



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
LYONS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 204**

**Room 251 & Virtual  
100 South Brainard Avenue  
LaGrange, Illinois 60525  
Monday, July 27, 2020 - 7:00 PM**

**AGENDA**

- I. OPENING & ROLL CALL (7:00)**
- II. AGENDA APPROVAL/ORDER OF BUSINESS (7:00)**
- III. PLEDGE (7:05)**
- IV. WELCOME**
- V. COMMUNICATIONS - Public Comments (7:10)**
- VI. NEW BUSINESS (7:30)**
  - A. Discussion on Equity at LT
    - 1. Board Goals
    - 2. Board Policies
    - 3. Initiatives/Access/Supports
    - 4. Liaisons
      - a. African American Community Liaison
      - b. Hispanic Community Liaison
    - 5. Academics and Achievement
    - 6. Equity in Remote Learning
      - a. Access to Laptops
      - b. Access to Internet (Hotspots)
  - B. Opportunities/Moving Forward
    - 1. Board Training: *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity* (Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple)
    - 2. Survey Current Students and Families re: Equity and Experiences
    - 3. New Measures to Explore
- VII. ADJOURNMENT (9:00)**

# LYONS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

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TO: Board of Education

FROM: Timothy B. Kilrea, <sup>TBK</sup> Superintendent

DATE: July 24, 2020

RE: Initiatives and Programs at LTHS Addressing the Achievement Gap

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Attached please find an executive summary of some initiatives and programs at LT that have been implemented over the past few years addressing the achievement gap of our students. The summary provides a brief synopsis of the following:

- Performance Data
- Class Rank Elimination
- AP Access
- SEL and Staff Charter
- Equity and Achievement
- IncludED Dignity Framework
- Grading Changes
- Dual Credit
- Effectiveness of Levels
- Study Halls

This information will prove to be a useful tool to guide discussion at the Special Board Meeting on July 27, 2020.

# Initiatives and Programs at LTHS That Address the Achievement Gap

## Performance Data

Annually, student performance data is shared with the Board of Education on ACT, SAT, and AP data. We also share data on District Goals. In November of 2019, we looked in particular at student life and shared additional information about students based on sub-groups. There is also data presented by the State on the school report card, which we also share with the Board. We use this data to develop new goals and make changes to our processes. These data have led to a number of changes at LT, including a goal to increase enrollment in AP and higher level classes, provide supports, such as study halls for all and support rooms, and address SEL and re-entry needs. Performance data about the “middle level student” led to the elimination of class rank.

To help administrators, counselors and social workers, we developed a series of data dashboards through our data warehouse via DecisionEd.

## Class Rank Elimination

The Class Rank Task Force began with the following guiding principles:

- ▶ We want to make sure all students maximize their potential.
- ▶ We want to make sure we remove obstacles that limit student opportunities.
- ▶ We want to increase the number of students who get in to their preferred colleges.
- ▶ We want to continue to honor the high achievement of the top students.

After further discussion and refinement, we came up with a guiding focus:

**The Class Rank Task Force seeks to maximize post-high school opportunities for the greatest number of students and continue to recognize the high level of achievement of the highest performing students.**

With the guiding focus in mind, the Task Force looked at current weighted GPA ranking practice at LTHS and read through a packet of information about rank that included LT’s existing procedures on ranking (both weighted and un-weighted), PowerPoint slides from a class rank presentation for the LT Community Advisory Council, graphs that plot five years of LT weighted and un-weighted GPA performance, an article from the Chronicle of Higher Education, a Chicago Tribune editorial, a chapter from the National Association of College Admissions Counseling from 2012 that charts the significance of all factors in admissions decisions, and two class rank study team reports from other high schools that decided to eliminate class rank. Findings included:

- ▶ Colleges only consider rank if a school provides it.
- ▶ Rank has dropped from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> most frequent component of college admissions. (NACAC)
- ▶ Students in large schools are often hampered by class rank. (310 ranking at LT = top third of class, A’s & B’s may not be top 1/3)
- ▶ Ranking can exclude students from scholarship opportunities that are open to unranked students.
- ▶ Ranking can lead to unhealthy competition and choice of classes based primarily on rank/GPA impact.
- ▶ Students in the middle rankings (33<sup>rd</sup> to 66<sup>th</sup> percentile) are incorrectly viewed as being less proficient when compared with schools and students nationwide.
- ▶ Based on the distribution of course placement, minority students are more negatively impacted by ranking.

