

# INSIDE



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FALL 2021



> Reading Across SMSD

> A Sense of Belonging  
for Every Student

> Seniors Earn \$2.1 Billion  
in Scholarship Offers

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ON THE COVER: David Stubblefield, associate superintendent of leadership and learning, interviews Olivia Bloomfield, Corinth fourth-grader, about how to create change.

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Help us share great news from our district on social media.

#### INSIDE

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

Inside Shawnee Mission School District is published by the Communications Team in the Shawnee Mission School District.

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# The Hub

Updates from Superintendent Dr. Michelle Hubbard

It's hard to believe winter is just around the corner. With so much going on in our district, the days fly by quickly! It is important to take time to celebrate and cheer the many achievements that occur daily in the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD).

Welcome to "The Hub," a place where I hope to share information and shine the spotlight on some of the many inspiring and exciting things happening in our schools.

There is so much that we are proud of in the district, as we continually work and innovate to fulfill the Strategic Plan's objective that each student will have a personalized learning plan that will prepare them for college and careers, with the interpersonal skills they need for life success.

In The Hub, I hope you learn something new about our incredible students and staff.



Dr. Michelle Hubbard

## Teacher of the Year



We are thrilled to recognize the SMSD Elementary Teacher of the Year, Amy Sachse, and the Secondary Teacher of the Year, Wraye Royle.

A proud graduate of the Shawnee Mission School District, Sachse teaches fourth grade at Corinth Elementary school. Sachse received a Bachelor of Arts Cum Laude in English with a Minor in Educational Studies from Davidson College in North Carolina, and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Brown University in Rhode Island.

Her goal is to cultivate a sense of belonging and inspire a love of learning for all children.

Royle teaches seventh grade math at Indian Hills Middle School. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Kansas in 2014 and a Master of Science in Education Administration from Fort Hays State University in 2018. Royle is passionate about education and models the value of being a lifelong learner for her students.

Sachse and Royle will now represent the district in the regional competition for the annual Kansas Teacher of the Year (KTOY) award, sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education.

The mission of the KTOY program is to build and utilize a network of exemplary teachers who are leaders in the improvement of schools, student performance, and the teaching profession. We are so proud to have Sachse and Royle represent the Shawnee Mission School District in the next steps of the competition. Congratulations and good luck to them both!

## Oak Park Mall Featuring Student Owned Businesses

I'm delighted to share that SM West student entrepreneurs are ready to meet your holiday shopping needs. This year, students in Tiffany Dixon's digital design and entrepreneur class have been creating their own online businesses. They've designed and created shops that offer clothing, accessories, home décor, and more. Others are working on raising money through crowdfunding platforms to cover expenses for starting their business.

Through an innovative partnership with Oak Park Mall, the student-owned businesses will be on display in a virtual storefront. The storefront will feature student owned brands and student entrepreneurs seeking startup funding. Shoppers at Oak Park Mall can use QR codes to link to the classroom website.

We are very excited about the experience and potential as the student stores will be live for Black Friday and Cyber Monday. The district is pleased to support these students and this unprecedented Real World Learning partnership. To join us in supporting these student owned businesses, visit <https://www.smwikingdesigns.com/seed-funding> or scan the QR code. We hope you will also support our students by shopping in the Oak Park Mall virtual store!



## National Merit Finalists

We are proud of the Shawnee Mission seniors named semifinalists in the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program. They took the 2020 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), the initial screen for this honor. These semifinalists represent less than 1 percent of all U.S. high school seniors.

The following students received the 2022 honor: Shawnee Mission East: Kurt Cronenwett, Sam Huntley, Kenneth McCullough, Emily Moseley, Ibrahim Sufi, and Andrew Ward. Shawnee Mission Northwest: Lincoln Bartelt, Nathaniel Hollman, and Alexa Magstadt. Shawnee Mission South: Megan Bogner and Clinton McKenzie. Shawnee Mission West: Benjamin Phillips and Tyler VanDeventer.

It was so great to see these national champions of academics joined by their family members and principals to celebrate at a fall reception. We congratulate them and are grateful to everyone who helped them achieve this accomplishment.



## COVID-19 Mitigation Update

The Shawnee Mission School District continues to monitor new cases of COVID-19 in our schools. We're pleased that mitigation efforts have supported our top priority to keep schools open and safe.

