



This Issue's Highlights:

- **Merging the Head and the Heart: The District's SEEAL approach to education, pages 10 & 11**
- **District Excels in Academic Growth: The 2020 APR results are in, page 1**
- **Camp U and Summer Learning Academy return in June 2023, page 3**
- **University City Board of Education Candidate Statements, page 4 & 5**
- **Black History Month Celebrations, page 15**

Missouri Releases 2022 APR Results Based on New Standards



HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined

Amid an ongoing global pandemic and drops in attendance due to COVID-19, The School District of University City grew in student performance in math and English Language Arts (ELA).

Student growth was above average in math. Students also demonstrated growth in ELA.

These are some of the findings in the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) March 7 release of its Annual Performance Review (APR) of public school districts statewide. This year's APR was created under revised standards referred to as the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). This is the sixth time in the 23-year history of MSIP that the standards

have been revised, and the new standards are informally called MSIP 6.

"Having worked with University City for the past five years, I am genuinely impressed with effective practices the district has put into place," said Dr. Craig Larson, an area supervisor for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "These practices have led to increased student academic growth and to closing achievement gaps. I am particularly impressed with the increased academic focus at University City High School and how that focus is changing the trajectories of students' futures."

The 2022 APR is based off of one year of data collected in the 2021-22 school year. The results are baseline. Future APRs will eventually take into account three years of rolling data. Science and social studies were not

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Dr. Craig Larson
Missouri Department of Elementary and
Secondary Education Area Supervisor



McCarthy Building Companies, Inc.

Pershing Elementary School students explore hands-on science activities during a special visit with staff from McCarthy Building Companies Inc.

evaluated for growth in this year's APR. DESE officials noted the following about this year's APR:

- The 2022 APR is based on an entirely new evaluation method created by DESE.
- It cannot be compared to previous versions of annual APRs.
- DESE officials said the 2022 APR "reflects the ongoing impact of the pandemic, including its disproportionate impact on some groups of students."

Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR, and Director of Secondary Education and UCHS Principal Mike Peoples, Ph.D., were two of several education leaders who sat on a statewide committee to advise state education leaders on the creation of new standards for MSIP 6. Hardin-Bartley cautioned that this is the first year of the new standards, and there may be adjustments to the evaluation process.

"There are bright spots in the APR data for the District – particularly regarding student growth," she said. "The most important thing to

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UCHS Junior Forms Financial Literacy Nonprofit



PROBLEMATIZE: Learning Reimagined

You are 17 and exploring college and career paths. You are thinking about what you might want to do when you get out in the world. And yet, you are entering a society with a rapidly changing economy and workforce. Some people seem to make it big. Others seem to struggle financially no matter what they do. What steps do you take?

For University City High School junior Dani Wasserman, at least part of the answer lies in developing financial literacy well before graduating high school.

Wasserman is the founder of Invest Now Clubs, a registered 501c(3) nonprofit building a network of student financial literacy clubs to help middle and high school students learn the ins and outs of money and how to manage it. Wasserman started her original Invest Now club as a freshman at University City High School during 2020 in the pandemic after pitching the ideas to District administrators through a Zoom meeting that included Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley.

They were wowed, and Wasserman has been working ever since on her quest to rapidly grow financial literacy among her peers. Not only

Continued on page 6



University City High School junior Dani Wasserman, founder of Invest Now, welcomed guest speaker Robin Havlicek, program manager – community development lending and investing with Huntington National Bank, to the Financial Literacy Club at University City High School.

From our Superintendent of Schools



Sharonica Hardin-Bartley
Superintendent

Dear University City Community,

I'm delighted to present to you the Spring 2023 edition of PRIDE, our newsmagazine for The School District of University City. This publication strives to showcase our district's vision of Learning Reimagined. That vision has five priorities:

- Rigorous, relevant and modern learning in which we strive to humanize, personalize and problematize learning experiences
- Well-being and joy, because when our youth, staff and families are well, our students learn better
- Excellent staff with experience, training, professional development experiences and strong relationships
- All hands involved in partnerships that enhance our students' learning and social emotional experience
- Resources that are used wisely and equitably for our students, staff and greater community

You may be aware that we are currently refreshing the vision of Learning Reimagined by gathering your thoughts and input. To date, we've held five public community engagement meetings to hear your thoughts and ideas. There are more to come. The feedback has been thoughtful and insightful, and it is clear that our stakeholders want rigorous learning with measurable student achievement, and that they understand this cannot happen without simultaneously

addressing the social and emotional needs of all students, staff and family during these very trying times.

In this issue's centerpiece, you will read about strategic efforts districtwide to blend classroom academics with best practices regarding social emotional support. This is to ensure that the two work seamlessly together in our classrooms at all times. We call this SEEAL, which stands for Social, Emotional, Equitable and Academic Learning. You would think in our society that all of these attributes would be present in school learning. But, more times than not, the social, emotional and cultural needs of students are lost amid the systems and demands of public education.

This intentional work by our staff and teachers to be there for students in authentic relationships attuned to their needs is so important to their well-being and academic success. It is our mission to ensure that the soil is ripe for love, empathy and support in every staff-student interaction. As we till the soil, it is so exciting to watch our students grow in this nurturing environment!

In Service of Our Children,

Sharonica A. Hardin-Bartley
Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR
Superintendent of Schools

From our Board of Education



Joanne Soudah
Board of Education
Director

Greetings, University City Community!

The second semester is well underway, and I hope that everyone is having a good school year. Perhaps you've noticed some of the staff in the school district wearing this year's themed T-shirt, sporting the word "Ubuntu" and an African proverb that reads, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa had the following to say: "One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected, and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."

This plays out in The School District of University City on a daily basis. During my years as a kindergarten teacher in our schools, one of the first and most important things was to guide the class to work together for the benefit of all of us. Teachers refer to this as their class "gelling," and there is a perceptible shift at the moment that a class gels. Similarly,

this synergy is present when people come together for the collective good at the building level, district level, community level and board level; and yes, it is palpable. That is Ubuntu.

As you look across our district, you will see evidence of interconnectedness again and again. A Board priority is to provide the resources necessary to uphold our vision: "Our students are well-educated, capable and ethical citizens who positively impact society." That is Ubuntu.

There is a brand new effort in which the former elementary and middle school PTOs have come together to form the One U. City Community Collaborative, in which the group is working together for the benefit of all of our students across the district. That is Ubuntu.

This interconnectedness is part of who we are as a school district and as a community as we share our joys, challenges and tragedies. There's a Swedish proverb: "Shared joy is double joy; Shared sorrow is half a sorrow." That is Ubuntu.

Let's stick together, for together we will go far.

Sincerely,

Joanne Soudah
Joanne Soudah
University City Board of Education Director

The personal opinions expressed in the letter above may not reflect those of the entire University City Board of Education.

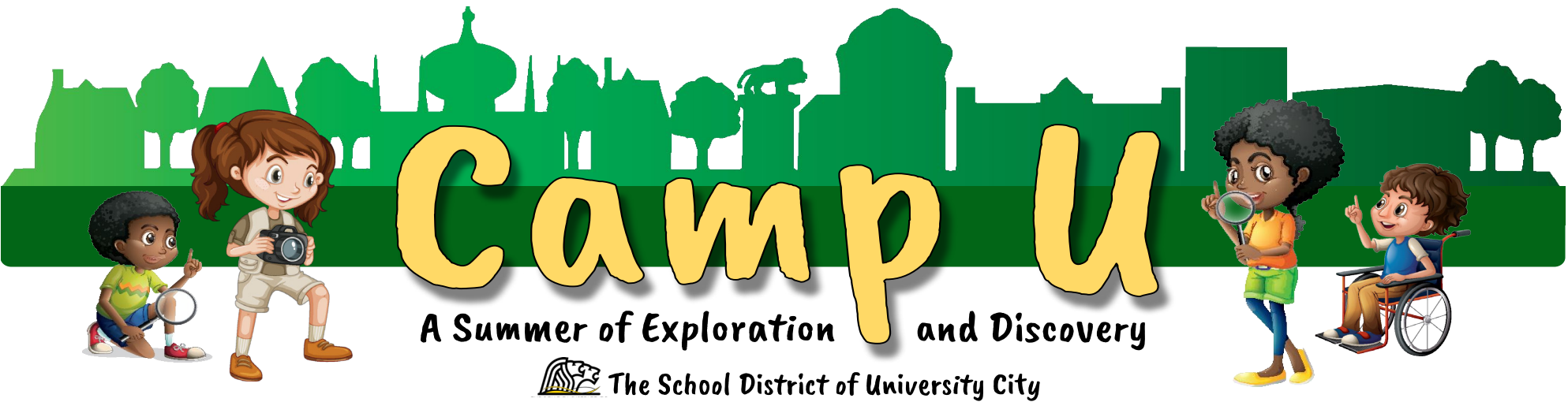
Stressed? Need time to reflect? Want some downtime?

Join us in...

The Peace Place

As part of its vision of well-being and joy, the District has created a virtual toolkit for wellness. The Peace Place offers guided exercises for mindfulness, quick escapes through sounds and music, creative exercises and more. The Peace Place is open to anyone who would like to take a little time for themselves to refresh, refocus and be well.

www.ucityschools.org/ThePeacePlace



Camp U and Summer Learning Academy Return in June 2023

PROBLEMATIZE: Learning Reimagined

The District is excited to announce that Camp U will return for its third consecutive summer for students in grades 1-8. The high school will also continue with Summer Learning Academy, a program offering credit recovery and online learning during the summer months.

Camp U will run weekdays from June 5 through June 30. There will be no camp on Monday, June 19, in honor of the federal Juneteenth holiday. Due to planned maintenance repairs at Jackson Park Elementary School, students in grades 1-5 will attend Camp U at Pershing Elementary School from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Students in grades 6-8 will attend Camp U at Brittany Woods Middle School from 8 a.m. to noon.

Summer Learning Academy for grades 9-12 at University City High will run Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., from June 5 through June 29, with no school on June 19 for the Juneteenth federal holiday.

The District's free Camp U experience couples hands-on academic learning with enrichment experiences in partnership with signature St. Louis learning institutions, including The Magic House at MADE, St. Louis Science Center, The Saint Louis Zoo, Wild Bird Sanctuary and others. It is intended to prevent the "summer learning slide" and build academic skills, while giving all students opportunities to be a part of the many great St. Louis summer experiences offered by our fun learning institutions. Instruction over the four weeks is based upon student projects that build throughout Camp U.

