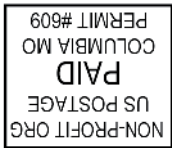


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QUARTERLY CONNECTION

★ WINTER 2021 ★



INSIDE ISSUE:

Superintendent of the Year

Student athletes take on state competition

Winter fine arts

Election education

2021 National Merit Semifinalists

When it snows

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Superintendent Stiepleman named 2021 Superintendent of the Year

The Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) and Missouri School Boards' Association named Columbia Public Schools' Superintendent Peter Stiepleman Superintendent of the Year for 2021.

Stiepleman joined Columbia Public Schools in 2006. He served as a teacher, assistant elementary school principal, principal and assistant superintendent. He became superintendent in 2014.

During his time, CPS has undergone quite a bit of change, including enrollment increases and demographic growth, as well as economic challenges.

"There is no question that Dr. Stiepleman's leadership philosophy has helped guide the successes achieved in one of the state's largest school districts," MASA Executive Director Doug Hayter said.

Stiepleman's belief system of AEO – Achievement, Enrichment and Opportunity – has served as the building blocks for the CPS mission and conveys that all students should have an excellent education. This includes access to a great curriculum, access to skilled teachers, enrichment experiences and interest-based activities, and access to a school system that eliminates barriers for children. He has been diligent in finding opportunities to communicate the AEO message, actively engaging students, parents, staff and community with regular dialogue.

Stiepleman said he was humbled and honored to receive the award.

"I love this school district, I love the community, I love the people I work with and any successes I have has everything to do with the incredible people – teachers, leaders, school board members – of this amazing school district," he said.

"You couldn't have selected a better Superintendent," said Helen Wade, president of Columbia Board of Education. "This man has not just dedicated his workday, but he's dedicated every waking moment to the service of the students in this district. He truly is a leader in every sense of the word."



Watch the Superintendent of the Year video presentation:
<https://youtu.be/9qVXEd8tHrI>

Among the long list of programs Stiepleman has championed are the STEAM Middle School, The Nature School, Early College – High School 2.0, grade-level field trip enrichment experiences for all students, the COMOEd Future Teacher program and anti-discriminatory policy revisions to include gender identity expression and sexual orientation.

Stiepleman announced he will retire from his position as of June 30, 2021. Having taken very few sick days while with Columbia Public Schools, he is entitled to approximately \$50,000 in sick pay. Stiepleman said he will donate that money to three areas that he is especially passionate about:

- **The Nature School**, so that every fifth grader in Boone County will have the opportunity to attend a fully place-based learning center
- **The CPS Japan STEM Connection trip**, so that more kids can experience these trips, regardless of financial constraints
- **The COMOEd Future Teacher program**, which is dedicated to establishing a pipeline locally educated, highly effective and culturally competent future teachers so that the diversity of CPS' student body is more reflected in the diversity of teachers

Dr. Stiepleman was recently named as a finalist for The National Superintendent of the Year® award, a program sponsored by First Student, AIG Retirement Services and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) that pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead our nation's public schools.

"There is no question that Dr. Stiepleman's leadership philosophy has helped guide the successes achieved in one of the state's largest school districts."



Rock Bridge High School Girls' Golf team



Rock Bridge High School Girls' Tennis team



Rock Bridge High School Softball team



Rock Bridge High School Boys' Cross Country team

Student athletes take on state competition

Congratulations to the talented CPS student athletes and coaches for their recent state competition successes.

On October 19 - 20, the **Rock Bridge High School Girls' Golf team** competed in the MSHSAA Class 4 State Championship Tournament at Dalhousie Golf Club in Cape Girardeau. All five girls qualified individually to compete at the state competition, which also earned the opportunity to have the team represented at the state tournament. The Bruins finished in fourth place overall.

Team members: Siena Minor, Tierney Baumstark, Madison Moller, Abby Baker and Josie Arms | Coach: Melissa Coil

On October 23-24, the **Rock Bridge High School Girls' Tennis team** competed in the MSHSAA Class 3 State Championship Tournament at the Cooper Tennis Complex in Springfield. The Bruins finished in fourth place.

Team members: Maggie Lin, Anjali Ramesh, Abbie Sivaraman, Sarah Ding, Sryia Pokala and Kinley Schade | Coach: Ben Loeb

On October 30, the **Rock Bridge High School Softball team** defeated Lee's Summit North 1-0 at the Killian Softball Complex in Springfield to win the MSHSAA Class 5 State Championship and finish the year with a perfect record of 29-0. This is the first state championship in school history for the Rock Bridge Softball program.

