

# A Look Around Lakota

WINTER 2022-2023

**Lakota**  
Local Schools

WE *choose*

**LAKOTA**



**WE all choose Lakota Local Schools for different reasons.**

Inside this special winter mailer, we bring you the personal stories and experiences of students, staff, parents and community members who have chosen to call Lakota home.



Everything WE do is designed to create a future-ready, student-centered learning experience for every single student.

As interim superintendent, I am committed to supporting the mission statement of Lakota Local Schools through my decisions and actions, just as I have done in my previous role.

I came to Lakota in 1997 as a math teacher at Liberty Junior School. After serving as an assistant principal at Lakota East High School and principal back at Liberty, I was named

assistant superintendent in 2012. I also briefly served as interim superintendent during the 2016-17 school year. I am proud to once again serve our students and staff in this capacity.


Every day, 17,500 students walk through our doors to receive an education. Not just any education: a Lakota education. Our teachers, staff and administrators are committed to providing the best education possible to our students through innovative, personalized instruction.

In these 12 pages, you'll get a glimpse into our classrooms and not only read about programs we offer, but hear from some of our students, staff and families about what a Lakota education means.

Lakota is my home. I choose Lakota not only professionally, but also personally.

My wife and I chose Lakota many years ago as the place we wanted to raise our children because of the excellent education they would receive. With two Lakota graduates and two students still in our schools, I wouldn't have it any other way.

I am committed to all of our kids, all of our families and all of our staff...just as I have been for the last 25 years. I am proud to be a part of Lakota and look forward to continuing to move our district forward.

  
**ROBB VOGELMANN**  
Interim Superintendent



Meet  
**Maha Kayed**  
Lakota Parent  
& Local  
Business Owner

Maha Kayed is a parent to four Lakota students and two Lakota East graduates. A local restaurant owner who has lived in the community for six years, she describes Lakota to be "like a second family." Maha appreciates the strong sense of community, as well as the diversity of thought and cultural backgrounds she has found in the schools.

Maha has also seen firsthand the wide spectrum of programs and opportunities Lakota offers to meet her six children's very different needs and interests. For her family, that has included both Lakota's gifted and special education services, the transition to work program,

Butler Tech's career technical options and specialized programs like Lakota East's Spark and National Honor Society, just to name a few.

"Each child is different and Lakota looks out for everyone so that no one gets left behind and can be successful in life, work for the betterment of our community, and just be happy."

# WE choose



# WE are Future Ready

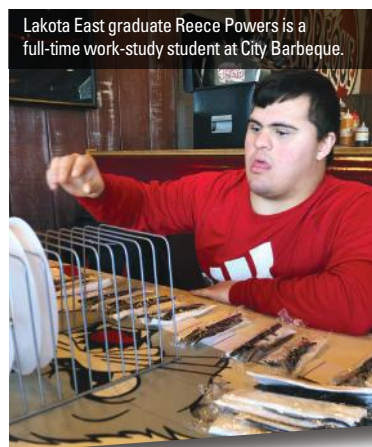
At every grade level, special opportunities go beyond the learning standards to prepare students for what comes after Lakota.

## Helping Students Transition to Work

Lakota's Transition to Work Program offers high school and post-secondary students, with an identified disability, an opportunity to practice employability skills while earning credit toward graduation.

Currently, more than 60 students ranging in age from 14 to 22 spend time each day working part-time at nearly 30 area job sites. The program is a win for both the students and the employers.

"Our work study program is second to none, and it truly connects students to real world learning," said Andrea Longworth, Lakota's Executive Director of Special Services. "It prepares students both socially and emotionally for what's going to come after high school."

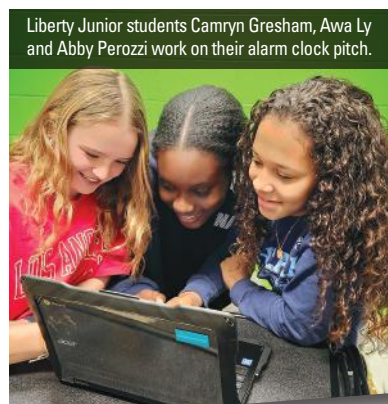


Lakota East graduate Reece Powers is a full-time work-study student at City Barbeque.

