

LT Community Advisory Council (September 21, 2022)
Meeting Minutes

The Lyons Township High School District #204 Community Advisory Council met on September 21, 2022. 71 members of our school community attended to hear a general LTHS update from Dr. Brian Waterman (Superintendent). In addition, the focus of the meeting was to hear a presentation and provide feedback on the topic of “School Safety at LTHS”.

Dr. Waterman provided the following LTHS updates:

- *Strategic Plan Update*
InspireLT, which was LT’s stakeholder-engaged strategic planning process in Spring, 2022 has evolved into unpacking the goals the team set forth and beginning to live the plan. During the Fall, 2022, LT will continue developing action items and action plans that will move us toward accomplishing the goals. In addition, we will be developing a district scorecard to measure our progress.
- *Recognition of Class of 2022 National Merit Semi-finalists*
LT is proud to announce that ten seniors have been named semifinalists in the 68th Annual National Merit Scholarship Program. These students will continue to compete for approximately 7,500 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$30 million dollars that will be offered in the spring. More than 1.5 million students nationwide entered the Merit Program as juniors by taking the PSAT National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. High scorers were designate semifinalists, representing less than 1% of the states graduating class. In total, just over 16,000 students nationwide qualified and five of these students were from LT. These ten students will advance to the Finalist level later this year. LT’s ten National Merit Semifinalists are Anne Dillon, Taylor Dudek, Andrew Elrod, Ella Happel, Nicholas Lorenzen, Peter Mikulski, Matthew Ozark, Josephine Powell, Joseph Wall, and Anna Zierdt. Congratulations to all ten National Semi-finalists!
- *Deaf Awareness Month*
September is Deaf Awareness Month. The purpose of Deaf Awareness Month is to help raise awareness about the language, culture, and diversity of the Deaf community in the United States. It is observed in September to commemorate the first World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf, which took place in 1951. The month focuses on promoting the positive aspects of deafness, encouraging social inclusion, and raising awareness of the organizations that support those who are deaf. It helps us see the highly concerted global advocacy to raise awareness about the Deaf Community on different levels. It is about gathering together, becoming united, and showing that unity to the rest of the world. A variety of activities have been planned here at LT, including a staff ASL training last week that was facilitated LTHS ASL teacher, Krystle Conrad.
- *Hispanic Heritage Month*
LTHS is currently celebrating HispanicHeritage Month, which is observed each year from September 15 to October 15. This year’s theme, Unidos: Inclusivity for a Stronger Nation, celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. The day of September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively. At LTHS,

approximately 24%, or 933 students, are of Hispanic or Latino origin, and we are enjoying planning activities to celebrate LatinX Heritage Month throughout the next few weeks. This includes hosting the Voices of Chicago from the Chicago Poetry Center for two special performances on Friday of last week.

○ *Suicide Awareness Month*

The National Alliance on Mental Illness has identified September as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month to help promote awareness and recognition around the issues of suicide prevention and how to have appropriate and meaningful dialogue regarding the topic of mental health. Throughout the month of September, LT is bringing light to suicide awareness in a variety of ways to impart the important message that we all play a role to speak up and get ourselves and others support when we see warning signs. On our campuses, announcements will be provided, ribbons will be worn and other activities planned as we shine a light on a topic that is often difficult to discuss and uncomfortable to hear. As a part of this effort, the Student Against Violence Everywhere is launching a week-long Start with Hello program. This program brings attention to the growing epidemic of social isolation in schools and communities, and empowers young people to create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their school. Start with Hello teaches students to reach out and include those who may be dealing with social isolation, and who might be at risk of harming themselves or others. By normalizing this conversation, our students will build the skills to recognize the warning signs and speak up to help others find the support they need. We invite parents and guardians to join us in having these same conversations at home with your students as we recognize Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

○ *Community Theme of the Beginning of the School Year*

A common theme during the first 4 weeks of the school year has been community, and specifically, providing our community with an opportunity see our campuses, provide their thoughts and input, and connect with our staff, leadership team, and Board of Education. So far this school year, we've hosted a Community Chat with Board Members (August 31), two Parent Open Houses (September 8 and 15), Sankofa Community Connection (September 13), an articulation event with our associate schools on September 7. And, we still have more to come with our LT Community Advisory Council meeting on September 21 and an articulation event for our local business partners, realtors, villages and municipalities, and faith-based leaders in early October.

- *In addition, Homecoming Week may be the best example of connecting with our community as we celebrate Homecoming, 2022. We are excited to welcome our alums back and celebrate the outstanding traditions of LT with a Pep Rally and Soccer Game on Friday, September 23 and a Community Parade, Football Game at Bennett Field, and the Homecoming Dance on Saturday, September 24.*

○ *Upcoming Events Related to Community*

Dr. Waterman also highlighted the following upcoming events:

October 8 – Free AdventHealth Clinic at South Campus

October 12 – Two speaker events. Dr. Tyrone Howard will present “Building an Inclusive Community” and Parent Community Network is hosting Dr. Doug Bolton who will talk about how as a community we can continue to work toward developing resilience in our students.

