



# This Week At Lakota

**Instilling Pride. Igniting Passion. Infinite Possibilities.**

December 2, 2016

**Leading the Way**



If you haven't had a chance to look at the "Inside Your Schools" video series, be sure to take some time to watch these short videos that highlight the priorities and principles guiding the work of the district. Click the photo above to see the final video or [click here to see the complete series](#) on Lakota's YouTube channel.

## 'Inside Your Schools' Video Series Concludes

The final installment in Lakota's new video series, "Inside Your Schools," is now available.

This [eighth chapter](#) serves as a wrap-up, summarizing the priorities and principles guiding Lakota's daily work in the areas of instructional excellence, community engagement and, the foundation of it all, fiscal responsibility and sustainability.



Heritage Elementary sixth-grader Rithik Sinhasan is collaborating on an autism advocacy project with a non-profit organization called the Lynx Project. He is shown here with his mom, Sheila, and Steven Humes of the Lynx Project. Rithik uses the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) to help him communicate.

## Lakota Grad, Current Student Partner on Autism Advocacy Project

The Lynx Project, a non-profit organization co-founded by Lakota West graduate Megan (McGill) Moore '08, will bring a special art song performance to Cincinnati in 2017. An art song is a poem or prose set to music, usually with a singer and a pianist, that lasts about three minutes.

"What makes this performance so special is that the words for the art songs come from people who communicate differently than most," said

Earlier chapters of "Inside Your Schools" dove into topics like academics, technology, diversity and district finances in more depth, each supporting Lakota's commitment to provide a personalized educational experience to every student.

[Click here to access the complete video series via Lakota's YouTube channel playlist.](#)

Moore. "The four young authors are primarily non-verbal due to their autism, but that doesn't mean they don't have a voice. They absolutely do, and what they have to say is incredible."

Heritage Elementary sixth-grader **Rithik Sinhasan** is one of the four students selected to take part in the Autism Advocacy Project. Because he cannot speak aloud, Rithik is able to share his voice by spelling out words via the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) or "letterboarding."

"Rithik is a testimony to what can happen when we personalize learning methods to the unique needs of our students," said Lynda Theiler, Lakota's executive director of special services K-6. "Using an alternative form of communication such as RPM is an example of how we find a method that maximizes what a student can achieve. It's great to see him now applying his talents to such a productive project."

Rithik and the other young authors are part of the local RPM community.

"I love having a loving group of friends," said Rithik. "They silently gently form a circle of encouragement." He likens his circle of friends to that of the olive leaves forming an Olympic crown. "Olive leaves linked together form an Olympic crown, our autism joins us like leaves forming a golden link."

Moore, who has two degrees in vocal performance and is now an emerging professional opera singer, has met with Rithik several times for the project. "He is funny and super friendly, and very smart. His prose and poems are far beyond his age, and he has lots of really amazing things to say. People just need to take the time to listen."

With sufficient funding, the group hopes to host two premieres in the fall of 2017. One will be a sensory-friendly concert tailored to families who have children with autism, and another will be for the general public.

In one of his writings, Rithik said, "I see light all the time. I see more reflections than you can possibly imagine. Other people look for long but I

look for an instant and recall everything. No person really understands the nature of this unless they experience it themselves.”

In line with Rithik's lyrics, the art song performances will give the community an opportunity to gain some insight into the world of autism. Rithik's is thankful for the opportunity to be part of the project, and to be able to share his thoughts and experiences.

"(It is) really good everybody goes out of their way to engage us," he said. "The selection of good things everywhere offers hope our voices will be heard. First each one was lonely now we are lodestones." (*A lodestone is a naturally magnetized mineral, or the focus of attention or attraction.*)

If you would like to learn more about the Lynx Project or make a donation toward its Autism Advocacy Project, [click here to visit their website](#).

## Around Lakota

### Ohio Board of Education Honors Lakota with 2016 Momentum Award



The Ohio State Board of Education recently granted Lakota Local Schools the 2016 Momentum Award. The annual recognition is granted only to districts that received A's on every growth measure, or value-added component, included on the latest state report card.

Lakota was one of only two school districts in Butler County to receive the Momentum Award. Statewide, only 54 of more than 600 school districts earned the distinction.

As reported at the release of the 2015-2016 district report card results, Lakota's overall 'A' for progress measures the growth that all students made in the last year, based on their past performance.

"Letter grades on the state report card only tell part of the story for how we're ultimately preparing our students for their future," said Lakota Acting Superintendent Robb Vogelmann. "But the report card did

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tell us we're growing students at tremendous rates – more than six times what the component requires for an 'A' – and that's something to celebrate.

“We continue to challenge ourselves to meet the rising achievement standards set by the state, but I commend our teachers and support staff for staying focused on stretching each student individually. To grow a student in their learning is just as important as meeting a set proficiency rate,” Vogelmann continued.

