

One of my favorite things that we do at Lakota is celebrate the accomplishments of our students. Big or small, in school or out, our students deserve to be recognized for their successes. It is a way to demonstrate that the school community values and supports its students. A building culture that encourages students to reach their goals, cheers their successes and supports them along the way, is one where students can thrive.

Student recognition comes in many forms. It could be as simple as a high-five and heartfelt congratulations, or it could be a more formal acknowledgement. At Lakota, each of our buildings has its own special way of celebrating its students.

Academic achievement is recognized throughout the district in a variety of ways. Students can be named to the school honor roll, invited to a special celebration or they may be acknowledged with a certificate. However, it's not just the top of the each class who are recognized. Our schools also laud academic improvement at all grade levels. At the West Freshman building, each teacher nominates a student for their academic improvement quarterly to recognize at a VIP breakfast, with a special invitation extended to their parents as well.

Character recognition is also common among our schools. At Endeavor Elementary, each month a different character trait is highlighted. Every day, a student is recognized for displaying the trait and their picture is displayed for the month. At Cherokee Elementary, students are recognized regularly on CTV (Cheetah Television). Students who have a big accomplishment outside of school, for example winning a medal at a state competition, are invited to share their success with the student body on CTV, as well. Teachers at Hopewell Junior nominate students weekly for successes big and small. A celebration occurs every Friday during lunch.

Principals and teachers throughout the district are also using social media, especially Twitter, to tout the achievements of their students. In addition to receiving a gift card to a local restaurant, East Freshman recognizes its student of the week via Twitter. Just search #WEareLakota to see many examples throughout our schools for yourself.

As a district, we recognize students during the student spotlight portion of the school board meetings. This could be for academic or athletic accomplishments. Or it could be a special community service project they started. It's a chance for our community to hear not only about the accomplishments of our students, but to hear from them directly. Our bi-monthly district newsletter also contains "shout-outs" to students for their achievements, whether they are academic or extracurricular in nature.

This year, we are adding a new student recognition for our high school seniors. On April 5 at the East Freshman building, Lakota Schools will hold its first Military Commitment Ceremony. The event will begin at 7:00 p.m. and will recognize our seniors from both high schools who have committed to enlisting in a branch of the armed services or who have committed to a military academy after graduation. It will be a very special evening and the public is welcome to attend.

*Matthew Miller is the superintendent of Lakota Local Schools. Follow him on Twitter (@LakotaSuper), Facebook (Matt Miller – Lakota Local Schools Superintendent) and Instagram (lakotasuper).*