

A Look Around Lakota



WE are Pushing Boundaries



Freedom Elementary third grade teachers Beth Bonin and Kristin Kessen literally pushed back the wall dividing their two classrooms to give team teaching a try with their 52 students.

From digital learning to team teaching to reimagining the high school experience, Lakota is pushing the boundaries on the traditional K-12 student experience.

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#WEareLakota

WE are Forward Thinking

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Matthew J. Miller
Superintendent

Last February, we began the process of developing a new strategic plan for the district. At many organizations, this is an exercise they complete every three to five years, with the end result sitting on a shelf in a binder, collecting dust. From the beginning, our intent was to be different; to create a document that would become a part of our culture, embraced by our staff and applied to our students every single day. I believe we have achieved this.

than 2,300 people completed online surveys and focus groups were held. Once the information was gathered and analyzed, a draft was built and shared out for feedback, including an in-depth community conversation. The final plan was approved by the Board of Education at its Dec. 10 meeting.

The new mission of Lakota Local Schools states: Everything WE do is designed to provide a future ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child. Every staff member at Lakota is able to apply this

“Everything WE do is designed to provide a future ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child.”

To build a comprehensive strategic plan, it couldn't just be sitting in a room. We needed to hear from our stakeholders: staff, parents, community members and, of course, students. More

mission to their job. It will be the question we ask before making big decisions: Is this providing a future ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child?

To support the mission, we



have designed four pillars as our vision: WE are personalized; WE are future ready; WE are fiscally responsible; and WE are in this together. Our four “Es” are also built into the vision. Once our kids cross the graduation stage, they will be prepared to “Enroll” in higher education, “Enlist” in the military, become “Employed” or follow an “Entrepreneurial” path. It is not our goal for students to just graduate from Lakota. It is our goal to prepare them to lead successful lives.

It is essential that we provide a high-quality, personalized and student-centered education to every child at Lakota Local Schools. This new strategic plan has been designed to be a blueprint for Lakota's future. It reflects where we are now and where we want to go.

Matthew J. Miller
MATTHEW J. MILLER
Superintendent

From the Lakota Board of Education | Q: How have you seen Lakota



Julie Shaffer
President

A: “Lakota is leading the way and preparing students for their future by listening to all stakeholders through multiple outreach programs. Feedback enables us to be student-centered, ensuring our kids are ready for their future with programs like the Lakota Cyber Academy, whether that future is enrollment, entrepreneurship, enlistment or employment. We're focused on giving our staff freedom rather than focusing on the test, and we are doing all of this in a fiscally responsible way.”



Todd Parnell
Vice President

A: “Lakota is leading the way in many areas through innovation and thinking toward the future. Technology sure, but innovation in curriculum, internships, student opportunities along with the WE are Lakota philosophy and culture, is creating an environment to benefit all stakeholders including: students, educators, administrators, employees and members of the community. Working together, we are creating an effective, exciting and transformational educational experience.”



Kelley Casper
Board Member

FROM THE TREASURER

WE are Fiscally Responsible

As our new mission statement says, everything WE do at Lakota Local Schools is designed to provide a future ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child. Fiscal responsibility is one of the pillars of our new strategic plan and it is something that I take very seriously.

It is imperative that we ensure the alignment of our resources to the educational priorities of our district. This includes making sure that we are able to pay for the priorities and implementing a plan to ensure their sustainability as well as the financial stability of the district. Through the reallocation of dollars and smarter spending, we have operated with a balanced budget for six consecutive years.

We have also refinanced our debt over the past several years to take advantage of lower interest rates and, as a result, have been able to lower our debt service payments. This, combined with increasing values of the residential

and business properties in our community, has allowed the amount collected from our residents to be lowered. The bond millage has been decreased by one (1) mill and your property tax bill(s) you receive this year will reflect this change. This means that our tax payers will pay less to Lakota Local Schools annually - good news for you, our community.

