedback  
To: "Vincent Case" <vincent.case@gmail.com> <school-  
com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
<selectmen@lexingtonma.gov>  
Cc: lpease@lexingtonma.gov dchabot@lexingtonma.gov  
Attachments: Attach0.html 9K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear Vincent,

Thank you for writing to the School Committee and sharing your concerns with

**Michele Bernier <michele3bernier@gmail.com> writes:**

Dear Dr. Ash,

I'm confused. I am currently listening to you speak at the School Committee Meeting and I am hearing you say that you welcome talking to parents and groups. This is news to me. Two years ago, I came to you with a list of 40+ people that wanted to discuss challenging math for advanced student in elementary grades. You said no to speaking to us. You didn't want to talk to us. You didn't even tell me this yourself, but instead had one of your staff members deliver the news. I also spoke with Mary Ann Stewart, who also didn't get back to me regarding the reason why this would not be discussed with the group.

Does *anyone* want to explain to me now why no one bothered to speak to the group?

I'm very curious as to what grades would have been assigned to your evaluation if the public had any input.

Regards,

Michele Bernier

(parent of 3 children: 2 in Harrington, 1 in Clarke)

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From: Michele Bernier <michele3bernier@gmail.com>      June 7, 2011  
 11:22:02 PM  
 Subject: [School-com] speak to parents and groups  
 To: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 Cc: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 Attachments: Attach0.html      2K  
 Attach1.txt      1K

Dear Dr. Ash,

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Does *anyone* want to explain to me now why no one bothered to speak to the group?

I'm very curious as to what grades would have been assigned to your evaluation if the public had any input.

Regards,

Michele Bernier  
(parent of 3 children: 2 in Harrington, 1 in Clarke)

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From: Olga <opg1000@rcn.com> June 7, 2011 11:19:27 PM  
Subject: [School-com] no agenda had notice of negotiations with Ash  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 6K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Hi again,

I looked up the agendas in my old emails, and the executive session purpose is "contract negotiations with nonunion personnel." This could be any assistant superintendent as well as Paul. So, in spite of what you may think, the public had no clue that you were planning to extend Paul's contract early. Sigh ...

Less than cheery,  
Olga

Agenda for 4/23/11

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEEMEETING

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From: burke\_mark@yahoo.com June 7, 2011 8:43:22 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Please delay the contract renewal  
To: "school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 1K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear School Committee,

I would like to request that you delay Dr Ash's contract renewal until issues related to teacher morale can be further investigated. I believe that it is in the best interest of the town and its schools to ensure all of the facts about Dr Ash and his impact on the schools (negative or positive) are reviewed before any contract is signed with Dr Ash.

Thank you,  
Mark Burke  
216 Lincoln Street

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From: Mary Ann <f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com> June 10, 2011 6:58:15 AM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] Dr. Ash's contract  
To: rmcantwell@verizon.net  
Cc: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 8K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear Monica,

Thank you for your thoughtful email.

By now you are probably aware that the School Committee took it's vote in an Executive Session last Wednesday, June 1 to extend Dr. Ash's contract through June 30, 2015. While this may be a difficult choice to accept, my colleagues and I deliberated thoughtfully and take our work seriously.

Paul Ash has an honest and direct style that has sometimes been misinterpreted. In any case,

3 2 8

he is committed to our feedback for improving communications/relations across the district and in the community.

Solutions and thoughts to the issues you raise about enrollment, redistricting, swing space for Estabrook students, and extended day programs have been explored and discussed in School Committee meetings; I suspect many of them will be discussed and revisited again. While there are undoubtedly some morale issues, where it is coming from and why remains to be determined.

Focus groups are being conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators across the system to gather information; Dr. Ash will update the School Committee and the public about what he is hearing at our meeting Wednesday, June 15. We also expect to hear from faculty on morale when we get the results of teacher surveys to be distributed in the fall. There is much to understand: Is the issue particular schools? Administrators? The central office? Paul Ash? And/or, anything else?

We hope you remain engaged with us in this process as it will take some time to get a comprehensive picture and understanding of this complex issue. The School Committee is committed to understanding any and all causes related to the concern this issue has caused.

Above all, we are committed to keeping children's learning and well-being at the heart of all our decisions.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart  
Chair | Lexington School Committee

On Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 5:20 PM, <[rmcantwell@verizon.net](mailto:rmcantwell@verizon.net)> wrote:

Dear Members of the School Committee:

I am writing to ask that you please delay the vote to renew Dr. Ash's contract as the superintendent. While I believe he has worked very at hard to do a challenging job, there have been some concerns with his style of leadership in the last few years. Most notably, I wonder about redistricting children to Bridge, a school that had been overcrowded for years, despite many concerns from parents; keeping children in the Estabrook school

when they may have been better served if they had use of the old Harrington school as a swing space during this time; the motivation and process behind trying to change what are, by many accounts, well-loved and well-managed after school programs for our youngest students; parity in the elementary schools in general; and issues with teacher morale at the high school.

Because the youngest children cannot advocate for themselves and because the older ones who can have spoken about their concerns in recent letters to the Minuteman, I would hope that we could as a community take some time to further evaluate this issue. Parents, although vocal, are really powerless. Employees who are directly and indirectly affected by his decisions are in an awkward position to speak about this. You are the only ones with the ability to check Dr. Ash's authority over the lives of all of the families with children in public school and the employees of the school system.

Thank you for you consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Monica Cantwell

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School-com mailing list

[School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)

<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: rmcantwell@verizon.net June 7, 2011 5:20:23 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Dr. Ash's contract  
To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 4K

Dear Members of the School Committee:

I am writing to ask that you please delay the vote to renew Dr. Ash's contract as the superintendent. While I believe he has worked very hard to do a challenging job, there have been some concerns with his style of leadership in the last few years. Most notably, I wonder about redistricting children to Bridge, a school that had been overcrowded for years, despite many concerns from parents; keeping children in the Estabrook school when they may have been better served if they had use of the old Harrington school as a swing space during this time; the motivation and process behind trying to change what are, by many accounts, well-loved and well-managed after school programs for our youngest students; parity in the elementary schools in general; and issues with teacher morale at the high school.

Because the youngest children cannot advocate for themselves and because the older ones who can have spoken about their concerns in recent letters to the Minuteman, I would hope that we could as a community take some time to further evaluate this issue. Parents, although vocal, are really powerless. Employees who are directly and indirectly affected by his decisions are in an awkward position to speak about this. You are the only ones with the ability to check Dr. Ash's authority over the lives of all of the families with children in public school and the employees of the school system.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Monica Cantwell

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: Mary Ann <[f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com](mailto:f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com)> June 9, 2011 10:53:53 PM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] Delay of vote on Dr. Ash's contract  
To: Malka Binder <[malka\\_binder@hotmail.com](mailto:malka_binder@hotmail.com)>  
Cc: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 4K  
Attach1.txt 1K

We appreciate your comments, Malka. By now you are probably aware that the School Committee took it's vote in an Executive Session last Wednesday, June 1 to extend Dr. Ash's contract through June 30, 2015.

Our faculty and staff turnover rate is low and rate of applications for open LPS positions is high. While there are undoubtedly some morale issues, where it is coming from and why remains to be determined.

Focus groups are being conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators across the system to gather information; Dr. Ash will update the School Committee and the public about what he is hearing at our meeting Wednesday, June 15. We also hope to hear from faculty on morale when we get the results of teacher surveys to be distributed in the fall. There is much to understand: Is the issue particular schools? Administrators? The central office? Paul Ash? And/or, anything else?

We hope you remain engaged with us in this process as it will take some time to get a comprehensive picture and understanding of this complex issue. The School Committee is committed to understanding any and all causes related to the concern this issue has raised.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart  
Chair | Lexington School Committee

On Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 4:45 PM, Malka Binder <[malka\\_binder@hotmail.com](mailto:malka_binder@hotmail.com)> wrote:

I would like to add my voice to those who are requesting that the vote on Dr. Ash's contract be delayed. I think it is very important to collect sufficient feedback and input from teachers, parents, and students in matters such as this that will affect thousands of Lexington children for many years.

Thank you,  
Malka Berndt

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School-com mailing list

[School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)

<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: Malka Binder <malka\_binder@hotmail.com> June 7, 2011  
4:45:29 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Delay of vote on Dr. Ash's contract  
To: <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 1K  
Attach1.txt 1K

I would like to add my voice to those who are requesting that the vote on Dr. Ash's contract be delayed. I think it is very important to collect sufficient feedback and input from teachers, parents, and students in matters such as this that will affect thousands of Lexington children for many years.

Thank you,  
Malka Berndt

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From: Mary Ann <f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com> June 9, 2011 10:53:14 PM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] Comment in support of SC re tonight's meeting  
topic Superintende  
To: Kevin Johnson <krj@pobox.com>  
Cc: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
Attachments: Attach0.html 6K  
Attach1.txt 1K

We appreciate your comments of support, Kevin.

Our faculty and staff turnover rate is low and rate of applications for open LPS positions is high. While there are undoubtedly some morale issues, where it is coming from and why remains to be determined.

Focus groups are being conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators across the system to gather information; Dr. Ash will update the School Committee and the public about what he is hearing at our meeting Wednesday, June 15. We also expect to hear more from faculty on morale when we get the results of teacher surveys to be distributed in the fall. There is much to understand: Is the issue particular schools? Administrators? The central office? Paul Ash? And/or, anything else?

We hope you remain engaged with us in this process as it will take some time to get a comprehensive picture and understanding of this complex issue. The School Committee is committed to understanding any and all causes related to the concern this issue has raised.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart  
Chair | Lexington School Committee

On Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 4:39 PM, Kevin Johnson <[krj@pobox.com](mailto:krj@pobox.com)> wrote:

School Committee members,

I'm writing to express support for the School Committee as you strive to improve Lexington's schools.

While it's certainly critical to insure that school staff feel valued and appreciated, identifying and communicating opportunities for improvement in the schools as Dr. Ash has done certainly has the potential to raise concerns for some people including staff. Nevertheless, changes must be pursued if

improvement is to be possible. For example, the shift in focus from teaching to learning is a very substantial and potentially disruptive change but a very necessary one to improve achievement for all students.

As a specific example, a few years ago a faculty committee surveyed LHS teachers about requiring that student assignments be posted online. LHS assignments are required to be posted online today and I expect few would argue against this requirement now, however at the time nearly two thirds of teachers responding to the survey were opposed.

While it's important to hear the concerns of faculty and the community, discomfort with change shouldn't be allowed to derail needed changes and improvements or else improvement will become impossible. I support the School Committee in putting concerns in their proper perspective with regard to the evaluation of the Superintendent's overall performance.

Sincerely,  
Kevin Johnson

—  
Kevin Johnson  
[krj@pobox.com](mailto:krj@pobox.com)  
Phone: [781-863-1186](tel:781-863-1186)

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School-com mailing list

[School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)

<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: "Kevin Johnson" <[krj@pobox.com](mailto:krj@pobox.com)> June 7, 2011 4:39:12 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Comment in support of SC re tonight's meeting topic  
Superintendent c  
To: <[school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 4K  
Attach1.txt 1K

School Committee members,

I'm writing to express support for the School Committee as you strive to improve Lexington's schools.

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As a specific example, a few years ago a faculty committee surveyed LHS teachers about requiring that student assignments be posted online. LHS assignments are required to be posted online today and I expect few would argue against this requirement now, however at the time nearly two thirds of teachers responding to the survey were opposed.

While it's important to hear the concerns of faculty and the community, discomfort with change shouldn't be allowed to derail needed changes and improvements or else improvement will become impossible. I support the School Committee in putting concerns in their proper perspective with regard to the evaluation of the Superintendent's overall performance.

Sincerely,  
Kevin Johnson

—  
Kevin Johnson  
[krj@pobox.com](mailto:krj@pobox.com)  
Phone: 781-863-1186

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From: Mary Ann <f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com> June 9, 2011 10:50:51 PM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] Delay Paul Ashe's renewal  
To: zuccaro maureen <zucmo@yahoo.com>  
Cc: "school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 4K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear Maureen,

By now you are probably aware that the School Committee took it's vote in an Executive Session last Wednesday, June 1 to extend Dr. Ash's contract through June 30, 2015.

Our faculty and staff turnover rate is low and rate of applications for open LPS positions is high. While there are undoubtedly some morale issues, where it is coming from and why remains to be determined.

Focus groups are being conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators across the system to gather information; Dr. Ash will update the School Committee and the public about what he is hearing at our meeting Wednesday, June 15. We also hope to hear from faculty on morale when we get the results of teacher surveys to be distributed in the fall. There is much to understand: Is the issue particular schools? Administrators? The central office? Paul Ash? And/or, anything else?

