

Lyons Township High School Community Advisory Council

7:00 PM – February 20, 2008

Minutes

Documents sent earlier:

1. Agenda for LTCAC meeting on 2/20/08
2. Minutes from LTCAC meeting on 12/12/07
3. Notice of proposed By-Law Amendment
4. Summary of Table Discussion from October 17, 2007
5. Lyons Township Membership Commitment Form

Handouts:

1. *Lion*, February 15, 2008, Volume 98, Issue 5
2. School Climate Survey Results
3. School District Goal 2007-2008: To Improve Student Academic Achievement
4. Lyons Township High School: Test Preparation
5. A New Model of Curriculum for the Humanities

I. Business Meeting (7:04 PM)

A. Joyce McFadden called the meeting to order with the following announcements.

1. The superintendent search presentation scheduled for this evening has been moved to April since the firm hired to perform the search has just started.
2. Please place your Membership Commitment Form in the center of the table.
3. Joyce McFadden presented the recommendations regarding counseling from the October 17, 2007 meeting to the Board last night.
4. We also recommended improvements concerned recycling paper products. Faculty and students need to be made more aware, and more bins may be needed. Perhaps a school assembly could emphasize these points, and information should be placed on the web site.
5. In the notes, the date shown for the agenda should be 12/12/07, not 12/1/07. The minutes were approved as amended.
6. By-law amendments are needed to bring the by-laws into conformance with existing practice. See the handout for current and proposed wording. The group voted to change the wording on the proposed amendment for Article V, Section 2, item 3, sentence 2 to "The Nominating Committee shall present its slate of officers prior to the May meeting." This serves as the 30 day notice required for proposed amendments. The vote will be taken at the next meeting.
7. All members are requested to sign in at each meeting. Attendance is tracked and members are allowed only two absences. If you haven't sign in at a previous meeting, please contact Marilyn Kosin.

B. Superintendent's Report and School Board Report, Dr. Kelly (7:12 PM)

1. The Board has started the superintendent search. Dr. Kelly is not directly involved. The Board has hired the firm of Hazard, Young, and Attea. Last night was the 2nd meeting between the Board and the firm. The firm will meet with the LTCAC in April and they will be meeting with a large number

of individuals and groups associated with Lyons Township. From this, they will create a profile and try to find someone who matches that profile. In the fall of 2008, the job announcement will be posted throughout the country. In late October, they will select 6-9 candidates to interview. They plan to select a new superintendent by November 24th. This will allow a ½ year overlap for the transition.

2. The executive summary on the School Climate Survey shows that 397 staff and 872 students responded. It shows the highest and lowest items. The idea is to pick a small number of issues to address.
 - a. What happens when kids get picked on (bullying)? Most walk away. Only 24% would try to stop it. That is way too low. We will conduct focus groups to explore the issue in depth in order to discover how to change that. This may result in some in-service training. We also plan to work with the three other feeder districts who already have programs to eliminate this behavior.
 - b. No one likes the way discipline is conducted in high school. This is universal. We are planning to talk with kids about these issues to gain an understanding through communication.
 - c. We are putting together a program to improve relationships between kids with different backgrounds.
 - d. We are also trying to improve staff communications, but we are a two campus school and there are inherent difficulties.
 - e. The next time we do the survey, which is typically every other year, we will administer in a more structured situation. Some kids did not take the survey seriously. We will also administer to a statistical sample, clarify some ambiguous questions, and ask some different questions. The results are now in a database so changes in responses may be tracked in the future.
3. The Board approved \$2,524,000 worth of summer construction activities. Even with due diligence and going for bid during the winter, the lowest bids were 15% over projections. Projects include renovating classrooms at both campuses, converting the Old Theater to a conference room with two adjacent classrooms, renovating the South Campus Library, reconfiguring the west field from three to four fields, and replacing all south campus lockers.

