

**FR Council**  
**September 16, 2010**  
**Lincoln High School Cafeteria 4:15p.m.**

**BUILDINGS NOT PRESENT:** Campbell, Eastridge, Elliott, Humann, Huntington, Lakeview, Lincoln North Star, Lincoln Northeast, Norwood Park, Park, Pershing, Saratoga, Sheridan.

**“EARLY BIRD” DRAWING:** Nancy Fisher, Mickle, won a \$25 gift card to Red Lobster, compliments of Candace Specht and Horace Mann Insurance.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Jenni called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of May 20, 2010, were approved as printed.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS:** The financial reports for May, June and July were approved as presented.

**APPRAISAL COMMITTEE REPORT—Linda Freye**

Linda reminded FR Council that the only personnel that are to be using the piloted appraisal process are those who have been through the training. Linda encouraged members who are piloting the process to provide LEA with feedback.

Jenni reminded the FRs that the appraisal process must be approved by the LEA and LPS Boards. There also may be a survey that will be sent out to all staff in the pilot program.

**LEA POLICY CHANGES—Marcia Benner**

Marcia presented the changes approved by the LEA Board of Directors regarding the job descriptions for the Associate Staff for Membership and Governance, Associate Staff for Government Relations and Finance, LEA UniServ Director and the LEA Executive Director. Marcia asked FRs to review the changes and be prepared to vote for approval at the October 21, 2010, FR Council.

**INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION:**

President’s Update—Jenni Absalon

❖ **MEMBER RELATIONS:**

- District Update:
  - The Time and Attendance System (TAS) is out of payroll and teachers will not be clocking in and out as classified staff are currently doing. Teachers will continue to use SubFinder and will be expected to log in on Monday of each week to verify any absences from the previous week. If there appears to be a mistake, teachers will need to contact their payroll secretary.
  - Tests are standardized in Math across the district.
  - Pinnacle grading system and weighting of grades was determined by principals. The high school principals made the decision that the grades would be 80% summative and 20% formative, whereas, the middle school principals made the decision that grades would be 100% summative.
  - LEA/LPS Negotiated Agreement was a joint agreement between LEA and LPS. Last spring during negotiations, both sides brought concerns to the table. One of the agreed upon items is that coaches cannot miss Parent Teacher Conferences unless they are the Head Coach.
  - LEA has met with Dr. Joel on various occasions. One discussion was regarding the Community Conversations that were held October and November of 2009. Dr. Joel has

set a meeting with Dr. Moore, Kathy Danek and Jenni Absalon to work on the Strategic Plan for the school district.

- LEAF Quilt Raffle:
  - Jenni presented the quilt and announced that raffle tickets are currently being sold. The proceeds will go directly to the Foundation. The raffle will be held in December.
- Probationary Teacher Training:
  - Saturday, October 9, 2010, from 9:00 am to noon, a training session will be provided by Dan Studer. A variety of member rights and protections topics will be presented. This presentation is a free benefit to LEA members and will present guidance on many topics that affect probationary staff. All probationary (and up to year five) teachers are encouraged to attend.

#### ❖ COMMUNICATION

- Action=Personal Responsibility:
  - Jenni reminded FRs to inform their building members of information that is relevant to them.
- Surveys:
  - There is a current survey on the appraisal system and soon will be one on discipline. Jenni informed FRs that the district has discussed eliminating the Best Practices of Student Discipline Handbook.
- LPS Board:
  - All LEA members may attend LPS Board meetings and the Board welcomes information from staff. Jenni is finalizing the Legislative and School Board Contact Teams.

#### ❖ COMMUNITY

- Harvest of Books:
  - Jenni stated that IAAP will host an event for Harvest of Books October 9<sup>th</sup> at Holmes Elementary from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. She also asked that if FRs have a home business, or know of a home based business that may be interested in being a vendor, to contact LEA.
- LIBA:
  - Jenni, Jim and Dan also met with Coby Mack, Wanda Caffrey, Doug Carey, and Phil Young from LIBA. Dr. Joel was a speaker at the Education Liaison meeting last week.
- Community Conversation:
  - This past summer a conversation was held at the Malone Center with approximately 65 parents in attendance. Jenni continues to work with Thomas Christie and TJ McDowell on this initiative.

