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LPS GOALS 2018 - 2020

The Collective Goals of the
Lexington School Committee
and the Superintendent of Schools



An Overview

Goal-Setting and the Superintendent Evaluation Process

In 2012, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed a new educator evaluation process for all teachers, administrators, and school superintendents in the Commonwealth. The process is based on a five-step cycle of self-assessment, goal-setting, implementation, and formative and summative evaluations. An educator's performance is measured against a possible four (4) standards, 41 indicators, and 21 elements. Superintendents are required to submit one **measurable professional practice goal** and one **measurable student learning goal** and at least two district goals developed collaboratively with school committee members. The school committee is not required to evaluate the superintendent on all 62 indicators and elements; instead, superintendents and school committee members are encouraged to work together to identify which standards, indicators, and/or elements will be used in the superintendent's annual evaluation.

In 2012, the Massachusetts Association of School Committee developed a Superintendent Evaluation Guide to show how the superintendent and school committee could work together to develop goals that inform the superintendent evaluation process.

"The first step of the five step cycle is to review the entire system and begin a process for the superintendent. This includes having the school committee and superintendent come to agreement around the standards, rubrics, evidence of performance, and goals built around the state standards as well as personal, professional goals."

We, the Lexington School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools, extend our heartfelt appreciation to the educators who work tirelessly on behalf of our children, and we remain deeply committed to working collaboratively and in the best interests of the young people we serve. The four (4) goals identified on the following pages are aligned to the MA DESE standards and indicators and reflect our collective priorities. The goals, strategies, timeline, and evidence provide a rich source of data that will inform the superintendent's annual evaluation.

Goal 1: Community Outreach

By June 2019, the superintendent will meet with 100% of identified stakeholders to develop an understanding of the experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and values that shape the Lexington school community.

SELF ASSESSMENT/REFLECTION:

On July 1, 2018, I was appointed the new Superintendent of Schools in Lexington. Since then, I have worked to learn as much as possible about all Town stakeholders, including those affiliated with both the municipality and our schools. As the new leader of Lexington Public Schools, there is nothing more important than hearing the perspectives and understanding the view points of all our constituents; hence, this professional practice goal focused on community outreach.

Entry meetings with constituents are easy, but actively listening to one's school community and developing plans to address what has been heard takes time. Slowly, I have begun to learn more about the hopes and dreams of our students, parents, teachers, administrators, and Town leaders. School committee members and others have offered their advice on people with whom I should speak, way leads on to way, and my community outreach grows. In the coming days, weeks, and months, I hope to establish the kind of culture of mutual respect and trust that is necessary to serve all children well. The first step in creating a respectful culture and climate and forging a pathway to the future is to reach out to a diverse group of constituents in the community.

In order to lead effectively, I must be able to answer questions such as: What are the experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and values that shape our school community? Given the competing demands and the incongruous nature of educational systems, how can we establish a sense of alignment, coherence, and unity? What are the problems to be solved and what are the hopes and dreams to be realized?

A "community outreach" professional practice goal will help me gain an intimate understanding of the community and hopefully the ability to work collaboratively with the school community to preserve what works in Lexington, to problem-solve and refine those aspects of our work that need attention, and to create new possibilities that ultimately will better serve our students.



Community Outreach: Strategies, Timeline, and Evidence

By June 2019, the superintendent will meet with 100% of identified stakeholders to develop an understanding of the experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and values that shape the Lexington school community.

STRATEGIES: Effective school leaders establish a culture of mutual respect and trust to better serve all children. I hope to build a strong foundation by engaging in the following actions:

1.1 Hold individual meetings with all Town administrators to learn how the municipality functions in Lexington (Sept. - June 2019).

1.2 Meet with 20+ community groups to develop a shared understanding of Lexington's core values and beliefs (Sept. - January 2019).

1.3 Attend a faculty meeting in each of the ten schools to get to know educators (Sept.-June 2019).

1.4 Conduct site visits to each of the ten schools (Sept.- June 2019).

1.5 Shadow three Lexington High School students (e.g. Asian, Boston, LGBTQ, CP1, CP2, Honors/AP, etc.), for a full day to (1) gain a student's perspective; (2) to observe teaching and learning at LHS in a wide variety of settings (Sept.-June 2019).

EVIDENCE: In order to demonstrate what I have learned, I will submit four pieces of evidence, including (1) a list of entry interview dates with Town administrators; (2) a list of community groups with whom I have met and a brief synopsis of each discussion; (3) a copy of my written principal observations for the ten faculty meetings I attended; and (4) a reflective journal entry to chronicle my experiences shadowing three diverse LHS students.