The component considers fourth- through eighth-graders' average growth, over multiple years, in the areas of math and reading. In addition to all students, it also weighs three other designations: gifted, students with disabilities and students whose academic performance is in the lowest 20 percent of students statewide.

According to a letter signed by Ohio Board of Education President Thomas Gunlock, “Your report card shows your pupils enjoyed greater than expected growth in reading and mathematics. Your accomplishment makes you part of a group of districts that is supporting the academic growth of students from every background and ability level. This is especially commendable when your district is operating multiple schools that can have diverse student populations and varying needs and challenges.”

[Click here](#) for more from the Ohio Department of Education on this recognition.

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## **Lakota East's Spark Shines Again at National Journalism Convention**

# NSPA



*The Spark news magazine staff pose with the numerous awards they recently received at the National High School Journalism Convention. Honors the Lakota East group received include the first place "Best of Show" cup and National Pacemaker Print Publication recognition and Spark Co-chief Editor Emma Stiefel won "The National Story of The Year" in the News category.*

Lakota East student news magazine, The Spark, garnered armfuls of awards at the recent National High School Journalism Convention held in mid-November in Indianapolis. More than 6,200 high school students from 39 states and four countries attended the conference, which is sponsored by the National Scholastic Press Association and its partner, the Journalism Education Association.

The magazine earned the first place "Best of Show" cup for news magazines and was one of 21 National Pacemaker Print Publications. The Spark has been a finalist for the Pacemaker award, considered the Pulitzer for high school journalists, 14 times and has won 11.

Senior **Emma Stiefel**, Spark's co-chief editor, won the "National Story of the Year" in the news category and former Spark Co-chief Editor **Maddie Week** finished runner-up in the "Diversity reporting" category. **Vivian Kolks**, Spark's opinion editor, finished seventh in the opinion category. The magazine has had eight national NSPA story of the year winners since 1998.

In addition to the stellar writing, Spark's graphic design also merited high honors. Former Spark Co-chief Editor **Christine Shi** earned "National Design of the Year" for a spread (two pages that face each other) and second place in Cover Design. **Cassie Chrysovergis**, **Sophia Chrysovergis** and **Manjot Kalkat** earned runner up in National Design of the Year for their informational graphic while **Sarah Aftab** earned fifth place in the illustration category.

During the conference, students also participate in on-site contests, showcasing their research, writing and editing skills. Congratulations to the following who received excellent awards in the write-off: **Caroline Bumgarner**, **Michelle Chu**, **Richard Giang**, **Vivian Kolks**, **Katie Kruback**, **Cara Satullo** and **Emma Stiefel**. Spark staff earning honorable mention were: **Sarah Aftab**, **Allie Church**, **Julianne Ford**, **Rebecca Holst**, **Morgan Kile** and **Victoria Negrón**.

"These recent awards indicate the quality of work of our Spark team, as well as their dedication and professionalism," states Suzanna Davis, principal at Lakota East. "We are so proud of the magazine and the time, energy and effort that these students pour into it. It truly is an example of a

student-led project because the students are involved in every aspect of the magazine, from writing and design to selling ads and overseeing the production.”

## Holiday Concerts Hosted by Lakota Junior Highs, High Schools



Schools across the district will be celebrating the holidays with special choir and band concerts. Here is a list of the evening programs planned for Lakota's junior high and high schools.

**Dec. 6**

Holiday Concert  
Lakota East Choirs/West Chester Symphony  
Princeton Pike Church of God  
7-9 p.m.

**Dec. 8**

Hopewell Junior Holiday Chorus Concerts  
Hopewell Junior School  
6:45 - 9:00 p.m.

**Dec. 8**

Lakota East Freshman Band Concert  
Lakota East Freshman School  
7 p.m.

**Dec. 12**

Lakota West Holiday Band Concert (all 4 bands)  
Lakota West Theatre  
7-10 p.m.

**Dec. 13**

Lakota East Gift of Music Band Concert  
Lakota East Theatre  
7 p.m.

**Dec. 15**

Lakota West Choir Concert  
Lakota West Theatre  
6:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**Dec. 15**

Plains Junior Choir Concert  
Plains Junior Gym  
6:30 p.m.

The public is welcome to attend any of these events to enjoy music of the season.

## 2017-18 Preschool Enrollment Begins Jan. 4



Registration for Lakota's tuition-based preschool program will begin Jan. 4.

Parents can [visit the website for detailed information](#) about enrollment. Preschool applications for the 2017-2018 school year are available [online](#) and at Shawnee Early Childhood School, Creekside Early Childhood School and Liberty Early Childhood School.

An informational meeting for parents will be held on Jan. 18 at Creekside Early Childhood School at 6 p.m. Staff members will be available to answer questions and to give an overview of the program. They will share the Creative Curriculum and Acelero Adaptation that preschool teachers follow, as well as what the "life in the day of a preschool child" looks like.

