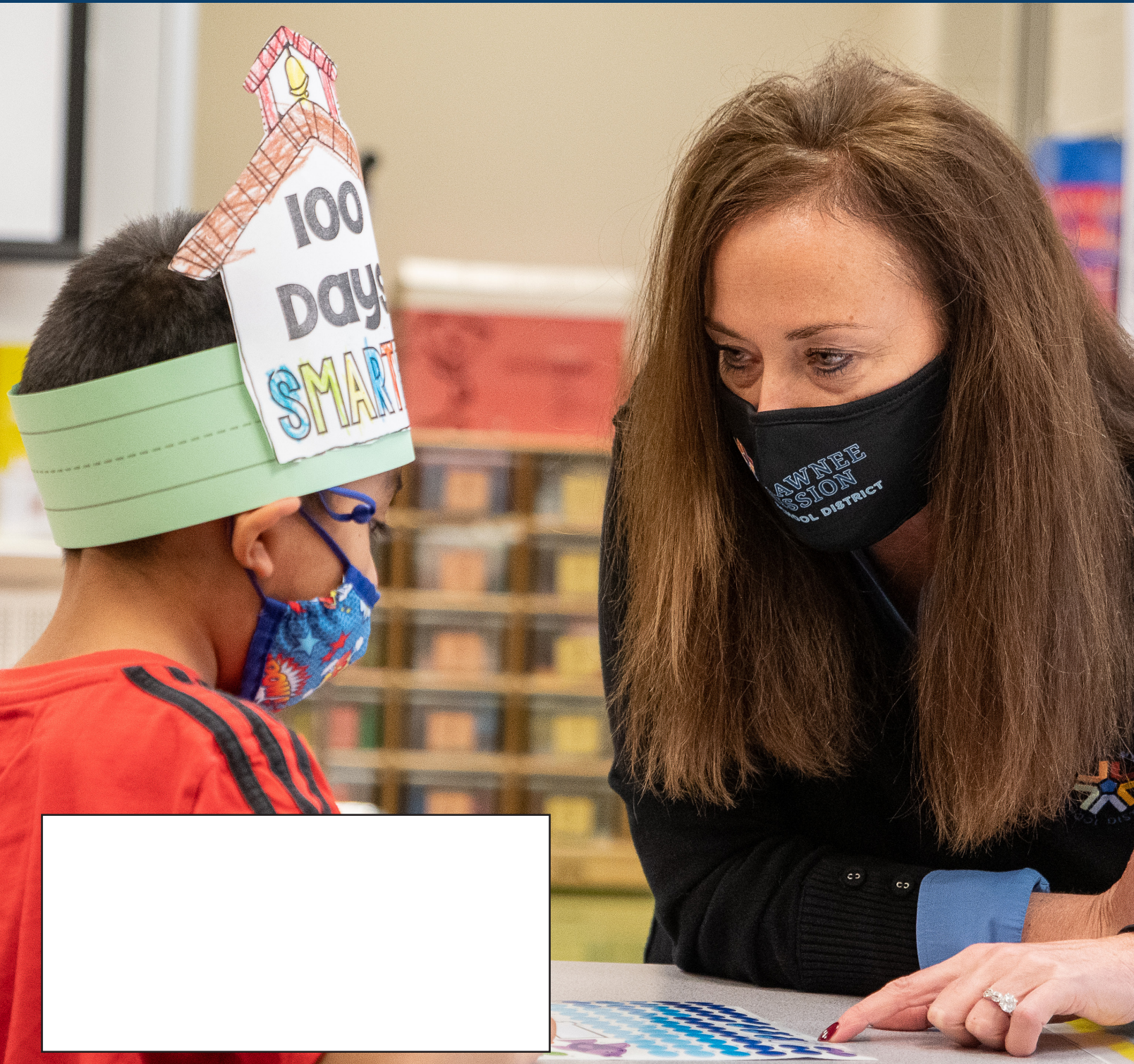


INSIDE



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPRING 2021



> Meet Incoming Superintendent
Dr. Michelle Hubbard

> SMSD Strong-
Thank you SMSD
Community

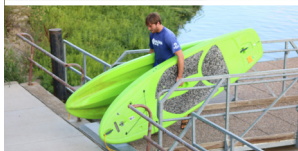
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ON THE COVER: A Shawnee Elementary student shares schoolwork with incoming superintendent Michelle Hubbard.

