

High School Ad Hoc Committee



Work of the Ad Hoc Committee

1. Study what we have - Examine current academic and athletic engagement and outcomes in the first in-depth analysis involving Lexington elected leaders since the agreement went into effect almost 3 decades ago.
2. Study what we want - Surveys of both current Lexington resident K-8 and high school parents on perceptions of the current arrangement and desired changes.
3. Study what is possible – Recommendations on how we might improve areas of education at RCHS for all students, both city and county, and determine if, logistically, it is possible for the return of a Lexington High School.
4. For the Future – City Council and the City School Board must determine if the facilities are logistically feasible, given potential improvements to educational outcomes and reductions in operating costs, and therefore worth pursuing an independent high school, or opting to make continuing improvements to RCHS.

History

- 1965, Lexington achieves city status primarily for control of its own schools (Hunter Chase, 1988).
- Consolidation of multiple high schools pushed by the county as early as 1967 with the Peabody Study ordered by Rockbridge County and Buena Vista, seeking to create equitable education options across student bodies (though all three county high schools met accreditation standards in 1987).
- County attempted to consolidate the schools after a bond issue in the 1970s, but due to inflation during construction failed to finish a complete high school, resulting in the Floyd S. Kay Technical Center.

- June 1987, County notified Lexington of the desire to cancel the LHS contract, removing the majority of students from LHS. 1989, Educational Consulting Services advises Rockbridge County to consolidate its high schools, citing decreased operating costs. Strong dissent was registered by citizens of Natural Bridge and Glasgow. Citizen feedback at town halls was impeded at the time by a series of snow storms.
- County Supervisors issued an ultimatum in August of 1988 demanding the County school board pursue a complete takeover of the Lexington school district. Lexington opposed, offering to only consolidate the high school as a first step. County moved forward without Lexington, withdrawing students from LHS.
- Lexington panics. To allow Lexington to only consolidate at the high school level, County demands it pay 30% of the costs of the new building and county use of Lex athletic fields at \$1 per year. City refuses and considers reverting to town status to stick the county with the entire costs.
- Negotiations continue resulting in the city paying 20% of school costs, no ownership, and a proportion of operating and capital improvement costs equal to the percentage of Lexington student residents on a contract basis. The agreement was considered at the time a prelude to consolidation.

- Letters opposing consolidation in the News Gazette from the 1980s have proved predictive as educational studies since have found limited evidence of success.
 - Study of school consolidation since found that school mergers do not significantly decrease costs or increase student performance (Cooley 2011)
 - Secondary schools should be no more than 500. Large consolidated school decrease student moral through impersonal education and large class sizes, harming outcomes particularly for at risk students (Bard, Gardener, and Wieland 2005)
 - After consolidation, Rockbridge County showed no significant improvement in educational outcomes, though availability of course access was now equal (Cook 2017).

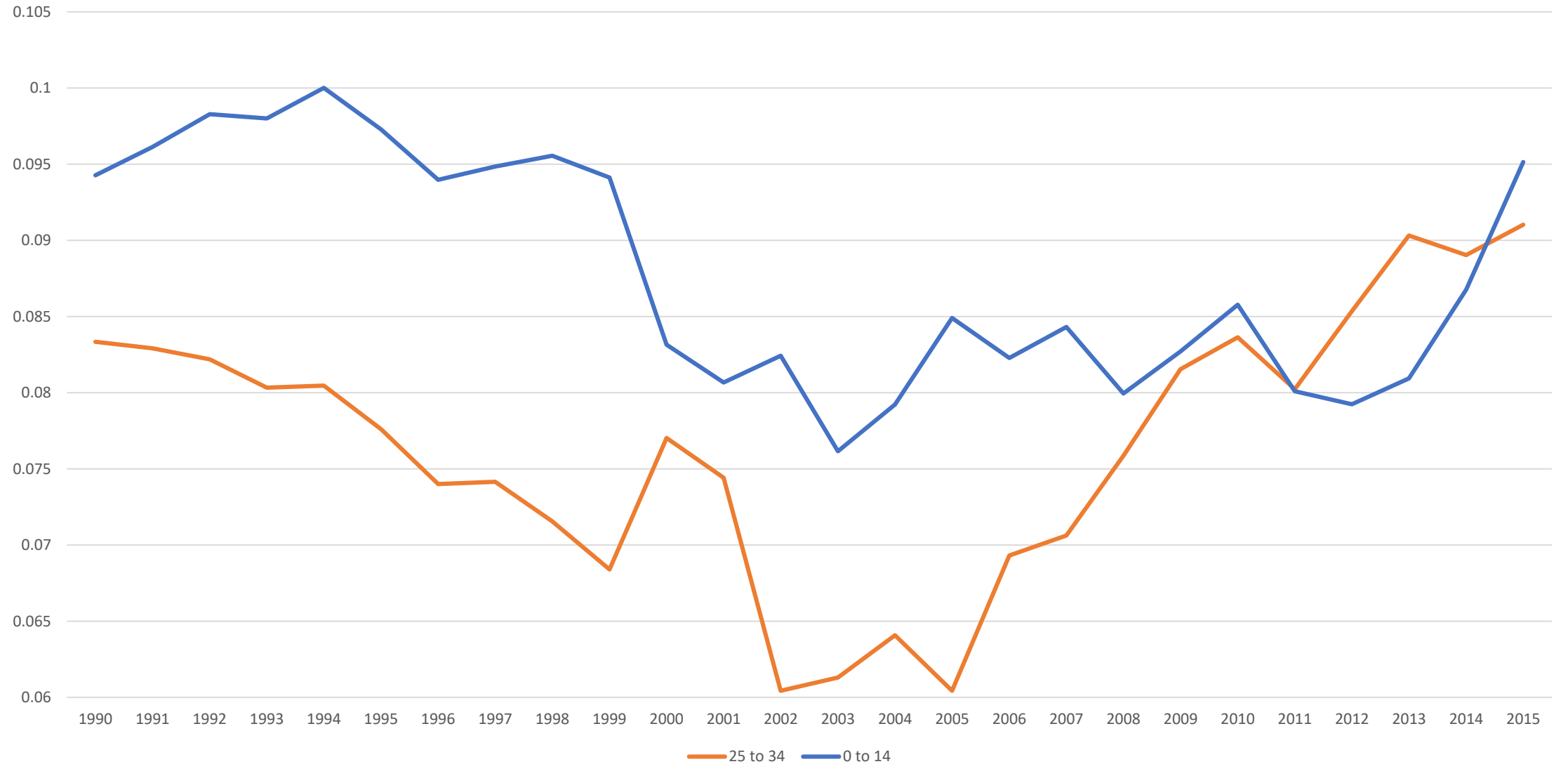
Foundations of the Lexington Ad Hoc Committee

- Prompting the discussion was comparison with other regional high schools, such as Albemarle, Charlottesville, Roanoke, and Augusta, and the reality that Lexington may lose residents and commercial activity to nearby regions with perceived superior high schools.
- Data collected from the Commonwealth, greatschools.org, US News, New York Times, RCHS administration, Lexington city staff, and US Census.
- Explored suggestions brought up by citizen strategic planning group on education.