## Getting an Early Look at Entrepreneurism

Media Design and Communication classes get junior high students future ready by teaching about technology and the role it plays in all of the four Es (Education, Employment, Enlistment and Entrepreneurship). Several projects tied to Lakota's "Junior Entrepreneur" program take a deeper dive, where students collaborate to create pitches for new products.

Creativity abounds with ideas, including an app that helps you pick out an outfit based on the clothes you own, or an alarm clock for chronic oversleepers that travels around the room so you have to get out of bed to turn it off. Last year, a Liberty Junior student was awarded first place at a state competition for her phone case that used kinetic energy.



Liberty Junior students Camryn Gresham, Awa Ly and Abby Perozzi work on their alarm clock pitch.

## Discovering Career, Hobby Interests

Programs at all grade levels give students the opportunity to explore their career or hobby interests. Cherokee Elementary School's sixth-graders participated in a "Talk and Try" career day event. Students rotated through different stations, hearing a speaker talk about their career and then participating in an activity that would give them a taste of what the job would be like.

"Careers are...about having a passion," explained sixth-grade teacher Monica Lidman. "It seemed like a natural fit for our kids as we start having conversations about growing older and discovering things you enjoy that might get you thinking about your future."

At the Lakota West Freshman Campus, "Real World 101" has become an annual event. Students are given the opportunity to "choose their own adventure" from a catalog of options centered around learning, self-discovery and preparation. "We dedicate the whole day to helping our students pursue their individual interests - whether that be after college, for a future career or hobby, or even just how to relax and get your mind right," said West Freshman world history teacher Jason French, who led the endeavor alongside fellow history teacher Jennifer Parrett.



Visitor Rich Nicely helps Cherokee Elementary sixth-graders explore a career in pipefitting.

# LAKOTA

Nichole Bruce's Math, Modeling & Reasoning (MMR) course at Lakota East High School revolves around real world learning.

Experiences like purchasing your first car, planning a road trip and even superhero bungee jumping on Main Street are the norm for her students.

After 18 years in teaching, Nichole has heard the age-old question, "When will I ever use this?" a time or two. She leans into real world learning to answer it, giving her students ample opportunity to apply their knowledge and make connections among other content areas and life outside of high school.

She appreciates that students are engaged and take ownership of their learning when they can see the connection.

**"I became a better teacher by moving into the Lakota schools. Expectations for personalized learning, technology, collaboration and professional development are very high."**

Meet  
**Nichole Bruce**  
Math teacher,  
Lakota East  
High School



**"Lakota has the most dedicated, hard-working educators and I feel proud to be a part of this district."**





Lakota Central teacher Shay Lenos leads his Math, Modeling & Reasoning class.

WE *are* Personalized

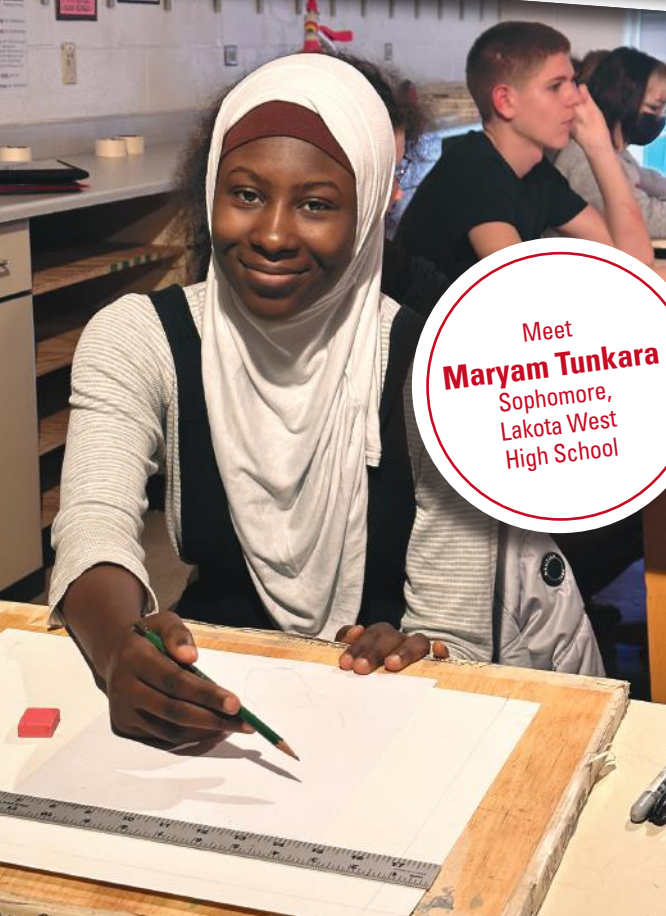
## New Lakota Central as Personalized as It Comes

Personalized learning, in its truest form,  
is best modeled at Lakota Central.

