

# Inside Your Schools



## The Changing Face OF EDUCATION



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**A NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT**

## *Thank You for Your Support*

**W**hile our teachers and school staff continue their daily work of providing a great education to Lakota students, here at Central Office we've been focusing on careful implementation of the commitments in our levy plan.

As I've said before, that doesn't mean we're going on a spending spree. The school board voted to place a levy on the ballot, based on a lot of research and listening to our community. Our careful allocation of dollars allows us to restore, in part, some services, and modernize our educational offerings as we prepare students for college, careers and life.



The very first levy commitment we implemented was the family cap on extra-curricular fees. We hope to see the first effect of that as we begin the spring sports season and see more students participating. That was the reason for the fee reduction, too, effective next school year.

Another levy commitment was to restore busing to students in grades two through six who live farther than a mile from school. That service began this month.

We promised to add another day of art, music and P.E. for grades four to six. This involves hiring additional teachers and redoing the elementary class schedule.

We have a team working on this, and it will start on schedule next school year. Adding a seventh daily class period for our ninth-graders also requires hiring and scheduling changes, which can affect transportation, food service, athletics, and more. We have another team working on that with the goal to begin next school year.

The levy commitments to bolster security were in two areas: physical changes to our buildings, and hiring more school resource officers. Some of those new officers are already in our schools, and we're working to hire more. The physical changes take more time. We have to follow a state-mandated process for hiring an architect, which will be followed by requests for bids. We hope much of this work can be done over the summer.

One of our most critical and complex levy tasks involves building the capacity to support the district's instructional technology goals. There are several ongoing projects involving physical upgrades to areas like the wireless network and teacher and student devices. We must prepare for Ohio's Next Generation online assessments, beginning next school year. This is all part of our multi-year technology plan, which also includes a new instructional technology team and additional technology support staff. All of this is critical as we continue modernizing instruction through district-provided and student-owned technology.

Again, thank you to the community for your support of our schools. We take very seriously our responsibility to provide a great education to our children, while being good stewards of tax dollars. We work hard at both.

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### **INSIDE YOUR SCHOOLS**

Through programs like "Community Conversations" and mailers like this, Lakota is committed to keeping the entire community engaged and informed about what's happening at our schools. This issue is about the "Changing Face of Education," so we hope it will help you understand the challenges we face today and how we're addressing those changes to best serve our students in a fiscally responsible way. Enjoy this second edition of "Inside Your Schools!"

### **COVER PHOTO:**

Woodland Elementary fourth-graders (left to right) Sydney Bost, Hai Lan Klei, Hayden Cole and Carson Lloyd enjoy a hands-on lesson in science through "COSI on Wheels," an interactive program made possible by the school's PTO.

*Karen Mantia*  
**DR. KAREN MANTIA**  
SUPERINTENDENT

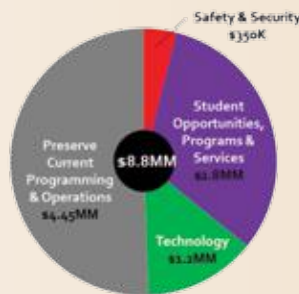
## Levy Update: Where the Community's Investment is Going

The passage of Lakota's levy in November 2013 means both short-term and long-term work. Here's a quick update on our progress.

### Permanent Improvement (PI)



### Operating



	<b>Security upgrades to school buildings</b>	Beginning architect selection process. Implement construction plans (May 2014 – approximately Aug. 2016).
	<b>Increase number of armed law enforcement officers in schools</b>	First group of officers on duty Jan. 2014. Planning for additional officers in process.
	<b>Upgrade district's instructional technology infrastructure</b>	Installing routers, optics, fiber optics, data drops, etc. Choosing solutions and vendors for secondary building wireless system. Implementing management system for updated student technology devices. Pilot testing the updated teacher technology devices.
	<b>Increase instructional and operational technology support</b>	Selecting instructional technology support staff to help integrate technology into classrooms district-wide and positively impact student performance using more advanced technology (Jan.–April 2014).
	<b>Maintain district facilities</b>	Assessing and evaluating immediate projects with the highest priority. Bid out projects and establish construction schedule (approximately April 2014).
	<b>Expand bus service for grades 2-6</b>	Expanded service began Feb. 2014.
	<b>Increase student participation in extra-curricular activities</b>	Family cap implemented Dec. 2013. Fee reduction goes into effect Aug. 2014.
	<b>Add one day of art, music, P.E. for grades 4-6</b>	Evaluating scheduling options and staffing needs (through June 2014). Additional rotation begins Aug. 2014.
	<b>Add seventh class period for grade 9</b>	Evaluating scheduling options and staffing needs (through June 2014). Additional class period begins Aug. 2014.
	<b>Modernize coursework</b>	For the 2014-2015 school year, revising business program to focus on entrepreneurial development and continuing course development for some STEAM <sup>2</sup> programs (science, technology, engineering, arts/design, mathematics and medical). Beginning to develop long-term planning process to continuously modernize student course options.