Changing Demography of Lexington

- Child population is growing, returning to levels from the 1980's/90's.
- Some grade levels at Waddell are at or near maximum class room sizes.
- Expect proportional child population to continue to grow: 25-34 age group is at a relative peak and climbing.

Proportional Lexington Population by Age Group



Source – US Census Bureau

		College Readiness	AP Test	AP Passed	Math Proficiency	English Proficiency	Graduation Rate	Total Enrollment
Western Albemarle High	Albemarle County	60.1	66	88	81	95	97	1042
Albemarle Highschool	Albemarle County	39	45	82	75	91	94	1974
Monticello High	Albemarle County	36.1	52	59	71	88	95	1101
Hidden Valley High	Roanoke County	36	43	77	83	97	97	1022
Cave Spring	Roanoke County	34.3	43	74	97	98	93	988
Spotswood High School	Rockingham County	27	32	80	90	93	93	844
Harrisonburg High School	Harrisonburg City	26.3	33	73	83	75	89	1520
Rockbridge County High	Rockbridge County	24.5	27	89	82	84	92	997

Source – US News, Commonwealth of Virginia

A Tale of Two High Schools

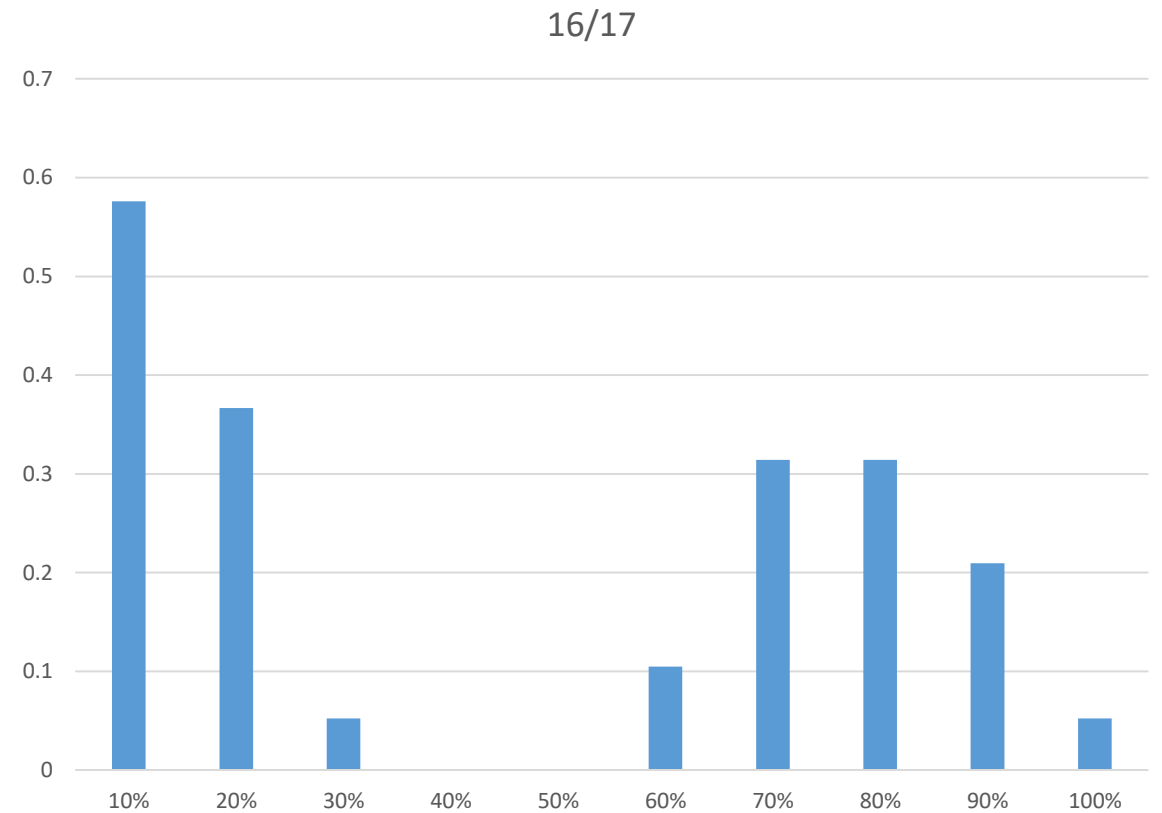
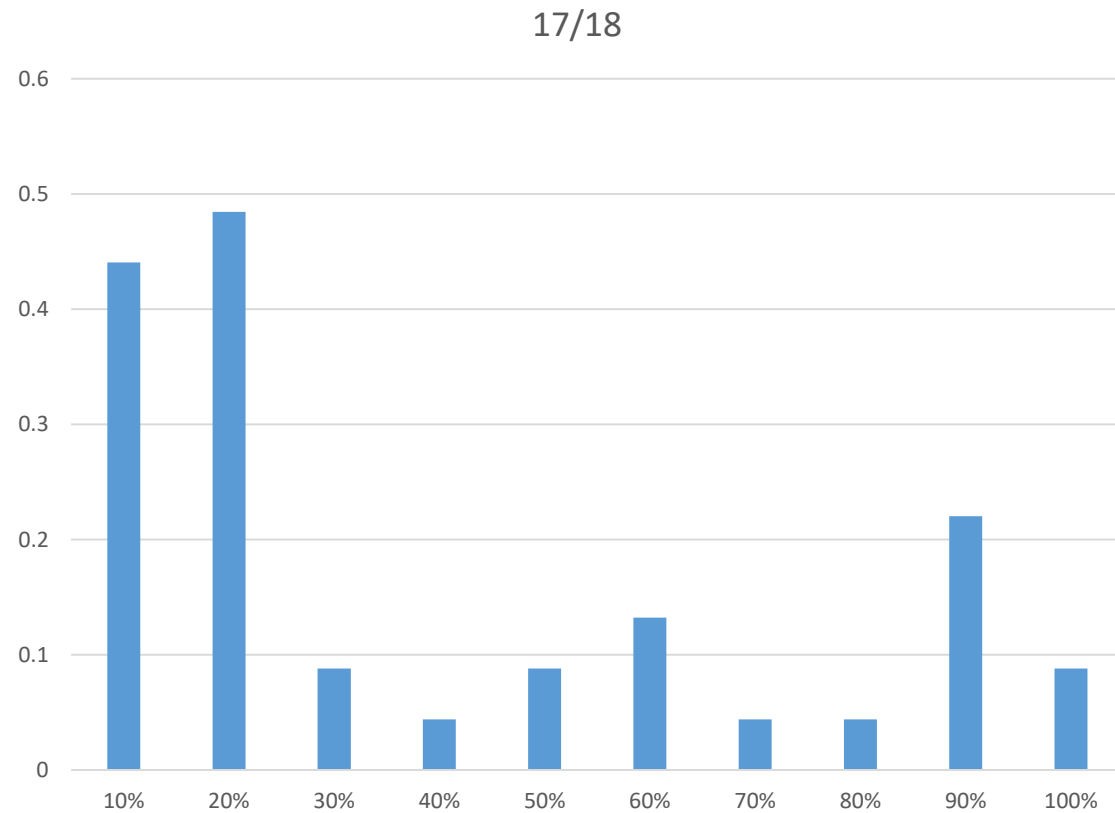
The Good