As a result, class rank was eliminated along with Valedictorian, focusing instead on Honor Graduates. Anecdotally, Lianne Musser has said more of our students are being admitted to colleges that previously would not have admitted them due to our ranking. More study would be needed to determine the impact on sub-group admissions.

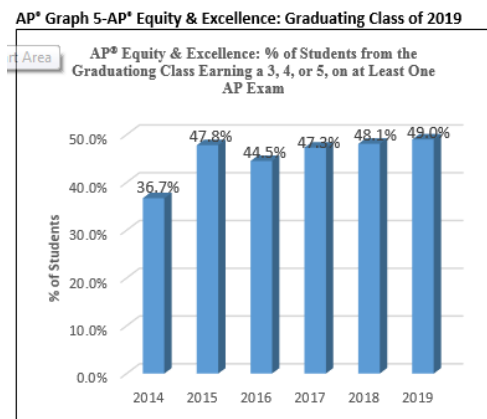
## AP Access

Annually, the College Board calculates a school's Equity and Excellence percentage in an effort to communicate the percentage of students in a graduating class that took and earned a minimum of a 3 on at least one AP<sup>®</sup> exam. The College Board reports that "while some recent research indicates how exposing students to college-level standards inherent in AP<sup>®</sup> courses can lead to positive college outcomes, the likelihood of college success is significantly stronger for AP<sup>®</sup> students who score a 3 or higher" on an AP<sup>®</sup> exam". (College Board, *7th Annual Report to the Nation*, p. 14).

Prior to the Graduating Classes of 2015, LT's Equity and Excellence percentage was less than 38%. With the restructuring of LT's college course offerings, the Equity and Excellence percentage for the Graduating Class of 2015 grew 11.1 percentage points when compared to the Graduating Class of 2014. Since the Graduating Class of 2015, LT's Equity and Excellence has been 44% or higher. To date, the Graduating Class of 2019 has had the highest percentage of students taking and passing at least one AP<sup>®</sup> exam during their high school career with 49%. If we accept the College Board's findings, then 49.0% of LT's 2019 graduates are more likely than their classmates to complete college in 5 years.

Recently, the Chicago Area Directors of Curriculum and Assessment (CADCA) administered a survey to obtain the Equity and Excellence percentage for the Graduating Class of 2019. The surveyed suburban schools span the counties of Cook,

DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will. The chart below reflects the number of schools earning an Equity and Excellence percentage in the stated range. With a percentage of 49.0, LTHS lies at the top of the 40<sup>th</sup>- 49<sup>th</sup> percentile range. This percentage is

