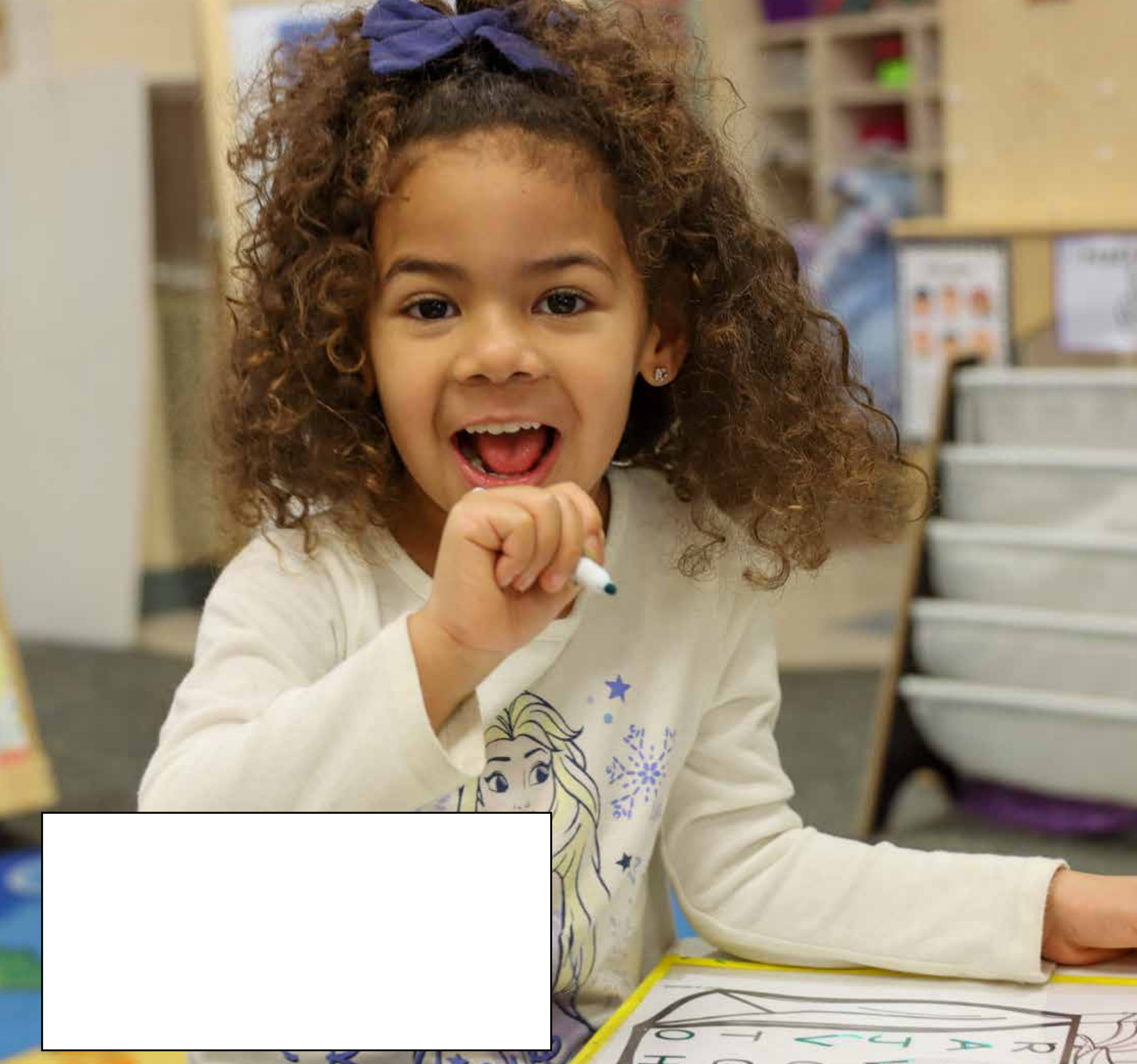


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SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPRING 2023