- Excellence in Geometry and Geography
- AP passage rate far in excess of the norm
- Suspension rates are low
- Good student teacher ratio

The Bad

- Poor performance in World History
- Very low AP enrollment rate, particularly in STEM fields
- Minority and disabled students performing poorly in some fields
- Very high chronic absentee rates

Distribution of Lexington Students at RCHS



GreatSchools Rating

- GreatSchools Rating (Testing/AP/Equity across disadvantaged groups):
- 8: Cave Spring; Glenvar; Riverheads
- 7: Hidden Valley; East Rockingham
- 6: Spotswood
- 5: Lord Botetourt; William Byrd; Buffalo Gap, Ft Defiance; Stuarts Draft; Broadway; Western Albemarle
- 4: RCHS; Northside; Alleghany; Covington; Bath; Wilson Memorial; Turner Ashby; Nelson County
- 3: Parry McCluer; Robert E. Lee; Harrisonburg; Albemarle; Monticello; Amherst

Overview

Geometry

Earth Science

VA and US History

This shows Test Score Ratings for different races/ethnicities. Big differences may suggest that some student groups are not getting the support they need to succeed.

All students



White

(88% of students)



Black

(4% of students)



Hispanic

(4% of students)



A worrisome sign:

Test scores for low income students at this school fall **below** the state average for all students.



Parent tips

Ask the school what it's doing to help students who are behind. Understand what [on-track learning looks like](#), and... [More](#)

All students



Low-income

(31% of students)

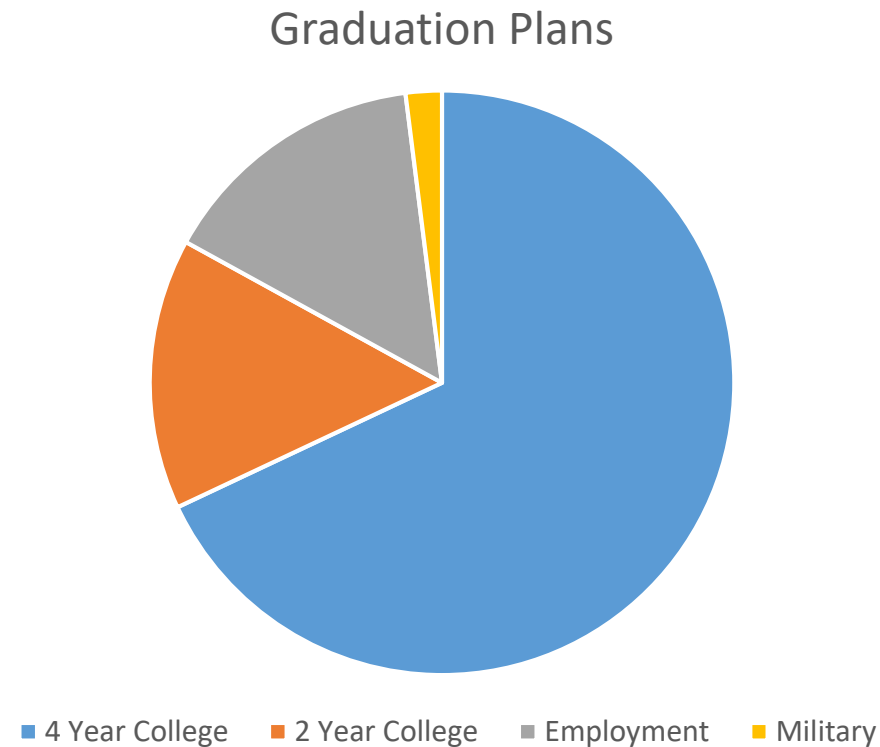


Not low-income



Lexington City Student Graduation Plans

- 83% of Class of 2017 City residents students attended a 2 or 4 year college



Source - RCHS

College Readiness

- Very High: Western Albemarle
- High: Albemarle
- Middle: Monticello; Cave Spring; Hidden Valley
- Low: Turner Ashby; RCHS; Spotswood; William Byrd; Glenvar; Harrisonburg; Robert E. Lee; Ft. Defiance
- Very Low: Parry McCluer; Wilson Memorial; Nelson County; Riverheads; Lord Botetourt; Broadway; East Rockingham; Buffalo Gap; Amherst; Stuarts Draft
- Bottom: Bath; Alleghany

Course Engagement

- **Humanities:** English; Spanish; Art; US History; Latin; World History; Journalism; Music/Band; French
- **Natural Sciences:** Health; Chemistry; Biology; Earth Science; Physics
- **Math:** Algebra; Geometry; Pre-Calculus; Statistics; Calculus
- **Social Sciences:** Economics; Government; Geography; Leadership

