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# HEALTH FOCUS

Building Bridges Between Health and Learning

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Health Services Department • Lincoln Public Schools • 5901 O Street • Lincoln, NE 68510 • (402) 436-1655 (Fax) 436-1686

## Health Services Forges Ahead in the 2008-09 School Year

by Judy Zabel RN, MS, NCSN  
Supervisor of Health Services



Welcome to the 2008-2009 school year. It is difficult to put into words all that we do each day to keep children healthy and in school. Many tasks are mundane, routine, while others are exciting and

unusual. New students arrive with new needs and health concerns, returning students at times have health changes that require interventions and planning to provide the appropriate care.

As the year begins, the students are excited to be back in the classroom (at least most are), ready to learn. How do we support that mission? It begins with greeting the students, giving the “new” students a tour of the health office and explaining what happens when they pay us a visit. Then the paper work begins: immunizations, health histories, physical examination reports, vision evaluations, emergency care plans, individual health care plans, getting parent signatures on all the right forms, and so on. Who in the building has a health concern that needs medication during the day? Who has a life threatening allergy? Who carries their emergency medication with them? Do they know how and when to use it? Does the teacher know what to watch for if there is a medical problem?

Also important, planning for field trips and class parties to allow for student participation and safety. Educating staff and students on health issues and illness prevention. This is just a brief glimpse of the beginning of a school year for the staff in the Health Office.

There have been changes in staffing for Health Services; the specific changes have been addressed in another section of this newsletter. The changes have been made to provide services to the new Adams Elementary which opened its doors for the first time this August, and to meet the ongoing health needs of students in all buildings. Student Services is experiencing changes as well. Some may be aware that the Health Services Director, Becky Wild, retired August 31, 2008. A smooth transition has been created with the appointment of Terry Macholan, as the Interim Director of Student Services effective September 1, 2008. Health Services is a part of Student Services and the continuing needs of all students remains a top priority.

The school nurses have identified that the number one concern for student health and learning is lifestyle choices, focusing on nutrition and activity. The Nurses’ PLC is looking at education and intervention strategies to promote decision making that supports a healthy lifestyle. **This is looking at the “big” picture of a lifelong healthy lifestyle.** The question is: will the information that we learn today about nutrition and activity make a difference? What effect does this have on LPS goals: to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gap and to increase the graduation rate? We believe that healthy choices promote healthy students, which in turn promote learning.

We are looking forward to an exciting year. On behalf of the Health Services team, I welcome the returning staff and extend best wishes to our new employees!

“All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope.”

—Winston Churchill  
(1874-1965)

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## Food Allergies

by **Hollis Alexander-Ramsay, RN, MSN**

According to the CDC, the body reacts with an abnormal immune response when certain foods are eaten. It is believed that approximately 4-8% of children and 2 % adults have food allergies. **Anaphylaxis**, as a result of this condition seems to be on the increase. Some risk factors related to this condition may include: a family history of asthma and allergies, elevated IgE levels (allergen specific serum immunoglobulin), and a genetic predisposition.

The CDC states that **8 foods are common causes of food allergy reaction: "cow's milk, eggs, peanut, tree nuts (such as cashews, almonds, and pecans), fish, shellfish, soybeans and wheat.** Gathered data shows that approximately 3.3 million Americans have tree nut allergy; 6.6 million are allergic to seafood; and annually, there are about 2,000 hospitalizations, 150 deaths and 30,000 cases of anaphylaxis caused by combined food allergies.

Onset may be sudden and severe including symptoms such as hives, difficulty breathing, coughing or wheezing, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, eczema or rash, tingling in the mouth, swelling in the tongue and throat, dizziness and loss of consciousness.

Managing food allergies include omitting the foods that one is allergic to. If the reaction has been severe in the past, it is highly recommended that an EpiPen is available. LPS has implemented an Asthma and Anaphylaxis care plan which is followed in the event of a life threatening event, as a result of a severe allergic reaction. This includes using an EpiPen, calling 911 and then giving Albuterol medication.

Once a student with a food allergy is identified, a careful history should be taken and steps implemented to prevent any contact or ingestion of that food. This involves parents, teachers, administration, physicians, the nutrition department, kitchen staff working together to implement a safe plan for the student. The student is also included in establishing a plan of care which is age appropriate.

Source: *cdc.gov*

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Please forward any questions, comments or contributions to any member of the Newsletter Committee.