#SMSDStrong

Help us share the good news from our district on social media.

INSIDE

Shawnee Mission School District
8200 W. 71st Street
Shawnee Mission, KS 66204

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Thank you SMSD

A Message From the Superintendent

Shawnee Mission's rich history as an outstanding school district is well documented. Alumni span the globe and are difference-makers in our world. For us, the community and school district join as one to create a sense of place and belonging. The pandemic has underscored that point, illustrating the critical role the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) plays in making our community whole.

The pandemic has presented challenges, but is not the narrative that defines our past, nor our future. The SMSD is on an incredibly strong footing. We have a Strategic Plan, developed by our community, which provides a north star for years to come. That north star manifests itself in a commitment to three interrelated objectives: (1) every child having a personalized plan that (2) prepares them to be college and career ready with (3) the interpersonal skills they need for life success. That commitment is our destination. Arriving at our destination matters in the life of every student we serve and shapes our behavior.

The reality of that destination is omnipresent in our decision-making. The bond issue passed by our community was designed to support a system of learning that ensures every student graduates life-ready. While the bond funds buildings and technology, those are important only to the extent that they support all students in meaningful learning. Passage of the bond also provides a pathway to reduce workload for secondary teachers. Change now creates opportunities for our secondary schools to create fresh learning experiences that ensure every student masters important learning, and empowers them to develop meaningful, personalized learning plans. Work is also being done at the elementary level to identify fiscally sustainable strategies that support the teaching and learning needed to achieve our three objectives.

The past three years, we have set a foundation for the future. Our destination requires an unwavering focus on learning. The budget is balanced, past personnel cuts were restored in whole or in part, and administrative costs at the district level were reduced. We increasingly use data in public meetings to inform progress on our three objectives. Now is our opportunity and challenge to ensure schools are designed around the learners we serve. Doing so requires changing instructional practice and school design. This will require students, teachers, staff, parents, and community joining hands and using research and data to inform learning practices.

SMSD is on a journey. While the global pandemic and funding challenges have created turbulent waters, this storm too shall pass. It is important as the waters calm to focus on arriving at our destination. Our Board of Education members, past and present, have been clear on their commitment to SMSD's Strategic Plan. They have focused their efforts on ensuring equity in outcomes and making sure our fiscal house is in order to set the stage for success. Importantly, the Board of Education also selected the next superintendent, to provide a steady hand in steering us forward. Our Board of Education members, who spend countless hours volunteering for this important work, deserve our community's heartfelt thanks. I thank them for their work, and their commitment to making SMSD an even better place for all children to learn.

Life's journey has seasons of time. With my season as superintendent in Shawnee Mission drawing to a close, I want to thank you for being a wonderful, caring community. The handoff to Dr. Michelle Hubbard as the SMSD's next superintendent will be seamless, and she will do a marvelous job! I encourage each of us as community members to rally behind Dr. Hubbard and SMSD, and to support the important work of ensuring every child has the learning they need for life success. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. 🍀



Dr. Mike Fulton

Meet Dr. Michelle Hubbard

Incoming SMSD Superintendent

It is such an honor to be selected to serve as the next superintendent for the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD). As a long-time resident of one of the 14 cities in the district, I have experienced the value the school district brings to this amazing community.

One advantage I have as I begin my superintendency is that this community has provided strong direction for the district. In June 2019, the SMSD Board of Education approved a Strategic Plan, developed in partnership with the community. The plan has three interrelated objectives: Each student will have a personalized learning plan, which will prepare them for college and careers, with the interpersonal skills they need for life success. This is exactly the right work, and I am strongly committed to it, and to ensuring that ALL of our students can achieve it. We have a wonderfully diverse community, and that diversity is one of our biggest strengths. We are at our best when the “we” in “we the people” truly means all of us!