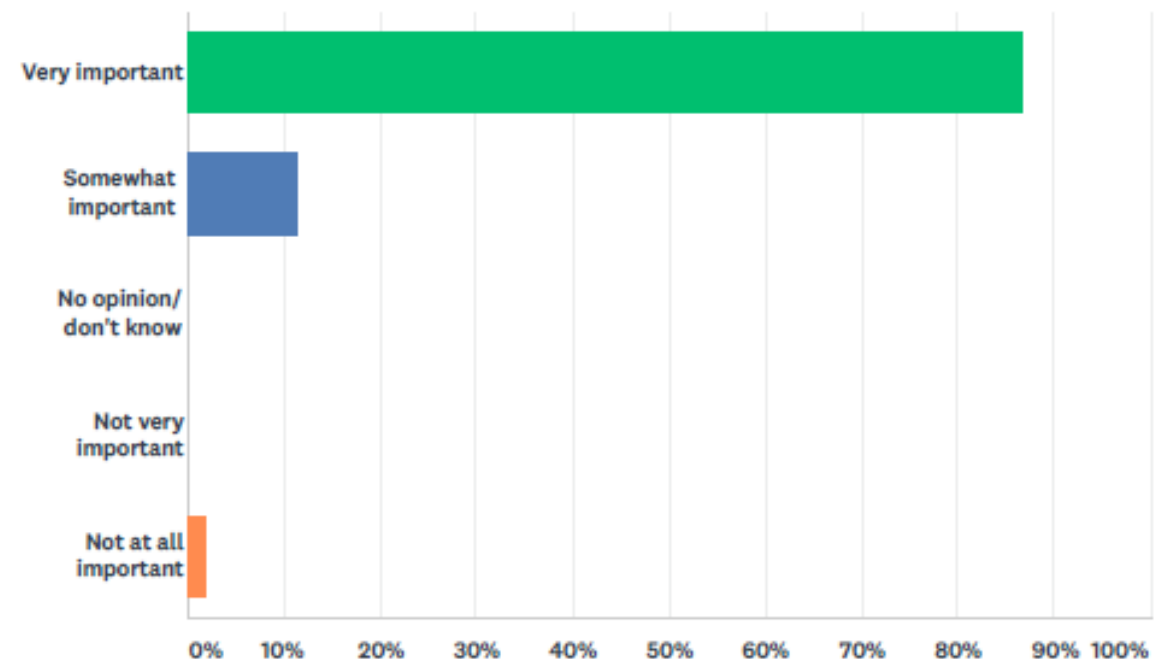
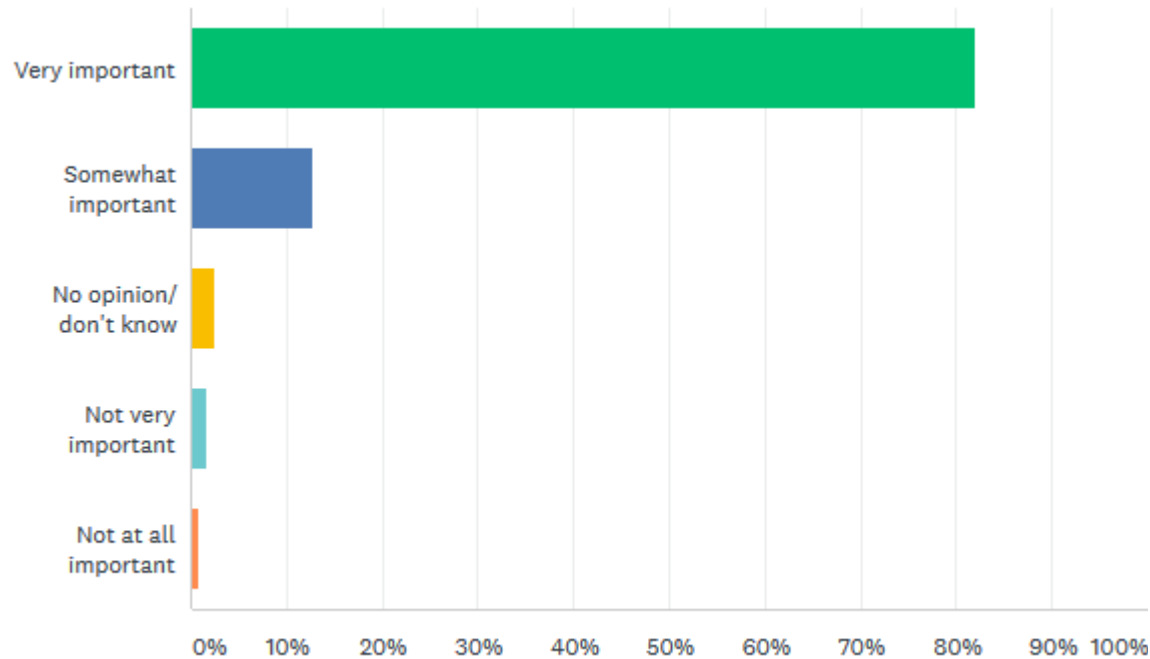
Sport (Varsity and Junior Varsity)	Participants*	Proportion of Total @ RCHS
Cross Country (Boys)	4	36%
Golf	5	63%
Football	5	7%
Volleyball	7	29%
Forensics	2	25%
Basketball (Girls)	1	5%
Basketball (Boys)	4	16%
Swimming (Boys)	3	20%
Swimming (Girls)	5	25%
Indoor Track	4	14%
Baseball	3	9%
Outdoor Track (Girls)	3	14%
Outdoor Track (Boys)	1	6%
Soccer (Boys)	14	38%
Soccer (Girls)	6	18%
Lacrosse (Girls)	10	28%
Lacrosse (Boys)	5	26%
Tennis (Girls)	2	15%
Tennis (Boys)	2	15%
Wrestling	3	14%

**Note: Parent survey responses indicate that at times a student may not make the team for a sport. Thusly, observed participation does not reflect demand.*

