Inside Your Schools

Going **Beyond**

**THE BASICS**
Building Upon the Basics

At Lakota, we take very seriously our responsibility to educate every single child. Like any other service-driven industry, the quality of the experience we deliver to our “clients” — our students — is paramount. Our “product” is more of an outcome: More than 1,000 young men and women graduate each year prepared for the rigors of today’s workforce or post-secondary education.

In a business where people are our greatest assets, the variables of our work are numerous. The students who walk through our doors come to us with all different backgrounds and life circumstances, speak a different language. Others come to us with a disability. Some live in poverty, while others require exceptional levels of rigor in the classroom. Some want nothing more than to discover their passions; some require exceptional change, too. I am proud of the fact that we met 97 percent of the state’s 26 standards across all grade levels and all subject areas. In fact, Lakota students, on average, actually performed 15 percent better than the state average.

That is why state testing, and the data it generates for each student, will continue to be a core piece of our work. It measures our success as educators in challenging every student to think critically in the most basic and foundational academic areas: reading, writing, math, science and social studies. Learning is an integral part of the student learning experience, too. Lakota’s student internship program helps students discover their passions and apply their skills to real-world problems. The rapid pace of change in the educational landscape is one of the biggest challenges we face today. That is why state testing, and the data it generates for each student, will continue to be a core piece of our work.

We know strong schools don’t happen without strong finances, which is why we take this part of our work so seriously.

A new Innovation Council, for example, is supporting the district’s move to a more modernized curriculum that matches the skills tomorrow’s workforce requires. Learning through advanced technology is an all-time high and service learning is an integral part of the student learning experience, too. Lakota’s student internship program helps students discover their passions and apply their skills to real-world problems.

The data helps teachers understand how their students are performing, in comparison to their peers statewide, and then individualize instruction. It is particularly important when paired with our own classroom assessments because it gives us a much more complete picture of each student.

The stories in this issue of “Inside Your School” will provide you with some solid examples of how we’re going beyond the basic foundations of learning to give our students the most individualized and challenging academic experience.

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Beyond the Books: DIGITAL LEARNING

Technology Education Starts Early

Access to digital learning tools is only half of the equation when it comes to preparing students for an increasingly technological world. The tools are only as powerful as the person holding them, which is why a new elementary technology class is so transformational.

“Not many kids know what to do online,” said one fifth-grader participating in Lakota’s new technology class at Woodland Elementary.

That’s the focus of the district’s newest elementary special, serving more than 7,400 first- through sixth-grade students at 14 Lakota schools. Once a week for 18 weeks, students focus solely on technology, just as they do with other “special” classes like art, music and physical education.

Through the new special, students learn about online safety and digital citizenship, communication, research and information fluency. Digital projects using tools like a 3D printer further develop skills in collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making, as well as technology operations and concepts. All are core indicators of the national technology standards for grade-specific skills that Lakota follows.

“Technology isn’t new for most students, but learning how to use it responsibly and to collaborate with their classmates to solve problems are often new skills for them,” said Krista Heidenreich, Lakota’s director of digital learning.

“The more prepared Lakota students are in using technology as they enter each new grade, the more opportunity teachers have to provide for individualized instruction.”

An elementary-level technology special was one recommendation in an independent instructional technology evaluation completed for Lakota in 2012. This evaluation, paired with industry best practice and staff and community input, supported the creation of Lakota’s Instructional Technology Strategic Plan, a 2013 levy promise.

“Technology is a critical component in today’s workforce and a powerful tool for supporting instruction. Knowing how and when to use it in real world applications is crucial for our students.”

Todd Wesley
Chief Technology Officer, Lakota Local Schools

What is Digital Learning Day?

Teachers and their creative use of digital tools shape learning for students across all disciplines, said Grundy, Lakotereich, Lakota’s director of digital learning.

“It’s not only a day of celebration for what’s happening in our classrooms with digital learning, but also a time for teachers to share best practices,” Heidenreich explained. “This district-wide sharing of ideas continues to benefit our students and to further increase their engagement in learning.”

