

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has released the 2017-18 state report card results. The high-quality education, student-centered education our students receive is reflected in this year's report card. Improving to a 'B' from a 'C' in both achievement and gap closing, while maintaining an 'A' letter grade in both overall progress and graduation rate, has contributed to the district earning a final grade of 'B'.

I believe that encouraging our teachers to collaborate across departments and buildings has helped to meet the needs of our diverse learners. Last year, we empowered our teachers to look not only to their building peers, but to realize that teachers, our best resources, are available across all 23 of our buildings.

Along with collaboration, our teachers work tirelessly to keep our students engaged every single day. They are dedicated to building positive relationships and trust with their students, helping them to prepare for the state assessments.

As a district, we saw the K-3 Literacy component of the report card dip from a 'B' to a 'C.' It's imperative that you understand that this piece of the report card measures the progress of students who are deemed to be "off track" in their reading. It does not take into consideration the vast majority of students who are "on track". We are more interested in how far our students have come by the time the Third Grade Reading Guarantee takes place. We promoted 98.33 percent of our third graders to fourth grade; over 93 percent of these students met the requirements of this state-mandated guarantee and an additional five percent of students met alternative pathways set by ODE.

This year, a team comprised of district and school administrators, teachers and students are part of an initiative called Lakota Next. The purpose of this group is to reimagine the high school experience to better prepare students for life after graduation. We began planning for this initiative last year, prior to seeing the slight decline from a 'C' to a 'D' in the latest "Prepared for Success" metric on the state report card.

One of the areas we are focused on is increasing real-world learning opportunities for our juniors and seniors. We are working to substantially increase our internship program. Additionally, we are working with Butler Tech to grow more pathways and industry-recognized credentials for students who may not choose to continue in higher ed. The more exposure to a variety of careers we can give our kids prior to graduation, the better.

Interestingly, the Ohio Department of Education does not recognize these types of experiences as part of the "Prepared for Success" grade on the state report card. Nor do programs like our Career Readiness Academy (CRA) count towards this assessment.

These are just a few examples of why I encourage our parents, staff and community members to remember that testing is only one part of assessing student growth. Many other factors impacting the overall student experience are not directly reflected on the report card.

We will be releasing our second annual Quality Profile report in the coming weeks. This report is a companion piece to the state report card, highlighting current and future areas of focus for the district, including: academics, safety and security, finances, the student experience and parent/community engagement.

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