> Enrollment Open for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

> You're Invited to the R&D Forum

> Students Shoot for the Stars with NASA HUNCH

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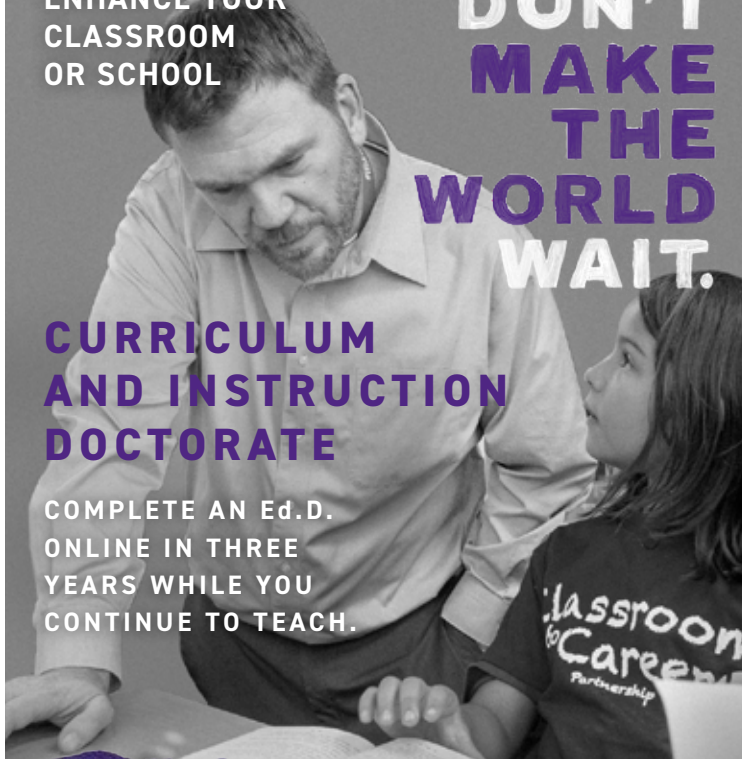
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ON THE COVER: A Pre-Kindergarten student practices writing at Nieman Elementary.

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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

We are in the final days of the 2022-2023 school year. Before the year concludes, there will be several opportunities for us to celebrate all that has been accomplished as One Shawnee Mission.

This April our entire community is invited to celebrate student innovation and achievement at the district's 61st Research and Development Forum. You can find all the details on page nine. It is always fun to see the results of what our students and staff achieve throughout the year.

We also look forward to honoring the Class of 2023 as commencement ceremonies are held in May. It's such a great time to think about how staff members, families, and our extended community have helped each graduate reach this point. Our team here in Shawnee Mission plays such an important role in helping each student reach success. I'm proud of what we have accomplished this year and look forward to what is next.



Dr. Michelle Hubbard

Academic Achievements

Here is a look at some of our recent student and staff achievements:

Horizon Award: Jordyn Burke, a Kindergarten teacher at Corinth Elementary School, was honored as one of the best new teachers in the state. She is a winner of the Horizon Award, an honor presented to a select number of educators in Kansas who have performed in a way that distinguishes them as outstanding in their first year of teaching.



Corinth Principal Michelle Lord, Horizon Winner Jordyn Burke, and Superintendent Dr. Michelle Hubbard.

Seal of Biliteracy: The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) awarded 111 Shawnee Mission seniors, representing 10 different languages, with the Seal of Biliteracy. This impressive achievement recognizes students who have attained proficiency in English and one or more world languages. Earning the seal is a statement of accomplishment, and an acknowledgment of student readiness for college and career and for engagement as a global citizen.

KMEA: The Shawnee Mission West High School Aurora Choir and the Shawnee Mission West High School Chorale were selected to perform at the 2023 Kansas Music Educators Association (KMEA) In-Service Workshop. More than 60 students were also selected to perform in honor groups at the state-wide event.

Presidential Scholar Candidates: The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program named five Shawnee Mission seniors as candidates. The candidates are: Natalie E. Anderson, SM East; John Lavergne, SM South; Owen McGlynn, SM East;

Greta Stechschulte, SM East; and Coleman Stephens, SM East. These students were selected among about 5,000 eligible candidates in the 2023 program from nearly 3.7 million 2023 high school seniors across the country.