**DRAWING:** Gift cards to Indigo Bookstore were won by Marlyce Carlson, Lincoln High and Paula Buckner, Scott.

**“THE RIGHTS STUFF”**—Dan Studer, LEA UniServ Director

- Dan reported on appraisals and writing goals/job targets.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**—Jim Rea, LEA Executive Director

- Jim reported that LEA continues to bring in new members. He encouraged FRs to ask probationary teachers to register for the workshop on October 9, 2010. He stated that LEA is healthy financially. Jim stressed that the new job descriptions will help streamline and be more effective for the LEA members.
- Politics: The 2010 Census will have an impact on the realigning of the Congressional boundaries. The First and Second Congressional District will have major changes and the Third

will have minor changes. A committee of Senators will be drawing the boundary lines. Jim and Jenni will be holding meetings with Senators from the Capitol area. Business leaders are attacking the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR). All bills introduced this past year dealing with the CIR were not advanced out of committee.

**OLD BUSINESS:** none

**NEW BUSINESS:** none

**COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Lincoln Southwest—Group Comment/Concern:

One of the recent ratified pieces of the teacher's contract is the expectation of all teachers to be present for parent-teacher conferences utilizing the same provisions for exceptions as PLC days, such as professional activities. This includes coaches not being excused for practices so that teachers who are coaches are present for conferences. Recently, an e-mail was sent from the district office allowing principals the option of excusing coaches for up to 50% of the parent-teacher conferences.

Teachers who do not coach are concerned for the following reasons: 1) this memo sent out appears to be a violation of the mutually ratified contract regarding expectations of parent-teacher conference presence, since practices do not qualify as professional leave activities, 2) this message contradicts the message principals delivered at the beginning of the year which was consistent with the LPS/LEA ratified contract and as a result creates a breakdown in consistency, 3) this is inequitable for the teachers who do not receive an extra standard pay and who must be present in lieu of a contract compensatory day that is in the calendar to compensate teachers who ARE present, and 4) this contradicts the spirit of the contract to make teachers available for parents, who are our clients and who make time from their schedules to assist in making their children our students—successful through collaboration with teachers.

***Response from Ken Babcock***

***The decision to allow coaches to miss part of the parent-teacher conferences was formulated after considerable discussion and thought. There would have been some inequities if some of our teams would have been forced to miss one or possibly two practices within a week. I know further discussion will take place about this subject in the future.***

***Response from LEA***

***The expectation is if any amount of parent teacher conferences are missed the coaches are expected to make up the time by offering an alternative time for parents, outside of the contract day.***

Lincoln Southwest—Building Comment/Concern:

Lincoln Southwest High School piloted the Pinnacle grading system, which has been an outstanding tool. Part of the program provides the ability to weigh grades, of which many teachers do in their discipline. Last year, curriculum specialists informed teachers that, this year, discussions would occur to standardize grades in individual disciplines across the district, which teachers acknowledge to make sense for consistency among high schools. However, at the beginning of this school year, weights were set in place with little discussion in some disciplines or no discussion in even more disciplines. Many teachers were not informed by their curriculum specialists until after teachers had print and/or handed out syllabi to students.

This concerns teachers because: 1) they do not feel empowered to develop weight standards collaboratively with the district, despite assurances to the contrary by their curriculum specialists, 2) teachers have not received justification for why 80% summative, 20% formative weighting was selected (i.e. research to support this weighting) and 3) such a weighting for formative, such as homework, is contradictory to the middle school

philosophy, the philosophy from which many students come from when going to high school, in which homework is now graded.

Mickle Middle School—Group Comment/ Concern:

Is it true that high schools are having their mid-quarter reports, quarter reports, etc. “pushed out” by their offices, yet middle school teachers must do this themselves including printing off hard copies for students whose parents don’t have access to Pinnacle? We have a teacher at Mickle who is also at North Star who said that North Star office is “pushing out” reports, but at Mickle, we must make the hard copies (for those who do not have email) and send the email.

Southeast High School—Group Comment/Concern:

Quite a few teachers are feeling frustrated with implementation of the new Pinnacle system. While there are many positives to the new system for teachers, students and parents, many teachers feel there was not enough thorough training offered before being expected to use it and having it “go live” to students and parents. We especially could have benefitted from extended training occurring before the contract year began, and from training that could have included simulations such as setting up mock grade books, mock grading situations, etc. Perhaps a different approach might have been allowing us to learn, use, and work with the new system for the first 9 weeks before opening it up to parents/students, especially given the limited (i.e. 1 1/2 hour) training that was provided to teachers.