We continue to work closely with the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) to monitor the spread of the virus and follow the recommendations of our public health department with respect to addressing positive cases, presumed positive cases, and exposures.

As more students have the opportunity to be vaccinated for COVID-19, we hope to re-evaluate mitigation protocols in the future. For more information and to review the COVID-19 Data Dashboard visit: <https://bit.ly/CovidInfoSMSD>. ♦

# Reading Across SMSD

A new page-turning opportunity has launched in the Shawnee Mission School District. Read Across SMSD, led in partnership with NEA-Shawnee Mission, is engaging every school in a district-wide celebration of reading.

Each month brings a new theme featuring a new set of books. By encouraging reading for all ages, Read Across SMSD supports the district's academic goals and the district's Strategic Plan belief that our community's strength is derived from its diversity. It provides an opportunity to cultivate a culture of belonging for every student.

"Reading is one of the most powerful ways we can support student success," Superintendent Dr. Michelle Hubbard shared. "It has been so exciting to see students across the district engaging with Read Across SMSD and hearing about the amazing conversations these books are inspiring."

Here are some highlights from Read Across SMSD in the 2021-2022 school year:

## August: Read Across SMSD Launches

Readers from Overland Park Elementary School joined Dr. Michelle Hubbard, Linda Sieck, NEA-Shawnee Mission President, and librarians Emily Mihelic, Brookwood, and Gary Strout, Prairie, to kick it all off.

Since the launch, Read Across SMSD has inspired many students in the Brookwood library to share their stories, and connections to the books and listen to one another, Mihelic shared. "It is building a community of readers that can interact with the text and each other through this reading experience," she added. "I hope it continues to be a way for students to see themselves reflected in the stories and a way to build a community of readers that respect and appreciate what each other brings to the table."



## September: Embrace New Beginnings

This theme focused on the topic that even though new beginnings can be scary, they can be faced. Dr. Michelle Hubbard, in her first months as superintendent, engaged new teachers and students transitioning to new schools about their experiences. New SM Northwest Special Education teacher Bryson Dunbar spoke of facing his fears about a new job by asking questions.

"You never know everything," Dunbar shared. "When you have someone who can guide you, it can make the experience a lot easier."



## October: Create Change



Olivia Bloomfield, a fourth-grader at Corinth Elementary, helped introduce the theme by talking about how she has advocated for inclusive playgrounds in the district and across the metro. The monthly theme encouraged readers to pick up titles helping students recognize their power to change the world.

Bloomfield told David Stubblefield, associate superintendent of leadership and learning, that any student who wants to make a change should go for it.

"Everyone can make the world a better place," Olivia added. "They just need to speak up."



## November: Explore Ancestry and Identity



Books featured this month highlighted characters who make connections with their ancestors and learn more about who they are. SMSD Biotechnology students joined Board of Education member Jamie Borgman for a discussion about how stories and DNA can tell us about our ancestors and who we are.

"DNA can tell us what color eyes your grandma has. But, it can't tell us what her favorite color is," Elaine Gast, SM Northwest sophomore and Biotechnology student added. "One way to learn more about ourselves is through stories people tell us and books."



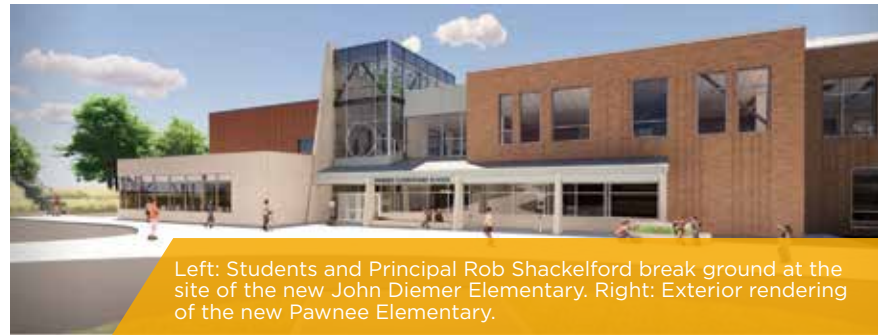
Read Across SMSD

## Join Read Across SMSD

- » Find a monthly theme and list of books at <https://bit.ly/ReadAcrossSMSD>.
- » Post your participation on social media using #ReadAcrossSMSD.
- » Follow the district @thesmsd on Facebook and Twitter.
- » Share upcoming events and activities in SMSD schools with the Communications Team: [adcommun@smsd.org](mailto:adcommun@smsd.org).

