Our Schools

A Publication of the Lee's Summit R-7 School District
We Prepare Each Student for Success in Life
October 2021 Issue

The C.L.I.M.B. to success:
LSR7’s peak priorities guide strategic plan

Learn More About Our Teacher of the Year
Follow Our Roadmap Guiding Our Future
Get Answers About Our Middle School Transition
New Phase Open in September

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SUPERINTENDENT’S MESSAGE

HELLO, LSR7!

Our mission to prepare each student for success means we must be versatile. Understanding that our world continues to evolve, we’ve developed a new strategic plan to help us navigate the future and to keep us rooted in making students ready for college, work and life.

We collaborated with staff, students, parents and business partners to develop our 2021-24 strategic plan, the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). Our Board of Education approved this plan on June 15, 2021. This will guide us as we continue to empower students to build successful lives. Our plan includes the “peak” C.L.I.M.B. priorities (Career, Leadership, Instruction, Mental Wellness and Belonging). You can read more about our strategic plan on pages 4-5.

Across the district, you can see how we’re supporting C.L.I.M.B. through these significant steps in our strategic plan and the 2020 no tax rate increase bond issue:

- We revitalized Mason Elementary.
- We’re building East Trails Middle School.
- We’re renovating our three existing middle schools.
- We’re transforming Lee’s Summit High School.

On pages 6-8, you can learn why we’re investing in middle school. 2022-23 will be a big year for middle school — we’re opening East Trails Middle School, moving sixth graders to middle school and changing middle school boundaries (elementary and high school boundaries will remain the same). We answer frequently asked questions, and our middle school principals share their excitement for our grades 6-8 middle school model.

Finally, turn to our recurring interview feature, In My Words, on pages 2-3 to hear from Robert Kim, student from Cedar Creek Elementary, and Mr. Matt Good, debate teacher from Lee’s Summit West High School, 2021 LSR7 Teacher of the Year and finalist for Missouri Teacher of the Year. Robert shares his passion for project-based learning, and Mr. Good explains his teaching philosophy.

Strategic planning can sometimes feel abstract, but we are seeing its rewards every day during life in LSR7. It shines a light on our path forward, helping our talented team to determine the best ways to support students on their journey to future success.

With much appreciation,
DAVID BUCK, Ed. D
SUPERINTENDENT

Federal Program Complaint Resolution Procedures: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires certain notifications to parents/guardians when school districts receive federal funds. School districts must annually disseminate Federal Programs Complaint Resolution Procedures to parents/guardians of students and appropriate private school officials or representatives. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Complaint Procedures can be found at: https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/essa-complaint-procedures
I like science because everytime you learn something different and new. I don’t have a favorite topic but I love learning how things work.

There’s a lot of creativity in the Gifted program and you do a lot of projects. We did a project to launch little candies. You have a group to work with, and you try to launch candy the farthest. You have to understand all the different contraptions. Another project used a ramp to slide an egg down in a car. It bashes into the wall, so you have to build protection around it.

I like a lot of books, but I think I mostly liked reading the “Spy School” series by Stuart Gibbs when I was in fourth grade. It was really entertaining. It was the first book I found that I actually liked, which made me read the whole series. I like a lot of the Truman Readers Award and Mark Twain Award nominees.

I’ve been in the Book Club. I like the recommendations. It gave me the opportunity to read more books and meet more people. I enjoyed talking about the books; there were a lot of different opinions.

I’ve grown a lot more comfortable around people. I’m not as shy and afraid to ask anything anymore.

Swimming is hard and really tiring, but it’s fun. You can definitely see how much you’ve grown, going to practice four times a week for an hour or two. I’ve gotten a lot better.

I like catch-and-release fishing. You just have a really good feeling once you catch a fish. The biggest fish I’ve caught is 7 pounds, as big as my whole upper body. I could barely carry it, and it was hard to get out of the water, which made it really fun to catch.

When you’re fishing and sitting there waiting, there’s always that feeling you’re not going to catch anything. You just want to go home but then if you keep trying you’ll most likely catch something, whether it’s in a day or a month. It’s really important not to give up because you’ll probably just go home upset without anything.

I’m excited for middle school next year because there are a lot of different opportunities. It’s somewhere to start finding your passion for when you’re older. I don’t really know what I want to be yet.