Polar Plunge: This February, team One Shawnee Mission supported Special Olympics Kansas at a local Polar Plunge event. They braved below-freezing temperatures to take a dip in Lake Olathe. This team was honored with a plaque for being the Team with the Most Participants. They also raised more than \$3,000 to support Special Olympics athletes. Across Shawnee Mission, students, families, and staff benefit from opportunities created through Special Olympics. One example in the Shawnee Mission School District is Unified Sports, an opportunity that joins students of all abilities on the same team for competition experiences.



Team One Shawnee Mission at the Polar Plunge.

Appreciation Week: We invite our entire community to take time to thank all who serve Shawnee Mission School District students. From May 8-May 12, 2023, we will observe an appreciation week for all staff members. It is a chance to take time to show how much these individuals do to support each student's success. We'll share ideas for joining the celebration this spring on smsd.org.



Read Across SMSD



Dr. Darren Dennis, chief academic officer, and Shawnee Mission Northwest student journalists introduce the March Read Across SMSD theme.

Each month Shawnee Mission encourages reading for all ages, and joins Read Across SMSD in support of the district's strategic plan belief that the community's strength is derived from its diversity. Modeled after the national Read Across America program, every month Read Across SMSD features books for all ages and explores a monthly theme.

Our theme in March is "Bring Communities Together." The theme highlights how powerful stories can be in helping everyone to be seen and heard in a community. Scan the QR code to watch Dr. Darren Dennis, chief academic officer, join Shawnee

Mission Northwest student journalists to introduce "Dream Street" by Tricia Elam Walker and Ekuia Holmes.

We invite everyone in our community to Read Across SMSD. Visit smsd.org/about/read-across-smsd to connect to more resources. Post your participation with #ReadAcrossSMSD! 📖



Enrollment Open for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten



A look at Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten in the Shawnee Mission School District.

As a parent and classroom volunteer, Kali Cruz has seen how much her son Mateo has grown in his Pre-Kindergarten classroom.

He's made new friends during small groups and center time, engaged in hands-on learning, and prepared for Kindergarten every step of the way.

"There is so much being taught in the classroom," Cruz shared. "They are learning how to write their name, letter sounds, rhyming. There is so much that is being taught that they are going to use next year!"

How to Enroll

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten enrollment is open now in the Shawnee Mission School District for the 2023-2024 school year!

Shawnee Mission provides hands-on learning opportunities with qualified educators that help students discover unlimited possibilities for the future.

Visit smsd.org or scan the QR code below for links to enroll. Enrollment must be completed on a desktop, laptop, or tablet. For help with Pre-K enrollment, please contact the early childhood office at 913-993-6441. For help with Kindergarten enrollment, please contact your area school.

Pre-Kindergarten: Open for children 4-years-old on or before Aug. 31, 2023 (and not Kindergarten eligible)

Pre-Kindergarten is a tremendous opportunity for all four-year-old students, expressed Nieman teacher Amber Pagan.

"Pre-Kindergarten is a great place for us to start getting students ready and prepared for Kindergarten, and help enrich all they already know," she added. "I am so proud of the growth

these students make socially, emotionally, and academically."

Pre-Kindergarten is a half-day program in Shawnee Mission. Fee and no-fee options will be offered in the 2023-2024 school year. Sessions are held from 8:10 – 10:55 a.m. and 12:25 – 3:10 p.m. Wraparound care options are available at some sites through Johnson County Park and Recreation and YMCA.

Kindergarten: Open for children 5-years old on or before Aug. 31, 2023

Kindergarten provides a strong foundation for future learning for all students, according to Georgia Klos, East Antioch Kindergarten teacher.

"Students are able to build on their skills and it helps them in first grade, fifth grade, and all the way through high school. It starts in these early years."

