

The Value of a Lakota Diploma

A Lakota diploma carries a lot more weight than a prescribed set of state tests or course requirements. To be honest, we wouldn't have it any other way. Those measures, alone, aren't enough for any school district to rest assured that their graduates are ready for the workforce that awaits them. Value of

Our parents and community need to know that we view the state tests, at any grade level, as just one factor in our students' path to graduation. Our counselors and administrators spend just as much time monitoring credits and state point requirements, as they do assisting students in exploring their career interests, internship opportunities, career-focused coursework and extracurricular opportunities. Those are the experiences that differentiate the Lakota education.

Even so, state tests are an important piece to the puzzle. Frankly, they give school districts a standard accountability system. It's how we know our students are getting the skills they need be competitive in today's world.

There's a lot of talk lately about Ohio's new graduation assessments and requirements, so I wanted to share Lakota's current position.

First of all, labeling the requirements as new is a bit misleading. How well our secondary students perform on the state tests has always had some bearing on their graduation. Also, the requirements are far from new, in that they'll go into effect for the Class of 2018, or this year's juniors. But we've been preparing for this shift since this class of students entered their freshman year in 2014, and some were among the first to participate in the new tests.

Under the revised requirements, in addition to completing the state minimum for courses like English language arts, math and science, a graduate must also earn a cumulative score of 18 points on seven end-of-course exams. Students are tested for their proficiency in algebra, geometry, physical science, American history and government, and two levels of English, at the conclusion of each corresponding course.

The end-of-course exams are proving more rigorous than the previous five Ohio Graduation Tests. But that's consistent with what we're seeing across the board on state tests. It's why almost every district statewide has seen a decline in achievement rates on the state report card. It's also why there's mounting concern over the impact on graduation rates.

But honestly, it's still far too early to predict the real impact of the new requirements – at Lakota or anywhere else. After all, over the next 18 months, students will have ample opportunity to earn the required points – either through retakes or tests they have yet to attempt – or even meet one of the alternative criteria like a “remediation-free” score on the ACT or SAT.

Our early projections are promising, but we will continue to do things the Lakota way. That is, we will rise to the challenge and do everything in our power to get every student the support they need to ultimately meet the state's graduation requirements, and then some. As I said, the Lakota diploma is worth so much more.

Robb Vogelmann is the acting superintendent for Lakota Local Schools.