Team members: Margo Frossard, Maren Jones, Jillian Larkin, Madisyn Logan, Ella Schouten, Maddie Snider, Anna Christ, Abby Hay, Kayla Mooney, Taylor Nivens, Lucy Sadewhite, Sophia Schupp, Elizabeth Wiese, Addie Clay, Cydney Fullerton and Molly Murphy | Coach: Lisa Alvis | Assistant coaches: Jeff Bazat, Andrea Drake and Frank May

On November 7, the **Rock Bridge High School Boys' Cross Country team** won the MSHSAA Class 5 State Championship race at the Gans Creek Cross Country Course in Columbia. This is the second state championship in school history for the program with the first being in 2011. Additionally, Rock Bridge Senior Matthew Hauser won his individual race, earning the designation of MSHSAA Class 5 Boys' Cross Country Individual State Champion. Matthew is the third individual in school history to achieve this designation, joining Kirk Sloan who won the race in 1980 and Caleb Wilfong who won in 2011.

Team members: Matthew Hauser, Ian Kemey, Andrew Hauser, Tate Fletcher, Ethan Wampler, Weston Jokerst, Ty Welty, Charles Colbert, Hudson Summerall and Matthew Griffith | Coach: Neal Blackburn | Assistant Coaches: Patrick Sasser and James Leach

Winter fine arts

Like many experiences this year, high school drama looked a little different throughout the district as staff and students found innovative ways to make sure the shows did go on.

HICKMAN HIGH SCHOOL – "GODSPELL JR." PRODUCTION



Approximately 40 students at Hickman High School participated in the production of "Godspell Jr.," which was made available online in mid-December.

Sarah Gerling, the play's director, said the show was chosen due to its significance to the times.

"The theme of the play deals very much with a sense of community," Gerling said. "All of the actors in the opening scene are sort of coming from a place of isolation and, throughout the production, they are learning to become a cohesive group, a community. It really resonated with us."

Gerling said that when students and staff were sent home in late March due to COVID-19, it was difficult for everyone in numerous ways.

Figuring out how to make a performance possible allowed that community to come together and feel connected. Despite the challenges of building a performance in the midst of a pandemic, Gerling said the opportunity to create something was very special for all involved.

Rehearsals for the show were handled in-person, with precautions including social

distancing and mask-wearing. Because a live performance was not practical, the cast and crew filmed the final production and made it available online.

Filming the production meant new considerations, such as multiple camera angles and editing.

"Thinking about what different cameras will be seeing and when to cut, it was all very new," Gerling said. "We were fortunate to have a team of adults working to provide support."

Despite the challenges, students were engaged and performed well in the unique environment.

"The kids were awesome," Gerling said. "Rock stars whether they were in the cast or part of the crew. They were willing to be flexible and were very creative, engaged and excited throughout the process."

Gering said everyone knew going in that they must be prepared for changes, both to processes and schedules. She said she was most appreciative that everyone involved demonstrated a willingness to refine as needed, while maintaining a positive attitude.

"It has been challenging," Gerling said. "But has also brought lots of joys and laughter, and great things have happened."

ROCK BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL – "LUCKY STIFF" PRODUCTION



Rock Bridge High School's performance of "Lucky Stiff" took place online November 30 – December 4 as a ticketed event that

allowed patrons to stream the performance online, which was recorded live.

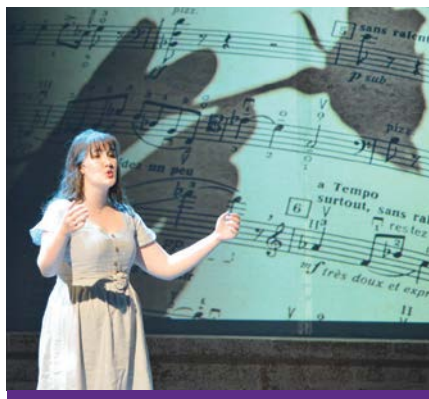
Approximately 15 cast members and four technical assistants participated in the production. The typical eight weeks of auditions and rehearsals were compressed to six, and all rehearsals were held in-person as participants practiced social distancing and wore masks.

