

PRESS RELEASE

KANSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
2901 TROOST AVENUE, KANSAS CITY, MO 64109
816.418.7420 • KCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

KCPS Partners With New SchoolSmartKC to Support Quality Schools

April 11 launch event will showcase \$563,000 grant to help students in 10 schools

Kansas City, April 11, 2017: SchoolSmartKC launches today as an education organization dedicated to closing the achievement gap in the Kansas City public school system in the next 10 years.

A launch event with initiative leaders and partners will start 4:00 p.m. today, April 11 at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Kansas City, which is located at 1709 Walnut St. in Kansas City, Mo. All members of the news media are invited to attend.

The new nonprofit seeks to double the percentage of Kansas City schools and students that demonstrate performance at or above the state level over the next ten years. SchoolSmartKC's collaborative approach includes engagement from all education stakeholder groups in Kansas City, including parents, teachers and administrators at both KCPS and charter schools.

"Every student in the Kansas City public school system deserves the opportunity to achieve success in education, work and life after high school," said Awais Sufi, President and CEO of SchoolSmartKC.

"Working together as a community, we can focus our collective energies and financial support to expand and fortify quality schools and bring meaningful improvements in lower performing schools."

SchoolSmartKC will utilize three key strategies to close the achievement gap in Kansas City:

- **Better parent engagement:** Cultivating a robust constituency of parents that are informed about school quality and empowered to take action
- **Direct investments in schools:** Making substantial, coordinated investments to expand and fortify quality school offerings, while also supporting the improvement of schools that can and should do better
- **Support pro-student policies:** Serving as an unyielding voice insisting on a quality education for all students in the area and supporting practical policy changes needed for sustained improvement



SchoolSmart KC announced its first direct investment, an initial grant of over \$563,000 over two years, to create new support programs for low-income students at six KCPS schools and four charter schools through a research-based program called Communities in Schools (CIS).

CIS will place site coordinators at each of the ten schools to develop and coordinate services needed by low-income students to ensure they overcome both academic and non-academic barriers to achievement. Assistance provided includes support for clothing, nutrition, healthcare, transportation and more.

The KCPS schools included in the project are:

- Benjamin Banneker Elementary School
- Central Academy of Excellence
- Central Middle School
- George Melcher Elementary School
- Kansas City Neighborhood Academy (a KCPS charter school)
- Northeast High School
- Northeast Middle School

SchoolSmartKC intends to announce two additional, significant investments in the coming weeks. Combined with the CIS announcement today, SchoolSmartKC will donate roughly \$3.3 million to schools and programs in the coming weeks to help close the achievement gap.

“My goal as Superintendent is to ensure that we have quality seats for every single kid in this city and SchoolSmartKC is providing a real opportunity for us to work together to demonstrate that the education landscape in Kansas City is a model for the country,” KCPS Superintendent Mark Bedell said.

“We are excited to be part of a conversation that brings all education stakeholders together to find common ground and solutions for kids,” added Dean Johnson, Executive Director of Crossroads Academy Charter Schools.

SchoolSmartKC was incubated out of the Kauffman Foundation and is funded by the Hall Family Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation and the Kauffman Foundation. It is an independent 501(c)3 organization.