



# Lexington Public Schools

1557 Massachusetts Avenue ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

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

(781) 861-2550  
email: [pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us)  
fax: (781) 863-5829

## **“Our Schools”**

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*Steven Flynn, Ed.D., Principal, Clarke Middle School*  
*Joanne Hennessy, Principal, Diamond Middle School*

### **“Children of Educators Dedicated to Community and Education”**

“This building is rededicated to the people of the town of Lexington in appreciation of their support and commitment to the pursuit of educational excellence for the children of Lexington,” so read the plaques that hang in the entrances of our respective schools. What an appropriate message to greet teachers like us who came to Lexington from communities where education was seen very differently. One of us began our career in an agrarian community in upstate New York where a teacher's primary goal was keeping students in school until they turned sixteen. The other began his administrative career in South Central Los Angeles in a three-square-mile neighborhood with eighty thousand residents where a teacher's primary goal was keeping students out of harm's way. We both ended up in Lexington because of the community's commitment to educational excellence.

We continue to see evidence of Lexington's commitment to excellence on a daily basis. Whether it be the dedicated parents who take the time to meet with us to determine the ideal placement for their child or the local residents who pulled together to ensure that parking lots and sidewalks were plowed from a spring snowstorm so the middle school musical could go on as scheduled. It is the teachers who embrace the challenge of dealing with the difficult emotional transition young adolescents make and tailor their teaching style so that students can explore freely and conceptualize increasingly complex concepts. It is the teaching teams that meet twice a week to discuss the progress of individual students, ensuring that they are developing academically as well as socially and emotionally, and that children are not left behind. It is the administrative team that spends its summer pulling together the most effective organization for each distinctive academic year.

What we have learned is that class size is the key to delivering the caliber of education all students deserve. Instead of being lectured, as was the custom in junior high schools, middle school teaching is most effective when it is experiential. Students learn about subjects such as ancient civilizations by enacting different aspects of Greek life and then completing a variety of assignments about their experiences. This is done most efficiently when class sizes fall within acceptable ranges.

We have learned that technology should not be used as a substitute for teaching; rather, it should be used to enhance students' ability to focus on a particular process. For example, the advent of word processing has opened endless possibilities for students to refine their editing and writing skills from a very early age. Smart boards, electronic chalkboards that can capture and save what is written on them in an instant, enable

teachers not only to show their students multiple ways to arrive at the same answer, but also to share that information with them instantly. We have learned that technology is the library of the future and can provide instant access to a breadth of subject matters, including professional development materials that once were relegated to basements and vaults at large universities, requiring teachers to travel great distances and spend countless hours reading through thousands of pages of materials to do their research.

As teachers first and foremost, we know that innovation is the foundation for maintaining teaching excellence. In recent years, there have been an increasing number of professionals dedicated to improving instructional methodology using empirically collected data. Our students would benefit from having teachers who could participate in conferences led by these and other innovators. They would also benefit from continued curricular support. Our low ratio of administrative headcount to staff has made it challenging to support and continually update the curriculum mapping needed to ensure consistency across schools and continuity between grade levels.

The most important lesson we have learned is to always draw on the strength and dedication of our community. As the children of educators, we have seen this in action throughout our lives. Whether it be in upstate New York, Long Island, South Central LA, or suburban Massachusetts, we must continue to work together to protect educational excellence each and every day. We look forward to your continued support in this important endeavor.