I’ve learned you can’t just stop in the middle of something. If you start something, you should probably finish it. Keep trying. Don’t stop. I’ve learned that from school, in swimming and things I do outside of school.
I became a teacher because I’ve always liked school, and as I got more contemplative I could see myself being in charge of the classroom. In eighth grade in Communication Arts class right here at Pleasant Lea Junior High, a teacher named Roby Little exposed me to debate. From that moment on, the die was cast.

I took debate with Ben Martin [2003 LSR7 Teacher of the Year] at Lee’s Summit High School my freshman year. Debate gave me a school community to belong to.

It is a really cool full-circle experience to be Teacher of the Year because Ben got to shake my hand and hand me the Teacher of the Year award. To be rewarded by him and sort of see myself in this tradition has been one of many really exciting things about this experience.

The Teacher of the Year process involves a lot of reflection. I was amazed at how often I came back to the importance of having a place to call home in the schoolhouse. I think my efforts to develop strong relationships and encourage students to feel like debate is a place where they can belong will only be stronger after going through this process.

You’re going to use debate skills in literally any possible post-high school endeavor. It’s things like critical thinking, speaking in an organized and coherent manner, thinking and speaking on your feet, researching and being able to verbalize both sides of a particular issue.

In addition to what we used to think of as education’s purpose, which is workforce readiness, informed citizens, aspects of character education, all those things we used to think of as school duties are all still there, but everything else is schools’ now too. Access to affordable nutrition, monitoring emotional and physical wellbeing of young people, affordable childcare for working parents. That is why schools need support and funding more than ever.

As LSR7 educators, we can teach anybody anything from anywhere. From a first grade teacher who I witnessed firsthand with my own son at the same table teaching a class full of first graders with poise, grace and excellence to people teaching Auto and Home Care remotely, what our educators have done is incredible. We should have an enormous sense of pride for accomplishing that.
Developing students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills to succeed in life. Investing in new ways to support the well-being of students and staff and create a strong sense of belonging and inclusion at school. Providing comprehensive academic support to help all R-7 students achieve excellence.

These goals were identified last year in a community survey created and distributed by a group of R-7 parents, students, staff members, administrators and community members tasked with developing LSR7’s next strategic plan.

That group, the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) committee, met throughout the 2020-21 school year to determine new goals and priorities to guide LSR7 for the next three years.

In addition to surveying the community, the group studied district data, state standards and team input to determine what LSR7’s focus areas should be.

The result is a new 26-page strategic plan approved by the Board of Education this past June. Strategic plans are required by the state, and serve as a roadmap for district action steps and decisions to support students.

Learn more about the priorities identified in the 2021-24 CSIP at lsr7.org/csip.

LSR7’S PEAK PRIORITIES:

**CAREER** *(Career, College and Life Preparedness)*

**LEADERSHIP** *(Organizational Effectiveness & Data-Based Decision Making)*

**INSTRUCTION** *(Innovative Instruction & Academic Excellence)*

**MENTAL WELLNESS** *(Social-Emotional Learning & Well-being)*

**BELONGING** *(Diversity, Inclusion & Equity)*

**GOAL 1**
We will provide high-quality experiences with access and opportunity for each student.

**GOAL 2**
We will foster a responsive, caring and inclusive environment.

**GOAL 3**
We will provide meaningful public engagement that includes all stakeholders as vital partners in LSR7 education.

**GOAL 4**
We will be responsible stewards and leaders.
Lee’s Summit High School student Avery A. records measurements as part of her internship with Budget Blinds in Lee’s Summit. Employee Courtney Stoddard Laufketter (LSHS Class of 2007) also interned at Budget Blinds in high school, and she trains high school interns in office responsibilities and client support skills.

“Working at Budget Blinds has taught me so many things from communication skills to computer skills,” says Avery. “This internship is already making me feel more prepared to step into the real world.”
“My favorite thing about the transition is giving the opportunity for students to not just have a pit stop in middle school but a full experience and buy-in through academics, activities and athletics for three full years.”

BRIAN LINQUIST, PRINCIPAL AT PLEASANT LEA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Thanks to voters’ support of our 2020 no tax rate increase bond issue, we are transforming the LSR7 middle school experience. Starting in the 2022-23 school year, we are transitioning to a grades 6-8 middle school model, opening East Trails Middle School and finishing significant renovations to our three existing middle schools. The sixth grade transition promises to expand opportunities for our students and better prepare them for success in life. As next school year approaches, here are answers to frequently asked questions:

Tiyana D., a Summit Lakes Middle School eighth grader and cheerleader, helps Julian M. with his schedule.
HOW LONG HAS THE SIXTH GRADE TRANSITION BEEN PLANNED?