We hope you remain engaged with us in this process as it will take some time to get a comprehensive picture and understanding of this complex issue. The School Committee is committed to understanding any and all causes related to the concern this issue has raised.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart  
Chair | Lexington School Committee

On Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 3:44 PM, zuccaro maureen <[zucmo@yahoo.com](mailto:zucmo@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Please vote to delay renewal of Ashe's contract until AFTER discussion about Morale of teachers at LHS.

Dr Fiveash's forced retirement was a disgrace.

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School-com mailing list

[School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)

<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: zuccaro maureen <zucmo@yahoo.com>  
 zuccaro maureen <zucmo@yahoo.com>  
 June 7, 2011 3:44:11 PM  
 Subject: [School-com] Delay Paul Ashe's renewal  
 To: "school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
 Attachments: Attach0.html 1K  
 Attach1.txt 1K

Please vote to delay renewal of Ashe's contract until AFTER discussion about Morale of teachers at LHS.

Dr Fiveash's forced retirement was a disgrace.

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From: "Thomas V. Griffiths" <tomg@egh.com> June 7, 2011 3:28:47 PM  
 Subject: [School-com] Concerning Your Revised Agenda & Dr. Ash  
 To: school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 Cc: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 Attachments: Attach0.html 4K

Friends,

I was wondering how you would handle the list traffic concerning Paul's contract. You'd have been within your rights to have considered and voted the contract tonight absent much audience discussion, but I think you've picked a wise course in deciding to hear people out and have another meeting later.

And, in your role as leaders of the community's school system, I hope you'll focus on your own evaluation of the Superintendent, and not the present, limited, I think, negativity we are seeing expressed on a couple of lists. Nor, I'd argue, should you appoint some other panel to do the job for which the law says you are elected to be responsible.

The school system functions in a state environment where scores of Superintendent vacancies exist and where Superintendents are often bounced for their inadequacies. Paul is a great Superintendent, a guy who's here because he really wants to have an impact on education, a guy who has the knowledge and intellectual vigor to push for the best in our system. He's not afraid to insist on professional standards and improvement and is very chary of wasting money: he is frugal, and that has proved significant when we compare

Lexington's ability to deliver a consistently excellent education with the cuts in education some of the other Commonwealth towns are experiencing.

We also live in a state where, statewide, more and more is asked and demanded of teachers, where their unions are stoned in the media, where there is an accelerating movement to control their benefits packages, where, in brief, a teacher could believe himself or herself one of the least appreciated citizens on the face of the earth. Add to that a disagreement with a department head. Frustration upon frustration.

This dynamic sets the stage for confrontation and, in our case, the loss of three deeply respected teachers. But that cannot be allowed to obscure the essential need to be rational in evaluating the overall system and what it accomplishes year-after-year. The Lexington School System is a school system, not a loose confederation of schools that happen to exist in Lexington or a loose confederation of teachers who happen to teach in Lexington, brilliantly or poorly as may be the individual case. This system's goal is to marshal everything we know about how children and young adults learn and then to deliver learning to our students. In the final analysis, the issue isn't teaching style, it's student learning.

Part of the equation will always involve the efforts of great teachers, standard setters, but a school system goes well beyond that in developing curriculum, setting rubrics against which learning and year-to-year progress are measured, insuring year-to-year integration (perhaps between classes taught by great teachers and not-the-greatest teachers), and affordable operation. The guy responsible for getting this job done is the Superintendent, and we have a keeper.

-Tom G-

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School-com mailing list

School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us

<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: BonnieBrodner@aol.com June 7, 2011 2:59:27 PM  
 Subject: Re: [School-com] Fwd: Re: Number of Retirees  
 To: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 Attachments: Attach0.html 6K  
 Attach1.txt 1K

Thanks, so much, for this, Paul.



What this shows is that for the 5 years previous to your being superintendent the average # of teachers retiring was 22.2 a year. For the last 5 years, including this one, all of which you have been superintendent the average # of teachers retiring is 18.8 a year. This data shows that teacher retirements have actually gone down a bit per year since you've been here ..... I don't know if we want to say this tonight or not, but it's a great thing to have in our pockets if we need it .....

Thanks again for supplying these numbers, Paul.

- Bonnie

Bonnie E. Brodner  
BonnieBrodner@aol.com  
H: (781) 674-9913

In a message dated 6/7/2011 10:00:34 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us writes:

Bonnie asked that I find out the number of retirees pre my employment. They are listed below. I have also recopied the numbers from 2006 to 2011. As you can see, the numbers do not support the allegation that teachers are retiring at greater numbers.  
Paul

Teachers Only (Before my employment)

2000	19
2001	29
2002	22
2003	17
2004	25
2005	18

Teachers Only (During my employment)

2006	TBD
2007	22

2008 24  
2009 16  
2010 17  
2011 15

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: "Jayne Adelman" <jbadelman@rcn.com> June 7, 2011  
2:56:40 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Request to review low teacher morale and improve  
governance structur  
To: <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 7K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear Members of the School Committee,

I am writing to ask you to immediately set up a committee to look into problems with teacher morale. I have had children in the Lexington Public School System continuously for the past 16 years. Within the past several years, I have heard informal but an increasing number of references to low morale by many teachers. These concerns were heightened by the recently announced departure of several seasoned and well respected teachers at LHS.

The Lexington Public School system is only as good as the teachers who work directly

with our children, day after day. If teachers are demoralized, our children will suffer. In addition, we cannot afford to lose seasoned and effective teachers who love teaching and are loved by their students.

In my opinion, it is not sufficient to dismiss the concerns about low morale and to assume that low morale is not a problem because of the high teacher retention rate. Lexington is a community that has many well educated individuals, many involved parents, and the student body, by and large, is privileged to receive outside enrichment both at home and in other settings. Lexington does not have to deal with extensive poverty among its students, and it has far fewer safety and behavior problems than schools in inner city or lower income communities. Lexington also pays its teachers well and has a good retirement system. In many ways, this community is an ideal place to teach. I think that many teachers would be reluctant to leave even if there is low morale. Therefore a teacher retention rate is not an adequate measure of teacher morale.

I strongly recommend that you immediately set up an independent committee to look into teacher morale. If it is found that there are legitimate concerns, actions should be taken immediately to address those concerns. We cannot wait until the fall to begin the discussion on this issue.

I also want to address the governance issue relating to contract renewals. I strongly urge the school committee to set up a more inclusive and more transparent method of evaluating the superintendents' position. The performance goals and method of evaluating the superintendents' position should have input from more parties and be more widely disseminated. The evaluation should include all constituencies, including teachers, administrators and parents. Many more parents than just school council members should be included in the evaluation. I believe that there are many stakeholders in Lexington who are not adequately represented in the current evaluation process. As school committee members, it is your responsibility to conduct a thorough and fair and evaluation of anyone in the superintendents' position. This process should be more transparent so that all stakeholders can see what was done and believe in the thoroughness, confidentiality and fairness of the process.

Thank you for reviewing these comments and considering these suggestions.

Respectfully,

Jayne Adelman

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From: "Patterson, John" <JDP@foleyhoag.com> June 7, 2011 2:49:26 PM  
 Subject: [School-com] RE: Letter to Dr. Ash concerning Karen Girondel and thoughts on teac  
 To: "'school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us'" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
 Attachments: Attach0.html 5K  
 Attach1.txt 1K

I should tell you that I just learned the Dr Ash has decided to make the payment to Ms. Girondel for the unused sick leave days, so please disregard that part of my email. I am very pleased that Dr Ash made that decision and I give him a great deal of credit for changing his position.

John Patterson

-----**From:** Patterson, John  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 07, 2011 12:25 PM  
**To:** 'school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us'  
**Subject:** Letter to Dr. Ash concerning Karen Girondel and thoughts on teacher morale

Dear School Committee Members,

We write this letter as proud parents of a just graduated senior at LHS. We believe that you are considering teacher morale and we wanted to share a letter (attached) that we recently sent to Dr. Ash concerning his initial decision not to compensate Ms. Girondel for unused sick days that we believe she is entitled to for the reasons set forth in the letter.

We have been very pleased with the quality of education that Amy, our daughter, has received at Lexington public schools, particularly at the high school. Her teachers have been enthusiastic and dedicated and talented. However, we fear that future students will not be as fortunate as Amy because the low morale of the teachers is likely to drive the best teachers from LHS. From conversations with our daughter and two teachers, one of whom is Ms. Girondel, and from reading the many articles and letters in the Lexington paper,

we believe that the administration has created a negative atmosphere for the teachers. What else could one expect when the administration has treated Ms. Girondel and others so poorly and has imposed mindless tasks on the teachers that consume some of their teaching time (such as the requirement to write the day's class objectives on the blackboard--imposed from the top without teacher support). In any event, we hope that you will investigate these concerns and come to your own conclusions. We are deeply appreciative of your dedication to maintaining high standards and practices for Lexington education. Although we will no longer be connected to the schools, we remain committed to the belief that every child deserves the best possible education. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our children and our future.

Respectfully,  
John Patterson and Michele Demarest.

United States Treasury Regulations require us to disclose the following: Any tax advice included in this document and its attachments was not intended or written to be used, and it cannot be used, for the purpose of avoiding penalties under the Internal Revenue Code.

This email message and any attachments are confidential and may be privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify Foley Hoag LLP immediately -- by replying to this message or by sending an email to [postmaster@foleyhoag.com](mailto:postmaster@foleyhoag.com) -- and destroy all copies of this message and any attachments without reading or disclosing their contents. Thank you.

For more information about Foley Hoag LLP, please visit us at [www.foleyhoag.com](http://www.foleyhoag.com).

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From: Keith Lehman <[hklehman@gmail.com](mailto:hklehman@gmail.com)> June 7, 2011 2:39:42 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Dr. Ash's Contract  
To: [school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)  
Attachments: Attach0.html 4K

554  
Attach1.txt

1K

Dear School Committee Members:

Thank you for taking the time to read my e-mail. This is my first letter to a government organization, so forgive me if I am unfamiliar with the appropriate formalities.

I understand that the school committee will be discussing Dr. Ash's contract this evening, and am writing to express my opinion that we should consider delaying the decision and begin a new search. There are a number of factors that influenced this opinion, but mostly it is the conclusion that I draw based on my perception, having lived here for 16 years, that there has been, and continues to be, a gradual but steady decline in the quality of education in Lexington.

As I know you are very busy, below are some highlights of facts that have informed my perceptions:

\* School administration budgets are increasing (at least as a percentage of total costs) and teaching positions and teachers aids are being cut.

\* We have been losing many highly experienced teachers -- some of whom are nationally recognized as leaders in their fields. Generally speaking, the most that is said is the administration and the teachers have agreed to part ways. I have not seen any evidence that leadership is investigating the root causes. Nor is it described as a difference of philosophy. If the issues are financial, I would expect to see an administration working to justify increased spending. If the issue is that the administration is attempting to lead the district in a particular academic direction, I would expect to see articles and/or a discussion as to what the district's goals are (for example: to focus on improving the scores of underachievers -- even if that means less resources for many of Lexington's over-achievers).

\* Dr. Ash stated recently that there has been no censorship at the high school, and yet not much more than a month ago, Dr. Ash indicated that the decision to cancel a previously approved school play had been left up to the high school principle. NPR ran a program discussion the censorship decision. Clearly Dr. Ash was aware of the decision, and yet he maintains that there has been no censorship. Neither of these answers is satisfactory and the former is not consistent with my understanding of the facts.

I can only conclude that, at a minimum, the School Board should investigate these issues more fully, prior to making a decision.

Respectfully,

Keith Lehman  
4 Hudson Rd.  
Lexington, MA

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The information transmitted is intended only for the person to which it is addressed and may contain confidential material. Review or other use of this information by persons other than the intended recipient is prohibited. If you've received this in error, please contact the sender and delete from any computer.

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From: "Mollie Garberg" <mgarberg@communispace.com> June 7, 2011  
2:03:16 PM  
Subject: [School-com] In Support of Dr. Ash  
To: <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 6K  
Attach1.txt 1K

Dear School Committee Members,

I am writing to express my support for Dr. Ash and my hope that your committee will unanimously renew his contract. It is also my hope that you will provide time to listen to

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parents and others as they express their opinions, and work with Dr. Ash to devise a means of assessing to what degree morale actually is an issue and how to improve it regardless. I believe that renewing his contract, should you choose to do so this evening, would not preclude him from working hard with you to improve his communication and outreach skills.

Dr. Ash is by no means perfect but his achievements in so many areas, such as budgeting and financial accountability as just an example, have served to put Lexington on the right footing to pass overrides and prepare for a much needed debt exclusion for our elementary schools. Dr. Ash has in many respects been a change agent for Lexington and change is always difficult. However, losing Dr. Ash now would set our schools back dramatically and take us years to recover. Many other districts across the Commonwealth are in search of qualified candidates and as a result it would be extremely arduous and difficult to find a replacement, especially of Dr. Ash's caliber.