II. Discussion of Members' Concerns and Issues (7:27 PM)

- A. Q. With so much construction at South Campus, what happens with summer school?
 - A. Much of summer school will be transferred to North Campus. All information is posted online.
- B. Q. North Campus traffic is snarled. Sometimes it is so jammed that people can't get out of the lots. Cars are parked on both sides of Elm and Park.
 - A. We will have the police come back.
- C. Q. What are the issues concerning reconstruction of the South Campus pool?
 - A. There are minor problems with tiling becoming unglued. This was fixed once and will be done again under warranty.
- D. Q. What's the story about a rumor that pot is being sold in the lunchroom?
 - A. First, a lunch room is not a good place to sell pot. It is not likely and we

haven't received reports. We have expelled or suspended kids this year for drugs. Drugs exist in high schools and communities, which is why we have a drug awareness program and do a lot of work in health class. Alcohol is a bigger problem.

- E. Q. Would you consider bringing in drug-sniffing dogs?
A. Dr. Kelly wouldn't do it because of the spottiness of results. The best information about drugs comes from the kids.
- F. Q. Will you replace the track at the west field?
A. Yes, the cinder track is composed of toxic materials and needs to be treated before removal at a cost of \$40,000. We will put in crushed stone 12'-14' wide and ¼ mile long.
- G. Q. Have green friendly cleaning products been acquired?
A. Yes, most of our products are green friendly. The only ones we don't use are the disinfectants since they don't kill germs as well.
- H. Q. Why was there no moment of silence following the Northern Illinois University shooting?
A. There are too many shootings now. We reserve the moment of silence for our immediate family, for example graduates of LT. However, we did recheck our crisis plan.
- I. Q. Should someone be at the entry desk at the North Campus?
- J. A. Not usually. At South Campus, we can close the entire campus limiting access through that front entrance, assuming no one lets someone else in another door. At North Campus, there are too many entrances, although most side doors are closed. We have found it is better to have security moving rather than to station them at single points. A lot of people watch what's going on and question strangers.
- K. Q. Last year, we discussed safety and security, and we had to present a Driver's License for admittance.
A. There may be someone checking during busy times – early, late, and during lunches.
- L. Q. What is the discipline policy for disturbances on buses?
A. There are loose guidelines that depend on the driver for enforcement. When the bus returns, an assistant principle will go on board and take actions. There is one problematic bus line which we may cancel.
- M. Q. Why is there no early activity bus for 6:00 AM activities? With the new laws restricting the number of kids who can be in a car, more parents are driving to the early activity and then taking their kids between campuses. This adds to the traffic bottlenecks.
A. It may have to do with elementary school routes. Buses do double duty. We'll have to think about the impact of the driving laws.
- N. Q. Do you send letters to parents before cancelling a bus route?
A. We would send dozens of letters before cancelling a route.
- III. Overview of Major School District Goal to Improve Academic Achievement at LTHS, Dr. Kelly (7:50 PM)
- A. Here is a short history of district goals. In 1992, the district goal was to balance the budget. We now have a surplus of about \$30 million.
- B. Another goal was to increase extracurricular activities since research showed that it increased other good things, including academics. When that goal

started, 42% of the students were involved; five years later it was at 82%. It has remained close to that since.

- C. We set a school climate goal. PSI and LTCAC came from those goals.
- D. We had a goal for facility planning and renovating. It resulted in plans for the next 20 years.
- E. We did extensive curriculum reviews. That is completed
- F. Technology was a goal. We created the IT department; went from two computer labs to 11; and, started a notebook project that now covers half our teachers.
- G. We focused on recruiting the best people. We now have the best recruitment program in the country which has resulted in hiring excellent creative people.
- H. Improving student achievement is our current major goal. This is one umbrella goal and everything will be related to it. Some facets touch every kid, such as our plans for ACT scores. Others will focus on specific areas, for example improving minority achievement.

