

Lakota Local Schools has recently received the exciting news that the district has been selected by the College Board for its "8th Annual AP Honor Roll." We are one of only 34 districts in the state, and 447 across the country and Canada, to make the list.

The College Board looks at data gathered over the past three years regarding the increased accessibility to Advanced Placement® (AP) courses for students. At the same time, the district must also maintain or increase the percentage of students who earn a score of three or higher on the AP exams - a student can score up to a five. Most colleges and universities will grant credit for a score of three or higher. Lakota high school students are currently able to choose from 20 AP courses in a wide array of content areas, including Latin, calculus and computer science.

Offering our students a variety of courses that not only meet their needs and interests, but challenges them, is just one way that we are preparing our kids for the future. We must continue to examine how we are teaching our students to ensure that our teaching practices keep them engaged in learning.

Innovation in the classroom should be encouraged to engage our learners. Class lectures are not necessarily the best way to teach a subject day in and day out. Encouraging our kids to dive deeper into a subject that interests them will spark their creativity and passion. Genius hour and project-based learning do just that, and many of the teachers in our schools are embracing these ideas.

Other innovative ideas in the classroom include moving away from traditional rows of desks. If you walk through a building in Lakota, you are likely to see stability balls, high-top tables and even sofas in some classrooms. Flexible seating allows the students or teachers to reconfigure the room to meet the needs of the class, whether they are working in small groups, individually or altogether. Our teachers have been creative in order to furnish their classrooms. Some repurpose old pieces by shortening legs and bringing in pillows for students to sit on. Some are applying for (and winning) grants. Others are using websites like DonorsChoose.org to find philanthropists who will donate money towards their classrooms.

Innovation can also be seen by the use of technology in the classrooms, which will continue to grow at all grade levels. This year, our students and staff now have the option of using programs in either Microsoft or Google, which has shown to be especially helpful with collaboration. Proficiency in both programs will be a benefit to our students in their future.

As we move towards being a 1:1 district in terms of student-to-device ratio at the secondary level, the use of technology in the classroom will increase and complement the excellent education our kids are already receiving at Lakota. As we have announced, our seventh and eighth grade students will receive a district-owned laptop in the fall of 2018. Once this pilot program is running successfully, we will introduce 1:1 at our high schools.

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