

## **Lakota Local Schools Invited to Join National Network of Innovative School Districts**

Lakota Local Schools recently received the exciting news that Digital Promise's League of Innovative Schools has selected the district as a new member. Lakota is one of only 93 districts in 33 states throughout the country to belong to the prestigious organization.

Digital Promise, an independent, bipartisan, non-profit organization, was created in 2008 under President George W. Bush and was formally launched by President Barack Obama in 2011. The League of Innovative Schools was created by Digital Promise in 2012 and fosters collaboration among like-minded, forward-thinking leaders in education.

At Lakota, we strive to be innovative in our teaching, course offerings and use of technology for students. School today is not the same as it was 20, 10, or even five years ago. Every student learns differently and it is our job as educators to ensure that we reach each individual. This means that we need to constantly look at the way we teach and adjust where needed. This focus on personalized learning and growth has led to our shift from a traditional learning environment to a more student-centered approach. Our teachers are collaborating and using one another's best practices to ensure that our kids are engaged in learning every single day.

Innovation in the classroom is happening throughout our district. Examples include the expanded implementation of Project Based Learning, where students learn by researching a topic and completing a project, as well as Genius Hour, where students are able to explore a subject that they find interesting. In addition, incorporating technology as a tool in learning – not a substitute for teaching – by having access to devices in the classroom is a necessity in today's world. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Applied Arts and Math) labs in our elementary schools engage students in real-world problem-solving scenarios, beginning as early as second grade. Our secondary students benefit from increased STEAM course offerings, thanks to our partnership with Butler Tech.

This is an exciting time for our district. The implementation of Digital Learning Labs at both of our high schools fosters collaborative professional learning among our teachers. The new "Lakota Launch Pad" at Liberty Junior School is a pilot concept for inspiring innovative instruction. In addition, a team of administrators, school leaders and teachers are working together to establish a forward-thinking vision for teaching and learning at the junior school level. As a result, four teachers have volunteered to explore personalized learning instruction with flexible course design that supports individualized learning for our students. Also, our elementary school teachers have the opportunity to observe, provide peer feedback and collaborate on innovative solutions to instructional challenges twice a year through Lab Sites.

At Lakota, we are committed to providing a first rate K-12 education. In addition to classroom instruction, this also includes the health and well-being of our students. I encourage you to join us at our next Community Conversation to discuss stresses and anxieties facing our kids and the collaborative roles of parents, schools and the community in helping students deal with them. We will meet at the Central Office, 5572 Princeton Road in Liberty Township, on Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. As always, everyone is welcome.

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