ALIGNMENT: Standard I: Instructional Leadership, Indicators 1-B-1 Instructional Practices; 1-D-2 Observations and Feedback; Standard III: Family Engagement; III-A-2 Community and Business Engagement.

Goal 2: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

By June 2020, there will be a 20% increase in inclusive and equitable practices, opportunities for students to learn with their peers, and in time-on-learning.

SELF ASSESSMENT/REFLECTION:

In the fall of 2018, the Superintendent and LPS Administrators' Council developed a 37-page position paper called, "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Our Call to Action." The purpose of the report was to engage the Lexington school community in our collaborative effort to problem-solve, address, and monitor progress toward creating an inclusive and equitable environment for all.

"Our Call to Action" is an enormous undertaking, and the diversity, equity, and inclusion ("DEI") efforts described in the body of the paper could be considered a comprehensive strategic plan all its own. Inclusion is a topic that is at the core of our "DEI" effort, which is why we chose to make it the basis of our student learning goal. Shortly after the superintendent's arrival on July 1, 2018, parents of children in the Developmental Learning Program (DLP) expressed concern that the time their children were included in the general educational setting was decreasing, not increasing. They cited data to underscore their belief that while inclusive practices are increasing statewide, children entering the elementary DLP program in Lexington tend to spend less time with their peers in the general education setting than they did in pre-kindergarten.

Researchers Thomas Hehir and Laura Schifter (2012) and others have written about the academic and social benefits of inclusion for all. Moreover, in the research Schifter conducted in Massachusetts, "the results showed that the probability that a student with a high-incidence disability (such as a learning disability) in a full inclusion placement graduated on time was about 84 percent, whereas an otherwise similar student in a substantially separate placement had a probability of 43 percent."

My personal philosophy is that inclusion benefits all students. Children should begin in the general educational setting and move to a more restrictive setting only when absolutely necessary. I also believe that our profession has an obligation to rethinking disciplinary practices, which can be accomplished by: ensuring that if punished, students are still learning (e.g. suspending a student for skipping school is a counter-intuitive practice); by increasing classroom management and training opportunities for educators and administrators, by adopting positive interventions and approaches; and through restorative practices designed to educate students to right their wrongs and learn from their mistakes.

Although our overall suspension rates are relatively low (a total of approximately 60 suspensions at LHS for the entire 2016 - 2017 school year), there is a significant gap between students of color and students with special needs compared to their counterparts, which mirrors state and national trends. In 2016 - 2017, African American/Black students were a little more than 4 times more likely than White students to have one or more suspensions, and students with disabilities were just over two and a half times more likely to have one or more suspensions.

While a 20% increase in inclusive practices may be an ambitious goal, we hope to make progress toward increasing inclusive practices in two ways: (1) by increasing the time students in the DLP program are included in the general educational setting; and (2) by decreasing the number of disproportionate suspensions for students with special needs and for students of color (thereby, increasing time on learning).



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategies, Timeline, and Evidence

By June 2020, there will be a 20% increase in inclusive and equitable practices, opportunities for students to learn with their peers, and in time-on-learning.

STRATEGIES:

2.1 Conduct an equity audit to understand current strengths and opportunities for improvement in the district, in schools, and in classrooms (January 2019).

2.2 Superintendent organizes a Community Input Team to problem-solve matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (December 2018).

2.3 Calculate the amount of time students in the DLP program are spending in an inclusive setting by analyzing students' IEPs. Develop a plan to increase the amount of time spent in the students' least restrictive inclusive setting (January 2019).

2.4 Communicate the district's response to the consultants' recommendations and progress made on the DLP audit that occurred last year (November 2018).

2.5 Develop a common language and consistent approach to recording and responding to disciplinary infractions between grade spans in order to develop a baseline (January 2019).

2.6 Provide professional learning in culturally responsive pedagogical practices and alternatives to discipline, such as restorative circles (Sept.-June 2019).

2.7 Select a protocol and implement a monthly LPS Admin. Council case study style conversation to discuss for the purpose of examining our practices and exploring disciplinary alternatives together (November 2018).

2.6 Work with all LPS Admin. Council members to write a DEI goal and monitor progress toward attaining the goal (September - June 2019).

2.7 Hold LPS Admin. Council meetings in schools throughout the year with host principals taking the lead and sharing their DEI work with colleagues (September - June 2019).

SELF-ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCE:

(1) Equity Audit Report; (2) CIT agendas and minutes; (3) a graph showing (a) the amount of time in DLP students' IEPs; (b) identifying other inclusive opportunities; and (c) the total increase in inclusion over time; (4) a Status Report on the DLP Audit/Evaluation; (5) a database of common disciplinary infractions and guidelines; (6) a comprehensive list of high-quality professional development offerings on diversity, equity, and inclusion; (7) a copy of the protocol and minutes from LPS Admin. Council meetings; (8) feedback on administrators' goals; (9) an analysis of disciplinary data by school and a calculation of any increases in time-on-learning.