Our cash balance is very strong and is predicted to remain that way throughout our most recent five-year forecast. With revenue growth predicted to fall below inflation, we are projecting a spending deficit in fiscal year 2023, the fifth year of our forecast. This will require us to dip into our cash balance at that point.

It is not unusual for a school district to show a spending deficit in a five-year forecast. In fact, more than 95% of schools in Ohio are showing a spending deficit in year five or before. A financial forecast is based on assumptions for the present and

future. There are always unknowns and this forecast is no exception. We will remain vigilant and have already begun to review Board policy with our finance committee, including policies to address: fiscal budget stabilization reserve (rainy day policy); minimum cash balance; and a structurally balanced budget.

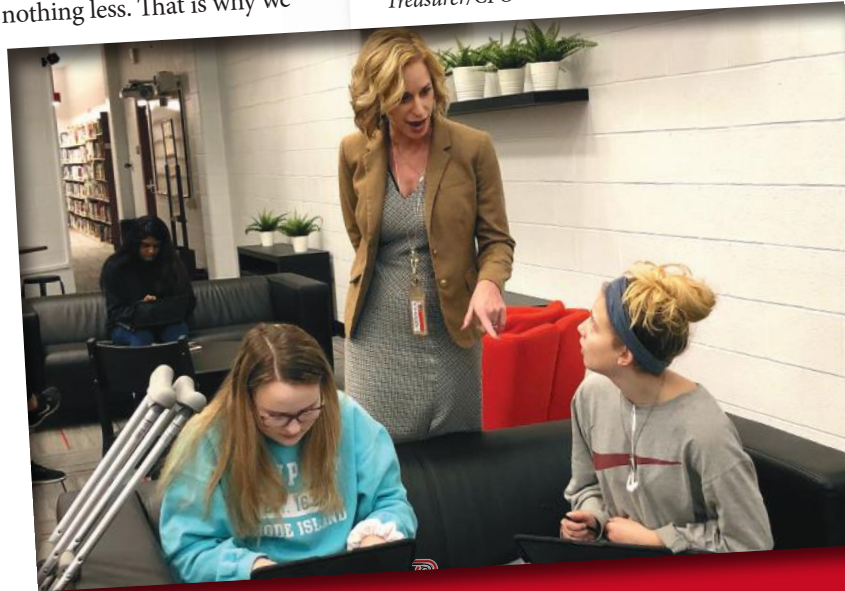
We are grateful for the community's support in passing the 2013 levy and understand that our stakeholders are watching our spending. We would expect nothing less. That is why we

believe in financial transparency, which not only includes bi-annual five-year forecast updates, but an annual financial prospectus that is mailed to every community member. If you haven't done so lately, I invite you to visit the finances section of our website for more information.



Jenni L. Logan
Treasurer

JENNI L. LOGAN
Treasurer/CFO



Local Schools leading the way?

A: "Lakota is leading the way by intentionally emphasizing student voice. We are empowering students to have a say in not only the kind of education they receive, but how it is delivered. With everything from Project Based Learning to innovative uses of technology to flexible seating in the classroom, Lakota continues to listen to how our students define their educational experience and allows them to share in the process."



Brad Lovell
Board Member

A: "WE are stronger together. Teaching and learning not only happens in the classroom, but outside the walls in our community. Lakota continues to lead the way in honoring diversity and inclusion throughout our community by hosting events, learning opportunities and fanfares across the district. Additionally, expanding opportunities with local businesses provides real-world learning experiences for our students. Together with our community's support, our students are benefitting."



Lynda O'Connor
Board Member

A: "The district is pushing the boundaries for change - from past practices in how we do business to instructional innovation in the classroom. The future is wide open, driven by a need to create and sustain a transformative learning experience for Lakota's 16,500 students. The classroom needs to be an engaging, tactile environment meant to bring out creative, solution driven, problem-solving experiences. Lakota is leading the way in preparing students for their future."