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## REMINDER

Registered Nurses are reminded that **licenses expire on October 31, 2008.** Nurses may renew their licenses on line at [www.dhhs.ne.gov/crl/crlindex.htm](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/crl/crlindex.htm); by US mail, or in person at the Nebraska State Office Building. The credential area of the Licensure Unit is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Operating Hours are 8:00am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. Please call (402) 471-4376 if you have questions.

# Professional Learning Communities in Health Services

## Reflecting on 2007; New Perspective 2008

At the end of the 2007-8 school year, school nurses showcased their PLC projects that they had worked on during the year. They divided into teams; each team implementing a project that would improve academic achievement through health promotion. In many instances, this required schools (administration, teachers, health offices, students) to implement new and innovative ways to promote health and well being, beyond the health offices and into the classrooms. Listed below, are some of the innovative ideas that were implemented at the elementary, middle and high school levels:

**Candy Free Zone:** The goal of this project was to examine the nutrition environment in the school setting. A survey was implemented to see what was being used as rewards in the classrooms. Based on the results of the survey, the group decided to focus on implementing a “Candy Free Zone.” Many school nurses met with the school staff to promote the project and invite them to create (not mandatory) a candy free zone in their classroom(s). “Candy Free Zone” laminated signs were distributed to participants. This meant that alternatives would be used such as extra recess, stickers, stamps, happy notes, among other ideas. The goal was to help students consider other choices as rewards besides candy. Of course there are many other benefits such as healthy teeth, calmer students, improved nutrition and a cleaner school environment. Overall, the feedback from participants was indeed positive. In fact, the Pyrtle Elementary school principal, with the support of her staff and the PTO implemented a “Candy Free” school during the project. **Team Leader: Marcia Jones, RN**

**Asthma Education:** This project evolved from school nurses recognizing that many students did not understand much about their asthma, triggers, treatments, and the

proper use of asthma medication. The group felt that they could play an important role in educating students about the disease process and its management. An asthma knowledge checklist was developed to include: a review of the meaning of asthma, symptoms, triggers, treatment and medication, demonstration of proper use of the inhaler among other important aspects of self care. The checklist was developed in the form of a pre and post test, in order to implement teaching and to evaluate the student’s understanding of their asthma management after being taught by the school nurse. Parents were informed about the project. Since many students miss school because of asthma, it is hoped that by educating them about asthma, they will become more empowered and self reliant in the management of this condition. Hopefully, this will lead to less absenteeism and healthier students. **Team Leader: Sheryl Woodward, RN**

**Childhood Obesity:** The high school nurses addressed childhood obesity. They researched a model developed by the National Association of School Nurses called S.C.O.P.E. (School Nurse Childhood Obesity Prevention Education). It provides

“strategies for school nurses to assist students, families and the school community to address the challenges of obesity and overweight.” They decided to create a similar program that would reach their community and greater Nebraska. They collaborated with local hospitals, the Health Department, doctors, dieticians, nurses and mental health practitioners to bring a 2-day workshop to Lincoln this past June. Continuing education hours and LPS flex hours were provided for the event. There were approximately 65 attendees. It is hoped that the training will enable the participants to empower children and their families with the knowledge and the skills to lead healthy lives. **Team Leader: Kay Holt, RN**

**In the 2008-9 school year,** the school nurses are coming together as a large group to work on their PLC project. The focus will be on promoting healthy lifestyles for students, titled “Healthy children... Ready to Learn.” School nurses are already hard at work defining the goals, strategies for implementation of this project, seeking grant information, and recognizing the benefits of educating students about nutrition and exercise. **Way to go LPS school nurses!**