Dr. Jennifer Tyrrell (Principal) and Mr. Kevin Brown (North Campus Associate Principal) presented information regarding 1) a safety assessment that was conducted during the summer, 2) the promotion of the “Start with Hello” campaign at LTHS, 3) the Violent Critical Incident (VCI) drill that was conducted on September 1, and 4) the Threat Assessment Process that LTHS utilizes. Following the presentation, members of the LTCAC discussed the questions below in small groups and provided feedback regarding school safety at LTHS

In planning for the 2022-23 school year, we prioritized starting the school year with an emphasis on school safety. Many of the efforts and areas of focus have been shared with you tonight. Please provide feedback on these priority areas/efforts and share ideas for consideration during future planning efforts within the area of school safety.

- ✓ We like that the drill was so early on in the year, the usage of a consultant, and the switch to the tunnel. Is there any concern with kids outside for sports, gym, etc.? What’s the protocol? What about events like tonight; security guards around?
- ✓ Barricade during drill is pragmatic, But will it be muscle memory to default to the practice all the time if not practiced to evacuate when able?
- ✓ Have we locally debated arming our staff in order to assist in emergency situations? Have we considered providing access to firearms (with appropriate training) when response time is delayed?
- ✓ Can we better introduce and set expectations with parents around the SROS’s to help educate and inform and create comfort of practice?
- ✓ Create line of sight to exterior doors during and AFTER school – expectations around entry at all times – enhance security for all times of day and after hours.
- ✓ 30 days for video recording seems short/brief to keep retaining – could you consider extending that?
- ✓ Students think safety has improved.
- ✓ 1-2 student support in unmanned spaces.
- ✓ Prioritize safety in restrooms, specifically related to marijuana use. It is important for students to feel comfortable/safe using the restrooms.
- ✓ Safety is “next level” this year.
- ✓ VCI Drill was more effective this year because there was more participation in practicing the barricade.
- ✓ Appreciative of the school monitoring system, whether online or through gaggle, but how much is it being monitored.
- ✓ What should parents expect in terms of the how/what regarding the communication of emergency plans?
 - Mass texts, voicemails, emails, etc.? Will the blackboard website work include this?
- ✓ Have we considered the use of a visible identification for students?
- ✓ Have we considered scanning ID’s in and out for record keeping and accountability?
- ✓ It is important to ensure that doors can be barricaded – some open out.
- ✓ It is important to decrease occurrences of physical violence at school.
- ✓ It is important to decrease racism in the school and separate the physical violence. How can we be proactive instead of reactive with conflict resolution?
- ✓ What is the definition of community?
- ✓ How are we monitoring kids in the areas that are not seen by the cameras?
- ✓ How can we enhance the systems we have in place currently (i.e. motion sensing on cameras)?

- ✓ It is important to increase communication with community, staff and families regarding safety plan and information to help increase understanding of ALICE and VCI Plans.
- ✓ Tracking all incidents from mid-severe to be able to be proactive in supporting students now and for several years post-graduation with community resources. E.g. one student with 10 “mild” incidents may go under the radar if none of the incidents are significant.
- ✓ Have we considered adding additional SRO’s and/or armed security?
- ✓ Do we include enough drills/practice related to evacuation, severe weather, and VCI?
- ✓ Can we send a safety/e-mail communication to all parents with a quick recap?
- ✓ Visitor access seems very easy.
- ✓ Can we consider the safety/security during after school campus safety/patrol (sports)(clubs)?
- ✓ Students report that students are taking school safety seriously, but they understand that it is not the only focus of school (which is great).
- ✓ School safety is important to continually revisit and update.
- ✓ Should we consider ladders and exits for 2nd and 3rd floors
- ✓ Should we consider a follow-up drill with less direction?

Research supports that implementation of Sandy Hook Promise Know the Signs Programs (Start with Hello and Say Something) as well as having robust mental health counseling & support programs reduces violence in schools. What ideas do you have for our continued work providing social and emotional support to students, building a culture of connectedness, and continuing to create a say something culture at LTHS?