WE are Personalized



Teachers and students work together to reimagine the high school experience during the three-day design challenge.

Transforming the High School Experience

The ultimate example of empowering teacher and student voice is happening at Lakota Local Schools right now. A group called #LakotaNext has been given the task of reimagining what the high school experience should look like.

Recently, the district held a screening of the movie "Most Likely to Succeed" for the community. The documentary looks at the American school system, which, in many cases, has changed very little in the past 120 years. "School today is not like it was 20, 50 or even 10 years ago," said Superintendent Matthew Miller. "The world is ever-changing and so must we in order to prepare our kids for success

after graduation. It's not good enough to only adjust what we teach," he continued. "We need to think bigger. We need to think outside the box to provide our students with the tools they need to succeed in life."

District leaders have been discussing the high school experience since last spring, but believed that both teachers and students needed to be a part of the discussion. A group comprised of about 30 teachers and 20 students from both high schools have joined forces to brainstorm ideas, such as coursework, schedules and room design, to improve the educational experience of students.

Coupled with #LakotaNext, district leaders have also begun to develop a portrait of a Lakota graduate - the aspiration that every Lakota graduate has the tools needed to find success once they have their diploma in hand. "The portrait of a graduate encompasses more than daily

lesson plans," said Keith Koehne, executive director of curriculum and instruction. "Our students must also have critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills to help them succeed in life," he added.

Koehne believes that input from business partners is a must. The district recently hosted a Community Conversation with members of the West Chester Liberty Chamber Alliance to discuss the types of skills companies look for when hiring new employees. Soft skills, such as communication, was the overwhelming answer. "Internships, job shadowing and a curricular option with guest speakers in the classroom will expose our students to real-world learning opportunities," said Koehne. "Partnering with the business community to give students more opportunities is a game changer."

what's trending @LakotaDistrict

We Want to Hear from You

Monthly Coffee Chats with @LakotaSuper and ongoing Community Conversations are two great ways to share your thoughts and learn more about Lakota. Check out our Lakotaonline.com calendar for upcoming events. #WEareLakota



Celebrating Our Future Veterans

To celebrate those @EAST_HAWKS and @FirebirdTweets students whose post-graduate plans include enlistment in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, Lakota will host its Military Commitment Ceremony on Tuesday, April 30. The hour-long program is open to the entire community and will begin at 7 p.m. at Lakota East Freshman. #WEareLakota



WE are Future Ready

One-to-One Technology Pushes Boundaries

Lakota kicked off the school year with a one-to-one technology pilot for students in grades 7-8. It was so successful that Chromebooks were also distributed to high school students when they returned from winter break.

Each junior school, freshman campus and high school has transformed its media center into an Innovation Hub, where students can work and study together at collaboration stations, explore concepts and standards through virtual reality, and demonstrate their learning through creative outlets such as music, video and 3D printing.

Teachers are working to enhance and transform the classroom experience for students by providing a level of personalization that empowers them to truly “own” their learning.

Lakota’s #WEareEmpowered movement supports students as they develop skills around digital citizenship, digital organization, digital access and collaboration – and we teach these skills as early as kindergarten.

CommUnity University

Lakota’s monthly learning series, led by expert Lakota staff and community partners, continues to provide training and resources to parents, relatives, staff and community members on important issues affecting our youth. These free sessions are live streamed and include breakfast and complimentary childcare. Check the website for upcoming dates and topics. #WEareLakota



State of the Schools March 13

Lakota Superintendent Matthew Miller will deliver his community State of the Schools address on Main Street at Lakota East High School on Wednesday, March 13. All are welcome to tour a showcase of all 23 schools before Miller’s public address at 7 p.m. The event will give staff, parents, students and community members a look at Lakota’s current and future plans.