ALIGNMENT: Standard I: Instructional Leadership; Indicators: 1-C-2 Adjustment to Practice; 1-D-1 Educator Goals; I-E-1 Knowledge and Use of Data; 1-E-2 School and District Goals; Standard II: Management and Operations; Indicator II-A-3 Student Safety, Health, and Social and Emotional Needs; II-C-1 Time for Teaching and Learning; II-C-2 Time for Collaboration; IV-A-3 Meetings.

Goal 3: Lexington's Strategic Plan

By September 2019, develop a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan that includes a vision, mission, core values, goals, strategies and indicators of success, charting the course for the future of the Lexington Public Schools.

SELF-ASSESSMENT/REFLECTION:

Seneca the Younger, once said, "If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable." No words could more eloquently capture the need for a thoughtful and purposeful plan than those of the great Roman philosopher. It is interesting that some find the planning process a colossal waste of time, energy, and effort, arguing that more effort should go into the work rather than the planning. While these naysayers have a point about the need for an organization to actually focus on the work, we need only examine what happens in the absence of a plan to understand the benefits. Decisions are made without context and precious resources are wasted. Tension mounts as individuals make up their own rules in the absence of a good road map. Leaders are criticized for making thoughtless decisions in a vacuum, one after another, with no insight into how a decision fits into a larger vision in the broader context.

As it turns out, do plans matter. And not just any sort of plan, but meaningful, cohesive, integrated plans linked together through a common purpose, a shared vision, and a thoughtful process. In Lexington, no strategic plan or - for that matter - no master

facilities plan - exists, although it appears that some efforts have been made in the past. For example, the district website still links to the "LPS Core Values" that "represent the essential and enduring commitments of the Lexington Public School community." The stated core values include (1) academic excellence; (2) respectful and caring relationships; and (3) a culture of reflection, conversation, collaboration, and commitment to continuous improvement." The aforementioned statement is followed by two hyperlinks: one labeled "district goals" and the other labeled, "system goals." One statement can be found under "district goals," underscoring the urgent need to address rapid increases in enrollment. The "system goals" link includes school improvement plans, the former superintendent's goals, and a mission and vision statement from March, 2013. There is little evidence of the utilization of the March 2013 document, which contains interesting ideas related to creativity, perseverance, intelligence, and globalization.



Lexington's Strategic Plan - Strategies, Timeline, and Evidence

By September 2019, develop a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan that includes a vision, mission, core values, goals, strategies and indicators of success, charting the course for the future of the Lexington Public Schools.

STRATEGIES:

- 3.1** Develop an LPS Strategic Planning Timeline (December 2018).
- 3.2** Work with community to develop a Master Facilities Plan to proactively address enrollment increases and decreases, creating the flexibility necessary for thoughtful decision-making and advocacy with respect to capital expenditures (July 2019).
- 3.3** Integrate the Master Facilities Plan into the LPS Strategic Plan (August 2019).
- 3.4** Integrate the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion "Our Call to Action" plan into the LPS Strategic Plan (August 2019).
- 3.5** Integrate the work of the SEL-CIT and the Social and Emotional Learning Plan into the LPS Strategic Plan (August 2019).
- 3.6** Launch the LPS Strategic Plan at the 2019 LPS Convocation on the first day of school for educators (August 2019).

EVIDENCE: (1) LPS Strategic Planning Timeline; (2) Agendas and minutes from strategic planning and master facilities planning efforts; (3) "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Our Call to Action" position paper; (4) Master Facilities Plan; (5) SEL-CIT Report/Plan; (6) LPS Strategic Plan.

ALIGNMENT: Standard III: Communication; III-C-2 Culturally Proficient Communication; Standard IV: Professional Culture; Indicator IV-A-1 Commitment to High Standards; Indicator IV-A-2 Mission and Core Values; Indicator IV-C-1 Communication Skills.

Goal 4: Promoting Student Learning, Engagement, and Well-Being in Our Schools

By September 2019, develop a thoughtful, integrated, and cohesive SEL Plan that links to the strategic plan and clearly articulates the district's vision and strategy for ensuring the social and emotional well-being of all Lexington students.

REFLECTION: When I interviewed for the Lexington superintendency, the job description placed an emphasis on students' Social and Emotional Learning. At the time, I asked how the Lexington school community defines Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and I learned that there was opportunity for further growth in this area. During my interview, I was asked to speak to my vision for LPS, and I developed a vision based on balance: "For every child, a hungry mind and a happy heart," and I created a possible framework for a strategic plan, embedding the philosophical tenets of Socrates into an integrated framework for social and emotional learning.

