

At Lakota Local Schools, we embrace the diversity of each of our 16,500 students. From the first days of school, we celebrate our differences while we both teach and model acceptance for one another.

Throughout the district, our staff works from a “culture playbook” - a philosophy that teaches both adults and students what it means to exhibit “above the line behavior.” If you are a parent or follow us on social media, you are most likely familiar with “E+R=O,” or an event, plus your reaction, equals the outcome. While this is a district-wide initiative, our schools also engage in Positive Behavior Intervention Support, or PBIS. Each school may have its own program, but the teachings are very similar: be a positive, supportive person who helps others. Whether a student is part of Creekside’s Bucket Challenge or has earned stickers as they demonstrate what Heritage has HEART means, examples of positive behavior and empathy can be seen at all of our schools.

Last January, we created the Lakota Outreach, Diversity and Inclusion (LODI) department. The members of LODI work to enhance our district’s ongoing efforts to consistently provide all students with a safe, secure and supportive learning environment. Through this department, our extensive parent engagement and community outreach efforts continue to grow, from our tradition of school fanfares to new programs such as CommUnity University, to name a few. Additionally, the “Champions for Change” program, a group of district-wide representation that works to promote a culture of empathy and understanding among staff and students, continues across all Lakota schools.

Diversity in our schools goes beyond the 33 percent of students who are non-caucasian or of a different ethnic background. 20 percent of Lakota students are economically disadvantaged. Our community liaisons work very hard to assist families who need help. Programs such as the giving trees during the holiday season are run by this team to help our families have presents for their children. Additionally, resource pantries have been set up at all of our schools.

What began as a simple idea at Adena Elementary School last year has now grown far and wide across Lakota. Through a partnership between LODI, community liaisons, PTO/PTAs and the District Parent Council ambassadors, our schools have been stockpiled with snacks, school supplies and personal hygiene items for students who may need them throughout the day.

We suspect that the government shutdown is taking a toll on some of our families. If you are a Lakota parent and have been affected, I encourage you to reach out to your school's principal or community liaison. There are resources in our community and greater Cincinnati that you may benefit from. More information can also be found on our website, lakotaonline.com.

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