



March 11, 2019

Dear Titan Community,

As you are all aware, when we started this mission redreaming possible for every scholar within the district a promise was made to maintain a level of transparency with parents, teachers, staff and of course our scholars. On February 26th, many of you either attended or viewed the live broadcast of Lorain City Schools’ Board of Education meeting which saw poignant remarks from our scholars, parents, teachers, school board and Academic Distress Commission members.

Amongst those heartfelt sentiments from you all, were a list of six urgencies posed to the board by Academic Distress Commission members Diane Conibear-Xander and Steven Cawthon. In the spirit of collaboration as it pertains to the best interests of our scholars, please see the table below for the district’s response.

We do ask that you understand, some questions posed on the 26th may still go unanswered for the time being. Because although we are completely committed to providing you all with every answer, to every question you pose, we will continue to do so in a manner that does not compromise the factuality of the response, thus requiring more time than others to clarify.

Cawthon/Conibear-Xander Identified Urgency #1: School Safety

CLAIM	RESPONSE
<p>Excessive physical violence 22 fights reported in a 2 week period from end of January to early February, 9 fights in 1 day at Southview Middle School</p>	<p>That is false and the actual data from Lorain High School can be found here: http://bit.ly/2UuWCOP. It is important to note that a fight involves 2 or more individuals so individual suspensions for fighting do not equal the total number of actual physical fights. Fighting in our schools has been an issue for many years. When scholars engage in physical violence they are suspended. Scholars who continually engage in violent behavior are expelled.</p> <p>Southview Middle School did experience an unusual day in October of 2018 in which many scholars chose to engage in physical fighting. These serious behavioral issues resulted in suspensions. On the next day, the building principal visited every single classroom to send a strong message that that behavior will not be tolerated and to reset exceptions and remind scholars of alternatives to violence. Since that time, Southview has experienced lower incidents of fighting suspensions than in previous years and the data can be found here: http://bit.ly/2F4PfrY</p> <p>It is important to stress that 2% of our population are involved in these fights or frame it as 98% of our scholars do the right thing and that should be celebrated. Restorative practice is</p>

Redream Possible



	<p>one way we are trying to give scholars tools to solve differences without violence but it is not in place of discipline.</p>
<p>Scholars fighting in hooded sweatshirts covering their head so they cannot be identified on video- hooded sweatshirts were permitted after the scholar code of conduct was not properly updated</p>	<p>There is no documentation of this occurring during the school day. There was on incident that occurred at an athletic event and the individual in question was quickly identified. Parents have overwhelmingly provided feedback in the form of phone calls and social media comments that scholars should be able to wear hooded sweatshirts in school.</p>
<p>LHS panic button-no protocol for emergencies for building staff</p>	<p>All LHS panic buttons have been tested by the operations department and deemed fully functional. A digital version of the safety binder was made available to all LHS staff before school began. Physical binders were made available to staff that wanted a paper copy. There is protocol for emergencies and safety drills are conducted once month.</p>
<p>Severe lack of scholar accountability for administrators and deans to minimize suspension rates – creating chaos in buildings and classrooms and disruption with instruction.</p>	<p>All scholars are accountable for their actions. All incidents are addressed and consequences are given according to the behaviors exhibited.</p>
<p>LMS progressive discipline building plan was not given to teachers until February 5, 2019</p>	<p>Based on responses to a survey sent out to teachers Longfellow Middle School principal Rae Bastock and her administrative team revamped approach to discipline. An overview of the discipline approach was presented during professional development time and teachers were encouraged to provide their input. It is normal to reaffirm behavioral expectations with staff and scholars mid-year and that is what LMS administrators did.</p>
<p>Scholar Emergency Medical Authorization forms are incomplete, missing and/or not updated in Progress Book</p>	<p>This has been a reoccurring issue in the past few years and the staff have worked to update the information as fast as possible. Many parents do not know that they need to update their scholar’s records each year.</p>
<p>Outbreak of head lice and concern of bed bugs coming into buildings – no protocol or confidence from administrators on how to handle these cases – Teacher reported 8 cases of live lice in one classroom</p>	<p>The district’s policy on head lice and bed bugs can be located here : https://www.lorainschools.org/Page/3618</p> <p>Dealing with head lice is a common problem in schools. It is dealt with according to district policy. Scholars are not permitted to reenter school until they have been deemed lice-free.</p> <p>When bed bugs are identified the area impacted is thoroughly cleaned and treated.</p> <p>Most recently, a claim was made that bed bugs were located in the Performing Arts Center. Central Exterminating Company</p>



	conducted a thorough inspection, and “no signs of bed bugs or live bed bugs” were found.
Shortage of school nurses.	We are currently fully staffed with nurses. The perceived shortage is due to staff justifiable absences. It is difficult to find substitute nurses to come in for only a short amount of time during the day.