All applications must be received or postmarked by Jan. 31 to be considered for the lottery. The lottery will take place in February and all applicants will be notified by mail regarding their admission in the program by the end of February. Applications received after the Jan. 31 deadline will be placed on a waiting list.

**Fall 2016 Community Newsletter Now Available**



Several times a year, Lakota produces a community newsletter to help parents and residents stay informed about important district-wide information. The piece is mailed to every household and business in West Chester Township and Liberty Township, the latest for just 17 cents per piece.

The fall 2016 edition is now available. If you did not receive a copy at your home or if you need additional copies, please visit Lakota's Central Office or any school's main office. Copies will also be available next week at the administration buildings for both West Chester and Liberty townships, as well as the West Chester MidPointe Library.

This issue focuses on Lakota's approach to personalized education, highlighting the diversification of options that defined one student's path. Also covered are evidence of academic excellence (not necessarily captured by the state report card), an update on finances, and some of the new and continuing ways we are trying to communicate with and engage the larger community.

To view the publication electronically, [please click here](#).



[View All District News](#)

## New Business

*Announcements & Opportunities*

### Superintendent Search Continues: Application Period Now Open

Following a series of community input sessions, the Lakota Board of Education's search for the school district's next superintendent continues.

Feedback compiled from 13 different stakeholder sessions and more than 150 completed questionnaires helped shape the final candidate profile. A search brochure and application are now available, with all applications due by Jan. 13, 2017.

## On The Radar

*Quick Links & Reminders*

### Lakota West Swing Dance on Dec. 9

Lakota West bands will hold their annual Swing Dance on Dec. 9 from 7:30 - 10 p.m. in the Lakota West Jazz Club (cafeteria). The whole community is invited to this fun evening that will include old favorites and holiday classics.

With the goal of making a final selection in March 2017, the school board is seeking a new leader who can begin at the conclusion of the current superintendent's contract in August 2017. Community engagement is the driving force behind the search process, which was scheduled to begin this fall.

[Click here](#) for more information about the superintendent's search, including a timeline, candidate profile and application materials.

## Are You Ready for Winter? Check Your Communication Preferences Today

We may not want to admit it, but inclement weather is possible and even probable, now that we're into December. Please check your Lakota communication preferences to ensure you are set up to receive weather-related notifications in the manner you wish to receive them.

In addition to posting an alert on the district homepage and [Facebook page](#), Lakota also issues a phone call, text message and email to anyone who has selected these options for weather-related alerts. Local newspapers, television and radio stations are another source of these updates.

Lakota has recently switched to a new notification system for general, emergency and weather-related communications. If you are the official parent or guardian of a current Lakota student or a current employee with a valid Lakota email address, please log into [Info Center](#) to make sure the phone numbers and email addresses being automatically pulled from Home Access Center (parents) and active directory (staff) are accurate and up-to-date.

To view and modify your weather-related preferences, select "Preferences," then "Weather-Related Notifications."

Others in the Lakota community who are not parents, guardians or employees and wish to subscribe to district communications may do so via Lakota's [self-sign-up portal](#).

[Click here](#) for more detailed information about Lakota's new communication system.

## Listen Up Lakota Focuses on District's Communication

In addition, guest dance instructors will be on hand to teach swing dancing, and there will be an opportunity to compete in a dance-off near the end of the night. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$10 (children 3-10 are \$5.00, those under 3 are free).

Approximate performance times are:

7:45 p.m. – West Freshman Jazz Band

8:35 p.m. – West Jazz Combo

9:20 p.m. – West Jazz Ensemble

[Click here for a flyer with more details.](#)

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## Lakota East Baseball Hosts Spaghetti Dinner on Dec. 9

There is no need to make dinner on Friday, Dec. 9 -- just head over to Lakota East for a yummy spaghetti meal!

The Lakota East baseball team is hosting this fundraiser from 4:30 to 7 p.m. in the Lakota East cafeteria. Tickets are just \$5 per person and can be purchased from any baseball player or by contacting Michelle McDonough at 513-235-0373.

[Click here to see the spaghetti dinner flyer.](#)

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What do the new video series and a printed publication that's mailed to approximately 42,000 area residents and the district Facebook page have in common? They are all methods Lakota uses to reach our students' families and the local community. And the communication isn't only one-way, as the district has several ongoing programs that ensure the public can share their questions, concerns and suggestions.

The December "Listen Up Lakota!" focuses on the district's communication strategies and resources, featuring Acting Superintendent Robb Vogelmann and Executive Director of Media & Community Relations Lauren Boettcher. The interview will air Friday, Dec. 16 at 5 p.m. and again Thursday, Dec. 22 at 1 p.m. on Maple Knoll Radio Network stations WLHS 89.9 FM and WMKV 89.3 FM and streaming live at [www.wmkvfm.org](http://www.wmkvfm.org).