100+ Booths at Lakota’s Summer Fair, March 4 & 6

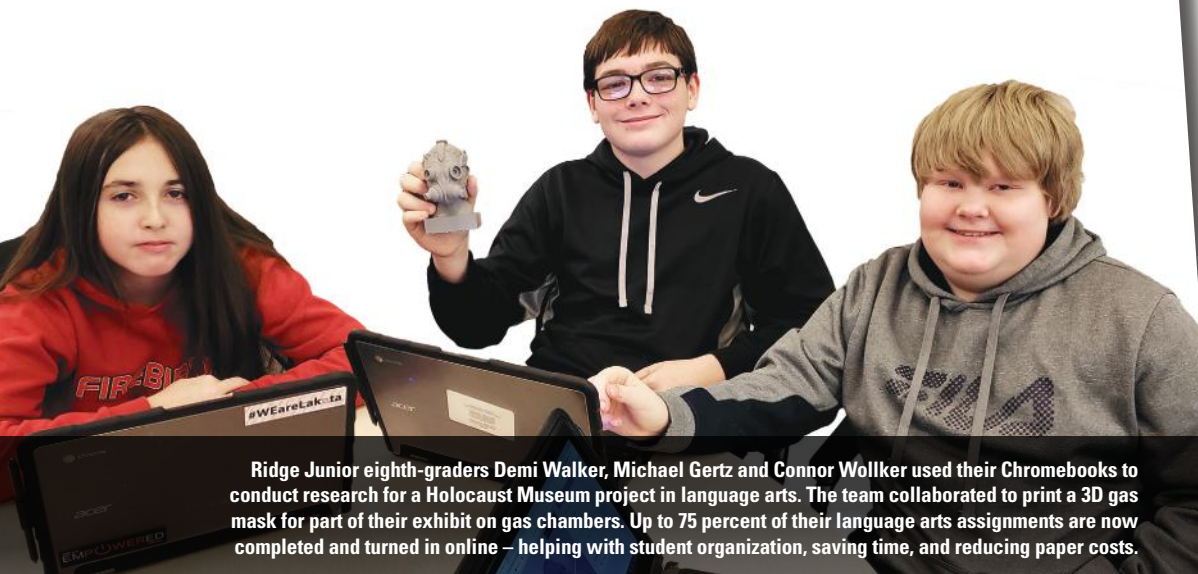
Mark your calendars for March 4 (@EAST_HAWKS) and March 6 (@FirebirdTweets) from 6 to 8 p.m. Local groups with summer youth activities will be on hand to share information. Exhibitors include everything from summer camps and learning centers to childcare facilities and athletic leagues. Event includes a free raffle and live performances. #SummerFunFair #WEareLakota



Jaiila Robinson and Zayron Hill used their Chromebooks to create a moving tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. They used Hopewell Junior School’s Innovation Hub to record their version of the song “Glory” and then paired it with video clips of the Civil Rights era. “Having a laptop that travels with us makes things so much easier,” Robinson said. “We don’t have to keep logging in and out of devices.”

