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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT— OCTOBER 26, 2021

1. Congratulations and Celebrations!

Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Awards

Each year I have the privilege of awarding Lexington High School students the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award for Academic Excellence. This year, I am recognizing three outstanding high school scholars: Anthony The, Powell Zhang, and Sudi Zhao. This annual award is given to high school students who have distinguished themselves in their pursuit of academic excellence during their high school careers. I am honored to recognize these hardworking and dedicated students for their academic achievements and their contributions to our school community. Way to go, Anthony, Powell, and Sudi!

World Wide English Organization

LHS junior Emily Wang was recognized in the current issue of the *Colonial Times* for starting her organization World Wide English, connecting Lexington teens with English Language Learners for one-hour support classes. Emily identified Diamond teacher Lonamae Shand as the individual whose gesture of kindness completely changed her trajectory in school, as she struggled with English language acquisition after moving here from China at age 11. Great teachers make a difference, and Emily's story is representative of the important work so many of our dedicated educators do to lift our students' voices. We are so proud of you, Emily!

2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community Input Team

This fall, the DEI CIT focusing on the adoption of a district-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) curriculum is continuing its work. At their first meeting in June, the group collectively identified some important vision statements for the effort in alignment with the LPS Strategic Plan. This summer, they came to consensus about using the [Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards](#) to evaluate our curriculum, particularly to identify where we are reaching these standards and where potential gaps may exist. The next step includes gathering data from all department and building leaders, as well as individual teachers, that will be presented back to the committee in early December. At that point, the DEI CIT will begin the important work of identifying the best components of what is currently happening in our schools and what gaps

need to be filled. There are also plans to create opportunities this winter for community members who are not a part of the DEI CIT to provide input on the process.

Religious Calendar Web Page and Google Form

As we work to consider how to approach the school calendar in inclusive ways that embrace the tremendous diversity in our school community, we recently sent out a [survey](#) to all community members asking them to share the cultural and religious observances that are important to their family. We have used the initial submissions to create a [web page](#) that provides suggestions for supporting students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. We are working with the community to develop collaborative messaging that honors the important religious and cultural observances and educates those who may not be familiar with their purpose. The web page and the included messages about observances are dynamic, and we welcome ongoing community input!

AAPI History Inclusion Benefit Concert

The “Asian American History Inclusion” Benefit Concert organized by Lexington High School students will be held on November 11th at the Lexington High School Auditorium during Veterans Day. The purpose of this concert is to raise funds for the inclusion of Asian American history in our textbooks. We will invite Asian veterans as honorable guests to this event.

“Asian Hate” has been a problem that existed for a long time in the United States. The pandemic saw a rise in violence against Asians as people blame them for causing this widespread disease. The shooting in Atlanta on March 16 resulted in the death of six Asian women and shocked the entire Asian American community. The tragedy has led many to contemplate and examine the injustice against Asians over the years. Why are Asians excluded from American society when they have contributed to building this country? Why are Asian American veterans, who are just as courageous and selfless as any other veteran, not receiving well-deserved recognition? Why are the contributions of Asian Americans reduced to mere paragraphs in our history textbooks as though they were not part of the hundreds of thousands who made America what it is today?

Massachusetts is the birthplace of the American spirit, and it has long been a model of education. To represent our mission to promote the integration of Asian American cultures in the local community, we would like to use music to educate and unite our diverse community. This is a small step towards greater acceptance of Asian American cultures in America, and we hope to see you there in support of our cause!



3. LPS COVID-19 Updates

Elementary COVID-19 Communications

A recent cluster of COVID-19 cases in one elementary school classroom prompted us to make some adjustments to how we notify parents. If there is a positive case in an elementary classroom, principals will notify all parents in that classroom. Nurses will continue their practice of separately notifying the parents of the children who are close contacts. As always, families should continue to check the [LPS COVID-19 Dashboard](#) that is on our website and updated Thursday evenings and Friday mornings.

