OUR SCHOOLS

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEE’S SUMMIT R-7 SCHOOL DISTRICT
WE PREPARE EACH STUDENT FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE
MARCH 2021 ISSUE

THE STUDENT VOICE ISSUE:
READ INTERVIEWS FROM ACROSS THE LEE’S SUMMIT R-7 SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SUPERINTENDENT’S MESSAGE

PUBLIC EDUCATION HELPED ME FIND MY VOICE.

It set me on a path to become the first person in my family to graduate college. It provided me a place to learn and grow in and outside of the classroom.

It provided me with valuable experiences — from rigorous math classes to exploratory courses in drafting and shop to extracurriculars such as sports and club — that developed my skills, expanded my viewpoints and instilled in me hope for the future.

It introduced me to impactful teachers who would change the trajectory of my life. Like science teacher Mick Hart, who in setting high expectations for me as a student, helped develop my interest in science and led to me starting a successful career, first as a botanist and then as a science teacher who would grow into a school leader.

One of the greatest joys of being a Superintendent is helping our district provide these meaningful experiences for each and every one of our students, and watching students thrive as a result.

Whether it’s a student discovering a new passion, finding inspiration in a teacher or mentor, or learning new skills that will help them be successful in life, these important connections are happening every day in the Lee’s Summit R-7 School District.

The theme of our March issue of Our Schools is “student voice,” and across this issue you will find students from across LSR7 reflecting on experiences, moments and challenges that they believe are shaping who they are, and who they want to be.

Their stories are a testament to the innovative and student-driven culture of LSR7, the talents of our incredible and hardworking staff and the importance of public education in itself.

Despite challenges prompted by an unprecedented pandemic this year, LSR7 has provided an array of services — academic and social-emotional support, food, books and technology, community resource connections and targeted interventions, to name a few — that serve our students’ unique needs.

These efforts are so important.

Public education remains the vehicle in which our communities care for the academic, physical and emotional needs of our youth and develop the young voices who will lead our world someday.

As Trailridge Elementary fifth grader Kimber Dhyne says in this month’s issue, “With your voice, you can make things the way you want to be.”

Her words reflect LSR7’s mission, to prepare each student for success in life, to equip tomorrow’s leaders to be the change they want to see in the world and to develop students into adults we all would be proud to call our neighbor.

With much appreciation,

DAVID BUCK, Ed. D
SUPERINTENDENT
I like everything about reading. I like every type of story, minus the spider ones. I’m afraid of spiders. I like non-fiction, dinosaurs and creatures. I do not like the asteroid’s impact on dinosaurs. There are no dinosaurs on Earth.

My favorite thing about math is multiplication. I know it’s from the third grade, but multiplying is so easy, like 100 times 10 equals 1,000.

My favorite learning is science because we can do cool experiments.

I like the project of the exploding volcano. It’s really funny. It says do not shake the bottle, but I will shake the bottle. I will uncap the soda bottle and put four mints in there and BOOM! It shoots all the foam into the air.

From Marvel, I like Captain America, Iron Man and Hulk. Hulk is so funny. I’ve loved Captain America since I was a baby in Venezuela. Iron Man is so smart. I don’t pay much attention to DC Comics.

I like to teach my friends Spanish because if they go to Venezuela they can communicate. It makes me feel good because they are learning.

Legos are one of my favorite things to play with, and I can build a tree house or an X-wing.

My favorite Star Wars movies are “A New Hope,” “The Empire Strikes Back” and “Return of the Jedi.”

I like to play board games. My favorite one is Monopoly.

I want to be a teacher, an astronaut and a race car driver. I want to be the first man on Venus. I would like to just test a big Hot Wheel car with a remote on the circuit and then report to the Hot Wheels builders who are going to build that same car but in miniature.

Dominic Mezerhane Maldonado is a first grader at Lee’s Summit Elementary.
What made me get involved in broadcast is I’ve always liked to talk. I just thought it’d be really cool to be in the news.

If it’s the beginning of the month, we talk about what kind of topics we should talk about. If it’s the middle, we talk about editing or speaking or writing about that specific topic. We’ve talked about homelessness once; we interviewed someone; we’ve talked about safety rules, we’ve talked about the Kansas City Chiefs; we’ve talked about upcoming events, that kind of thing.