SMSD offers free, full-day Kindergarten for every student. The elementary school day takes place from 8:10 a.m. – 3:10 p.m. In-person welcome sessions will be coming up at individual schools. Information will be available about the Jump Start to Learning program, a three-week summer offering for incoming Kindergarten students.

Our school communities look forward to welcoming future Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students and we look forward to working with families in support of each child's success. ♦

Scan here for more info or visit smsd.org/families/enrollment.



Summer Enrichment and Signature Program Classes

Kick off a summer of discovery, learning, and fun! Summer Enrichment gives students a chance to explore classes like art, music, technology, science, sports, and more.

Summer Enrichment is open to students in Pre-K (age 4 by June 1) through seventh grade. Summer Enrichment will be held at Westridge Middle School, 9300 Nieman, Overland Park.

Signature Program satellite classes are held at the Center for Academic Achievement, 8200 W. 71st St., for students in sixth and seventh grade in the 2022-2023 school year. These classes give students a chance to explore unique Signature Program classes like Camp Care (focused on medical health), culinary arts, and summer farm enrichment (learning how food is grown and harvested).

Weekly classes are offered June 5 - July 14, 2023. No classes will be held June 19 or the week of July 4. Morning and afternoon sessions are available, as are early care and lunch care options. Scan the QR for more information or visit smsd.org/academics/summer-programs. ♦



Student leaders demonstrate medical health skills in the Camp Care Summer Enrichment class.

Summer Meals

Free meals for children, ages 1-18, will be offered at Summer Lunch Bunch at the locations below. Adults will be able to purchase a lunch for \$5 (cash only).

Summer Lunch Bunch will be dine-in only (grab and go will not be available).

Menus and more information about Summer Lunch Bunch will be posted at: smsd.org/about/departments/food-service/summer-lunch-bunch. ♦