I plan on being in attendance this evening but let me say now that I appreciate the hard work you and your committee faces in managing the on-going community conversation around morale. I ask that you work closely together and be a calming force and most importantly that you strongly support Dr. Ash by renewing his contract, for the future of our schools and our children.

Thank you,

Mollie Garberg

**Mollie Garberg**  
Director, Client Services  
v. 617.607.1407

Communispace | 100 Talcott Avenue | Watertown MA 02472

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From: Mary Ann <f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com> June 9, 2011 10:45:27 PM  
 Subject: Re: [School-com] renewal of Paul Ash contract  
 To: Becky Barrentine <e.barrentine@gmail.com>  
 Cc: School Committee <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
 Attachments: Attach0.html 6K  
 Attach1.txt 1K

Thank you for your comments, Becky. By now you are probably aware that the School Committee took it's vote in an Executive Session last Wednesday, June 1 to extend Dr. Ash's contract through June 30, 2015.

Our faculty and staff turnover rate is low and rate of applications for open LPS positions is high. While there are undoubtedly some morale issues, where it is coming from and why remains to be determined.

Focus groups are being conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators across the system to gather information; Dr. Ash will update the School Committee and the public about what he is hearing at our meeting Wednesday, June 15. We also hope to hear from faculty on morale when we get the results of teacher surveys to be distributed in the fall. There is much to understand: Is the issue particular schools? Administrators? The central office? Paul Ash? And/or, anything else?

We hope you remain engaged with us in this process as it will take some time to get a comprehensive picture and understanding of this complex issue. The School Committee is committed to understanding any and all causes related to the concern this issue has raised.

Sincerely,  
 Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart  
 Chair | Lexington School Committee

On Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 12:28 PM, Becky Barrentine <[e.barrentine@gmail.com](mailto:e.barrentine@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Members of the School Committee,

I am writing in support of Susan Kenyon's request to postpone approval of Paul Ash's contract.

Thorough investigation of systemic employee morale issues needs to be completed before a contract is signed. I believe the Committee would be remiss in its fiscal

responsibilities not to investigate these concerns first and use the results of this investigation to supervise and evaluate Mr. Ash (how else can one supervise and evaluate?).

Beyond this, I feel I am a bit ignorant and greatly flummoxed about the school committee's process and just who the committee represents. I had assumed the Committee represents the families of Lexington and yet I don't see that written any place. How the committee is dealing with the finalization of the Superintendent's contract certainly does not appear transparent to me which tells me the Committee does not represent the town taxpayers.

Is not the committee supposed to operate in the sunshine?  
 Should not the Committee welcome the reactions of Lexington taxpayers in order to best represent these same people?  
 Is not the renewal of the superintendent's contract worthy of an agenda item?  
 If an agenda item causes a lot of discussion, is that not the perfect item to have on the agenda?

I greatly appreciate the hard work of the Committee. And yet, a contract should never be pushed through, especially such an important one, for the sake of finishing business on time. It is more important to have the right contract for the right reasons.

Sincerely,

Becky Barrentine \_\_\_\_\_  
 School-com mailing list  
[School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us)  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: Becky Barrentine <e.barrentine@gmail.com> June 7, 2011  
 12:28:32 PM  
 Subject: [School-com] renewal of Paul Ash contract  
 To: School Committee <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>

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If an agenda item causes a lot of discussion, is that not the perfect item to have on the agenda?

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Sincerely,

Becky Barrentine \_\_\_\_\_  
School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
<http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com>

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From: Mary Ann <f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com> June 9, 2011 10:44:09 PM  
Subject: Re: [School-com] Delay vote on Dr. Ash contract  
To: Karen Fu <kfu@momentapharma.com>  
Cc: "school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>

Attachments:      Attach0.html      7K  
 Attach1.txt      1K

Thank you for writing, Karen. By now you are probably aware that the School Committee took it's vote in an Executive Session last Wednesday, June 1 to extend Dr. Ash's contract through June 30, 2015.

Our faculty and staff turnover rate is low and rate of applications for open LPS positions is high. While there are undoubtedly some morale issues, where it is coming from and why remains to be determined.

Focus groups are being conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators across the system to gather information; Dr. Ash will update the School Committee and the public about what he is hearing at our meeting Wednesday, June 15. We also hope to hear from faculty on morale when we get the results of teacher surveys to be distributed in the fall. There is much to understand: Is the issue particular schools? Administrators? The central office? Paul Ash? And/or, anything else?

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Sincerely,  
 Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Stewart  
 Chair | Lexington School Committee

On Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 12:29 PM, Karen Fu <[kfu@momentapharma.com](mailto:kfu@momentapharma.com)> wrote:

Dear School Committee,

I believe the School Committee should delay the vote on Dr. Ash's contract to investigate the serious issues of teacher morale that have recently come to light. Below are the links to articles in the Minuteman about this issue.

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/lexington/news/x724664778/School-Committee-wont-take-up-teacher-morale-issue-before-fall#axzz1ORNCzmbo>

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/lexington/news/x1826251131/Two-longtime-Lexington-High-teachers-call-it-a-career#axzz1ORNCzmbo>

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/lexington/news/x1908281889/Lexington-High-drama-teacher-Steven-Bogart-to-retire#axzz1ORNCzmbo>

As a parent with young children in the Lexington public school system, I am deeply

concerned by the way issues are handled by Dr. Ash and the School Committee. Please send a message to the town that you do take education seriously and delay this vote. So far, I have been disappointed with the way Dr. Ash and the School Committee handled the redistricting of the Avalon kids from Fiske to Bridge and the issues with the Estabrook school building; I am hoping the School Committee steps up and does the right thing here.

Thanks,  
Karen Fu, PhD  
Associate Director, Manufacturing Sciences  
Process Development and Manufacturing  
Momenta Pharmaceuticals, Inc  
675 West Kendall St  
Cambridge, MA 02142  
t: 617-395-5138  
e: kfu@momentapharma.com

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School-com mailing list  
School-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us  
http://comet.ci.lexington.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/school-com

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From: Karen Fu <kfu@momentapharma.com> June 7, 2011 12:29:41 PM  
Subject: [School-com] Delay vote on Dr. Ash contract  
To: "school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us" <school-com@comet.ci.lexington.ma.us>  
Attachments: Attach0.html 8K  
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As a parent with young children in the Lexington public school system, I am deeply concerned by the way issues are handled by Dr. Ash and the School Committee. Please send a message to the town that you do take education seriously and delay this vote. So far, I have been disappointed with the way Dr. Ash and the School Committee handled the redistricting of the Avalon kids from Fiske to Bridge and the issues with the Estabrook school building; I am hoping the School Committee steps up and does the right thing here.

Thanks,

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LETTERS

& ATTACHMENTS TO EMAILS



## Open Letter to the Lexington School Committee

As I reflected on the letter that Dr. Ash wrote to the Minuteman, our local paper, on 6/8/11, I was compelled to write this letter. Dr. Ash referred to surveys that were completed 2 -3 years ago, which are not relevant to the toxic environment that presently exists in the high school and four elementary schools. As it has been the norm, he is consistently dismissive and refuses to admit that there are a lot of problems in our school system that need to be dealt with regardless of the fact that most of the principals are his friends and that he does not see anything wrong with their poor and intimidating treatment of the staff. The high school is not an isolated issue. Yes, the three retiring teachers are a great loss to this school system, as we are constantly told that 'hard data' is the only thing that matters. So many outstanding teachers have taught in this school system and have consistently produced students and citizens of the world who are independent thinkers.

The School Committee definitely feels comfortable doing 'back room' deals which include granting Dr. Ash an extended contract that is legal but lacks all the principles and values this community believes in. He has saved this town some money, but at what cost? The morale of our school system is low along with an atmosphere of intimidation in which principals who are friends and loyal to Dr. Ash feel comfortable executing demoralizing actions with an absence of remorse. Specifically one elementary school has experienced the most exodus of teachers, and has an experienced competent teacher who is presently experiencing overwhelming pressure just because she happens to be the 'target' this year. Other elementary teachers have also been recipients of such treatment so this is not an isolated case or an exception. When you, the School Committee and Dr. Ash, support such principals then we seriously have a problem that needs to be addressed! Please be mindful that the teacher I am referring to is an elementary teacher who happens to be very cognizant of the ramifications of voicing her sentiments. If I were to describe this administration, I would say it is arrogant, demeaning and welcoming of those who feel comfortable intimidating staff and comfortable with rewarding those new teachers who embrace a 'go along' mentality because they want to retain their jobs.

Shame on some members of the School Committee and Dr. Ash for feeling comfortable stating that a lot of teachers want to work in our system without considering that a lot of teachers including those recently hired stay in our school system because the economy is slow and teaching jobs are hard to come about. Veteran and new teachers do not have many options since there are not a lot of teaching jobs available due to the present economy. As I watched several School Committee meetings it became very apparent that Dr. Ash as well as the School Committee feels extremely uncomfortable when questioned and are dismissive in their approach and demeanor, which is arrogant.

If you feel that Dr. Ash is an outstanding superintendent because of his fiscal abilities then we seriously have a problem which teachers and students will have to deal with the ramifications for many years to come! The present predicament our school system is in is something that was ignored for several years as like-minded principals were hired. Knowledge without compassion is truly destructive, and this town deserves much better if we want to retain and sustain our stellar reputation!

Ms Stewart says the goal of our schools is "learning". What she ignores is "Teaching," in all its many facets,--without which learning does not occur. Having been a teacher for close to seventy years, privately and finally as chairman of the Voice Department at Boston University where I taught for 25 years, I know the importance of distinguished teaching. Lexington High School has been known for several generations as one of the finest public schools in Massachusetts, if not in the nation. The first disturbance of which I heard was the sudden and appalling resignation of Brian O'Connell, one of the finest choral conductor --and I have been a choral conductor-- I had ever known. Then last week the Minuteman informs us of more resignations. I had just heard about Steve Bogart, and now we have Ms Girondel and Dr. Fiveash. Clearly the great teachers are leaving, enabling the superintendent to appoint young teachers, --if any good ones will come, knowing the morale situation here—who cost much less, thus saving us all money. The situation is similar to what happened at Oberlin College. During my active teaching life Oberlin was considered one of the greatest music schools in the country, up there with Juilliard and Eastman. Then Ellen Repp, their greatest teacher resigned and the quality of the faculty dwindled, as did their reputation. For almost a decade few singers of quality went to Oberlin. In just the last couple of years have they managed to begin to upgrade their reputation. The result of poor faculty morale has far reaching effects. Among the faculties of schools in our neighboring towns (and I know teachers in several of those schools) the comments about Paul Ash are not quotable in public. Already I know of one young family who has been advised not to move to Lexington because of the turmoil in our schools. And so, as this continues where do our property values go? Lincoln, Sudbury, Concord, Carlisle are similar in price, with *fine* schools. This carnage must cease. The administration of Paul Ash must be carefully vetted before any new contract negotiations take place. The acts of his administration need to be known by the Lexington *public*. This hasty addition of Mr. Ash's contract to the School Committee's agenda for this evening is an egregious insult to the public of Lexington's right to *know* the *facts*. That will take a bit of time, to be fair to both Mr. Ash's adherents and opponents. A hasty action this evening will open a firestorm of protest that will be costly in both dollars and reputation to our town. Respectfully submitted, Robert Gartside

20 Loring Road  
PA

60 Liberty Ave.  
Lexington, MA 02420  
781-863-0503  
April 28, 2011

Lexington School Committee

↘ Mary Ann Stewart, Chairman  
Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice Chair  
Margaret E. Coppe  
Jessie Steigerwald  
Noah Coolidge

Lexington Public Schools  
146 Maple Street  
Lexington, MA 02420

Dear School Committee:

I am a Lexington parent who has lived in Lexington for 19 years. I have a daughter who was a successful student in the Lexington Public Schools. She took four foreign languages in high school; in her senior year she was given the departmental award and the German scholarship. Although I did not speak at the School Committee meeting last Tuesday night, I want you to give serious consideration to what I have to say.

I have questions, and the students have questions about the sudden departures of Michael Fiveash and Karen Girondel that we cannot get answers to because everything is draped in confidentiality, and because the authorities are being less than truthful. If we ask what events led up to their retirements, we will get no answers. There is evasiveness and flat-out lying. But you are the School Committee. You can ask questions and get some sort of answers.

A student asked the department head why Dr. Fiveash was being shifted to teach introductory grammar in Latin I instead of the substantive Latin literature he was so amazing at teaching in the upper levels. The student was told that it is confidential, relating to contract matters. What could possibly be the reason, except to humiliate Dr. Fiveash?