- ✓ Is there some kind of anonymous hotline?
- ✓ Build in more team-building/counseling/mental health days or events.
- ✓ Is there an opportunity to switch counselors if there is a discomfort?
- ✓ Should be suggested to students that they think about who their trusted adult might be.
- ✓ How can students be encouraged to make friends outside of clubs that may seem intimidating?
- ✓ Should we consider adding a semester-long Social/Emotional class?
- ✓ Focus on resilience and self-service tools.
- ✓ Can we consider developing a tool kit for parents?
- ✓ Provide students with a resilience toolkit to overcome challenges.
- ✓ We recommend this be considered as part of the website redesign:
 - Students self service site with curated content to overcome challenges and who to go to if self-service is not thorough
- ✓ Transparency and support for parents re: mental health.
- ✓ Strikes some parents as this is NOT what HS students are prone to do.
- ✓ Need to have people you can go to.
- ✓ How plausible is the email to “the trusted adult”?
- ✓ The opening SEL lessons should be spread out over different periods over the course of 2-3 weeks.
- ✓ General feeling that the opening SEL lessons were a “check off the box” all in one day.
- ✓ During the day, students picked the same “fun fact” all day.
- ✓ Advertise “say hello” more so that more people participate
- ✓ SEL: Make it more interactive or personal.
- ✓ Less phone use in class because phones prevent authentic connections.
- ✓ Instead of just one co-curricular night, add a couple more so that kids are aware of extra curriculars and actively reach out or try and join a club.
- ✓ Nice efforts to encourage kids to join programs
- ✓ Please continue the culture of inclusion and positivity

- ✓ It is important to find students who are not involved with activities.
- ✓ Please invest in more social workers and counselors.
- ✓ Analyze contact/engagement rates of social workers and counselors to students (avg. contacts per month/semester/year with a student).
- ✓ It is important to keep SEL as authentic as possible.
- ✓ Consider mentoring programs that involve older students working with younger students.
- ✓ Expand snowball or prioritize sophomores who did not get in as freshmen.
- ✓ Please consider adding SEL days every month.
- ✓ How can we continue to address students' social skills?
- ✓ Teach students how to engage with each other.
- ✓ Giving parents better information before it is needed being proactive about distributing good mental health guides for parents.
- ✓ Increase adult involvement in Freshman Experience Day, rather than having students lead the experience.
- ✓ Consider adding alternate and additional methods for reporting concerns for students.
- ✓ Increase accountability regarding disciplinary issues.
- ✓ Safety incident reporting for public.
- ✓ Front loading SEL was too much, overwhelming at the beginning of the year. Most students tuned out and didn't participate.
- ✓ Consider adding a mentoring program with student to student or staff to student.
- ✓ Consider adding theme tables at lunch or providing an option to go home/open campus.
- ✓ Tap into the local community groups to join various school events e.g. sports events during lunch time. This could include the YMCA, the Living Room (NAMI) being able to come on campus.
- ✓ Consider adding a counseling app.
- ✓ Consider promoting the Speak-up Line more.
- ✓ Extra Curriculars – do they track involvement and how do you engage those that appear most isolated?
- ✓ Consider making sure that the promotion of SEL is consistent and not just at the beginning of the year.
- ✓ Consider adding brain development education and common sense reminders.
- ✓ There is an awesome variety of clubs and activities to ensure connectedness
- ✓ The intentional efforts to build community this year are present.
- ✓ Ongoing PR/Recruitment efforts re: clubs and activities are important; consider adding a mid-year co-curricular night.
- ✓ Need for continued proactive mental health supports (e.g. go to social worker, other resources; “safe” peer groups for support).
- ✓ Consider including a self-assessment survey for students about their mental health.

Tonight, we shared a bit about ALICE protocols and our implementation of the VCI drill during the early part of this school year. As a student, staff member, parent/guardian, or community member, please provide feedback for our consideration when planning future drills and communicating with our school community.

- ✓ Kids need to know where exits are so they can make the best barricade/evacuate decision.
- ✓ Can the window for drills be narrowed and explained to students? High anxiety students spend the day worrying.
- ✓ Overall question: What is the policy for student phones? They are distractions, but should be with kids for safety.
- ✓ Include upcoming drills on calendar/website.

- ✓ Annually have a more comprehensive drill
- ✓ Mental health resources should be available as part of the drill process.
- ✓ Let parents know about the technology of the blue point system and how it works.
- ✓ Notifying parents what to do in an emergency is important.
- ✓ Consider inviting the LTCAC to a drill to then act as a champion to the process
- ✓ Decision making should be made by people in the building.
- ✓ Make the drills more realistic.
- ✓ Give the teachers the choice to get the kids out how they see fit
- ✓ There is no value in using protocols that you are not practicing.
- ✓ I would expect the staff to have some boundaries.
- ✓ Although you can't have surprise drills, there should be drills during passing periods or lunches so that it brings up awareness that not everything goes according to your plan.
- ✓ Consider developing clear and concise communication plans, not just for parents, but for the neighborhood and local residents/businesses.
- ✓ What are the mass communication systems currently in place and what is needed – short term and long term?
- ✓ Inform families/residents of best ways to sign up for/receive communications (ex – some media pages are not directed by the school)?
- ✓ Consider adding after care for mental health after the drills.
- ✓ All classrooms should have classroom discussions. Students need decompression time after the drill.
- ✓ Regarding the BluePoint System, the parents should also get the notification.
- ✓ Practice routes during various times/days and get student feedback about how it went.
- ✓ Ensure there is an ongoing review of entrances and ensuring entry protocol with staff and students.
- ✓ Positive experience overall in handling drills
- ✓ How do you handle kids with anxiety that this may affect negatively? Decompress?