Irving Middle School—Individual Comment/Concern:

It would have been nice to have Pinnacle piloted/or field tested in Middle School before all teachers had to try it. We should have had time to practice before it goes live to students and parents. Please, when it goes to Elementary School, have a pilot time. Since High School is 80% Summative and 20% Formative...Middle Schools should be also!! It’s not a good idea to have poor work habits for 3 years and then have the formative work count. We try to tell students that homework counts but 11-12-13 yr olds don’t understand that...

#### ***Grading/testing Responses from Dr. Barb Jacobson***

***Concerning standardized tests given throughout the district:***

- ***Barb states that, in preparation for the NeSA Math tests, math teachers are administering benchmark tests throughout the year. The tests are to be used as an indicator of the progress of the students.***

***Concerning the weighting of grades:***

- ***The high school principals made the decision that the high school weighting is 80% summative and 20% formative.***
- ***The middle school principals made the decision that the middle school weighting is 100% summative and 0% formative.***
- ***Teachers who disagree with the weighting formulas should talk to their principal about their concerns.***
- ***In some content areas, weightings have been predetermined - it depends on the content area. Curriculum specialists have worked with their department chairs in the development of the weightings. The weightings are set up in order to be consistent across the district in grading. It is an issue of equity so that it doesn't depend on where you go to school or what teacher you have - you are evaluated in the same manner.***

#### ***PINNACLE Responses from Kirk Langer***

1. Is it true that high schools are having their mid-quarter reports, quarter reports, etc. “pushed out” by their offices, yet middle school teachers must do this themselves including printing off hard copies for students whose parents don’t have access to Pinnacle?

*At high schools, office personnel printed and distributed mid-quarter reports. In essence, reports were printed for all high school students consistent with previous practice.*

*In middle schools teachers were asked to distribute mid-quarter reports electronically using the email capability of the Pinnacle Gradebook to send a "student assignment" report to all parent/guardian email addresses associated with their students. Computing Services would be happy to provide a demonstration of this process in order to help you gauge the impact on teacher time. Computing Services provided school office personnel with an application that allowed them to easily ascertain which parents did not have electronic access to the Gradebook or email. Middle school office personnel generated a list of parent/guardians that needed a print version of the report and distributed print reports to them.*

*Finally, quarter report cards will be distributed in print format for all students consistent with past practice. These report cards will be generated by office personnel at both high school and middle schools.*

2. Is there now a “window” for due dates for progress reports on Pinnacle?

*Grade reports are harvested directly from teachers' gradebook. Thus, while there is a specific date and time those grades are harvested for reporting, teachers have persistent access to their gradebook and since there is no separate reporting system there isn't really a "window" of time. If gradebooks are kept up-to-date there is no additional work required at the time of reporting.*

3. Quite a few teachers are feeling frustrated with implementation of the new Pinnacle system. While there are many positives to the new system for teachers, students and parents, many teachers feel there was not enough thorough training offered before being expected to use it and having it “go live” to students and parents. We especially could have benefitted from extended training occurring before the contract year began, and from training that could have included simulations such as setting up mock grade books, mock grading situations, etc.

*This question addresses both the scope and duration of training in addition to the timing of student/parent access to the Pinnacle Internet Viewer (PIV). There were a variety of implementation considerations and trade-offs inherent in many decisions. Care was taken to bring forward lessons learned from the pilot to inform a successful implementation process.*

*There is an inherent relationship between the scope of training and its duration. The training in the pilot and full secondary implementation, reflected teacher feedback that the best training is that which is "just in time, just enough and just for me."*

- *"Just in time" meant putting the technical training very close to the start of school so teachers could very quickly put that into practice.*
- *"Just enough" recognizes that the start of school is a very busy time for teachers as they prepare for the school year. The intent of the training was to provide teachers with the technical skills necessary to take attendance, enter assignments, access demographics and use the system to communicate with parents and students.*
- *"Just for me" recognizes that while all teachers use a gradebook, there are variations among/between the curriculum disciplines related to specific grading practice. Based on experience in the pilot, the specifics of grading practice were addressed in the context of PLCs*