If we ask how Dr. Fiveash was treated with the planned transition to a new upper-level Latin teacher, I am sure we will be stonewalled. I was told he was forbidden to meet with his successor or hand down his course materials, so he would have had to teach Latin I and simply bury all that he had developed over the decades for Latin III and Mythology. What motivation could there be for this, except to insult Dr. Fiveash as long as he stayed?

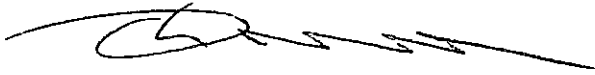
Something rare and valuable was made to end. And it is not a pretty, natural end. Over and over, I am hearing the phrase "forced out." It is clear that neither teacher wanted to

retire yet. I want you to ask the Lexington High School administration these questions and listen hard to the rationalizations you are given. What I believe you will discover is that the motivation behind the course-load change was small minded and mean spirited. Certainly, the execution was mean and intentionally hurtful.

Here in Lexington, we value intelligence and honor. Dr. Fiveash and Mme. Girondel taught the students to develop both. There is no way to overstate this: they are truly great teachers. Someone should be held accountable for their departures. This is a huge loss to education in Lexington. If it becomes the norm, we will be left with a mediocre staff unable to satisfy the intellectual needs of our children. When that mediocre staff retires, no one will mount a protest.

I want the School Committee to pursue this, to find out who is responsible. Go beyond Superintendent Ash and the principal. Talk to the people involved, including Marie Murphy (the department head), Michael Fiveash and Karen Girondel. Find out what happened. I want the School Committee to ask why the system has become so heartless. And I want action to be taken so we don't lose any more amazing teachers.

Sincerely,



Theodora Martin

I forgot to hand this to you while I had the 5  
mike - this is partial analysis of the data from

Madam Chairwoman, Dr. Ash, and the School Committee,

Mark Choufsey

Amy and Michaela have asked me to comment on some of the methodological issues posed by their survey. Having reviewed their data collection and analytic techniques, I would like to offer another perspective on the results.

### Data collection

Amy and Michaela received 104 responses to their survey, which comprises approximately 70% of the teachers at LHS. They approached teachers and asking them to fill out surveys. This response rate is extraordinary. There is no question that the Amy and Michaela have obtained data which reflects the opinions of a large proportion of the faculty. In particular, those teachers who were missed from the data collection were probably missed randomly due to alternative obligations. This point bears repeating: **under-coverage is not an issue in their dataset.**

I also wish to emphasize that an external survey of this type provides a better sample than a district-led survey. Surveys conducted by the district administration are more likely to pressure teachers to give positive answers to questions about the administration, as implicit or explicit reprisal is or is perceived as more likely.

### Questions posed

Michaela and Amy asked teachers to rate eleven statements on a scale of one to ten. They roughly divided into three categories: questions about their own job, questions about the quality of the administration, and questions about the culture of the school. While it may be tempting to discard the conclusions due to discomfort with the way a subset of the questions were phrase, and I agree that some of the questions could have been better asked, the data are still informative. To discard the data on the basis of how the questions were put is, in Emerson's words, "the hobgoblin of weak minds." More detailed analysis is insightful.

I wish to remind the School Committee that even if the questions are in some cases ambiguous, information can be meaningfully extracted from the survey regardless. This information is in two forms.

First, control questions were included in the survey. Control questions are statements questions which one would reasonably expect teachers to rate very highly, such as "I love my job" or "I enjoy teaching my students." The responses to these questions give a sense of how highly teachers rate *anything* they agree with. By extension, we can measure disagreement with reference to the distributions of responses to control questions. It is clear that the distribution of responses to questions about culture and the administration indicated dramatically different levels of support from the control questions.

This brings to light a subtle point. Amy and Michaela have *scale data*, which means that they have data which has no external calibration. (The jump between a 5 and a 6 is not necessarily the same as a jump between a 6 and a 7 by any particular teacher's rating.) This means that precise quantitative interpretation is misguided. While a "report card" designed to get people's

attention was included in the package, a richer view of the data is required. We must abandon our preconceptions of “disagreement”, “agreement,” and “neutrality,” with reference to the scale suggested, instead referring specifically to the relative responses to the questions. In this light, the conclusion is pellucidly clear: there are unambiguously lower levels of agreement with administration and with the idea that the school culture is excellent than there are to the control questions.

The second way that data can be meaningfully obtained from the data is with direct reference to the questions asked. If someone argued that the survey was designed to elicit negative responses, I would point out that the preponderance of questions phrased in a positive way, combined with the balanced labelling of the scale and heavy emphasis on controversial issues, would be more likely to favour positive than negative responses. In fact, both the numeric data and comments show that teachers, when offered an opportunity to voice concerns about or appreciation of the administration in a way that was free of pressure—implicit or explicit—from their superiors, they seized the opportunity to do so. 31% of teachers surveyed answered 1 or 2 to “I approve of Dr. Ash’s governance.”

### **Report Card**

I wish that Michaela and Amy had set up their survey in a way that more straightforwardly lent itself to interpretation as a report card. However, even if the translation from a 1-10 scale to a report card seems suspect, it is appropriate, for the following reasons:

1. As noted above, directly applying the labels “disagree,” and “agree,” and interpolating neutrality as directly between the two, misunderstands the nature of the data and how people respond to surveys. Wherever the school was graded poorly, there was a clear divergence between teachers’ responses and the distribution of responses to questions on which teachers ought to agree.
2. Suppose that a more appropriate translation was 1-10 being mapped to 50%-100% on the report card, mapping a 5 to a “C”, which is traditionally regarded as an average grade. Even if this procedure were adopted, the data clearly show that the results would have been very poor for the school and the administration—Cs and Ds rather than Fs, grades which most people wouldn’t be proud to bring home.

Regardless of whether you disagree with the exact grades that Michaela and Amy assigned, statistics is the art of telling a story with data. Michaela and Amy sought to bring your attention to survey results which demonstrate a clear morale problem. In this sense, they have been successful. The grades should draw you to look closer at the underlying data, which are concerning.

### **A final observation**

Finally, and as a matter of interest, I looked closer at responses to two statements:

- I am always comfortable expressing my opinions publicly to colleagues and administrators.
- This school is heading in the right direction.

The data suggest that there are two groups of teachers at the high school. One group, approximately 40% of teachers, do not like the direction that the school is going, or are uncomfortable expressing opinions. Approximately 40% do support the direction or are perfectly comfortable expressing opinions.

I performed a correlation analysis on the responses to these two questions. I found a that correlation coefficient  $r=0.81$  . In other words, approximately 66% of the variation in one variable can be explained by variation in the other. The conclusion I draw is that **those who are most concerned with the school's management feel the least free to voice their opinions.**

I find this conclusion to be concerning. Those who disagree should feel that their opinions are welcome, even if decisions are ultimately taken against them. Stating that all opinions are welcome is not enough to take care of this concern—the data unambiguously show that a cultural problem exists.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

May 25, 2011

**An Open Letter to the Lexington School Committee**

We are teachers at the high school and three of Lexington's elementary schools. We write to tell you that there is a great deal of discontent with the unresponsive, arrogant, and ineffective "leadership" in our school system. Our schools are increasingly unpleasant places to work. Administrators are hired with very little concern for their interpersonal skills and as a result we are saddled with a group of leaders who are preoccupied with test scores rather than creativity and human values. Within our individual schools, teachers feel it is not safe to express dissenting views. In responding to teacher and parent concerns, "spin" (and a fear of lawsuits) has replaced honesty and substance. Talented teachers are leaving Lexington and others are giving serious thought to leaving. We ask you to investigate, to find out for yourselves how much discontent there is and how ineffectively our schools are being managed.



**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, June 7, 2011**  
**Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room**  
**1625 Massachusetts Avenue**

**7:30 p.m. Call to Order and Welcome:**

Public Comment – (Written comments to be presented to the School Committee; oral presentations not to exceed three minutes.)

**7:40 p.m. Superintendent's Announcements:**

**7:45 p.m. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:**

**7:55 p.m. Discussion Items:**

1. ING/MASBO Finance Award (10 minutes)
2. K-5 Pro-Social Skills Program (20 minutes)
3. FY12 Budget Changes (30 minutes)
4. FY11 Budget Changes (20 minutes)
5. New England Association of Schools and Colleges Two-Year Progress Report for Lexington High School (20 minutes)
6. Superintendent's End-of-Year Report (30 minutes)

**10:05 p.m. Action Items:**

1. Vote to Approve Jonas Clarke Middle School Field Trip to LaGuácima de Alajuela, Costa Rica, March 8 through March 17, 2012 (10 minutes)
2. Vote to Approve Lexington High School Field Trip to Stockholm, Sweden; Helsinki, Finland; and Tartu and Tallinn, Estonia, April 12 through April 22, 2012 (10 minutes)
3. Vote to Approve Lexington High School Science Team Trip to New Brunswick, Canada, July 24 through July 29, 2011 (5 minutes)
4. Vote to Approve 2012-2013 School Calendar (15 minutes)
5. Vote to Accept a \$100 Donation to the William G. Tapply Memorial Fund (2 minutes)
6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 11, 2011 (2 minutes)
7. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 10, 2011 (2 minutes)

**10:51 p.m. Executive Session (Collective Bargaining):**

*All agenda items and the order of items are approximate and subject to change.*

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- 7:45 p.m.    Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:**
  
- 7:55 p.m.    Discussion Items:**
  - 1. ING/MASBO Finance Award (10 minutes)
  - 2. Superintendent's Employment Contract (60 minutes)
  - 3. FY12 Budget Changes (20 minutes)
  - 4. FY11 Budget Changes (20 minutes)
  
- 9:45 p.m.    Action Items:**
  - 1. Vote to Approve 2012-2013 School Calendar (10 minutes)
  - 2. Vote to Accept a \$100 Donation to the William G. Tapply Memorial Fund (2 minutes)
  - 3. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 11, 2011 (2 minutes)
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- 10:01 p.m.    Executive Session (Collective Bargaining):**

*All agenda items and the order of items are approximate and subject to change.*

11

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
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**10:46 p.m. Executive Session (Collective Bargaining):**

*All agenda items and the order of items are approximate and subject to change.*

## **MEMORANDUM of AGREEMENT**

This MEMORANDUM of AGREEMENT is made by and between the Town of Lexington, Massachusetts, a municipal corporation in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, acting by and through its School Committee, hereinafter referred to as the "Committee" and Paul B. Ash of Newton, Massachusetts, hereinafter referred to as the "Superintendent".

In consideration of the promises herein contained, the parties hereto mutually agree as follows:

### **ARTICLE ONE – EMPLOYMENT**

- 1-1. The Committee hereby employs Paul B. Ash as Superintendent of Schools for the period commencing July 1, 2009 and ending June 30, 2015.
- 1-2. The Superintendent agrees to all of the rules, regulations and policies as determined by the Committee, as well as to all of the provisions of the General Laws of Massachusetts relating to education, the schools and the legal functions and responsibilities of Superintendents of Schools. In the event that the Committee adopts a rule, regulation or policy that is in conflict with any portion of this AGREEMENT, then this AGREEMENT shall prevail.
- 1-3. The relationship between the Committee and the Superintendent shall be based on a deep commitment to work in unison for the benefit of the children and the general community served by the Lexington Public Schools and it shall reflect a clear understanding that the Committee is the establishing agent of all school system policy and that the Superintendent has the responsibility to administer said policy with proper authority, in a sound, fair and ethical manner.

### **ARTICLE TWO – CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

- 2-1. Termination
  - 2-1.1. In the event that the Superintendent desires to terminate this contract before the term of service shall have expired, he may do so by giving at least one hundred twenty (120) days' notice of his intention to the Committee by registered mail, return receipt requested.
  - 2-1.2. The Committee, through a majority vote of the entire committee, may terminate the agreement before the term thereof shall have expired for inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a Superintendent, insubordination, or other just cause, provided the Superintendent has been informed of the charge or charges and cause or causes for his proposed discharge and has been given an opportunity for a hearing before the Committee prior to official action being taken.

2-1.3. Said hearing shall be convened in Executive Session unless the Superintendent requests that it be public. The Superintendent may be represented by counsel at such Executive Session who shall be entitled to participate on behalf of the Superintendent. The Committee shall provide thirty (30) days written notice of said hearing with a statement of charges in sufficient detail to place the Superintendent on notice of the basis for such intended action and copies of all relevant documents on which the Committee intends to rely for such action.

2-1.4. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Committee, through a majority vote of the entire Committee, may place the Superintendent on paid leave for good cause.

2-2. Renewal or Extension

2-2.1. The Superintendent shall be employed for a six-year period, commencing on July 1, 2009 and ending on June 30, 2015 . Commencing July 1, 2011, and thereafter, this Agreement shall be automatically extended for successive periods of one year on each July 1, provided, however, that either party, at least eighteen (18) months prior, may give written notice that this Agreement shall not be so extended, in which case this Agreement shall be extended only as the parties subsequently agree (that is, the first such notice must be given on or before January 1, 2012, and in subsequent years, on or before the January 1 eighteen months prior to the termination of the contract). This clause requires the Superintendent to give all school committee members written notice of its requirements on or before December 1<sup>st</sup> of each year that this contract is in effect.