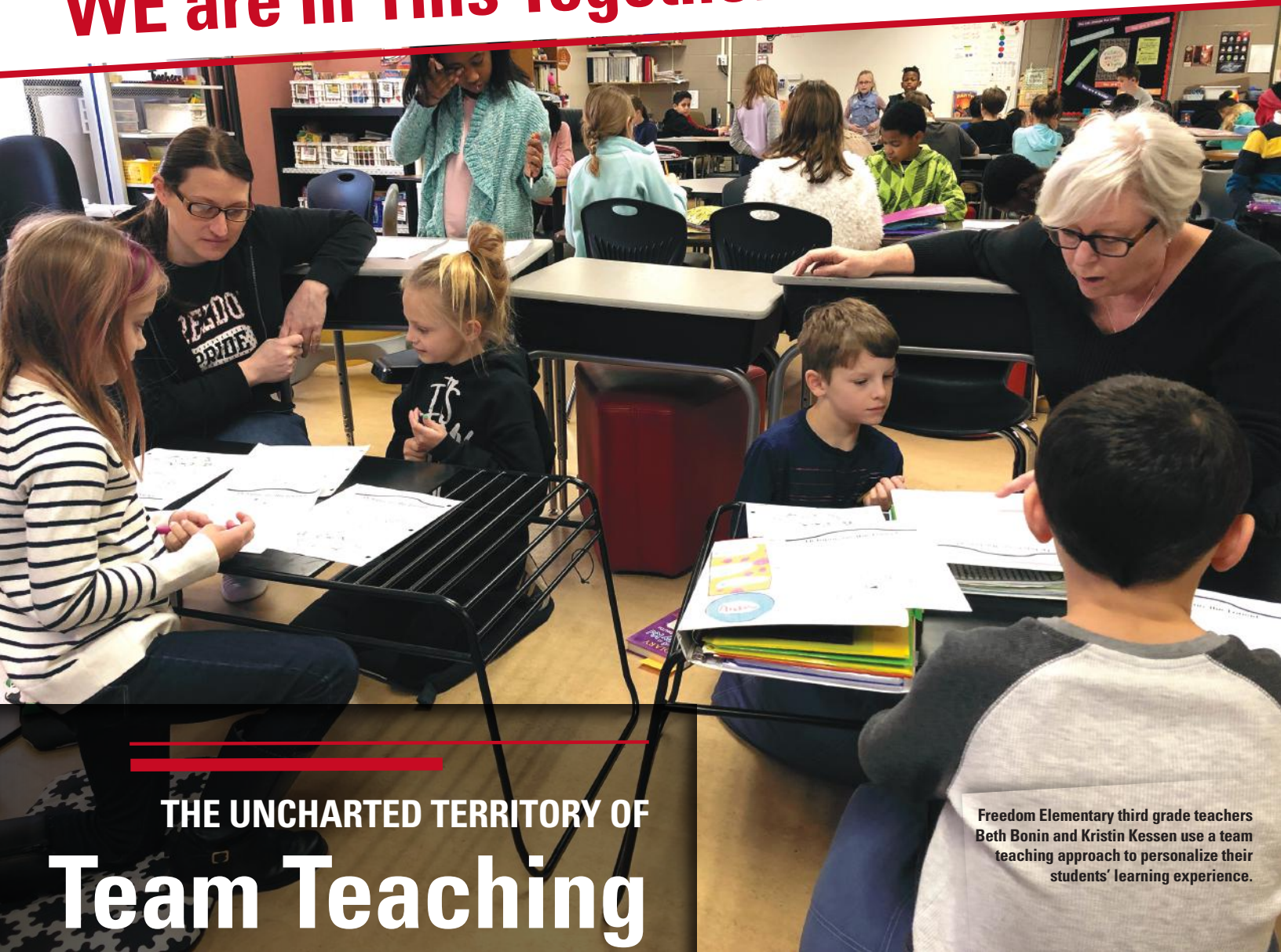


Students in Amy Drouhard’s science class used their Chromebooks to view live earthquake and volcanic activity around the world and find the correlation between seismic activity and volcanic activity. The Liberty Junior seventh-graders also used virtual reality goggles to go on Google Expedition field trips to several volcanoes. “The 1:1 rollout allows for more innovative lessons that engage students and connect science curriculum to the world in which they live,” Drouhard said. “I can’t wait to see where using this technology takes me next!”



Ridge Junior eighth-graders Demi Walker, Michael Gertz and Connor Wollker used their Chromebooks to conduct research for a Holocaust Museum project in language arts. The team collaborated to print a 3D gas mask for part of their exhibit on gas chambers. Up to 75 percent of their language arts assignments are now completed and turned in online – helping with student organization, saving time, and reducing paper costs.

