

Lakota links high grades with student engagement

By Lindsey Hilty, Staff Writer

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LIBERTY TWP. — A majority of Lakota Local School District students are engaged in some sort of school activity.

Those are among the findings in a report district officials discussed Monday, Nov. 30.

But with 30 percent not involved, officials said work still must be done, specifically because the report found a correlation between student involvement and increased grade point averages.

“Student engagement — it’s so important to our business,” said Ron Spurlock, assistant superintendent of secondary education. “We know when students have a niche in their schools and they are actively participating in the classroom, achievement is going to increase.”

Communication and a shift to 21st century skills are essential, he said.

According to an internal survey in the fall of 2008, 60 percent of students felt comfortable at school events or activities and 85 percent felt comfortable talking to at least one adult at school. Fifteen percent did not attend a school event last year.

A similar survey was given in May and results improved, officials said.

“While most of the work that we did was with high school students, we think it is very relevant to all of the buildings K-12 to Lakota,” Spurlock said.

The student activities committee interviewed groups of students and teachers to create a comprehensive report. This included statistics from an engagement survey students took in 2008.

Board members said they want to ensure engagement activities are impacting the most students possible at the most efficient costs.

“I would think that would be really vital information as we move into tight budget situations,” Board Vice President Joan Powell said.

The committee’s recommendations were that the district should look for ideas to implement at relatively low costs. Suggestions included providing communication boards for students to coordinate rides and advertise events; pairing new or younger students with older students; surveying more students about the types of clubs or activities they want and what logistical issues they need addressed in order to attend; and that teachers exhibit 21st century skills in the classroom to impact students’ motivation to achieve better grades, which the study found directly

impacts how much they participate in school-sponsored activities.

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