## ARTICLE THREE – POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

3-1. Duties

3-1.1. The Superintendent shall perform faithfully, to the best of his ability, the duties of the Superintendent of Schools and shall serve as Executive Officer of the Committee as provided in Chapter 71, Section 59 and all other General Laws of Massachusetts.

3-2. Administration and Supervision

3-2.1. Subject to the General Laws of Massachusetts and all legally binding contracts in effect within the School Department, the Superintendent shall have the authority and the latitude to assign and manage all personnel so that the interests and needs of the School Department are best served. This leadership requirement shall include the selection,

placement and transfer of qualified personnel and the direction of instructional, special needs, financial, and other education and related staff and programs. As to all matters for which final authority is vested with the Committee, whenever possible, the Superintendent's advice and counsel will be solicited before the Committee makes a final decision.

- 3-2.2. Both collectively and individually, the Committee shall promptly refer all criticism, complaints and suggestions brought to its attention to the Superintendent for study, recommendation and subsequent action.

3-3. Performance Review

- 3-3.1. No later than March 1 of each year, the Committee shall evaluate the performance of the Superintendent in writing in accordance with a mutually agreed upon evaluation instrument which clearly articulates the goals, objectives, and standards by which the Superintendent's performance will be measured. Such instrument shall be considered as part of and incorporated by reference in this document and shall:

1. Require the Committee to speak in "one voice" by voting as an entire board on the Superintendent's performance. The feedback of each member regarding each aspect of the evaluation shall not be segregated from the consensus view. In the event the Committee consensus determines that the performance of the Superintendent is unsatisfactory in any respect, it shall describe in writing, in reasonable detail, the specific instances of unsatisfactory performance.
  - a. A consensus of the individual evaluations compiled by committee members shall be prepared by the Committee Chair, signed by the Superintendent and placed in his personnel file. Such signature shall not necessarily indicate agreement with the content thereof but rather acknowledgment of receipt of the document. The Superintendent may respond to the evaluation in writing and may attach his response to the evaluation in his file.
  - b. The Superintendent shall be provided with copies of individual Committee member's evaluations and shall meet with each Committee member submitting an evaluation to discuss its contents, unless waived by both parties.
2. The performance assessment shall be used for the following purposes:

- (1) to strengthen the working relationship between the Committee and Superintendent and to clarify for the Superintendent and individual members of the Committee the responsibilities the Committee relies on Superintendent to fulfill;
  - (2) to discuss and establish reasonable expectations and goals for the ensuing year.
3. In addition, the Superintendent shall meet with the Chair after compilation of the composite referred to above, at least once each year, for the purpose of discussing his performance as well as the working relationship between the Committee and the Superintendent.
  4. The Committee, individually and collectively, shall promptly and discreetly refer to the Superintendent, in writing for his study, review and response, any and all criticism, complaints, suggestions, narrative, or comments regarding the administration of the schools or his performance.

**ARTICLE FOUR – COMPENSATION AND BENEFIT**

4-1. Salary Considerations

- 4-1.1. For the period of time commencing July 1, 2009 and extending through June 30, 2010, the Superintendent shall be paid at the rate of **\$241,914** per year payable in equal installments in accordance with the payroll schedule for other professional employees.
- 4-1.2 For the period of time commencing July 1, 2010, the annual salary specified in Section 4-1.1 shall be \$248,160.
- 4-1.3 For the period of time commencing July 1, 2011, the annual salary specified in Section 4-1.1 shall be \$254,594.
- 4-1.4 For the period of time commencing July 1, 2012, the annual salary specified in Section 4-1.1 shall be \$262,232
- 4-1.5. For the period of time commencing July 1, 2013, the annual salary specified in Section 4-1.1 shall be \$ 270,099
- 4-1.6 For the period of time commencing July 1, 2014, the annual salary specified in Section 4-1.1 shall be \$ 278,202.

#### 4-2. Insurance Coverage

- 4-2.1 The Superintendent shall be entitled to all insurance plans (medical, hospital, life, etc.) in effect for the employees of the Lexington Public Schools.

### ARTICLE FIVE – VACATION AND RELATED LEAVE CONSIDERATIONS

#### 5-1. Vacation

- 5-1.1. The Superintendent shall be entitled to thirty (30) paid vacation days annually. As of July 1, 2008 and on each July 1 thereafter, the Superintendent shall be credited with the total annual allotment of vacation days 'upfront' and may use same at his discretion.

The Superintendent may buy back up to ten vacation days per year at the per diem rate of pay then in effect. To be eligible to receive this buy back the Superintendent must notify the Committee of his intent to access said buy back on or before June 1<sup>st</sup> of any calendar year.

The Superintendent shall be allowed to accumulate unused or unredeemed vacation days to a maximum of (10) days.

- 5-1.2. All accumulated vacation time will be paid to the Superintendent (or his estate) in the next pay period following resignation, retirement, termination, or death at the then effective per diem rate of pay calculated based on the actual number of days in each year the Superintendent is required to work.
- 5-1.3. The Superintendent shall be entitled to all holidays granted employees of Lexington Public Schools.

#### 5-2. Sick Leave

- 5-2.1. On July 1 of each year of this Agreement, the Superintendent shall be credited fifteen (15) days of sick leave. The Superintendent may use sick leave on the same basis and for such purposes as such leave is available to employees of Lexington Public Schools.
- 5-2.2. Unused sick leave shall carryover from year to year without limit, but shall not be eligible for any buy back.

#### 5-3. Personal Leave



5-3.1. The Superintendent may be absent for reasons that are unusual, imperative or emergency in nature at which his attendance is required and for which no other arrangement can be made. This includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: legal proceedings, religious observances, family matters, medical emergencies, special travel arrangements, or attendance at funerals.

5-4. Additional Absences

5-4.1. In cases of absences over and beyond those leaves included in this section, salary shall be deducted at a per diem rate of 1/260 of the annual salary of the Superintendent.

**ARTICLE SIX – EXPENSE ALLOWANCES**

6-1. Professional Expenses

6-1.1. Reasonable reimbursement will be made to the Superintendent for all expenses incurred at professional activities attended in fulfillment of his duties and responsibilities to the School Department. Said expenses will include travel, registration fees, meals, and hotel costs. This reimbursement includes attendance at one (1) national conference and two (2) state conferences per year.

6-2. Professional Dues

6-2.1. The Committee shall pay all dues and associated costs of membership for the Superintendent in the following professional Associations:

- (a) Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
- (b) A.A.S A
- (c) A.S.C.D.

6-3. Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System

6-3.1. The Superintendent shall be a member of the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System as required by M.G.L. c.32.

6-4. Transportation Allowance

6-4.1. The Committee shall reimburse the Superintendent for expenses and personal automobile use outside the District at the approved I.R.S. rate per mile.

## ARTICLE SEVEN – MISCELLANEOUS CONSIDERATIONS

### 7-1. General Benefits

7-1.1. It is agreed that all fringe benefits accruing to the professional administrative personnel of the Lexington Public Schools will apply to the Superintendent.

### 7-2. Professional Liability

7-2.1. The Superintendent shall be indemnified and held harmless by the Committee to the extent permitted by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 258 for any and all demands, claims, suits, actions and legal proceedings, including legal expenses that may be incurred in defending against such actions, brought against the Superintendent for actions taken within the scope of employment. This obligation shall continue in full force and effect after the Superintendent leaves his position for any reason.

7-2.2. If the Superintendent fails to cooperate in a full and timely manner with the investigation and/or defense of any actions brought against the Superintendent, then the Committee will be under no obligation to indemnify the Superintendent pursuant to Section 7-2.1 of this Agreement.

## ARTICLE EIGHT – ENTIRE AGREEMENT

8-1. This Memorandum of Agreement embodies the entire agreement between the Committee and the Superintendent and there are no inducements, promises, terms, conditions or obligations made or entered into by either party other than those contained herein.

8-2. This contract may not be amended except by an agreement in writing signed by the parties hereto.

8-3. If any paragraph or part of this contract is later found to be invalid, it shall in no way affect the remainder of the Agreement, which shall continue to be legally binding and effective as to both parties.

8-4. This Agreement shall be executed in three counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original and each of which taken together shall be considered as one and the same document.

**ARTICLE NINE – MISCELLANEOUS**

- 9-1. In the event that any disputes arise regarding the interpretation and application of any provision of this Agreement, the Superintendent and the Committee agree that they or their authorized representatives will meet in an effort to resolve their differences and in the event that said effort should not be successful, they shall participate in mediation if a mutually acceptable mediator can be agreed upon. In the event that a mediator cannot be agreed upon or mediation is unsuccessful, either party may submit its claim to a court of competent jurisdiction.
  
- 9-2. Throughout the length of his service, the Superintendent shall maintain and provide to the Committee copies of all licenses and/or certification required by the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the performance and execution of the duties of the position of Superintendent of Schools.
  
- 9-3. The Superintendent may engage in consulting or other out-of-system engagements, provided that the extent of such activities is reasonable, and provided further that no such activity poses a conflict of interest with Lexington Public Schools or is in derogation of the interests of Lexington Public Schools.

**IN WITNESS THEREOF**, the parties hereunto signed and sealed this Memorandum of Agreement in triplicate.

**For the Town of Lexington;  
By Its School Committee**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Ann Stewart, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Assented to:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul B. Ash, Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Approved as to form:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert G. Fraser, Esq.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

6 June 2011

Dear School Committee Members,

I have been heartsick since I heard of the departure of several of Lexington's finest teachers. I ask you to consider the following as you decide whether you will delay the extension of Dr. Ash's contract until further study can be undertaken.

Below is an extract from a letter I sent to Dr. Ash last year in May 2010, specifically addressing the excellence of several teachers and administrators in the Lexington School System. The letter was a thank you note for retaining such highly competent professionals. Dr. Ash responded to me by email, thanking me for sending him the information. I believe that you will find it is very relevant to the discussions currently taking place around the recent teacher "retirements," and that you will also find interesting the analysis of the performance of those teachers using LHS Advanced Placement student test metrics.

I have omitted part of the letter because some wording mentioned my children, and the role these people played in their specific educational development. I did not want to embarrass either my children, or the teachers or administrators by making the information public. You will be able to see exactly where the edited parts are.

I believe that we need to see what is going on in the schools before we potentially lose more teachers. As the "captain of the ship" Dr. Ash is responsible for what goes on in it. If an independent investigation shows that this is a tempest without foundation, so be it. In my opinion, both Lexington and Dr. Ash have the time to get this right, if not over the summer, then at the beginning of next year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stann Chonofsky

----- previously sent letter -----

8 Dee Road  
Lexington, MA  
02420

6 June 2011

Dr. Paul Ash  
Superintendent of Schools  
Lexington Public Schools  
146 Maple Avenue  
Lexington, MA  
02420

Dear Dr. Ash,

I am writing in support of several staff members and administrators who I believe deserve commendation because of their dedication to students, and in the case of the teachers, because of their ability to inspire and instruct their charges.

...

...

The Teachers

The teachers who ought to be commended are:

- **Tatyana Finkelstein** – We weren't quite sure what to make out of Ms. Finkelstein when we first met her. What we learned was that she not only knows her subject, but truly understands how every child in her care thinks, how they feel, and what motivates them to learn. She follows up with parents and students – even after her students move on out of Diamond. She is unconventional, but has the ability to reach her pupils, by using unique problem sets and challenging her students to master the thinking behind them, that is truly breathtaking. ...
- **Karen Girondel** – I don't know how long Ms. Girondel has been in the system, but I have talked to teachers in Lexington that had her when they were students in the high school. She is a role model for teachers everywhere who need to know how to reach children, and make learning a pleasure. She is always on site – if you had to pay her by the hour, you couldn't afford to pay her. Her kids love her. ... Ms. Girondel works with a lot of students all of the time including after school.
- **Dr. Michael Fiveash** – He is another gem in the language department. Not only is his Mythology class a legend in the school, I'm not sure how many other high schools have kids literally lining up to learn Latin and the classics. Dr. Fiveash reaches kids academically, while not "dumbing them down," by continuing to require high standards, even from "average" students who achieve more under his tutelage, than they possibly could with another teacher. ...
- **Dr. Susan Offner** – Dr. Susan Offner is an unsung heroine of Lexington High School. Not only is she an expert in her field, she is an expert in the teaching of it. I was astounded at how she got her students to learn the sheer amount of material she covered for her AP courses. What's more, she did it while also running two specific after-school biology related clubs with more than 35 students in them. She too, like the other teachers above, never looks at the clock, and spends the time it takes with students to help them succeed. ...