Funding for Camp U is determined by student attendance, and a commitment to all four weeks is required for both funding and instructional purposes.

Open registration will begin after spring break. Watch for details to come at www.ucityschools.org/CampU2023.



Students explore science with hands-on experiments during Camp U at Brittany Woods Middle School.

Reminder for U. City Schools students in need of

IMMUNIZATIONS

for the start of the new school year!

Friday, August 18, 2023 9 to 11 a.m. McNair Administration Building 7700 Olive Blvd. (63130)

Preregister with specific immunizations needed: www.ucityschools.org/ImmunClinic2023

Please bring: 1) completed consent form, 2) immunization record, and 3) letter from your school nurse indicating the required vaccines.

Questions: Contact District Lead Nurse Patricia Wilson, MSN RN (314) 651-7268 or pwilson@ucityschools.org

Conducted in partnership with Visiting Nurses Association

of a Lion

Join the Pride

Enrollment Opens April 3!

for Rising Kindergartners & New Families

Details at www.ucityschools.org/Enroll

Kindergarten Open House For Prospective Families Wednesday, April 12, 2023 Register for family to attend at www.ucityschools.org/KGOpenHouse2023

Jump Start to Kindergarten For kindergarten students enrolled for SY 2023-24 July 31 - August 2, 2023 Register for student to attend at www.ucityschools.org/JumpStart2023 For more details, visit www.ucityschools.org/Jumpstart

of a Lion

University City Board of Education Candidate Statements

Five residents have filed for candidacy in the April 4, 2023, election for three, three-year seats on the University City Board of Education. Asterisks (*) indicate the incumbents. The candidates, in order of filing, submitted the following statements and photos.

George Lenard*

I'm seeking a fourth term on the school board to help keep the district on the path of progress led by Superintendent Hardin-Bartley, whom I helped select during my first term. If elected, my experience will help provide continuity. I will ensure new board members acclimate quickly, using my knowledge of the many functions of the board. I helped develop the evidence-based Learning Reimagined model and the strategic plan, helped lead board legislative advocacy, and represented the district on the City's Economic Development Retail Sales Tax Board. I've worked on district facilities and finances, compensation, and benefits.

Professional development through the Missouri School Boards' Association earned me Advanced Board Member certification. While on the board, I've been its only lawyer member, which has at times been quite helpful, though of course the district relies on retained attorneys for legal advice.

We have much to do. Above all, we must improve student achievement. High expectations and academic rigor are essential. I'm proud of the District's response to COVID, but this protracted health crisis left too many students lagging behind. Catching up will require extraordinary efforts by all. We must ensure we provide high quality, relevant, and engaging instruction by highly qualified staff, even in the face of a national trend of educators leaving teaching more quickly than they are replaced.

Overseeing district finances is an obligation to stakeholders I take very seriously. I'm pleased that presently district finances are at their strongest since I began serving. I successfully championed development of supplemental funding from grants and donations, which has made a meaningful contribution to district resources. Given present economic uncertainties, the future will likely bring new financial challenges. If elected, I will be a good steward of taxpayer money, to always provide the best education possible with available funds.



Bridget McDougall*

Hello, fellow U. City residents. It's been my pleasure to step in and assist the Board of Education since Traci Moore's vacancy this past September. Like Traci, I share a long history of being a proud resident of University City, and I seek to give back to the school and community that shaped so much of who I am as an educator, a supporter of our city, and now a mom.

Elected by the current board to serve the remainder of this term, I was able to hit the ground running, so to speak, and fully engage in the role. I'm a firm believer that engagement as a board member is two-fold: what is accomplished during school board meetings/work sessions and what support is given in the community—to students, teachers, parents and caregivers, and residents.

That support comes in the form of showing up, sharing, and most importantly, listening. If you attend PTO meetings at the high school, are part of a school community collaborative, or have been involved with One U City, we have likely already met.

My support of an equitable education for all of our students stems from my experience as a teacher in two vastly different districts here in St. Louis. I am proud to support the momentum of our district's goals of addressing factors of equity which impact our students' educational landscape, and I am proud to say we're already seeing the results of this work.

On a practical note, I have completed the required 18 hours of board member training required by the Missouri School Board Association and have been actively involved in reviewing and updating district policies as part of the board's Policy Committee. I'm asking for your vote to continue the work I'm actively engaged in as a current board member.



Kay E. Gage

Greetings! I was born and raised in University City and am a 1986 graduate of University City High School. I am proud to say I received my K-12 education in The School District of University City. As a second generation educator, I have been in the business of working with and empowering students for over half my life.

I began my career as a Youth Specialist with the Division of Youth Services, working with troubled youth. In 1992, I transitioned to education in the St. Louis Public Schools, serving as both a substitute and certified classroom teacher. Since 1997, I have served the Jennings School District as a classroom teacher, school counselor, and Jennings NEA president. I work to equip students with the awareness and skills needed to successfully navigate and compete in the 21st century, and provide enrichment opportunities for students through network collaboration and partnerships with community stakeholders.

I have a desire to shift the direction of my community service. So I answered a clarion call to run for The School District of University City Board of Education. I am driven by my love for University City and dedication to making sure students experience an education that is humanized, personalized, and problematized. I intend to support the district's effort to provide every student access to exceptional schools that inspire learning. I am an advocate for robust curriculum and instruction; support for our students, teachers, and school leaders; and access to resources that ensure district goals are met.

I look forward to being given the opportunity to serve our community as a member of The School District of University City Board of Education. Please consider me when casting your vote on April 4, 2023.



School Board Candidate Statements

Continued from page 4

Kwira R. Vickers

My name is Kwira Vickers. I am a proud member of the UC Class of 1999 who is eager to serve in a position on the U City School Board. Since the 1960s, my family has been deeply rooted in the community. Both of my parents attended and graduated from U City High (dad '69, mom '71). After college, I returned to the community that I love and that has loved me for decades. My two boys have been in the district since Kindergarten – Rashad graduated last year and Jahleel is a current 8th grader at Brittany Woods Middle School.

I have unique educational expertise as a U City alumna, a current U City parent, a former PTO member at Hawthorne and Jackson Park and as a public school educator myself. As an alumna, I have the perspective of being a student in the district. As a parent, I see the changes U City is undergoing and have volunteered in schools. As an Assistant Principal at a public school, I endure daily the changes that education has faced since the pandemic and the impact of these changes on our children.

I have deep U City knowledge, but most importantly, I have strategic insights to how schools work. With my 17 years in education (both in the classroom and as an administrator), I can continue U City on the right path. Education has changed tremendously in the last decade, and I want to help U City change with the times while preserving the sanctity and spirit of a district with so much rich history. I believe we can preserve the high standards and community that U City is known for while also fostering key changes that will launch us into the future of education.



Karen Bernstein

My name is Karen Bernstein and I am excited to be running for School Board in University City. I am uniquely qualified for this role given my history with U City schools and my experience in education and business.

I am deeply connected to our students and families. I previously worked at Barbara C. Jordan, Pershing, Jackson Park, and Flynn Park as Wyman's Wraparound Services Building Director, I also interned with the principal of Brittany Woods when earning my MBA and Master's in Education Leadership.

I believe our schools need leaders with experience in how schools work – from the education AND the business lens. I have experience in both fields. I worked as a middle school teacher in Normandy School District, which included implementing new curricula and mentoring new teachers. I also worked as a program director at Wyman Center, where I learned best practices in a variety of schools by collaborating with schools, students and their families to ensure students succeeded. Currently, I work in education data compliance, helping principals and their finance teams plan for long-term success with both their student academic success and long-term business viability.

As a board member, I will support the school district in using data-driven approaches to close academic and social emotional learning gaps. This must be done with equity and our vast community resources in mind. I also will ensure the district is a good steward of public dollars by using existing and projected data to look at where our district will be in the future. Finally, I will advocate for the continued success of the district vision Learning Reimagined. Our commitment to Humanize, Personalize, and Problematize learning for our students must be at the heart of each board decision.

Thank you for your vote for Karen Bernstein on April 4th!



Community Engagement

Refreshing the Vision:
Learning Reimagined

Input Sessions


Tuesday, March 28, 2023
(5:30-7 p.m.)
- Barbara C. Jordan Elementary
1500 North 82nd Blvd. (63132)
- Pershing Elementary
6761 Bartmer Ave. (63130)

Wednesday, April 12, 2023
(6-7:30 p.m.)
- Brittany Woods Middle
& University City High
UCHS Pruitt Library
Jackson entrance at
Shaffesbury & Jackson Ave.

Note: Julia Goldstein ECEC,
Flynn Park Elementary and Jackson
Park Elementary sessions were held
in February 2023.

Please join The School District of University
City in its efforts to refresh its strategic plan,
Learning Reimagined.
Register at www.ucityschools.org/2023CEMtgRegistration.

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UNIVERSITY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
PRESENTS:

THE WIZ

BY WILLIAM F. BROWN AND
CHARLIE SMALLE

PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH CONCORD
THEATRICALS INC. & AZTEC SHOWTRAX LLC.

TICKETS AVAILABLE
NOW!

April 14 & 15, 2023 • 7 p.m.
University City High School • Charles A. Banks Auditorium
7401 Balson Ave. University City, MO 63130

Admission: \$10 (Online plus fees) / \$12 (In-Person)
Online Tickets: www.ucityschools.org/UCHSWIZ2023
For details, email khooks@ucityschools.org



Trivia Night

Save
the
date!

**SATURDAY
May 6, 2023**

Watch for details:
ucityschools.org/1UCTrivia





Reminder: Election Day

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

NO SCHOOL & Staff Professional Development Day



University City School Board Candidate Forum

Election day is Tuesday, April 4, 2023

One U City invites you to meet this year's
school board candidates in an informal discussion
moderated by the League of Women Voters.

Tuesday, March 28 • 7 p.m.

Brittany Woods Middle School
8125 Groby Road (63130)

Submit a question for the candidates online by Sunday prior:
www.ucityschools.org/BOEForumQuestion

Register for link/password:
www.ucityschools.org/BOEForumRegistration

Learn more about One U City at www.ucityschools.org/1UCity

Free summer meal program returns

Attention ALL KIDS:
Visit your neighborhood
University City Camp U / SLA
site in University City during
specific dates and times and
receive a breakfast and/or lunch
at NO CHARGE.