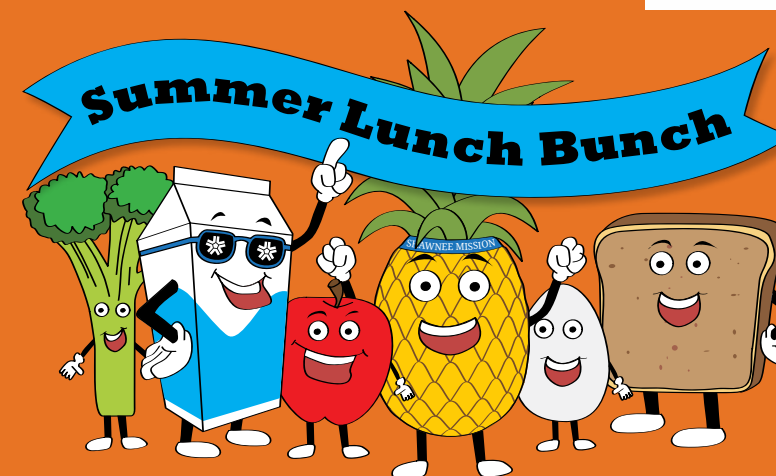


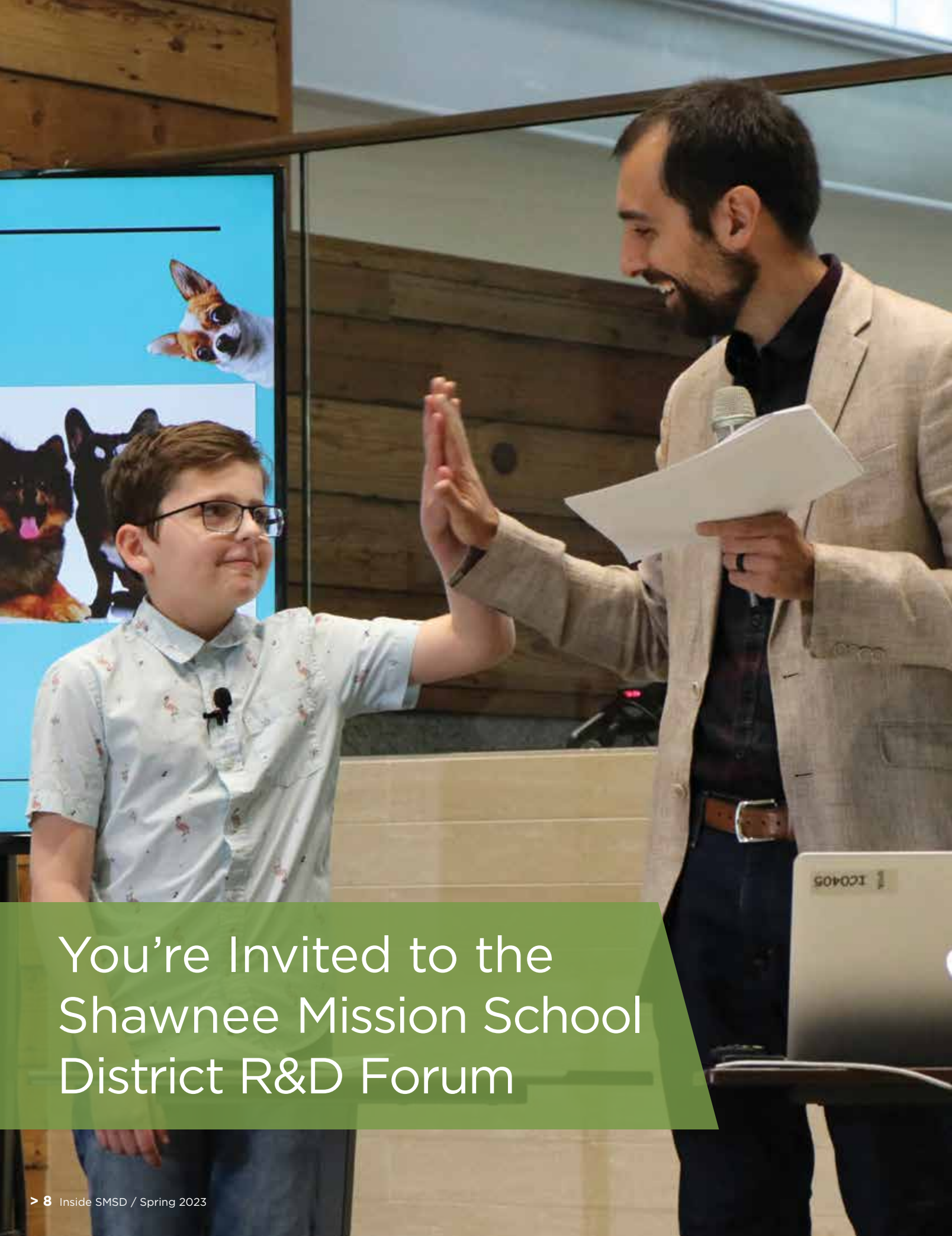
Dates: June 5, 2023 - July 28, 2023 (closed June 19 and July 4)

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Locations:

- » Comanche Elementary School
8200 Grant Ave.
- » Shawnee Mission North High School
7401 Johnson Drive
- » Westridge Middle School
9300 Nieman Road
- » Rosehill Elementary School
9801 Rosehill Road
- » Shawanoe Elementary School
11230 W. 75th St.





You're Invited to the Shawnee Mission School District R&D Forum

Student Showcase

The student showcase features student art, science, and career and technical education projects created throughout the year.

Open House at the Center for Academic Achievement (CAA), 8200 W. 71st St.
4 to 7 p.m. April 25
4 to 7 p.m. April 26
4 to 7 p.m. April 27

Entries will be on display at the CAA, with a reception for all entrants and families. There will also be music performances by student groups from across the district!

Next Great Idea Live Pitch Competition

Student innovators will present their ideas to judges for a chance to win cash prizes and turn their ideas into reality.

The contest will be livestreamed so the community can watch and support.

The event will be from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday April 29, 2023.

Visit smsd.org for a link to watch the event and to cast a live vote for the People's Choice Award. Voting will take place after the final pitch. 🍀

Checking in with 2021 Winner Nathan Mestel

Within a year, Nathan Mestel turned his idea to address food waste into a reality. The Shawnee Mission West freshman shared his work with community members at the Lenexa Farmer's Market.

