

## Pssst! Here are a few things you need to know...

At a minimum, the LEA leadership meets monthly (often more frequently than that) with District management leadership to discuss issues that arise throughout the district and to do problem solving. LEA never waits until formal meetings of the joint LEA-LPS Professional Committee (ProCom) or negotiations to try to put out fires, address concerns, or to make the professional lives of our members better.

Because of some recent discussions between LEA and LPS, here are some items we thought members needed to know about. These pieces of information are in addition to the “Comments, Concerns, and Announcements” and the responses to them that members can and should read in the monthly minutes from the LEA Faculty Representative (FR) Council which records issues brought to the Association’s attention via our diligent LEA building representatives.

### FLEX Time

(1) Each year the Association and LPS has dedicated themselves to getting the bugs worked out regarding FLEX time. This year most curricular areas were timelier in their communication to teachers about required expectations, alerting them before school was out last year as to what staff development would be mandated for District FLEX. In a few cases, this did not happen and teachers filled up their FLEX hours in the summer only to discover they still have mandated inservice to attend. This should not be happening and it is LEA’s expectation that situations such as these will not continue. If members filled up their District FLEX time with mandated staff development choices, they cannot be expected to attend additional district mandated staff development unless it is provided on contract time (i.e. a sub is arranged for during the school day) or the member is paid to attend the inservice (and it is up to the member if they are willing to attend the inservice for pay). Members can be held accountable for somehow receiving relevant information from any mandatory staff development session (i.e. material sent to them from their consultant, information shared by someone who attended, etc.)

(2) Members who have multiple assignments or who teach multiple curricular areas cannot be mandated to take more than seven hours of District FLEX. It is not the member’s responsibility to try to meet multiple demands by consultants, either. Should a member find themselves in the situation where more than one consultant is mandating inservice that will take the member over their seven hours of District FLEX time (or fourteen hours of combined District and Building FLEX time if the member owes Building FLEX time to a District program rather than to a school site), then the member should send an e-mail to all consultants involved in the staff development mandates, explain the dilemma (that too many hours of inservice are being mandated), and ask that the consultants work out the discrepancies between/among themselves and arrive at a solution that has the member working only seven hours of mandated District and seven hours of mandated Building FLEX time for the year. The same is true if a member finds themselves in a tug-of-war between a consultant and a principal over FLEX requirements. The consultant and the principal need to be contacted by the teacher and the two supervisors need to come to an understanding of what will be required of the member. *If in doubt, the member should always fulfill the requirements of their immediate supervisor—the person who is responsible for their appraisal and who will hold the member accountable for the content of the staff development.*

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## Appraisal Rubrics

Since the fall of 2006 a group of LPS building principals have been using a set of rubrics to help them reach a level of consistency when it comes to marking teacher appraisals. Thus, the set of rubrics is a tool for administrators to assist them to do their jobs. As more and more administrators have implemented the use of the rubrics, more LEA members have become aware of them and there has been growing concern about what the rubrics mean. Use of the rubrics by a building principal does not indicate there has been a change of the LEA-LPS approved Appraisal Process. Teachers may, if they so desire, ask their principal to see a set of the rubrics.

[Two side notes: (1) More building principals appear to be formalizing their informal observations of teachers with what are referred to as “walk-throughs.” After an informal visit to a classroom, principals are sometimes providing feedback on a “walk-through” form. This feedback should not be considered any different than an informal note or verbal comments given to a teacher after an informal observation. Although principals have always been able to include informal information on a teacher’s appraisal, the bulk of a person’s appraisal needs to come from the approved LEA-LPS Appraisal process which includes a minimum of two formal observations announced at least twenty-four hours in advance followed by post observation conferences. “Walk-throughs” do not indicate a change in the approved Appraisal process; a process, by the way, which has to not only be jointly approved, but be consistent with LPS Board policy. The *LPS Teacher Appraisal Manual* is also approved by the Nebraska State Department of Education. (2) The joint LEA-LPS Teacher Appraisal Committee is meeting this year and reviewing the jointly approved Appraisal process. Any subsequent changes must be approved by both the LEA Board of Directors and the LPS Board of Education and members will be kept well informed of any changes, if any are made.]

## Social Security Numbers

LEA has been working with the District for quite some time to ensure that individuals’ social security numbers are not included on or requested on documents that are visible to the public. Now and then LEA receives reports of a form still requesting social security numbers. Members are encouraged to use their employee number on such forms and not their social security numbers. LPS will accept the substitution.

## **COPING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE: # 3**



We’ve told you about **SHERMAN TANKS** and **SNIPERS**. By chance do you have an **EXPLODER** in your life? This article has been revised from information from Robert M. Branson from the homepages of [wmich.edu](http://wmich.edu).

**EXPLODERS** are known for sudden tantrums filled with rage that appear to be barely under control. Resistance or provocation to an **EXPLODER**, intended or not, can cause an escalation of fury to the point where objects are thrown, blows struck, or unforgivable and unforgettable things are said. **These folks are the life of the party! Ugh!!!**

**What makes an EXPLODER tick?** An adult tantrum is a sudden almost automatic response to a situation in which a person feels both thwarted and psychologically threatened. **EXPLODERS** feel first angry and then blaming or suspicious. A victim’s reaction is likely to be one of surprise and bewilderment at the abrupt and horrifying change in the situation. Such eruptive behavior can be cause for others to become



silent, passive or spark tantrums of their own.

### **So how do you cope with Exploders?**

1. Help them regain self-control. How? If their eruptive behavior does not run down, or at least pause, then douse the fire yourself by yelling "Stop, stop" or "wait a minute, something's gone wrong," etc. The repetition helps, as does a sharp inflection or enough volume to break through. Intend to get their attention and break the spell they are under.
2. Show your serious intentions—after getting their attention, make it clear that you do take them seriously.
3. Interrupt the interaction—announce a break in the meeting, even if you're not in charge, or just leave, making sure to say, "I'll be back." Your purposes are: (a) to buy time to compose yourself, (b) to break the immediate pattern of interaction between yourself and the **EXPLODER**, and (c) to help them cool down to regain self-control.
4. If possible, you might want to seek some privacy in a different setting with the **EXPLODER**.

*In other words... wet their fuse!*