Technically the district's newest high school, it is officially recognized as a virtual school by the Ohio Department of Education. In reality, it merges the concepts and resources of three former Lakota programs - the Academy, the Virtual Learning Option (VLO) and the work study experience formerly known as ACCESS - all under one roof.

The school's flexible, non-traditional format means that every one of Lakota Central's current 225 students can benefit from a smaller school environment. It also means that they can build their own unique schedule to meet their personal needs. While about a quarter of students attend school entirely online, the majority have chosen some combination of virtual and in-person instruction delivered either in the old Academy space in front of West Freshman or a small designated wing within West Freshman.

Regardless of the format, the content is both designed and taught by Lakota teachers using a combination of Central's seven full-time teachers, some teachers they share with the main campuses (mostly for electives) and even Lakota-created online lessons used in some of the same courses offered at East and West. Most courses use the flipped classroom model, a personalized learning strategy through which new material is delivered virtually and then practiced in person with the teacher.



Meet  
**Maryam Tunkara**  
Sophomore,  
Lakota West  
High School

WE *choose*

Maryam Tunkara is brand new to Lakota this year, but already taking advantage of the multitude of courses and extracurricular options available to her.

That list includes student government, robotics, the Technology Student Association (TSA) and the Muslim Student Association (MSA).

After taking her first-ever art class this year, she was surprised to discover a personal interest in drawing and painting. She also appreciates the easy access to more technical pathways like engineering

and biomedical science without ever having to leave West's campus, thanks to Lakota's partnership with Butler Tech.

*"I really appreciate the pure number of classes and clubs you can join even as an underclassman. It's easier to find out things you're interested in earlier."*



Students also only take three or four courses at once (in a more compressed period of time), helping them overcome executive functioning challenges that are exacerbated in a traditional seven-bell day.

**"They really get to know their classmates and teachers and build stronger relationships," said Lakota Central Principal Kate Joseph.**

**"What I love about this place is that kids are really seen. They are celebrated. We walk life with them in a way that you can't when there are almost 2,000 kids."**

The personal situations requiring a more flexible format for school range dramatically, including students who need to be home to help care for a family member, students who need to work, and others who are pursuing a passion that requires a significant time commitment. Joseph says the model also lends itself to true internship experiences for students. She looks forward to more business partnerships that connect Central students with potential career pathways, as opposed to short-term jobs.

"The whole idea and long-term vision for this is how can we rethink the traditional model we all know as high school?" said Central's assistant principal, Eric Bauman. "How can we make it work for kids in a way that kids never had the ability to imagine?"

Bauman said he is proud of the bridges Central has built with leadership at East's and West's campuses already. He looks forward to collaborating more to

identify good candidates and "make high school work for all kids." So far, he's witnessed a lot of success stories to this end.

**"Finding a way to connect with students so that they like school is a very rewarding outcome."**

**— Eric Bauman, Central's assistant principal**



Lakota Central senior Khi'Arie Brown with Tambo, the therapy dog the school shares with Liberty Junior School.

Lakota Central students gather at Sinclair Community College for a post-secondary options tour that also included Cincinnati State.



# LAKOTA

At 17 years old, Lakota East senior George Kolks has three bosses, goes on business trips and has his own desk.

A part-time, paid intern at global manufacturing company Standex since last summer, George is putting to work the skills and connections he's gained during his three years in Lakota's Cyber Academy. He is also part of the student team that recently placed fourth among nearly 500 high school teams in the National Cyber League competition.

The first of its kind cybersecurity program for high schoolers has set

George up to earn several industry certifications, most recently including his Ethical Hacking Pro certificate. That distinction opened the door to his involvement in a high-profile project at Standex testing cyber vulnerabilities, better known as "red teaming" to cyber professionals.

Let alone the technical experience, George values the soft skills he's picked up along the way - like how to interview, talk to your boss, conduct yourself in a Teams meeting and even interact with people all over the world.

