HAWK REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2011

September is always an interesting time of the year as the changing of the guard occurs at the middle school. As the principal, you become accustomed to the school social groups, students who thrive, students who struggle and other dynamics among the kids. This year brings a new group of 6th graders trying to find their place, seventh graders who are learning from their first year of middle school as well as dealing with everything that happens at this age, and then there are the eighth graders who now have the chance to be the 'big dogs' at the school and hopefully be positive leaders. What is most exciting for me is watching the kids who start to emerge from the pack and start to shine. This is one of the many rewards of being a middle school principal.

At the start of the school year we hit the magic 400 student mark for the first time at La Center Middle School. This has gradually worked its way down to 392 but it is still the highest on record. The 6th grade class is the biggest we have had with 141 students. Fortunately they are a mature group who has made good choices. This is evident in the way that they conduct themselves in the classrooms and the hallways. I have a really good feeling about this group. This group is currently enjoying CISPUS and I look forward to hearing about their many adventures. I just hope they listened to their teachers and didn't bring white clothes because they are going to get dirty.

On the topic of CISPUS I would like to thank the La Center Casino Charitable Funds for supporting our kids program for the ninth year in a row. Their generous donation of $10,000 makes it possible for our district to fund CISPUS for our excited 6th graders. I would also like to thank community members for helping to fund scholarships which allowed students who could not afford to attend CISPUS the opportunity to go. The school understands that generous funding by the Charitable Fund and the community members may not always be available so we are now looking to find other ways to fund CISPUS. Any suggestions from the community would be greatly appreciated as we want CISPUS to remain a part of our school despite the economic times.

This year I am very fortunate to have an administrative intern working with me. Joe Bosch will be working with me until December and it has been wonderful to have an administrator in the office next door to bounce ideas off. He has taken on some large projects already for me and has been extremely visible in the classroom supporting teachers and kids. I am working on convincing him to volunteer for the rest of the year but I am pretty sure that Woodland Middle School, where he works as a math teacher, may not like that idea.

In late April, when we decided the date for the Back to School BBQ, the last thing that we were thinking of was how hot it would be that day. After about 97 days of straight rain, we weren't sure if the sun would ever come back. Unfortunately the hottest day of the year coincided with our Back to School BBQ. We moved it to the back of the school for shade but it was still very toasty. Mr. Shucka and I played our own version of Survivor by cooking on our large BBQ in that heat. Our numbers were down from the previous year but 300 people still braved the scorching temperatures and came for one of

Mr.Shucka's famous hot dogs. It is always fun to meet the new parents and we thank everybody who came out.

Athletic competition has started at LCMS. This year we are a lower for numbers in Volleyball and Football and maintained similar numbers in cross country. The Volleyball and football teams are working hard and I hope that some wins are right around the corner. The cross country team continues to dominate and is helping to continue the strong legacy of future high school cross country runners.

Last Friday was a half day followed by an in-service. Half days are always tricky as teachers can end up being a day ahead of other classes and students don't always concentrate on the half days. We have made some changes for our half days to promote school spirit, reward achievement and focus on the District Ends policy through our Advisory Program. Students met for the first two hours completing some Advisory competitions and then met with their home advisory group to do activities based around teamwork and goal setting. At 10.30am, our assembly acknowledged students on honor roll and also kicked off our Advisory Spirit Competition. Our students are broken into Super Advisory Teams comprising of a 6th, 7th and 8th grade team. I am fortunate this year to share a 7th grade advisory with Mr. Sutton. A wonderful moment in our school was at the beginning of the assembly. Staff had the 7th and 8th grade students sitting in the bleachers in their advisory group and a space was left for the 6th graders. As each 6th grade advisory group walked in the 7th and 8th grade groups in their Super Advisory team cheered loudly for them and made them feel very welcome. A great kickoff to the year.

At this stage I would like to let Mr. Bosch inform you on what he has been working on since the beginning of the year.

"David has given me several opportunities to take advantage of my administrative internship. We consolidated a middle school survey taken last spring and presented the data to the staff during in-service training. The staff analyzed the data and presented suggestions that would improve the learning experiences for grades six, seven, and eight grades. The staff also provided us with methods of improving the survey for next year. I was very impressed with the enthusiasm and ownership of the results the teachers demonstrated during this work session.

We are currently in the pre-planning stage of creating a transition plan for fifth to sixth grades. The plan is to reduce the stress level so there will be few, if any students that struggle making the jump from elementary to middle school.

I am also organizing a community job fair that is sponsored by the La Center School District. The job fair's goal is to connect our students' parents with employers. The event is scheduled for October 27th."

Thanks to Mr.Bosch for tabulating the student survey data and facilitating the in-service. Staff enjoyed the process and would like to develop questions on the next survey so that they can get data more specific to their subject to gather feedback to improve their practice in the classroom. I appreciated how staff took the data, owned the problems of practice and came up with strategies to address it.

We are off to a great start this year and I look forward to seeing our students continue to be energized in the classroom even if the temperatures outside start to fall.

Sincerely,

David Cooke
Principal
La Center Middle School