With the help from a few students with film and audio production experience from classes at the Columbia Area Career Center, the cast and crew learned how to produce a final performance that was filmed for viewer enjoyment.

Vocal Music Teacher Mike Pierson said he was pleased with the final production and especially the opportunity it provided for students to do what they love - perform on stage.

"I have a lot of 'theater nerds' in our department, and those teachers and kids were looking for something to do," Pierson said. "This performance really fulfilled a need for them."

BATTLE HIGH SCHOOL – MUSICAL REVIEW



Music and theater students at Battle High School participated in a musical review livestreamed the weekend before Thanksgiving.

Directors Myriah Araiza and Tim Hercules said it was exciting to be able to give students the opportunity to perform.

A total of 23 students participated in the

performance, with 14 acting and/or singing in the showcase and nine more helping with technical logistics.

With many precautions taken to keep students and teachers safe, the performance required students to take a more individualist approach, putting in more at-home practice time and showing up to rehearsals ready to perform.

Students met in-person wearing masks once a week and maintained social distancing while in the school building. Teachers stressed the importance of hand washing and staying healthy, and disinfected surfaces in order to prevent cross-contaminating mics and chairs.

Because performers each had a part in selecting piece(s) for the showcase, there was immense ownership which Araiza described as "awesome."

She said this also provided more opportunities for individual performances and less group work, which worked better under the circumstances.

Araiza and Hercules said they were thankful to many different participants for their part in making the performance possible, which was livestreamed on November 20, 21 and 22.

FIFTH GRADE HONORS CHOIR

Even a pandemic can't stop the music for Columbia Public Schools' Fifth Grade Honors Choir.

"It is going to be highly modified, but our directors Elizabeth Tummons and Sara Dexheimer, have a spectacular plan," James Melton, director of Fine Arts for the district, said.

This year, fifth grade students from across the district were invited to audition virtually through the classroom application Seesaw.

Approximately 200 students auditioned for 160 spots.

This year's performances were based around the Peter Reynolds book "Happy Dreamer!" Students rehearsed with directors each week online, both as a large group and in smaller groups. They received additional support

from their individual building music specialists.

Tummons, who is a music specialist at Grant Elementary School, and Dexheimer, who is also a music specialist at Fairview Elementary School, used large group experiences to bring the community of music-loving students and teachers closer together, with various vocal warm-ups, musical readings and time well-spent with fellow musicians.

“There is so much emotion right now, and this provides an opportunity for our students and our teachers to be creative and focus on what each child needs,” Tummons said. “By opening this up we allow students and teachers to express feelings, have a creative outlet and enjoy their passion.”

Tummons and Dexheimer said everyone involved in the program really took ownership, and the kids were very engaged in being part of the creative process - having a good time, learning new techniques and sharing ideas.

Students were very conscience about choosing music that would hook kids and engage them, Tummons said.

Involving the community is also a desire of both directors, who invited guest musicians to visit group practices for Q&A to expose students to different ways of experiencing music, including writing and composing.

“It’s a coming together of everyone and honoring those feelings,” Tummons said.

The entire performance will be available to experience in the spring. Directors are also currently working to provide a single-song preview for the winter break.

“ By opening this up we allow students and teachers to express feelings, have a creative outlet and enjoy their passion. ”

Election education



The 2020 presidential election provided a unique opportunity for teachers to talk with students about the election process. From kindergarten to high school, teachers engaged students of all ages to explore democracy and what it means in accessible and fun ways.

Amber Fireshaker, a kindergarten teacher at Two Mile Prairie Elementary School, said she focused her lessons on what it means to be part of a community. She talked with students about what makes up a community, the communities students are personally a part of and how communities make decisions together.

“At the beginning of the year we started talking about what a community is, which is all new to a five-year-old,” Fireshaker said. “Then we centered the discussion around their world – their home, their family, their classroom - and went from there.”

As part of the election education, students got to experience voting through an “election” of the songs to be used for their Brain Breaks – something that matters to them.

The voting exercise provided an opportunity to discuss what it feels like to win a vote, and what it feels like not to win. This led to explanation of the presidential election and discussion about what makes a leader. Fireshaker said she started again with examples relevant to the students, about the leaders in their family, and related that to the leaders of our country.

Fireshaker said what was most important to her for students to take away from the election education was learning about making choices.