Based on local and national research, we know that our students will be returning in-person to our schools next fall. We are working on a series of strategies to ensure that our students are on-track in their learning. In the words used to warn passengers on the British underground, we are looking to Mind the Gap. To do this, we must pay attention to the data, which will tell us what our students know and are able to do, and where they need additional support. We will look at this data at the district and building levels, but we will also drill down to look at each individual student. We will personalize our work to support individual students in reaching their goals. We will put particular emphasis on strengthening our relationships with our students, so we can support them in developing personal goals, in order to assess their strengths and needs, and work collaboratively with them to develop strategies to achieve their goals.

My own personal journey is proof that relationships matter. In my life, I have many examples of the importance of relationships. My dad was the one that set high expectations for me, provided a safety net and support when I failed, and was my loudest cheerleader when I succeeded. I can also think of three teachers: Mrs. Warren, my 3rd grade teacher; Mrs. Richardson, my middle school Student Council sponsor and a special education teacher; and Mrs. Kennemer, my senior English teacher. All three of these teachers believed in me. They encouraged me to work hard and instilled in me leadership skills. Each of them took time to know and support me, and without them, I would not be the person I am today.

Each of our students needs relationships with caring and responsible adults (beyond their parents and family members) in order to be their best selves. We will focus on nurturing and supporting those relationships across our system, in order to reach our strategic plan objectives. The same is true for adult relationships, and within our Strategic Plan are strategies for giving our secondary teachers additional time to plan and collaborate, so that together, we can support our students in reaching their dreams.



Dr. Michelle Hubbard

SMSD Strong

The Shawnee Mission School District is a remarkable place. It has a rich history of success, powerful traditions, and tremendous assets. The community brings high expectations, and this district is poised to meet and exceed them. It won't be easy, and there will be many challenges to overcome. I am committed to working collaboratively with our teachers, our administrators, our Board of Education, and our community, in order to ensure that the promise of our Strategic Plan becomes real in the lives of our students. This is work that none of us can achieve by ourselves. It will take all of us working together, but I am convinced that is who we are. We are SMSD Strong! ♦



Enrolling Now for Pre-K and Kindergarten

Enrollment is open for future SMSD Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students.



Left: Kindergartners at Rhein Benninghoven Elementary engage with their teacher in a Morning Meeting. Right: Young readers at work at Rosehill Elementary.



About Pre-kindergarten

Children who will be 4-years-old on or before August 31, 2021, but are not yet kindergarten-eligible are able to enroll in this Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) program, available in select schools across the district.

Pre-k is designed to provide a stimulating environment to challenge and engage students socially, emotionally, and academically. Pre-k students are connected to learning experiences that promote social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development. They learn skills such as taking turns cooperatively, sharing, and following directions — all essential components for future success.

“One of the things that has impressed us is that the teachers look at the kids from a whole person perspective,” Janell Peterson, Merriam Park Elementary parent shared. “It’s been a big benefit to our family and has helped us to be able to navigate those big change times in our lives.”

Families should complete online enrollment, which is open now, and opportunities for families to safely visit schools and meet school staff will be scheduled by appointment this spring. “In our pre-k classrooms, children participate in active, hands-on activities to build foundational skills and prepare them successfully for kindergarten and beyond. Students engage in purposeful play, which contributes to cognitive, physical, social and emotional development,” said Dr. Leigh Anne Neal, chief of early childhood learning.



About Kindergarten

The Shawnee Mission School District offers full-day kindergarten at each of the district’s 34 elementary schools. By Kansas statute, children must be age 5 on or before Aug. 31 to be eligible for kindergarten enrollment.

In full-day kindergarten, students are able to engage, interact, and learn from caring educators and a curriculum offered so that they gain a personalized learning experience that prepares them for college and careers with the interpersonal skills they need for life success.

