

# Annual Report

2020-2021

## ABOUT LPS



60 SCHOOLS

39

ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOLS

12

MIDDLE  
SCHOOLS

6

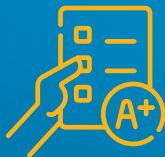
HIGH  
SCHOOLS

3

FOCUS  
PROGRAMS



6,635 STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



5,235 STUDENTS IN GIFTED PROGRAM



130 LANGUAGES SPOKEN



41,562  
STUDENTS

15% Increase  
In 10 Years



82.7%  
GRADUATION RATE

4-Year On Time  
Graduation Rate





# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Dear Community Members,

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the numbers, statistics and stories that shaped our 2020-2021 fiscal year. While these highlights are merely a brushstroke of the last school year, it is my hope that it paints a picture of the challenges our community faced and how we came together for kids.

### **Education is foundational to society.**

When schools across the nation adjusted to shelter in place mandates, we all felt the effects. We look to our schools to provide a safe place for children to be while parents work. For Lincoln's most vulnerable families, schools are the place in which many children get their first meal of the day and a backpack of food to take home over the weekend. At the most basic level, we look to schools to provide the basic skills kids will need to become employable individuals that contribute to the growth of our economy.

But they do so much more than that. Our school buildings are where our young people develop friendships, learn leadership and work together as a group. It's where caring adults notice students who are struggling and provide resources and support to them and their families.



In August 2020, LPS opened the 2020-2021 school year with remote and in person options. While this addressed some of the most basic needs for kids, COVID-19 continued to stress the system. Our educators carried the weight of teaching to virtual learners and those in their classroom. The lesson learned: kids, especially those in high school, take on information best in person.

The 2020-2021 school year became one answering the question: "How can we safely get students back in the classroom?"

During our most challenging times we rely on our community. Public education at its very base is preparing individuals to discern and reason the needs of the group as a whole. It takes ongoing discussion and dialogue about the group's goals and the quality of its work.

**Lincoln, time and time again, you've said education is one of our most important values, and as a community in the last year, you've backed it up.** Together we've been able to keep kids learning and excelling. Your generosity is apparent in every single one of these pages of this report, and for that we thank you.

Sincerely,  
Wendy Van

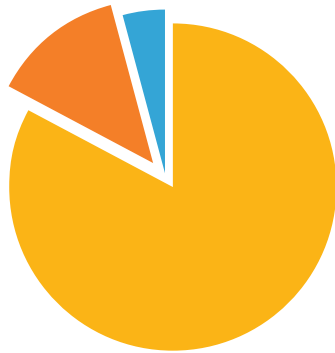


## 2020-2021 Financials



### Income

- Contributions: \$2,397,564
- Grants: \$291,792
- Invested Income: \$2,447,645
- Other Revenue: \$199,109



### Expenses

- Programs, Scholarships, Grants, and Awards: \$2,034,589
- General Admin: \$314,129
- Fundraising: \$107,216

Numbers provided in the 2020-2021 financial audit performed by Buckley & Sitzman, LLP.

Amount raised, funds disbursed and number of donors are from the Foundation for LPS 2020/2021 Fiscal Year (September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021).

\*Includes endowed contributions.



**\$5,336,110**  
AMOUNT RAISED



**\$2,455,934**  
AMOUNT DISBURSED\*



**2,348**  
DONORS

**Lincoln has arguably one of the best urban public school systems in the nation.**

“ Not only is LPS nationally recognized for its work, but also offers a supportive school board and Lincoln community that have proven time and again they are willing to roll up their sleeves and support our staff, students and families. ”



**DR. STEPHEN C. JOEL,**  
SUPERINTENDENT,  
LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



# Opportunities at Students' Fingertips

## DONOR GIFTS GUITARS TO KEEP KIDS ENGAGED

In December 2020, Dennis Zager, part of the duo that rose to fame with the 1969 number 1 hit song "In the Year 2525," and his son, Dennis Zager Jr., donated 700 guitars to Lincoln Public Schools.

The intent behind the gift: get guitars in the hands of students with an interest in learning to play the guitar and keep them engaged in school during a pandemic.