"If you have an idea and you want to go out there and make an impact in the world- there are so many opportunities to go out there and impact the world one little bit at a time," Mestel reflected.





Left: The newly constructed John Diemer Elementary. Right: John Diemer students walk the halls of the new building.

Earn Your Diploma with Project Finish

SMSD STRONG

Strong Schools, Strong Community

The first day of the second semester was exciting for John Diemer Elementary students as they started classes in their brand new building. Students were amazed at the beautiful spaces designed just for them.

“Being in a fun place like this, with all the colors and the seats outside, it will help me focus more when I’m in a comfy environment,” shared fifth grader Eli Schap.

The school was rebuilt using funds from the \$264 million bond referendum approved by voters in January 2021. The two-story building features flexible learning spaces for student collaboration, outdoor classrooms, and maker labs, and has been built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

(LEED) certification standards.

John Diemer Elementary is the second rebuilt elementary school to open as a result of the bond. See below for a status on elementary school rebuilds and other projects that are underway or recently completed.

Elementary School Rebuilds

- **Westwood View-** The new Westwood View Elementary opened in August 2022.
- **John Diemer-** The new John Diemer Elementary opened in January 2023.
- **Pawnee-** Pawnee is currently under construction, with plans for the opening of the new building at the start of the 2023-2024 school year.
- **Rushton-** Rushton is currently under construction, with an estimated completion date of August 2024. The school community celebrated the start of the project with a groundbreaking this spring.
- **Tomahawk-** Construction is expected to start in January 2024, following a community input process.

Middle and High Schools

- **Shawnee Mission East High School-** Construction is complete on an addition providing a large

classroom/collaboration space, an elevator and restroom renovations. Landscaping will be added this spring.

- **Westridge Middle School-** Renovations were completed in December. Westridge now has two new collaboration spaces and an outdoor classroom was added to the school’s courtyard. The main office, counselor offices, and conference rooms were remodeled. Restroom renovations were also completed.
- **Horizons-** Renovations on the school cafeteria and commons area were completed in December. Restrooms in the building will be renovated this summer.

District Building Learning Space Upgrades

- **Shawnee Mission Early Childhood Education Center-** A second phase of renovations will provide new flooring in classrooms, new ceilings, lights in corridors, new casework for classrooms, and restroom remodeling. Phase two of this renovation is scheduled to take place this summer.

Visit smsd.org/bond-2021 to follow bond progress. ♦

It’s never too late to finish your high school diploma, according to Project Finish coordinator Matt Crandall. “A high school diploma can be life-changing and through Project Finish we are here to help,” expressed Crandall.

Project Finish is a tuition-free online diploma completion program for adults living within the boundaries of the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD). Candidates who complete the program earn an SMSD diploma.

Last March, Rachel, a stay-at-home mother of three, decided it was time to achieve a long-time goal and complete the requirements to earn her diploma. Through an online search she discovered Project Finish.

She met with the Project Finish instructors for a transcript review, and learned she would need to complete a half credit of English 12 and two semesters of geometry.

She enrolled in the program feeling a little trepidatious, but also determined to succeed. “I felt that I was jumping with both feet into dark water, but also, ‘I think I can do this and it’s time.’”

The Project Finish program provides students access to lessons and course materials 24 hours a day, seven days a week through a digital platform. Participants can work at their own pace and at a time most convenient for them. Rachel shared she found the flexibility of the program to be a benefit.

“The great thing is that you can login when you have time,” she added. “I was able to weave this into my busy schedule and still get the kids to sports, music lessons, and all of that.”

The Project Finish program is centralized at Horizons High School, located at 5900 Lamar Ave. Participants who need access to a computer may use the Horizons computer lab to work on coursework. The computer lab is staffed by a Project Finish instructor who is also available to answer questions and provide support.

Rachel says the instructors were helpful and encouraging and she made every effort to go in to the lab twice a week for tutoring support. “There were times it was overwhelming, but they told me no-one has ever failed and that I wasn’t going to be the first one.”