Opportunities for families to safely visit schools and meet school staff are taking place during scheduled times this spring.

NEW TO THE DISTRICT?

If you are a new family to the Shawnee Mission School District, visit smsd.org to access online enrollment. If you already have children enrolled and attending Shawnee Mission Schools, you should log into your Skyward Family Access account and select New Student Enrollment to enroll your incoming pre-k or kindergarten student.

“Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten learning are the cornerstones of education,” Mandy Hogan, Merriam Park kindergarten teacher expressed “Pre-k and kindergarten put the foundations in place for future learning.” ◆

SMSD STRONG

Strong Schools, Strong Community

We are grateful for the support of our Shawnee Mission School District community. This January, voters approved the 2021 bond proposal question. The \$264 million bond proposal will address strategies outlined by the community in the Strategic Plan.

"We know excellent schools are essential to strong communities," Superintendent Dr. Mike Fulton shared. "Our goal is that we

continue to be ranked among the finest school districts in the nation, employing exceptional educators who work in state-of-the-art facilities where learners achieve their full potential. We appreciate our community's support for teachers and for helping each student achieve their personal best."

The district will make a series of facilities improvements through this bond, including the rebuilding of five elementary schools. It also

will allow the district to make budgetary changes necessary to hire additional secondary teachers and better support student learning.

"We are grateful to our community for supporting the district's efforts to maintain our facilities and reduce secondary educators' workload," said Board President Heather Ousley. "We will roll up our sleeves and get to work."



Supporting Student Learning

The bond approval allows the district to shift some custodial and maintenance salaries into the capital fund. This frees up money in the operating fund to hire additional secondary teachers in order to better support student learning. The district has outlined its commitments in its Strategic Plan and the Professional Negotiated Agreement (PNA).

The Strategic Plan recommends an increase of secondary certified staff by up to 78.5 FTE, which will be carried out over the course of several years. To start this multi-year process, contingent upon the state meeting its funding obligations, the district plans to move custodial and maintenance salaries to capital funding, allowing for an initial \$2.3 million to be used for hiring teachers.



The proposed bond was developed as part of a multi-year process. Survey data collected in the summer of 2020 indicated strong support for a potential bond.

Election results showed 69.41 percent of Shawnee Mission voters approving the bond referendum.

The election office issued 180,319 ballots to registered voters in the district. The election office reported voter turnout was 27.54 percent.



Early designs of the new Westwood View (top left) and John Diemer Elementary (bottom right) school buildings. Left: Staff, families, and community members at both schools continue to engage in the design process.

Facilities Improvements

In February, the Board of Education approved a series of bond-related construction plans that will allow for initial facilities improvements to begin soon.

Elementary



John Diemer and Westwood View are the first elementary schools scheduled to be rebuilt. Staff, families, and community members have provided input and engaged throughout the design process. Construction is set to begin on these two elementary schools in the summer of 2021.

Here is the estimated timeline of future elementary rebuilds:

- Pawnee is planned for on-site construction beginning in the fall of 2021, with an estimated completion date of June 2023.
- Tomahawk and Rushton are scheduled for construction to begin in January 2023, and open in August of 2024.

The timeline is subject to change based upon any unforeseen circumstances.

Secondary



SM North, SM Northwest, and Indian Woods will receive upgrades this summer:

- Each will receive upgrades in selected restrooms
- SM North will receive a new weightroom
- SM Northwest will have upgrades to its commons area
- Indian Woods will gain an addition to the south part of the building to increase learning space

Repair and replacement of roofs and asphalt will also take place at selected schools. A large-scale update to the district's security and video control surveillance platform will take place in every building.



Leadership Shawnee Mission students engage in a collaborative game to build strengths.

Leadership Shawnee Mission Reimagined

Nimble, flexible, and positive are all traits to describe the third cohort of Leadership Shawnee Mission, Class of 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the course was rescheduled and reimagined from the original June 2020 dates and is now being held this spring. Leadership Shawnee Mission is an invitation-only development program of the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation.

