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**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT— FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

**1. Congratulations and Celebrations!**

Core Value Awards

Congratulations to our fifth grade Hasting student, Avery Horvath, for winning the “Do Your Part” Core Values Exemplar Award. Avery was nominated by her fourth-grade teacher, Jessica Delande. Avery’s brother, Colby, was diagnosed with cancer around the same time that the pandemic hit and schools were closed. Throughout the past year, she has shown strength and courage through such trying times. Avery is a rock for her family and is constantly helping out with her brother and the household. She took remote learning seriously and never wavered in her academic efforts. Avery volunteers her time to her teachers (both past and present) over the summers and in the mornings before school. She maintains a positive spirit and we thank Avery for always doing her part!

Congratulations to our Clarke Health and PE teacher Nicole Linehan, for winning the “Care for Yourself and Others” Core Values Exemplar Award. Nicole was nominated by her Clarke colleague, Kelly Harrington. Nicole organizes and leads early morning Zoom exercise sessions to encourage a healthy lifestyle. This helps fellow teachers (remote and hybrid) feel connected, relieve stress, be active and start the day off with friends. Thank you for caring for yourself and others, Nicole!

Congratulations to our LHS student, Kristina Wong, for winning the “Use Your Mind” Core Values Exemplar Award. Kristina was nominated by her friend and fellow Senator, Sara Mei. Kristina serves as Senate Secretary which is a hard and challenging position. She writes the minutes for Senate meetings and also is the chair of the Communications Committee. In a year when unifying and making sure that the message of what the Senate does get distributed to the student body is difficult, Kristina has always used her mind during every Senate and Communications meeting to make sure that even the hardest plans to carry out are followed through. Kristina listens to everyone’s ideas and is a valuable leader in both the Senate and the community. She comes up with new ideas and always includes the logistical side of decision-making. Kristina takes a rigorous course load which definitely uses her mind as a student but still, she makes time to do plenty of community service and runs clubs outside of school to help others. Thank you for using your mind, Kristina!

### The Chronicles of Jane, Book Seven

Congratulations, once again, to our talented students and Kate Bromley, Carly Kalivas, John Diperna and the entire cast and crew of the Diamond Middle School production, *The Chronicles of Jane, Book Seven*! Diamond entertained us with another incredible performance earlier this month. More than 400 people tuned into the performance on the first night. If you didn't have a chance to watch the show, please click [here](#) to access the performance.

### LHS Teacher Appointed to the National Constitution Center's Teacher Advisory Council

Congratulations to Mr. Larry David, Lexington High School Social Studies Teacher, for his appointment to the National Constitution Center's Teacher Advisory Council. At a time in our Nation's history when a working knowledge of the Constitution of the United States is more important than ever, Mr. David's appointment is a timely one! Congratulations, Mr. David!

### Clarke and Diamond Middle Schools Represent at the Science Bowl at MIT

Clarke and Diamond Middle School students recently competed at the Middle School Science Bowl held each year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Diamond came in third and fourth place; Clarke students came in first and second place, and they are headed to the Nationals! Way to go, Ms. Factor, Ms. Grosslight, and our Diamond and Clarke students—we are so proud of you!

### Scholastic Art Awards

A number of Lexington students received recognition through the Scholastic Art Awards! Congratulations to the following students: Best in Art: Eileen Ho, Diamond Middle School; Regional Art Winners: Mira Hsu, Jonas Clarke Middle School; Katie Stolz, Jonas Clarke Middle School; and Eileen Ho, William Diamond Middle School; and Lexington High School award recipients include the following: Anna Babashak; Michael Gordon; Timothy Koh; Sarah Liu; Katelyn Mcshine; Robin Pan, Lydia Rommel; Maya Shimron; Maya Silverman; Julien Song; Hannah Steinbrecher; Ellen Wang; Sophie Wang; and Jasina Yu.

We also want to congratulate all of our Lexington Public Schools Visual/Digital Arts educators across the system who contribute to our students' success! Special thanks to Alethea Roy, K-12 Coordinator of Visual Arts, Damian Barneschi, Ashley Grant, Rachel Durocher, Monique Shramme-Harris, Jessica Sperandio, and Jessica Khamarji, Rachel Tadeu, and Lauren Finkle.

## **2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

February is Black History Month, and 'CodeSwitching' was recently included as part of *The Boston Globe's Black History Month Film Festival*. For those who were unable to tune into the powerful discussion with filmmaker and Lexington High School graduate, Mike Mascoll, [here](#) is a link for the recording of the conversation.

In other DEI news, Samantha St. Lawrence, a Lexington High School English teacher has been instrumental in creating a [Black History Pop-Up Museum](#). Last year high school students visited in person; this year the event is digital. Samantha and Alex Kuschel, K-5 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator, are exploring ways to connect elementary students with this work in the future.

### 3. Fall 2 Athletics

We have established Fall 2 sports guidelines for Lexington Public Schools. Students will have an opportunity to participate in Cheerleading, Football, Girls' Swimming, Track, and Volleyball. We are expanding our LPS COVID-19 pooled saliva testing program to student athletes who choose to participate in hybrid learning. Please click [here](#) for more information for LHS student athletes, and [here](#) for a joint statement from the Middlesex League Superintendents.