Meet  
**George Kolks**  
Senior,  
Lakota East  
High School



**"This program changed my life because it literally changed my career path and I am so grateful for it," said George, who shifted his sights from a career in law to becoming a chief information security officer.**

# WE are Personalized

## MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Beginning last school year, Lakota intensified its K-12 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) efforts. This meant systematizing our approach for using data at all grade levels to monitor progress and target interventions for individual student needs.

"MTSS is the driver behind personalized learning," said Lori Brown, Lakota's interim executive director of curriculum & instruction. "It's the work we do all day long to identify the social, behavioral and academic needs of our students and then respond accordingly. But without a system to organize that work and all the data informing it across all 23 of our schools, it's inefficient and inequitable."



From academic assessments and disciplinary trends to data surrounding mental health and attendance, for example, Lakota collects a wide range of data points to help assess needs and trends. Lakota's new MTSS team now tracks that data and coordinates data-driven decision making in partnership with building leadership. The result is a web of programs that ebb and flow based on what the data is telling them students need at any given time.

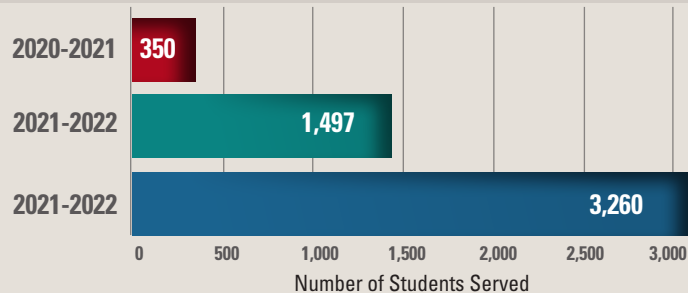
## GIFTED SERVICES

A big lift by Lakota teachers to personalize student learning is steadily translating to big gains in the number of Lakota students receiving gifted services.

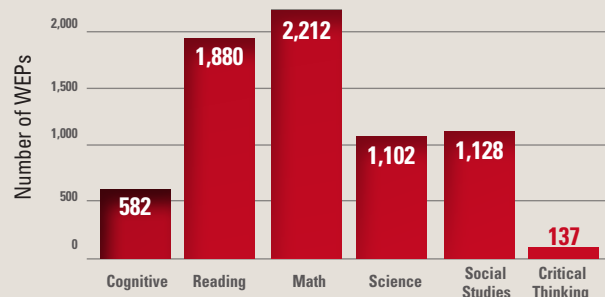
Lakota's elementary schools were the first to see the impact of the district-wide effort to remodel Gifted Services. All math and English Language Arts (ELA) teachers put in the work to become gifted service providers. This not only added ELA as a gifted option (previously limited to just math), but also shifted gifted services to the traditional classroom, allowing significantly more students to participate.

At the secondary level, results are just beginning to emerge this school year. For the first time, educators teaching any one of Lakota's advanced course options are participating in the training to become gifted service providers. As a result, every gifted student is now receiving a personalized Written Education Plan (WEP) for each advanced course, helping them set learning goals and monitor their progress.

## ELEMENTARY GIFTED SERVICE LEVELS



## SECONDARY STUDENT WRITTEN EDUCATION PLANS (WEPs) - AS OF DECEMBER 2022 -



## what's trending @LakotaDistrict

**Summer Fun Fair Coming Up**  
It's not too soon to think about summer! Mark your calendars for our popular Summer Fun Fair open house events on Feb. 27 (Lakota East) and March 1 (Lakota West). Join us from 6-8 p.m. to learn about summer youth activities. More info., including how to exhibit: [lakotaonline.com/summer-fair](https://lakotaonline.com/summer-fair) #WEareLakota



1 2 3

**Community Conversation: Strategic Plan**  
It's time to update Lakota's strategic plan. Join Board of Education members and district leaders in a community conversation about this important topic: Feb. 23, 6:30 p.m. at Lakota East High School. #WEareLakota



1 9 36





Meet  
**Megan Cameron**  
Student Wellness  
Coordinator,  
Lakota Local Schools

# WE choose LAKOTA

In her four years leading Lakota’s student wellness efforts, Megan Cameron has been at the helm of the district’s rollout of some key mental health programs and services.

