

March 30, 2022

Kathleen Lenihan, Chair
Lexington School Committee
School Administration Office
146 Maple Street
Lexington, MA 02420

Dear Ms. Lenihan:

We write to you as peers and fellow members of the long-standing partnership of the EDCO collaborative. For 50 years, EDCO has brought together 16 communities to serve students with special needs and provide educators professional development. Together, we have pooled time, leadership, and significant resources in dedication to the students and families of our districts in good faith and shared interest. While we are heartbroken to dissolve this organization that has well served thousands of students and professionals, we are grateful for the thoughtful cooperation of all EDCO member communities to bring our partnership to a graceful close. It is in this spirit that we share our concerns about the remaining responsibilities of all the members of EDCO and assuring that our collective duties are executed in a timely manner to assure that no additional cost will burden any of our budgets in the upcoming critical fiscal year.

Due to a variety of factors, including the pandemic, EDCO has been forced to dissolve as an organization and break the 15-year lease on its Bedford property. As part of the closure process, all of the member districts of EDCO must resolve all liabilities (including the lease) as soon as possible in order to secure DESE approval to close on June 30th. This is necessary to avoid incurring an additional year of significant operating costs. Lexington Public Schools has been and remains a longtime member of EDCO as recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Early and Secondary Education. Lexington is also a legal signatory on the Bedford campus lease agreement. As a member and as a signatory, there is no doubt that Lexington has responsibilities and obligations to the dissolution of EDCO.

While EDCO leadership has offered meetings, written letters, and attempted multiple forms of communication with Lexington Public Schools about their responsibilities to the dissolution process, including a recent meeting with the Superintendent, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the EDCO Board, and the Interim Executive Director, we have yet to receive any commitment from Lexington with regard to these liabilities. It appears the position that Lexington leadership has taken is that they are not responsible for paying their fair share of the dissolution costs. To date, Lexington has indicated that they do not intend to pay their portion of the lease costs, approximately \$113,000, nor the FY22 operating costs, approximately \$36,000.

While we appreciate that \$149,000 is not insignificant money, money paid for an obligation rather than in service to Lexington students, we remind Lexington leadership that all other EDCO communities are paying their share of the significant costs of the dissolution. Indeed, even communities like Wellesley and Winchester, which are no longer members, have affirmed their responsibility to fulfill their obligations from past membership. Other member districts, many that face significant economic challenges, are also meeting their obligations as good faith members of our long-standing collective.

The stakes for the entire collaborative are significant if Lexington Public Schools continues to take the position of not meeting their obligations to the EDCO dissolution. The costs of these expenses will fall to the remaining 15 member districts, many of which are facing staff reductions, budget shortages, or extraordinary financial challenges in our post-pandemic economy. To be frank, Lexington Public Schools' choice to turn its back on its obligations to the EDCO collaborative will mean less money for the rest of our region's students. Money that can be spent meeting the challenges of the increasing social-emotional needs, early literacy needs, and academic recovery needs of students who have experienced the trauma of learning and growing during a pandemic.

In the spirit of 50 years of friendship and collaboration, the school committees of the 15 member EDCO Collaborative request that the school committee and leadership of Lexington Public Schools acknowledge and fulfill their obligations to the communities with which they have long enjoyed successful partnerships. We make this request as neighbors and as fellow communities dedicated to the needs of our students. Let us see this 50-year-strong partnership come to a graceful close: with all who have taken part giving their fair share to see it done.

Regards,

William J. Hayner, Chair
Arlington School Committee

cc: Arlington Advocate
Lexington School Committee Members
-Eileen Jay, Vice Chair
-Deepika Sawhney
-Scott Bokun
-Sara Cuthbertson, Clerk