

LT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

7:00 PM – April 19, 2006

Minutes

Handouts:

1. Education Week-10/8/2003
2. LTHS Academic Ability Standards
3. List of questions for the Homework Panel

I. LTCAC Call to Order and Business (7:02 PM)

- A. Co-Chair Angela Curran called the meeting to order.
- B. May 2006 meeting format-Board of Education members have been invited to the May meeting. Meeting will be informal meal/work session to decide on the three or four topics to be discussed in the 2006-2007 meeting calendar.
- C. Angela asked for a group of committee members to meet before the May 10 meeting and discuss formal changes in the “structure” of LTCAC, regarding number of meetings per school year and length of time for these meetings.
- D. Secretary’s Report- the members in attendance unanimously approved the minutes as written for the 3/15/2006 meeting.
- E. Nominating Committee-Slate of candidates for 2006-2007. Angela Curran will remain as Co-Chair. Joyce McFadden has been nominated as Co-Chair candidate. Mark Magee will remain as Membership Committee Chair. Deb Wach will remain as Secretary.
- F. Membership Committee-Mark Magee, Membership Committee Chair, is looking for recruits from outside the LaGrange residential area. Membership questions can be addressed to Mark via email (mark.magee@raymondjames.com) or by cell phone (312-543-7836). LTCAC website has a membership application.

II. Superintendent Report (Dr. Kelly) (7:12 PM)

- A. Bob Tenuta (LTCAC member) met with the BOE to suggest school security ideas and provided great input.
- B. Dr. Trybus is retiring in June 2006.
- C. SC Assistant Principal position will be filled soon.
- D. Two new staff members were hired for the Special Ed Department.
- E. Construction project at SC hit a glitch with the Field House floor. There have been problems with the 42,000 SF floor: Dye lots of pieces don’t match and seams between the pieces have gaps and/or are overlapping. Resolution is being pursued with the contractor prior to initiating any legal action.
- F. The pool project is going well and LTCAC is invited for a tour of the facility prior to the May 10 meeting.

III. School Board Member Report (Al Polich) (7:18 PM)

- A. Al read excerpts from a USA Today (4/11/06) article regarding technology give-away programs. The results of the Syracuse University study implied that

there were instances where no real benefits arose from giving laptops or notebooks to students as tools to be used in middle school classrooms.

B. AI suggested that the May 10 meeting be used to allow some of the teachers who participated in the LTHS tablet laptop study to present their findings and methods for implementing the new technology into classrooms in the 2006-07 school year.

IV. Old Business-Board of Education Recommendations (7:20PM)

A. Tom mentioned that two sets of recommendations were presented to the BOE at their last meeting. Substance Abuse/Social Norming Campaign and School Climate recommendations as presented to the LTCAC in the April mailing. Copies of these can be found on the LTCAC website.

V. New Business-Homework at LTHS-Students/Division and Assistant Chairs/Student Services Panel members were provided with a set of questions for discussion and comment (7:23 PM)

A. Angela introduced the staff and student panel members: Lilane Koehn Mace, Math/Science Chair, Scott Eggerding, Language Arts Chair, Paul Houston, Global Studies Chair & Mary Lee Lockwood, Student Services Chair; Billy Doyle, Kellyn Moran, Kara Minogue & Jessica Donnermeyer were the students

B. David C. Franson, LTHS Principal, gave an introductory talk regarding homework and reviewed the two handouts that he distributed at the beginning at the meeting. He submitted that serious students know that good students build upon their knowledge whether homework is “assigned” or not.

C. Student Feedback

1. Students realized that there are larger amounts of homework associated with the various academic ability levels.
2. Students’ homework expectations came predominantly from other students.
3. Students thought that they were prompted more at SC in regard to homework completion.
4. Students decide on their class load depending upon the homework loads associated with those classes. They balance extra-curricular and homework loads when scheduling their classes.
5. History department seems to have some discrepancies with homework assignments that are teacher specific.
6. Students thought that the ability to review class syllabi would be helpful in assessing the classes that they are considering prior to completing the scheduling process.
7. Students sometimes complete homework as they assess when it will be checked versus how it is assigned.
8. Sometimes students don’t complete homework, or they prioritize assignments, because they are too tired or have too many competing duties/responsibilities.
9. Students thought that homework loads were cyclic, therefore not steadily overwhelming.

10. Teacher feedback to homework was generally perceived as adequate. If feedback is necessary in order for specific students to stay caught-up with their workload, then it is more critical to those individual students to receive the feedback. The student may need to ask the teacher for help in this regard.