WE are In This Together



THE UNCHARTED TERRITORY OF Team Teaching

Freedom Elementary third grade teachers Beth Bonin and Kristin Kessen use a team teaching approach to personalize their students' learning experience.

Freedom Elementary third grade teachers Kristin Kessen and Beth Bonin know a thing or two about pushing boundaries. Just before the start of the school year, they literally pushed back the wall that divided their two classrooms, embarking on a team teaching journey that would challenge the only approach they'd ever known over their combined 35 years in education.

"I'm pretty sure most people thought we were crazy," laughed Kristin, admitting that there were moments early on when she and Beth may have thought the same thing. But when asked if they'd do it all over again - as if to underline the accord with which they teach - both responded in unison and without hesitation: "Absolutely."

Why? Because it's good for their kids.

Team Teaching in the Non-Traditional Sense

What makes this teaching duo's endeavor even more admirable is that they're navigating somewhat uncharted territory.

"There's very little research to help guide them in what they're doing," said Lakota academic coach Katie Enneking, explaining that team teaching is traditionally comprised of a general education teacher teaming up with a special educator to co-manage a regular size classroom.

In contrast, Beth and Kristin's model doesn't divide the student-to-teacher ratio in half. Instead, they share their individual class rosters of 26 students - for a combined class of 52 students. While other class sections might switch rooms, and teachers,

for subjects like math and language arts, their classes remain together all day long.

But depending on the subject area or needs of their students, the delivery of content may vary from one day to the next. While Kristin might be leading an introductory lesson about fractions, Beth is walking the room to answer questions and provide words of encouragement. On another day, one might find Kristin reviewing a concept on one side of the room while Beth leads a more advanced group in a related enrichment exercise on the other.

And while it's far from traditional, Beth and Kristin say the benefits are numerous.

The Benefit Analysis

"I know Kristin's kids just as well as my own kids and that's never happened before," said Beth, recalling prior years when she split her time between both classes to teach language arts and social studies. "They see us as equals who both care very deeply for them. They know they can come to both of us for anything and that's huge."

While their similar expectations create consistency, they also see their very different personalities as another asset for connecting with students who may be more drawn to one over the other. Furthermore, they each bring a different perspective to a lesson, one oftentimes filling in the gaps or even helping draw connections across subject areas.

Of course, differentiation, or the personalization of learning, is of critical importance. "We are able to work in small groups more often and change those groups throughout the day, based on students' needs," said Kristin, describing their classroom as very fluid.

From more efficient classroom management - one of them can handle a situation without disrupting the rest of the class - to honing soft skills like blocking out distractions and learning to work with a larger variety of people, the list of benefits goes on and on.

With Great Risk Comes Great Reward

Team teaching, and all its benefits, is starting to catch on across grade levels and subject areas around Lakota. Over at Liberty

Junior School, for example, language arts teacher Angie Bellia has recently found success in team teaching with social studies teacher Rick Cooper.

The pair share the same class roster across their sixth and seventh bells. While they reside in separate classrooms, they oftentimes converge in the Innovation Hub and coordinate their units. "Using his content gives me a foundation," Angie said. "We can read and write about anything, but tying it into a familiar topic gives it a focus and a purpose."

Plus, the team has found ways to give their students ample opportunity to direct their own learning. For example, in an upcoming unit on the Industrial Revolution, students will have the opportunity to choose whether they wish to learn it in a more traditional format or through a project based learning exercise.

All four teachers admit that they've grown professionally by working alongside a peer with different strengths, but the real winners are their students.

"You can see how they light up and what resonates for them in a subject that they love," Beth said. "That gives you the perfect opportunity to find a way to apply that to a subject where they might struggle more. That's when all the risk of trying something new is worth it."