Survey of Lexington City Resident Parents

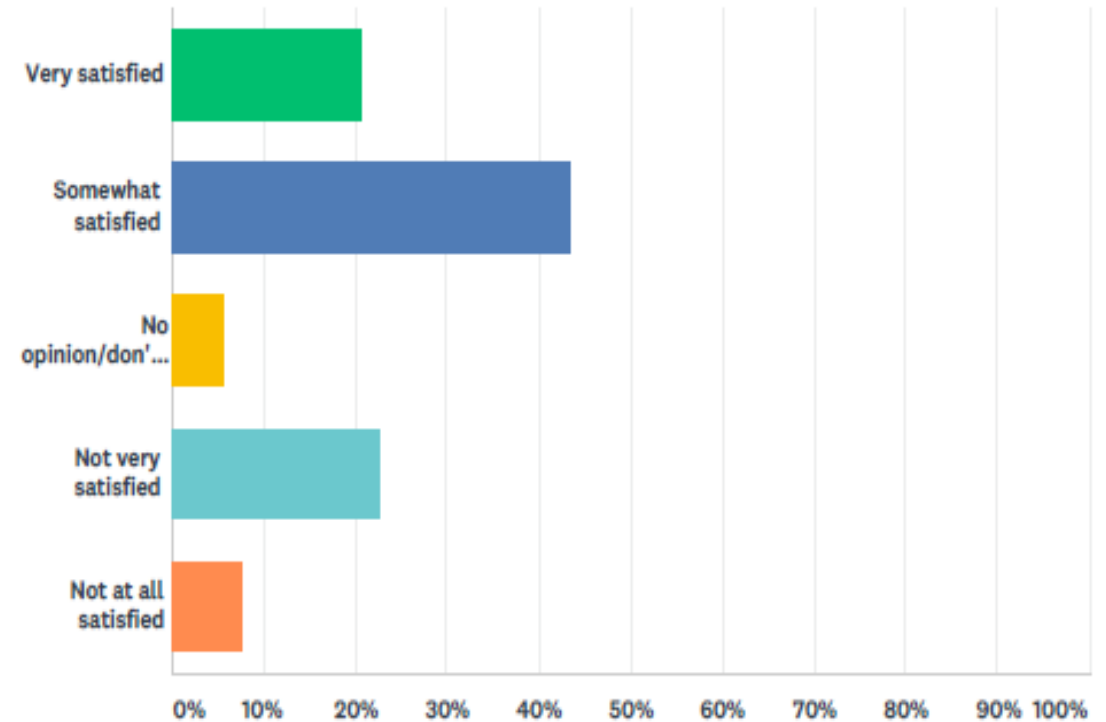
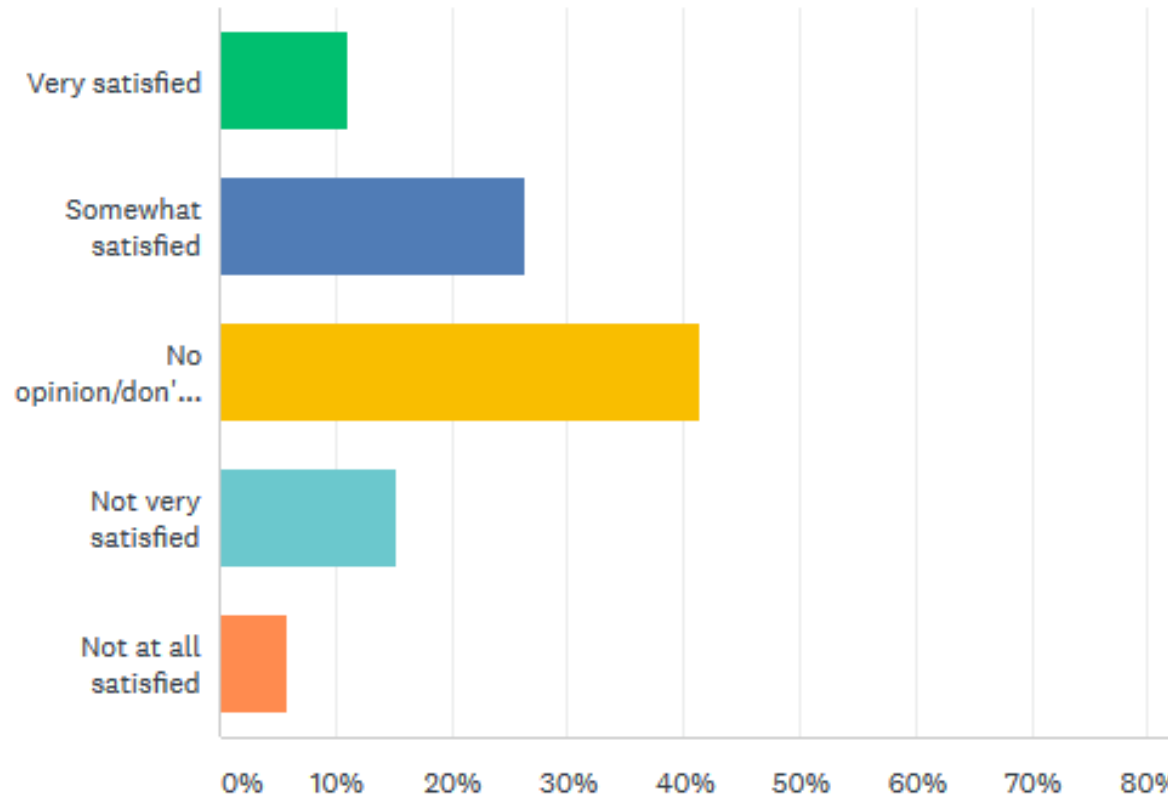
- Two surveys, one for K-8 and one 9-12.
- Distributed through normal teacher-parent communication and e-mail.
- Two graphs presented for each question, left is K-8 and right is 9-12
- For written responses, most common topics across all responses provided, with example quotations where relevant.
- Response Rate (so far, approximate):
 - 32% Waddell
 - 89% LDMS
 - 34% RCHS

How Important is it for the City of Lexington to have some input on decisions relating to the curriculum and management at Rockbridge County High school?



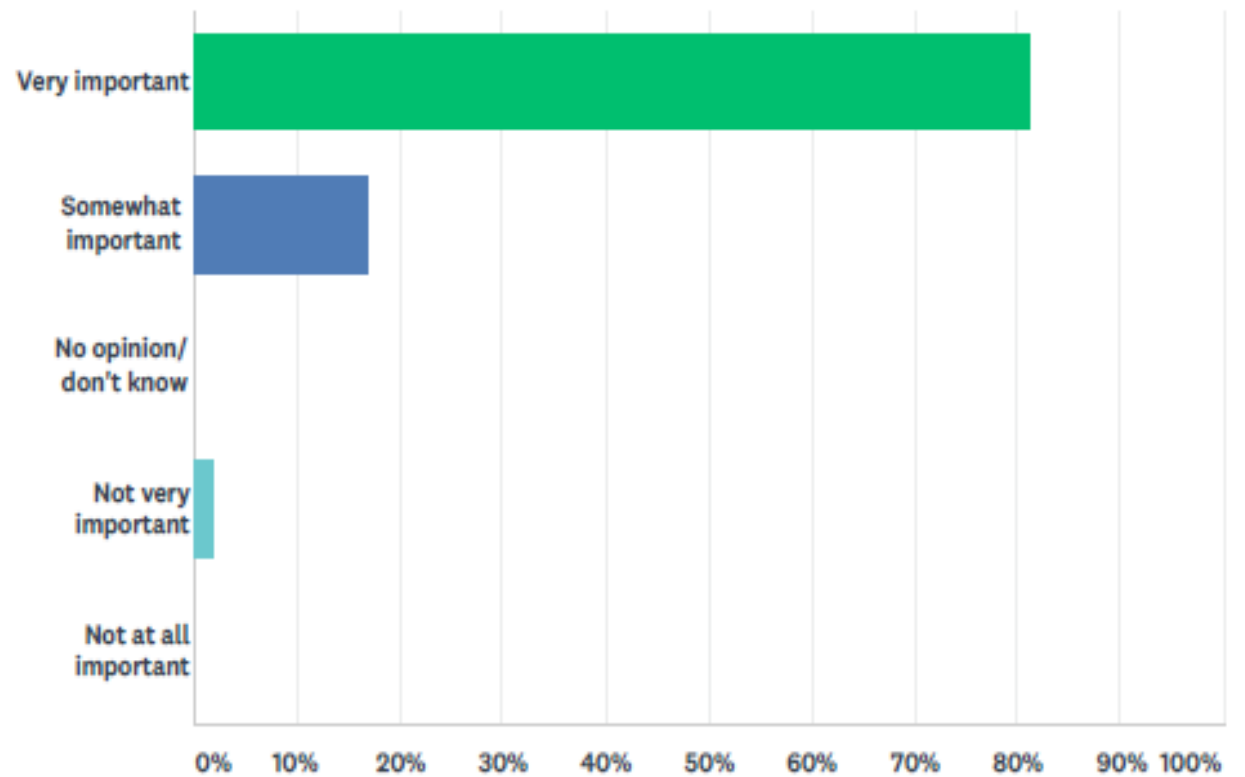
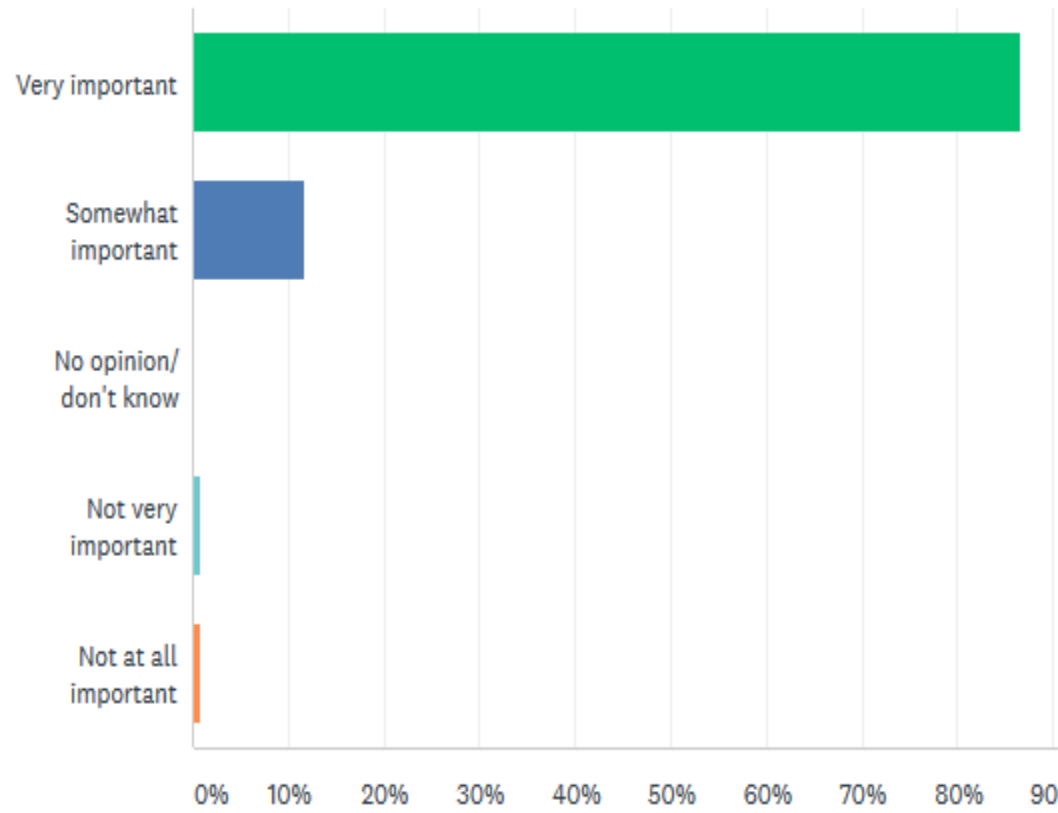
Source – Lexington Parent Survey

