



Lexington Public Schools

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Our Schools **Introducing Our Three New K-5 Leaders**

November 8, 2007

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This is third of three articles introducing the new leaders of the Lexington Public Schools.

“I love being a principal!” is a signature phrase for Elaine Mead. Ms. Mead joined Harrington Elementary School this summer as the new principal after serving for nine years as principal of the Huckleberry Hill School in Lynnfield. Ms. Mead began her career in education as a third grade teacher in Virginia. Although a Massachusetts resident for the last 20 years, Ms. Mead still occasionally gives a hint of her Southern background with a friendly, “Y’all.” She and her husband are the parents of two grown children, and her experience as a parent has deeply affected her philosophy and practice as an educator.

Ms. Mead loves elementary education because it is during these years that children exert their passions and opinions and begin finding their own voice. She believes that making strong connections with students and their families is the essential foundation for developing their confidence and competence, emotionally and academically. Ms. Mead's core values are closely aligned with the overall goals of the Lexington Public Schools: academic excellence; respectful and caring relationships; and a culture of reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement. She sees her job as translating this philosophy in an action-oriented way. She knows that parenting is hard work and works closely with the PTA and teachers to collaborate on how best to support parents.

The diversity of the student population and community of Lexington also attracted Ms. Mead. She is impressed with how the school district embraces diversity and cited the commitment to the Family Friends program, in which children who are part of the METCO program have a monthly play date with a family from their school. She looks forward to furthering this and other programs during her tenure at Harrington.

We are also privileged to welcome Dr. Jade Reitman as the new principal of the Bridge School. She served as the principal of the South and Sanborn Schools in Andover for a total of 15 years. She was also a language arts specialist in Middleton for 6 years, where she was responsible for guiding curriculum and instructional strategies in the areas of reading and language arts. Dr. Reitman's prior experiences as a principal and language arts specialist are invaluable to the work she is doing at Bridge. Dr. Reitman earned her doctorate in education from Boston College.

Dr. Reitman was drawn to Lexington because of its outstanding reputation. Since July, she has devoted considerable time learning about the dynamic Bridge community. She is delighted to be part of such a proud school family, which has high aspirations for its children. She has also been busy working with the newest members of the Bridge faculty, helping them become integral members of this vibrant school community.

Another aspect of Dr. Reitman's job that has kept her busy has been improving the physical appearance of the school to ensure that the children have an orderly and pleasant environment in which to learn. Dr. Reitman takes the safety and security part of her job especially seriously and to that end has developed new procedures for drop-off and pick-up that emphasize what the children need to do to ensure their own safety. Moving almost 440 children in and out the building in less than fifteen minutes is no easy task.

Dr. Reitman's experiences have helped her understand that through listening, communicating, problem-solving, and planning together, we will attain our mission at the Bridge School—"helping students develop their intellectual, aesthetic, and physical capabilities."

The new principal of the Bowman School, Dr. Mary Antón-Oldenburg, is not a newcomer to Lexington. Dr. Antón-Oldenburg moved to Lexington approximately 20 years ago. As an educator committed to public schools, she knew she wanted a strong progressive school district for her then preschool-age children; she has not been disappointed. "The Lexington Public Schools have provided my children with a nurturing yet academically challenging atmosphere and a strong sense of their own abilities and the importance of giving back to the world. It is an honor to work in town and be able to give back some of the support my own children received."

Dr. Antón-Oldenburg started out her educational career in the Brookline Public Schools teaching seventh, sixth, and fifth grades and K-2. This, coupled with previous teaching in high school in California, has given her a K-12 perspective that helps to shape her vision of schooling. "Regardless of the grade level, our goal is to create engaged, enthusiastic, lifelong learners." Dr. Antón-Oldenburg received her doctorate from Harvard Graduate School of Education. In addition to her work as a teacher, she was an elementary school principal in Westford, MA, in a new public school that she opened.

Dr. Antón-Oldenburg adds, "The Bowman community is a perfect place for me. Teachers and staff are collaborative; they are eager to work with a principal who has energy and ideas, and they are not afraid to share their own." Dr. Antón-Oldenburg is enjoying the high level of educational dialogue, the commitment to academic excellence that characterizes the staff. She is also enjoying learning to dance and sing as a "Candy Kid" for the staff play. She says, "I haven't been in a play since seventh grade, and no one has ever wanted me to sing anything before!"

All three of our new principals are rapidly rising to the pleasures and the challenges of their positions. We are privileged to have them, and I look forward to working with them to continue Lexington's tradition of excellence. Please join me in welcoming Elaine Mead, Jade Reitman, and Mary Antón-Oldenburg to our schools.