My perspective of journalism has really changed because I just used to focus on school work and not too much on friends. Now, I focus more on my friends in school and talking with the teachers a little bit more.

I’ve always been very talkative. I just feel like I’ve grown a little bit more by talking with others and chatting with my friends.

It’s helped me believe in myself more.

I like to talk about the things that are going on in life right now, other people’s perspectives about how they look at things.

My voice is an opinion. It helps me meet others and talk with others. It helps me think about other people’s perspectives. You can say what you think is happening. You can change things.

With your voice, you can make things the way you want to be.

Kimber Dhyne, a fifth grader at Trailridge Elementary, is a member of Trailridge’s Broadcasting Team.

My favorite part of being on broadcast is making others happy. My sister sees me onscreen in her classroom. That makes me happy.

I want to use my voice to be able to make others happy and safe and maybe I can be on a real news channel some day.

I’d say my generation really likes to express our opinions. It depends on the mood we’re in. Sometimes we like to make others really happy. We really like to make people feel welcomed and comforted.
One reason I enjoy theater so much is that it really allows me to explore all sides of perspective.

Last year in seventh grade was my first time doing a show ever. I was Willy Wonka as we did the Willy Wonka musical.

Jack Scott’s character in “Disney’s High School Musical, Jr.” has more to it because his main gimmick is while he’s announcing things he’s very showboaty, he grabs the attention, but we see him during everyday school he’s actually a bit of a nerd. It’s all about how he comes to terms with this persona.

I have to give a lot of credit to my parents, who are both immigrants from Cameroon, a country on the west coast of Africa. They’ve always raised me to shoot for the stars and you cannot go wrong if you do that.

That’s why getting the Wonka role in general felt like such an accomplishment because it was proof of my own hard work.

My father is a pharmacist, and my mother is a nurse practitioner, so I plan to also do something in the medical field. I was thinking of becoming a neurosurgeon or something like that.

I have said the same thing since first grade — I want to go to Harvard. I’d like any Ivy League school, but I am confident that if I put 100% of my ability into working toward that goal, I could get into a college like that.

Though some people might be more willing to observe the world around them and look at it as something they go through, I look at it with a mindset of what can we do about this?

One thing I’ve seen in my generation is how much we are going to celebrate diversity. It’s something that you see every day in school, on social media. Diversity is being celebrated, and that is so great.

I think my idea of voice has changed since COVID-19. Having it around, even when the lockdown has lightened, it really makes me think about how much of an impact even your everyday person has on one another.

I feel this coronavirus situation has enlightened me as to how important everyone’s voice is in the world.
I wanted to join the strategic plan team because it was an opportunity for my voice to be heard because I felt there had been many things that had gone unnoticed by the school district.

This showed up in my email for students to join CSIP and I was like, “This is a great opportunity for me to have my voice be heard and my friends’ voices to be heard.”

Since this pandemic started, I saw even the most quiet people raise their voice. Remaining silent only aids your enemy. In the words of Audre Lorde, “Your silence will not protect you.” If you want to lead, you must be willing to speak.

I think the kind of leadership my generation will demonstrate is action-taking. For some generations, their words were enough to change the world.

If we never take a stand against injustice, nothing will change. We will remain stagnant in a world many will not find happiness in.

Leadership is leading the crowd like a shepherd does for his flock, guiding them in the right direction to where to graze or rest.

I plan to be a film actress. I’m going to go to Metropolitan Community College-Longview for two years to use my A+ scholarship then hopefully go to University of Missouri-Kansas City. During that, I’ll be doing my best to get acting gigs and build up my resume.

When I was little I would do fake commercials. As I got older, I really liked being on stage, getting to make people smile or making them feel emotion. That’s the best thing — making someone feel something, and it’s all your own doing.

With the theater classes provided by Mr. Brad Rackers, that’s been the best thing for my acting growth.

Now ever since COVID-19 started, I’ve really calmed down. I’m like, “There’s a plan here. I just need to calm down and look through it all and just trust everything will go the way it does. And if it doesn’t, just work with it, adapt and overcome.”
I decided to participate in the LSR7 African American Read-in because of my little sister. She loves poems, but unfortunately she is in middle school, so I did this for her.

