



Lexington Public Schools

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Our Schools

Students Strengthen Our Community

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My December article focused on the value of co-curricular activities. This week's article focuses on community service, an important component of our educational offerings in the Lexington Public Schools. All students are expected to complete forty hours of community service before graduation, but Lexington students' commitment to caring for others begins long before they reach high school.

Community service helps strengthen students' relationships beyond their peer groups and families. For example, fourth graders at Bowman have been enjoying pen pal relationships with seniors in the community for several years. The students are encouraged to maintain these relationships once the year is done. One older resident, who has stayed in contact with her pen pal who is now a senior in high school, has been pleased to have had this relationship and be a part of this young woman's life throughout the years. Students from Clarke participate in a supper club with seniors. In November, the students enjoyed eating pizza and playing Bingo at a local senior center. Other students have lent a helping hand to some of our senior citizens by raking leaves.

Community service projects also teach students how to be action oriented and do something to address the challenging problems we face as a society. Many of our schools have organized successful food drives. In just two weeks, the Kindergartners at Harrington collected close to 200 items for the Lexington Food Pantry. Clarke's Explorer Team helped organize the school's 13th Annual Food Drive, filling 95 boxes for those in need. Students at Bridge have helped combat hunger by volunteering at the Bristol Lodge Soup Kitchen. Diamond's grade eight students sponsored the second largest food drive for the Boston Food Bank last spring. Just recently, the Estabrook community collected fifteen bags of blankets, rugs, towels, and soft cloths. The collection was delivered to the Animal Rescue League of Boston and the North East Animal Shelter in Salem. The shelters' staff was thankful and impressed with the responsiveness of our community.

As the holidays approached, our students were mindful of other children who are less fortunate than they are. Students at Fiske collected many boxes of gifts for Toys for Tots, and students at Hastings and Clarke collected winter coats to ensure that other children would be warm enough throughout the winter.

By the time our students reach high school, they are eager to participate in a greater variety of community service projects. The approved list of community service opportunities includes dozens of activities in the areas of education services, health services, on-campus activities, and conservation and environmental projects. Students are encouraged to seek approval for projects that are not on the list but in which they have a strong interest. Most importantly, they are encouraged to enjoy making our community and our world a better place.