June 5 - 23, 2023

For list of locations and specific times,
visit www.ucityschools.org/SummerMeals

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from
discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination,
write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 726-6381 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Field Hockey Summer Camp



Monday 6/5 - Thursday 6/8
K-2nd 6:30-7:30pm
3rd-8th 6:30-8:00pm

MORE INFO & REGISTRATION AT
[HTTPS://LINKTR.EE/UCITYFIELDHOCKEY](https://linktr.ee/ucityfieldhockey)

Thriving District Boutique Gets a Refresh

PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined

It is important that District students and families needing basic essentials feel cared for and respected. That’s why the District’s very popular school-based boutique got a facelift this year to make it more of a welcoming space for families seeking needed clothing, shoes, coats, athletic wear and other basic essentials. Volunteer organizers Rebecca Salem and Kim Dann-Messier said they wanted the boutique to look more like a nice shop rather than a place just to sort through clothing. The new look includes crisp white shelving, nooks for displaying jewelry, handbags and other accessories, bright lighting, chic chairs and more.

The boutique is free to families and students needing assistance and is open by appointment. It is housed in the lower level of University City High School.

The boutique always has a need for donations of clean, gently used clothing and new packs of underwear in all sizes. It especially needs athletic shorts, shoes, packages of socks, jogging pants and tops and larger women’s clothing. The boutique is additionally planning a prom “pop-up shop” and is further seeking donations of jewelry, formal shoes, gowns and prom dresses, and nice clothing for men.

To donate to the boutique or schedule an appointment, contact Rebecca Salem at rsalem91@yahoo.com and/or Kim Dann-Messier at kimde@hotmail.com.



Invest Now

Continued from page 1

is the Invest Now Club at University City High School thriving, it has also sparked the startup of three other Invest Now clubs – one at a KIPP charter school in St. Louis, another at nearby Maplewood-Richmond Heights High School and the newest at KIPP Schools in Columbus, Ohio.

“Finance has always been something I had been interested in,” Wasserman said. “My dad works in real estate at a bank, which interested me in business.”

Wasserman said she started a small but thriving investment club in seventh grade at her former private school where the middle schoolers learned about the stock market. When she joined the District as a freshman, she saw a need among her peers who didn’t have the connections to banking and entrepreneurship that she had.

“It made me think about a greater impact regarding the knowledge I had acquired,” she said. “Many of our students at University City High School might not come from families who have that knowledge on financial literacy.”

She recalled giving a presentation at Maplewood-Richmond Heights High School, and watching the students’ eyes open wide when they learned about the exponential growth of compound interest and put it in context of sneakers.

“The example I give is the sneaker example, given that many students spend a fair amount on sneakers – because who doesn’t like a good sneaker?” Wasserman said. “I tell them, if you hold off on buying one or two pairs of sneakers and save the money, with a compound interest of 7%, two pairs of \$200 sneakers will be \$12,608 by the time they turn 65.”

The club meets after school about twice a month. In addition to learning basic financial concepts, the club also brings in guest speakers from banks, investment firms and businesses. Maxine Clark, the former founder and CEO of Build A Bear, is scheduled to visit.

Club members also have some skin in the stock market game. Thanks to support from the District and outside partners, the club is given \$300 to invest, so meetings also focus on financial portfolios and making educated investments based on what might be ticking up in the stock market.

The results have been mixed – mostly due to the global pandemic which rocked the markets in the first 18 months of the club. The students’

stock purchase choices are based on current world events, good stewardship, a knowledge of youth culture and, yes, a little bit of gut instinct.

Their first investment was in a solar energy company in Canada in response to the incoming President Joe Biden’s agenda

to increase solar energy usage in America, Wasserman said. Stocks that have done well include ULTA Beauty and Costco, which had just completed its plans to build a store in University City. Students have also had some nice returns on stock in The RealReal, an online luxury consignment store. As for the latter pick, Wasserman said club members like “to thrift,” and online recycled clothing is both environmentally sound and a hot trend.

District Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said Wasserman is a dynamo who plays a powerful leadership role for District administrators and staff to follow.

“Dani is an extraordinary young woman leader,” Hardin-Bartley said. “This is such a fantastic opportunity for our students. So many of our students don’t have access to financial literacy at home. Some of our families are unbanked, meaning they don’t have bank accounts. It is empowering for students to learn both basic skills and understand the high impact of saving and investing wisely.”

When she graduates in 2024, Wasserman plans to major in finance and business and hopes to go into real estate development. She’s already on her way thanks to internships. She’s worked with an affordable housing real estate developer and is doing research on housing in St. Louis for a professor at Washington University. That experience opened her eyes to the history of redlining neighborhoods in St. Louis and its legacy of financial disenfranchisement in many segregated neighborhoods.

Wasserman said financial literacy helps combat that history. “Financial literacy is not just about creating a stable life, but a successful life in various sectors of our society.”



Dani Wasserman

Missouri Releases 2022 APR Results Based on New Standards

Continued from page 1

consider is that students in our schools are learning and recovering from two years of a pandemic. This not only indicates our district’s resilience, but intentional strategies to get students back on track through new learning strategies and intensive social emotional support in light of the pandemic.”

Annual APR scoring is part of the “state’s accountability system for reviewing and accrediting Local Education Agencies (LEAs).” It “outlines expectations for school practices and student outcomes, with the goal of each student graduating ready for success in college, career, and life.” The School District of University City, like many other urban predominantly Black districts, was disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and that is reflected in their APR scores, Hardin-Bartley said.

“The District lost important APR points for low attendance last year during the pandemic, particularly when the Omicron variant kept so many students home in January and February 2022,” she said. “Almost all urban school districts in our area received no attendance points. And yet, they were more impacted by COVID-19, and that is definitely reflected in total APR scores. It is my hope that this scoring doesn’t marginalize school districts of color, even when many of them are making progress.”

Hardin-Bartley said the APR results indicate there is still intensive work to be done on academic proficiency.

“I am so proud of our students’ growth during hard times,” she said. “That is a great sign our approach is working. We are not yet where we need to be on milestones for overall student proficiency. We have very high academic performers. And yet, we want to see all of our students progress further. Overall, more of our students should be in the proficient range.”

Hardin-Bartley said the District is on track for better attendance this year due to fewer absences from COVID-19, which will increase student engagement and direct instruction time with students. She said she is optimistic that the District’s academic growth will continue because of curricular work and well-being initiatives that were accelerated in response to COVID-19.

“We are on the right track. Our educational model prioritizes academic rigor and well-being at a period in history when students’ academic and mental health has been severely impacted by COVID-19. We have a robust strategic plan in place that prioritizes modern, rigorous and relevant learning; well-being and joy; excellent staff; key educational partnerships with local and national organizations; and responsible and equitable use of resources. This year, we were able to fully implement that plan without

classroom interruption from COVID-19,” she said. “Additionally, we’ve made changes to our districtwide multi-tiered systems of support to reach more students and boost overall academic growth. We are hiring a director to oversee that system, which will prevent students from falling through the cracks with interventions that are both targeted and effective. We are also providing more intensive student support to address student mental health, because research indicates a nationwide mental health crisis among our youth. This includes hiring an on-site therapist.”

Hardin-Bartley cautioned that the annual APR, though important, is just one indicator based on standardized testing delivered at a fixed point in time. The District uses a variety of metrics and assessments to gauge student performance throughout the school year. Leadership teams also continually evaluate school environments and teaching performance with regular learning walks to monitor the District’s learning and social emotional culture.

“Our students are doing powerful things every day as they learn with a social justice and service centered mindset. In so many ways, I witness our students coming together with teachers with action plans regarding building community, sustainability and inclusion,” she said. “We continually find new pathways to opportunity for students. We have one of the most robust dual college enrollment programs in the region, with students earning hundreds of free college credit hours prior to graduation.”

As District leaders and staff evaluate APR and make adjustments, Hardin-Bartley noted that drilling down solely on academic performance measured by testing, without including enhancements for student and staff social and emotional wellness, would be shortsighted.

“We know students learn better when they are well, included and supported,” she said. “We also know that students nationwide are dealing with a mental health crisis in the aftermath of COVID. We cannot dismiss wellness. It is a necessary factor in student learning as we move forward in service of our children.

“I encourage parents and caregivers – including those considering public education in University City – to come visit our schools and talk to us about our modern, rigorous and relevant learning, our focus on well-being among students and staff, our excellent staff and our intense focus on student voice, social justice and equity.”