Mike Isaacson, principal of Horizons and Project Finish,



explained that it is powerful to watch students gain the self-confidence that comes with achieving this life-changing goal.

“It is attainable if they are willing to put in the hard work to make that dream come true,” noted Isaacson.

This December- a day before her birthday- Rachel passed her final exam, completing all the requirements to officially earn her high school diploma. Accomplishing her goal and receiving her diploma was an emotional experience.

“I’ve carried shame about it for so long, and I never felt as worthy. Now I have my diploma and I feel proud of myself because I know I’m capable. It’s something no one can take away from me.”

Earning her diploma has also been the first step to a new career. Rachel recently passed the national and state tests to fulfill a dream of becoming a licensed real-estate agent.

Achieving her goals has taken hard work and determination, and her family could not be prouder.

“It’s been really cool for my kids to see me at the computer working, they see me going to night classes, they see me balancing it all,” shared Rachel. “They’re thrilled for me and they’re excited about what the future can bring,” she added.

Since first launching in 2019, over 45 students have successfully earned their diploma through Project Finish.

To learn more about Project Finish or to begin the enrollment process, visit smsd.org/academics/project-finish. ♦



Rushton sixth grader Charlie Dunker speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Shawnee Mission Students Help Seek Real World Solutions

Students in English Language Arts (ELA) teacher Joanna Schindel's class have been immersed in a six-week project to help the City of Overland Park with a real world challenge.

Like many communities last summer, the City of Overland Park experienced a lifeguard shortage. The vacancies impacted the pool schedule by reducing hours and causing some pool closures. It's a real world problem that the City of Overland Park hopes students can help solve.

In January, students and representatives from the City's Parks and Recreation department met in the Shawnee Mission South Library to learn about the issue and ask probing questions about the job of lifeguarding and the shortage.

This is an example of a client-connected project. Client-connected projects provide real world experiences where a student or teams have the opportunity to network with professionals, collaborate with peers, and work to solve authentic problems and projects in their community.

At first, Shawnee Mission South Freshman Savannah Ryan was surprised by the project.

"It caught me off-guard to be honest. I didn't realize English class could be a real world learning project," shared Ryan. "It's amazing, I've never had this before and I'm going to learn a lot from it," she added.

Schindel explained that the learning goals this semester are to develop research and presentation skills. Following the roundtable discussions, the students will spend several weeks conducting research and focus groups to help develop their solutions. Integrating a client-connected project into the curriculum gives students

the opportunity to learn these skills in an authentic setting.

"A lot of time in ELA classes we only get to secondary research," Schindel noted. "With this project, students will be able to engage in primary and secondary research, analyze the data and findings and synthesize it all in a final presentation to our clients."

Schindel shared another goal of the project is to help students understand the power of language to connect with people and effect positive change in the community.

"If students can sit down with adults today in our ELA class, they can graduate and make real change happen in the future because they've already gotten a taste of that in high school," explained Schindel.

The project culminates with teams of students presenting their solutions to a panel of City of Overland Park professionals.

Client-connected projects fulfill the criteria of a Market Value Asset (MVA), defined as specific work opportunities or accreditations that contribute to student success in work and learning beyond graduation. This is all part of the Real World Learning initiative, a partnership with the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and more than 30 school districts across the metro area.

The region-wide goal for the initiative is by 2030 all high school students will



Shawnee Mission South students meet with representatives from the City of Overland Park.

graduate with a diploma and a Market Value Asset.

If your business would like student solutions for an issue at your workplace or if you have a client-connected project where high school feedback would be helpful, please contact Laura Harsch, Business to Education Program Officer at lauraharsch@smsd.org or 913.993.9367.

Learn more about Real World Learning in the Shawnee Mission School District by scanning the QR code. ♦



Above: Engineering students review their designs with Instructor Greg Thiel. Below: Students Luis Montanez and Samantha Herron present to NASA. Right: Senior Isaac Baran displays a scooter wheel prototype.

