

[Kathleen Lenihan](#)

1. Why should people who care about social justice vote for you?

Lexington residents who care about social justice should vote for me because I have consistently taken action to support social justice. Words are easy, but action takes time and commitment beyond putting a sign in your yard. As a Town Meeting member, I have voted for zoning changes to allow more housing options and more affordable housing in Lexington. I have voted for bylaws to improve sustainability and address climate change. We must do our part in Lexington and not expect others to solve these problems. Outside of Town Meetings, I am politically involved in helping to elect candidates to state and federal offices who can use their power to advocate for social justice. I volunteer with LexRAP (Lexington Refugee Assistance Program) and give driving lessons to refugees and asylum seekers.

Social justice is a major priority in my work as a member of the School Committee. During my seven years on the School Committee, I've consistently supported our efforts to center social justice in our schools. The LPS mission statement is "Joy in learning; curiosity in life; and compassion in all we do." The last part – compassion – is critical to who we are. Compassion is not just empathizing with someone, it's taking steps to help solve problems. Quite simply, we are not living up to our ideals if we ignore social justice. Actions we've taken include creating a new administrative position, Director of Equity and Student Supports, to address DEI issues; creating a working group, of which I am the chair, to develop a school calendar that better reflects LPS values; and making significant strides in hiring a more diverse staff for our schools.

2. Why do you support or oppose LPS's Serious Talks curriculum?

I wholeheartedly support the Serious Talks curriculum, and I'm incredibly proud of the work our educators and administrator have done creating and advancing this curriculum. Providing our students with a world class education in science, math, history, literature, the arts, and more is essential. But how do we do that if students don't feel safe and respected for who they are? As an LPS administrator said at a School Committee meeting, you can't learn if you don't feel safe. Sadly, far too many of our LGBTQ+ students do not feel safe. The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey revealed that these students, along with Black students and students on IEP or 504 plans, are at increased risk of being bullied. Even more alarming is the rate of suicide ideation amount LGBTQ+ students. It is unacceptable that 43% of transgender students report suicide ideation. I believe Serious Talks curriculum can make a difference in the lives of these students.

Serious Talks is about more than gender, and it's about more than just making marginalized and oppressed groups feel safe. These 20-25 age appropriate lessons at each grade level teach children about the diversity of their world, how to look critically at bias and prejudice, how to understand that not everyone thinks alike, how to talk with people when you don't agree, and most importantly that all people deserve kindness and respect. I am so proud of all the academic achievements of our students – whether it is a child progressing on the MCAS from Partially Meeting Expectations to Meeting Expectations or a group of students winning a robotics competition. But nothing fills me with more pride than hearing from a parent about how their child amazed them with an unexpected level of maturity and understanding about how we need to treat all people with respect. Serious Talks is a curriculum that serves each and every one of our students and it has my complete support.