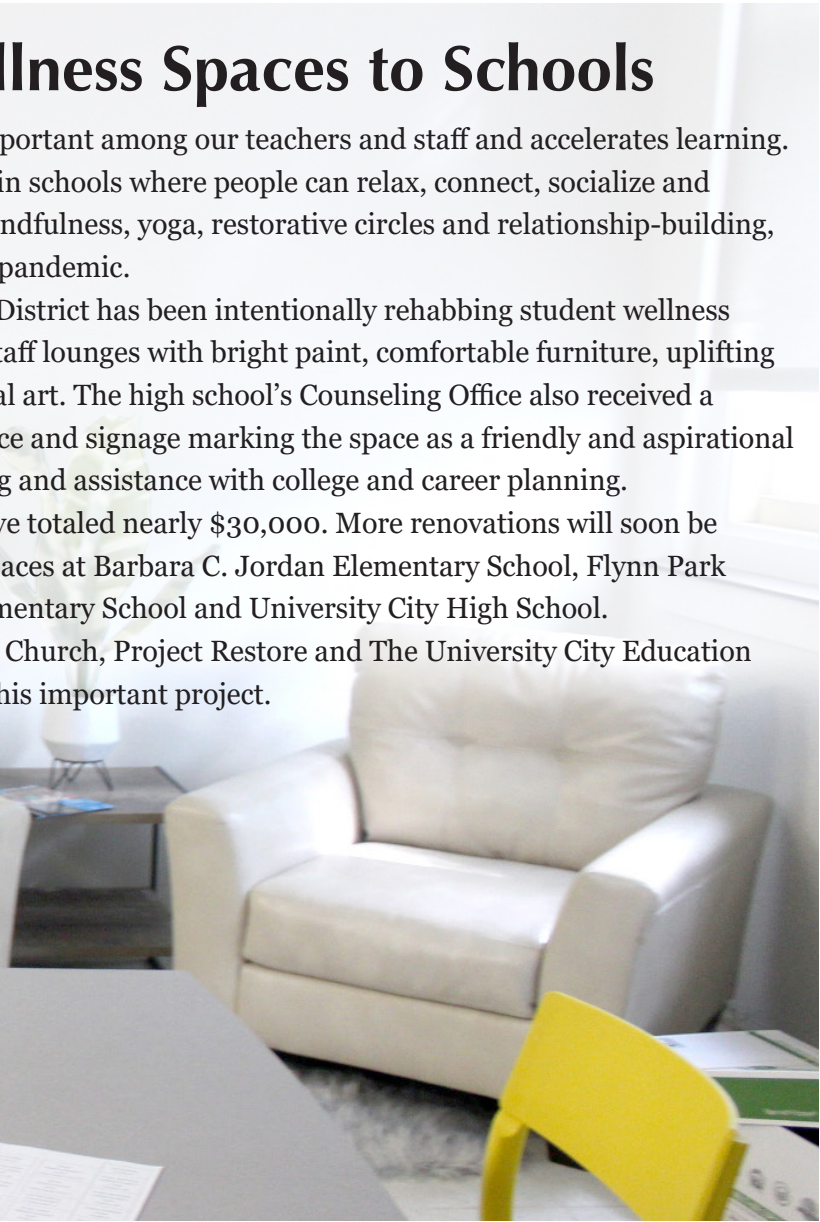
District Adds Wellness Spaces to Schools

Mental health and wellness is so important among our teachers and staff and accelerates learning. It is vital to have spaces and places in schools where people can relax, connect, socialize and engage in healthy activities such as mindfulness, yoga, restorative circles and relationship-building, especially in the aftermath of a global pandemic.

Thanks to generous donations, the District has been intentionally rehabbing student wellness spaces, student-centered offices and staff lounges with bright paint, comfortable furniture, uplifting murals, coffee stations and aspirational art. The high school’s Counseling Office also received a facelift that included a colorful entrance and signage marking the space as a friendly and aspirational place to visit for counseling, mentoring and assistance with college and career planning.

Donations to revamp the spaces have totaled nearly \$30,000. More renovations will soon be underway, including more wellness spaces at Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School, Flynn Park Elementary School, Jackson Park Elementary School and University City High School.

The District thanks Faith Des Peres Church, Project Restore and The University City Education Foundation for their partnerships in this important project.



UCEF Awards \$20K In Grants to Support Unique Classroom Projects

HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined

Carrot, the beloved resident snake in Rubina McCadney’s Brittany Woods Middle School classroom, now has plenty of snacks to eat. Students in Jessica Job’s pre-K class at Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center will explore making intricate patterns and shadows on the wall with colored light blocks and light projectors.

The Golden Girls dance team at University City High School now has showy gold capes for performances and showcases. Danny DuMaine’s music students at Pershing Elementary School will sound out notes and musical scores thanks to new electronic keyboards.

These are just a few of the many exciting learning and experiential opportunities made possible by the 2022 grant awards from the University City Education Foundation (UCEF). The volunteer nonprofit awarded more than \$20,000 in grants to University City Schools teachers and staff on Dec. 7, 2022.

The awards and the actual items were presented by UCEF President Linda “Cookie” Jones and other board members during a celebration party for the awardees held in the library at Brittany Woods Middle School – the same place where the volunteer board meets regularly to fundraise and select grant awardees.

Every year, UCEF advertises the grants to District staff and students, who then apply with proposals for resources they need to enhance learning and social emotional experiences in classrooms or school buildings. The group further supports larger fundraising efforts for The School District of University City.

About 30 staff and board members attended the celebration. Guests enjoyed delicious snacks from Salt and Smoke. There was also a surprise visit from Carrot, a 3-foot orange and white snake who resides in McCadney’s classroom. Carrot was the lucky recipient of food and other habitat items from UCEF. Carrot often provides support and comfort in the classroom, as she likes to calmly snuggle with students.

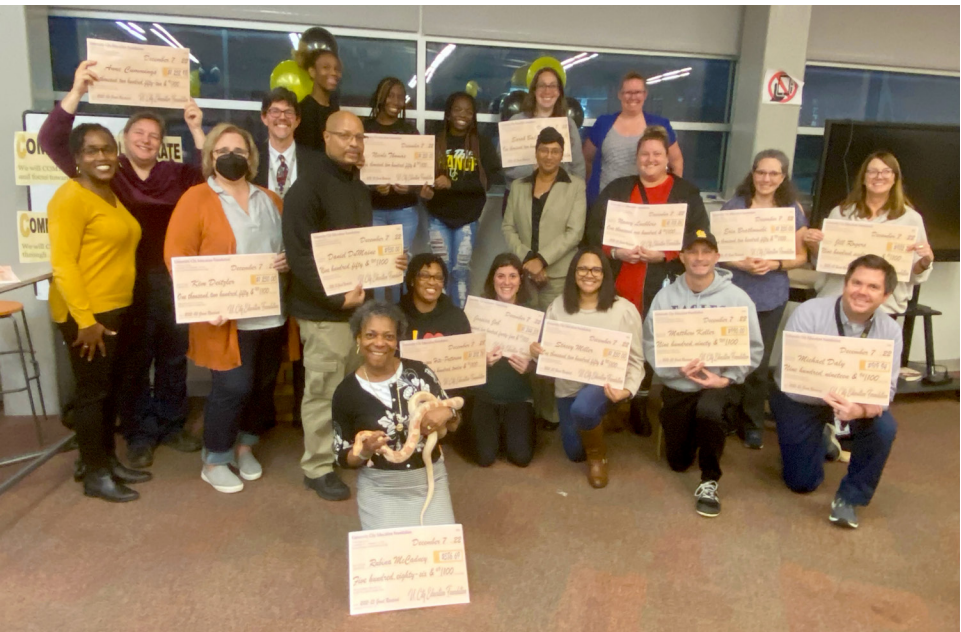
To learn more about UCEF, check them out on Facebook.



An Honor Like No Other!

On Oct. 14, 2022, University City High School inducted 11 alumni into the UCHS Hall of Fame. Congratulations to Kathryn (Pierce) Banks, ’93; Jennifer (Roman) Boykin, ’82; MSG Donavan “Donny” Nelson Butler, US Army, Retired, ’89; Reena Goldthre, ’99; Linda “Cookie” (Dickson) Jones, ’83; Daniel Kaufer (deceased), ’77; Earl Kessler, ’59; David Levi, ’77; Helene (Wagman) Sherman, ’62; Richard Stack, ’70; and Stephanie Williams-Nelson, ’77.

The UCHS Hall of Fame selection committee is currently in the process of reviewing nominees for the Sept. 29, 2023, induction ceremony. Watch for more details, including selected inductees and ticket information, this summer at www.ucityschools.org/HOF2023.



The University City Education Foundation (UCEF) awarded more than \$20,000 in grants to teachers and staff to enhance student educational experiences during the 2022-23 school year.

UCEF Grant Awards for 2022-23	
A More Inclusive Library: Foreign Language Fiction for English Language Learners	\$1,250 – Kim Deitzler, University City High School
Building Thinking Classrooms: White Boards on Wheels	\$708 – Michael Dorsey, University City High School
Edible School Yard Comes to Brittany Woods	\$1,753 – Anne Cummings, Brittany Woods Middle School
Exploring Light and Shadow Play	\$1,244 – Jessica Job, Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center
For the Love of Reading	\$1,177 – Jaquin McBride, Pershing Elementary School
Language Growth in Young Learners	\$1,200 – Kelsi Tatum, Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School
Maker Space Startup	\$1,000 – Nancy Luebbers, Pershing Elementary School
Robolink Zumi	\$920 – Michael Daly, University City High School
U Right Snack Services Business	\$1,000 – Shannon Hayslett, University City High School
Opening Creative Minds Through Keyboards	\$950 – Danny DuMaine, Pershing Elementary School
Literary Magazine	\$625 – Patrick Gilligan, University City High School
To Kill a Mockingbird Live Experience at The Fox Theatre	\$1,250 – Erin Bratkowski, University City High School
I Can BEE a Coder	\$1,213 – Monique Hite-Patterson, Jackson Park Elementary School
Joyful Confident Readers Raise Their Voices	\$983 – Jill Rogers, Pershing Elementary School
UCHS Golden Girls Dance Team Capes for Performances	\$1,250 – Nicole Thomas, University City High School
Flourishing Families – Pershing Parents Support Connection	\$1,250 – Stacey Miller, Pershing Elementary School
“Feed the Cats” Speed Program	\$990 – Matt Keller, Brittany Woods Middle School
Book Battle: Building Skills and Nurturing a Love of Reading through Competition	\$1,250 – Sarah Bailey, Pershing Elementary School
Carrot and Sticks – Feed the Classroom Snake	\$587 – Rubina McCadney, Brittany Woods Middle School

First, Do No Harm

A Q&A with Christina Grove About Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching

PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined

Far too often, the behaviors of Black students in classrooms are viewed by educators as disruptive rather than as an asset, said Christina Grove, The School District of University City’s new CLR Instructional Leader. Black students are often shushed, corrected and shamed for displaying their cultural identities in school. And, alarmingly, research shows Black students are more disproportionately disciplined, suspended and expelled from public schools in America than white students.



Christina Grove

For decades, schools have struggled to address disproportionate rates of expulsions and suspensions of Black students. Despite federal decrees and complaints from groups like the ACLU, adults in school cultures often blame the student and their parents as the culprits for failing to conform, when, in fact, the schools have failed to address gaps in understanding between their established school cultures and students’ positive home cultures.

About five years ago, the District began embracing the work of researcher Sharroky Hollie, the author of “Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching.” Referred to as CLR, this practice urges teachers to recognize their innate biases regarding students of different cultures; validate and affirm those differences and behaviors; and bridge the gap to accelerate positive relationships and classroom learning.

The District is doubling down on this process with the appointment of Grove to a new CLR Instructional Leader position. In the fall, we talked with Grove, a former District Teacher of the Year who most recently taught social studies at Brittany Woods Middle School. Grove is a 1994 graduate of University City High School, and her two children attend/attended the District.

