



Lexington Public Schools

146 Maple Street ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

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

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

Our Schools

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Beginning last January, the *Lexington Minuteman* graciously agreed to publish “Our Schools” to provide residents with timely and important information about the Lexington Public Schools. The first three articles this school year will introduce five key leaders, who are new to Lexington, and their vision for the Lexington Public Schools. In this week's article, I will introduce Linda Chase, the new Director of Student Services. The second and third articles will introduce the new town-wide Director of Public Facilities and the three new K-5 principals.

We are fortunate to have hired Linda Chase as our new Director of Student Services. She is a highly experienced school leader with significant background working with students, parents, and educators. She has a total of 31 years as a special education administrator and former special education teacher. Most recently, she worked as the Director of Student Services for the Westwood Public Schools.

In Lexington, the Student Services Department provides a wide array of support services for all 6,200 students, including approximately 1,200 students with special needs. Mrs. Chase's department is responsible for PreK-12 guidance, mental health, nursing services, and special education. Her overall role is to ensure the highest-quality special education and support services for the students and to provide coordinated and cost-effective support services from a building and district-wide perspective.

In today's complex world, the academic and social demands on our students are enormous. By providing them with the appropriate support services, when needed, we help students thrive academically and socially. For example, the Multidisciplinary Support Team at Lexington High School provides an array of services for general and special education students with social and emotional difficulties. The program offers a continuum of support services including specialized instruction, in-school counseling and therapeutic intervention, collaboration with outside health providers and agencies, and support to parents. In addition, the program can provide support and consultation to teachers to help students in the general education environment.

This past year, at the secondary school level, the department expanded three programs and created two others that respond to the current needs of students with language-based learning disabilities, students with autism spectrum and related disorders, and students with emotional disabilities. By providing quality programs and services within the Lexington Public Schools, the educational experience improves for all students. In addition, students who might otherwise have gone to schools outside of Lexington can remain in their home community, be educated with their non-disabled peers, and participate in school and community activities while maintaining and developing academic and social connections. These new and expanded programs also offer a significant financial advantage over high-cost private school tuitions and transportation.

One of Mrs. Chase's goals this year is to collaborate with teachers and administrators to identify research-based best practices that help struggling students. For example, Tiered Intervention provides students with support services, including support in reading and math, before referring them to special education. This intervention model ensures support for struggling students while preserving special education for students who need specialized instruction. The model is built on frequent data collection and monitoring of student progress.

Mrs. Chase sees parent involvement as an essential component of program development and implementation. She will work closely with parents through the Parent Advisory Council and various subcommittees to gain a parent perspective when expanding existing programs and services.

In her office, Mrs. Chase has a sculpture of hands shaking to symbolize the spirit of her vision for trust and partnership within the school community. It is with this vision in mind that she will be overseeing the multifaceted needs of our students.

If you are interested in meeting Mrs. Chase, please join us on Thursday, October 11, at 7:30 p.m. at Lexington High School's Library Media Center. She and I have been invited to be the guest speakers at the Special Needs Parents Advisory Council meeting. This is a meeting open to the public, and I encourage anyone interested in learning more about our vision for the future of Student Services to join us.

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