



# Lexington Public Schools

## *Office of the Superintendent of Schools*

---

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** School Committee

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

**Re:** Report on 2007-2008 System Goals

**Date:** June 17, 2008

I am very pleased to report that the faculty and administration made significant progress on all of the School Committee's 2007-2008 system goals. Some of the major accomplishments this past year have included:

- Completing K-12 curriculum reviews in three departments;
- expanding the use of professional learning communities to improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- providing all administrators with professional development to improve supervision and evaluation;
- launching the new Department of Public Facilities, in cooperation with the Town Manager;
- lowering energy consumption in all schools; and
- improving the budget and financial reporting to the School Committee and community.

In addition, the Student Services Department implemented five new programs that saved the Town 1.8 million dollars and provided more students high quality education programs within the school district.

Two of the most significant achievements this past year, which were not identified at the start of the 2007-2008 school year, were:

1. The report on the achievement gap in the Lexington Public Schools (Documentation, Research, and Recommendations) and the work of the task force; and
2. Planning and preparing for full-day kindergarten next fall.

2007-2008 was an outstanding year for the Lexington Public Schools. My sincerest thanks to everyone that helped us achieve our goals and improve learning for all students.

The following three values represent the essential and enduring commitments of the Lexington Public Schools:

1. Academic excellence
2. Respectful and caring relationships
3. A culture of reflection, conversation, collaboration and commitment to continuous improvement

## **REPORT ON 2007-2008 SYSTEM GOALS**

- 1. Ensure that the academic, social, and emotional needs of students are identified and matched with appropriate and effective curriculum and instructional experiences.**

### **Key Indicators:**

- A. Conduct Year 2 of the K-12 curriculum review processes for Mathematics and Physical Education/Wellness.**

The K-12 physical education curriculum and mathematics review committees presented their year 2 reports to the School Committee on June 3 and 17, respectively.

- B. Conduct the first phase of the K-12 curriculum review processes for Science/Technology/Engineering.**

The K-12 science review committee presented its year 1 report to the School Committee on June 3.

- C. Continue to expand the district's capacity to use data to assess programs and student work.**

The district collaborated with Boston College for the third year on the data analysis and strategic planning process. The quantity and quality of the MCAS data analyzed was extremely beneficial to principals and teachers.

This past year all school improvement plans were based on SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time bound). The results from the 2007-2008 school improvement plans will be presented to the School Committee in the fall.

For the third year, K-8 teachers worked together in professional learning communities to focus on ways to improve student learning. Each teacher team wrote a specific SMART goal, based on an area of instruction that needed to be improved. Teachers presented their results at May faculty meetings. In most cases, teachers reported significant student improvement.

Although not on the September goals, Vito LaMura, past LEA President, wrote a 61-page report that researched the achievement gap for African-American students in the United States and in Lexington. The district formed an Achievement Gap task force that recommended short- and long-term steps at its June 10 meeting. Next year, the K-5 literacy department will expand its tiered intervention program, based on frequent use of data. All nine schools will train their teachers in the use of regular formative assessments that will be used to modify instruction for struggling students.

Last December, when we learned that Lexington might be eligible for a full-day kindergarten grant, we applied for and received the State grant. From January until June, substantial work was done to present the benefits of full-day kindergarten to the community, conduct parent interest surveys, meet with parent groups, prepare financial projections, and plan changes to the school day. Next fall, there will be 19 full-day kindergarten classrooms and 1 half-day kindergarten classroom.

**D. Continue to improve the safety programs in all schools.**

The schools collaborated with the police and fire departments to improve our programs to respond to emergencies. All schools continued its long-standing practice to conduct safety drills. For the first time, the Fire Department provided training to all new teachers at the end of August.

Efforts were made to hire a chemical hygiene officer. Unfortunately, there were no applicants.

After researching various companies that offer electronic home-school communications systems and their costs, the FY 09 budget includes funds to hire a company next fall. By next fall, all nine schools will have a functioning electronic home-school communications system in place.

