

The 2017-2018 school year is well under way, with students, teachers and staff all settling in for a year of learning, opportunity and growth. One of the keys to a successful school district is bringing departments together to work as a team for the better education of our students. Combining our special education, curriculum and digital teams into one cohesive unit, and having our academic coaches and digital learning specialists train together and collaborate with one another, allows us to better serve all of our teachers and students. We are transitioning from two separate teams to one unified team of Lakota Learning Specialists.

In addition to the collaboration of staff members, we are also encouraging our students to talk to us about technology in education. We live in a digital world and it is imperative that our students have the opportunity to experience technology in the classroom. Through "Student Voice: Technology" on our student app portal, students are able to share their thoughts about technology with administrators. They are able to let us know what they like, what could use some improvement or make suggestions for new concepts to enhance their learning needs.

Staff members across the district are also joining forces for a common cause. Lakota is a district with a reputation of giving back to the community. Traditionally, Fridays are dress down days for teachers and staff. Now they are dress down days with a purpose. Our staff members have the option of contributing a monetary donation throughout the year in exchange for participating in "Casual for a Cause" Fridays. The money collected will be shared among four local charities: Reach Out Lakota, Butler County United Way, The Community Foundation of West Chester Liberty and Caring Community Collaborative, or C3. It is important to always remember that every day is an opportunity to lead by example. These charities have a rich history in helping the West Chester and Liberty Township communities and Casual for a Cause is just one way that we can help.

One of the things that I love to do is communicate the positive happenings in our district through Twitter. We have introduced the district hashtag, #WEareLakota, as a way for members of our staff, families and community to join the conversation. Teachers and staff throughout Lakota Schools have embraced this idea and have taken to Twitter as a way to share what is happening in their classrooms, schools and around the district. Prior to the start of the school year, our own students led a professional development session for teachers on the art of using Twitter. The results have been so successful that community members have asked if they, too, could participate in a Twitter class. Our kids are only too happy to help! Stay tuned for more information.

If we haven't had the chance to meet yet, consider joining me for my first Coffee Chat on September 6th from 9 to 10 AM at Einstein Brothers, located at 9216 Allen Road in West Chester. On the first Wednesday of each month, I will be available for drop in conversations with parents and residents at local coffee shops in West Chester and Liberty Township. I want to hear your questions and thoughts about Lakota Schools. I hope to see you there.

Matt Miller is the superintendent of Lakota Local Schools. Follow him on Twitter @LakotaSuper and FaceBook Matt Miller – Lakota Local Schools Superintendent.