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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT— FEBRUARY 2, 2021

1. Congratulations and Celebrations!

National Association for Music Education (NAfME)

The LHS Music Department had four students selected for the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) All Eastern Division Honors Ensembles! This is an exceptionally competitive process and to get accepted is a huge accomplishment! In the All Eastern Orchestra, congratulations goes to Anita Keltche (Senior, Flute). LHS students who made it to the All Eastern Concert Band include: Marily Swinger (Junior, Flute); Heath Nevis (Junior, French Horn), and Justin Sjodin (Junior, Tuba). These musicians were selected from 1150 All-State applicants and ranked by their state presidents. They will be participating in a "Virtual Weekend" experience March 4-6, 2021, including keynote speakers, masterclasses with professional musicians, rehearsals with their conductors, as well as opportunities to learn and network with colleges and universities of various types and participate in mock auditions.

PBS Kids Writing Contest Winner, Georgie Gorvine!

The New Hampshire PBS sponsors a kids writing contest for elementary school students each year for students in New Hampshire and surrounding states. Georgie entered the contest in May 2020, when she was in 2nd grade and was just announced as a 1st place winner for 2nd grade! Georgie's story started as a remote learning assignment in Ms. Sweet's class at Hastings. You can read Georgie's story on the contest site: <https://nhpbs.org/kidswrite/winners.asp>.

Lexington High School Campus Cleanup

LHS students, Pip Fletcher, Annika Johnson, and Aaria Prakash organized and held a Lexington High School Campus Cleanup day on Friday, January 22nd. Overall, the cleanup day turned out to be a huge success with 35 student volunteers and about 10 full bags worth of trash. Thank you to these students for organizing and all the volunteers who participated in cleaning up the LHS campus: Annika Johnson, Aaria Prakash, Pip Fletcher, Alice Van Evera, Sonia Kumar, Alex Ordentlich, Talia Ofek, Sophie Sommers, Aneya Prakash, Alara Rago, Isabelle Lensmire, Michael Weisen, Caleb Johnson, Jake Strollo, Deena Selitsky, Martin Landis, Hobart Swan, Sawyer Colwell, Aman Nazeeri, Mariyam Simon, Bianca Zhang, Emma Glynn, Alexa Gelormini, Ahmed Akoad, Leah Hubbard, Juliette Mangon, Ella Thomas, Nishika

Karody, Sofie Huntington, Alyssa Pusatere, Jack Brenner, Grace Gao, Mark Batista, Mari McBride, and Leah Barrentine

Another Top 300 Scholar, Alec Zhu!

At the last School Committee meeting, I congratulated one of our “Top 300 Scholars.” I am pleased to share that Lexington High School Senior, Alec Zhu, also was named a [“Top 300 Scholar”](#) in the 80th Regeneron Science Talent Search—the nation's oldest and most prestigious science and mathematics competition for high school seniors. As a “Top 300 Scholar,” Alec receives a \$2,000 prize, and Lexington High School receives another \$2,000 to use toward STEM-related activities. Congratulations, Alec, we are so proud of you!

2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Last month, the Inclusion Community Input Team reconvened to discuss promoting inclusion in the hybrid and remote learning environments. The team of approximately three dozen parents, teachers, and administrators provided input on the possibilities and opportunities we can capitalize on during this unique time, creating this [guidance](#) that was circulated to leadership throughout the district.

District leaders also continued working toward a curriculum that is more inclusive of all identity groups, especially those historically marginalized and silenced. The middle school English Department is meeting this month with the members of the district's new DEI Student Advisory Council to discuss how to balance the inclusion of underrepresented identities without spotlighting the few students in the room who hold those identities. Similarly, a group of students has shared explicit feedback to the Health and Wellness Department about how their specific identities are being incorporated into the curriculum, and we are making appropriate updates and revisions accordingly. Next week, a group of LHS students is scheduled to meet with Science and Social Studies curriculum leaders at the elementary level to discuss ideas for further incorporating environmentalism and other social justice concepts into younger students' learning. We are excited to continue to incorporate student voice as a necessary component of our ongoing curricular revision process.

3. LPS COVID-19 Pooled Saliva Testing Update

Why No Positives in the #LexGetScreened COVID-19 testing program?

LPS has administered approximately 3,000 pooled saliva PCR (molecular tests) through our #LexGetScreened COVID-19 testing program. To date, no SARS-CoV-2 has been detected in any of our testing pools by Mirimus Clinical Labs. We have convened a Testing Task Force, comprising community partners, nurses, parents, school, district/union leaders, and school committee members. At our last meeting, we reviewed participation rates and discussed strategies for increasing those rates, including direct outreach from building/district/union leaders, delivery of test kits in staff mailboxes, and raffles and prizes to encourage participation. We are halfway through, and we need everyone who is eligible to participate in the testing program. Our hope is that we will see an even better turnout in the fourth round of testing next week!