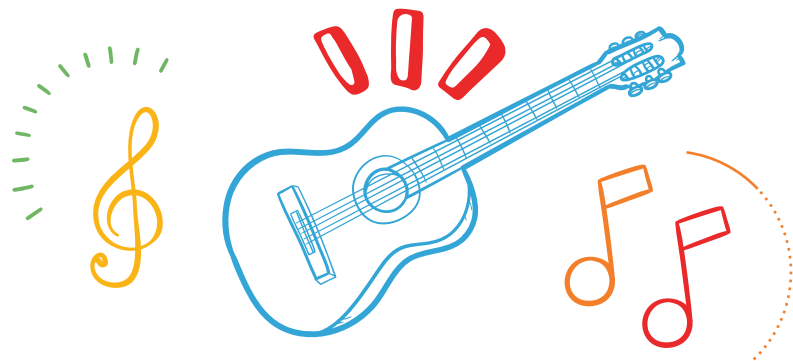
The guitars were divvied up and distributed to LPS music departments. Twenty remained and an idea began to percolate. What if we asked principals and music teachers which of their students would individually benefit from a guitar? The nominations poured in and the day before the start of winter break, we gifted the remaining guitars. Some were stowed away by parents with less financial means to be gifted at the upcoming holiday. Some were placed directly in the hands of teens who had shown musical talent, their eyes wide in disbelief at receiving such a gift.

Kelly Apel, the principal at Brownell, jumped at the opportunity for one such student. "Jayden is a child who chooses to do the right thing even when adults are not watching," Apel stated. "He is a quiet leader who is inclusive, kind, hardworking and determined." Jayden had shown an interest in playing the ukulele in music class; however, he had not had the funding to purchase his own stringed instrument.

At the Foundation we work with donors to provide opportunities that enhance the learning experience for students at LPS.

"Dad's dyslexic," said the younger Zager. "He had a hard time in school and the guitar really changed his life. Putting guitars in young people's hands seemed the natural way to pay it forward."

Today Jayden is thriving. For so many kids, school is about helping students discover what they are passionate about and finding a way to build on that passion so when they graduate, they thrive.



Denny Zager playing one of his custom guitars.  
COURTESY OF DENNIS ZAGER

“

Putting guitars in young people's hands seemed the natural way to pay it forward.

”

DENNIS ZAGER JR.



Delivering guitars to Clinton Elementary School.  
COURTESY OF LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR



Denny Zager with student.  
COURTESY OF DENNIS ZAGER

# Tactile Learning

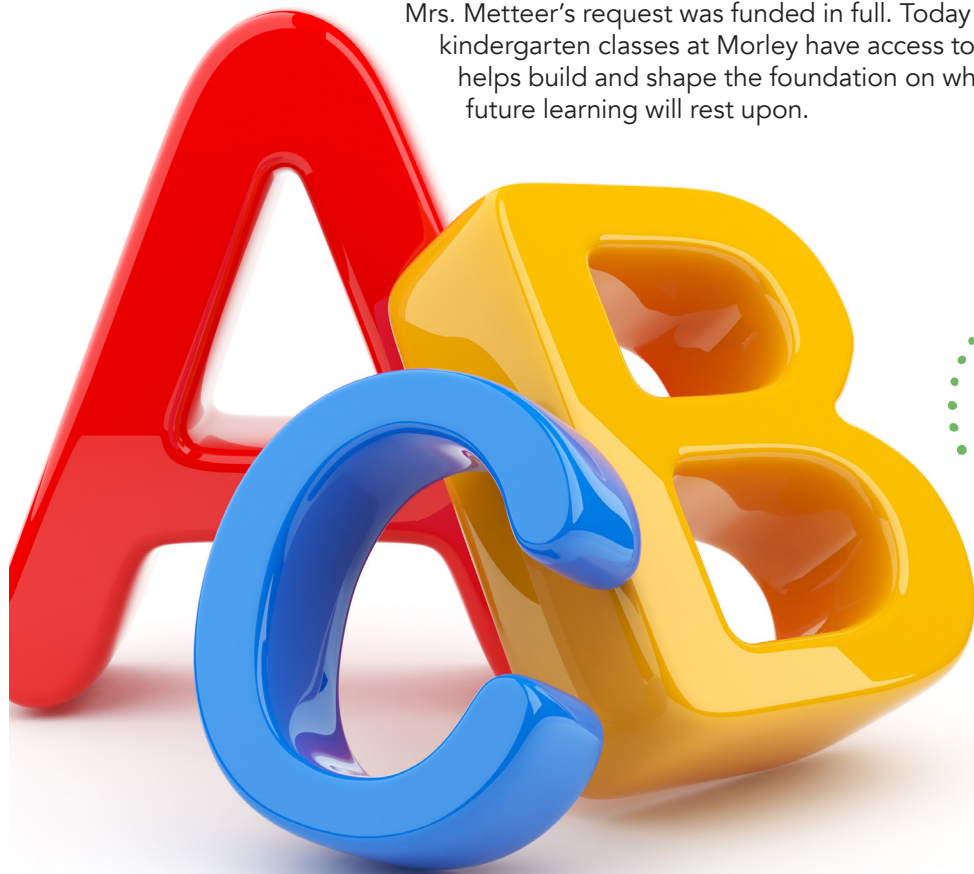
## TEACHING THE ALPHABET THROUGH TOUCH

LPS educator Julie Metteer saw a need in her classroom. Her kindergarten class was learning the most basic fundamentals of reading and writing: the alphabet. For kids, the abstract concept of matching a sound to a letter can be challenging. "I wanted them to have a more tangible connection to the sound," Mrs. Metteer explained. "The Alphabet Tubs do that." Filled with objects the perfect size for small hands, each tub features one of the 26 letters in the alphabet. A 3-dimensional yoyo, a plastic replica of a yak, yield sign, yogurt container and an upper- and lower-case Y allow curious fingers to touch the letter, the examples and make the sound of the letter, creating stronger pathways in the brain and easier recognition.

"Before moving to Lincoln, I had used alphabet sound tubs and saw success." Knowing they were not budgeted, Metteer turned to the Foundation for LPS to create a Fund a Need campaign.

Fund a Need is the Foundation's online, crowdfunding platform that allows teachers to identify classroom needs that fall outside of their budget, but will enhance the learning opportunities for students. Teachers share the need and we spread the word to community members looking for opportunities to support teachers in a tangible way. In 2020-2021 there were 81 campaigns totaling over \$208,873.75 in requested funds.

Mrs. Metteer's request was funded in full. Today all three kindergarten classes at Morley have access to a tool that helps build and shape the foundation on which so much future learning will rest upon.



## FUND A NEED

2020-2021

81

CLASSROOM CAMPAIGNS

\$208,873.75

TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED





# Outstanding Educator Awards

2020 – 2021



Dolores N. Mather Award for Language Arts Teaching

**Annette Luce**

Elliott Elementary School  
Educator, 2nd Grade

Ruth I. Eickman Outstanding Early Childhood Educator Award

**Jenny Carver**

Early Childhood Special Education Home-base Teacher

Helen Krieger Outstanding Healthcare Provider Award

**Megan Lytle**

Huntington Elementary School, School Nurse

John Prash Health and Physical Fitness Award

**Lis Brenden**

Lincoln Southwest High School, PE Teacher

Florence J. Clark Award for Excellence in Middle School Teaching

**Ashlea Jurgens-Woitzel**

Culler Middle School  
ELL Team Leader

**Lesa Christiancy**

Moore Middle School  
6th Grade Science Teacher,  
Technology Leader

Marie Bourke Leadership Award

**Kathleen Dering**

Elliott Elementary School  
Principal

R. L. Fredstrom Leadership Award

**Shelby Mutchie**

Pyrtle Elementary School  
Building Coordinator

Union Bank & Trust Award for Excellence in Financial Literacy Education

**Josh Hinrichs**

Lincoln Southwest High School  
Economic/Business Teacher

Jill Oestmann Reading Educator Award

**Laura Aten**

Lincoln High School  
Reading Facilitator

Bathey Outstanding Teacher Award

**Lindsey Dresden**

Irving Middle School  
7th Grade Science Teacher,  
Science Liaison

Leola Bullock Multicultural Award

**William Bryant**

LPS District Office  
Student Advocate for the African American Community

Sawin Soul Work Award

**Cindy Schwaninger**

Lincoln Public Schools  
District Office  
Director of Elementary Education

Nancy Muehlhausen Counseling Award

**McKenzie Potthoff**

Lincoln Southeast High School  
Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher



# Hands On Learning

## HOW A SPECIAL GIFT WILL HELP DELIGHT THE SENSES

She never had children of her own, but children were a significant part of Pat Campbell's life. As a public school teacher at Beattie Elementary and as an aunt. Especially as an aunt.

Pat Campbell helped raise her niece, Madeline, who had Eisenmenger syndrome, caused by a congenital heart defect. As a tribute to her niece, who passed away at the age of 41, Pat set aside \$530,000 for the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools to support school endeavors to support young people with special needs.