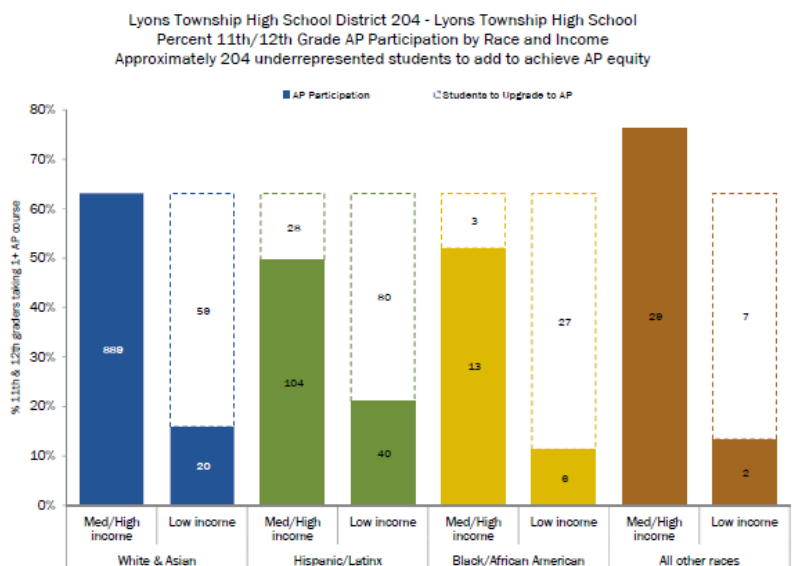


**Table 2 –CADCA Survey: AP<sup>®</sup> Equity & Excellence**

AP <sup>®</sup> Equity & Excellence Score	# of Schools
0-9	2
10-19	2
20-29	3
30-39	7
40-49	11 (includes LT)
50-59	8
60-69	2
70-79	1
None are above 79 at this time	

in the middle of the responding schools. Due to CADCA agreements, the names of schools and their corresponding percentages cannot be released. However, the data demonstrates that several of our peers have successfully supported more than 50% of their graduating class as they take and pass at least one AP<sup>®</sup> exam.

In addition to our local data, we also worked with Equal Opportunity Schools to determine what our goals should be for enrollment. In order to have our students represented in AP classes at the same ratio that they are represented in the school, 204 low-income white students, Hispanic students, Black students and low-income students of other races need to access AP courses.



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 All calculations are based on a benchmark participation rate of 63%.  
 Charts with a benchmark participation rate <40% have a projected rise of 20%. Charts with a benchmark participation rate between 40 and 60% have a projected rise of 10%.

## SEL and Staff Charter

2016: Student Services noticed annual upticks in depression and anxiety. Searching for a program led to Yale's RULER approach. A team went to Yale for training and brought RULER back to the District.

2017: Yale Staff come to LT to train 40 members of the SEL Team. Students introduced to RULER through group guidance, student services, re-entry and alternative.

2018: SEL implementation plan presented to Community Advisory Council. In the fall, RULER training began for all staff.

2019: Developed a Staff Charter involving 418 staff members answering the question "How do we want to feel at work," with the top 5 feelings being safe, inspired, supported, connected and valued. 2019-20 school year linked SEL tools and instruction with formative assessment through the SEL Learning Teams.

### ▶ YALE RULER APPROACH

- R**ecognizing emotions in self and others
- U**nderstanding the causes and consequences of emotions
- L**abeling emotions accurately
- E**xpressing emotions appropriately
- R**egulating emotions effectively



## Equity and Achievement

In response to the Board of Education goal regarding the academic performance of minority students at LTHS, the Equity and Achievement Team formed in October, 2014 to

- 1) explore the current realities of minority students at LTHS and
- 2) brainstorm possible programs and/or initiatives that can assist in our effort to provide an equitable chance of success for all students.

Data analysis concerning the Class of 2018 (conducted in November, 2014) indicated that the majority of financially advantaged students earning a score between 13 and 15 on the EXPLORE test were placed in higher freshmen classes than their EXPLORE scores initially dictated. And, they succeeded in these courses by earning a B or higher. Data analysis conducted during the same time period also indicated that free and reduced lunch students earning the same EXPLORE scores accepted their initial high school placements at much higher rates. As a result, free and reduced lunch students were placed in classes that were less rigorous and unlikely to put them on-track for taking an AP class in high school.

The team began to explore methods of encouraging more socio-economically disadvantaged students to take Advanced Placement courses at the junior and senior level. In order to accomplish this goal, it became apparent that it would be necessary to encourage a more rigorous course sequence beginning in their freshman year. As a result, the team developed the idea of creating a 42-student cohort beginning with the Class of 2019 (current 11<sup>th</sup> graders) where students could be placed in Accelerated courses their Freshmen year with the long-term goal, by June of 2019, for 40 socio-economically disadvantaged students in the Class of 2019 taking and passing at least one AP Exam. During 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the 2018-19 school year, of the 36 students remaining in the cohort, 25 students were enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) course. In addition, it is important to note that 92% of the Class of 2019 Equity and Achievement cohort applied to a college or university.