Lakota teachers have embraced technology in their classrooms, but outdated resources and limited support have restricted their impact. The passage of Lakota's levy means one thing though...

## Help is on the Way

**Y**ou haven't experienced exhaustion until you've been one of two teachers in a computer lab with 60-plus first-graders.

For every student you help, another five inquisitive hands fly up in the air. The line on their screen is "too fat." How do you make it skinnier? What is a browser and where is it? Why won't the arrow go where I want it to go and do I really have to walk my mouse up the wall to get it there? Why can't I just touch the screen like my iPad? What do you mean "right click?"

This is the scene for Liberty Early Childhood first grade teachers Eunice Vogelsang and Kristin Sellers. For many students, this is where their life-long relationship with technology really gets started. And like so much of what they learn in

first grade, it's where the foundation is built.

"So many students come to us knowing how to open an app without the slightest clue what word processing is. We have to expose them to the right set of skills," Vogelsang said.

And so their work begins. Like teaching a child how to hold a pencil, both teachers start with the very basics – how to hold a mouse, what it means to click and drag, what and where the backspace key is. Mastering these skills early is critical for developing a solid foundation and interest in technology.

"First grade is really the students' first chance to interact with technology in a meaningful way," Sellers said. "We take every opportunity to work it into our lesson plans."

Teachers' attention to tech-

nology aligns with the district's long-term plans to expose students to advanced technologies as early as kindergarten up through 12th grade. This makes sense when you consider the fact that more than 50 percent of today's jobs require some degree of technology skills. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, that percentage will increase to 77 percent in the next decade.

This also explains the district's commitment to dedicate a significant portion of the recently approved levy funds to update technology equipment and support services in a sustainable way. Implementation of a multi-year technology plan will help give teachers the resources they need to more successfully integrate technology into their daily classwork.

With increasingly demanding curriculum standards at every grade level, integration is the key word. Vogelsang and Sellers are constantly turning to resources like the computer lab or their Smart Board or the school's cart of iPads provided by the PTO. Those tools can help students learn the calendar or addition and subtraction or writing skills while getting hands-on

experience with technology.

"There's no shortage of great teaching resources out there," Sellers said. "It's just a matter of finding them and then finding the time to play with them and tweak them for our lessons."

Lakota teachers have worked together to find and modify their own solutions for instructional technology, but additional support made possible by the recent levy will build upon their progress and provide more consistent direction.

"Despite limited resources in recent years, our staff has risen to the occasion. They've found their own ways to make technology work in their classrooms and we're already seeing that payoff," said Lakota's Executive Director of Technology Todd Wesley. "Additional support will give them all a more sustainable solution to build upon that great work.

"It's all about building capacity for the future. The benefits technology can provide to education will continue to grow exponentially. Much of our planning includes the anticipation of future needs and continuing to build a foundation that's scalable enough to meet those needs." ●

### WHAT'S TO COME

#### **An instructional technology manager and integration specialists will serve Lakota's 22 schools:**

- Providing teachers with training and best practices for integrating technology into their lesson plans.
- Helping incorporate student-owned devices.
- Establishing learning expectations for each grade level.
- Providing ongoing professional development as the district continues to modernize instructional content.

#### **Teachers' computers currently range from five to seven years old. A pilot began this month to start replacing each one for:**

- Increased speed, reliability, storage space and battery life.
- Increased access to modern digital resources.
- Expanded options for using data and modern software for more personalized instruction.

