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Recycling program to come to schools



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By Jordan Frias
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LEXINGTON

Lexington School Committee members approved a new recycling program, which will allow residents to get rid of old clothing, shoes, linens and plush toys, and allow the money raised to supplement school activities.

Each school will receive \$100 per ton of recycled textiles collected in the bins, provided by recycling company Bay State Textiles, Inc., who is providing the bins. This money will go into the individual school's gift account and can then be used to pay for field trips, classroom materials, and other items not include in the school's operating budget.

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Mary Ellen Dunn advocated for the program, which is a "passive fundraising opportunity."

"It's a revenue source for the schools," she said.

School Committee member Alessandro Alessandrini was pleased with the fundraising option.

"It provides an alternative source of funding and alleviates pressure PTAs have in giving money to the schools," he said.

Dunn said the program is also beneficial because it removes textiles from the town's waste system

School Committee Student Representative Abigail Schwartz shared her concerns she had about the selected company, saying its exported textiles disrupt small clothing businesses in developing nations.

Dunn said lots of recycling textile companies export their textiles to other countries, including Goodwill Industries International, Inc., which was an option the school district was considering. She said many of the items recycled by Bay State Textiles are sold back to the United States.

Committee members did not question the need for the extra money or the program overall but some questioned the fact that gift accounts, where the money is deposited, could be used for professional learning.

Committee member Judy Crocker said professional learning shouldn't be financed by community member contributions, calling it a "district expense."

"I would like the students to be the beneficiaries," she said.

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School Committee Chairman Margaret Coppe defined professional learning as a conference or one-day workshop that a teacher or teachers attend. Coppe said these are sometimes not budgeted for and was in favor of having it as one of the gift account items.

Coppe said professional learning for teaches does benefit the students, which Crocker agreed with but still opposed the use of this money to support this.

Members voted to remove professional learning as one of the items that could be financed by the recycling program. They may work with schools to decide how to finance professional learning.

Committee member Jessie Steigerwald asked the School Committee to refrain from voting to include the PTA and others in the discussion.

Steigerwald mentioned other local efforts to bring in other recycling textile programs, like Cradles to Crayons. She asked committee members to work with the PTAs and PTOs before making a decision on Bay State Textiles.

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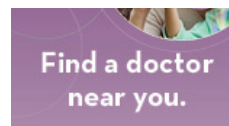
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