## “Screening” Students and their Health Information

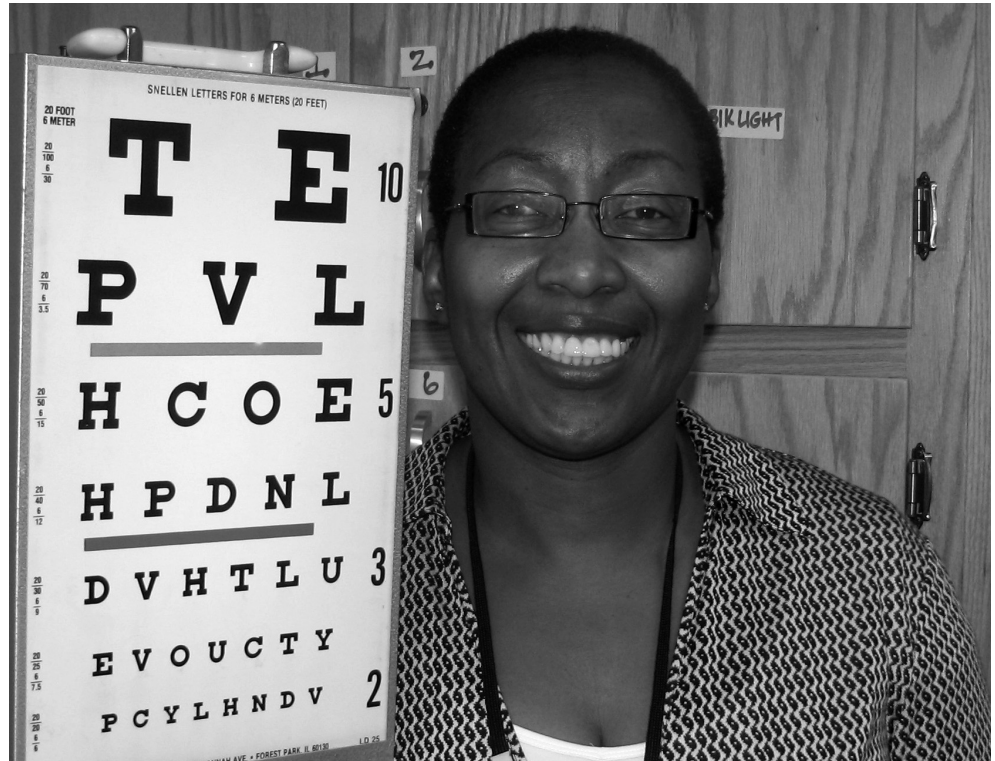
By Hollis Alexander-Ramsay  
RN, MSN

School education not only involves teaching, learning and academic exams: it also includes the promotion of healthy minds and bodies. Ensuring that a student’s health is at its best creates the best possible environment for learning to take place.

LPS requests an entry physical, vision evaluation, dental checks, health history, and immunization records for students. This, is not simply for the sake of collecting data, rather it is to ensure that a student’s learning is not hindered because of poor vision or hearing, a medical condition, dental issues or lack of proper immunizations. Unique information relative to a student’s physical and mental well being may be ascertained from these records, which may result in an individualized Care Plan for the student.

Take for example vision and hearing, which are known as the “quiet debilitators” (Manual of School Health, 2002). Impairment to either of these senses can lead to behavioral, physical and educational problems. However, early detection may reduce the adverse impact on students’ learning; hence the importance of early screening. It is the first line of defense that alerts us as to whether a student can see or hear well, or whether there is a risk for potential issues such as underachievement. Thus screening takes on major significance during the first few weeks of school, as school nurses and health technicians sort through health information.

Paying careful attention to students as we screen them can give us a lot of information. For instance, a student observed or with a history of headaches, blurred vision, squinting, tilting or turning of the head, or reading materials close to the eyes, may have a condition called **astigmatism**. This condition is caused by an irregularly shaped cornea



or lens which bends the light rays in different directions causing a blurred image. A student with this condition may not want to wear new glasses, since correction for astigmatism usually requires some adapting. Communicating with the prescribing optometrist may be necessary if there are doubts about the new prescription.

A teacher may report that a student is walking into objects, rubbing their eyes constantly or is complaining of blurred distance vision, being dizzy or unusual posturing. Again, screening may detect a vision problem which may lead to a student having difficulty participating in sports, or diminished academic performance. A referral to an optometrist may reveal that the student is myopic, hence only seeing objects clearly within close range. With myopia, a school nurse may use judgment in determining periodic recheck with and without glasses to see if there has been improvement with vision. Even communicating with teachers about seating arrangement, when a student initially fails the vision screen may help. Since these students are re-screened before a referral is

made for follow-up, is this necessary? This is not an unreasonable question; if indeed the student goes on to acquire glasses for correction or reading.

The Health History information may also reveal that a student has a diagnosis which requires medication being taken at home or at school. Certain medications such as the central nervous system drugs (e.g. Dilantin) can affect visual acuity, hence requiring follow-up screenings or eye examinations.

**These interventions by school nurses make significant differences in PLC outcomes, a student’s academic success and self confidence.** Ultimately, early identification of a health impairment, establishing a care plan and collaboration with staff, parents and physicians (a team approach) may ensure a positive and productive learning experience for students.