#### **Several upgrades to Lakota's overall technology infrastructure will provide a solid foundation for continuously changing instructional demands.**

- With Ohio's new online assessments beginning next school year, new computer devices will be piloted this spring for instruction and online testing.
- Ohio's Department of Education is providing a dry run opportunity for this new way of assessing student learning progress and several Lakota buildings will be participating. These pilots will also help Lakota test network solutions to be expanded this summer. ●



Independence Elementary teacher Ryan Corris began his lesson

by reviewing the engineering design process, and then inviting his class over to a “stream table” to discuss erosion and deposition.

No, his students aren’t in high school, or even junior high – they’re only 10 years old.

And the students love it. Their eyes are glued to Corris as he rearranges the sand on the table and engages students in critical thinking through questioning. “What do you think is going to happen when I create a river by turning the water on?”

Hands shoot up to answer the question and, as Corris turns on the water, curiosity and excitement take over the room.

Part of Lakota’s evolving STEAM<sup>2</sup> program, lessons like these are happening in schools across the district – as early as first grade. STEAM<sup>2</sup>, which stands for science, technology, engineering, arts/design, mathematics and medical, is designed for students in grades 1-12 to strengthen both workforce development and college readiness.

Lakota has added several courses since the program launched in the 2012-2013 school year, starting at the junior high level. In the elementary grades, teachers are incorporating more engineering design lessons and inquiry-based learning by using the Engineering is Elementary (EiE) program from Boston’s Museum of Science. Lakota classrooms are using 20 different EiE study units ranging from landforms to ecosystems to electricity.

Each EiE unit is launched with a storybook about a child who solves a problem through engineering. Set in locations around the world, the books integrate literacy and social studies – and provide context and meaning for hands-on activities that follow.

Corris’ lesson centered around a story about a boy

from Nepal who uses his knowledge of geotechnical engineering to help cross the Karnali River. Corris put his own little twist on the lesson by using a stream table a parent had built for him.

“Students get excited when they see new materials and equipment in the classroom,” Corris said. “It helps them become engaged in the activity and get involved in the discussions that take place within their small or large groups.”

Adena Elementary science teacher Bev Gfroerer sees the same reaction in her classroom.

“My students are enjoying science so much more. When they’re active and enjoying

what they’re doing, much more learning goes on. It really helps them make a connection. I just love teaching this way.”

EiE lessons pose a big question like, “How does this work?” and then gives students supplies to come up with an answer. In a recent lesson about electricity, Gfroerer’s students were given materials to make a doorbell with sound and lights. “It’s amazing how students always step up to the challenge and figure it out. They work together to come up with a solution.”

This style of learning reaches all levels of students, giving everyone a chance to be successful. But the most successful students aren’t those who have

all the answers, but have the skills to find the answers.

Christy Knopp, a fifth grade teacher at Freedom Elementary, says that the projects require a lot of math and science, but also give her plenty of opportunity for cross-curricular skill building. Technical reading and writing, for example, are critical parts of the learning process.

“I am sure whatever career my students choose in the future, communicating accurately and effectively with others will be a valuable asset,” Knopp said. “I think STEAM<sup>2</sup> education pulls it all together in a way that benefits every student, even if they aren’t planning to be engineers. We are really all engineers in our own way.” ●

# STEAM<sup>2</sup>

## *A Lesson in* **Problem Solving**

# Learning as Real-world, Hands-on as it Gets

## *Teacher's Academy has students ready to take on the world*

There's an internationally recognized program at Lakota East that the community might not even know about.

It's called Teacher's Academy, and it gives Lakota students hands-on experience and a real-world taste of teaching as early as sophomore year. Like Lakota's other vocational offerings, the program is available through a partnership with Butler Tech, one of Ohio's largest career-technical schools.

Learning takes place in un-

conventional ways in this class and is oftentimes misconstrued as "fun and games," according to the program's leader, Crissy Lauterbach. She cites a recent lesson that involved playing a game of cribbage. "It's a complicated game that can be difficult to learn, so the students had to learn to break down the game," Lauterbach explains. "It was a hands-on way to help students learn different teaching methods."