# SMSD STRONG

Strong Schools, Strong Community



Left: Students and Principal Rob Shackelford break ground at the site of the new John Diemer Elementary. Right: Exterior rendering of the new Pawnee Elementary.

As they returned to classes this fall, Shawnee Mission students across the district encountered the results of many exciting building upgrades and projects. In January 2021, the Shawnee Mission community voted to pass a \$264 million bond referendum that students, staff, and the community will benefit from these upgrades for years to come.

The passing of the bond supports the goal for the Shawnee Mission School District 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.

## Elementary Rebuilds

Five elementary schools in the Shawnee Mission School District will be rebuilt. Construction is currently underway on the new Westwood View and John Diemer elementary schools.

## Projects and Upgrades

This summer, new inclusive playgrounds were installed at Belinder, Overland Park, Prairie, Roesland and Sunflower Elementary schools.

Work has continued on a weight room addition and restroom renovations at Shawnee Mission North High School. Shawnee Mission Northwest's restrooms and commons are being remodeled. Indian Woods Middle School is undergoing a restroom remodel and the construction of a three-story addition.

Multiple buildings have received heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) updates, roof repair and replacement, asphalt repair and overlay, security upgrades, furniture replacement, and carpet and floor tile upgrades over the summer.

We thank the entire SMSD community for supporting student success through the bond approval. This support is essential to the continued strength of SMSD schools. For more information on bond construction work visit: [www.smsd.org/bond-2021](http://www.smsd.org/bond-2021).

## Upgrades Planned for 2022

Looking ahead to 2022, construction projects and upgrades will continue across the district.

TYPE OF UPGRADE	LOCATIONS
Elementary School Rebuild	Pawnee
Middle School and High School Learning Space Upgrades	Westridge, Horizons, Shawnee Mission East
District Building Learning Space Upgrades	Shawnee Mission Early Childhood Education Center (SMEC-EC)
Playground Replacement	Highlands, Rising Star, Rosehill, Corinth
Furniture Replacement	Indian Woods, Shawnee Mission East, Shawnee Mission West
HVAC	Indian Woods, Shawnee Mission East, Christa McAuliffe, Brookridge, Corinth
Asphalt Repair and Overlay	Belinder, Crestview, East Antioch, Highlands, Prairie, Roesland, Rushton, Santa Fe Trail, Tomahawk, Indian Hills, Shawnee Mission East, Horizons
Roof Repair and Replacement	East Antioch, Overland Park, Indian Hills, SM Northwest

# Shawnee Mission's Portrait of a Graduate

The Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) has a vision for what every student will know and be able to do on their graduation day called the "Portrait of a Graduate." It highlights key skills and attributes critical to life success.

The Portrait was developed in the 2019-20 school year by students, parents, educators, counselors, and partners from business and industry. They represented all district feeder patterns and included individuals whose native language is not English. They rooted their work in the district's Strategic Plan objective: Each student will have a personalized learning plan that will prepare them for college and careers, with the interpersonal skills they need for life success.

A strength of the Portrait is that it focuses on skills beyond core academic subjects that are needed for life success, shared Dr. Ryan Flurry, principal of career education campuses and coordinator of career and technical education. "Those academic skills are one piece of a larger puzzle when it comes to preparing students for their future," Flurry noted. The Portrait of a Graduate is designed to support students from Pre-K through graduation, and educators will use this resource as a guide in every school.

## Personalized Learning (Broad Values)

All components of the Portrait are achieved through personalized learning. In the Shawnee Mission School District, personalized learning is defined as "learning which places the whole child at the center of instruction and is informed by strong educator/student/family/community relationships to provide equity and choice in time, place, path, pace, and demonstration of learning."

In August, three SMSD students who helped develop the Portrait and definition of personalized learning helped present the concepts to the Shawnee Mission Board of Education. Tobi Oyetunji, Indian Hills eighth-grader, Lida Padgett, SM East sophomore, and Jocelyn Tovar, Hocker Grove eighth-grader, provided details about what personalized learning will mean for students.

"A key part is giving students choice and voice in how they demonstrate their learning," Tovar added.

Shawnee Mission's definition of personalized learning means students, families, and educators will collaborate to support student learning. It is supported by targeted instruction which uses a variety of ways to provide feedback and inform instruction. Personalized learning is also supported by student ownership and reflection – giving the students themselves opportunities to set, track, and evaluate their own goals.

