

LYON COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



The Tutorial Enterprise

An Affiliate of
NSEA & NEA

Steve Fargan, President
Leanna Ogle, Vice President
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President Fargan Reads to Classes and Delivers Mini-Grant Checks



A committee met after the LCEA executive board meeting in February to select the 2007 Mini-Grant winners. The grants are for \$200 to be used on programs which impact students. On March 2, 2007 LCEA President, Steve Fargan, toured the school district reading to classes and delivering the mini-grant checks to the winners listed below:

- Cari Bunyard – FES
- Jennifer Chico – YES
- Jody Ericksen – FHS
- Arvella Jergesen - FIS
- Sonya Kirby – SES
- Marie Lico – SES
- Pat Mikulish – Smith
- Tamara Roseberry – CES
- Torie Sandberg – FES
- Becky Jo Thiel – DES
- Dawn Van Sickle/Janet Shure – SES
- Jane Wren – FIS

Congratulations to the winners and keep trying if you weren't selected.

2006 Mini-Grant Winner

By Deborah Berris

I want to thank LCEA for their \$200 Mini-grant which I received in March 2006. I was able to purchase three different sets of Reading Rods for my first grade literacy centers. These manipulative cubes provide hands on activities focusing on phonemic awareness, word families, word building, and sight word activities. They provide activities for varying ability levels from PREK to upper elementary skills. Reading Rods require limited space and provide enough materials for up to six students to work on individual, differentiated activities.

I have used the Reading Rods as independent centers and in small teacher led group activities. Students enjoy the hands on building activities and the activity cards provide a wide variety of teaching ideas. All ability levels benefit from the manipulative and it helps keep students focused at center time. The Reading Rods have been made available to all four of the first grade classes at Sutro Elementary. Thank You LCEA!



NSEA Good Idea Grant Winners

Two LCEA members are to be honored with checks from the Nevada State Education Association for their grant applications.

Congratulations to:

- Vivian Olds from Fernley Elementary
- Karen Turner from East Valley Elementary

Job Well Done!!

Text of the speech given by Steve Fargan, LCEA President, at the February 27, 2007 Lyon County School District Board of School Trustees Meeting

I am here to share concerns about the Lyon County School District Instructional Coaching program and Senate Bill 404. As President of the Lyon County Education Association many teachers have shared their thoughts with me, and the LCEA Executive Board has directed me to be a voice for the teachers in our district.

I would like to preface this by saying that we are impressed with the individual efforts and initial intentions of the Lyon County School District coaches.

However, there are some concerns about the program that I will be bringing up. Teachers already mentor and assist their peers. As professionals we share what works best to meet our students' needs. It is a form of flattery when another teacher copies a successful lesson to better meet their students' needs. This already occurs during genuine collaboration.

Teachers already have done and will continue to do lesson plans.

This year I have done three different types of lesson plans:

1. My own plans to help assist me in meeting my students' needs.
2. Substitute plans done in great detail to make sure my students' needs are still met on the few occasions when I may be out.
3. Lessons using Lyon County School District lesson design form, which feel like a weekly assignment during a teacher education program. Myself, and others find this to be time consuming and professionally insulting. The one size fits all approach does not fit all grade levels, different subjects, teaching styles, or diverse students' needs.

If teachers were to do this style of lesson plan for each lesson or objective taught, each teacher would use a ream of paper each month. Do the math on the time and expense of this.

During a conference I attended last summer I read the following statement: *"Spend less time doing paperwork and more time meeting your students' needs."* I like this statement. However, this seems to be the opposite of the way things are headed in the Lyon County School District.

The Lyon County School District Instructional Coaching program and SB404 lacked any significant input from those most affected by its implementation.

Therefore, buy-in doesn't really exist.

In a previous school board meeting I heard about 2,187 observations and conferences done by coaches. This sounds an awful lot like an administrator's job.

We asked the following question on a recent survey of our members and asked for comments that I will share if time allows.

Question 18. Has the implementation of the LCSD instructional coaching program been helpful in your teaching?

Yes _____ No _____

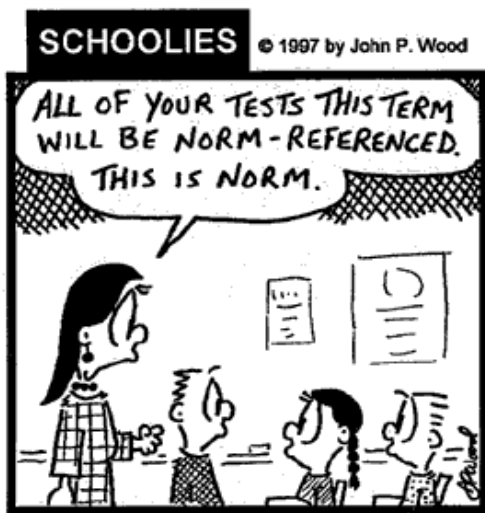
Comments:

The results were 49% yes and 51% no.