The program welcomes stu-

dents who are unsure of their career path as equally as those who have always known teaching is for them. Skills developed in the class can jumpstart a teaching career or be applied to just about any career path.



Lauterbach

"This class can help with anything you want to go into – not just teaching. You learn confidence, public speaking, being professional, working as a team and overcoming fears," said East senior Casey Warren, who comes from a family of teachers. "Remember that one teacher who made you feel like you could do anything? I want to be that teacher for others."

For East senior Sydney Petersen, it was her personal struggle with dyslexia that inspired her to take the class. It's why working in a special education class has been so rewarding for her.

"Most of the students have come to believe they can't learn – like I thought when I

was younger. I want to show them that they can learn," said Sydney, who through Teacher's Academy has learned that she's a hands-on learner.

During senior year, students devote two periods to Teacher's Academy. They are paired with a Lakota teacher, giving them the opportunity to observe, assist and eventually teach their own lessons. Through job shadowing and mentoring, students get to experience teaching at different grade levels, as well as explore educational fields such as counseling or administration.

There is no doubt Teacher's Academy is successful; in fact, schools worldwide have used it as a model for their own programs.

Despite the accolades, one of the best parts of the program is how Lauterbach encourages students to try their hardest and not do anything halfway. "I like to put students in situations where they can grow, but be successful. They end up learning they can do things they never thought possible."

For many, this lesson may be one they pass on to their own students one day. ●



Above: As part of her student teaching experience, Lakota East senior Courtney Regg helps Woodland second grade teacher Jenny Haynes provide one-on-one attention to students in her class.

### About Our Partner:

## BUTLER TECH

**Butler Tech is one of Ohio's largest career-technical schools.** Its partnership with Lakota spans several decades, offering students a wide range of hands-on vocational opportunities.

**Almost 1,900 Lakota students take a Butler Tech class** in their home school, with about another 250 attending one of Butler Tech's stand-alone campuses. ●

## The Lesson of *the Scarf Project*

**Teacher's Academy students understand the power of hands-on learning because of a project they complete during their senior year...**

"Each student spends 25 hours making a scarf. For the first four days, I demonstrate how to knit. After that, I can't hold the needles for them. I can only explain how to do it. If you try to help students by grabbing the computer mouse and moving it for them – or knitting the stitch – they don't learn. There is nothing like doing it yourself. It's a tough lesson to learn.

At first, the scarf is a little bumpy, but as they continue, it gets better. They eventually learn that there is a right needle to use with a particular yarn, just like there is a right way to teach each student.

In the end, we donate them to a homeless shelter. Many kids are disappointed because they thought they were making it for themselves. But I tell them it's just like teaching. You work with kids, teaching them, molding them and then you have to let them go. You are basically giving away your hard work in teaching – just like the scarf." ●

— Crissy Lauterbach

## Union Elementary's new program is all about Early Exposure



Union Elementary English teacher and WKID advisor Julie Cohen helps sixth-grader CeCe Bohn, a news writer and anchor, during the program's first session.

Every Wednesday afternoon at 4:15, the Union Elementary Media Center is transformed into a newsroom.

In one corner of the room, young student reporters are putting the finishing touches on their stories, while photographers are downloading their latest shots from their iPhones. Down the hall, the film crew is busy recording the anchors, now ready to deliver their stories, and the design team is preparing the final set backdrops. As usual, the media crew and graphic designers sit at the end of the line waiting for the final copy and video footage to drop into their layouts.



The WKID News Team is a new after-school program this year aimed at exposing students to all facets of real-world journalism. Thirty-seven Union sixth-graders participated in the first eight-week session and two additional sessions will be completed before the end of the school year.

The end products are a print newspaper distributed to every Union student and a video broadcast delivered in the cafeteria. Story topics and segments range from sports, technology tips and teacher spotlights to community news, healthy living ideas and special segments like Book Nook, Pet Perks and even a "Dear Isis" advice column.

"It's exceeded my expectations," said Union language arts teacher and program advisor Julie Cohen.

Cohen carefully designed the after-school program to mimic any current day news team. Everything from the individual responsibilities and team structure down to the program name, WKID, closely matches what students might one day find should they pursue a career in print or broadcast journalism.