The Portrait of a Graduate bolsters district efforts to work in partnership, to serve for students as the bridge to unlimited possibilities yet to be discovered.



### CITIZENSHIP

- » Community service
- » Social justice awareness
- » Multi-lingual
- » Financial fitness
- » Creates value for others
- » Values differences

### INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- » Open-endedness
- » Teamwork with structure
- » Well-practiced social skills
- » Embedded life skills
- » Emotional intelligence
- » Leadership skills and capacity

### COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

- » Moves from acquisition of knowledge to application of knowledge in real world setting
- » Success measured by competency, not seat time
- » Integrates content across subject areas
- » Market Value Assets Attainment (Industry Credentials, College Credit, Work-Based Learning, Entrepreneurial Experiences)
- » Courses taken align with student interests and aptitudes

### PERSONAL RESILIENCE

- » Learns independently
- » Explores known topics deeper
- » Health and wellness for future life needs
- » Drive/Passion
- » Lifelong learner
- » Self reflection; seek and use feedback
- » Advocate for self and others

### PERSONALIZED LEARNING

- » This is achieved through personalized learning, defined as learning which places the whole child at the center of instruction and is informed by strong educator/student/family/community relationships to provide equity and choice in time, place, path, pace and demonstration of learning.



## Seniors earn \$2.1 Billion in Scholarship Offers

Feelings of shock, amazement, and gratitude were shared by many Shawnee Mission students and families as the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation kicked off their annual Scholarship Shawnee Mission program. This year, the program surprised more than 1900 seniors in the SMSD with scholarship offers totaling over \$2.1 billion.

“When I tell you I’m so overjoyed I’ve been crying for hours, I mean it! Words cannot express my emotions,” said Shawnee Mission parent Myisha Weatherspoon after learning her son, SM West senior Jayden Ford, earned more than \$400,000 in scholarship offers. “This will literally change my son’s life.”

SM South senior Graciela Albarran-Bautista expressed her gratitude to the district and the Foundation for expanding possibilities after high school. “I’ll be the first in my family to go to college,” she shared. “This is a big deal.”

Currently in its third year, the Scholarship Shawnee Mission program connects Shawnee Mission students to scholarship opportunities, explained Ed Márquez, program officer of the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation.

As part of the program, parents opt in to share their student’s data with participating colleges and universities. The schools make scholarship offers to students who match their

admissions and scholarship criteria. This year, 45 colleges and universities participated in the program, offering a total of 45,765 scholarships to Shawnee Mission seniors.

“We want students to become aware of opportunities they may not have known about or considered. If they look at these options and see them as a potential avenue for furthering their education, it may improve their ability to make a better decision on the front end of enrollment,” shared Márquez.

Foundation Board member Angelique Rodriguez-Gunion expressed, “I personally know kids that only want to be local, but when they see the scholarship offers, they start to think, ‘oh! I could go to Texas, or Arkansas, or Iowa.’”

The scholarship announcements were made at assemblies in the gymnasium at each Shawnee Mission high school. After receiving their offers, students were encouraged to visit with college representatives who were set up at stations lining the gymnasiums.

“I think this is a great opportunity for students to see what’s out there,” expressed SM South Principal Dr. Todd Dain. “A lot of students, even at this stage as seniors, are undecided on where they’re going. It’s also a great opportunity for the colleges to reach students they may not see otherwise. It’s really a win-win.”



Left: SM North senior Krystal Montoya meets with a college representative. Right: Shawnee Mission Education Foundation presents scholarships to seniors at SM South.



Watching students be surprised with their scholarship offers was a special moment, shared SM South college advisor Lucy Coopman.

“Especially for those kids who do have financial need, it’s heartwarming to see them realize ‘yes, college probably is possible for me,’” Coopman added.

Breaking down barriers and opening opportunities is the purpose of the program, according to Shawnee Mission Education Foundation executive director Kim Hinkle. “We believe that all students should be recruited by colleges and universities without the financial and psychological barriers that are often an implicit part of the college application process,” she shared.

Long-term, the Foundation’s goal is to expand the diversity of the geography, size, and types of postsecondary schools participating in the program.

“We would like colleges in all 50 states to be competing for our Shawnee Mission students. By having more options and opportunities we’ll better help students find a personalized path that will lead them to success after graduation,” shared Hinkle.

