



Lexington Public Schools

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Our Schools

Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion of All Children

March 31, 2008

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What does it mean for a school system to be inclusive? Educators have used this term for decades to talk about the ways we need to include students who have historically been disenfranchised, such as students with physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities. This article highlights our on-going commitment to diversity and to developing a curriculum that includes the many faces and backgrounds of all students in our community.

We know that children must feel safe and welcome in the classroom to reach their academic potential. To feel safe, welcome, and ready to learn, all children, and especially young children, must be able to discuss themselves and their families in a manner that is caring and respectful. Our tradition of creating an inclusive environment and embracing diversity is consistent with our core purposes: Commitment to academic excellence, respectful and caring relationships, and a culture of reflection, conversation, collaboration, and commitment to continuous improvement. These core purposes have been supported by our School Committee and have been the cornerstone of the work of our staff for many years. To this end, we believe that all children deserve to see themselves and their families reflected in school materials and in conversations so that they feel safe and welcome, and are able to learn.

The Lexington Public Schools began the work of a comprehensive K-12 curriculum review in physical education/wellness during the summer of 2006. One of the components of this comprehensive process was an analysis of the Massachusetts Health/Wellness Curriculum Framework, including recommendations for curriculum adoptions for the Lexington Public Schools. As a part of this process, a group of administrators, teachers, and community members formed the “Windows and Mirrors” subcommittee to develop a comprehensive, inclusive K-5 Diversity Curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and the National Standards for Civil Rights consistent with the historical “welcoming to all” philosophy of the Lexington Public Schools. This new curriculum promotes acceptance and understanding of the diversity of our town, country, and world, and includes both historical lessons on civil rights and contemporary lessons on families.

On March 18, we presented to the School Committee this new, formalized diversity curriculum in preparation for next year, when we plan to pilot four to five short units in each elementary grade. Some units will focus on families, including families with single parents, foster parents, and gay and lesbian parents. Other units will focus on racial and ethnic diversity and other areas in which human beings differ from one another. Resources in this curriculum include books, materials, and discussion points that help children feel welcome and allow them to talk about their families and the families of their friends. Some units will focus on stereotyping,

historical roots of discrimination, and bullying. These units are tied to existing reading, social studies, and social competency curricula, and are linked to state and national frameworks for each grade level.

During the upcoming months, administrators and staff will participate in professional development centered around the implementation of this curriculum to ensure it is consistent and compassionate. Teachers will pilot this K-5 inclusive curriculum in classrooms during the 2008-2009 school year. At the end of next year, the pilot curriculum will be evaluated. Recommendations for modifications will be made to both the K-12 Curriculum Task Force and the Windows and Mirrors Subcommittee. The long-term goal is for this inclusive curriculum to become part of the complete Lexington Public Schools' curriculum and for full implementation to occur once the curriculum review process has been completed.