Tell us a little bit about your history and how you came into this work.

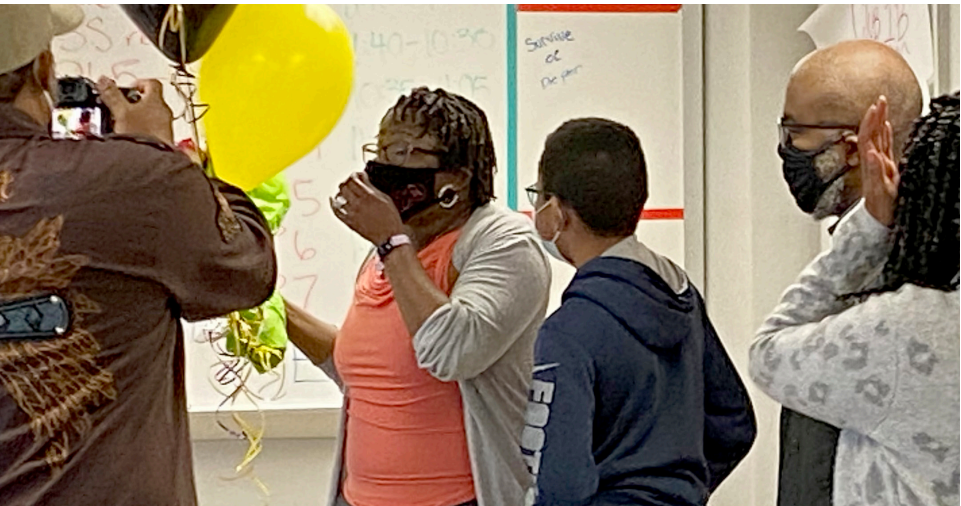
I am a second-career educator who comes from a family of educators. Prior to joining this profession, I’d worked with a local bar association coordinating continuing education for attorneys, as well as educational outreach programs for K-12 students. My first foray into a public school setting saw me working in a space with a strong social justice and law focus. So, it was in that place I learned to interrogate the inequities in education’s systems and structures.

What is your model for bringing the CLR mindset to our classroom educators? How far along is the District in this process?

Our district’s work with CLR utilizes Dr. Sharroky Hollie’s framework. In his model, there is an emphasis on understanding students’ cultural identities in order to validate and affirm their ways of being and brilliance, in order to build and bridge them toward their academic goals. SDUC has been enmeshed in this work for more than five years. In that time, several teachers have been coached specifically around using CLR strategies for classroom response, discussion, movement, literacy and vocabulary instruction. Additionally, teacher leaders and administrators have received training on how to structure and implement building level teams charged with supporting teacher development within their schools. This year, my work is focused around supporting new teachers with the mindset and skillset development necessary to begin or further their journey toward being culturally and linguistically responsive practitioners.

What are some subtle biases that teachers need to recognize that may be leading them to educate with less rigor?

Each of us, as educators, have to work to ensure that the high levels of support we seek to give students is matched with equally high expectations around their brilliance and capabilities. We are all aware that students can come to us with varying levels of skill development. None of those perceived gaps preclude students from striving for and achieving excellence. We



Christina Grove, the District's new CLR Instructional Leader, was surprised in 2021 with the District's Teacher of the Year award.

have to ensure that we can see that, even when students can’t see it for themselves. And, we can’t let our cultural lens and preconceived notions of what brilliance “looks like” hinder us from seeing the fullness of what our students (and their families and caregivers) bring with them every day.

Give an example of a culturally based student behavior that is often viewed as disruptive in a classroom, and how could that be addressed by teachers as an asset?

Each person values “realness” to varying degrees, often informed by their cultural identities. For example, in much of our society’s youth culture, “keepin’ it a buck/100/real” is prized highly. For some previous generations, a perception of what it means to be “nice” means one is often expected to quash their true feelings about a topic in order to spare others’ feelings. Enter the middle school student who walks in a classroom and says “Ugh, it stinks in here!” That student sees it as their right and responsibility to be honest. Their teacher sees it as rude. The culturally and linguistically responsive practitioner recognizes their own possible bias around the value of the behavior; validates and affirms the student’s expression of the behavior, while also facilitating their thinking around how that statement might impact others in the learning community; and looks for ways to proactively utilize that cultural behavior in the learning. (Realness is especially useful when engaging in critical analysis of dominant/traditional historical narratives.)

Where have you seen the most progress in District classrooms?

There are buildings in our district where this work is going forward with intention. I’ve been in classroom spaces with our youngest scholars at Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center, where teachers use call and response attention grabbers, engaging in conversations around connections between things learned in home cultures and in school spaces, and utilizing multilingual text resources around the classroom. I have also engaged with multiple teachers who have a strong desire to honor student cultural identities in meaningful ways beyond typical stereotypes to help push learning and relationships forward. We have a ways to go, but we are moving in the right direction.

What work is ahead for you?

My work this year revolves around our newest team members. This year I will be supporting their development via whole group professional development, as well as individual coaching opportunities. In addition, I am pushing forth my own learning – working to understand the history and future of asset pedagogies (one of which is CLR) so that I can push my own thinking and help our teachers integrate this seamlessly into their practice.

Any final reflections?

This work is fundamental to providing all School District of University City students, families and caregivers with the educational opportunities they desire and deserve. Zaretta Hammond, the author of “Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,” said, “All education is culturally responsive. The question is ‘who is it culturally responsive to?’” It is my intention to help teachers develop ways of being and instructional practices that are culturally responsive to ALL of our students.

Merging the Head and Heart

Education in The School District of University City is a **head and heart business**. To nurture strong learners, the District aims to seamlessly blend **modern, rigorous and relevant** instruction with intentional work to foster **well-being and joy**. This school year, the District's offices of Student Services, Well-Being, and Curriculum and Instruction have been working together to ensure that classroom teachers and staff embrace an educational model called SEEAL – a model that intentionally blends **Social, Emotional, Equitable and Academic Learning** in the classroom. Regardless of the academic discipline, be it literature, social studies, math or physics, **academic learning is strengthened when it is blended with heartfelt teaching** that nurtures relationships, inclusion and positive social emotional practices.

Measuring Well-Being Through Panorama

How do we know if our Well Being and Joy approach is working to enhance learning? What can we tweak to be more effective? Evaluation and data are key components in monitoring our progress.

Since 2018, the District has been using an evaluation system called Panorama. Panorama measures social emotional well-being factors in our elementary, middle and high school students. All students in grades 3-12, staff, and parents are asked to fill out a Panorama survey at the beginning and end of each school year. Over time, this growing body of data enables District leaders and teachers to gauge how we are doing to ensure our students, staff and families are well. The data can be drilled down to school building, grade level, classroom and even individual students. The data set is compared to aggregate Panorama data nationwide to inform all staff how we compare by age and by specific measures.

Questions on the Panorama surveys measure student social emotional competencies and perceptions of school environment, equity and inclusion.

These are big terms, but survey questions are broken down to identify whether student qualities such as growth mindset, emotional regulation and confidence to succeed are healthy and robust. Panorama helps the District gauge whether students and staff feel as if they are engaged, safe, included and challenged. Most importantly, Panorama helps the District measure whether students have key relationships with adults and peers to succeed.

"Well-being and joy isn't fuzzy," said Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley. "It is highly measurable, and when we have exact data points, we can see what's working and make adjustments where there are opportunities. Students have a hard time learning if they don't feel safe, if they feel isolated, if they are marginalized, and frankly, if they don't feel loved.

Continued on page 13

Yoga is just one of dozens of tools the District uses to promote well-being in its buildings. Students learn best when social emotional practices are seamlessly integrated into school curriculum and daily life. At Brittany Woods Middle School, students utilize the newly renovated wellness area to connect through restorative circles, meet with the building's wellness specialist and practice yoga before school most mornings.

Teachers Get a Course in SEEAL: Social, Emotional, Equitable and Academic Learning

Think back to the positive teachers and classes that have stuck with you the most. What was it that made them unforgettable? Was it the coursework? Or was it the teacher?

Most likely, it was a powerful combination of both: an educator that deeply connected with you through coursework and discussion that was both challenging and meaningful. This is what the District means when it strives to educate with both the head and the heart. In reality, the best learning emerges from teachers who humanize their students. They intentionally integrate positive social emotional practices into concrete lesson plans and teaching practices.

The School District of University City calls this SEEAL, an acronym for social, emotional, equitable and academic learning. There is a skill set needed for this type of teaching. So, this school year, all of the District's K-12 teachers have been participating in professional development course called SEEAL 101.

The program is led by Nikole Shurn, the District's well-being director, and Christina Grove, CLR coordinator in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. In her role, Grove leads initiatives to recognize and remediate cultural and racial bias in the classroom. (Learn more about her role on page 9).

Continued on page 12

Jackson Park Teacher Goes on Jennifer Hudson Show

PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined

The Jennifer Hudson Show recently awarded Jackson Park Elementary School \$10,000 after second grade teacher Shumsheia Johnson was completely surprised and called up on stage to chat with Jennifer Hudson during a taping of her talk show earlier this year.

In late January, Johnson was shopping online for tickets to the Los Angeles show to surprise her daughter with a spring break trip to Los Angeles for her 16th birthday. The show was sold out, but Johnson noticed a message on the show’s website for teachers. She clicked a link and filled out a questionnaire about what teaching and her school meant to her. She said she hoped Hudson could send an inspirational message to the students, particularly after so many of them were impacted by severe flooding in University City last summer.

A few days later, she was able to obtain last-minute tickets for her and her daughter to go to a taping in early February. Little did she know, she would be called out of the audience to be a guest on the show talking with Hudson about teaching and her love for her students and Jackson Park. She was a natural!

She also didn’t know that several of her past and current students would present taped messages to her that were aired during the six minute segment.

“You help me with everything I need help with,” said one student.

“Thank you for helping me with my math. You’re the best math teacher ever,” said another.

“You made second grade one of the best times I ever had,” said a former student. “You also made me want to come to school every single day.”

The show was televised on February 22. Johnson’s class and several other students and teachers celebrated with a private viewing in the school library. Near the end of the segment, Hudson announced that the show would be giving Jackson Park Elementary School the cash gift. It was a complete surprise to Principal Rebecca O’Connell and Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley who were also at the viewing.