“We celebrate the students’ adaptable spirit as we reinvented this year’s program,” Kim Hinkle, Shawnee Mission Education Foundation executive director said.

This semester’s seminar has evolved into a combination of virtual sessions and in-person sessions at the Center for Academic Achievement, using social distance. The seminar is facilitated by Allison Leone, director, Tucker Leadership Lab with William Jewell College.

“This group of students have shared unique experiences over the past year,” Leone noted. “They have handled a pandemic, power outages, changed

plans and quick adjustments like real champions. We appreciate their compassion in the face of adversity and appreciated the students’ reflection that ‘after everything we’ve been through today, I feel resilient. I’m ready to handle it all.’”

The scholars (as they are referred to in the workshop) have been reading “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” and completing thought exercises. They also participate in interactive exercises focusing on communication and teamwork, which have been accomplished online and in person. During the online session in February, the scholars worked on their personal mission statements and discussed Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) goals.

“For me, the most important habit is being punctual,” Philip Nunez, SM South senior, shared. “I believe arriving early shows great character and allows time to plan, introduce yourself, and get acclimated.”

The sessions also provided students

tips for interacting with people who have differing styles, Bianca Smith, SM Northwest junior shared.

“This will help me when I get a job and help me to work with others and their unique personalities,” Smith added.

The scholars participated in several activities that highlighted strengths and then participated in mini courses focusing on important leadership qualities like trust and reliability. “Even a simple game like Simon Says showed that everyone makes mistakes, and you can come back from your errors, they don’t define you,” Tobias Campbell, senior at SM West, noted. Campbell plans to take the skills he’s learning in this course to college and then apply them to a medical career.

Leadership Shawnee Mission is usually an intensive three-week summer course coupled with an internship. Instead of internships, this year students are working on client projects. Client-connected projects are one facet of Real World Learning, an initiative the school district and Foundation are working

on in partnership with the Kauffman Foundation. Small groups of scholars are working to provide solutions to a variety of issues faced in the Shawnee Mission community, including food insecurity and vaccine education. Each team of students is working with a district mentor to be a resource for helping determine a solution.

Campbell is working with Sierra Boyd, also a Shawnee Mission West student, on vaccine education. Their first step was to conduct research to find out staff and students' knowledge about the vaccine. The Shawnee Mission School District had surveyed staff members about receiving the vaccine. Boyd and Campbell designed a survey to send to students at SM West. They met with Dr. Dan Gruman, director of research and assessment, to review their survey. Gruman counseled them to focus on the purpose of each question

to ensure the survey gathered the information they were seeking.

The duo designed a four-question survey to address concerns students may have about the COVID-19 vaccine. They also encouraged students to recommend solutions about how to increase the awareness of the vaccine while keeping responses anonymous.

"Dr. Gruman was so knowledgeable and helpful and we used his suggestions as a guideline for our final survey,"



Campbell said.

The team will present their solution to vaccine education along with the other teams at a final session this spring, followed by a recognition ceremony. ♦

Distinguished Leaders Speaker Series: Senior Portraits

DISTINGUISHED LEADERS SPEAKER SERIES



A Virtual Event

[**SENIOR PORTRAITS**]

Thursday, April 29, 2021

6:30 p.m.



This year you are invited to hear from the Senior Class of 2021. In their own words, our seniors will inspire us with their personal stories of strength, hope, resilience - and their best advice for younger students.

This year's virtual event will be free and open to the public, but registration is encouraged. Please visit www.smef.org to register.



In Unscripted Year, Performing Arts Perseveres



Left: Jayce Lamb and Lillian Bowen, Shawnee Mission Northwest, record the audio tracks for a school digital production. Right: Elaine Gast, SM Northwest, acts in a digital school production.

Unable to hold their productions in the auditorium this year, SM Northwest teacher and theater director Jason Coats and his students have taken their shows to new venues.

