



Lexington Public Schools

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Our Schools

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Last spring, one of my columns addressed the attributes of a good school. One of those attributes as described by my colleague Matthew King, the former superintendent of the Wellesley Public Schools, is “evidence that the school produces students who are confident in the face of challenge, caring in their relations, competent in what they have studied, and curious about the world.” Lexington Public Schools’ long history of wide-ranging co-curricular activities is evidence of how we are succeeding in this area. On any given morning or afternoon, our students are participating in activities that enrich their academic experiences, teach them about the world beyond, and help them be better people. The high school’s mission statement explicitly mentions community service and activities as enriching the challenging curriculum, a theme that is consistent at all levels of our schools. This is the first of three columns that will highlight the variety of co-curricular activities that are taking place across the system. It will cover the programs that are academic or social in nature; the next two will focus on community service and athletics. The beauty of these programs is that they reflect not only the passion our teachers, staff, and parents have for learning, but more importantly the curiosity and ambition of our students.

Throughout the elementary schools, there are several math clubs, including Estabrook’s Math Olympiad, which brings fourth and fifth graders together to solve challenging problems, and Bowman’s Continental Math League, a before- and after-school club whose members have been first-place winners for the last five years. Other academic enrichment programs include Harrington Reads, a series of student–parent book discussions. These, as well as other programs sponsored by our PTAs and PTOs, help reinforce different aspects of our curriculum. Another interesting club that has been active at Hastings over the last few years is Odyssey of the Mind, which provides students from kindergarten through college with creative problem-solving opportunities. Hastings’ students have participated in various levels of competition, and just this year a new Odyssey of the Mind Club was started at Diamond. The elementary schools also organize events that are of interest to the entire family, including international dinners and festivals. Just last spring, Fiske families shared an international potluck dinner with food from around the world. More recently, the Bridge community was treated to a fabulous dinner prepared by fifth graders participating in the Dinner Party Project, a program that educates children through the process of producing a dinner party for their parents.

As students progress through the system, the club and activity offerings become more student driven. At the middle school level, the clubs build on the academic enrichment offerings at the elementary level and begin to look more like those offered at the high school level. Both middle schools have academic and language clubs, musical groups, and opportunities for kids to come together to share their interests in games and creative arts.

There are currently eighty-two active clubs and organizations at Lexington High School, including co-curricular clubs, student government, special interest groups, student publications, religious and ethnic clubs, social awareness organizations, and service clubs. As you walk down the main hall of the high school, you cannot help but notice the variety of posters publicizing different events and meetings.

Although student interest drives the types of activities offered, their success is dependent on teachers and staff who volunteer their guidance and support. Teachers and staff serve as role models for our students when they pursue co-curricular activities together. This past weekend, the Bowman Players, composed of Bowman teachers and staff, performed “Hansel and Gretel with a Twist.” Bowman principal and performer Mary Anton-Oldenburg described the play as “a huge community builder—especially for students seeing familiar adults in unfamiliar roles, like me singing and dancing.”

In the next column, I will explore the role of community service in our schools. In the meantime, please let your school principal know if you or your children have additional ideas for co-curricular activities.