

Community Listening Programs Key to Strategic Planning

At a recent work session held by the Lakota Board of Education, I shared an overview of our new strategic plan for the district, including a new mission and vision statement. The plan will be formally voted on at a future school board meeting, with the intent to implement the new mission and vision in January. Our mission is simple: everything WE do is designed to provide a future ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child. It is the core value that we believe and every decision we make must align with this mission. How we achieve the mission is a bit more complex. We must be personalized in our instruction, future ready focused, fiscally responsible and, as a district and community, work together to achieve our mission.

As we continue to move through the school year, we have embarked on our seventh year of community conversations. This program was created by Lakota's Board of Education in order to engage with our stakeholders on subjects that will ultimately allow us to better serve our students.

Staff, students, parents and community members are invited to attend meetings throughout the year to voice their opinions and ask questions on a variety of topics. A listing community conversations and dates can be found on our website. Some will be listed as staff, while others are open to anyone. Notes from each of our public sessions are also posted.

Community conversations have a unique format. Hosted by a third party facilitator, these discussions are centered on a specific topic. Participants sit in small groups to discuss one question at a time relating to the topic. The large group reconvenes to share what was discussed. It is an opportunity for members of the school board, executive leadership team and me to listen and better understand the views of our stakeholders.

Our next community conversation will focus on the effects social media has on our students. It is scheduled for Nov. 8 at 6:00 p.m. and will be held at Edge Teen Center.

Another way that I like to connect with our community members is by holding monthly coffee chats. While it's an opportunity for me to share what is taking place at Lakota, it is also an opportunity for you to ask questions of me and share your thoughts in an informal setting. I invite you to attend our next coffee chat on Nov. 7 at 7:00 p.m. at Coffee Beans and Brew.

Safety and security is always the number one priority at Lakota Local Schools. It is why we recently held a community conversation focused on the subject. Just as we routinely practice a variety of safety drills with our students, our district staff, including administrators, also participate in drills, as mandated by the State of Ohio.

On Tuesday, Nov. 6, we will hold a district-wide safety drill at Liberty Junior School. The exercise will be held in conjunction with our partners at the Butler County Sheriff's Office, West Chester Police Department and the Liberty and West Chester townships' fire departments.

Please do not be alarmed if you see local law enforcement at Liberty Junior on Tuesday afternoon. It is an opportunity for us to practice our safety protocols, just as we do with our students.

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