How satisfied are you with the education offered by Rockbridge County High School?



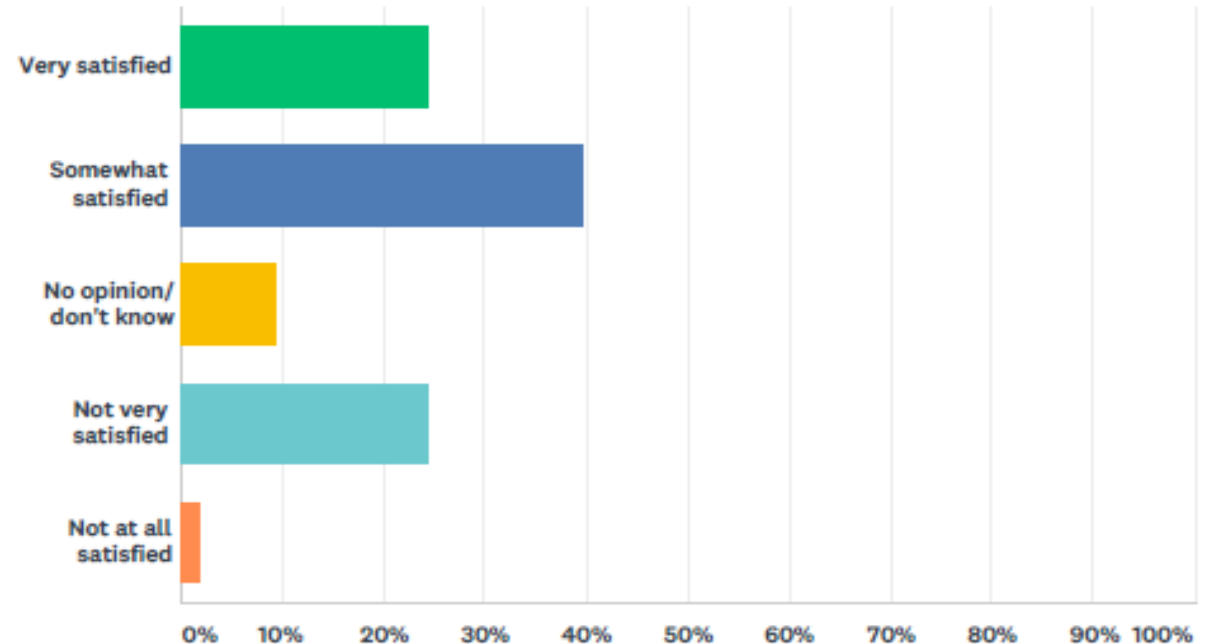
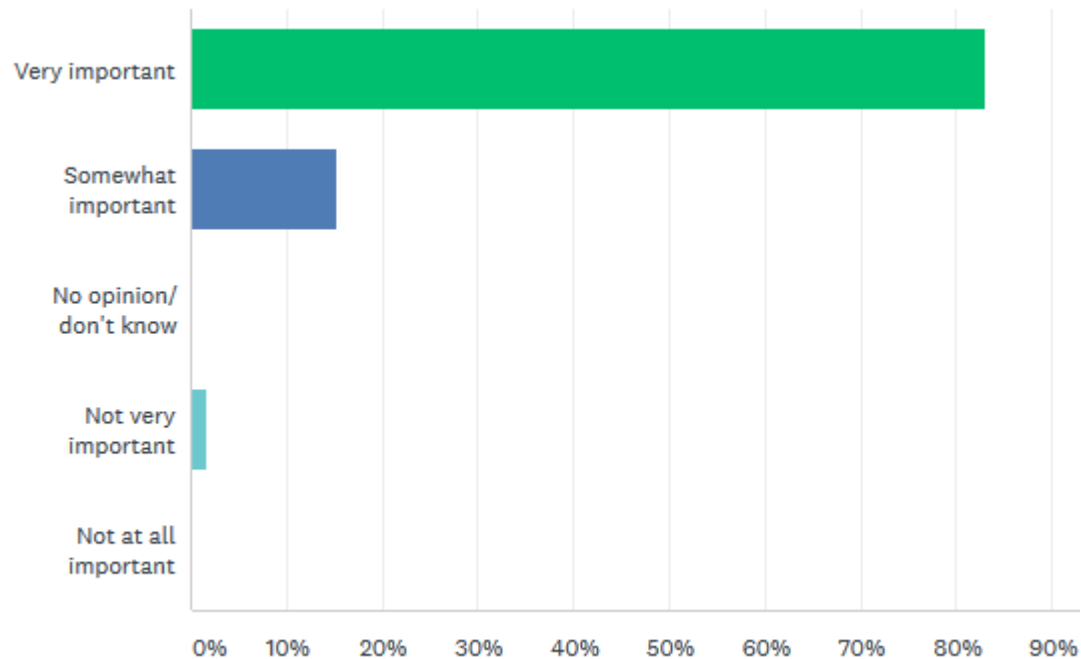
Source – Lexington Parent Survey