"My goal from the beginning has been to give them a taste of real-world journalism," said Cohen, who was originally inspired by new curricular standards that require a continuous connection back to real-world application. "The students were ready to go and hit the ground running right away. I stand in the middle and help when needed, but I'm really just the facilitator."

Students like Lauren McGarvey have appreciated that freedom. "I like how we get to take our ideas and run with it," said Lauren. Others like Nolan Johnson joined the film crew because he just liked technology and wanted to learn how to use Windows Movie Maker.

And to Cohen, that's what it's all about — early exposure. ●

### P&G: Lakota's Newest Business Partner

Lakota's newest business partnership is underway, with Lakota students getting hands-on engineering experience at Procter & Gamble's Beckett Ridge Technical Center. This is the first time P&G is working with high school students, and spots in the program were highly sought after — over 50 students applied for twelve open spots.

Lakota West physics teacher Linda Noble was part of the interview panel and is not surprised at the high interest. Several times a year, Lakota West hosts an engineering forum for aspiring engineers. "These forums generate lots of excitement and help students learn about possible career paths. But this P&G internship offers so much more insight for students."

For a month, students will spend two to four hours in six different rotations. They will learn how modeling and simulation experts use physics and math in their daily work. They'll study robotics technologies and the advantages of leveraging collaborative robots in manufacturing. The students will also work alongside cost engineers, learning how construction materials must be reviewed before designing a product.

Students can earn elective credit for the internship by keeping a detailed journal of all their activities.

The P&G partnership was modeled after the West Chester Hospital internship, now in its second year. Lakota's program architect, Dr. Lon Stettler, says, "Lakota will continue to expand on these types of engineering and biomedical opportunities, but we also plan to start up internships in areas like business operations and information technology." ●

*When you combine  
community service with  
curricular objectives, the  
result is*

## A Lesson in Giving Back



For Cherokee Elementary second grade teacher Jenny Burchell, service learning has always been an integral part of her classroom. Being a class means being a family and with that classification comes a commitment to positivity, mutual respect and understanding.

But this school year, she discovered a way to bring it to a new level.

"We work really hard to create a sense of community in our classroom," Burchell said.

"I wondered what I could do to make that picture even bigger for my students."

The answer to her question started with a loom and a non-profit called "Clothed with Love," which donates clothes and toys to needy families in Butler County. Burchell tasked her students with knitting one hat for the non-profit, making the project part of her economics lesson on needs versus wants (a second grade learning standard). What Burchell got was six completed

hats and several students who put a loom at the top of their Christmas lists. They wanted to continue the project at home.

"They were so proud of themselves," said Burchell, who reminded herself repeatedly that this was their project. Even when a hat came out with a hole in it, she let them fix, rather than doing it herself.

"It's so much more powerful than doing a worksheet," Burchell said. "Those kids really got it and they'll remember it

for a long time."

Burchell took the same approach with her next lesson on producers and consumers, this time bringing it to the international level. She taught her students about cultures that use livestock's life sustaining products to earn an income. Together, they committed to raise \$120, enough to purchase a goat for a family via the Heifer Project International. Students proudly brought in spare change they'd earned around the house, all adding up to \$180 – enough to purchase a goat and a flock of chicks, ducks and geese, too.

Combining lessons in service with a rigorous curriculum didn't come without extra time, planning and effort, but for Burchell, it achieved much more than she intended.

"Teachers are feeling overwhelmed because everything is so new," said Burchell, noting the state's new and even more rigorous learning standards. "There's a way to work service into almost everything we do, but it's not easy. You have to witness the direct impact to see that it's really worth it."

According to Burchell, it's a lesson she'll repeat for years and years to come. ●

### Service Learning: A Different Approach

Some of Heather Campbell's best lessons start with a single question: What's troubling you and what do you want to do about it?

The Lakota East English teacher still manages to address the required ninth and tenth grade English standards: analyzing social issues, researching, writing papers and delivering oral reports. But in the end, her lessons go much deeper than that.

"Ultimately, I prepare them to be good citizens. Whether they go to college or right into the workforce, they all need to understand they have a responsibility to their community."

Campbell has spent her last 12 years "planting seeds" in her students. Agreeing with the new Common Core's philosophy that courses shouldn't be taught in isolation, she helps her students discover a real local issue and then work together to solve it.

