

You may have seen #LakotaNext on social media over the past several months and wondered what it means. It's what we're calling the process as we talk about reimagining the high school experience for our students.

Why reimagine what high school looks like? School today is not like it was 20, 50 or even 10 years ago. The world is ever-changing and so must we in order to prepare our kids for success after graduation. It's not good enough to only adjust what we teach. We need to think bigger. We need to think outside the box to provide our students with the tools they need to succeed in life.

Last spring, we began talk about how we might change what the high school experience looks like. District leaders got together with teachers to discuss what we should change about our schools. While many good ideas came about, we knew that it was important to hear from the people who would be most affected by this - the students. A group of 30 teachers and 20 students, from both Lakota East and West high schools, came together to participate in the #LakotaNext Design Challenge last month.

Over a three day period, the group brainstormed countless ideas, from coursework to schedules to room design, all revolving around the question: How might we design a prototype of a high school master schedule that fosters the core principles of personalized learning? After collaborating, and truly listening to one another, the students and teachers presented their ideas to district leaders. It was amazing to hear the passion and out-of-the-box thinking coming from the challenge and I'm looking forward to continuing the conversation.

While we are still in the design phase of a new high school experience, we are moving forward with a new curriculum offering. Beginning in the fall of the 2019-20 school year, our sophomores, juniors and seniors will be able to enroll in the new Lakota Cyber Academy. Did you know that there are currently over 4,000 jobs available in this field and that number is expected to grow to 1.8 million by 2020? Together with Cincinnati-based Belcan, we are excited to offer this new pathway to our high school students. Through the course, students will earn industry certifications required for employment in cyber security. For next year's seniors, an accelerated "Cyber Sprint" class will offered.

Parents and students who may be interested in the new Lakota Cyber Academy are invited to attend an information session on Dec. 12. The event is one night only and will be held at the Cincinnati Marriott North in West Chester. The presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m. It is a great opportunity to learn more about this new curriculum offering.

Another opportunity for parents, students and community members to come together will take place on Monday, Dec. 3, at Lakota West High School. We will be screening the movie "Most Likely to Succeed." This documentary explores America's education system and a high school in the San Diego area that is daring to do things differently. Following the movie, we invite you to stay and take part in a discussion with district leaders.

I hope that you take the opportunity to attend one or both of these special events as we continue to innovate and move Lakota Local Schools forward.

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