

PRESS RELEASE

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Real World Learning Gets Real Boost with \$200K Kauffman Grant *Goal of initiative is to ensure that every student graduates with 'Market Value Assets'*

Kansas City, September 24, 2020: Kansas City Public Schools is ready to move forward with its Real World Learning initiative for students thanks to a \$200,000 grant from the Kauffman Foundation.

The KCPS Board of Directors approved the grant during its virtual meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 23. The grant will allow KCPS to significantly expand Real World Learning opportunities for middle school and high school students, according to initiative coordinator Crystal Everett.

"We are so grateful to the Kauffman Foundation for this grant because it gives us the resources to truly push forward with our strategic plan to make Real World Learning part of the student experience across our district," Ms. Everett said.

The Real World Learning initiative covers a wide range of programs that are all designed to provide KCPS students with practical, hands-on experiences that help prepare them to succeed in the workforce. Superintendent Mark Bedell made this outcome a priority and built it into the school system's five-year plan.

"This Kauffman Foundation grant is a great example of how Kansas City Public Schools is building partnerships that will help all of our students become productive adults," Dr. Bedell said. "This is an investment in our entire community."

The ultimate goal of the Real World Learning initiative is that every student will attain a "Market Value Asset" before they graduate from high school. As stipulated under terms of the Kauffman Foundation grant, these assets can include work experiences (either client connected projects or internships), college credit (completion of at least nine college credit hours), entrepreneurial experiences, or industry-recognized credentials. Currently, about 30 percent of KCPS students are earning their diplomas with these types of assets.

The Real World learning initiative was launched in 2019 when Everett was hired with the help of an initial \$85,000 Kauffman Foundation grant. Since then, she and others in the district have created a plan to tie together and leverage various existing programs, launch new efforts, and make sure that students, families, and staff are aware of these opportunities.

One of the new Real World Learning programs that were launched was the Cardinal Café at Manual Career and Technical Center. Launched before the COVID-19 pandemic, this café gives Culinary Arts and Graphic Arts and Digital Media students the opportunity to operate and promote a fully functioning coffeehouse in the Manual Career Tech building.

This fall, Everett is coordinating the start of Real World Learning partnership with Community America bank to facilitate life skills and financial literacy classes for students.

"We want to make as many connections possible between professionals and our students," Everett said. "We are creating very intentional experiences and helping our students explore their community."