Being helpful to less than half of the teachers is not effective. If given a letter grade this might even be considered failing.

I have also heard about parents who are concerned that qualified, respected teachers have been taken out of the classroom and are no longer working with students.

Parents, teachers, and students are concerned with long term goals that go beyond the short term goals of being test takers and AYP makers. Our students are our future. Taking highly qualified teachers out of the classroom is not an effective way to meet our students' needs. Some of the ways in which the Lyon County School District Instructional Coaching program has been implemented have been counter productive. This is not in the best interest of students' needs and has affected staff moral in the Lyon County School District. I urge you to give some serious thought to the next steps involved in professional development in the Lyon County School District. We sincerely believe that better working conditions for teachers, leads to better learning conditions for our students and gives us all hope for the future.



Text from speech given by Leanna Ogle, Vice President of LCEA at Board Meeting on Feb 27, 2007

At a recent meeting a report about Lyon County's PDC that is funded by SB404 was given. It was presented to you as something everyone is supporting. I have had many conversations with veteran teachers who do not agree with that premise, particularly staff members at YES. They find the LCSD mandated lesson design to be time consuming and redundant, as do I.

The mandated Lesson Design does not allow for differences between a lesson given to early childhood children and students who are in a high school biology class. As a teacher, I am required to differentiate for every student's needs. This lesson design does not differentiate for the teacher's different lessons or for the different levels they may teach.

I received training in 1981 in Douglas County from one of the state's first PDCs. I learned this basic lesson design then. I again went through Lyon County's PDC two times in 1986 and relearned this lesson design. This SB404 grant was given to Lyon County for new and "innovative" programs. This is not new. If I were to fully implement this lesson design in the present form for every lesson, it would take me approximately 15 minutes per lesson every day. It would be an extra 10 hours a week to fill out the required LCSD lesson design form for each lesson. Yes, I prepare lessons, with an objective and desired learning outcomes as that is what a good teacher does.

The thought behind this lesson design is to increase student learning. To truly increase student learning, students must have direct instruction from a teacher in a classroom that is not overpopulated and from a teacher who is not weighed down and exhausted by "busy-work" paperwork. Reducing the teaching staff to fund a site coach at each school site does not optimize

student learning. It would increase class sizes. Larger classes mean less contact time per student which directly relates to less learning and achievement.

The site coaches currently have no direct contact time with students. They have contact only with the teachers. My personal experience is that I see the coach for a 20-30 minute visit in my classroom each month. I have found that this has not given me any new ideas or methods which I don't already use. The best "bang for the buck" for increasing student learning is to have more teachers to teach children, not fewer. **It may be interesting to note that YES made AYP before this program was started.**

Another proposal I have heard to fund the PDC in the future is to no longer offer early retirement incentives to veteran teachers. While on the surface that may seem like a better use of money to keep experienced teachers, it actually affected on 1.6% of this year's teaching staff with this year's early buyouts. It is truly a cost saving item for the district.

I am currently as far over and as far down the pay scale as I can go in the BA plus 64 credit column. With benefits my employment costs LCSD about \$74,000 in wages and benefits. A newer teacher would cost much less than that per year. After LCSD purchases the PERS, which is approximately one year's salary, and hires a teacher with 5 years of experience, the cost to LCSD for wages and benefits would be about \$50,000 per year. The savings would be \$24,000 per year to employ the newer teacher over several years.

The issue of teacher burn out and the huge demands to meet NCLB requirements must honestly be looked at. I feel I work harder and care more about my students than I did 27 years ago. I also know I am facing a decision of whether or not I am able to maintain this level of professionalism at this point in my life. I have always hoped I would be able to move forward in my life while I was still good at and successful at being a teacher.

I find the Board's desire to retain experienced, veteran teacher's very

admirable and sensible, but with the actual small number of teachers who qualify for early retirement I think the Board's efforts to retain good teachers need to be focused on the teachers who are relatively new to our county.

In 2006-2007 there are 650 licensed staff listed which includes both administrators and teachers. Three hundred ten (310) positions have been hired since August 2003. That is 48% of licensed staff who have been in the district less than four years. One hundred eight (108) licensed staff or 17% have been in LCSD from 2000-2003. A total of 65% of the current licensed staff have been employed by LCSD for less than 7 years.

Even figuring an average growth rate of 9% in Lyon County over the past four years, this is nearly a 50% turn over for new hires in Lyon County. What can the Board do to retain these people? That is where the Board's emphasis for retaining experienced teachers needs to be focused. Currently there are only 65 employees that have been in LCSD prior to 1990. That is only 10% of the entire licensed staff. However, only 1.6% of the total licensed staff applied and qualified for early retirement incentives this year.

In conclusion, I hope the LCSD Board of Trustees looks hard at the benefits and drawbacks to the PDC in current forms. While it may provide support for teachers new to the profession, it does not provide much assistance to experienced teachers. In many cases, as the statistic of doing 2,100 coaching observations shows, coaches may actually be doing duties that administrators should and need to do themselves.