Student Vaccination Rates and Vaccine Clinics

This evening, I sent a communication on vaccine rates, vaccination clinics for students 5-11 years old, and the extension of the mask mandate. To view this letter, please click [here](#).

Student vaccination rates among age-eligible students (12 and older) continues to increase. As of October 25, 2021, 89.1% of LPS students, grades 7 - 12 and 90.9% of LHS students (grades 9-12) were fully vaccinated. You can view these and other student vaccination data on our [COVID-19 reporting website](#).

LPS also continues to host flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinics for students, staff and community members. All upcoming vaccine clinic dates are posted [here](#). LPS will continue to schedule vaccine clinics monthly (adding dates to this page as they are planned). This allows students who get their first vaccine to come back for their second dose. This also provides an opportunity for our students to get vaccines when they turn 12. Booster shots are also being offered to staff during these clinics. To register and review more information about LPS vaccine clinics [here](#). Thank you to our incredible nurses who have worked hard to keep our community safe and continue to emulate our LPS Core Values: "Do Your Part" and "Care for Yourself and Others."

4. Elementary Curriculum Updates

Last year, several curricular changes were put in place that we have not yet had the opportunity to highlight. Elementary teachers have incorporated phonological and phonemic awareness into their literacy instruction, and K-5 Math educators are investigating the potential of a new math program. These are valuable shifts that enhance the teaching and learning process, and we want innovations like these to continue. This is a good opportunity to highlight that we are simultaneously working on a vetting process that will position us to balance the many competing educational demands. In the future, I have asked that we formally approve and communicate in advance any proposed pilots such as these with budgetary or instructional implications.

Literacy

Kindergarten is currently piloting three different phonics programs. Every Kindergarten schedule includes 30 minutes dedicated to word study/phonics instruction, in addition to the reading and writing blocks; all kindergarten classrooms are piloting one of the programs this year. The three

programs being piloted are Fundations, The Units of Study in Phonics, and the existing program we modified over time, Phonics, Words, and How They Work, plus Lively Letters. The Kindergarten teachers, Literacy Specialists, and school data teams will collect information about implementation and outcomes and will make a recommendation for a phonics program to adopt systemwide, K-2, for the school year 2022-2023. In addition to the pilot programs, all Kindergarten, first and second grade teachers have added The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program to their daily instruction as another tool to support students in reading.

Math

The K-12 Math Department is resuming their Curriculum Review. As part of that ongoing work, K-5 Math will be engaging in pilots and exploring potential math programs later this year. The programs that will be piloted were previously evaluated and selected by the K-5 Math Curriculum Review Committee in February of 2020, prior to the pandemic. Participating classrooms and teachers will pilot one new unit from one of the potential programs this year. Pilots will take place between the months of November and March.

The K-5 Math Coaches and Department Head will support all pilot classroom teachers with unit planning and will provide in-class support throughout the pilot unit. At the conclusion of each pilot unit, participating teachers will complete a district created evaluation rubric of the program they piloted. K-5 Math hopes to be able to make a determination and selection of a new K-5 math program by May 2022.

5. LPS Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2020-2021 Highlights

The full presentation of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey will be presented to the School Committee and the school community at the Lexington School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) meeting on [Monday, November 1, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.](#) In the meantime, highlights from the YRBS can be viewed [here](#). An overview and detailed results from 2021 can be accessed [here](#), and previous LPS YRBS reports can be found [here](#).

These data will be reviewed along with other important information at the upcoming Mental Health Summit with the School Committee and Select Board on December 13, 2021. This discussion is being organized by the [Lexington Mental Health Task Force \(LMHTF\)](#), which is funded and staffed by Town of Lexington officials and Lexington Public Schools staff. The LMHTF aims to provide leadership and a community-wide focus by engaging providers, residents of all ages, and the greater Lexington community in mental health and wellness initiatives. This program seeks to complement and promote mental health and wellness services already in place in Lexington, and to coordinate with current and future services.