



# Lexington Public Schools

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## Our Schools

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

## Collaboration Is the Answer

The start of each academic year shines a spotlight on our highest hopes for all 6,169 of Lexington's students. Two weeks ago, I stood on the Lexington High School stage to share my hopes and vision for the Lexington Public Schools.

The good news is that Lexington schools are among the best in Massachusetts. On September 5, the Boston Globe ranked Lexington schools #1 for eastern Massachusetts. In the September issue of Boston Magazine, Lexington High School was ranked #4.

While ranking methodologies might be challenged, our overall success is not an accident. Our parents deeply care about the education of their children, our community has a long tradition of supporting its public schools, and our talented educators provide some of the best education anywhere.

However, according to recent research, excellent teaching and hard work are not enough to provide equity and excellence for all students. No school system is going to achieve that goal until we change the way that we, as a team, deliver services to students.

Karin Chenoweth's 2007 book, *It's Being Done*, describes 15 schools throughout the United States that have eliminated or nearly eliminated the achievement gap for children of color, English language learners, special education students, and low-income students.

In Chenoweth's latest book, *How It's Being Done*, she explicitly identifies the conditions necessary for equity and excellence for all students, not just low achieving students. They are:

1. Outstanding teaching
2. Teacher collaboration
3. A laser-like focus on what we want students to learn
4. The use of individual and common student data to inform future instruction
5. The use of intervention strategies for students who did not master the material
6. Personal relationship building

Chenoweth emphasizes that success requires that all six attributes exist at the same time. In other words, schools which are high-performing for all students cannot focus on just some of the strategies and still succeed. All six attributes must be in place concurrently.

On September 22, I will present the recommended 2009-2010 system goals to the School Committee. These goals will include our commitment to improving academic success for all students and supporting teacher collaboration. This year, we will focus on conducting curriculum reviews in English language arts and science, expanding professional development opportunities to improve teaching, increasing the use of educational technology to improve learning, identifying and using data to improve on-going instruction, and expanding instructional strategies for students who need more support. These initiatives will not require any additional financial resources.

As we look toward the future, we will need to decide what our vision will be for the schools, how we will structure it, what we will preserve, what will we change, and what we will create. Please join me in embracing what Martin Luther King Jr. called the “fierce urgency of now.” Without doubt, we can only sustain that urgency in a community of collaboration and mutual support, collectively committed to one overarching imperative— every student in the Lexington Public Schools must receive precisely and consistently what he or she needs to become that fully educated person we all envision.

Paul B. Ash is the Lexington Superintendent of Schools. The full text of Dr. Ash’s opening day speech can be found at <http://lps.lexingtonma.org/Current/Opening-Day%20Speech%202009.pdf>