Jackson Park second-grade teacher Shumsheia Johnson shares with her students how it felt to be called on stage to chat with Jennifer Hudson.

There were so many cheers! But, by far, the highlight was Johnson making her Jackson Park Heart with her hands in front of a national television audience and then reciting the school motto: JP: We’re the heart of Jackson Park.

“The students are at the heart of what we do, so we put our hearts into everything we do at Jackson Park,” she told Hudson to a loudly applauding audience.

Johnson told Hudson her motivation for teaching, especially during COVID-19 and hard times, is spiritual.

“When God gives you purpose, and you really walk in it, he will bless you.”

Johnson and her daughter ended up revising their spring break plans. Instead of a trip to L.A., they were planning a five-night stay at a Kalahari Resort Water Park courtesy of the show.

Teachers Get a Course in SEEAL

Continued from page 11

Grove and Shurn said teachers sometimes view their teaching role from a purely academic lens. The approach is understandable. The U.S. education system is heavily steeped in assessments that score competency, but not necessarily powerful thinking and learning. There is always a risk of teaching to the test. But research indicates students scale up their learning power when the course content and teaching ensures they are included, heard, challenged and encouraged on a more personal, social and emotional level.

“What we know is that the brain seeks to connect, belong and have a sense of safety at all times,” Shurn said. “Without connections and safety, our brains simply don’t operate at their fullest potential. So the integration of social emotional competence and equity are vital if our academic spaces are to fully serve our students.”

In SEEAL 101, Grove and Shurn first teach teachers and school leaders on ways to engage in Panorama data (see story on page 10) to best understand their students’ social emotional strengths and opportunities for better personal engagement in the classroom. Teachers are taught to further look for social emotional cues among their students, and, finally, they are given tools to better engage their students on a personal level.

“They really are intrigued by and interested in the Panorama data that we engage in,” Shurn said of the teachers. “It gives them insight into how their students are feeling and thinking. It also raises questions for them about ways that we can support students with social emotional competencies.”

Teachers in all District classes are encouraged to use circle discussions that mix academic content with discussions that may include reflections on student identity, beliefs and their “why.”

Students need to feel like they have some personal “why” in what they are learning, Shurn said. So, a circle discussion on American history and

the current issue about what to do with Civil War monuments will not only include students reporting out on different texts they read prior to class, but moments of personal reflection and even discussion about emotional responses to the issue.

There is evidence that this method of teaching nurtures a growth mindset and elevates learning – particularly in an age when information is spewed out on reels, TicTok posts, Instagram, Facebook and Google, just to name a few. Current students have never known a day in their lives without cellphones. Access to a barrage of words, images, videos and texts is so easy and so instantly gratifying, it’s often hard to engage youth to understand the difference between active thinking versus passive consuming.

Thinking – or learning – requires effort, Grove said. It entails some struggle, making mistakes and learning from these social and emotional experiences. Shurn and Grove said acknowledging student emotions and the process of overcoming mental hardships in coursework is also part of the learning process, regardless of the subject.

“A math teacher can preface a lesson by asking students how they think they might have to show perseverance as they learn the lesson,” Shurn said. “Or the teacher could possibly ask students to reflect on the problems that required them to use their resolve to finish. In a science lesson, a teacher could use a Socratic seminar or community circle to engage in dialogue regarding a text that highlights a recent science concept.”

Ultimately, the intentional merging of academics with social emotional practices aligns with the District’s vision of creating college and career-ready graduates who are active and engaged citizens.

“Our vision requires that we pair the acquisition and development of these critical 21st century skills with their mastery of academic content,” Shurn said.

Measuring Well-Being Through a Pandemic

Continued from page 10

Well-Being and Joy in a Pandemic

Our youth are dealing with one of the most significant health crises of the modern age. The coronavirus isolated students, more adversely harmed African American and poor communities, disrupted education, triggered past trauma and anxiety, and put key developmental and social milestones on hold. Recent studies find students struggling with disturbing amounts of mental health issues. In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children’s Hospital Association together declared a national state of emergency in children’s mental health.

In University City, District students encountered dual pandemics – both COVID-19 and racism. They experience a world in which COVID exacerbated existing racial disparities regarding health, social status, income and neighborhood resources.

“Just like around the nation, we are seeing emotional challenges with our students due to COVID and other factors. They are dealing with very heavy stuff,” said Gary Spiller, executive director of student services and innovation. “Panorama goes far beyond typical indicators like grades and staff perceptions to accurately help us understand our students. Panorama data speaks directly to our three pillars of humanizing, personalizing and problematizing our student experience.”

Recent Panorama data reflected both challenges and victories during a global pandemic. For example, the District scored in the top 20th percentile nationally for cultural awareness and action. Teacher-student relationships saw significant growth in both elementary and secondary grades.

Our third- through fifth-graders scored in the 80th percentile nationwide. Growth mindset among students also scored high at all grade levels.

However, as anticipated, COVID taxed our students’ emotional bandwidth. Perception of self efficacy – the belief that they can grapple with and solve hard problems – dropped. Perceived student engagement in schoolwork and activities also dropped in grades 3-5.

Targeted Resources


Joe Miller, chief of staff for organizational health and effectiveness, said these data points led the District to increase resources in specific schools. For example, well-being specialists have been deployed in all schools to supplement existing counselors and social workers. At the high school, programming has been added for mental health. Last year, in the high school, funding was used last year for a Be the Change mental health campaign. This spring, the District is planning a community resource fair for students, parents and caregivers.

The District also increased mental health services for families through longtime partner KHAOS Kids, which stands for Keep Healing And Overcoming Struggles. Additionally the District added significant well-being spaces for students and staff in all schools.

“Panorama truly enables us to figure out where additional resources are needed to support our students so they are ready to learn.”

Joe Miller
Chief of Staff
for Organizational Health and Effectiveness

University City Police Department and School District partner again for



Tuesday, August 1, 2023

Jackson Park School Blacktop

Details for booth registration and donations available at www.ucityschools.org/NNOBTSR

University City High School

Class of 2023

Commencement
May 22, 2023

We wish them joy!



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF UNIVERSITY CITY
Transform the Life of Every Student Every Day!

Well-Being and Joy is a School District of University City strategic priority, but what does it really mean for our students, staff, families, parents and caregivers?

- Does it involve activities like yoga, mindfulness, gardening and restorative practices? Absolutely. Does it involve supporting challenged families with household essentials, extra food and free clothing through our District boutique? Always.
- But that is not all. In The School District of University City, well-being recognizes and addresses adverse mental health, past trauma, the stress of racial inequity, the impact of poverty, cultural bias in the classroom and racial disparities in learning outcomes and achievement. It is the District’s responsibility to intentionally address these needs with services, programs, staffing, partnerships and resources so our students are well. When students are well, they learn better and can achieve excellence.
- Here is a sampling of the ways The School District of University City nurtures well-being and joy in its daily culture.
- **Intensive resources** and easy access to school-based counselors, social workers and professional therapists for our students and their families.
 - **Well-being specialists** embedded in schools to ensure seamless service delivery and staff and student support.
 - **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support** (MTSS) for students. This year, the District hired a director of MTTS to ensure seamless integration.
 - **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive** (CLR) approaches in classrooms to mediate racial and cultural bias that harms student achievement.
 - **Restorative practices** through the use of restorative circles, a high school Restorative Justice Class and restorative justice to resolve conflict and address disciplinary issues.
 - **One U City**, a parent-community organization serving all elementary schools and Brittany Woods Middle School through an equity mindset.
 - **Robust partnerships** with nonprofits, service providers, faith-based organizations and governmental entities to bring mental health resources, training, services and other support. Partners include Alive & Well Communities, St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund, the STLCollective, St. Louis Community Foundation and premier institutions like Washington University, The Magic House @Made, COCA and The Saint Louis Zoo.
 - Creation of new, cozy and bright **student wellness spaces** in all schools, and upgrading staff lounges with coffee stations, bright art and new furniture for breaks and building staff community.

U. City Continues Generous Support of District Families

HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined

The spirit of the University City community came alive this past winter as dozens of individuals rallied to help our many families and students who were severely impacted by flash flooding this past summer. More than \$8,000 in donations were raised through the University City Education Foundation to help families with repairs, supplies and other needs as they recovered from the floods which displaced dozens of families and severely damaged homes and possessions of many others.

In November, families most impacted by the flooding were given \$400 gift cards to cover expenses incurred from the damage. In December, “Mr. Gary” Boyd, the crowned host of the television show “Them Yo People,” took our district’s students and families under his wing with his own special toy and supply drive for households still dealing with the aftermath of the floods. He used his voice on radio and television to sponsor food, gift and coat drives for our families. He then leveraged his connections in the entertainment industry to surprise University City High School students with a special assembly featuring many local music artists. And, on Sunday, Dec. 18, he held a free holiday celebration for the entire community in the University City High School auditorium. Boyd provided special invitations to families and residents who suffered severe hardship this year during the flooding. Attendees received many gifts and surprises.

In their annual tradition, the District’s team of social workers held a Holiday Appeal that netted nearly \$24,000 in gift cards and other monetary donations to benefit 102 District families and 284 students. Each family also received care baskets with food and other necessities. The University City Fire Department also contributed an annual truckload of toys to help lessen the holiday financial burden for many parents and caregivers.

The District is so grateful to the many individuals who contributed to these efforts that provided joy and well-being to our families. Thanks to their generosity, our students continue to come to school well and prepared to learn.



District partners come together in so many unique ways to support District students and families. Top, the University City Fire Department delivers toys for the annual Holiday Appeal. Middle: The Hazel Erby Foundation gives out turkeys before Thanksgiving to Barbara C. Jordan families. Bottom: “Mr. Gary” Boyd, the star of “Them Yo People,” hosts a special assembly for high school students to lift their spirits and mark the end of a hard year.

Student Awarded Prestigious Air Force JROTC Silver Valor Medal for Heroic Efforts to Save a Child

PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined

Amid devastating flash flooding on July 26, 2022, University City High School sophomore John Trotter did not hesitate when he heard a cry for help across the street from his house. Trotter crossed rushing water to get to his neighbor’s house. Once there, he discovered a family in panic. A child was trapped in a rapidly flooding basement. Trotter, a member of the UCHS Air Force JROTC, put his training to work. He looked for the heaviest, most solid object he could find – a cast iron skillet. He and another neighbor used the skillet to hack a hole through the floor. It worked! An arriving University City rescue team from the fire department extracted the child who was struggling to stay above water. The child was rescued without injury.