Showcase of Digital Learning Day

• Students in Lakota West’s American Sign Language class connected with four different Lakota second-grade classrooms through video conferencing. The high school students took turns reading and signing vocabulary words from popular children’s books. They also showed the second-graders how they can use signs in their classroom as well as how to spell their own name.

• At Lakota East, one teacher integrated a digital assessment app with her English as a Second Language students to enhance their understanding of specific vocabulary words and definitions.

• Art students at Liberty Junior School used a new online learning platform being introduced at Lakota to view and collaborate on digital instructional materials at home and at school in preparation for creating one-point perspective drawings.

“Technology isn’t the end — it is the means by which we deliver more engaging and effective instruction. And it entails more than just the computers, equipment and software,” said the district’s digital learning specialist provides direct support and new ways of incorporating such tools.

“We understand that while traditional, face-to-face learning remains important, the opportunities offered by blending this with technology and online instruction have been significant,” said Krista Heidenreich, director of digital learning. “Our teachers are purposefully integrating technology with blended learning strategies, which results in more hands-on opportunities for students.”

There are a multitude of tools at the teacher’s disposal such as digital assessment tools that allow the teacher to immediately gauge understanding; and content-focused tools that help students research and evaluate information. One resource, Canvas, connects the digital tools teachers use through a cloud-based system, integrating tools and allowing more time for hands-on learning.

Heidenreich stated, “These new approaches and tools are allowing our students to collaborate on lessons and assignments digitally, 24/7 with other students and with their teachers. In addition, new instructional approaches are developing our students as self-directed learners taking personal responsibility for their learning.”

“We talk a lot about lifelong learners and digital learning directly supports that philosophy,” added Heidenreich.

“We are in the process of creating one program that will help them learn computer coding concepts and ideas.

“First grade students at Creekside Early Childhood School digitally recorded their mathematical problem-solving steps allowing the teacher to review these steps, and identify and address any learning needs.

Many students attending the new elementary technology special were introduced to robots that will help them learn computer coding concepts and ideas.”

Jami Fischer, first grade teacher, Creekside Early Childhood School

“In our class we have created more opportunities for our students to be more engaged in the learning process.”

Jami Fischer, first grade teacher, Creekside Early Childhood School

 Instructional Delivery Evolves Through Technology

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Beyond the Standards: Service Learning

Student Learning Translates to Community Impact

When the result of student learning is a positive impact outside the four walls of the classroom, it’s called service learning. These opportunities are abundant throughout Lakota, helping students of all ages develop strong character traits and other practical skills like leadership, teamwork and communication.

One local organization that has benefited from Lakota service learning projects is Reach Out Lakota, the largest community food and clothing pantry serving West Chester and Liberty townships. “Over 60 percent of our food donations from mid-August until mid-June are from Lakota — from projects sponsored by the district, by schools, by classrooms or by individual students,” said J. Peyton Gravely, who oversees the organization’s fundraising and donor relations activities.

Reach Out Lakota serves nearly 2,200 clients, and food drives such as last fall’s eighth annual district-wide competition, REACH IN for REACH OUT LAKOTA, stocked the shelves for months. When those reserves started to dwindle, efforts like the “100 Days Smarter” challenge at Union Elementary kick in donations to further sustain their inventory.

Gravely added that “Lakota students and families provide not just food, but clothing, personal hygiene items and money. The impact of these donations is just so far reaching. That’s the beauty of our relationship with the school district.”

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For nearly ten years, students in the second-year computer science course at Lakota East have tackled a large-scale programming project. Early on, the task involved designing computer games. In more recent years, they’ve stretched themselves to think about the social impact of their project, but have never put any finished product to use. This year, their plans are bigger. Not only are they going beyond the four walls of their high school, they’re also building something that will make a lasting impact on two community organizations that have a real need for programming expertise.

Computer Science Students Put Skills to Work

In the ultimate combination of 21st century learning, intersecting two teaching methods that are growing in popularity around Lakota, across all subject areas and grade levels: service learning and project-based learning.

The challenge students were given simulates one they might encounter as IT professionals one day. Each group had a client. Each team was led by two project managers, and each was presented with a real problem facing its client.

With a focus on database management — because of its prevalence in the business world — the groups paired with two local non-profit organizations: Reach Out Lakota and the Community Foundation of West Chester/Liberty.