Still weighing his college options, SM West senior Jayden Ford hopes to play college football and baseball while studying to be a mental health counselor.

In the meantime, his mother said she sees another benefit as a result of the Scholarship Shawnee Mission program. “Since he received the scholarship offers, he has been walking around with an extra boost of, ‘I can do anything!’” shared Weatherspoon. “He is so happy, grateful, proud, and appreciative.”



Seniors at SM North visit with college representatives.

# A Sense of Belonging for Every Student

*How Equity Practices are Improving to Help Students Realize Their Full Potential*



Left: Eighth-graders Charles Gray, Dexter Stephens, and Benjamin Taylor work with Fran Opheim, performance teacher at Indian Hills Middle School. Right: Shawnee Mission Northwest senior Naudia Thurman at work in the classroom.



It's something Luis Montanez looks forward to every day he goes to school. At SM North, the junior can count on students and teachers greeting him in the hallway, asking how he is doing, and through these practices, showing they care.

"It's important," Montanez shared. "If I didn't feel welcome I might wonder if I had to go to school. But, instead this gives me motivation to start a new day. Everything goes better when you have that sense of belonging."

That sense he describes is something educators across the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) are working to build for every student.

It is a key outcome of Strategy 2 outlined in the district's Strategic Plan: "We will relentlessly create a fully unified equitable and inclusive culture." When that culture is realized, it results in a sense of belonging for every student, shared Dr. Tyrone Bates Jr., diversity, equity, and inclusion coordinator.

"We want every student to know that school is a space where you matter," he added. "We want them to know we see you. It's quintessential to building a culture in classrooms so learning can happen."

## Improving Practice Supports District Objective

Strategy 2 supports the district's strategic objective that 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.

Over the past two years, in support of this objective, the district has engaged in Corwin's Deep Equity work to improve its practices. It has been specifically designed and customized in order to strengthen the district's ability to give every student the best chance for success.

This professional development invites individuals to challenge past assumptions about who students are, and to develop ways to identify and understand their needs. These steps are helping educators and staff develop stronger classroom and school cultures, in order to help students feel connected to teachers and other students and build pride in their school. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs outlines, basic needs like feelings of safety and belonging must be met

before academic accomplishment and achieving full potential can be realized.

Every adult in the school building plays a significant role in creating that environment, Bates shared. This professional development has encouraged staff to ask if our schools truly are places where students and staff feel connected, and to continue to ask how they can be improved.

## Building Connections at School

In classrooms across the district there are numerous ways educators are working to foster a culture of belonging for students. In Mill Creek, fourth-grade teacher Kacy Thurman's classroom she provides books that represent the student population. Thurman works with students to use people-first language, which places the name of a person before stating their disability. Many elementary schools hold morning meetings, a practice she said is "crucial" to the start of every day. In morning meetings, a student is greeted, gets to share something about themselves, engages in team building games, and discusses the daily agenda. It often provides ways for teachers and classmates to learn about each other's diverse backgrounds and incorporate everyone's needs into the classroom.

"Fostering belonging in our classrooms means that teachers and administrators take a step back and let students teach us about themselves," Thurman added. "Through morning meetings, students start out as classmates and become deeply connected to one another."

At Shawanoe Elementary, the school also hosts vertical group meetings. These bring together students of all grade levels and an adult other than the classroom teacher. These groups at Shawanoe help students build relationships with their peers and get to know another trusted adult they can rely upon, according to special education teacher LaKrystal McKnight.

"Everyone deserves to feel safe at school," she added. "Every student deserves to be included, seen, valued, and heard. When students feel that they belong, they don't have to spend energy hiding who they are, having to defend or protect who they are. They can instead focus on learning."

## When Students Feel A Sense of Belonging

This fall, to provide a sense of how work in support of

Strategy 2 is impacting students, two students were asked to reflect on their experience for the Board of Education. They were asked "What are adults doing to make you feel like you belong at your school?"

Charles Gray shared that at Indian Hills Middle School, he appreciates the clubs and programs available. The eighth-grader notices students helping each other out and feels the same support from teachers.

"When I walk down the halls of my school I feel like I can go up to any of my teachers for help and they'll be right on it and help me," Gray added.

For Naudia Thurman, that sense of belonging has been reinforced by her ability to participate in a variety of student organizations at Shawnee Mission Northwest. The senior thanked her principal for encouraging her involvement in clubs like the Black Student Union, and for the opportunity to host assemblies, like one focused on Black History Month. This experience has led to further involvement and recognition, including a Princeton Prize in Race Relations.