## IncludED Dignity Framework

The IncludED Dignity Framework offers schools a new way to approach educational equity. We've given that "new way" a name: Dignity. If that word sounds faintly old-fashioned to your ears, that's because it is. Since the beginning of the 19th century, its use in popular culture has fallen off dramatically. Dignity is a noun with roots in Latin: "dignus" meaning "worthy." We're using that word to communicate the innate, equal worth of each human being simply because he or she is human. It is our common heritage and birthright as members of the human family. Even though we are born with it, we aren't born with an understanding of how to recognize, reclaim, and extend it to others. That is our work.

### Putting Dignity into Practice

As we unpack the concept of dignity and do this work, we will find -- perhaps to our surprise --

that in order to extend dignity to others, we first must have a firm grasp on our own dignity. That's because there is a common bond to human dignity. It is our shared identity. We first need to "do dignity" with ourselves because we cannot give to others what we ourselves lack. Once we have a firm grasp on our own dignity, we can extend it to the people around us. We can institutionalize it in school practices and policies. Our Dignity Framework and its four components give us the requisite tools to do this absolutely essential work.

1. Core Competencies for Dignity: Four personal capabilities and organizational capacities that, if nurtured, make it easier to honor dignity.
  - Listening • Patience • Empathy • Openness
2. Indicators of Belonging: Four states of being that describe the quality of people's present experience that can be used to gauge and assess the degree to which dignity is honored.
  - Appreciated • Accepted • Validated • Treated Fairly
3. Dignity Distorters: Elements that hinder our ability to honor dignity. Since "dignity begins with me," we first uncover and correct the warped perceptions we have of our own self-worth before we can fully extend dignity to others. When we jettison these distorters, we can bring dignity into clear focus.
  - Incapacities: judgement, apathy, intolerance, denial
  - Violations: degrade differences, presume incompetence, blame and shame, dominate
  - Indicators of Contempt: mistreated, otherized, dismissed, marginalized
4. Standards for Dignity: Four behavioral standards for planning, implementing, and assessing inclusive and equitable behaviors, practices, and policies.
  - Presume competence and positive intent
  - Build partnerships and community
  - Repair harm and restore relationship
  - Affirm differences and uniqueness



## Grading Changes

Over the last six years, there has been a significant shift in instruction through professional development at LTHS. We implemented multiple formative practices, developed curriculum maps linking outcomes to standards and assessments, and shifted to measuring student achievement under the umbrella of the growth mindset. All of these changes have challenged traditional ways of grading and has led to experimentation by teachers and teaching teams leading to multiple work-arounds of our traditional grading system to fit the shifts in teaching and learning.

As we continue to apply the formative practices to our courses, gradebooks are becoming more and more inconsistent and difficult to interpret. Students encounter seven different methods and sets of rules to determine their grades as they go through their schedule each day. In some instances, teachers in the same course have different rules. A Division Chair received a letter from a student that summarizes the issue: “I feel that myself and many others are being cheated and disadvantaged by this difference in policy. I hope that this issue can be resolved promptly, whether that be through a departmental standardization of grading policy, or any other appropriate action.” Without making a systemic change to how we report grades and student progress, our grading practices will remain inconsistent and unfair.

Ideally, we need to report how students are learning along with the degree to which they have mastered outcomes. Formative practices, designed to give students the opportunity to practice and get feedback, should not count as the final product. We need our grading practices to reflect how students learn rather than how a computerized gradebook calculates points. In researching more robust grading and reporting systems, we have found a method that satisfies teacher reporting, student feedback and parent understanding of student learning.

The proposed grading system solves the current problem while providing more information reflective of student growth. Instead of providing a single computer-calculated grade that jumbles mastery of learning outcomes, effort, participation, and attendance, we need a new report card that does the following:

- Reports a grade that is reflective of learning at a fixed point in time,
- shares feedback on planning, preparation and participation in courses,
- provides summary information of what is occurring in the class, and
- includes individualized comments about student performance and progress.

Making this change keeps a traditional grade that teachers assign and that will be reported on transcripts while also providing additional feedback to help students continue to improve. This shift is not a shift to standards-based grading; however, standards-based grading methods will work much better under this system.