This includes Lakota’s MindPeace partnership to make in-school therapists available in every school and peer-to-peer prevention programs like Sources of Strength and Hope Squad for grades 7-12.

After initially focusing on Lakota’s buildout of community partnerships and proactive programs, Megan is excited to now be focusing more on building capacity through staff training and professional development. She also enjoys the occasional return to her

days as a school-based therapist when she gets to partner with school administrators and families to problem solve and break down barriers to care.

“It makes me really proud to see how far we’ve come in giving our students more access to mental health care. I also appreciate that there is a general acceptance of school-based therapy. Lakota recognized the need and responded to it.”

## LAST SCHOOL YEAR’S WELLNESS STATS:

554

students received 2,154 hours of individual or group prevention.

2,697

education hours provided to staff, students or teachers.

959

students received 12,117 hours of school-based therapy.

**Early Kindergarten Registration Ends March 31**

**2023-2024 K-12 Online Registration Now Open**

**“Rumor Has It” Separates Fact from Fiction**

A new resource on Lakota’s website separates fact from fiction to combat the most prominent rumors and misinformation circulating about our schools. Visit [lakotaonline.com/rumor-has-it](https://lakotaonline.com/rumor-has-it). #WEareLakota

**LAKOTA MILITARY COMMITMENT CEREMONY**

APRIL 25 AT 7 P.M. - LAKOTA EAST FRESHMAN

#WEareLakota



# WE *are* Fiscally Responsible

## FROM THE TREASURER



**Adam Zink**  
Treasurer/CFO

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Planning for the short-term and long-term future in a fiscally responsible way is always the priority for Lakota's finance department. The five-year forecast, most recently updated in November, continues to maintain a healthy cash balance and does not call for an operating levy. It has also pushed the predicted spending deficit to Fiscal Year 2025. The last time Lakota was on the ballot was in 2013.

The district's cash reserve policy sets a minimum cash balance of 90 days at the end of each fiscal year in the interest of sound financial management. The current forecast predicts the district will carry 203 true cash days at the end of Fiscal Year 2023.

**"Providing the best educational opportunities for our students in a fiscally responsible way is the priority of the treasurer's department."**

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund, coupled with the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and BroadbandOhio, has provided Lakota with approximately \$20.6 million in federal funds to be spent by September 2024.

This short-term assistance of federal funds has helped our district offset additional expenses incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020-2021 school year, these funds were used to continue the Lakota-created Virtual Learning Option (VLO); expand Lakota's "WE are Empowered" one-to-one device program to third- through fifth-graders; build out the district's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to help implement the district's recovery plan for learning loss and personalized learning for all students; provide additional nursing support; and purchase supply kits for students in grades K-8.



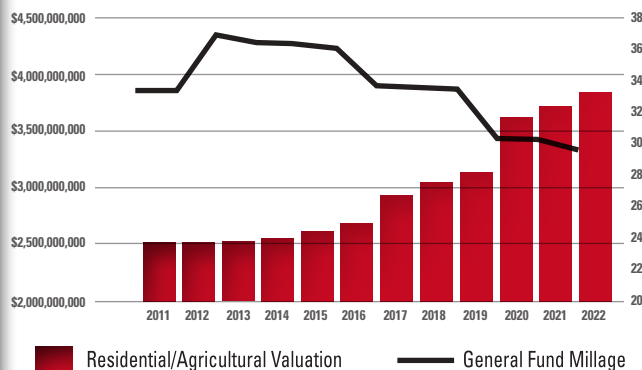
**DID YOU KNOW...**  
the general fund effective mills collected by Lakota have dropped below 2012's numbers?

### IMPACT TO TAXPAYERS

Local resources, including taxes, account for nearly 70% of Lakota's revenue. Being good stewards of our taxpayers' dollars is so important to the district that it is a pillar in the strategic plan: WE are Fiscally Responsible.

Local tax revenue is calculated through millage, or the annual tax rate applied to an assessed value of property. One mill equals \$1 for every \$1,000 of assessed value, which is on file at the Butler County Auditor's office. For example, if a home is valued at \$100,000, the taxable value is 35% or \$35,000. The tax per mill is calculated by dividing \$35,000 by 1,000, which equals \$35 in taxes per mill.

