



# 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](mailto:pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us)  
fax: (781) 863-5829

## Our Schools

### LEF's 20 Years of Partnership

December 4, 2008

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

The Lexington Education Foundation (LEF) is celebrating 20 years of partnership with the Lexington Public School System. As a relative newcomer to the LPS, I find it amazing that this organization, which has had such profound impact on our schools, has been around for two decades.

In 1989, LEF was established to respond to growing community concern regarding the effects of Proposition 2½ on public education in Lexington and to encourage and underwrite innovative learning projects. One of my predecessors, Superintendent Phillip Geiger, suggested the concept of a private, non-profit organization to support local schools. With tremendous support from a group of citizens, the idea took root.

The original mandate, to provide annual funding for innovative pilot projects outside of the school operating budget, has expanded to include funding for professional development, experts-in-residence, and teacher mentoring initiatives. Grants are awarded in three categories: program grants to teachers or administrators for innovative programming, community grants to schools for school-wide initiatives, and summer fellowships to teachers for summer study. Grant proposals come directly from Lexington educators, and each grant is awarded based on merit, as determined by a rigorous review process to ensure that every program funded is high quality, well planned, and efficient in its use of funds.

The initiatives funded by LEF make a difference in enriching math skills, improving literacy, promoting 21st century technology, providing professional development for teachers, supporting the arts, and enhancing social competency. Many of the programs that parents encounter every day are LEF initiatives. Open Circle, Big Back Yard, sophisticated technology to support curriculum, teacher mentoring, climbing walls, reading comprehension tool kits, and math challenge games are just some of the many LEF-funded programs making a difference in the lives and learning of Lexington school children.

The impact LEF has had on our schools should not be underestimated. LEF has awarded more than \$2.7 million since it started funding grants in 1991. This year alone, LEF awarded almost \$414,000 in grants – approximately \$320,000 for 41 program grants, \$40,000 for 11 summer fellowships, and \$54,000 for 10 community grants to the schools and the Superintendent's office. Funds for these programs are raised through events and through direct solicitation of Lexington citizens, businesses, and corporations.

Beyond the numbers and dollars, however, there is a more important story about LEF. LEF is a community organization in every sense of the word. Every effort it makes – from raising money to distributing funds – is made with the goal of bringing the Lexington community together around the shared goal of excellent public education. For example, LEF hosts two events a year – the Trivia Bee and Educated Tastes – and since I have become superintendent, I have not missed either. Hundreds of Lexington community members who look forward to these events every year share my enthusiasm. One of LEF's most popular fundraising efforts is the Staff Teacher Appreciation and Recognition (STAR) program that has allowed parents to honor almost 17,000 teachers and staff since 1991. This year, in honor of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, LEF will host a gala on March 21, 2009, and the organization is looking forward to celebrating public education and community with old and new friends.

From where I sit in the central office, LEF has simply made my job easier and more inspiring. I marvel at the work of LEF and the impact it has had. When I go to recruit teachers, the concept of an LEF grant for innovative programming is a lure to work in Lexington. When I want to bring in the very best speakers for professional development, I know that LEF supports my efforts. Truly a partner with the Lexington Public Schools, LEF provides a means for Lexingtonians to show support for the school system, take pride in community spirit, and help educate our children. Congratulations, LEF, on 20 years of good work. I look forward to working with you for many more.