**2. Ensure that the faculty and staff are of high quality and are enabled and supported to perform at the highest professional level.**

**Key Indicators:**

**A. Support teacher professional development that increases academic excellence and student achievement.**

This past school year the faculty participated in district-wide and building-level professional development that focused on "Building Professional Learning Communities." Teachers worked in collaborative groups on SMART goals that were designed to improve student learning. At the K-5 level, the PLC work and results were shared in collaborative groups during the May professional development day, and the results were very positive. The Middle School faculty worked in PLCs and focused on creating common formative assessments. They targeted their work on these common assessments to improve student learning. The High School faculty completed the NEASC self-assessment process that included creating common learning standards for courses within major academic departments.

**B. Provide administrators with professional development to improve supervision and evaluation.**

During the past two years, all administrators were provided three days of training to improve supervision and evaluation of teachers. Training included analyzing lessons and writing clear observation reports. Pairs of supervisors were assigned to watch the same class and compare their classroom observations to increase inter-rater reliability.

**C. Expand the capacity of the school system to deliver services, especially for students with special needs.**

The FY 09 budget includes two new K-5 special education programs. Next year, we will add a special education reading program for dyslexic students, and expand the special education language program. These programs will improve the range of services we offer, and make it possible to keep more students in-district.

**D. Foster a more diverse workforce in keeping with Lexington's goal to embrace diversity.**

The Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources attended numerous affirmative action job fairs to attempt to increase the number of minority hires. These job fairs were not successful. We will continue to explore what other options may be more successful. Two of our neighboring communities have withdrawn from the Affirmative Action Consortium after many years of membership, due to low numbers of candidates.

**3. Obtain and manage the financial resources, which maintain and improve the quality of the educational program and physical condition of our schools.**

**Key Indicators:**

**A. Implement cost-savings opportunities through the school system while maintaining high quality service (e.g., purchasing energy management, facilities management, special education).**

The Public Facilities Department (PFD) has continued to reduce energy consumption. This past year, we reduced electricity consumption by 13%. The overall energy budget will end the year with approximately a \$258,000 surplus. In custodial services, the department will enter into a performance-based contract for cleaning supplies, chemicals, and equipment. The selected vendor will support the department in the planning of tasks, determining the correct staffing levels, and employee training. In addition, custodial vacancies in the district are being consolidated to LHS to take advantage of the ability to contract third shift cleaning at that school. An expanded preventative maintenance (PM) program will also be implemented in 2009. An inventory of 1400 pieces of equipment has been completed. The roof inventory of the ten school buildings has been completed; a roof PM program will be implemented in 2009.

As previously mentioned, we implemented/expanded five new special education programs that saved 1.8 million dollars over what we projected would have been spent had the programs not been started. Since we planned on some savings when the FY 08 budget was built, the non-budgeted additional savings was approximately \$949,000.

**B. Continue the focus on maintaining, reviving or establishing basic operational procedures throughout the school system to ensure consistent delivery of operational services.**

The School Department is in the process of reinstating or reestablishing standard operating procedures within the district. The most prominent and active department has been the Business Office. The Assistant Superintendent has implemented the auditor's request for

standard paperwork to be on file and training for the administrative support staff to know what the requirements are going forward. In June, the student activity accounts at schools that have had a change over of principals during the last two years will be audited.

**C. Improve the district's capacity to monitor and forecast the school budget.**

In order to improve the district's capacity to monitor and forecast the school budget, the School Committee authorized two new positions within the business office (Finance Manager and Transportation Coordinator positions). The Finance Manager position supervises the entire accounts payable, payroll, and accounting staff, and is the gatekeeper on all payroll changes. The Finance Manager position will insure that all positions are budgeted and will identify where variances have occurred throughout the school year. This position is responsible for monitoring 85% of the school budget.

The Transportation Coordinator provides district-wide control of bus routes and service to ensure that safety and efficiency are primary goals of our transportation program.

**D. Negotiate collective bargaining agreements with seven labor unions.**

Five of the seven collective bargaining contracts are in place for next year. We are currently in mediation with the Instructional Assistants. The 2008-2009 ALA contract needs to be negotiated.

**E. Continue initiatives started last year.**

The district continued major initiatives started last year. Initiatives that were successfully completed included: Reorganization of the Department of Public Facilities, K-5 redistricting, high school accreditation, supervision and evaluation training, and implementation of five new/expanded special education programs. Other initiatives that are on-going include: professional learning communities, three curriculum review committees, work on the achievement gap, energy conservation, and new academic intervention programs (middle school math intervention, middle school executive functioning program).