In recent years, SEL has captured the interest of cities and towns across Massachusetts and our nation. As student needs became more complex and resources diminished, the MA Association of School Superintendents and the MA Association of School Committees adopted SEL resolutions, encouraging administrators and educators, legislators, and elected officials to prioritize the health and well-being of our children. In my capacity as superintendent and former President of MASS, I frequently noted the unintended consequences of an over-emphasis on SEL and the need for a thoughtful approach if we are to help students become the people they wish to be and to learn the skills necessary to thrive in a global world.

A holistic approach to education is a concept as old as time. Plato wrote about the importance of social and emotional learning in *The Republic* and organizations like Collaborative

for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) suggest that SEL should be defined according to 5 core competencies, including (1) self-management; (2) self-awareness; (3) social-awareness; (4) relationship skills; and (5) responsible decision-making. While this may not be the definition of SEL we choose for Lexington, it provides a starting point for a discussion about the types of relational skills we hope to cultivate.

Recently, the school committee and I engaged in a conversation about "unfinished business" and what problems we hoped to resolve by initiatives that began last year. Ultimately, we endeavored to understand what we mean here in Lexington when we say, "social and emotional learning." After some healthy discussion and debate, we realized that SEL efforts of the past were designed to address what Marc Brackett, Ph.D., the Founding Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, calls the three most common student descriptions of their school experience: (1) stress, (2) boredom; and (3) tired. These concerns are consistently expressed by Lexington students in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey data. We recognize that in education and elsewhere human beings tend to gravitate toward the negative. As a first step toward gaining a clearer understanding of what problem we are trying to solve and why, we decided to capture our preferred future for students with three antonyms. It is our hope that one day soon these words will capture the educational experiences of all students in the Lexington Public Schools: *contentment, engagement, and energy.*



Goal 4: Promoting Student Learning, Engagement, and Well-Being in Our Schools

By September 2019, develop a thoughtful, integrated, and cohesive plan that links to the strategic plan and clearly articulates the district's vision and strategy for ensuring the social and emotional well-being of all Lexington students.

STRATEGIES:

4.1 Develop a job description and hire a Director of Student Services or a person to oversee student safety, civil rights, wrap-around services, social and emotional well-being, etc. (February, 2019)

4.2 Work with administrators and educators to develop an operating definition of what we mean by social and emotional learning in the Lexington Public Schools (Sept.-June 2019).

4.3 Integrate efforts to promote greater student contentment, engagement, and vitality into high-quality LPS professional development offerings (Sept.-June 2019).

4.4 Bring student-centered efforts undertaken in previous years to completion through the following actions:

(a) guide the work and provide the tools to enable the school committee to make a final decision on a later start for high school students (December 2019).

(b) meet with students, parents and teachers to understand the practical implications of the new Homework Policy and work with the school committee to explore possible changes (June 2019).

(c) analyze Estabrook's alternative homework pilot and make a recommendation to the school committee on whether the pilot should be expanded and the reasons why or why not (June, 2019).

(d) identify and articulate the connections between project-based learning (PBL) and social and emotional learning (SEL) and develop an implementation plan per grade level.

(e) successfully implement the Town's joint mental health initiative.

(f) include the World Languages study in the FY 2020 school budget and consider whether an earlier exploration of languages could help our students feel more content, engaged and energized.

4.5 Develop a High School Community Input Team to explore course sequences (e.g. Science) and high school graduation requirements.



Promoting Student Learning, Engagement, and Well-Being in Our Schools, Continued

By September 2019, develop a thoughtful, integrated, and cohesive plan that links to the strategic plan and clearly articulates the district's vision and strategy for ensuring the social and emotional well-being of all Lexington students.

EVIDENCE: (1) a job description and recommendation for Director of Student Services; (2) an operating definition of SEL for Lexington; (3) a compendium of high-quality SEL professional development offerings; (4) recommendations, presentations and SC agendas, minutes, and a final vote; (5) a refined Homework Policy and implementation plan; (6) a recommendation to the SC on whether or not to expand the Estabrook homework pilot; (7) a practical PBL implementation plan with differentiated expectations and supports for each grade-span; (8) an HS-CIT Report outlining findings of study on course sequence and graduation requirements.

ALIGNMENT: Standard III: Family and Community Engagement; Indicator III-B-1 Student Support; Standard IV: Continuous Learning; Indicators IV-B-1 Policies and Practices; IV-C-1 Communication Skills; IV-E-1 Shared Vision Development; IV-F-3 Consensus Building.