### Bibliography

Lewis KD, Bear B: *Vision and Hearing, Manual of School Health*, ed 2, 2:34-46, 2002.

## In the Spotlight



**Maralee Cloran, RN, MSN**

Are We Having Fun Yet?"

If any of you have ever met me, you will recognize that this is one of my favorite phrases. I believe in being positive and having fun. Since we all have to travel through life - why not have a good time?

I was born in Nebraska City, the youngest of 3, and lived on a farm in Dunbar until 1963, when my dad announced that we were moving to the "big city" (Lincoln). What a change that was!

My mom always wanted to be a nurse so she instilled that dream into me. I started out early bandaging critters on the farm and then graduated to candy striping for 5 years at Bryan Hospital. (Or was it the cool uniform with the red and white stripes that attracted me?).

After graduating high school, I went to Nebraska Wesleyan for 3 years with the promise that I would receive my BSN when I completed 2 more years at Bryan School of Nursing, which actually turned out to be a BS in Biology with a minor in nursing. Then I went to the "new" UNMC nursing program in Lincoln and finally got my BSN. Later, I graduated from UNMC in Omaha with an MSN in Psychiatric Nursing (after

driving to Omaha one day a week for 5 years). Things have certainly changed with the use of the Internet!

I think that I have done about every kind of nursing. After 6 years of medical and orthopedic nursing at Bryan, I went to the VA Hospital for 10 years as the Nursing Instructor/ADP Coordinator. Then I had the opportunity to spend 3 years at Southeast Community College (SCC), writing the new Associate Degree Nursing program with 3 other teachers and then teaching in the program. My next employment took me into public health nursing for 3 years through Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD), 2 years with OBRA as a consultant, and then as a Director Of Nursing in a nursing facility for a year. While I was the Coordinator of the Memory Disorder Clinic at Bryan-LGH West (for 8 years), Nancy Brandt from Staff Development approached me. She said she thought I'd enjoy being a school nurse, and that my sense of humor would be a plus (don't know where that came from!). So here I am starting my 9th year. I am also starting my 17th year as a part-time mental health reviewer

**And now for my deep dark secrets. To sum me up - it would be "Faith, Family and Fun".** My faith continues to be the heartbeat of my life and has gotten me through some tough times. My family is very important, beginning with the promise I made my parents to stay around Lincoln and care for them; I also have 2 great kids. My fun (humor) is my way of encouraging others; if I can make you laugh, it's been a good day! I love to talk to groups about stress, work and humor. Work goes so much better with a good belly laugh. Did you know that laughing 100 times a day equals 10 minutes of jogging? (So go ahead and have a laugh).

**"I enjoy being a school nurse because it is challenging and involves every type of nursing."**

Another passion is writing. I have always wanted to write, but a course at SCC gave me the guts to start writing. I am very eclectic in my writing, because I have written a romance, a preteen mystery and 2 picture books. A book on organizing your home and a prison novel are works in progress. Writing is a great stress reliever as you gaze into a sunset with a cool breeze blowing through the window.

I have also sold discount Mary Kay for over 10 years because I love to help women look beautiful and not spend a fortune.

This summer, Katie (my daughter) and I have opened our own businesses. Katie has "Sweet Love Bakery" with some decadent baked goods and I started "Mama Mara's" homemade meat rubs and jerkies. My son, Eddy, is an awesome chef

and has been a great idea man for us. We are at Farmer's Markets and Craft Fairs. We've met a lot of great people and I hear Zippy and Susie (puppets) will be joining us soon.

I enjoy being a school nurse because it is challenging and involves every type of nursing. There's also a good feeling from knowing that our health offices make a difference in kids' lives, even if it is just a listening ear.

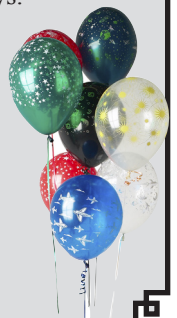
Well, there you have it. I hope each of you have the best year ever at LPS.

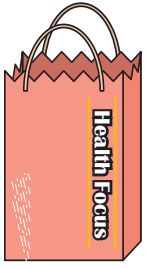
### CELEBRATION

The following Health Services staff, have September birthdays.

**Linda Bigerstaff,  
Diana Hall,  
Tonya Hartsook,  
Ana Jarecke,  
Wendy Rau,  
Kathleen Wichman**

*Best wishes on another milestone!*





## Gayle's Grab Bag

Another school year is well on its way. Like most things in life, there are changes.