In our student, staff and parent surveys from the spring of 2019, all three groups mentioned the problems with our current grading and reporting system as among the top five issues at LTHS. For the past two years, over 50 teachers and administrators have been looking at ways to improve grading so that it is more responsive to how students are learning. The attached recommendation to change our grading system solves the problems associated with measuring student growth, provides additional feedback, and continues to keep a letter grade for reporting to colleges and universities. Our teachers have begun to identify the learning processes that they would like to give feedback on and the Curriculum and Staff Development Team is prepared to empower an implementation team to put the task force recommendations into effect beginning with the fall of 2020.

Our system, adapted from research-based methods that have been in practice for more than 20 years throughout large districts, the U.S., and provinces of Canada, is proven and manageable. In October, Tom Guskey, the pre-eminent researcher and champion of making shifts in grading practices, led our Institute Day training session sharing the method of change that we are pursuing. Our Grading Task Force has made the attached recommendation for change that has been reviewed by our Curriculum and Staff Development Team.

## Dual Credit

How do Dual Credit courses address the achievement gap?

1. Our District goal of students taking one AP course is designed to ensure that students are college ready. Taking and earning transcribed college credit before graduation is another way to indicate college readiness.
2. ESSA now includes, as one of its ratings, an indicator of college and career readiness. One of those markers is dual credit enrollment.
3. If students can enter a college with transcribed credit, schools recognize that credit for advancement rather than placement. This means that, unlike AP, students can enter college needing to earn/pay for fewer credits. Having the dual credits will allow a student to take other courses and therefore create a minor or a second major that makes their degree more marketable without having to spend an extra semester or year in school.
4. Research shows that students who have earned dual credit in high school have a higher retention rate, graduate one time at a higher rate, and tend to return to school for a second year at a higher rate.
5. In areas of equity, dual credit helps students to believe that they can do college work, shows colleges that they can do college work, and has shown through research to provide a pathway to a college degree for minority and low income students at a higher rate than AP.

## Effectiveness of Levels

LTHS is unique in that we offer three levels of many courses. In 2008, we still had 5 levels:

Level I: Special Ed; Level II: Transition; Level III: Preparatory; Level IV: Accelerated; Level V: Honors/AP

In 2008, Transition was eliminated with the creation of Humanities. In 2013, we eliminated the Level I courses.

While much discussion has ensued about whether even three levels are necessary, not all courses have three levels for students to choose from. Similar to the underrepresentation in AP courses, low-income and minority students are underrepresented in accelerated and honors levels while they are overrepresented in prep and special education.

The District Goal encourages students to access higher-level curriculum through Equity and Achievement by placing students in higher levels. We have also begun to question whether the levels themselves create exclusions rather than providing appropriate challenge matched with student abilities. In light of District professional learning emphasis on the formative practices, teachers are better equipped to meet individual student needs in the classroom than they were 10 years ago, thereby bringing the effectiveness of levels into further discussion.

We have created a few places where only one or two levels are available, most notably in Interpersonal Communication (IPC) and senior English. Additional Dual Credit opportunities have also led to the dropping of prep languages for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year language students. This area engenders considerable discussion but also shows significant disparity in the achievement of sub-groups.

## Study Halls

A relatively recent and significant change has been altering the school day to include study halls at lunch. This came out of lengthy discussions about additional interventions for students who struggle while also addressing the social emotional needs of students who felt overwhelmed at school. The implementation of the lunch study halls allowed for monitoring of student performance leading to students being placed in a support room for a two-week period to bring up grades in core courses. It also allowed for drop-in study halls for student-initiated supports as well as a quiet, independent and purposeful traditional study hall in the middle of the day for students to get work done. These study halls opened up the ability of our Student Support Teams to review student performance and target students, primarily in prep classes, for early interventions. As a result, LT has become much more hands-on in supporting students systematically rather than solely relying on a student's ability to get to school early or stay after in order to get help. This is also an equity piece since a student was no longer dependent on getting a ride to school so they can get help when a teacher was available in the morning.