*and building flexible professional development. It is in that context where technical training provides foundation for professional development associated with grading practice.*

*Given the time frame, there is no question that PLCs and buildings have not had adequate opportunity to address all of the professional development needs. The difficulty, as pointed out, is that Pinnacle and the PIV bring immediate transparency that is new and can evoke anxiety similar to a "spectator effect." The decision to have the PIV open from the outset took into consideration experience from the pilot, technical limitations associated with opening the PIV differentially, and considerable input from Principals as well as the Curriculum, Computing Services and Student Services departments. It was recognized that any implementation of this magnitude brings with it a "dip" in performance as staff members become accustomed to the new environment. The benefits of increased communication with the PIV were considered numerous enough to warrant opening the PIV from the outset. Principals have worked to offset staff concerns by educating parents to expect some inconsistency as staff members learn the system and the district refines it. The preponderance of parent feedback supports this decision.*

4. It would have been nice to have Pinnacle piloted/or field tested in Middle School before all teachers had to try it. We should have had time to practice before it goes live to students and parents.

*There is no question that there are differences in grading practice between middle and high schools, however, the differences were not judged sufficient to warrant a separate pilot that would delay implementation and the associated benefits for students and caregivers. Overall, there is markedly less difference in grading practice between middle and high school than there is between secondary and elementary where there will be a separate pilot. A response to the timing of going "live" with PIV is included in the previous answer.*

East High School—Individual Comment/Concern:

LPS is looking at dramatic changes in graduation requirements. I realize some of their changes are state mandated, but I have a grave concern that these changes will kill some of our elective programs. I ask LEA leadership to investigate the proposal and advocate for our teachers and students. Are these changes really in the best interest of all students or just for the college bound?

*Dr. Mariln Moore responded:*

*It is a timely question for this will be on the board agenda for first reading at next week's meeting,*

*The board is considering changes to high school graduation requirements because of action by the state board of education. In order to be in compliance with new Rule 10 language, we must add 10 hours to our requirements in math, 10 hours to our requirements in science, and 5 hours to our requirements in English.*

*At the direction of the board's Student Learning Committee, a district committee, including teachers, district administrators, building administrators, and parents, has been working on this over the past several months. A public forum was held to provide an opportunity for any member of the community to speak to the committee. The study has also been publicized on the district's web site, with an online option for comments.*

*The committee decided that the premise of a comprehensive high school education should be reflected*

*in graduation requirements, so the requirement for fine arts/CTE was raised by 5 hours, and the PE requirement was raised by 2.5 hours. The technology requirement was reduced from 10 to 5 hours, given that so much technology is infused throughout all curriculum offerings.*

*The total hours required for graduation was increased from 230 hours to 245 hours. The new requirements will go into effect for the graduating class of 2015, this year's eighth grade students.*

*The board will consider the proposed revisions at the October 12 board meeting. Action is scheduled to be taken at the October 26 board meeting.*

Beattie Elementary—Group Comment/Concern:

What is the proper/appropriate response for a teacher when a meeting is set during our plan time and the teacher would like to not have the time taken away?

*Response – This is a frequently raised concern. First, members in this situation should try to negotiate with their administrator or person calling the meeting to try to find a time other than plan time for the meeting(s) if that is the desire of the impacted teachers or negotiate a limited amount of time to be devoted to the meeting so teachers still receive plan time each day. Second, members are urged to consider using the 5-18 appeal process and documentation both of which can be found on the LEA website under Member Rights.*

Beattie Elementary—Building Comment/Concern:

Are schools that are using BIST still to be referring students for disciplinary problems using the LPS referral form?

*Response – Yes. BIST is a behavioral intervention program separate from discipline, the LPS Rights and Responsibilities of Students, and the jointly approved, written, and adopted “Best Practices of Student Discipline” handbook. BIST does not fit all student/teacher needs and the “Best Practices” handbook addresses a variety of non-emergency procedures teachers and administrators can utilize. An overview of the “Best Practices” handbook will be included as part of the October FR Council.*

**DRAWING for ½ day of Guest Teaching:** Shawn Carlson, Roper Elementary.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Jenni adjourned the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jan Olmstead*

Jan Olmstead  
Secretary-Treasurer