How important is it that Advanced Placement courses and other college preparedness resources are available to your child in high school?



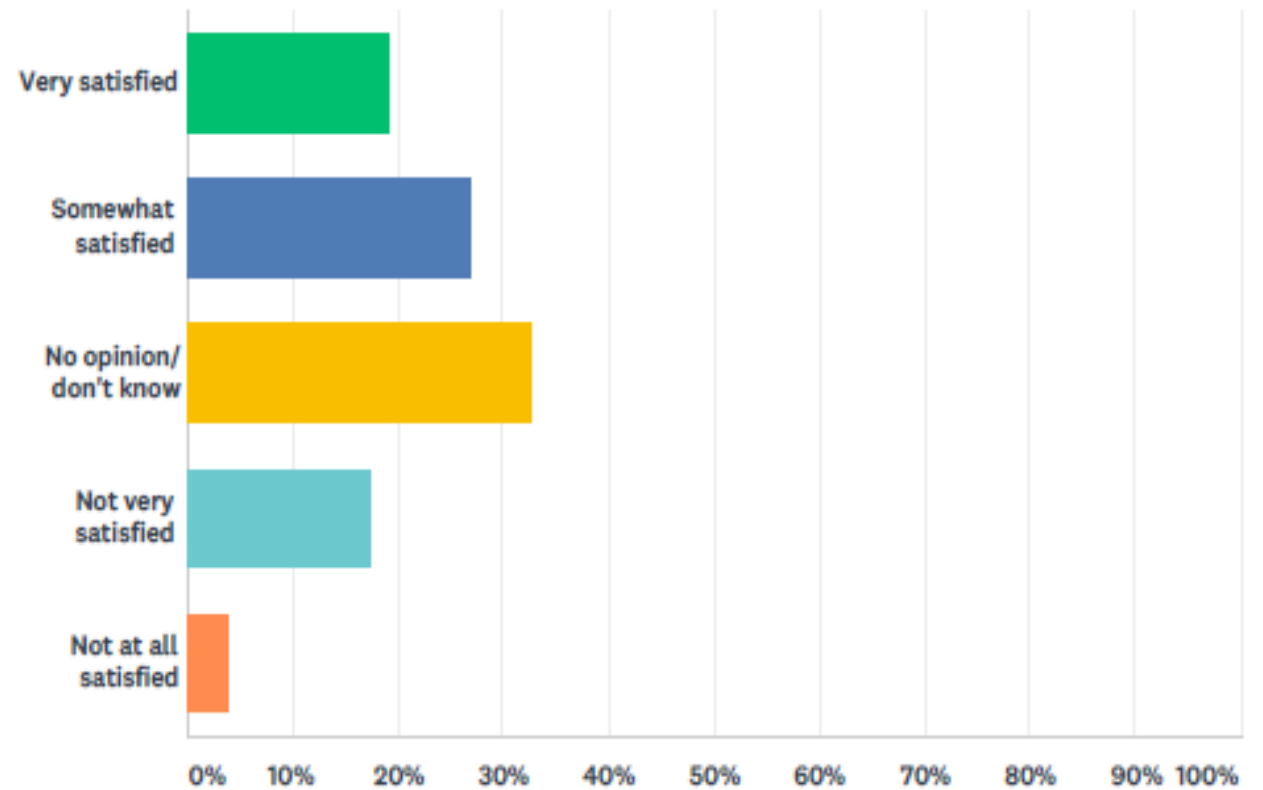
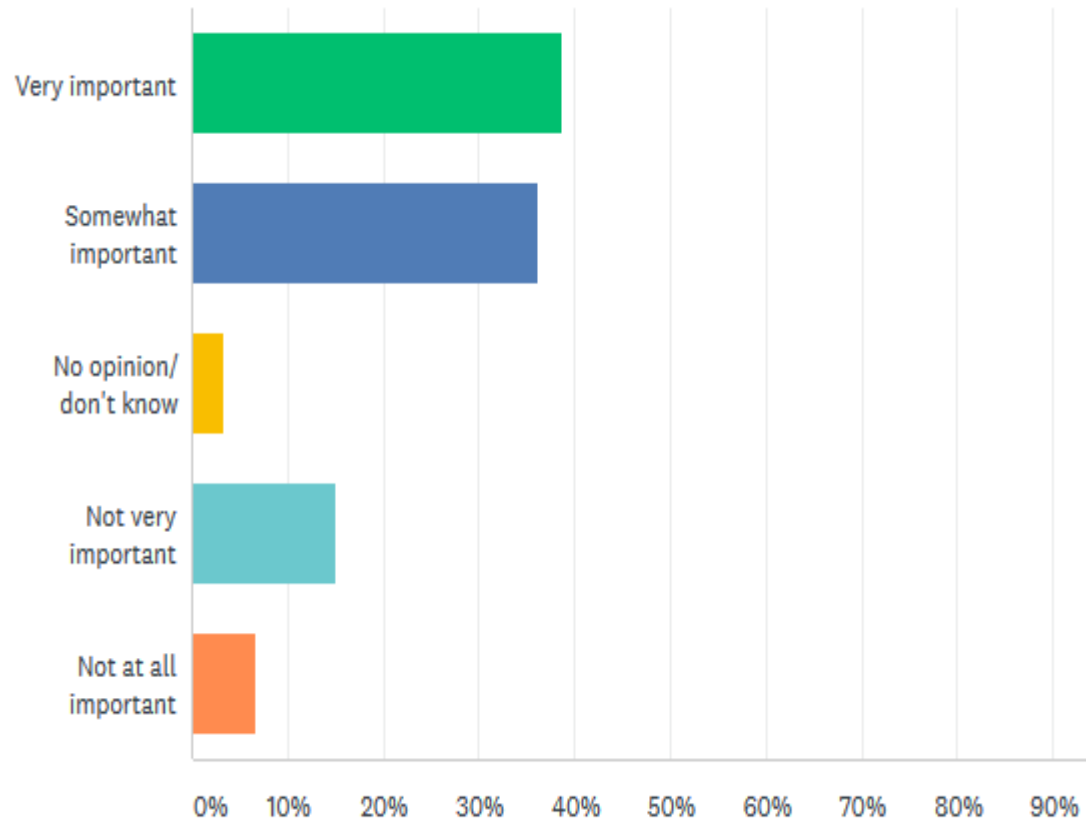
Source – Lexington Parent Survey

How important is it/satisfied are you with the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses available to your child in high school?