Cawthon/Conibear-Xander Identified Urgency #2: Teacher Working Conditions and Building Culture

CLAIM	RESPONSE
Reports of hostile, toxic work environments. Culture of fear and distrust throughout the district.	The district acknowledges the stress and uncertainty that has been present in recent months. We thank the staff members who give their heart and soul to the scholar of Lorain. Accusations of hostile work environments are investigated by the People Office. Any staff member with work place concerns should fill out an Employee Concern Form (http://bit.ly/2HrRBCL).
Teachers seeking medical attention for mental breakdowns, anxiety-impacting families and overall quality of life	Any staff who feel they need support can always reach out to the People Office for assistance. We want to make sure our teachers are taken care of so they can do the great work they do for our scholars.
Five teachers walked out or removed from teaching assignments for several weeks to months. All teachers returned with no found charges-rotating substitutes, chaos and lost instructional time for scholars.	When a staff member is accused of egregious conduct, the safety of scholars is the number one priority and a thorough investigation takes time. It is standard protocol to remove a staff member from scholars while an investigation is being conducted to maintain the integrity of the investigation.
OTES evaluations are not being administered to a high professional standard and are improperly completed due to inexperienced, unlicensed administration.	Implementing the OTES rubric with fidelity has been a major goal of leadership training and support. All OTES evaluators have been trained and credentialed by the state. All LCS administrators participated in a norming session and participate in regular meetings in order to calibrate their expectations and understandings of the OTES rubric. All administrators have obtained appropriate licenses on and continue to receive training on an ongoing basis.
All staff at Lorain High School have been informed they will need to reapply for their positions – with the exception of building administration.	The selection process is currently suspended and LHS staff is in the process of developing their empowerment school plan. We are excited to see the outstanding proposals created by our dedicated teachers and staff.
Excessive administrative walkthroughs disrupting instruction and scholar learning.	Instructional rounds are how administrators are able to understand what is going on in classrooms and where resources and support need to be directed. In a learning environment feedback is necessary for growth. Excellent school districts across the U.S. use instructional rounds to



	improve practice. Many teachers have reported that receiving regular feedback has improved their practice.
--	--

Cawthon/Conibear-Xander Identified Urgency #3: Ethical Concerns and Legal Matters

CLAIM	RESPONSE
Continued insubordination and refusal by CEO to provide records requests and schedule meetings as requested with LAD commissioner	The CEO provides updates as directed by the ADC chairperson and at ADC meetings. In addition, the CEO has routine monthly check-ins with each ADC commissioner. Our newest commissioner has been offered a check-in time and we are working on creating a schedule that works for everyone. Public records requests are addressed on a case by case basis. Public record requests response can be found here: https://www.lorainschools.org/Page/4247
Numerous lawsuits against LCS under new CEO appointment	There has been one lawsuit filed during the CEO's tenure.
Violations suspending scholars with disabilities beyond the maximum 10 day limit-violation under IDEA	The district has been made aware of zero violations with Office of Exceptional Scholars in the past 18 months. If there are incidences that we need to be aware of, please report them to our Chief of Schools, Dr. Brown so that we can address these concerns. We want what is best for our scholars and information that can help us get better for our scholars is greatly appreciated.
Middle school reports of scholars being charged \$5.00 to replace scholar badges and no finance record of deposit made for this collection/charge of money	Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Following an investigation by the finance team, this issue has been addressed. The money has been refunded to the scholars. The staff members involved have been addressed appropriately.
House Bill 410 (scholar attendance regulation) not being followed	House Bill 410 encourages and supports a preventative approach to excessive absences and truancy. The district has a robust set of interventions we use to tackle chronic absenteeism including phone calls, home visits, transportation support, referrals to counseling and in extreme cases referrals to juvenile authorities.
LHS unlicensed administrator allegedly charged with inciting hostile work environment.	All administrators have the proper licensure. The hostile work environment charge is under investigation.
GJW principal creating unprofessional social media posts about LCS teachers and staff.	Our district policy hasn't changed advising that employees should not use social media in an official capacity.