I chose “Still I Rise” because Maya Angelou is a really talented writer. She’s really inspiring to young Black girls.

I think the value of this read-in is introducing students to more Black writers and authors and to really open their eyes.

The author I enjoy the most is Langston Hughes. When he came out at the time, there wasn’t really space for Black authors and creators, but he made his way and overcame those trials.

For Black authors, I would recommend Gwendolyn Brooks, Phillis Wheatley and Alice Walker. The message that they sent across was to just be a better human.

Of the Black authors I’ve read, a common theme is although we struggle and have hardships that we still find a way to move on, move past it, keep building up.

Voice means to me and my peers that we speak up about problems, about the trials and tribulations that we go through.

In the school district I think we need a more unique learning plan because not everybody learns the same. Some people have disabilities, some people just don’t feel motivated enough.

I think members of our generation can use our voices to make everyone feel included, like they mean something.

I hope my generation accomplishes goals set by the older generation, what they couldn’t accomplish, with the racial problems that are going on right now. I hope my generation doesn’t have that problem.

I chose the step team because we could be loud. We could say what we wanted, and people would listen. I want people to know that we’re here to stay, and we’re here to win when we cheer for the basketball team.

I want to be an athletic trainer, so I’m going to University of Missouri-Kansas City. I want to be an athletic trainer because I enjoy sports, and I wanted to be a doctor and play sports at the same time. I figured I could cheer from the sidelines and be sort of a doctor while watching sports.

La’Ray McKinley, a sophomore at Lee’s Summit North High School, read a Maya Angelou poem during the Feb. 17 LSR7 African American Read-in (watch the full program at lsr7.org/readin). La’Ray also plays basketball, performs with the step team, the Northside Steppers, and competes in track and field.

La’Ray McKinley, a sophomore at Lee’s Summit North High School, read a Maya Angelou poem during the Feb. 17 LSR7 African American Read-in (watch the full program at lsr7.org/readin). La’Ray also plays basketball, performs with the step team, the Northside Steppers, and competes in track and field.
Winning the music competition was a fun experience, just trying something new in my musical endeavors. I don’t normally make electronic music but it was a fun learning experience.

The type of music I usually make is indie music or whatever kind of weird stuff I’m into at the time.

Sometimes I’ll write with my friends. I’ll have a phrase or I’ll watch a movie and be like, “Oh, that’s kind of a cool thing.”

I don’t really make electronic dance music (EDM). When I think of EDM, I think of no words, bass drops and things like that. I was pretty unsure about making it, and I was like, “I’m not the biggest fan of it.” That’s why I labeled it, “Is this ok??”

I’d say it’s an attempt at trying to get better in my musical abilities and experience and branch out.

I don’t have a vision in mind, necessarily. Usually when I make things it’s kind of sporadic and just impulsive.

I just want to be authentic to myself and my interests and just kind of do that. That’s my voice.

When you listen to a song, it can kind of take you back to a certain memory. It can take you back to a certain time or a certain movie scene. It just causes different emotions, so it’s kind of cool how it’s like this timeless thing. That’s what I enjoy about it.

When I heard about Summit Technology Academy, it was that you can make stuff and be creative. If you’re into visual or audio stuff, STA’s Digital Media Technology course is the perfect place for you to go. You can learn how to produce, how to make different videos and different editing techniques.

I would like to be an audio engineer. That’d probably be my dream job and I can go to concerts. I can make music on the side or hang out with people.

My dream job would be to make any sort of art freely.

Quinton Nofziger is a junior at Lee’s Summit High School and Summit Technology Academy. Quinton won the Missouri Music Educators Association’s Electronic Music Composition Contest with his song “Is this ok??” (listen to the song at lsr7.org/quinton).
Scheduled to finish in Fall 2021, the Mason Elementary project includes a new entryway, expanded parking lot, media center, administrative offices and future-ready classrooms.

Scheduled to open in 2022, a new, 180,000 square foot middle school at 1001 SE Bailey Road is a key component of LSR7 Board-approved plans to move sixth grade to middle school starting in the 2022-23 school year. The middle school will incorporate future-ready design and provide learning for 1,200 students.
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