### TAX YEAR RESIDENTIAL/AGRICULTURAL VALUATION VS. GENERAL FUND EFFECTIVE TAX MILLAGE



Residential/Agricultural Valuation General Fund Millage

### ESSER III ALLOCATIONS

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Grades 3-6 1:1 (FY23-24)                         | \$4,100,000.00         |
| Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) (FY22-23) | \$667,089.54           |
| Digital Learning (FY23)                          | \$159,213.12           |
| Learning Loss (FY22-23)                          | \$936,859.64           |
| Support Staff (FY22-23)                          | \$1,039,138.90         |
| Curriculum (FY23)                                | \$439,049.87           |
| Nursing Staff (FY 22-23)                         | \$3,081,325.20         |
| HVAC Chiller (FY22)                              | \$360,000.00           |
| Student Classroom Supplies (FY22-23)             | \$1,258,487.30         |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>\$12,041,163.57</b> |



### Lakota Local Schools Board of Education

Standing (L to R): Darbi Boddy, Julie Shaffer, Kelley Casper  
Sitting (L to R): Vice President Isaac Adi, President Lynda O'Connor



# *WE choose* LAKOTA

A former Lakota parent, Lee Redkey has lived in the district for 45 years. She volunteers for many community events including veteran activities and C3 Caring Community Collaborative. She actively volunteers with a political party, including local, state and national candidates, and has served as the volunteer coordinator for Butler County since 2016.

## #WEareLakota

"Lakota has historical experience in making decisions that are fiscally responsible and are impacting progression and growth in the district in a positive way."

Meet  
**Lee Redkey**  
Community  
Member &  
Volunteer

### WE ARE COMMITTED TO TRANSPARENCY IN OUR FINANCES

Use these helpful tools available on Lakota's website to stay informed:

District  
Report  
Cards

Five-Year  
Forecast

Budget &  
Appropriations

Monthly  
Board  
Reports

Annual Financial  
Prospectus &  
Comprehensive  
Financial Report

Financial  
Audit

Finance 101  
Video



Public  
Records

Scan to visit the Finance webpage.





# WE *are* Building Our Future

After pressing pause twice on master facilities work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district committee began moving full steam ahead to choose a final building plan that will meet the educational needs of our students far into the future.

At its Dec. 12, 2022 meeting, the Lakota Board of Education approved a new Master Facilities Plan (MFP). While new grade bands and tentative buildings associated with the plan have been approved, the committee will now begin working on the many details for how our facilities can best meet and support the educational needs of Lakota's more than 17,000 students into the future.

**Creating a new Master Facilities Plan is part of Lakota's strategic plan and serves as a guide for assessing the long-term need for facility improvements and the capital investments required to implement them. The last comprehensive plan was completed in the 2000s with a modified one in 2008.**

As enrollment continues to climb, even outpacing the last study, the district has been forced to make use of modular, or portable, classrooms to accommodate the growth.

## FUNDING THE PLAN

Knowing an MFP would be adopted by the Board in the near future, Lakota's finance leadership has been laying the groundwork to help ease the burden on our taxpayers as much as possible.

## STATE ASSISTANCE

The Board may choose to enroll in Ohio's Expedited Local Partnership Program (ELPP). Once accepted, the district would be eligible to begin receiving partial funding from the State for all Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) approved projects completed as part of the MFP. Currently, it is estimated that this could amount to 29%, or up to about \$146 million, of financial assistance for state-approved projects.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As the facilities committee begins to build out the details of the MFP, there will continue to be many opportunities for community involvement and feedback.

## IMPACT TO TAXPAYERS

While there are many details of the MFP to work through in order to calculate the final estimated cost, Lakota Treasurer/CFO Adam Zink noted during the approval process that this option has about \$7 million annually in estimated operational savings.

Zink made it clear to the Board and facilities committee that attrition, or retirement, is the driving factor for any potential operational savings associated with decreases in staffing.

Additionally, the opportunity to enroll in ELPP will help maximize savings for our taxpayers. Not partnering with the State would add approximately 3.75-5.25 additional mills to a future bond issue. When the district would ask its taxpayers for financial support through a bond issue has not been determined at this time.

## Fast Facts



Lakota's 25 buildings are valued at more than \$632 million.



The average age of Lakota's facilities is 34 years old.

50

By 2038, eight (or one-third of) Lakota schools will be over 50 years old.



Lakota's two high schools are the oldest in Butler County.