IV. Increasing Opportunities for All Students to Maximize their Performance on High Stakes Tests, Scott Eggerding ((7:59 PM)

- A. The Test Preparation handout gives an overview of what we do. Although there is a lot of emphasis on tests, they don't measure foreign language ability, participation, teamwork, etc. They measure a representative sample of the core academics embedded in all our programs. We can prepare students for these high stakes tests so they are not overly stressed; are able to get things right that they know; and, they are able to make good solid guesses on things they are unsure of. And, it gives them some test familiarity. Our test scores are now at a pre-mandatory ACT test level. That was a time when only college bound kids took that test. Some of that improvement is due to test preparation and curriculum reviews.
- B. A few years ago, we started encouraging sophomores to take the PSAT/NMSQT because it is a good indicator of success in their junior year; provides familiarity to the test; and, starts them thinking about what they need to do in order to improve.
- C. We help kids prepare in several ways. We work with ExcelEDGE, an outside vendor. We have our own internal program. And, we now pay teachers for doing test preparation work.
- D. The same is generally true for ACT/PSAE. We have LT's ACT evening classes. We work to attract more students and teachers to it. We also have special ACT preparation course for students with IEPs. They may need extra time or to have tests read to them. The preparation gets them used to these accommodations. We also offer ACT practice online. In some classes, we do WorkKeys preparation. WorkKeys is the second day of the PSAE and tests workplace readiness. We are also planning to offer this test preparation in study halls. We are working with teachers on how to interpret the results of the PLAN test, which precedes the ACT.
- E. Q. Before the ACT was required, how many actually took it?
A. About 10-12% did not take it.
- F. Q. Are there any plans to offer test preparation as part of summer school?
A. That has been debated. However, studies suggest that it is better to prepare students closer to the actual test. We do offer a fall test preparation for ACT.

- V. Reviewing and Improving the Transition Program, Scott Eggerding (8:12 PM)
- A. The blue handout talks about the Humanities program which was discussed with this group earlier. With your input from that discussion, we brainstormed with teachers about what it would take to be successful. These are listed on the handout.
 - B. Based on these ideas, on studying other schools, and on reading about the issues, we developed this new model. The Humanities program will be offered this fall at the prep level. It takes English, Reading, World History, and Seminar classes and condenses them into a three-hour block, keeping all four teachers and all four paraprofessionals. The handout describes the attributes of the program. All who successfully pass will receive prep credit since that is the level for which it is designed. Based on the EXPLORE placement test, we would place students in transition level who have a reading score of 13 or lower. The current test show about 137 incoming students with scores of 13 or lower. The Humanities program has slots for 144.
 - C. Q. Then IAP students cannot be in this program?
 - A. Correct. IAP students have a state mandated intervention, which is a different way of meeting student needs. Students with a score of 13 or less are performing two grade levels below grade, but without an IAP. The Humanities program is not a special education program.
 - D. Q. Will students in transition math/science, but not in this Humanities program, still get Seminar?
 - A. They will get a math/science program that includes Seminar.
 - E. Q. Is this program in lieu of the current transition programs?
 - A. It replaces English Trans, World History Trans, Reading Trans, and Seminar.
 - F. Q. How many are expected to take this in the fall?
 - A. There are 137 qualified, based on test scores, but there may be more.
 - G. Q. Is that number down from prior years?
 - A. No, the transition program has included about 15-20% of the incoming class.
 - H. Q. Are the goals of this course the same as the prep level course?
 - A. Yes.
 - I. Q. This is at the freshman level. What happens at the sophomore level?
 - A. We will have to develop other programs. Some students will move into the prep level.
 - J. Q. Will there be similar courses developed for all four years?
 - A. We will see as we go along. We usually provide enough variety and levels for juniors and seniors to meet needs.
 - K. Q. Would you please explain state mandated intervention for students in elementary schools?
 - A. RTI means that you look at the student in your classroom, find out what they need to succeed in your classroom, and you make accommodations in your classroom without moving them.
- VI. Improving the Academic Achievement of Minority and Immigrant Students, David Franson (8:28 PM)
- A. We want all students to do well. The average GPA for Caucasians is 3.7; for minorities it is 1.7. How do we address this disparity? We now have a program

called “Mental Karate.” It was developed by Mawi Asgedom, who emigrated from Ethiopia and went from a refugee camp to a Wheaton church group that adopted his whole family. He graduated from Wheaton North and went to Harvard on a full scholarship. He is now a motivational speaker and is partnering with us on the program. He initiated the freshman experience for all 1000 freshmen this year.