#### Overall Student Results With These Teachers

In case you think ... that these teachers just happen to resonate with ... [a specific] learning style, the academic results of Lexington High as a whole suggest otherwise, as do these teachers' specific contributions to these results. US News and World report compares high schools, and gives a higher rank given to those schools whose students take a more AP exams. The measure that US News and World Report uses is distorted in favor of a school that has more students taking AP courses, but whose students may not learn as much as a group of students in another school where AP is not taken, but whose students' knowledge might increase an equal amount. I believe that better measures would compare the performance of participants in AP exams to each other, and the performance of non-AP participants to each other, given the educational starting points of the individual students.

Comparing AP exam takers, normally one would expect some self-selection in schools without a policy encouraging students to take AP exams. The most motivated students who are interested in a subject would tend to take the AP exams and raise the overall scores. Conversely, in schools with policies encouraging students to take AP exams the reverse should occur. A larger cross section of all students would take the exams, including those not as well prepared or interested. Thus the results would be skewed with larger percentages of students with higher scores being reported in schools with fewer test takers as a percentage of the student body.

Figure 1 shows 2007 AP results for Biology, French, and Calculus. [There were 2 separate AP exams each for French and Calculus. Results in score categories for these subjects were combined to get composite results. Latin is not offered as an AP course at LHS so was not put into this comparison.] This data, for 2007, represents a year when Ms. Girondel taught both French AP courses, and Dr. Offner taught Biology AP. It was the last year for which I could get data, and cursory examination of the immediate prior years shows similar results.

Figure 1 indicates that the students in Lexington High School significantly outperformed students from other schools nationally and from Massachusetts in these subjects. In all three areas, more than 85% of Lexington students obtained scores of 4 or 5, compared to 44% of Calculus students nationally [the category of highest scores nationally], and to 57% of Calculus students in Massachusetts. [This was the category of highest scores in Massachusetts.] The spread was even more dramatic in French, which had the fewest percentage of students obtaining 4s and 5s in these three subject areas, both nationally, 28%, and in Massachusetts, 43%. Conversely, French was the highest performing category for Lexington of these three subjects, with almost 91% of test takers getting at least a 4.

Were these scores the result of "filtering" the "best" students into taking the exams? ETS reports that there were a total of 7,763,758 juniors and seniors enrolled nationwide at the time the 2007 AP tests were administered. They also report that 171,837 of those were from Massachusetts. [published in the National

Figure 1

Selected 2007 AP Score Percentages										
Score	Lexington			National Average			Massachusetts			
	BIOLOGY	Both Math AP Exams	Both French AP Exams	BIOLOGY	Both Math AP Exams	Both French AP Exams	BIOLOGY	Both Math AP Exams	Both French AP Exams	
5	52.9	71.7	53.1	19.1	25.8	12.0	27.4	36.4	19.5	
4	32.2	17.0	37.5	20.2	18.5	16.4	23.5	20.3	23.3	
3	10.7	9.4	6.3	21.2	19.1	30.1	20.3	18.3	31.8	
2	4.1	1.9	0.0	23.4	13.4	20.7	19.0	10.3	14.9	
1	0.0	0.0	3.1	16.1	23.2	20.7	9.8	14.7	10.5	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Summary Report on the AP Central website, downloaded into Excel on spreadsheet "Exams by State"] Lexington school department statistics show that at the same time there were 452 seniors and 508 juniors in the high school. Using these counts as a surrogate for potential test takers, Figure 2 suggests that contrary to encouraging only the "best" students to take the exams, Lexington was in fact represented by a broader and more inclusive set of students taking these exams than the rest of the country or the state of Massachusetts.

Figure 2

Selected 2007 AP Score Percentages									
	Lexington			National Average			Massachusetts		
	BIOLOGY	Both Math AP Exams	Both French AP Exams	BIOLOGY	Both Math AP Exams	Both French AP Exams	BIOLOGY	Both Math AP Exams	Both French AP Exams
Percent of Students Taking Exam	12.6	11.0	3.3	1.8	3.4	0.3	2.8	4.7	0.8
Ratio to Lexington				6.9	3.2	12.0	4.5	2.3	3.9

In Figure 2 we see that almost seven times as many Lexington students took the Biology exam as a percent of potential test takers than did students in other high schools nationally. [This is most likely due to the availability of Biology course offerings at LHS.] Twelve times as many LHS students took the French AP exams as would have been predicted by comparable national statistics. Even Calculus, one of the most "popular" AP exams, had more than three times as many test takers in Lexington as the national average. The AP test-taking rate in Biology and French is approximately four times the rate reported in Massachusetts, while Lexington High reports Calculus test-takers at twice the rate of other

Massachusetts high schools. Both figures combined mean that in these subjects Lexington High School is outperforming the rest of the nation and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, even though it is drawing a wider distribution of students which probably represents a larger cross-section of abilities. [It should be noted that similar trends hold true for Chemistry, Physics, US History, and World History at LHS.]

As an aside - these numbers have particular significance for the science department. The science department has fewer course levels in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, and is not as accommodating of students whose main interest is not science, or students who are scared of the pace or subject matter, and may need extra time to "settle in." I have often thought that this was not a good thing in that kids ought to have a choice not to have to take the AP courses if they wanted a more challenging experience than a level one course. I'm not so sure now after seeing these results. The numbers suggest that students who otherwise would not have been challenged, are doing much better than they might have, based on the strength of the curriculum and teaching.

Certainly, Lexington students are very hard working, and deserve a lot of credit for their effort. However, it is also clear from the results of these tests, that other hard working students in other schools are not achieving the same results in learning the same material. This can be directly attributed to the work of the teachers in these subjects, and in Biology and French, the number of students in this cohort was overrepresented by students of Ms. Girondel and Dr. Offner.

#### The Administrators

There are four administrators who also deserve mention ..., sometimes "behind the scenes":

- **Joanne Hennessy** – I know that Ms. Hennessy has retired. However, I have not encountered anyone else in the Lexington school system who truly understands how kids learn and thrive. .... I recently read about the changes occurring in Diamond. Both the parents and administration letters, to my mind, completely overlooked the key elements that Ms. Hennessy put in place to make Diamond a special learning environment. I hope that the future doesn't find the school achieving lower results as a cookie-cutter pedagogy is put in place as a substitute for truly understanding and matching kids, and providing for their needs.
- **Gary Simon** – Gary Simon runs the math department. Again, I have not found a peer of his who truly understands both the stresses on kids, and how they learn. Gary goes the extra mile to make sure that LHS students can be successful – taking into account not just their academic needs, but their social and emotional growth needs. His department standards are high, and he tries his best to make the "right" things happen for the kids.  
...
- **David Lautman** – ...
- **Natalie Cohen** – ...

The current overloaded cliché is that "it takes a village..." In ... many ... students' cases, these specific teachers and administrators formed that village. Each one should be commended, and all have our thanks.

Very truly yours,

Stann Chonofsky

cc: Natalie Cohen

## Sustain our teachers

As a Lexington parent, no educational issue invites concern as much as the loss of teaching talent, evidenced in Minuteman letters.

By themselves, a couple teachers retiring early would not cause concern. The context seems to be that our leadership's focus on standardization continues to reduce the meaningful and enjoyable learning.

I've seen an elementary school teacher with decades of first-hand experience instructed to use system-wide learning technology, to the detriment of our child's class.

We've witnessed excessive focus on MCAS stifle fun learning and diminish instructional time, including delayed start times at LHS.

Diamond has been standardized: an amazing principal has stepped aside, in-depth project days have been terminated, and stable learning groups ensuring continuity through adolescence have been abolished.

We also learn that extended day programs, which themselves offered varied experiences, are to be standardized.

Words from retiring teachers give us pause. These brave voices tell us about administrative pressures and difficult challenges. They are also likely the tip of the iceberg. (Should I wonder whether anyone's career is impacted by drama censorship?)

First, diversity is critical to innovation. We should encourage the School Committee to take a strong stand against excessive standardization and standards-based education, which does not serve the many talented students of Lexington.

Second, we must not let short-term leaders damage our talented teaching ranks, as teachers are the long-term anchors of our school system. We must stand by teachers as our schools' most valuable assets.

I challenge our School Committee and administration to recognize the value of teaching talent, and ensure the freedom of speech implied by their tenure. Engage teachers in innovative school design and planned diversity, nurturing the bond between teacher and student, and promoting the diversity of special experiences trampled by the standards movement. — **Mark Andersen, Thoreau Road**



60 Liberty Ave.  
 Lexington, MA 02420  
 781-863-0503  
 April 28, 2011

Lexington School Committee  
 Mary Ann Stewart, Chairman  
 Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice Chair  
 Margaret E. Coppe  
 Jessie Steigerwald  
 Noah Coolidge  
 Lexington Public Schools  
 146 Maple Street  
 Lexington, MA 02420

Dear School Committee:

I am a Lexington parent who has lived in Lexington for 19 years. I have a daughter who was a successful student in the Lexington Public Schools. She took four foreign languages in high school; in her senior year she was given the departmental award and the German scholarship. Although I did not speak at the School Committee meeting last Tuesday night, I want you to give serious consideration to what I have to say.

I have questions, and the students have questions about the sudden departures of Michael Fiveash and Karen Girondel that we cannot get answers to because everything is draped in confidentiality, and because the authorities are being less than truthful. If we ask what events led up to their retirements, we will get no answers. There is evasiveness and flat-out lying. But you are the School Committee. You can ask questions and get some sort of answers.

A student asked the department head why Dr. Fiveash was being shifted to teach introductory grammar in Latin I instead of the substantive Latin literature he was so amazing at teaching in the upper levels. The student was told that it is confidential, relating to contract matters. What could possibly be the reason, except to humiliate Dr. Fiveash?

If we ask how Dr. Fiveash was treated with the planned transition to a new upper-level Latin teacher, I am sure we will be stonewalled. I was told he was forbidden to meet with his successor or hand down his course materials, so he would have had to teach Latin I and simply bury all that he had developed over the decades for Latin III and Mythology. What motivation could there be for this, except to insult Dr. Fiveash as long as he stayed?

Something rare and valuable was made to end. And it is not a pretty, natural end. Over and over, I am hearing the phrase "forced out." It is clear that neither teacher wanted to

retire yet. I want you to ask the Lexington High School administration these questions and listen hard to the rationalizations you are given. What I believe you will discover is that the motivation behind the course-load change was small minded and mean spirited. Certainly, the execution was mean and intentionally hurtful.

Here in Lexington, we value intelligence and honor. Dr. Fiveash and Mme. Girondel taught the students to develop both. There is no way to overstate this: they are truly great teachers. Someone should be held accountable for their departures. This is a huge loss to education in Lexington. If it becomes the norm, we will be left with a mediocre staff unable to satisfy the intellectual needs of our children. When that mediocre staff retires, no one will mount a protest.

I want the School Committee to pursue this, to find out who is responsible. Go beyond Superintendent Ash and the principal. Talk to the people involved, including Marie Murphy (the department head), Michael Fiveash and Karen Girondel. Find out what happened. I want the School Committee to ask why the system has become so heartless. And I want action to be taken so we don't lose any more amazing teachers.

Sincerely,

Theodora Martin

Seaport West  
155 Seaport Boulevard  
Boston, MA 02210-2600  
  
617 832 1000 *main*  
617 832 7000 *fax*

John D. Patterson, Jr.  
617 832 1144 *direct*  
jpatterson@foleyhoag.com

June 1, 2011

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Lexington Public Schools  
Administration Office  
146 Maple Street  
Lexington, MA 02420

Re: Karen Girondel

Dear Dr. Ash:

I am writing to you as a parent of a Lexington student who is graduating from high school this year and who was fortunate to have had Ms. Girondel as her French teacher for three of the four years she studied French. Over these years we have been extremely impressed by Ms. Girondel's dedication to her students and the enthusiasm she brought to them. My wife and I are distressed that the school system is not supporting her request to be compensated for her sick leave days as she has requested. We understand that you have not made a final decision and hope that in the end you will consider her request in light of all the circumstances.

Article 6 of the Agreement between LEA and the Lexington School Committee is poorly written. But it does state that "written notice shall be given no later than September of the school year of retirement." Under Article 6 of the Agreement, Ms. Girondel's "school year of retirement" is the school year that begins in the fall of 2011. That is the school year in which her retirement will take place. The current school year is obviously not her "school year of retirement" since she is still working. Since next year is her "school year of retirement", she need only give notice at the beginning of that year indicating that she wishes to be paid for her unused sick leave days, or before September 2011. She has done that.