Reach Out Lakota’s plan for an automated database for its food inventory left an impression with the first group led by seniors Bobby Yost and Mitch Bockhorst. That’s not surprising considering the organization provides relief to hundreds of Lakota families each year.

“Seeing so many partners organized food drives over the years as a student...for me at least, it’s definitely a pressing need,” Bockhorst said. “Reach Out Lakota has been so present in my life. It feels good giving back to something that has done so much for my community.”

“It’s pretty awesome to see my work being used in a meaningful way, rather than just sitting untouched on a flash drive somewhere,” Yost said.

The second group was moved by the challenge to create a comprehensive tool that would allow the Community Foundation to efficiently reach its growing base of volunteers and donors, delivering one message to a range of email systems and social media platforms, based on the individual’s preferences.

According to co-leaders and juniors JC Pyron and Austin Reifsteck, they are driven by its potential application to other community organizations and needs.

“Something like this could be reconfigured for so many other needs,” Reifsteck said.

The complexity of both projects goes beyond the scope of what students learn in class. The process, including the chance to work with IT professionals who can fill the voids of expertise, gives them invaluable experience in programming and service.

“This project has a very direct impact we can see,” Bockhorst said. “You don’t get that in many other class projects.” •
Understanding Lakota’s State Report Card Results

Ohio’s state report card is just one tool, among others, we use to measure how Lakota students are understanding the foundational academic areas. We value any data that helps us identify our progress as a district and individualize instruction to each student. These district results for the 2014-2015 school year were released by the Ohio Department of Education in late February 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENT</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>WHAT IT MEANS TO STUDENTS</th>
<th>WHAT IT MEANS TO LAKOTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: Indicators Met</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Student passage rate of the state tests across all grade levels and academic areas.</td>
<td>Student passage rate of the state tests across all grade levels and academic areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: Performance Index</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>The achievement level of all students. The higher a student’s performance level, the more points applied to a district’s overall index.</td>
<td>This data is critically important to helping teachers individualize instruction by offering extra help or enrichment, depending on a student’s comprehension level. Under this calculation, students who elected not to take the state tests received a zero. This counted against the district on the report card, but more importantly, there is less information for helping us meet individual academic needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Closing: Annual Measurable Objectives</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>The year-over-year improvement in performance of nine different student subgroups, as identified by the state.</td>
<td>The state disaggregates our data in a way that shows us how we can better serve students who speak a different language, struggle with a disability or live in poverty. For example, it’s important that we respond to the unique needs of every single student and this type of data helps us better understand what those needs are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress: Value-Added (overall)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>How much students in grades 4-8 have grown in their math and reading skills, using one year’s growth as the baseline.</td>
<td>This is about keeping students on track in their learning and challenging them to grow year after year. Every student has a different trajectory, but what’s important is that they never plateau. This measure also assigns value-added letter grades to three different subgroups: our gifted students (A), the lowest 20% in achievement (C), and students with disability (F) — another indicator for where we need to focus our attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-Year Graduation Rate</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>The number of ninth-graders who graduated in four years (93.5%), or five years (96%).</td>
<td>While still a high mark, we will never be satisfied with anything less than 100% graduation. Graduation support, alternative course options and remediation are critical supports to this goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-Year Graduation Rate</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>How well the district assists their struggling young readers and helps them get on track.</td>
<td>** No Rating (too few struggling readers to calculate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3 Literacy</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>How prepared students are for college or a career. Reports on participation and performance levels for tests like advanced placement, ACT and SAT as well as dual credit programs like College Credit Plus.</td>
<td>How well the district assists their struggling young readers and helps them get on track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared for Success</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state will award a grade for this component until next year. We continue to see high levels of participation and achievement in advanced level coursework, with nearly 50% of our students participating in at least one advanced placement course. We want to continue growing those numbers, which is why we are accelerating the number of AP offerings and other options like College Credit Plus that help students get a head start on college and their careers. Other valuable preparation programs like Lakota’s internship program are not considered in this measurement.

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Standards form the framework for Ohio’s state tests, but unless you’re an educator, it’s not likely you’ve ever actually seen one. Here are just a couple examples in the subject areas of math and language arts, but there’s a lot more where these come from.