"If kids can start to look at the needs in our community and how to best address them, that's huge," Campbell said.

Her students' latest project involves a partnership with Magnified Giving, a Cincinnati non-profit that puts philanthropic dollars directly into the hands of area students. They work in small groups to identify a need, research area non-profits and then present their case to their classmates. As a class, they host their non-profits for in-class presentations and then vote on which one should receive the \$1,000 grant.

"It isn't what we've done forever," Campbell said. "It's more work to look for the right opportunities, but the effects are much more impactful and longer lasting." ●



## Spotlight on staff

PAULA DOLLOFF, LAKOTA WEST



## Giving Skills Instead of Answers

**THE CHANGING FACE OF EDUCATION** often refers to technology, or standards, or curriculum. But Paula Dolloff, a veteran English teacher at Lakota West, says she has changed as a teacher over the last five years of her 21-year career.

“My understanding of student needs has deepened,” said Dolloff, who student-taught at Lakota, taught one year in upstate New York, then returned to Lakota and has been here ever since.

“Ten years ago we thought of a student as an empty vessel and it was a teacher’s job to fill it. Now, I believe the teacher needs to be more of a guide. I want to marry their own learning and writing style with the ability to function in the university and work environment.”

She said she tries not to jump in so quickly and help when students are struggling.

“Students are used to looking to the teacher for everything. We used to see them get stuck and after three seconds we’d swoop in to save the day. We need to stop doing that. And we need to give them skills instead

of answers.”

Dolloff teaches three sections of Honors 10 English and three sections of Advanced Composition, a class made up of seniors. She works to help her students become better writers. (She’s an aspiring novelist herself, with an agent in New York handling a young adult novel she’s written.)

“I’m trying to teach them to write without following a formula about the introduction, the thesis statement, the conclusion. I don’t want them to write like robots. But they need an understanding of their audience and how to communicate effectively with that audience.

“One challenge is trying to move students away from the ‘get it done’ mentality. Type it... print it... turn it in. I’m trying to get them to take some time, do some drafts, fix what’s wrong. We’re getting there. When I go home at night I’ll check my email seven times a night. We email drafts back and forth.”

Her class subjects are reading and writing, but the primary activity is discussion. “We do peer review group work, we have

small discussion group, full class discussion. There’s some direct instruction, but you have to balance it.

“I love the block days, where class is an hour and a half. You have to mix it up, but you can do group work, use a video, read

Shakespeare in parts. And the new ‘Xtra Help’ class schedule is great. I love it. It was a godsend during the college essay application season. From September through November, I was booked every day.”

Dolloff also works as a curriculum partner, working with specialists in the curriculum department. “I’ve been doing a lot of work helping interpret the Common Core standards for our students. The standards emphasize the student responsibility piece. They’re asking students to come up to the level of discourse and to take charge of their own learning.”

In addition to her full-time teaching position, and serving as a curriculum partner, Dolloff is also the business manager for the busy Lakota West theater program. (She also was on the district’s strategic planning core committee last year.) She spends a lot of time at school.

“This district has been my home for the last 20 years,” she said. “The students here are just amazing. I’ve probably learned more from them than they have from me.

“The building administration has been great too. They trust us enough to just let us teach.” ●

**Paula Dolloff:**

- **The best book:** “1984. The one book everybody should read.”
- **The next best book:** “*Catcher in the Rye*. Salinger changed writing. He captured the voice of the teenager. That had never been done before.”
- **Best known classic she’s never read:** “*War and Peace*.”
- **Best book on writing:** “Stephen King’s *On Writing*. Even if you don’t like Stephen King, it’s still the best book about writing.”
- **Advice for aspiring writers:** “I tell them don’t major in English. Major in something you can live on, and then take a lot of writing courses. And write.”



## A WORD FROM OUR SCHOOL BOARD LEADERSHIP

### What do you believe is the most significant shift in education affecting Lakota's daily work and its future?

*Julie Shaffer, President*



"Nationally, we are seeing an emphasis on high stakes testing driving education to help the U.S. measure up to international standards. I believe Lakota's challenge will be to meet these educational standards, while still allowing our staff to use their expertise to nurture creativity and a love for learning in our students. These are areas where we have excelled and which cannot be easily measured on any test."