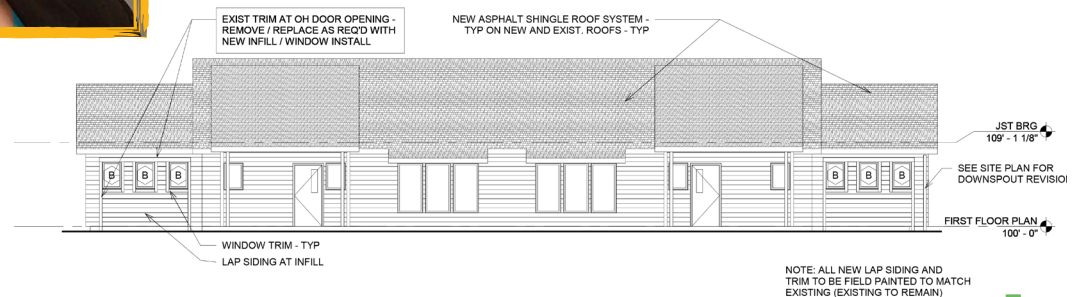
Today Pat's legacy lives on by funding an addition and improvements to the Independence Academy, an LPS facility that supports students with special education needs. The space will feature updated classrooms, renovated bathroom facilities, and a newly created sensory space for students with autism. Because of her gift, the Independence Academy will house twice the number of students as it had previously, ensuring that even more students have the life skills necessary to flourish.



“ Because of Pat's gift we can enhance the opportunities we provide to our students. The sensory space and upgrades to the outdoor spaces specifically provide a needed element for these students. ”



DR. ALISHA BOLLINGER, SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR



# Hand in Hand

## PARTNERING TO SUPPORT STUDENTS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

Educating a student isn't an easy task on a good day. Add a global pandemic into the mix and it becomes significantly more challenging for everyone: educators, administrators, families and students.

At the Foundation for LPS we saw how families were deeply affected by COVID-19. We heard their stories. The number of requests for emergency assistance we received skyrocketed.

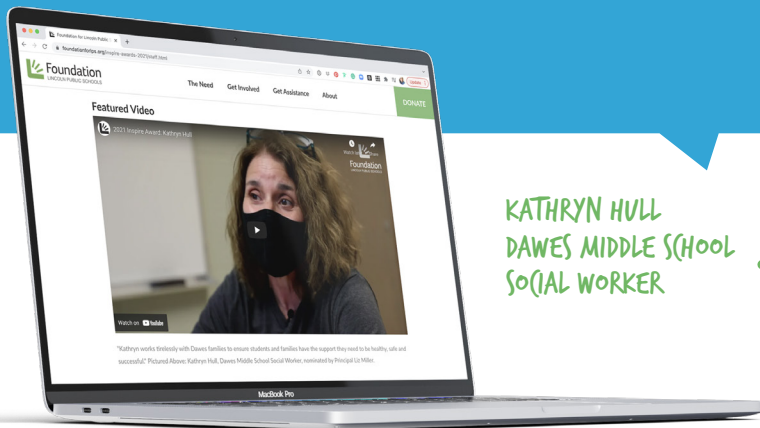
Soon the repercussions of significant stress at home began being felt in the classroom. Effects like the inability to concentrate, lack of motivation, social isolation, anger, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and so much more, presented early on in students.

In October 2020 we launched a third round of funding. We continued to support students and their families with money for rent, utilities, food, transportation and other emergency needs, but added a mental health component.

Together with LPS, HopeSpoke and Blue Valley Behavioral Health, we provided CARES Act dollars to fund therapist-led discussions offered to all students in a café-style format, small group interventions, and short-term, crisis-oriented individual therapy sessions provided by community-based therapists.

This partnership allowed us to remove the barriers of seeking care, it cut through the red tape, and provided the necessary referral to more intense therapy for the students who needed critical services. While the true repercussions of the pandemic will not be known for years, in the short term we know the improved mental health of just one student makes a difference.

“What happens in the community, what happens to their family, that affects learning.”



KATHRYN HULL  
DAWES MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SOCIAL WORKER



Watch Kathryn Hull's full talk on social work during the pandemic.



41,562  
LPS STUDENTS



46.8%  
OF LPS STUDENTS  
LIVE IN POVERTY



200  
SOCIAL WORKERS,  
COUNSELORS AND  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS



1  
MENTAL HEALTH  
PROFESSIONAL FOR EVERY  
208  
STUDENTS IN OUR DISTRICT

This project was supported by funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) from the U.S. Department of Treasury and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, CFDA Number 21.019.