Members of our school community have asked why Mirimus Clinical Labs has not yet detected a positive case among the 3,000 test takers in our school community. Dr. Avon Lewis, LEA President and LHS Science teacher, developed a clever explanation using a statistical model to

analyze the problem for LEA members. Dr. Lewis has given me permission to share her insights with you. It is an interesting way to think about the problem, and a great way to encourage more participation in testing!

There is something wrong with the testing: there have been no positives. *I have to admit, when the first set of results came back I was surprised. When the second set of results came back, I wondered, too. But then I sat down and did some math and now it makes a lot of sense. Here is the basic idea. Right now we have a rate of roughly 60/100,000 new cases per day in the state. Imagine a big bowl full of 60 blue marbles (representing the new COVID positive people) and 99,940 green marbles (representing the negative people). Close your eyes and pull out a marble, then another. Is it possible to pull out 1000 green marbles in a row? Sure. That is what has been happening for the roughly 1000 tests we run each week. If you want to know more, [here is a video I made that uses a model to demonstrate that](#) more than 60% of the time we expect zero positives with rates where they currently are. If you want to play with the model for yourself, [here it is](#).*

In Case You Missed It

We have shared several communications and resources in the past couple of months. I am including them here for easy access:

[LPS COVID-19 Update 01-27-2021](#)

[LPS COVID-19 Update 01-22-2021](#)

[LPS COVID-19 Parent Update 01-15-2021](#)

[LPS COVID-19 Staff Update 01-15-2021](#)

LPS Parent Forum [Presentation](#)

LPS Parent Forum [Recording](#)

4. [Superintendent/School Committee Goals, 2020 - 2022](#)

Our goals for the next two years have been in development for several months. In many cases, the work has progressed toward completion. It is good to see that even in challenging times, there is so much we can and do accomplish together! Please click the link to see the final draft of the LPS Goals, 2020-2022.

5. **FY 2022 Preliminary Chapter 70 Funding Update**

The Governor's House 1 Budget Proposal has been submitted. Chapter 70 is set to increase 3.7% over FY 2021, representing a \$197.7M increase to the State's Chapter 70 line item. Statewide student enrollment down over 30,500, a statewide decline of 3.56%. Gov's Budget begins the rollout of the provisions of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA). Those in educational circles have been expressing concern about the use of October 2020 enrollment, given that we anticipate the enrollment dips will rebound.

How does the Governor's use of October 2020 impact Lexington? The short answer is that the use of October 1, 2020 enrollments that represented a loss of 309 students does not have a significant impact on State funding for LPS. We are one of 277 districts that lost student population, 41 districts increased population (most are the regional or vocational districts). Our Chapter 70 allocation for FY 2022 is \$14,647,494 increased by \$209,460 or 1%. Lexington received minimum aid which is \$30 per pupil, along with 249 other school districts in Massachusetts. The formula's minimum aid provision guarantees all operating districts receive at least the same amount of aid in FY 2022 as in FY 2021, plus at least \$30 per pupil. The Chapter 70 calculation for Lexington is a bit more complicated than multiplying the 309

decrease in pupils by the \$30 per pupil minimum. For instance, the foundation budget is derived by taking base foundation components (i.e., enrollments at each grade level), along with increments above the base (i.e., special education, English language learners, and low income), resulting in overall FY 2022 Chapter 70 foundation budget, as shown [here](#). In other words, the 309 student enrollment dip may represent more than \$30 per student. Keep in mind that these are preliminary figures, and the House, Senate and Conference Committee budget processes must still occur in order to get to a final budget appropriation.

6. Update on Middlesex League Athletics

The Middlesex Athletic Directors have made arrangements for parents of our seniors to attend the final home game of the season this winter. We will use the final games of the season to honor our seniors and their families for Senior Day as well. Our games will be against Reading on Saturday, February 13th and Monday, February 15th. Seniors will need to complete a link with their invited attendees in advance of Senior Day, so we are able to track who is attending the games for potential contact tracing purposes. All guests must be masked at all times and follow social distancing guidelines. A professional photographer (with negative COVID test in hand) will do team photos (masked and 6 feet apart), individual photos, action photos and photos of seniors and their families. In other news, please click [here](#) for the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's (MIAA) statement on Fall II sports, including cheerleading, football, indoor track, and unified basketball. The Middlesex League Superintendents will meet within the next two weeks to discuss the Fall II recommendations of the MIAA, and I will have an update at the next School Committee meeting.

7. Community Events and Highlights

On the evening of January 27, 2021, approximately 120 LPS school community members attended a professional learning workshop on Project Based Learning with expert Rob Berger. Ron is the Senior Advisor for Teaching and Learning at EL Education, a nonprofit school improvement organization that partners with public schools and districts across America. He is the author of best-selling education books, including: *An Ethic of Excellence*, and *A Culture of Quality*; and co-author of *Leaders of Their Own Learning*, *Transformational Literacy*, *Management in the Active Classroom*, *Learning that Lasts*, and *We Are Crew: A Teamwork Approach to School Culture*.