The sixth grade transition was part of the Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan, and the idea was developed in spring 2019.

WHO MADE THE RECOMMENDATION TO TRANSITION?

Teachers, counselors, administrators and parents on the Sixth Grade to Middle School Study Team considered best practices, research, facilities, Human Resources, scheduling, transportation, Special Services, extracurriculars, curriculum and support from staff and the community.

WHEN WAS THIS DECISION APPROVED?

On Sept. 24, 2019, the LSR7 Board of Education approved the plan to transition sixth graders to middle school.

WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC AND EXTRACURRICULAR BENEFITS OF THIS TRANSITION?

Students will have three years to learn and grow in the same environment instead of just two years, reducing the frequency of transitions they have in their education.

Our 48-member Middle School Programming Team worked from February to March to reinvent the middle school curriculum to align the curriculum to the unique intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs of middle school students. This will provide opportunities for exploration among multiple career pathways. Revamped exploratory classes will include business and marketing, engineering, communication and more.

We are developing plans to increase extracurricular opportunities such as clubs, intramurals and scholastic sports activities. Sixth graders will have more options through our Diploma Plus program, which develops workforce skills so our high school graduates are ready for their continued education, career and life. Diploma Plus helps students earn Market Value Assets, which add value to a high school diploma and give students a leg up on entering the workforce or entering college with a purpose aligned to their passion. These assets include the Early College Asset, Client-connected Project Asset, Internship Asset, Industry Credential Asset and Entrepreneurial Experience Asset.

“We’ll have our regular vision of what middle school looks like with all the new offerings and the initiatives that the district is doing with Diploma Plus/Real World Learning, project-based learning and Market Value Assets. Sixth graders will be exposed to Market Value Assets earlier, finding some paths that they may feel strongly about from an exploratory point of view.” [For more information on Diploma Plus, visit lsr7.org/diplomaplus]

JEFF SCALFARO, PRINCIPAL OF BERNARD CAMPBELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BENEFITS OF THIS TRANSITION?
Middle schools’ smaller setting helps our LSR7 team build positive relationships with students at a key time in their development. Other than toddler years, there is no other time children experience such rapid growth and require such support.

WHAT DOES THIS TRANSITION MEAN FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOUNDARIES?
We will change boundaries for ONLY our middle schools, starting with the 2022-23 school year. Our Middle School Boundary Study Team is made up of teachers, staff, parents, community members and administrators who have worked to evaluate the best way to funnel our middle schoolers into four buildings. The team has worked since April to study projected enrollment, building capacity and other district data to make their recommendations. The team used that information to create proposed boundary ideas and then evaluated each of those ideas against specific criteria. The team hosted community feedback sessions in June and September, and it collected feedback via online surveys.

WHEN WILL A FINAL DECISION BE MADE ABOUT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL BOUNDARIES?
The Board of Education is scheduled to consider a final proposal for new middle school boundaries at the Oct. 21, 2021 meeting.

HOW MANY STUDENTS WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE 2022-23 REDISTRICTING?
All of our approximately 1,200 current fifth graders will start sixth grade in 2022 in a middle school environment. Some students may attend the middle school they are currently districted for; others may be districted for a new school. Some current middle school students will attend seventh grade at one school this year and eighth grade in another school.

WILL SIXTH GRADERS HAVE THEIR OWN SPACE IN SCHOOL?
Yes. Each building will have a designated area for sixth graders.

CAN SIXTH GRADERS STUDY IN THE GIFTED PROGRAM?
Yes. They will continue to have the opportunity to study in the Gifted program.

“This three-year period allows the school and the school community to better wrap support and services around students during those pivotal years before students get to high school.”

DR. DAVID MITCHELL, PRINCIPAL OF SUMMIT LAKES MIDDLE SCHOOL

“Although East Trails Middle School will be a very future-ready space and forward-thinking in its design, ultimately it’s our students’ home. We want them to feel connected, welcome and safe. I want us to be a family.”

DR. WHITNEY MOREHEAD, PRINCIPAL OF EAST TRAILS MIDDLE SCHOOL
RahLo H. from Meadow Lane Elementary stacks Play-Doh containers and spends time with Ms. Gayle O’Hair from Great Beginnings Early Education Center. For the first day of school, GBEEC staff helped former students transition to elementary school.

Emery S. from Underwood Elementary places a sticker on a mosaic. As students return library books over time, they reveal an image.
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