



Lexington Public Schools

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“Our Schools” **Benchmarking Our Schools**

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How do we measure a school system's success? On the Massachusetts Department of Education web site, numerous input variables (benchmarks) are listed. For example, the state lists for each community the number of computers per student, its pupil/teacher ratio, and average teacher salary. We look at and evaluate these numbers regularly, and annually we look great, but do these numbers really tell you how well the school system is educating its students? In my opinion, the answer is no.

I agree that school leaders must be held accountable for student results and wisely spending scarce resources. The Lexington Public Schools must be both effective and efficient in support of academic performance.

Ultimately, the best benchmark is how well our students perform. So, how well are we doing?

High school principal, Dr. Jones, recently reported that ninety-two percent of our seniors enrolled in schools of higher education. Twenty-five of our seniors were named National Merit Scholarship semifinalists (more than any public high school in the state), and sixty-nine seniors won National Merit commendations—an astounding twenty percent of the class. In the spring of 2006, 537 LHS students took the Advanced Placement Tests and 176 were named Advanced Placement Scholars.

This fall, we learned our 2006 LHS yearbook was awarded first place in the American Scholastic Press Association contest and a silver medal in the Columbia Press Association contest. Our math team recorded the first-ever perfect score in the Massachusetts math league. We have already begun qualifying individuals and teams for the national competitions in competitive speaking and in policy debate. Two of our students won awards in the National Council of English Teachers writing contest. Our jazz ensemble performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival, and our concert choir performed at Harvard's Sanders Theatre. Forty-one of our music students were selected for the senior district festival, and three LHS musicians were selected for all-Eastern honors.

In the 2006 MCAS exam, ninety-one percent of the Class of 2008 scored advanced or proficient in English, and eighty-nine percent scored advanced or proficient in mathematics.

Most recently, one of our seniors finished third nationally in the Siemens Competition in Science, Math, and Technology.

We maintain an outstanding and very successful athletic program: last year, our varsity teams won seventy percent of their contests, and, more importantly, participation continues to grow. Lexington High School has over eighty clubs and extracurricular activities, most of which are supervised by volunteer faculty members.

At the K-8 level, our students performed near the top of the state on MCAS examinations. The middle schools came in first and second on the state Math Counts competition. Clarke and Diamond also came in first and second in grades 6, 7, and 8 on the New England Mathematics League test. This year, thirty students at the Hastings School participated in the Odyssey of the Mind competition. One of the four teams will represent Massachusetts at the World Finals in East Lansing, Michigan.

Some would argue that schools should be run like a business or factory and measured only by cost-based industry benchmarks. I think we would all agree that our schools should be efficiently run, but they are not and should never become a business or factory. Ironically, the best benchmark of success for any business is satisfied customers. Twenty-one percent of Lexington's residents are students in the public schools, which is one of the highest rates in the Boston area. Lexington is a wonderful community with outstanding schools, and my administration will continue to strive to keep it that way.