Trotter’s actions did not go unnoticed. On Nov. 11, 2022, Trotter was surprised with the prestigious Air Force JROTC Silver Valor Award medal, one of just a handful awarded nationwide. He was awarded the medal at the start of the high school’s JROTC annual Veterans Day ceremony in the auditorium. It is believed this was the first time a UCHS student was awarded the medal.

UCHS officer Col. Robert Jakcsy wrote in his nomination, “Cadet John Trotter exemplifies the best traditions and ideals of Service Before Self and clearly deserves the Air Force Silver Valor Award.”

NewsChannel 5 was there to capture the event. Congratulations, John, on your courage and service!



Jennifer Thorpe-Trotter stands by her son, University City High School sophomore John Trotter, who was presented with the prestigious Air Force JROTC Silver Valor Award medal for his heroic efforts during the July 2022 flash flood in University City.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The month of February was full of rich experiences that celebrated and honored the contributions of African Americans. Music productions, living museums, poetry, dance, art and an original production of The Fight for Wakanda that highlighted more than 65 students from Jackson Park. These were just a few examples of the brilliance and creativity expressed by our students and staff. There were 600 tickets sold for The Fight for Wakanda performance! Black history and issues regarding civil rights, social justice and equity aren’t just celebrated during February’s Black History Month, but are an integral part of the District’s everyday curriculum and student activities at all grade levels.

Preschool and elementary students across the District enjoyed read-ins by special guests celebrating Black authors and positive stories about African American culture and history.



Following a spirit week filled with honoring historical Black figures, Pershing Elementary students presented a Living Museum immediately preceding their culmination concert on Feb. 28.



University City High School students and staff were treated to an assembly featuring our own Unstoppable U step team along with step performances by special guests from the Devine Nine Greek organizations on Feb. 28.

The Fight for Wakanda



On Feb. 24, Jackson Park students transported more than 600 audience members to the hidden fictional country of Wakanda as they danced, sang and performed in The Fight for Wakanda, written and directed by school librarian Pat McGarvin.



During a Feb. 28 assembly, Brittany Woods Middle School celebrated with music, dance, song and more.

Using video as a reflective tool, Brittany Woods Middle School teachers see new goals for themselves

IN THE NEWS:

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Excerpts by Anne Heinrich, Washington University in St. Louis, Institute for School Partnership

When approached with the opportunity to watch videos of themselves guiding a classroom of students through a science lesson, Brittany Woods Middle School science teachers were less than enthusiastic.

The teachers admitted dreading it at first. Six science teachers in the middle school are taking a closer look at themselves and one another by participating in Sci314, an embedded coaching pilot with the Institute for School Partnership (ISP) at Washington University in St. Louis.

As it turns out, the experience hasn't been all that bad. In fact, with one coaching cycle under their belts, most are looking forward to the next one. Teachers said they supported one another and felt affirmed at every step of the process. There were no "gotcha" moments.

The missing "gotcha's" never materialized for one simple reason: that wouldn't be in keeping with ISP's approach to partnership. Instructional specialists do a lot more listening than talking, take teacher/educator insights seriously and invite partners to determine what they want and need.

Elizabeth Gardner, coordinator of district-wide professional development and secondary science curriculum at The School District of University City, is a former middle school science teacher herself and very familiar with ISP's signature mySci program, a comprehensive curriculum designed to engage students in authentic science learning with hands-on material kits and high-quality professional development support.

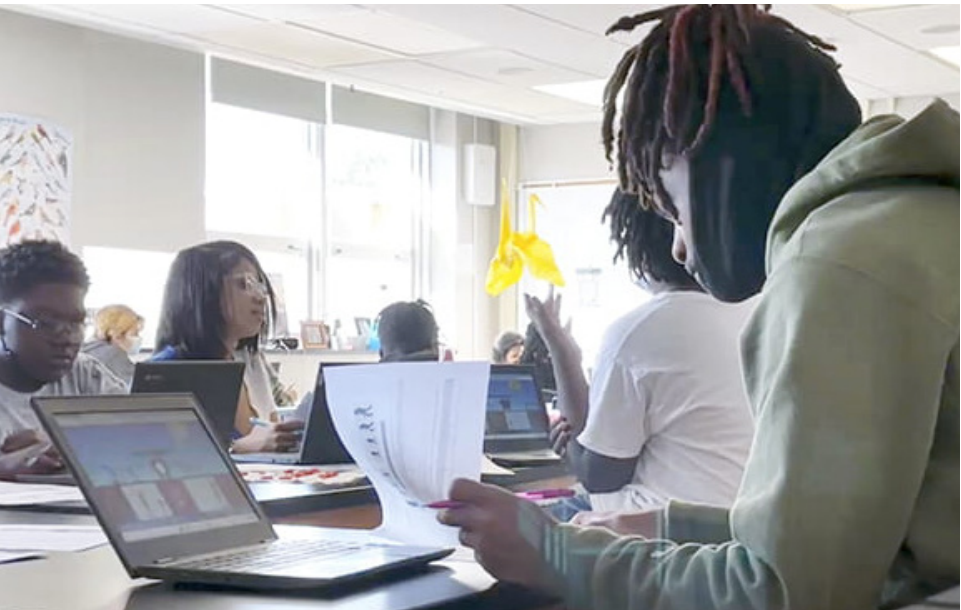
"Joining forces with the mySci team to pilot Sci314 was a pretty organic process," explains Gardner, who knew firsthand just how collaborative the work had been when the District helped develop mySci. "The team would ask for feedback, then actually make modifications and literally show up the next day with the materials and changes we suggested! We're here with partners. We trust them."

An added bonus, says Gardner, is the message of autonomy to teachers.

"The teachers pick their goal," she says. "This is their opportunity to identify what they want to improve. The feedback from teachers so far on the video coaching has been extremely positive."

When an "expert" comes into a classroom for "observation," chances of a teacher feeling like they are in the hot seat are high. Adding a camera to the mix has the potential to only heighten the level of anxiety, but Lanesha McPherson, an eighth-grade science teacher, says that's not a problem at Brittany Woods Middle School.

"In our building, having adults come in and out of the classroom is the norm, so this worked well for recording. We could just be ourselves," says McPherson. "Having Heather and Alex (ISP's instructional specialists) there, just as part of the room, was easy. The students know why they are



Brittany Woods Middle School students share data from a recent science project.

there, so it was all very natural." McPherson appreciated the collaborative nature of the process, especially being asked what they wanted to work. Her focus for the first cycle was honing her craft to ask deeper, probing questions.

"They know more than they think they know," she says. Despite her 18+ years of teaching experience, she welcomes the chance to also remain a learner. "We know our content, but this process helps us learn more about ourselves. We're always working to do something better. After watching the video, you can see where you are. It really helped."

Using videos as a reflective tool for teacher professional development is becoming more common, says ISP Instructional Specialist Heather Milo, who together with Alex Gerber, also an instructional specialist, is leading the coaching pilot for Sci314.

"We know that peer teacher observations have significant benefits for supporting teacher learning and teaching practices, but substitute teacher shortages sometimes make these impossible to implement," says Milo. "Video can provide the same learning benefits without the added strain on a district's resources. This is an important part of maintaining equitable access to high-quality teacher professional learning."

"The first year of this pilot was about building trust," says Milo. "And this year has been a game-changer as teachers feel safe and become more skilled at tuning into the nuance of students' science ideas and analyzing the why behind their in-the-moment instructional decision-making in their classrooms."



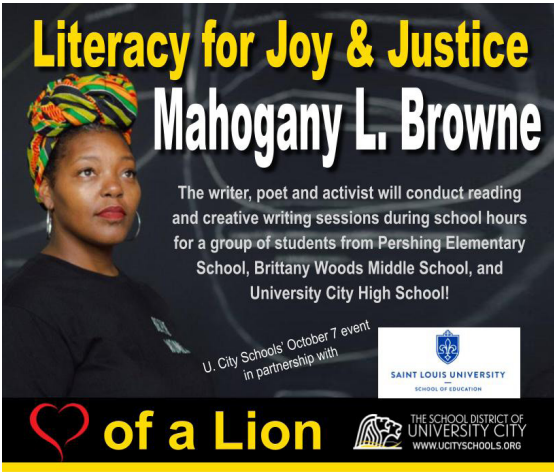
Lanesha McPherson

Lanesha McPherson leads a science class at Brittany Woods Middle School. McPherson and other teachers watch videos of themselves teaching to perfect their approaches with students.



U-Speak Project Empowers Student Voices

HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined



This school year, students at all grade levels have been honing their "student voice" in their English Language and Arts (ELA) curriculum. The initiative, called U-Speak, helps students understand that literacy coupled with well-expressed ideas, experiences and personal stories leads to empowerment. Simply put, when students read, write and speak well about their experiences and beliefs, their words define themselves and establish their place and power in a community.

In addition to writing about specific academic topics and texts, ELA classes intentionally focus on writing about personal experiences and beliefs in a variety of formats. The initiative also includes special events for students. In October, with support from Saint Louis University, author Mahogany Browne held a reading and creative writing session for Pershing Elementary School, Brittany Woods Middle School and University City High School students. In early January, middle and high school students participated in a U-Speak group writing workshop and open mic event in which they read their work aloud to their peers.

Silence the pianos, silence the drums.
Bring out the coffin so airplanes can circle in mourning overhead.
Scribbling on the sky: He is dead.
The stars are no longer wanted.
The moon we need no more.
Put everyone out.
We lost him who we adored.
Pack up the sun and dismantle its shine.
Tell the ocean to hold its tide and the forest to hold its leaves.
Nothing will ever be good again
Tears won't cause the seed to grow 'cause he's gone.
That's just the way life is.

— Rosie Puckett, UCHS 9th grade

An Ode to Fear

It's the fear that keeps me alert; the reason I watch my surroundings.
It keeps me safe.
It prepares me for the worst; the worst always occurs.
And when it does, this fear will be my saviour.