Shawnee Mission Students Shoot for the Stars with NASA HUNCH

Engineering Signature Program students in the Shawnee Mission School District are getting a learning experience that is truly out of this world.

Through NASA's HUNCH program, the students have been designing projects that could be used by NASA in the space program.

NASA HUNCH is a project-based learning program intended to develop innovative solutions to problems posed when working and living in space, according to the HUNCH website.

"NASA utilizes the creativity of high school students to develop ideas that, maybe, they could refine and send to the moon," explained Shawnee Mission engineering teacher Greg Thiel.

Throughout the fall semester, students worked in pairs to conceptualize, design, develop, and ultimately fabricate a prototype of an object or tool that could be used in space.

The project's culminating event was a video call with NASA Engineers. Students presented their research and designs and received feedback on their work.

For their project, Shawnee Mission North Seniors Luis

Montanez and Samantha Herron fabricated a lunar worktable.

The first step was to learn more about space to understand how to design a table for environmental extremes. To meet NASA's requirements, the lunar table needs to be able to hold 100 pounds, be easily manageable for the astronauts, and be able to withstand elements like lunar dust.

Beyond gaining research skills and technical knowledge, the students have had the invaluable experience of communicating and receiving constructive feedback from the experts at NASA.

"We're learning from the professionals," said Montanez. "Their feedback is just great for us. That way we can go back, make improvements, make things better, and make them a little more efficient."

"It was really fun to see how we could create this idea and almost pretend like we're on the moon and see how our idea would be used," said Herron.

The NASA HUNCH program has 277 participating schools across 44 states with more than 2,500 students. The Shawnee Mission School District is the only school participating from Kansas and the Kansas City metro area. ♦

Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Gives the Gift of Reading



A child receives a book from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.



Every month, 18 month old Asher is excited to receive a free book in the mail addressed directly to him.

"He absolutely loves them. It's the greatest surprise for him every time they arrive in the mailbox," shared his mother, Abby Corkery.

Through the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation, Asher is enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The non-profit, founded by the country music star, is a book-gifting program with the goal of encouraging regular reading from birth and inspiring life-long literacy.

As an affiliate of the Imagination Library, the Foundation registers families with children ages birth to five years old and living within the boundaries of the Shawnee Mission School District. The Imagination Library will then send a free, age-appropriate book in the mail each month to the child.

Sarah Behrens, a parent in Parents as Teachers, shared that her family has enjoyed building a home library with the Imagination Library books.

"They're books we turn to all the time. They're on the book shelf and we pull one out almost every night."

Behrens has been impressed with

the quality of books and explained that her family has appreciated the reading tip sheets that are included on the inside cover.

"The books have helped open our eyes as parents to how reading together fosters language and communication development, as well as emotional literacy," she shared. "It's a cool way to learn about reading development as our kids prepare for the school years."

Corkery has also noticed the thoughtfulness and care that has gone into selecting each book. Books are selected each year by Dolly Parton's blue ribbon book selection committee, a specially-selected panel of early childhood literacy experts, that reviews hundreds of potential titles each year.

"I can tell each book has been intentionally chosen. They've just been spot on for Asher's age and his interests. Each one that arrives becomes his new favorite and we read them multiple times each day," said Corkery.

Since becoming an affiliate of the Imagination Library, the Foundation has enrolled more than 3,700 area children in the program, more than tripling the Foundation's initial registration goal of 1,000 children in the first year.



"The Foundation is committed to supporting early childhood learning in our community, and we are so thrilled at the enthusiastic response to this incredible program," expressed Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Director Kimberly Hinkle.

Behrens shared she is grateful to live in a community that places high importance on early childhood education.

"The fact that the Foundation offers this program for children in our community, before families enter school buildings, I think that says a lot. It's an amazing program that we're fortunate to have," Behrens added.

Families who live within the boundaries of the Shawnee Mission School District can enroll in the program at smef.org/dolly.

A gift in support of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library puts books in the hands of children in the Shawnee Mission School District community. To make a gift, visit smef.org/givebooks.

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