

## State Report Card: Beyond the Letter Grades

If you've had a chance to check out Lakota's 2015-2016 state report card, released by the Ohio Department of Education a week and a half ago, please take my advice and do what we did. 1) Don't panic and 2) read beyond the letter grades.

I say that because under the new grading scale, *all* Ohio schools are facing some very steep challenges. That's not to say we aren't taking the results seriously – because we are, more than ever. The reality is that the bar against which schools are graded for their performance is continuously changing, and rising. It's no more than a reflection of what's happening all across the nation. In the race to be globally competitive, we're all chasing higher standards.

When you pair such rising standards with three different test combinations over the last three years, what you get is immeasurable year-over-year comparisons. That's why Lakota and other similar district across the state are seeing report cards that look far different, as compared to previous years. What appears to be waning student achievement is actually the natural response to a new and evolving set of achievement and accountability standards.

It's also important to remember that under the new report card format, we're graded in just six different areas. While the report card is one valuable measurement tool, it doesn't draw a complete picture of both what we're doing right and where we might need to improve.

Take for example the "K-3 Literacy" component. Last year, 99.4 percent of all third-graders met the requirements of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and were promoted to fourth grade. But because the report card measures how well schools assist their struggling young readers, not how well all students read, we received an "F" for this component.

Another area is "Achievement," for which Lakota earned a "C." Despite our students performing, on average, about 17 percent higher than the state average across all indicators (or subject area by grade level), we could not meet the high targets set by the state for 8 of the 28 indicators.

This stands in stark contrast to the "A" we received for "Progress," which awards a "C" to districts if the average growth of its students is equivalent to one year's worth of growth. Our results here suggest our students are growing at tremendous rates, despite not meeting the state's rising achievement targets.

At Lakota, we focus on the end game. That means how well we're preparing our students for the rigors beyond high school. In other words, are we graduating students on time and do their test scores *and* experiences suggest they are college- or career-ready?

Lakota is an excellent school district and we will continue to challenge ourselves and our students in a way that prepares them for not just a test, but for life after graduation. There are so many things we have to offer in this way, and they go well beyond the measures of the state report.

Please visit [lakotaonline.com](http://lakotaonline.com) for a more in-depth look at last year's report card results.

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