“That sometimes you don’t get what you want – you may have to compromise sometimes when you are part of a community,” Fireshaker said. “It’s important for everyone to have a voice, even if you don’t always get your way. You must work together and be gracious.”

For Battle High School Teacher Susie Adams, the focus of election education looked a little different for her high school junior students.

“The process can be confusing,” Adams said. “For our students who are just years away from voting, it’s important that they understand the process of primaries, what happens when there is a tie and all the ins and outs.”

Adams, the social studies department chair and an AP history teacher at Battle High School, said they looked at presidents and elections through history to provide perspective. One aspect involved studying campaigns through history – viewing commercials, sharing collections of yard signs and buttons (going back to Roosevelt) and other campaign materials.

“Kids talked about how this was such a tumultuous time, with lots of arguing and mud-slinging,” Adams said. “We went back and compared this election to others throughout history so they could see that this wasn’t so out-of-the-normal.”

Adams said students organize voting drives three times a year, working to get students nearing the voting age registered. She added that many freshman classes participated in mock elections, complete with “I Voted” stickers.

Adams said she hopes students developed an understanding of the importance of forming their own opinion.

“We have a lot of influence from social media and television, and students also get a lot of their opinions from their parents,” said Adams. “As a young voter, it is important for them to learn to listen to all sides, then develop their own ideas based on their own research.”

2021 National Merit Semifinalists

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) was established in 1955 as an independent, not-for-profit organization. Each year, the NMSC conducts an academic competition which recognizes academically talented U.S. high school students and awards college undergraduate scholarships.

National Merit Semifinalists are the highest-scoring program entrants in the state and represent the top 0.5 percent of the state's senior students.

Thirty-one Columbia Public Schools' students have been named National Merit Semifinalists. The students will now compete alongside 16,000 semifinalists across the country for scholarships totaling more than \$31 million from the National Merit Scholarship Program. More than 1.5 million high school juniors from 21,000 high schools around the country entered when they took the Preliminary SAT. National Merit Scholarship finalists will be announced in the spring. The National Merit Scholarship Corporation provides scholarships annually for the nation's most academically accomplished. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

Hickman High School

SEMIFINALISTS

Adin Aberbach
Hunter Bailey
Benjamin Edidin
Daniel Fratila
Ellen Gates
Christina Hua
Ethan Jones
Samuel Morgan
Isaac Stiepleman
Alice Tang

COMMENDED

Jackson Huenefeldt
Hardy Pottinger

ACT perfect score of 36

Jarett Ren

Rock Bridge High School

William VanDyke

Rock Bridge High School

Kellen Sapp

Rock Bridge High School

Rock Bridge High School

SEMIFINALISTS

Tyler Dettmar
Shruti Gautam
Hyunjae Hahm
Andrew Kim
Skylar Koepke
Vignesh Kumar
Arren Mallott
Amira McKee
Jarett Ren
Garrett Roach
Kellen Sapp
Ellen Schaezler

COMMENDED

Dick Chen
Turner DeArmond
Giovanna Durante
Samaranjay Goyal
Phillip Lei
Alexander Pereverzev
Charlotte Tolly

When it snows

As winter weather approaches, we want our families to know snow days may still happen even with the calendar and current or future alternative methods of instruction.

School will be canceled, or a 2-hour delayed start will be implemented only after roads are tested. Should cancellation or a 2-hour delayed start be necessary, efforts will be made to notify radio and television stations by 6 a.m. Information will also be sent via the district's parent messaging system, posted on the district's website at www.cpsk12.org and available on CPS-TV.

Parents may make the final decision regarding a child's attendance. If the parent views the weather too severe or the road conditions too dangerous, absences will be excused. Difficulty in contacting parents usually prevents early dismissals, but under appropriate circumstances the district may dismiss early. On inclement weather days, please listen to local radio and television stations for news of early dismissal. Additionally, information will be sent via the district's messaging system, posted on the website and on CPS-TV.

Virtual learning will still adhere to the same winter weather cancellation policies and procedures as in-person learning options, as both in-person learning and virtual learning in Columbia Public Schools must maintain the same school year calendar, including snow days. While learning modes may indicate students are all in virtual learning, some students receiving special services may still be learning in-person. Additionally, school and district employees are still reporting to buildings to work. The district must consider the safety of all students and employees within the same school year calendar.

www.cpsk12.org