- B. We have 200 students in the program, which encourages academic achievement through personal success and school participation. Many people are involved in the program. There are five parts or belts. White is initiative; yellow is discipline; green is contribution; blue is courage; and, black is awareness. See their website at <http://www.mentalkarate.com>
 1. White (initiative): Identify five actions that they will act on to do good.
 2. Yellow (discipline): A goal is identified and must be done consistently (with discipline) for 45 days.
 3. Green (contribution): Do something beyond the individual – for family, another student, friend, school, or community.
 4. Blue (courage): Students acknowledge their importance in doing five acts of courage that must include trying to do something impossible, and keeping an inspirational log.
 5. Black (awareness): It is meta-cognition that helps students to think about their thinking. It helps them draw a full circle on their efforts throughout the year.
- C. We also have faculty members in liaison to the minority community. Nikita Hulbert, from Language Arts, is the liaison to the African-American community. Edgar Palacios, from Language Arts, is the liaison to the Hispanic community. They are doing whatever it takes to involve parents.
- D. We are also offering, at no cost, English language lessons to parents of ELL (English Language Learners) students. It is no longer called English as a Second Language (ESL) since in many cases, English may be a third or fourth language. The lessons have started and twenty parents are attending on Sundays from 2:00 – 4:00 PM with child care provided. On Wednesday evenings from 6:00 – 8:00 PM, we have eleven parents in the advanced class. While the majority taking the classes is Hispanic, there are others as well.
- E. We have formed a Committee on School Climate to be sensitive to what it is like to be a student or a staff member at LTHS.
- F. Q. Will Mawi be coming back next year?
 - A. We had planned on six visits this year. He is now working with seven schools, although not as extensively as with us. We don't expect him to be here as much next year.

VII. Creating and Using a K-12 Database, Julie Brenson (8:47 PM)

- A. This process will involve LTHS and the six feeder districts in creating a K-12 database. A common database can help track kids' achievement from kindergarten through high school. We can then compare student growth and we can learn and benefit from the information. We have data in the following areas:
 1. Program: attendance: activities, courses, teachers
 2. Achievement: GPA, class rank, class grades
 3. Demographics: gender, ethnicity, town, family, language

We do not have perception data, but we have done surveys to get opinions. We want to put all this in a data warehouse.

- B. We will ask other schools to store their data in the data warehouse. We need to store and retrieve it in a useful way. We are looking at a tool that allows respectful and secure access with strict rules on who can see it. Teachers will be able to see information about their students; principals will be able to see information about their whole school; district superintendents may see specific information about programs across their schools.
- C. How do we use it? As an example, we could look at box plots of reading scores across years and identify where an intervention would be needed. We could also perform item analysis for specific skills across classes. This leads to collaborating about how to teach those specific skills. Data-driven decision-making means using data to inform what we do as teachers and as parents. It informs us about our programs so we can make better choices for our students. This Lyons Township data consortium has a couple key ideas, the most important of which is to promote student achievement across the township.
- D. Q. What is the reception to this idea from the other districts?
 - A. They seem to be very excited about it. Dr. Kelly has met with superintendents. There also has been a joint meeting of school boards.
- E. Q. How will you deal with some technical issues, like storing different data or data with different names, etc.?
 - A. The data is SIS compliant, which means that the software can pull data from a variety of sources and move it into different forms. One option would be for all data to come to LT's warehouse. Another option is to use an external hosting service.

VIII. Table Discussion on Improving Achievement (9:11 PM)

- A. Is what is being offered preparing students for their future?
- B. What is an area that is not being addressed by the school yet?
- C. Please have someone record and leave the notes on the table.

IX. Adjournment (~9:30 PM)