This fall, they shared some of their first virtual productions with the community, performing an original play and a theatre classic. Due to the pandemic, students helped to create several virtual productions. This meant each actor was in charge of filming, audio, lighting, and editing to create a film of their presentation. This spring they are filming a production with remote and in-person students and are planning an outdoor presentation.

It's not what they are used to, but producing shows together in new and different formats has given some students something to look forward to and a way to stretch their skills, according to senior Lillian Bowen.

"I am so thankful that we are continuing to push ourselves to produce something," Bowen shared. "We have figured out every single way that we could perform safely, and found the right opportunity to make students such as myself, so to speak, shine their sparkle. I am thankful for our programs."

Performing arts teachers and staff across the district have been working in unscripted territory during the pandemic. Despite challenges, they have found new ways to adapt, rehearse, and perform. While tough, theater teacher Coats said he's proud of his students and has seen how they are strengthening interpersonal skill in the process.

"They are showing flexibility, communication, and leadership," Coats said. "Yes, we will have moments to bemoan the way it could be, but we also talk a lot about how we are going to move forward. I'm proud of the humanity my students have shown this whole time."

Previously, sophomore Ashley Solis-Jimenez had not been involved in theater, but saw this year as a chance to be in her first musical.

"Something I learned about this experience is to not take things for granted," Solis-Jimenez shared. "At the end of the day it's all about what lies ahead of us and make sure we

make the most out of it."

While the year is atypical, some

aspects of teaching and learning have remained the same. The work music teachers

are doing to be relevant and meet each student where they are is always something teachers work to accomplish, according to Dr. Bill Thomas, teacher and performing arts coordinator. Music students and staff have continued their work this year, whether it's in the classroom or in virtual rehearsals and concerts.

"Not everything we tried worked, but we failed forward," Thomas said. "We are all in this together. We talk a lot about picking ourselves up, persevering, and pushing through."

Sometimes in Megan Hoelscher's Indian Woods classroom, band classes had more focus on music theory, history, and individual practice rather than a group-wide rehearsal.

"These students have been real troopers," Hoelscher expressed. "Our student musicians have dug in and worked on their individual skills so when we're able to perform a concert together, they'll be ready to go. I'm so proud of how they've responded and we are very hopeful there is a chance for our kids to show the community what we've accomplished."

Students have found numerous ways to share music in Calista Martin's classroom at Sunflower Elementary this year. She's had students share desk drumming, explore movement and dance with music, and compose in mini sound studios using the Garageband app, all while learning remotely.

While incredibly challenging, this year has also been a "creativity explosion," Martin noted. "I think it will be a launching point in music education. I think we will see that students will develop skills and ideas we cannot predict. It will be a marvelous thing to watch, and I feel privileged to be a facilitator in their learning." ♦

Horizon Award Winner: Susan Specht

Susan Specht, a health and physical education teacher at Shawnee Mission Northwest, has been named a Kansas Horizon Award honoree.

Kansas Commissioner of Education Randy Watson shared the news with Specht in a virtual meeting in February. She was one of 32 teachers in Kansas to be honored for excellence in her first year as an educator.

"I am so honored to work for Shawnee Mission, and the people who have surrounded me are amazing," Specht expressed. "I tell people all the time I wouldn't have it any other way. I can't take all of the credit because of the support that has been there for me constantly. I'm so honored!" ♦



Watch the 59th Annual R&D Forum Live!

We invite the SMSD community to join us virtually for the 59th annual Research and Development (R&D) Forum on May 1. Each year it is a community-wide celebration of innovation and excellence!

This year's forum features a virtual Student Showcase and a live-streamed Pitch Finals competition: The Next Great Idea.

Visit www.smsd.org or follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@thesmsd) for links to watch SMSD students shine at this year's forum. Join in the fun by voting for your favorite entries!

We extend gratitude to Startland, who is partnering with the district to host this new pitch finals competition. Our sincere appreciation goes to the Regnier Family for 59 years of generous support for the Shawnee Mission School District R&D Forum. ♦





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