"I feel like they helped me as an individual to grow," Thurman shared.

Shawnee Mission high school teachers and student leaders often encourage students to join activities and clubs to strengthen the school environment. That is the case at Shawnee Mission Northwest, principal Dr. Lisa Gruman shared.

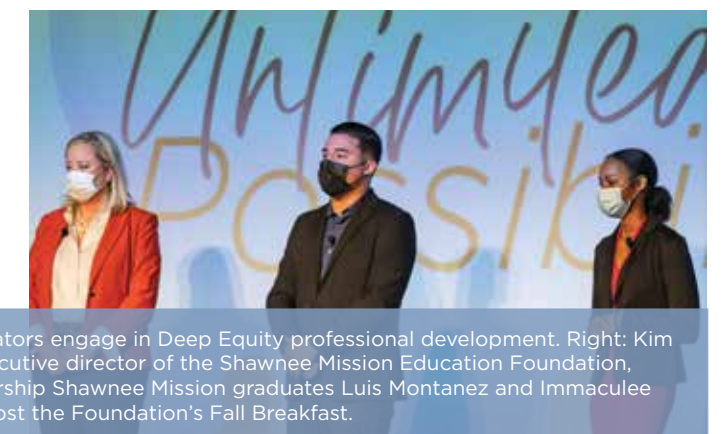
"Our purpose as educators and school leaders is to create the best school culture and environments for our students to thrive and discover their potential, learn more about who they want to be, as they transition to their next step," Gruman expressed. "These opportunities are integral to that purpose."

It gave Montanez, SM North junior, an added sense of purpose, he said, to be nominated by a teacher to be a part of the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation's Leadership Shawnee Mission program. Using the skills he has learned in this program and as a LINK leader (a mentor for freshmen at his school) he said he wants to help students feel the same sense of belonging he feels.

"I try to talk to them, make conversations with them, and try to do what my teachers did for me," he shared. "If they come in and there is an empty seat, I'm like 'This is your chair.' I don't want them to feel like they are just another student. I try to make them feel welcome." ◆



Left: Educators engage in Deep Equity professional development. Right: Kim Hinkle, executive director of the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation, and Leadership Shawnee Mission graduates Luis Montanez and Immaculee Muragizi host the Foundation's Fall Breakfast.