<p>A former retired administrator was fired from the district for falsifying time cards and now working back in district – rehired under current administration.</p>	<p>The individual in question was a substitute and has not worked for the district since June 2017 (before CEO appointment).</p>
<p>GJW administrator sent 1 ounce of marijuana over to a central office.</p>	<p>This statement is absolutely false and insinuates malice or intentional illegal activity which is damaging to the character and reputation of the administrators at GJW. The administrator brought an envelope (did not send through interoffice mail) with a cigar package to the expulsion hearing as evidence and before the hearing it was determined that the packaging had a small amount of marijuana left in it (less than a gram). The marijuana was disposed of and the scholar was expelled.</p>
<p>Unlicensed administrators suspending and expelling scholars.</p>	<p>All administrators are licensed. All expulsions are overseen by a licensed administrator/hearing officer.</p>
<p>Skewing and falsifying district data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CEO data is inaccurate and misleading to the public ● CEO presentations and interviews are inflated and untruthful ● Discipline reports ● Teacher attendance data ● Building administration fabricating instructional rounds data ● Scholar attendance reports ● Administrators (Principals & Chiefs) not reporting sick, personal and maternity leave 	<p>False data has never intentionally been shared publicly. It is the goal of this administration to lead with full transparency and identify discrepancies and redundancies in order to be confident in our data reporting. We work tirelessly to improve the integrity of our data reporting and bring all data to our community when available.</p> <p>To state that an administrator is “fabricating” instructional rounds data is a serious accusation and is damaging to the reputations of administrators. Our administrators operate with a tremendous amount of integrity because of their deep care for kids and their futures. When data is entered into Whetstone (the system for instructional rounds) an email is sent to the classroom teacher. If the data is fabricated the teacher would be notified immediately.</p> <p>Administrators are required to enter their absences in the Frontline Education System (AESOP). If an administrator does not have enough accrued time to cover a leave they are docked pay. Their weekly paycheck amounts are adjusted to reflect the change in pay.</p>



Cawthon/Conibear-Xander Identified Urgency #4: Academic and Curricular Concerns

CLAIM	RESPONSE
<p>Significant gaps and deficits in curriculum across the district.</p>	<p>We agree there have been significant gaps in curriculum across the district for years. It has been brought to our attention in a recent teacher listening session that curriculum in some subject areas has not been updated since 2003. With that information, we are quickly responding because our teachers and scholars deserve better. Reading and Math curriculum has been piloted in several buildings. Middle School math textbook adoption is happening now. The district is employing the traditional curriculum adoption committee process where several quality standards-aligned options are identified and vetted by teachers before a final choice is made. Lorain High School is currently working to identify the areas of most need and resources will be allocated accordingly. The district has moved to embrace more technology-based, open source curriculum for because it changes and adapts to current trends.</p>
<p>Title One and tutor services removed from classroom instruction to support administrative salaries.</p>	<p>All of our decisions are aimed to improve outcomes for our kids. Title One funds were pooled in order to provide consistent support to a larger number so scholars. An intervention block was added to the school day to provide time to address individual scholars targeted needs. Deans of Academics are responsible for the successful implementation of the intervention block. Deans of Academics work to provide feedback and facilitate resources to teachers that subsequently impact all scholars.</p>
<p>ELL (English Language Learners) services and support are lacking significantly across the district.</p>	<p>We appreciate this feedback and working diligently to improve our EL services. EL scholars are provided with targeted support including dual language pre-k and kindergarten classes; interpreters, tutoring, in-class support staff, support during intervention block and more. The district will continue to work to improve the ease of access and quality of supports. If there are suggestions and supports that the community might have to identify more ELL teachers, staff, and resources, we will always welcome solutions that will make our kids better.</p>
<p>Disproportionate number of special education and regular education in inclusion classrooms.</p>	<p>More context needed to respond appropriately.</p>