## Lakota West Choirs Host Holiday Event Dec. 10

*Features Carols, Coffee, Breakfast, Santa, Crafts and More*

Bring the whole family to the Lakota West cafeteria on Dec. 10 for some holiday fun. That's where Lakota West Choirs will host Carols, Coffee and More from 9 - 11 a.m.

The event will include holiday carols and sing-alongs, coffee, breakfast items, visits with Santa, kids' crafts, face/nail/painting, vendors, raffles and more. Tickets are just \$5 at the door. [Click here to view a flyer](#) about the event.

## VFW Teacher of the Year Award

The VFW Teacher of the Year award contest recognizes three exceptional teachers for their outstanding commitment to teaching Americanism and patriotism to their students. Each year, a classroom elementary, junior high and high school teacher whose curriculum focuses on citizenship education topics — for at least half of the school day in a classroom environment — can be nominated for the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award. Winners receive:

- A \$1,000 award for professional development expenses.

## Reach Out Lakota's Holiday Program Still Needs Your Help

Show that you care this holiday season by sharing what you can with those in need and giving back to the West Chester & Liberty township community.

Reach Out Lakota's annual holiday giving program, called "Care, Share, Give," brings the joy of the season to local families that struggle to provide for their children. This year, Reach Out Lakota expects to assist about 800 local children and their families.

Individuals and groups are asked to help in any of the following ways:

1. [SPONSOR](#) a child by donating a new toy or gift card valued at \$25
2. [PARTNER](#) with the program by organizing a giving tree or toy drive
3. [DONATE](#) funds to the program; we'll shop for you!

[Click here](#) for more information or to make your donation or email Andrea Subler at [asubler@reachoutlakota.org](mailto:asubler@reachoutlakota.org) or Sue Cheney at [scheney@reachoutlakota.org](mailto:scheney@reachoutlakota.org).

- A \$1,000 award for his/her school.
- Two award plaques: one for the teacher, the other for his/her school.
- An all-expenses-paid trip to attend a VFW conference to receive their award.

If you know a teacher that organizes community volunteer projects or invites veterans to speak in class -- or anything to help students better develop a better understanding of democratic values and beliefs, this award is for them. [Click here for more information](#) on how to nominate a teacher for this award.

## **Santa Suit Fun Run Supports Reach Out Lakota**

It's a fun and festive way to get into the holiday spirit, all while helping a local organization that supports so many Lakota families.

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual Santa Suit Fun Run will be held Sunday, Dec. 11. beginning at 11 a.m. The race, which is coordinated by Mojo Running, starts at Topgolf, then continues through the streets of West Chester.

Proceeds from the event support Reach Out Lakota and prizes are awarded in several categories. Register online at [www.registrationspot.com](http://www.registrationspot.com) or check out the Facebook page for [MojoSantaFunRun](#). For more information, email [santa@runmojo.com](mailto:santa@runmojo.com).

## **Photo of the Week**



## Pioneer Day at Liberty ECS

Liberty Early Childhood School students turned back the clock earlier this week to learn how life would be living as a pioneer.

Students learned about caring for animals that were important on the farm, weaving from their wool, cooking over a fire, square dancing, and other kinds of pioneer life adventures.

## Upcoming Events

### Event Spotlights

- [Monday, Dec.12](#)  
**Lakota Board of Education Meeting - Central Office**  
7 p.m.2 - 3 p.m.
- Monday, Dec. 19 - Tuesday, Jan. 3  
**No School for Students**

## Lakota In The News

### Community Coverage

#### Journal-News

[Lakota Schools taking applications for superintendent](#)

[Teacher nears 30 years at Freedom Elementary](#)

## Latest E-Flyers

### What's News This Week?

As a reminder, E-Flyers is Lakota's way of distributing information about programs, classes, events and opportunities happening in our schools and around the community. Rather than sending flyers home with students, we are now posting all approved information on the E-Flyer page, making it easy for families to access all current opportunities. Here is a listing of all

- Friday, Dec. 23 & Monday, Dec. 26  
**District Closed**
- Monday, Jan. 2  
**District Closed**
- Tuesday, Jan. 3  
**Staff Professional Development Day**
- Wednesday, Jan. 4  
**School Resumes/3rd Quarter Begins**

[See Full Calendar](#)

of the new district and community-sponsored flyers for this week.

**District-Sponsored Flyers:**

- [Lakota West Choir's Carols, Coffee & More \(Dec.10\)](#)

**Community-Sponsored Flyers:**

- [Perfection Gymnastics Holiday Camps](#)
- [December Community Volunteer Force Opportunities](#)

[All Current E-Flyers](#)

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