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## Education is Happening Here

Joshua Gagne

At first, I wondered, after reading the slogan "L-A, It's Happening Here," what "it" might be. Then I thought about the education I have received in Lewiston, which I credit for the upward mobility I believe myself to be experiencing. Lewiston-Auburn has repeatedly proven itself a hub of education in Maine. In terms of high school and postsecondary levels of education, the twin cities have surpassed the majority of Maine due to the prioritization of education and the emphasis on a lifetime of learning. In the Maine legislature, Lewiston-Auburn senators and representatives can be seen mirroring the concerns of their constituents as they consistently support educational funding. The work of our legislators, the strong presence of postsecondary schools, and the much-improved Edward Little and Lewiston High are leading Lewiston-Auburn in our charge toward a new horizon of education in Maine.

The improvement in our high schools over the past decade is the most important part of this charge. The future-oriented pedagogy at Lewiston High School, and probably at E.L. as well, has prepared many like myself for an education after high school and for a career after formal education. As important has been the way this preparation focuses on equity to allow everyone an equal opportunity to succeed. At Lewiston High, the technical center, nursing program, J.R.O.T.C., culinary arts program, and many other specific curricula prepare students for life after high school.

Particularly meaningful to my personal preparation for life has been the preparation for college I am enjoying courtesy of the LHS Aspirations Lab, Early College Studies, and Bates Senior Scholars. The aforementioned programs exemplify the emphasis by Lewiston-Auburn high schools on lifetime education and the future. This emphasis has led to greatly increased graduation and college attendance rates for students from the twin cities. It has also helped me and many others by providing an opportunity to overcome the social barriers which prevent so many low-income Americans from attending college. As the schools work to transcend economic barriers, I am also proud to see that they are working to transcend racial and ethnic barriers by embracing local diversity. It is by removing these borders that Lewiston-Auburn schools, as well as the cities in general, will reach their full potential.

Assisting the high schools in their tasks are the local colleges. The presence of Bates, one of the most prestigious colleges in Maine, and the budding L-A College, as well as CMCC and Andover, have contributed greatly in L-A's emphasis on higher learning. By collaborating with the high schools in allowing local students to attend college courses free of tuition, the local colleges have helped foster a community that values education. Lewiston-Auburn's strong educational values make L-A special among Maine's cities.

These values are seen in our legislators, who have also placed education at the height of their agendas. Lewiston's popular senator, Peggy Rotundo, has done wonderfully to represent Lewiston-Auburn's feelings by prioritizing education in her efforts in Augusta for the past eight years. She has been involved in almost every aspect of education and has consistently supported funding for schools, increased access to educational opportunities, and higher pay for teachers. This has earned her great support from the Maine Educational Association, which has given perfect ratings to six of L-A's

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nine legislators. In Augusta, the Lewiston-Auburn area is accurately considered a region that values education highly, which has been helpful, for example by procuring funding for the L-A College, in our push towards better educational opportunities for our residents.

The efforts in Lewiston-Auburn, from the Lewiston Regional Technical Center and other career preparation programs to the work of our legislators to increase funding to area colleges, make the future of the twin cities look quite promising. It is because of the primacy of education that we will achieve our potential in L-A. Education is the wheel by which Lewiston-Auburn will steer Maine toward a brighter future. Education is happening here.