<p>Blatant disregard and failure to respond to the special education teachers' requests for administrative coverage for IEP meetings after several attempts.</p>	<p>More context needed to respond appropriately.</p>
<p>Special education teachers being pulled for substitute coverage.</p>	<p>IEPs are complied with while balancing the immediate need for adults to supervise kids when classroom teachers are absent.</p>
<p>District RTI is not effectively implemented districtwide</p>	<p>Effectively implementing RTI in the district has been complex for years. It is our hope that with increased professional development and support the RTI process will improve.</p>
<p>Standards-Based Grading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inadequate teacher training ● Scholars and parents do not understand it ● Decreased parent involvement due to lack of understanding ● Grade calculations on reports cards are incorrect and not being addressed by administration ● Scholars lack effort because they don't see the new system as grades ● Athletic eligibility concerns for middle school scholars – no academic accountability with the new system 	<p>Transitioning to standards based grading is a significant paradigm shift. Trainings on standards based grading were given in August and upon receiving additional feedback, we provided more training this past January. However, providing scholars and families with a more complete understanding of how a scholar is performing is paramount to helping them succeed long term. With each grading period the collective understanding has increased and technical issues have decreased. We hope that educators will embrace this way forward and better help scholars and families understand as we all gain confidence in the process.</p> <p>The district is in compliance with the OHSSA rules for athletic eligibility.</p>
<p>SPARK – Grant funded tutors to support scholars in literacy intervention (Prek-5) turned away in all buildings except 2 elementary schools</p>	<p>Funding fell through for the other buildings.</p>
<p>New purchased service vendor programs: Kickboard, Whetstone, ANET, Unbound, Engage New York, ineffective; poor implementation, lack of training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vendors are charter school affiliates of CEO Hardy 	<p>Kickboard –Free to the district Whetstone-No previous ties to administrators or charter schools ANET- Is an application provided to both public and private schools to house and administer short cycle assessments. The district was awarded a 1 million dollar matching funds grants to support the use of the program.</p> <p>Piloted programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unbounded Ed- Free ● New York- Free



Cawthon/Conibear-Xander Identified Urgency #5: District Finances and 5-Years Forecast

CLAIM	RESPONSE
<p>District 5 Year Forecast Concerns – Personnel Services, Employee Benefits/Retirements, Purchased Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drastic increases in purchases services ● Drastic decreases in personnel services and employee benefits and retirement ● 43 Million dollars of general fund and Title One funds being appropriated in 598 account – No explanation, WHY? 	<p>The district has looked for ways to save money be as efficient as possible while providing resources and supports to scholars. The pooling of Title One funds allow the district to be proactive in decision making while remaining in compliance with the funding guidelines. As stated at the 2/26/2018 Board meeting Mr. Hill welcomes a forensic audit to prove there is no malpractice or wrongdoing.</p>

Cawthon/Conibear-Xander Identified Urgency #6: Lorain High School Staff Required to Reapply for Positions

CLAIM	RESPONSE
<p>LHS Teachers have not been supported by current LCS administration according to recent LHS data from Teacher Survey Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The district has provided enhanced curriculum including textbooks, teaching materials, software, and technology to support quality instruction: 81% STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE ● My building administrators have consistently high expectations for scholar behavior, responsibility, and accountability: 73% STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE <p>Items LHS teachers have requested over the last 18 months and have been denied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No SRO or comprehensive building crisis, safety plan, or drill practices ● Title tutors ● Attendance policy ● Undated textbooks and teaching materials ● Curriculum support ● Consistent discipline support and scholar accountability ● Class sizes reduced ● Vacant teaching positions be filled ● Balance of co-taught special education inclusion sections ● Improved ELL services and supports 	<p>Lorain High School is a complex learning environment serving over 2,000 scholars from diverse backgrounds. Transformation is necessary in order to provide our scholars with an education that will allow them to reach their fullest potential. It is possible to support teachers but acknowledge that changes need to be made. Designating LHS as the first Empowerment School provides intensive supports and interventions that will correct the patterns of dysfunction that have stymied progress in the past.</p>



- The culture and climate throughout the district is positive, and I feel valued and respected as a teaching professional: 88% STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE

LHS Statistics:

- From 2010 – 2014 LHS was one of the highest performing schools in district
- Today, The majority of the same staff and teachers still remain at high school
- LHS scholars and staff moved and relocated 3 times in 6 years
- From 2010-Present – 5 superintendents/CEOs in 8 years
- Unstable leadership, Ever-changing district-wide initiatives

“From 2010 – 2014 LHS was one of the highest performing schools in district,” this is not accurate. Please see <https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/archives>

Leadership changes are a challenge. We also want stability. Part of stability is supporting the work of the current administration instead of fighting against it.