*Ben Dibble, Vice President*



"Education is becoming more about personalized instruction for the individual needs of each student. Coupled with this is the push for students to take more control of their own educational path. I think more advanced instructional technology is the driving force that will

allow students to move at their own speed through topics and be able to delve deeper into topics that interest them."

*Ray Murray, Board Member*



"Lakota has gone from a district with less than 1 percent of students living in poverty 10 years ago to a community with over 17 percent today. Furthermore, these students typically arrive needing more academic help than what Lakota has been used to offering. How we rise to this challenge will ultimately determine this district's success."

*Lynda O'Connor, Board Member*



"The rapid pace of educational change presents us with a tremendous challenge, but a great opportunity. Today's students will move through multiple, diverse careers, not just multiple jobs.

Great teachers, new, engaging delivery models (for instance, experiential learning and flipped classrooms) and in-depth learning through technology can all help personalize education. These can develop each student's skills, talents and aspirations and help them become competent, independent lifelong learners. I think today's pace of change reflects what our students will face in their future careers, so it's good preparation for them."

*Todd Parnell, Board Member*



"Education and how it is delivered is evolving to meet the demands of a truly global community driven by technology. We live in a world that moves at an ever-increasing speed. We must work to keep our district and our children on the leading edge and prepare them to handle the challenges of today and the inevitable changes of tomorrow." ●

## Student Leaders are the Link to a Stronger School Community



**IT'S HARD TO BE A LEADER** in a school of 2,000-plus students. But a new peer mentoring program at Lakota East High School, called Link Leader, gives 144 students that opportunity.

"For sophomores coming to main campus for the first time, the transition can be overwhelming," said Lakota East counselor Mark Zimmerly. "Link Leader gives underclassmen direct access to an upperclassman from their first day."

Academically, link leaders can help students acclimate to their new classes and even select courses during registration. When it comes to extracurricular

involvement, this translates to helping students connect with a club or after-school group that matches their interests.

"More than anything, it gives them moral support in the form of someone to listen to and empathize with when things get tough," Zimmerly said. "It's someone they can see in the hallway and easily approach."

With more than 600 sophomores, each of East's 144 link leaders is assigned a small group of incoming students. The group meets once a month for open discussion.

"It really benefits our seniors in terms of leadership skills, too," Zimmerly said. ●



**A PEER COUNSELING** program started in the 80s has nearly 70 Lakota West students committed to a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle. The group leverages those values to lead countless community service activities.

Besides volunteering for groups like People Working Cooperatively (pictured above) and Chesterwood Village, the group spends much of its energy mentoring younger Lakota students. This spring, the group will debut its Medicine Show, a road show about good decision-making that will travel to a handful of Lakota elementary buildings. ●



Elgin Card, Lakota West High School



Suzanna Davis, Lakota East High School

Despite their differing personalities and leadership styles, Lakota's two high school principals make

# A Good Team

They are as different as two principals could be, but they have become close colleagues, and good friends.

Suzanna Davis is the principal at Lakota East High School. Elgin Card is the principal at Lakota West High School. They're both in the second year in that position.

The senior high school buildings are identical copies of each other. They each have about 2,500 students, including the freshman campus of each high school. The two principals know that they, along with their schools, their teachers and their students, will always be compared to and measured against each other.

It's a setting that could lead to ruthless competition and strained relationships. They are competitive, without a doubt. But they also are tremendously supportive of each other.

"We draw on each other's strengths," Davis says. "We have very different skill sets that complement our own styles. We bring different perspectives but

that makes us a better team."

For starters, they have very different personalities.

"We're different, but in some ways we're the same," says Card. "I'm more the talker. She's more...I guess reserved is the right word. But we're talking to each other all the time, we meet a lot, and we're always going to do what's best for kids and be consistent for both schools."

Two years ago he was an associate principal, in charge of the Lakota West Freshman Campus. She held the same

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position at the Lakota East Freshman Campus. They were promoted at the same time to become high school head principals by Dr. Karen Mantia, Lakota's superintendent.