What is a STANDARD anyway?

**Sample Reading Standard: Key Ideas and Details**

11th-12th Grade

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Quote accurately from a text when explain- ing what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

**Sample Math Standard: Geometry**

6th Grade

- Find the area of right triangles, other tri- angles, special quadrilaterals, and polygons by composing into rectangles and decom- posing into triangles and other shapes; apply these techniques in the context of solving real-world and mathematical problems.

2nd Grade

- Reason with shapes and their attributes. Partition a rectangle into rows and columns of same-size squares and count to find the total number of them.

K Grade

- Identify and describe shapes. Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.

Before the new standards went into effect just three years ago, a student might have encountered this type of question on a reading test, explains Tompkins. “What did the character in the story do to overcome their fears?”

Under the new standards, it might look something like this: Why did the characters in this story act the way they did?

“More than just demonstrating comprehension of the facts, it emphasizes the need to think critically and apply what you know to draw your own interpreta- tions or solve a problem,” Tompkins said. “It’s so different than the types of challenges students will face in today’s workforce. The new standards focus on real-world application.”

IN FACT, FOR EVERY subject area — English language arts & literacy, math, science and social studies — there’s a whole different set of learning stan- dards to help teachers identify what a student should be able to master at the completion of any grade level, beginning in kindergarten up through twelfth grade. For language arts, alone, there are 47 total standards, each one written for each grade level differently.

“The new standards acc- knowledge that a kindergartner is going to grow into a twelfth- grader one day,” said Becky Tompkins, Lakota’s curriculum specialist for K-12 literacy. “For each standard, there’s a stair- step progression from one grade level to the next. Everything is aligned and rather than working in isolation, teachers have a bet- ter understanding of what hap- pens after their students move on to the next grade level.”

This is significantly different than the previous model, which assigned standards to a band of grade levels and didn’t always show a natural connection from one band to the next. The new standards are more complex, and rigorous too, reflecting their intent to prepare students for college or a career.
Spotlight on Staff

NEW AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS MAKE GOOD TEAM
CINDY SORRELL AND KATELYN MURRELL

When you walk into veteran teacher Cindy Sorrell's first grade classroom at Wyandot Early Childhood School, and then into the room of Katelyn Murrell (who just started teaching first grade this year), they look quite different. In Sorrell's classroom, you are greeted with colorful math charts, a counter full of stuffed animals from beloved children's books, as well as many other learning tools she has collected over her 38 years of teaching. Murrell loves when the kids have that "aha" moment. "My biggest joy is when a student who has been struggling with a concept has that breakthrough moment when they get a big smile on their face and say 'I got it'."

For the past several years, Sorrell keeps saying that this might be her last year of teaching. "But once I see the excitement that the kids bring into the classroom, the thought of retiring disappears. I just love the everyday moments that make me smile."

Ben Brown. "And based on the interests shown by our students, we've added more projects that promote critical thinking and enthusiasm for learning, such as coding, robotics, gaming and animation. In the near future, we plan to add sound engineering, web design and video production."

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CELEBRATE Lakota Arts

Come celebrate Lakota student artists on April 26—and bring home one of their beautiful works of art too!

For the fourth year in a row, Lakota art teachers and IKEA West Chester are partnering to host the “Dress Me Up” community auction and sale.

That evening, IKEA’s restaurant will be transformed into an art gallery, filled with vibrant student paintings and hand-painted dressers, all for sale or up for bid to raise funds for Lakota art programs. IKEA generously matches every purchase, up to $2,500. The event gives students a venue for showcasing their art out in the community.

This year, the popular event will feature 20 dressers, inspired by a favorite artist or art movement, and over 40 framed art pieces created by students in grades K-12.

WHAT:
“Dress Me Up” community auction and sale

WHERE:
IKEA West Chester

WHEN:
Tuesday, April 26, 2016
Silent auction 6-7 p.m.

Purchases are payable by cash and check only.

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Email or call
lakota@lakotaonline.com
513-874-5505 (Central Office).

[Image of a child painting a dresser]

DID YOU KNOW?

29 cents is the per-unit cost to print and mail this piece to Lakota households and businesses.