Moreover, in Ms. Girondel's case, there are compelling equitable reasons to compensate her for what she has earned. As she has informed you, she had no prior intention to retire from teaching. It was only after continuing harassment and disrespect from her Department Head that she has come to this very difficult decision for her. Her retirement is really unfortunate, because Ms. Girondel is one of the most liked and respected teachers at LHS, and she will be sorely missed. She decided to retire only after she learned

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.  
June 1, 2011  
Page 2

that she was being marginalized and pushed out, and she then notified you of her retirement and requested payment for her unused sick leave days.

During her tenure at LHS, Ms. Girondel accumulated an astonishing 419 days of unused sick leave, since she took very few sick days. LHS has immeasurably benefited from this, not only by having her continue to teach her students but by not having to hire substitute teachers to replace her at a very substantial expense. The money she has saved LHS by having accumulated so many unused sick leave days dwarfs the amount that she would be compensated (at half pay) for the fifty days of unused sick leave. Under these circumstances, it would be extremely unfair of LHS not to compensate Ms. Girondel for the fifty days of unused sick time that she is entitled to be compensated for. Certainly, LHS would save additional money as well by replacing her with a younger teacher who would be paid considerably less than is Ms. Girondel.

I hope that you will make the fair and right decision and compensate Ms. Girondel for her unused sick-leave days. Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

John D. Patterson, Jr.

JDP/kap



# HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS · 02138

MATTHEW STEPHENSON  
Professor of Law

Griswold Hall Room 509  
TEL. (617) 495-9863  
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mstephen@law.harvard.edu

August 4, 2011

Lexington School Committee  
Lexington Public Schools  
146 Maple Street  
Lexington, MA 02420

Dear Members of the Lexington School Committee:

I am a 1993 graduate of Lexington High School. I recently learned about the retirement of three LHS teachers, including Dr. Michael Fiveash. I gather from news reports and conversations with current Lexington residents and LHS parents that these retirements were due primarily to conflict with the current school administrators and foreign languages department head. I also gather that concerned parents, and at least one School Committee member, are sufficiently concerned about what these departures reveal about teacher morale and the management of the current school administration that they have requested that this issue be placed on the agenda for the June 7 School Committee meeting, but that the School Committee Chair is disinclined to do so.

I am not a current Lexington resident, so it is conceivable that the School Committee might prefer to ignore my views entirely, but I was so disturbed when I heard this news that I felt that I had to convey my views on this matter.

I had the pleasure of being a student in Dr. Fiveash's Latin classes for all four years while I was an LHS student. He is an extraordinary teacher, certainly the most gifted teacher I had at LHS, and one of the two most gifted instructors I have had at any level. (The other was Elena Kagan, who was a professor of mine in law school.) Indeed, one of the reasons I am a teacher myself today is because of Dr. Fiveash's influence and example. The incredible devotion he inspires in his students is not because he panders to them or flatters them or makes things easy. Indeed, he was one of the most demanding and challenging teachers I had at LHS. Rather, as I can see even more clearly with the benefit of 18 years of hindsight, he had the rare capacity to inspire, in immature teenagers, a love of learning and an ability to glimpse, just beyond the narrow and often stultifying confines of high school, the larger world and the pleasures of the life of the mind. I am not exaggerating when I say that, when it comes to teaching high school students, the man is a genius and an artist. He is not merely a good teacher, or even a great teacher. He is a one-in-a-million teacher, someone that any competent administrator should recognize is a treasure to the school system. He should be allowed to teach whatever he wants, whenever he wants.

I do not know the precise circumstances of the disagreement with the current administration that led to Dr. Fiveash's departure, but, if I may honor Dr. Fiveash by using some Latin, *res ipsa*

*loquitur*. Any conflict with the administration that led to Dr. Fiveash's departure reflects badly on the administration, and is an appropriate subject for the School Committee to take up. Moreover, my stomach turns when I read mealy-mouthed quotes in the Minuteman from School Committee members citing LHS's generally good retention statistics (compared to national trends) as a reason not to treat the departure of Dr. Fiveash and his colleagues as an indication that something is seriously amiss. Anyone who is familiar enough with LHS to be worthy of a position on the School Committee should know that these losses are not ordinary losses. And, not that this matters as much, anyone with even a passing familiarity with basic statistical analysis should know that a comparison of the Lexington schools to national averages reveals essentially nothing about how well the Lexington schools are doing on this score, given that Lexington diverges from the national average on a host of dimensions that have nothing to do with administrative performance but that affect average teacher retention rates.

Again, I recognize that as a non-resident of Lexington, my views may carry little weight with the School Committee. But, as a concerned alumnus, I felt that I had to make my voice heard.

Sincerely,



Matthew Stephenson  
Professor of Law  
Harvard Law School

No. of Retirees  
2000 - 2011

<b>Year</b>	<b>Teachers Only</b>	<b>All Retirees</b>
2000	19	21
2001	29	34
2002	22	24
2003	17	20
2004	25	39
2005	18	23
2006	26	29
2007	23	34
2008	27	33
2009	19	24
2010	17	21
2011	15	24

## OUR SCHOOLS

During the past few weeks, three high school teachers announced their personal decision to retire after many years of dedicated service. I deeply respect these teachers and thank them for their many years of outstanding teaching.

Soon after these retirement decisions were announced, some residents have asked the School Committee if these retirements are linked to a more general morale problem in the Lexington Public Schools. The School Committee members and I take these residents questions seriously. One of our core values is "creating caring and respectful relationships" for all students and adults.

To ensure we are listening to the voices of all teachers, two years ago we participated in school-wide teacher survey sponsored by the major education organizations in Massachusetts (The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Teachers Association, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents). The district-wide report showed high levels of teacher morale, confidence in leadership, and appreciation for the level of parent and community support. The report showed one area where we needed to improve - the quantity and quality of the LPS professional development program.

Using the report and other information, we decided to allocate a major portion of new federal stimulus dollars to launch a comprehensive professional development program for all teachers. The program has been a huge success. In this past year alone, approximately 600 teachers voluntarily took the courses we offered on their own time after work. On November 10, 2010, Lexington's professional development program received nation-wide recognition in the leading education newspaper, *Education Week*. As a school system, we are committed to continuous improvement in every way, every day.

More recently, Deputy Commissioner of Education Karla Baehr recently stated that the State may once again repeat the teacher survey during the 2011-2012 school year. If the State does not repeat



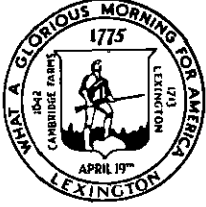
the teacher survey, LEA president Phyllis Neufeld and I had previously discussed sending out a teacher survey next year, well before the three teacher retirements were known by us. Regardless of who initiates the teacher survey, the Lexington Public Schools is committed to repeating the teacher survey. I look forward to sharing the district-wide results with the entire professional staff and the community.

In addition, next fall, the administration will continue its practice to report personnel changes at a September School Committee meeting. In the past, the report included the number of hires and departures compared local, regional and national trends, salary and demographic information, and categories of reasons that showed why staff members left the system. We also plan to increase our use of exit interviews to gain a deeper insight for the reasons teachers leave our employment.

Based on prior personnel reports, we have a low rate of teacher turnover and high numbers of applications. Last year, we hired 50 teachers out of approximately 650 teachers. Lexington's 7% staff turnover rate is far below the typical school turnover rate of 15% in the nation. In addition, very few teachers have reported they voluntarily left the Lexington schools due to working conditions. For most classroom positions, we receive more than 100 applicants per job.

The Lexington schools are strong because we value and nurture trust, collaboration, collaboration, and leadership at every level. Our principals work every day to include teachers and other staff members in the decision-making process to improve the quality of teaching, learning and working conditions.

I am confident that seeking staff feedback will help us improve the overall quality of the Lexington Public Schools. I look forward to sharing information with you as it becomes available.



# Lexington Public Schools

146 Maple Street ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.  
*Superintendent of Schools*

(781) 861-2580  
 email: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 fax: (781) 863-5829

## Our Schools

June 9, 2011

*Paul B. Ash, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools*

During the past few weeks, three high school teachers announced their personal decision to retire after many years of dedicated service. I deeply respect these teachers and our other retirees and thank them for their many years of outstanding teaching.

Soon after these retirement decisions were announced, some residents asked the School Committee if these retirements were linked to a more general morale problem in the Lexington Public Schools. The School Committee members and I take these residents' questions seriously. One of our core values is "creating caring and respectful relationships" for all students and adults.

To ensure we are listening to the voices of all teachers, two years ago we participated in school-wide teacher surveys sponsored by the major education organizations in Massachusetts (The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Teachers Association, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents). The district-wide report showed high levels of teacher morale, confidence in leadership, and appreciation for the level of parent and community support. The report showed one major area where we needed to improve - the quantity and quality of the LPS professional development programs.

Using the report and other information, we decided to allocate a major portion of new federal stimulus dollars to launch a comprehensive professional development program for all teachers. The program has been a huge success. In this past year alone, approximately 600 teachers voluntarily took the courses we offered, on their own time after work. On November 10, 2010, Lexington's professional development program received nation-wide recognition in the leading education newspaper, *Education Week*. As a school system, we are committed to continuous improvement in every way, every day.

More recently, Deputy Commissioner of Education Karla Baehr stated that Massachusetts might repeat the teacher survey next school year. LEA president Phyllis Neufeld and I had already discussed sending out the same teacher survey ourselves, if the State does not repeat the survey. We made this decision well before the three teacher retirements were known to us. Regardless of who initiates the teacher survey, the Lexington Public School system is committed to repeating the teacher survey. I look forward to sharing the district-wide results with the entire professional staff and the community.

In addition, next Fall, the administration will continue its practice of reporting personnel changes at the September School Committee meeting. In the past, the report has included the number of hires and departures compared with local, regional and national trends, salary and demographic information, and

categories of reasons why staff members left the system. We also plan to increase our use of exit interviews to gain a deeper insight into the reasons teachers leave our employment.

Based on prior personnel reports, Lexington has had both a low rate of teacher turnover and a high number of applications for open positions. Last year, we hired 44 teachers out of approximately 672 teachers. Lexington's 6.5% staff turnover rate is far below the typical school turnover rate of 15.1% in the nation. In addition, very few teachers have reported they voluntarily left the Lexington schools due to working conditions. For most classroom positions, we receive more than 100 applicants per job.

The Lexington schools are strong because we value and nurture trust, collaboration, and leadership at every level. Our principals work every day to include teachers and other staff members in the decision-making process to improve the quality of teaching, learning and working conditions.

I am confident that by continuing our practice of proactively seeking staff feedback, we will continue to improve the overall quality of the Lexington Public Schools. I look forward to sharing more information with you as it becomes available.

## Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

### Community

1. Stop inflicting your expectations on my children.
2. Even if you don't have children in the schools, please engage in the stress conversation with those of us who do; then, all of us can take what we learn back to our alma maters and start to talk to them about easing up on admissions pressure and requirements.
3. Children need to learn to fail and to be bored.
4. One stressor is Lexington's preoccupation with being #1; that perception seems to be top down, i.e. "Lexington is #4 in high schools according to Boston Magazine". We are a numbers driven society and town; we need less emphasis on being #1!
5. Stop MCAS testing.
6. With over scheduled family time, there is less time for appreciating neighbors and life.
7. Who is having the conversation with the students? Teachers, parents, guidance all need to talk together.
8. Take action in focused ways – don't try to do it all at once.

## Parents/Guardians

1. Family dinners - unplug together and converse!
2. Have the conversation no matter how it goes; talking and sharing are so important.
3. Say no; limit your own activities to model balance.
4. No pressure on kids to achieve straight A's and/or to take too many honors/AP classes.
5. Parents should not be afraid to set rules (i.e., cell phone use, texting, internet limits).
6. Understand that your kids' emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing are more important than grades.
7. Re: your expectations for your child; is it about your child or is it about you?
8. Educate yourselves about the type and amount of homework that is useful, when it is excessive, when it is damaging, and when it is not necessary.
9. Keep birthday parties, bar and bat mitzvahs, etc. simple, rather than a continuous ratcheting up of expectations.
10. What are your expectations for your children? Are your child's achievements for them or for you?
11. Help your student find their best post high school fit – not the most competitive college they can get into.

Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

12. Listen more
13. Stop asking preschool teachers for homework.
14. Stop enrolling children in preview courses the summer before
15. Respond to kids' work by addressing it qualitatively ("good point") rather than quantitatively ("you got an A").
16. Talk about: what it means to be successful
17. Monitor your child's recreational screen time.
18. Don't allow weekend homework.
19. Talk to your child about finding a college that is the right fit, rather than the most prestigious.
20. Give down time back to your/our kids!
21. Get off the laptop and cell phone; model being present.
22. Take a step back from the madness. I went to UMass and I'm having a great life – let your kids know that an Ivy League education does not equal happiness.
23. See the value of personal growth rather than being at the top of standardized results. It is not a failure to take non-honors classes if you are striving and learning.
24. Give kids unplugged, unscheduled days every week.
25. Family time and family discussions
26. There has to be room to make mistakes.
27. Parents can help by being role models for their kids: (a) unplug; (b) put up boundaries at work; (c) keep things in perspective; (d) find/create time for things that replenish you.

## Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

28. Parents should have an understanding of each other's expectations and approach to their children's stress.
29. Don't allow teachers to pressure kids about homework; stick up for them on an individual basis.
30. At least 1000 Lexington parents saw Race to Nowhere; we're discussing the issues.
31. Be aware of the symptoms of stress. If your child was depressed, anorexic, self-injuring, or suicidal, would you be able to tell?
32. Follow the cues of your kids.
33. Awareness of what's driving pressuring behavior. Mine is: fear that my child will be a failure in life unless s/he gets into a top college. Then, I center myself: there are many successful, happy adults who didn't go to top colleges. Then, I remember I want my children to be healthy and happy.

## Students

1. Be true to yourself.
2. Enjoy today for its own sake.
3. Why should I have to skip gymnastics when I am in 8<sup>th</sup> grade because I have too much homework?
4. Unplug so your brain can be at rest.
5. For the teachers: write down how long an assignment took you to complete.
6. Reduce stress by learning about different cultures

## Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

7. Balance academics and friends and enjoy childhood.
8. Sleep! Everything feels better/is easier when you give your body its most essential need.
9. Competition can be friendly and helpful or cutthroat and detrimental; which will you choose?
10. Only take honors classes if you love the subject.
11. Find your passion.
12. Even though they hear about reducing stress, some students don't feel it applies to them; they still want to push themselves to achieve at the highest level.
13. Please follow up with LHS teachers who told the principal that they feel they must give a lot of homework or else they won't be taken seriously.
14. Mindfulness: focus on the current moment. Stress often comes from worry about the future (i.e., upcoming tests, homework, college).
15. Remember the "love of learning" – it's not just about schoolwork and grades.
16. Failure is an essential part of learning.
17. Follow your passion.
18. Change your fear of failure: A grade of B is not failure!
19. Please stop cheating on tests, exams, and schoolwork.

## Schools

1. Get rid of community service requirement; let kids come to it themselves.
2. Bring back EWOW (Education Without Walls)



Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

- 3. Reduce homework.
- 4. Get rid of summer homework/reading.
- 5. Address the quality and quantity of homework.
- 6. The tracking that is done in the languages and math classes is unfair to a kid that is a late bloomer.
- 7. Why do you – especially elementary – tell kids they need to learn something “for MCAS”; teach because the need to learn, period.
- 8. Advisors should be aware of students not involved in any extra curricular activities and reach out to them; children who feel valued/needed in the community will tolerate pressure better.
- 9. Why do teachers seem to ‘dump’ extra work on students in the last 6-8 weeks of school? Is this material that needs to be taught? Realistically, there isn’t enough time in the school year to teach it all?
- 10. Engage parents in a conversation about homework and educate them about when homework is useful and when it is too much.
- 11. Limit sports practice on weekends and during school vacation.
- 12. Coaches/advisors need to have firm limits on their time requirements. Kids shouldn’t be asked to give up so much time (i.e. vacation) and to limit their extra curricular activities to an exclusive commitment to one activity.
- 13. The music program at LHS is excellent. It provides a smaller ‘school’ within a large school; this immediately eases the transition to LHS for incoming freshmen that participate. Please nurture the Fine and Performing Arts program – it is just as important as the major subjects
- 14. Teachers: Try to focus on process over product.

Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

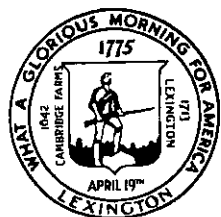
15. You don't need to over prepare high school kids for college (some LHS grads report not being challenged by college courses).
16. Ask students what brings stress down.
17. Evaluate the quality of homework – is it really necessary?
18. Please show parents the evidence that homework contributes to academic success. How much at each grade level? What kind of homework? With or without parent involvement?
19. No school sports on vacation, holiday, or weekend.
20. Tackle the issue of homework overload.
21. Switch the half days to classes in the afternoon.
22. If adults had the # of hours they must work that our kids have for school and homework – it would be illegal.
23. Focus on the homework load: (a) too many hours; (b) type; (c) not meaningful; (d) quality vs. quantity
24. Amount of homework, scheduling of tests, systems in place to alleviate these issues are not effective.
25. I'm concerned about the revelation that there is a big gap between the Level I and Honors courses. What about heterogeneous classes (unleveled) where students can opt to do honors level work within an unleveled class? This might take some pressure off kids in course selection.
26. Require less homework for students. Students should decide how much work they need to do to learn the material in a given class.
27. Middle School Education: set reasonable expectations for students around AP/Honors courses. Enable students/parents to talk about their concerns and anxiety about high school and to better prepare for its stresses.

Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

28. Bring the homework levels down the week of SATs.
29. Homework based on need; maybe let the child decide how many problem sets to do.
30. Re-evaluate high school starting time. I've heard high school needs to start early so kids can participate in sports in the afternoon; turn the athletic league on its head. Someone needs to be a leader and help the students learn when they are awake rather than 7:30 in the morning; maybe other school systems will follow.
31. The gap between honors and regular college prep is too great.
32. More honors option within college prep classes would help.
33. Support and teach a love of learning.
34. School personnel need to look at research about good teaching.
35. AP independent study option – make it available.
36. AP classes to optional AP grades; mix groups. The gaps are too far apart between AP courses and regular classes.
37. Please, don't just talk the talk – walk the walk; assign less homework so kids can really have balanced lives, dinner with their families, time to do a craft or read a novel or even get a good night's sleep.
38. Please examine whether we have curricula that can't be completed (taught and learned) in the available time.
39. No school vacation with mandatory varsity sport practices.
40. Homework should be limited to meaningful activities that are best accomplished at home – not busy work to just give assignments.
41. Stop teaching to only the top students.
42. No weekend homework for students!

Race to Nowhere Community Dialogue: responses from the community

- 43. Homework free nights across Lexington.
- 44. Flip the half days: teachers in the morning and classes in the afternoon.
- 45. Teachers should participate in public programs about stress and hear the concerns of parents and students.
- 46. Varsity coaches: unplug your teams during school breaks (no practices and games or not required to participate).
- 47. Make sure teachers do not assign homework over vacations.
- 48. Fix the huge gap between honors and level one classes (especially math).
- 49. No sports practice on holidays.
- 50. Are AP classes worthwhile?
- 51. Cut down on the amount of material covered over the year; go deeper; more input from teachers through the writing process - cut down on the amount of games and length of practice time.



# Lexington Public Schools

146 Maple Street ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.  
*Superintendent of Schools*

(781) 861-2580  
email: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
fax: (781) 863-5829

May 20, 2011

**TO:** Donna Hooper, Town Clerk, Town of Lexington

**FROM:** Paul B. Ash, Superintendent of Schools

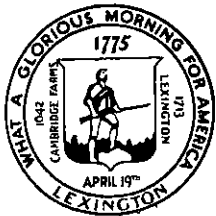
**RE:** Lexington Public School Committee Meeting

Please be advised that the Lexington Public School Committee will meet on the date, at the time, and in the location noted below. It is anticipated that this meeting will go immediately into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and is not expected to return open session.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Wednesday, May 25, 2011	7:30 p.m.	Cary Memorial Building Ellen Stone Room 1605 Massachusetts Avenue

Anticipated Agenda Item: Contract Negotiations with Nonunion Personnel

Many thanks for publicly posting this meeting.



# Lexington Public Schools

146 Maple Street ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.  
*Superintendent of Schools*

(781) 861-2580  
 email: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
 fax: (781) 863-5829

May 26, 2011

**TO:** Donna Hooper, Town Clerk, Town of Lexington

**FROM:** Paul B. Ash, Superintendent of Schools

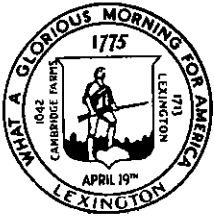
**RE:** Lexington Public School Committee Meeting

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Wednesday, June 1, 2011	8:00 p.m.	Lexington Town Office Building Room G15 1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Anticipated Agenda Item: Contract Negotiations with Nonunion Personnel

Many thanks for publicly posting this meeting.



# Lexington Public Schools

146 Maple Street ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.  
*Superintendent of Schools*

(781) 861-2580  
email: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us  
fax: (781) 863-5829

June 8, 2011

**TO:** Donna Hooper, Town Clerk, Town of Lexington  
**FROM:** Paul B. Ash, Superintendent of Schools  
**RE:** Lexington School Committee Meeting

Please be advised that the Lexington Public School Committee will meet on the date, at the time, and in the location noted below.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Wednesday, June 15, 2011	7:30 p.m.	Cary Hall Auditorium 1605 Massachusetts Avenue

The anticipated agenda for this meeting will be forthcoming.

Many thanks for publicly posting this meeting.

6/7/11

Dear Members of the School Committee:

I am writing to you today to encourage you to postpone the vote on the renewal of Paul Ash's contract. Since your evaluation of him in late winter, Dr. Ash has taken actions which raise new concerns about his performance and which add to growing concern regarding his tactics and ethics.

There are many stories I have read and heard which concern me and which I challenge the School Committee to either consider or further investigate, whether to verify or to confirm false, prior to committing to renewing our school superintendent's contract. If you truly care about our community and education, you will value the time to be thoughtful and thorough before taking action, which could become a commitment through June of 2016.

A single and most recent example comes from outgoing teacher Michael Fiveash "I was given a teaching assignment that was a disservice to my kids and my program." Fiveash said he was never given a clear explanation for the assignment and was told simply, "That is the way it is." "It's one thing to be asked for your opinion. It's another thing to be given orders," he said. "There has been a shift from autonomy ... to working collaboratively," Ash said. The above statements do not add up. Being given orders and assignment changes without discussion is not by any means collaboration.

What Dr. Ash has done exceptionally well on paper is cut the school budget. But his methods and his actions do not feel like a good fit for a town that values open debate of issues, and collaboration, and that cares so much about its school system. Are we prepared for continued fall-out?

I urge you to delay the renewal of Dr. Ash's contract until such time as you can fully investigate the allegations surrounding detrimental changes to our educational program and that you can create and ensure a healthier collaborative environment for existing teachers to speak up without fear of retaliation. A few months is a small time to delay considering the contract clause that automatically extends due to the 18-month cancellation notice in Dr. Ash's contract.

It may be too late this time, but I urge the School Committee in the future to also take into consideration that this contract hardly allows much time during term for review and process. If the town should ever decide not to renew, the superintendent becomes a "lame duck" for 38% percent of contract term. That is a significant proportion. What is the motivation or need for such an excessively long cancellation policy? I understand that the superintendent of Boston Public Schools has a 3-month cancellation notice in her contract. That seems much more reasonable and fair to the community does it not?

Respectfully yours,  
Britta McCarthy



This survey is completely optional. Please feel free to skip any question that you don't feel comfortable answering. The purpose of this survey is to present the School Committee with a teacher morale report. Please be honest when answering questions, so that the results are as accurate as possible. I will analyze the numerical results of this survey, and quote from any comments you may write. Please remember: nothing you write here will be associated with you specifically.

I teach (circle one): English Science History Math  
Foreign Language Art Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please decide to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I enjoy teaching my students.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I approve of the school and district administration.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

Weekly teachers meetings have improved my teaching skills.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I am confident my job is completely secure.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I approve of the school's policy of writing daily "objectives" on the board. It helps my students.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I love my job.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I am always comfortable expressing my opinions publicly to colleagues and administrators.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

The school atmosphere is collegial and friendly.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I regularly spend time outside of class helping students.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

I approve of Dr. Paul Ash's governance.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

This school is heading in the right direction.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Agree 10

Please include any comments, reactions, or suggestions about this survey or about the school:

Horizontal lines for providing comments, reactions, or suggestions.

This survey is completely optional. Please feel free to **skip any question that you don't feel comfortable answering**. The purpose of this survey is to present the School Committee with a teacher morale report. Please be honest when answering questions, so that the results are as accurate as possible. I will analyze the numerical results of this survey, and quote from any comments you may write. Please remember: nothing you write here will be associated with you specifically.

I teach (circle one):    English            Science            History            Math  
                                          Foreign Language            Art            Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please decide to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I enjoy teaching my students.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I approve of the school and district administration.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

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Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

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Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I approve of the school's policy of writing daily "objectives" on the board. It helps my students.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I love my job.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I am always comfortable expressing my opinions publicly to colleagues and administrators.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10

The school atmosphere is collegial and friendly.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10

I regularly spend time outside of class helping students.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10

I approve of Dr. Paul Ash's governance.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10

This school is heading in the right direction.

Disagree										Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10

Please include any comments, reactions, or suggestions about this survey or about the school:

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