Enrollment is over 17,000 and continues to grow, outpacing long-term projections from 2019.



The last time Lakota was on the ballot was in 2013.

\$146  
MILLION

If enrolled in ELPP, Lakota could qualify for partial state funding of its MFP, amounting to 29%, or up to about \$146 million, of the approved plan.

Visit [lakotaonline.com/mfp](https://lakotaonline.com/mfp) to stay up to date on the latest information and events.

## LAKOTA'S APPROVED MASTER FACILITIES PLAN

- Maximizes reimbursement through state funding options
- Independent preschool building
- Grade band structure: Preschool, K-5, 6-8 and 9-12
- Closing 10 schools
- Building three new schools, including a K-5 building and two new high schools
- Using the current high schools as middle schools
- 15 total schools, compared to the current 23
- Estimated \$7 million in annual operational savings



SCAN TO WATCH A  
VIDEO DETAILING  
THE PLAN





# WE *are* In This Together

Meet  
**Katie Bauer**  
Lakota Graduate,  
Parent & Employee

Katie Bauer pictured with husband John and daughters Emily and Riley.

## WE *choose* LAKOTA

Katie Bauer has chosen Lakota over and over again. A “Lakota lifer” who experienced the district from kindergarten up through her senior year at Lakota West, she says without hesitation, “There’s literally nothing I would change.”

That includes her very intentional decision to not only move her family back to Lakota to give her two daughters the same experience, but also to accept her “dream job” as the district’s facilitator of strategic business partnerships for real world learning.

**“I know it’s my job, but sometimes it seriously feels like community service. I inherently want to do more for our students because I once sat in their seats,”** Bauer says of her **“pay it forward”** mentality.

Bauer’s experience is one marked by countless memories of theater, band, choir, color guard, peer counseling, dance, cheerleading and more. “If I could join it, I did,” she laughs.

Looking back, she is especially appreciative of Lakota’s academic rigor and the self-advocacy

skills she gained to prepare her for her years at the Ohio State University and beyond.

Given her own story, the lens through which Bauer views her professional mission is all too appropriate.

**“Ultimately, I want to see people grow here, love it here and stay here. I want them to walk away saying I choose Lakota.”**

Beyond that passion, she enjoys the special camaraderie that comes with now working alongside many of her former teachers. She also appreciates the unique perspective she has as both a Lakota parent and employee.

“I have the best vantage point because I can see what’s happening all over - from the ECS level up through the high schools,” Bauer says.

**“What I see every day is that we’re doing what’s best for kids. And as a parent, isn’t that all you can ask for?”**

Katie Bauer brings to life Lakota’s philosophy that real world learning starts with strong business partners. We talked with four different individuals from four different industries about why they choose to partner with Lakota.



WE are  
Lakota

Watch the full video series to see what they had to say and how you can get involved!

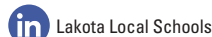






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## WE *are* In This Together

EDGE Teen Center, with a location in both Liberty and West Chester townships, serves approximately 125 high school students after school each day.

The variety of programs offered at EDGE focuses on four intentional areas of growth for students: community service, life skills, academic success and healthy living. Students may choose to participate in things such as career exploration, interview skills, financial literacy, mental health counseling and prevention education. EDGE also provides community service opportunities each week for high school students.

In addition to its after-school program, EDGE also partners with Lakota to offer in-school learning opportunities. The EDGE team meets with English language learners monthly at both East and West high schools, where they discuss topics such as job readiness skills, creating healthy boundaries and community service opportunities. Holding mock interviews for seniors and being a guest speaker in government classes to share about community service opportunities are also important aspects of the partnership.

### BY THE NUMBERS:

**125** Lakota students attend EDGE Teen Center each weekday.

**700+** students have been impacted through both in-school and after-school EDGE programs during the first semester.

**1000+** hours of community service typically completed by EDGE teens each year.



## WE *choose* LAKOTA

A native of greater Cincinnati, Sara Gabbard returned to her hometown two years ago and began working for the non-profit EDGE Teen Center. A youth and family advocate, she strives to support Lakota's teens through the strong partnership between the schools and EDGE.

**"Many of the things that are important to Lakota are important to EDGE, such as the success of the students after graduation. Partnering together means that we get to help make an impact and see the magic happen. We get to see the students bloom."**