Source – Lexington Parent Survey

How important are/satisfied are you with the organized athletic program available at RCHS?



Source – Lexington Parent Survey

Please let us know if there are any specific sports your child is most interested in participating in, or if there are any sports not currently offered that you would hope to see offered in the future?

Most common responses:

- Soccer
- Swimming
- Lacrosse

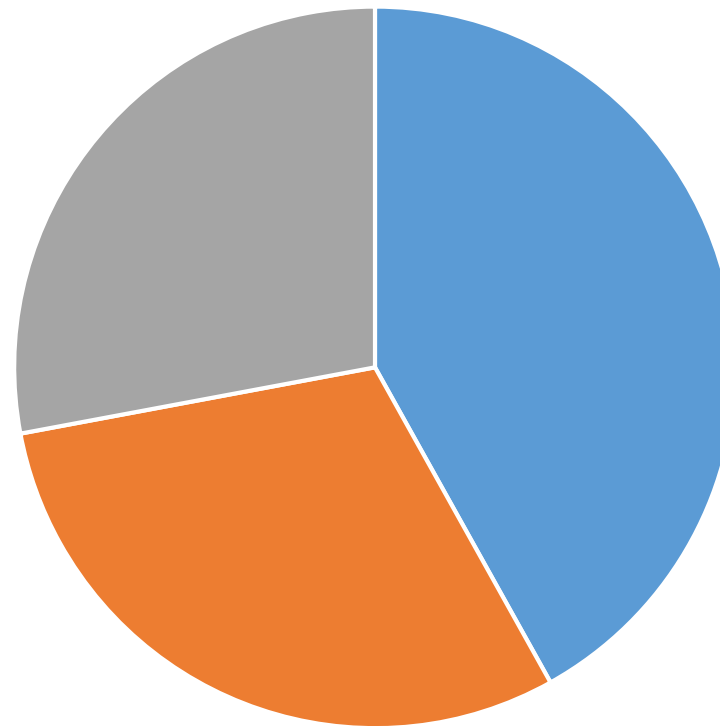
Are there any specific courses that you are interested in adding to the RCHS curriculum?

Most common responses:

- Theater/Fine Arts
- Computer Science/Programming
- A wide array of AP courses across disciplines

Do you believe Rockbridge County High School provides equal opportunities to all students regardless of race, color, gender, or economic background?

"If we use equality, access to resources, and treating people with dignity as benchmarks regardless of ones' class, race, gender, and religion (I might add) then we have a lot of room for improvement."



■ Yes ■ No ■ Maybe/Not Sure

"There seems to be a large gap between honors classes and classes offered to the average student. In general, honors classes are staffed by more qualified teachers. This forces average students to make the difficult decision to take honors classes for which they are not qualified or take classes with inferior teachers with students who are not motivated to learn."

Source – Lexington Parent Survey

Please provide us with any additional thoughts you might have on the current high school arrangement or how it might be improved?

1. “Lexington City must have its own school”/RCHS is too large
2. Lexington parents/Lexington City need official input at RCHS
3. Facilities are lacking/outdated/cause poor of morale

Example Responses

- “the student body is way too large”; “smaller is better”
- “Lexington should have its own high school and stop blindly paying exorbitant fees to the county without any say in how the school is run or the money spent. Having our own high school would keep families from leaving Lexington once their kids reach high school. A Lexington High school would allow our young people to grow and thrive in an environment that promotes the values of OUR city’s citizens, specifically academics, health, curiosity, innovation, social responsibility, and inclusiveness”
- “RCHS looks and feels like a prison”
- “RCHS has created two schools within their walls. By having children on an advanced vs standard diploma track, the kids are not given the opportunity to interact with each other. It causes a lot of ‘have’ and ‘have nots’.”

District	Cost per Pupil
Charlottesville	\$16,444
Albemarle	\$13,568
Harrisonburg	\$11,918
Rockbridge	\$11,559
Rockingham	\$11,423
Botetourt	\$11,359
Harrisonburg	\$11,282
Roanoke County	\$10,394
Buena Vista	\$10,901
Lexington	\$9,968

Expenditures

- RCHS Operational Expenses: \$8,599,575
 - Regular Education - \$5,436,877
 - Special Education - \$617,850
 - Vocational Education - \$1,144,563
 - Gifted - \$12,765
 - Other Programs - \$262,961
 - Non-Remedial Summer Instruction - \$43,060
 - Administration - \$140,670
 - Operations and Maintenance - \$693,061
 - Technology - \$147,768
- Last year's tuition paid by Lexington: \$1,468,753

Possible Expenditures

- Proportional Model – Scale RCHS expenditures to Lexington student population and needs
 - Instruction - \$884,475
 - Administration - \$140,670
 - Operations and Maintenance - \$69,306
 - Technology - \$31,031
 - Total - \$1,125,482
- Using current course enrollment to ensure enough instructors to cover all topics currently taken by Lexington RCHS students with no significant online component: approximate total \$1,180,771 (14 full time faculty at average RCHS salary scale, 2-3 part time, fixed administrative costs, scaled operations maintenance and technology).
- These are conservative estimates given the effect of transportation costs on RCHS budget not applicable to a hypothetical Lexington High School
- Conservative estimate does not include financial benefit of tuition payers.
- Does not include potential cost sharing opportunities across school systems where attractive, either with Rockbridge County or Buena Vista.

Virtual Education

A lot has changed since the 1980s

- City of Lexington is already using Edgenuity for online course offerings at Lylburn. Currently used for both remediation/recovery as well as standalone offering for unavailable coursework.
- IXL is being used in some classes at Waddell in blended learning environments.
- Both Edgenuity and IXL offer K-12 curriculum, support for blended learning and virtual schools, and personalized curriculum for students based on individual needs.
- Platforms like these can expand coursework availability, save on instructional costs and provide teachers with effective additional pedagogical tools.

Path Forward from the Ad Hoc Committee

- Recommendations on RCHS and current agreement
 - Addition of an ex-officio member of the county school board appointed by the city school board that participates on all matters related to the high school
 - Others to be reported to the school board and city council in January.
- Motion to instruct the city manager to work with the new superintendent to explore facilities possibilities for a Lexington High School, if any, reporting back to council by the first meeting of September 2019.
 - A similar motion providing instruction to the new superintendent will be made to the City School Board.