### 4. LPS Hiring Process for 2021 - 2022

The LPS FY 2022 Budget approved by the School Committee assumes that enrollment will stabilize and return to our pre-COVID projections of FY 2020. Lexington Public Schools experienced a 304 student enrollment decrease mirroring the State and Nation. While there are no good comparisons to be made with a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, after the Great Recession of 2007 - 2009, student enrollments in Lexington rebounded. If this comparison is any indication, we may see at least some of the 304 students return to our school system. It is a challenge to prepare a staffing plan with these uncertainties in mind. On the one hand, we need to ensure we have the highest quality staff available for our students; on the other, we need to ensure that we are not wasting precious limited resources, should these children not materialize. The Central Office Leadership Team and I worked together to develop this [strategy](#) to prepare building leaders for the challenges we will face this spring.

### 5. LPS COVID-19 Updates

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently issued [new guidance](#) on masks. One of the recommendations is to wear a disposable mask under a cloth mask. It is important that your mask fit snugly across your nose, mouth, and chin, without any gaps. LPS has secured disposable masks for the staff who want to wear one, and they have been delivered to our schools for principals to distribute. It is not mandatory to "double-mask," but if staff wish to do so, we are supplying them with disposable masks. It is mandated that everyone in LPS wear at least one mask while in the schools.

***I also am pleased to report that our COVID-19 positive case counts in Lexington continue to trend in the right direction.*** When cases were surging in Lexington in January, I indicated that it was not the right time to assemble a Community Input Team for a Full Return. Further, I shared with you that health experts anticipated the likelihood that the British variant would get worse in March, which could mean that it would be April before Lexington's positive cases reached more manageable levels.

On February 19, 2021, Alicia McCartin, Health Agent for the Town of Lexington, released the average daily incidence rate per 100,000 (see table below). The municipal side uses State metrics to track data, which places them in the "green" category. LPS has been utilizing the Harvard Global Health Institute's (HGHI's) system for nearly a year, which was developed prior to the State's COVID-19 color-coding system. The average daily incidence rate per in Lexington is 8.6 per 100,000, which places us in what HGHI refers to as the "yellow" or "community spread"

category. I indicated that we would turn our attention to full return when we were in the yellow zone, and our first Community Input Team for Full Return will take place this Friday.

**Average daily incidence rate per 100,000 over the last 14 days (2/3/2021- 2/17/2021)**

City/Town	% Positive (Last 14 Days)	Case Count (Last 14 Days)	Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100K (Last 14 days)	Total Tests (Last 14 Days)	Total Positive Tests (Last 14 Days)
Waltham	1.18%	252	27.1	24263	286
Bedford	1.45%	29	13.8	2479	36
Woburn	2.76%	144	24.8	5949	164
Lexington	1.16%	41	8.6	4666	54
Burlington	2.84%	76	19.5	3130	89
Belmont	1.43%	48	12.5	4200	60
Arlington	1.48%	96	15.0	7222	107
Winchester	1.66%	77	24.7	5296	88
Lincoln	1.16%	9	7.4	779	9

## 6. Community Input Team for Full Return

On February 12, I sent this [letter](#) ***announcing our intention to provide our youngest learners full time in-person learning by April, 2021.*** Specifically, we are hoping for as close to a full return as possible, starting with Kindergarten, First Graders, and Second Graders. As I have mentioned in previous School Committee meetings, we are still closely monitoring the health and safety conditions associated with the pandemic, so any full-return planning decisions that get made are subject to change.

The pandemic is our common enemy, and public education has become extremely polarized when we should be working together in the best interests of students. The past year has been marred by discontent throughout the State and Nation; instead of working together to resolve issues, there is a lot of finger-pointing and blame. There have been pandemic-related protests, including “sit-outs,” and “die-ins.” School community members across the State have served school leaders with petitions for full remote teaching and learning and for a full return. Union leaders have taken votes of no confidence against Superintendents and School Committees. Massachusetts parents representing 70 communities took a vote of no confidence against the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). The MTA and more than 100 locals took a vote of no confidence against the Commissioner of Education, and so it goes.

We have been fortunate in Lexington. It hasn’t always been easy throughout the pandemic, but somehow we have managed to maintain our focus on students and avoid most of the contentious issues that plague public education. I expect this goodwill to continue, as we work together with the community on a full return to school, starting with our youngest students. More than 70 qualified individuals expressed interest in participating in the Community Input Team for Full

Return, and the following individuals were selected to participate: Michael Allen, Jennipher Burgess, Jonathan Burstein, Jared Cassedy, Amy Chi, Dane Despres, Liz Billings-Fouhy, Jenny Corduck, Monica Davis, Jennifer Eklund, Sara Fenzel, Jennifer Greenstein, Daniel Gruskin, Caleb Hale, Barbara Hamilton, Patricia Jacotin, Rachel Jayson, Susan Kaftan, Maureen Kavanaugh, Zachary Kimon, Avon Lewis, Christina Lin, Louise Lipsitz, Colette Powell, Jesse Richardson, Deirdre Schadler, Eamonn Sheehan, Amy Shew, Andrew Stephens, Alison Stevens, Nadine Tassabehji, Donna Teltsch, Jen Turner, Mark Waldeck, and Michelle Wright. The team includes parents, educators, union leaders, and building leaders representing all grade spans and schools. District leaders will be invited to weigh in on the planning processes and to present at CIT meetings when needed. Superintendent Chats will be scheduled to ensure that all members of the public, including LPS staff, parents, and students will have a chance to weigh in. Consistent with our past practice, all meetings will be recorded and minutes will be available for the public.