The Student Point of View



"I like having the wall opened all the time. I get to be in groups with friends that I wouldn't ever see if we were in different classes." —Rayan Tarhouni (pictured right)



"Our classroom is really unique. I get to have both teachers at the same time and they both help me when I need it." —Muhammed Jallow (pictured left)



"I think the teachers get to know their students better because they see us all day. I like learning math from both teachers. It's interesting to see how differently they teach it." —Henley Ward (pictured right)

Technicalities of Team Teaching

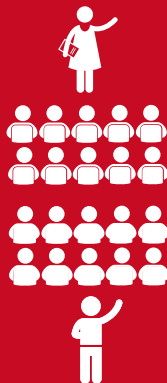
One Teach, One Drift

One teacher presents material to the class, while another circulates through the room and provides unobtrusive assistance to students.



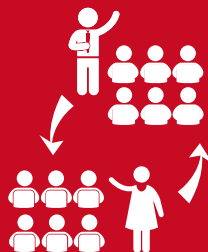
Parallel Teaching

Two teachers present material to the class simultaneously by dividing the class group.



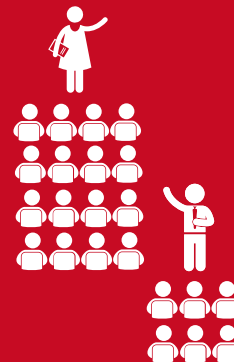
Station Teaching

Teachers divide class group and content, and teach one group first, then the other.



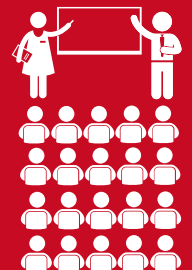
Alternative Teaching

One teacher instructs the larger group while another works with a smaller group needing more specialized attention.








Team Teaching

Both teachers work together to deliver content to the class at the same time.



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WE are Passionate

Second Career Educators: The Path Less Traveled



Ian Brown | Biology & Zoology Teacher, Lakota West HS

Former Careers: Zookeeper, marine animal trainer, outdoor education, cruise ship teen counselor

Years in Education: First year

What attracted you most to the teaching profession?

I love the conversations with teenagers and having them be excited about the world that surrounds them. I enjoy learning about my students' interests and using it as a springboard to teach them about mine.

These Lakota educators can personally attest to at least one of their classroom lessons: The path to discovering your life's work and passion can be a windy one. With K-12 education being a second or third stop in their career path, the decision to push their own professional boundaries has landed them in a place where they were meant to be.

Want More?
Scan to read the extended article on Lakota's website.



Laura Elam | Teacher, Wyandot Early Childhood School

Former Career: Life insurance and financial services

Years in Education: 8

What do you enjoy most about being a teacher? The hugs! I love the joy children bring to the classroom every single day.

What would surprise your former colleagues most about your new profession? That I spent 2 years away from work to pursue my Master's degree and start a new career working with 5 and 6 year olds!



Kenneth Jones | Intervention Specialist, Ridge Junior School

Former Career: Banking & financial services (fiscal office specialist for Lakota's payroll department)

Years in Education: First year

How has the transition pushed you out of your comfort zone?

I have gone from working behind a desk, in a cube, to being front and center in a classroom. Being a teacher means never having down time, always having to be on my game and ready. Every day, I have to make sure that I am prepared to guide, motivate and challenge my students.



Tiffani Wills | Assistant Principal, Woodland Elementary

Former Career: Adhesives industry (packaging)

Years in Education: 6

What attracted you most to the field of education?

I believe that all students, regardless of life circumstance, can be successful. I believe that I can best serve my community and make a greater impact by being a passionate instructional leader and a catalyst for positive change.



John Severns | Chemistry & Physics Teacher, Lakota East HS

Former Career: Chemist (Research & Development)

Years in Education: 18

What do you enjoy most about being a teacher? Developing relationships with students and having an impact on their lives is extremely rewarding. My high school chem teacher changed the educational and professional arc of my life. I hope that I can be that impactful to some of my students. I love the autonomy of the classroom. Unlike P&G where someone was always watching what I was doing, teaching is much more entrepreneurial.