"What's really impressive about both of them," the superintendent said, "is how they completely understand and get the high school dynamics. They understand kids, parents, teachers...they know how to connect it all together."

"She told us going in," Davis said, "that she was counting on us making the relationship work, and that it was a priority to work with each other for consistency."

But, Davis says, they also want to maintain each school's unique identity. The schools have different mascots (East is the Thunderhawks; West is the Firebirds), different school colors, and compete against each other in sports. Each school has its own culture and traditions.

Inevitably, when test scores are released, or scholarship winners are announced, the principals can't help but note how the

other school did.

"We see it," said Card. "But we both want all our kids to do well, and we know we can help each other when we're working together."

Davis said it's not just Lakota East and West that get compared. "We look at other high schools too...Mason, Fairfield, Sycamore. And some of those things, like National Merit semifinalists, go up and down every year."

Being the high school principal can be one of the most demanding jobs in a school district. It's certainly one of the most visible ones. They both work long days and nights. Students and staff fill their workdays, and they know parents expect to see them at athletic events and concerts and evening meetings. It's not easy, especially as both have families of their own.

Humor helps deal with exhaustion. They tease each other, laugh together, and keep each other going. ●

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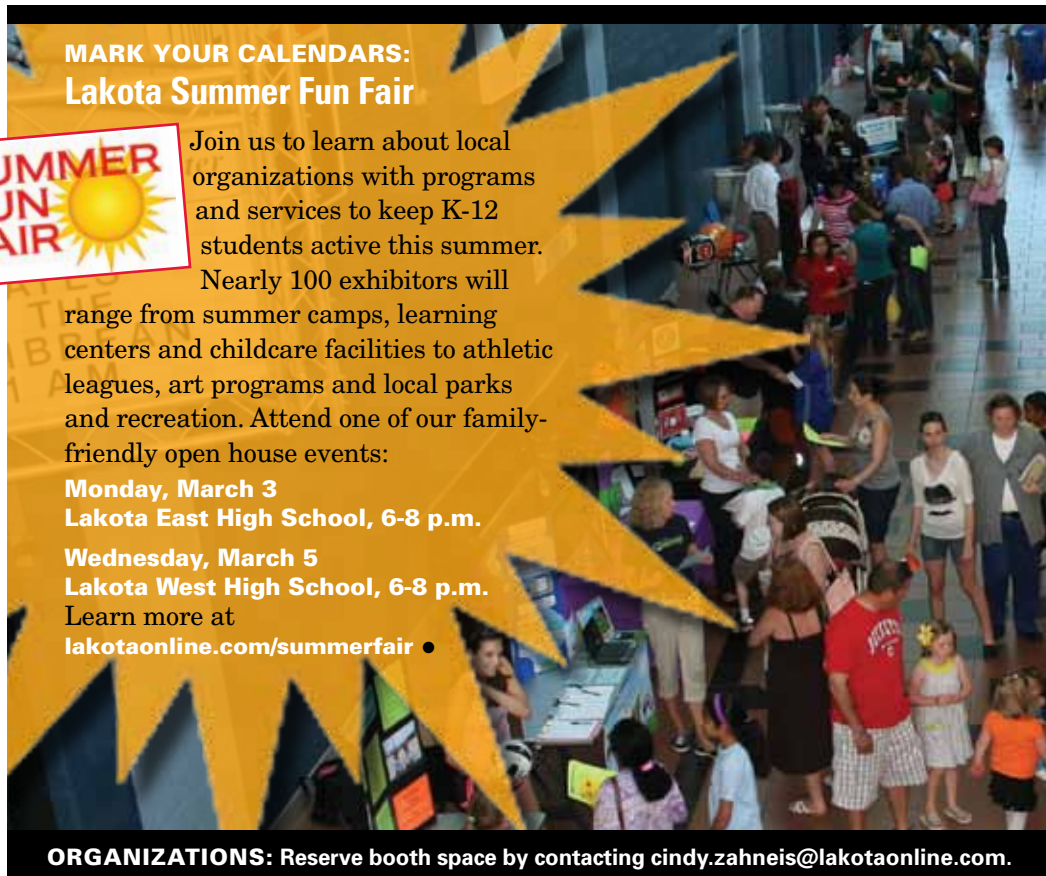
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