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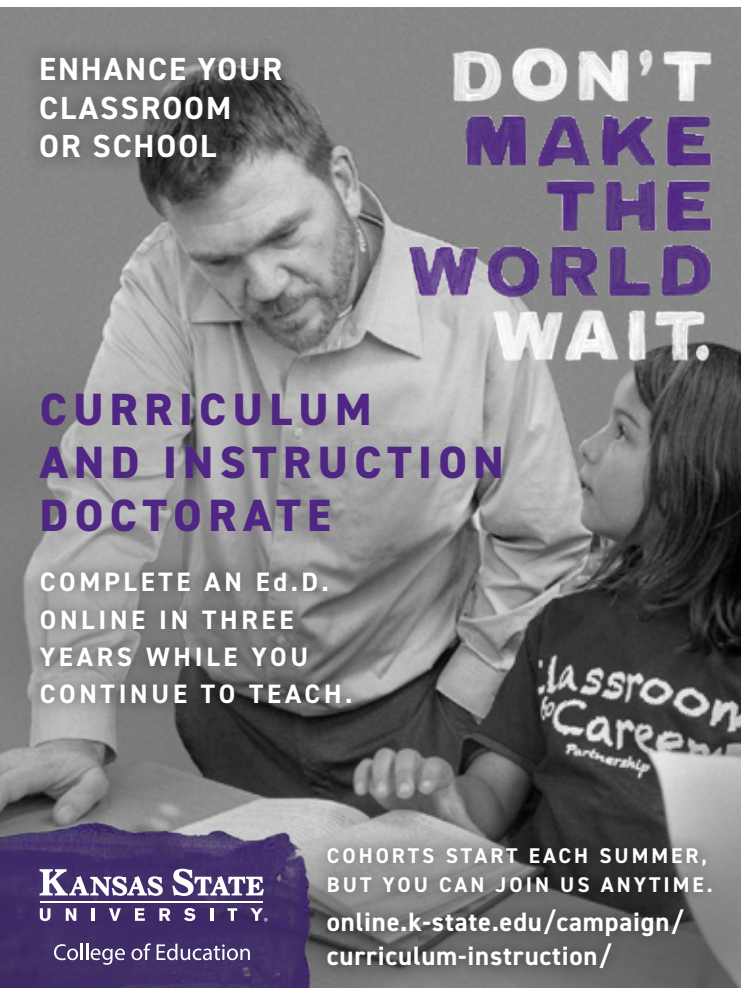
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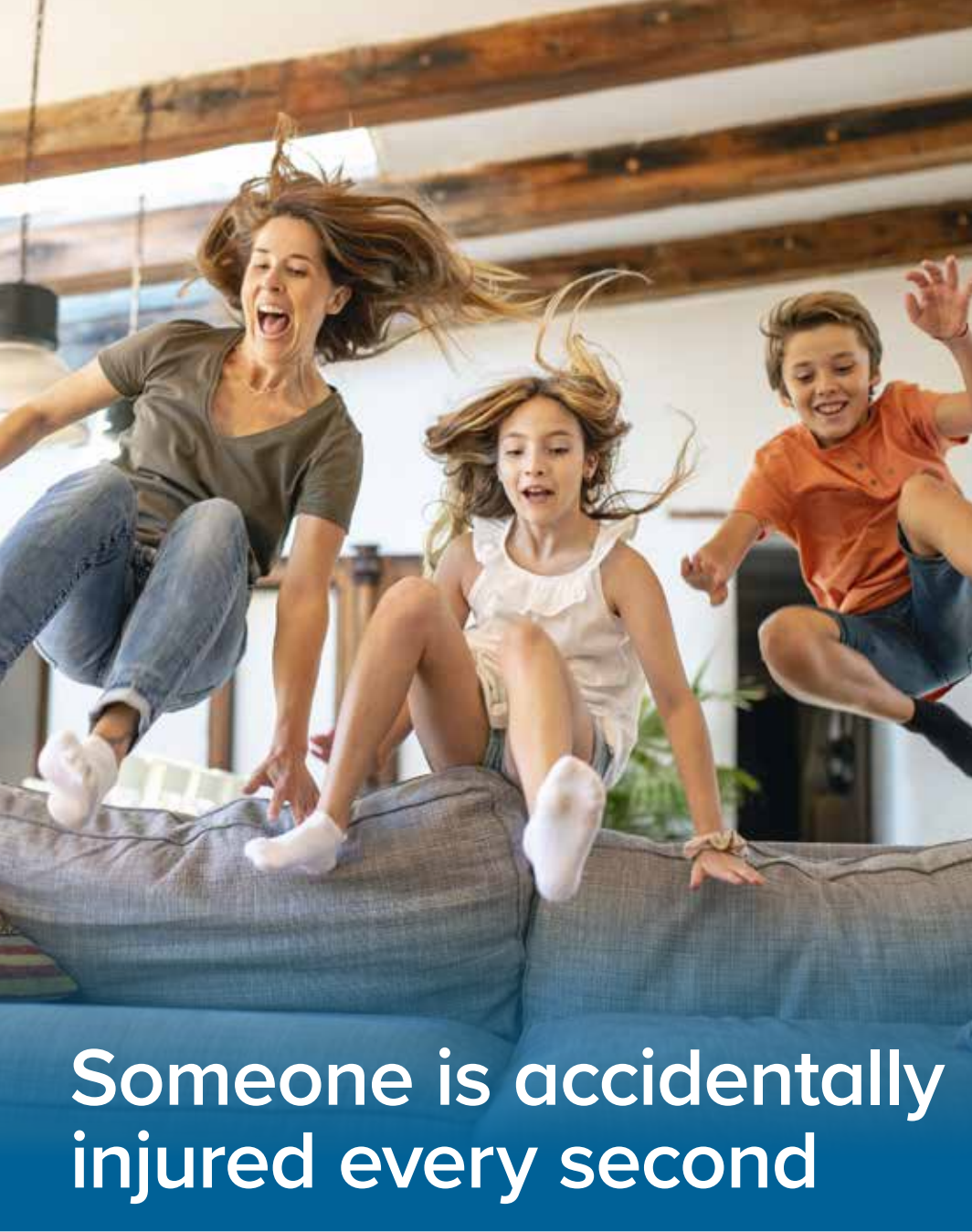
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