# Within Their Grasp

## DONOR SUPPORTS STUDENT PROSTHETIC EXPERIMENT

The project was one that had lived in Gryffin Sumner's mind for some time. He wanted to solve the problem of how to create an affordable, lightweight, functional prosthetic. "The goal was to make a functional, aesthetically pleasing, light, prosthetic hand under \$200," Gryffin explained in his abstract. "Amputation is a common problem all around the world, and an unfortunately large percentage of people don't have access to functional prosthetics due to cost or other limitations. The focus on this project was creating something that would be accessible and usable by anyone."

For Gryffin, the reason was personal. He had seen his own grandfather suffer. "This is a highly relevant project with potential for payoff, and that could benefit thousands of underserved people for whom current technology is unavailable," Gryffin shared.

Since 1991 the Foundation for LPS Todd Francis Research Creative Grant has allowed middle school and high school students to participate in significant and extended learning activities in the sciences. With grant funds, Gryffin, a student of the LPS Science Focus Program, was able to purchase the necessary supplies to begin work on a 3-D printed prosthetic hand that would function off of the extension and flexion of the user's arm.

He assembled the parts and began testing by putting the arm on, securing it to his scapula. "I began picking up various objects of different sizes and shapes and holding them for 10 seconds. I ran five trials for each object and categorized them as: Spherical, Cylindrical, Box-like, Amorphous/malleable, or Uncategorized."

Gryffin then tested based on a success/failure system and calculated the success rate. Cylindrical objects were successfully held 100% of the time, spherical objects 90% of the time, amorphous/malleable objects 80% of the time, box-like objects 77.14% of the time. For uncategorized objects, items were held only 48.57% of the time.

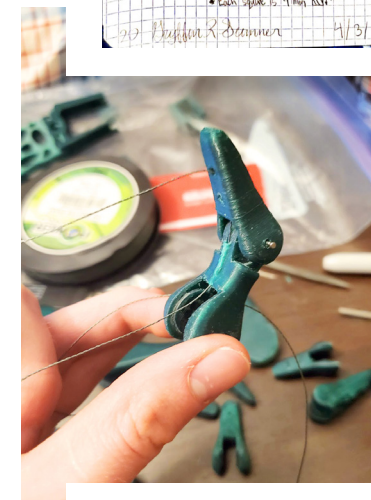
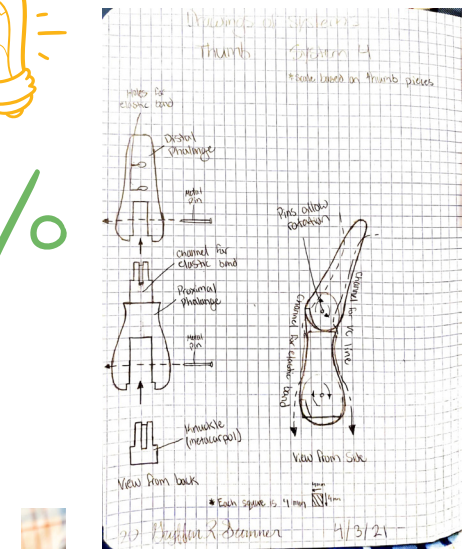
At the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools, it is our mission to help fund projects, ones like Gryffin's experiment, that inspire a passion for learning and aid students in realizing their full potential.

“

I would like to start off by saying thank you. The money you have provided through the Todd Francis Creative Research Fund has made my research possible. Biomedical Engineering is a field that I am truly passionate about. I have watched so many people, including my grandfather, suffer through dysfunctional or non-existent prostheses and I strive to bring some normalcy and happiness back to their lives. This grant is helping to bring this dream into fruition.

”

SINCERELY,  
GRYFFIN SUMNER



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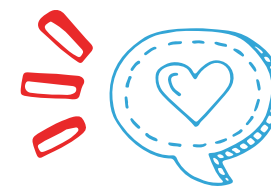
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THANK YOU!

\*In the 2020-2021 fiscal year we had 2,348 donors support our mission. Those listed above gave \$250 or more. Please note, this list has changed since our first publication to include individuals we regrettably missed. If by chance we omitted your name, please let us know so we can honor your gift.

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For more stories about what we do or to support our students and teachers go to [foundationforlps.org](http://foundationforlps.org) or call 402-436-1612.

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Robert D. Carstens Charitable Trust  
Rotary Club #14 Foundation  
Schmieding Foundation Inc.  
Stark Community Foundation  
The Castner Family Charitable Fund  
The Tournament  
Ziegenbein Irrevocable Family Trust