I hope you are all finding your "FORMS" folder useful by now. Please continue to use it as a reference so that you are submitting the proper form and using the forms in it as "masters" to be copied. I appreciate everyone's efforts in adapting to the changes I talked about at the **All Health Services** meeting, in August. If you have any questions regarding policy or procedures, please do not hesitate to call. I am only too happy to answer any questions so that things are done correctly.

Remember if you move you can change your address on the LPS website under the ICE (Information Center for Employees). Please also notify me so I can keep my mailing list current. If you have a name change, it must be done in HR with a correct Social Security card and picture ID.

This year I have developed a more efficient way to handle requests for purchases with the nurses' Enhancement funds. This will help me keep a more accurate account of money spent and the amount still available. Purchases can be made and receipts submitted from June 3, 2008 through June 5, 2009 for the 2008-2009 school year. Remember the dollar amount minimum is \$45 to be submitted for reimbursement, except at the end of the school year.

Dental screenings will be held October 20-24 and November 3-21. Deb Myerhoff with the Lincoln Lancaster City Health Department (LLCHD), Dental Division has been busy contacting dentists to do the screenings. I will also mail out a packet of information to the dentists that they will need to have for the screenings. Dental information will be sent to each Health Office (such as forms and a contract for the dentist to fill out).

Flu vaccination will begin in October. I will be emailing sign-up dates soon. Please remember only 8 schools can do vaccinations daily.

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## Under the Microscope

### Keeping tabs on what's new

#### Change of Assignments

**Tara Johnson**, Itinerant Tech, to Health Technician Sub

**Mary Larson**, Goodrich Health Technician, transfer to **Adams**

**Theresa Struble**, Roper Health Technician, transfer to **Yankee Hill**

**Sarah Virus**, Saratoga Health Technician, transfer to **Lakeview**

**Gloria Hernandez**, RN Sub, to **Humann**, School Nurse

**Kathleen Wiechman**, LPN Sub, to Treatment Nurse

**Nadine Frerichs**, 1 year Leave Of Absence

**Leigh Krueger**, 1 year Leave Of Absence

#### New Employees

We welcome these new employees to our Health Services family:

**Patty Baker**, RN Sub, changed to Prescott & Everett, School Nurse

**Jody Geer**, RN, Kahoa, Norwood Park, Eastridge & 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian School Nurse

**Heather Perkins**, RN Sub, changed to Riley, School Nurse

**Wendy Rau**, RN, changed from temporary to permanent Belmont & West Lincoln School Nurse

**Lacey Gerbig**, Substitute Health Technician

**Mary Jo Rood**, Roper Health Technician

**Fran Showalter**, Northeast, Itinerant Health Technician

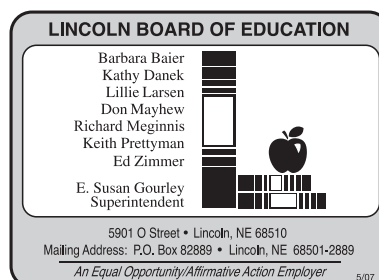
**Jesi Schneider**, Goodrich, Health Technician

#### Bid Farewell

**Cleta Johnson**, Roper Treatment Nurse resigned

**Lois Rademaker**, Yankee Hill, Health Technician resigned

**Jodi Silva**, Park Health Technician resigned



## Community Resources

#### Medication Assistance Program of Lincoln

**483-4800**

5625 O Street,  
Suite 3

Provides assistance to individuals unable to pay for their prescribed meds.

#### BryanLGH Counseling Center

Information on services or to schedule an appt.

**402-481-5991**

- Behavioral issues in children and teens
- Depression, anxiety disorders
- Life adjustment problems, stress
- Relationship issues
- Individual and family counseling
- Biofeedback therapy
- Psychological evaluations

#### F.I.R.S.T. Project

1919 South 40<sup>th</sup> St.  
Suite 111 (06)

Ph. 488-6760

[www.firstproject.org](http://www.firstproject.org)

Serves refugees, Immigrants, Torture survivors, Trauma victims & their family members (use professional interpreters) Behavioral Health Counseling Services

#### YMCA of Lincoln,

434-9200

[www.ymcalincoln.org](http://www.ymcalincoln.org)

Looking for a healthy lifestyle? Income-base fee scale called "Personal Pricing" based on income level and family size.

#### Cooper YMCA

323-6404

#### Downtown YMCA

434-9230

#### Northeast YMCA

434-9262