11. Students realize that if they fall behind in their assignments, it is very hard to catch up.

D. Division Chair Feedback

1. Division chairs stated that teachers assign homework because repetition and practice of lessons are the keys to success.

2. Homework is meant to be a preview of an upcoming assignment or class presentation. This preview serves as a way to better reinforce the classroom work.

3. More homework for the higher-level academic classes is due to more information being covered and a higher expectation of students to apply themselves to the coursework.

4. Students' unique capabilities make homework subjective, particularly from a quantitative viewpoint.

5. The division chairs reviewed the Academic Ability Level handout.

6. Teachers are allowed to assign homework according to their individual teaching styles. There is no "departmental" standard.

7. Teachers find that student and parent feedback is often conflicted, and in specific, opposed. Teachers receive a lot of feedback, though, and often are not able to reconcile the opposing positions between parent and student perceptions.

8. Departments have different homework loads due to content and subject matter.

9. Teachers are encouraged to weigh assignments when grading: tests, quizzes, homework, papers are not weighed equally in grade assignment and students are usually aware of the weights.

10. Teachers provide feedback whether the student "realizes" that it is being done or not. Teachers know when a student has done their homework by their ability to participate in classroom activities. If homework is not physically checked, it doesn't mean that the teachers are not aware of the effort each student is putting forth.

11. Teachers and counselors use the Academic Program Guide as a guide to specific class formats, content, etc.

12. Teachers encourage students and parents to use Edline, phone calls and email to make inquiries about classes prior to scheduling sessions.

13. Students should be encouraged by their parents to empower themselves by talking to their teachers and becoming their own advocates in the homework process.

VI. Question and Answer Session, Open Discussion (8:10 PM)

A. Academic Program Guide needs to have more information included in it.

- B. Sample syllabi should be available for all classes during pre-registration. Some courses do not lend themselves to syllabi, as class content is very changeable.
- C. Are prep class work level expectations too low or are LT prep students not college bound and their school and extracurricular responsibilities appropriate for their abilities? Teachers do not have low expectations, nor is the course material sub-par.
- D. Textbooks should be present for the pre-registration sessions.
- E. Are extra-curricular events competing for homework time?
- F. Some students “over produce” homework, in that they take an assignment and complete much more work than the assignment’s original expectation.
- G. Emphasize the fact that students can and should be making decisions that affect them and then respect and adhere to the decisions that they make. More choices don’t mean that students should participate in more activities. Balance is very important.
- H. Schedules can be publicized, but they are not always adhered to. Student pace often affects schedules, so while the schedules may be published, they may not be updated.
- I. Students who fail at LT do not complete their homework assignments. When asked why they didn’t do their homework, they said that they didn’t want to or couldn’t do it because of job responsibilities.
- J. Technological tools are not necessarily being used for academics. The time being devoted to ipods, laptops, MP3 players, etc. needs to be re-evaluated as to how the time is being spent (scholastic versus entertainment).
- K. Teachers make professional assessments of the “value” of the homework assignments on a student-by-student basis. “Reasonable consistency” is the rule.
- L. In the event that standards are made more uniform, the teachers start to change their teaching style by the “weight” of the standards.
- M. Most effective learning is accomplished through the diversity of teaching methods presented through different teacher personalities.

VII. Small Group Discussion Results

- A. Utilize teacher meetings (late arrival days) to communicate with teachers to strive to equalize homework loads within department and ability level assignments.
- B. Reanalyze the academic ability levels in regard to expectations and origins.
- C. There should be more consistency of homework assignments within divisions.
- D. Homework assignments from the prior year could be posted online as a reference for students and teachers.
- E. Some homework is considered pointless and a waste of time. Can these assignments be re-evaluated?
- F. Academic Ability Level expectations should be eliminated. Built in bias should be eliminated.
- G. Lower level students need to be motivated.
- H. Creative teaching needed to engage students and keep them from tuning out.

- I. Encourage peer learning in the classroom.
 - J. Homework philosophies should be re-examined by all faculty.
 - K. Study halls should be available for the freshman and sophomore athletes.
 - L. Isolate late nights for extracurricular events that adjourn at 10:30 PM or later.
 - M. Offer athletic study halls for all grade levels.
 - N. Review acceptance of late homework assignments.
 - O. Provide as much information as reasonable to students to make informed decisions about scheduling their classes
 - P. Establish more uniform weighting of homework department-wide for grade impact.
- VIII.** Meeting Adjourns (9:10 p.m.)