— Kahlia Tucker, UCHS 9th grade

Prompt – Explain a big idea to a young person.

Little sister, when you go to the hospital, you come back tired and hurting and sleepy
because your body has been working to keep you seeing.
Doctors have helped you more than they have helped big people like me like mommy like Oma
You're learning how to use your cane
And I'm sure you could tell me all the parts a hundred times.
You're learning to read in your own beautiful way
With your fingers touching and feeling and learning
So that, even if you stop seeing, you can still be our big girl.
You'll still be able to move and sing around the kitchen showing everyone how strong you are.
You are so strong.
Never let anyone say you're weak
Because your smile will always be here.
I know it will.

— Gabriella Carvajal, UCHS 11th grade

I have an obsession with forgetting the lessons I've learned,
Often ignoring any merits I've earned,
Scorning, wanting to burn my goals to ash
Once optimism comes to pass.
The seams binding my heart together start to unfold,
Unravelling from head to toe,
The light sinks out of the last breath of my soul
Leaving a heavier dent that takes a toll on the person I was and the person I showed.
Breaking down to who I truly am, I was lost in a fracture of my mind,
Losing time and my right to eyes until I was blind to who I could become.
My life was ripped away by the fears I hold,
Making my tears fill into any crevices that the hate didn't go,
Hoping to go back to being full,
Wishing I could pull back the wool,
That shields my hopes and dreams away behind clouds of anxiety and anguish.
I try to tell the world to clear the skies, but we don't speak the same language.
I tried to achieve freedom from demise
but this cruel God only accepts tormenting souls as payment.
Guiding me in and out of judgement like a bailiff
Beating out the last hopes whilst in his heavenly guise
I was quizzing which part of my thoughts cut ties
Not knowing what I wanted to achieve in my living
I would say life's broken
But even a broken record knows which notes are missing.

— Christian Quinichette, 10th grade

I love myself, but I wish I loved me more.
4 hours spent on my hair, nails, skin, make-up
Just to make up for my insecurities.
I wish I was beautiful like Naomi Campbell, runway type.
Truthfully, I run away from my true identity and don't fully understand beauty.
I want to be myself but it's hard when I don't know who I am or who I want to be.
I'm just existing.
Just breathing...
I don't know when or if I'll truly love me.
But, in 20 minutes, I'll redo my make-up, take 20 Instagram photos, and get 200 likes.
Then, 20 days from now I'll reinvent myself to fit into society's trend and be 20 times more confused than before.
I just want to know me.

— Felicity Jordan-Thomas, UCHS 10th grade



University City NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming City Council Meetings

Mon., March 13
Mon., April 24
Mon., May 6
Mon., May 22

U City Parks Centennial Celebration

April 15-16
Ruth Park Woods
ucitymo.org

Spring Leaf Collection

East: March 13
Central: March 20
West: March 27

Spring Bulk Item Collection

East: April 10-14
Central: April 17-21
West: April 24-28

State of the City Address: March 16

Mayor Terry Crow and City Manager Gregory Rose will present a recap of the past year and present plans for 2023 at the 12th annual State of the City program hosted by the Historical Society of University City. The program will begin at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 16, in the Council Chamber on the fifth floor of City Hall, 6801 Delmar Blvd. (63130). The meeting is free and open to the public.

According to Eleanor Mullin, president of the Historical Society of University City, the event is held annually in March to commemorate the birthday of the city's founder and first mayor, Edward Gardner Lewis, on March 4, 1869.

"The Market at Olive Development has changed the economic landscape in our community. I appreciate the Historical Society giving us the opportunity to report on the Council's accomplishments in 2022 and what's being planned for 2023," said Crow.

"Although 2022 had its unique challenges, we also experienced significant accomplishments. I am proud of how our city personnel and resources responded to the needs of our residents and businesses. I look forward to sharing some of the highlights of the year at this program," said Rose.

For more information, contact Mullin at ucityhistory@hotmail.com or (314) 862-2972.



Mayor
Terry Crow



City Manager
Gregory Rose

U City Parks Turn 100 – Let's Celebrate!

Celebrate the founding of University City's parks, April 15-16 at Ruth Park Woods



In 1923, University City opened its earliest parks. Lewis, Heman, Flynn and Eastgate Parks debuted. In addition, a plan was made to name parks for mayors as parks developed and mayors retired.

Today, there are more than a dozen developed parks offering activities for everyone to stroll, roll, play, picnic, relax, enjoy sports and the arts, and to simply come together as a community.

Celebrating the past, present and future began this year with the distribution of the 2023 U City Calendar featuring photos of our parks. The UCityParks100 volunteer committee is hard at work planning a series of activities, beginning with a Centennial event in Ruth Park Woods the weekend of April 15-16. We'll conclude our year-long celebration in November by honoring our veterans at the Memorial Fountain in Heman Park. These are your parks! Join us in the parks to celebrate!

Check out our Facebook page @UCityParks100 for a schedule of events and updates. If you have questions or want to volunteer to help, email Seymour.Parks@UCityParks100.org. Donations and event sponsorships are accepted through U City in Bloom, a 501© organization, at 7005 Amherst Ave., University City, MO, 63130.

Centennial Commons Recreation Facility Partially Reopening

Centennial Commons has partially reopened to the public. Currently, the indoor elevated track and cardio area are the only areas available for use. Due to the damage from the flood, the weight area, gymnasium, indoor soccer facility and meeting and event rooms will remain closed until further repairs can be made. In addition to use of the track and cardio area, residents can make 2023 picnic pavilion reservations, purchase or renew Ruth Park Golf ID Cards and purchase U City trash stickers from the facility. The Heman Park athletic fields and the large dog section of the U City Dog Park have also been reopened.

Hours of operation and more information can be found at ucitymo.org or call (314) 505-8625.

Olive Boulevard Mural Project Includes District Students



PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined

A busy eastern entrance to University City is more colorful now thanks to a district partnership with Murals on Olive, an organization that matches local artists with University City High School students to create vivid murals along the Olive Boulevard corridor.

The first mural was created last spring and painted by students in partnership with African American artist Byron Rogers under the guidance of UCHS Arts Facilitator Marnie Claunch. On Sept. 10, 2022, it was installed on the second story of the Winco Window Building, which faces Olive near the intersection of Skinker Boulevard. The students spent six months working with Rogers to create the 20-foot-by-8-foot mural in five panels inside an art studio at the high school.

The installation of the mural featured diverse and lively members of the community amid a backdrop of bright flowers, buildings and landscapes. It was featured in several media outlets, including the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Lila Gralnick, UCHS Class of 2022, told the Post-Dispatch that it was a fun challenge to emulate the artist's style when she helped paint large pink flowers on the five metal panels donated by Winco to serve as the mural's canvas.

"It was different because it was just such a large space," she told the Post-Dispatch.

Gralnick said the opportunity to work on the mural and her art courses at the high school motivated her to enroll and study art at Webster University.

Thanks to the partnership with Murals on Olive, Claunch's current art students at the high school are gearing up to work with local artist Marquis Terrell to create an even larger mural on the western side of the District's McNair Administration Building at 7700 Olive Boulevard. The inspirational mural will be displayed at the epicenter of the University



The first Murals on Olive mural was installed on Sept. 10, 2022, on the second story of the Winco Window Building near Olive and Skinker boulevards.

City community at one of its busiest intersections that connects the northern and southern neighborhoods of University City. The mural will reference the inspirational and diverse learning community within University City schools.

Murals on Olive aims to celebrate the diversity that is one of University City's defining features, said Judy Prange, a member of the Murals on Olive committee.

The first mural was made possible by financial assistance from SHED, Blick Art Materials, The School District of University City and the Winco Window Company. The second mural will be funded by the District and a grant from the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis.

STEAM Expo Returns to In-Person With Record Attendance



PROBLEMATIZE: Learning Reimagined

Several hundred people attended The School District of University City's annual STEAM Expo inside the Brittany Woods Middle School gym on Nov. 15, 2022. It was the first time the event was held in-person in two years due to previous COVID-19 precautions. Attendees of all ages enjoyed 26 different interactive displays hosted by students, schools and outside organizations, including groups from COCA, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri Botanical Garden's EarthWays Center, The Magic House, St. Louis Science Center and others.

Many students took center stage with their displays. The University City High School RoboLions robotics team expertly maneuvered their homemade robot to score baskets on the basketball court. The JROTC drone team enabled students to test fly drones up to the rafters of the gym. Sustainability students at Brittany Woods Middle School sold pumpkin muffins, honey, pepper jelly, potting soil, dog biscuits and seeds from their Brittany Brand booth. Their homemade wares were prepared from pumpkins, peppers and other food grown in the school's gardens. The honey was harvested from the school's four beehives. Several elementary schools showcased ecology, biology and environmental science taking place in their school gardens. There were displays on physics, Lego robotics, rocketry, medicine, biology, color mixing and water conservation sponsored by students and premier St. Louis organizations.

The STEAM expo, which stands for science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, is one of the District's signature events, providing students, parents and caregivers with hands-on learning activities intended to spark a love of learning in the sciences. The District embeds STEAM activities at all grade levels with a natural progression that enables students to specialize in core specialties such as engineering, medicine and computer science. Students in middle and high school can choose from a variety of STEAM-inspired electives that prepare them for future college and career endeavors.



A gallery of photographs from the event can be found at www.ucityschools.org/STEAMExpo2022Story.

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Bridget McDougall, Director
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Substitute Teachers Needed

The School District of University City is seeking permanent building substitute teachers for the 2023-24 school year. We offer competitive rates as well as benefits. Candidate qualifications include high school diploma and current Missouri Substitute Certification. Previous teaching experience or equivalent in urban settings preferred. Apply at www.ucityschools.org/Employment.



Do You Have Pride in PRIDE?

Let us know your thoughts on this issue of PRIDE, The School District of University City's newsmagazine that is mailed to all homes in University City twice a year. Please tell us what you think in a quick survey at "www.ucityschools.org/PrideSurvey" or use the QR Code above to access the survey.

Those who complete the survey by April 14 will be entered in a raffle to win a \$30 gift card for Salt & Smoke in University City. Please remember to fill out your name and contact information to be entered into the raffle.



St. Louis Cardinals vs. Detroit Tigers

U CITY DAY 
at the Cardinals Ball Game

Featuring UCHS AF JRTOC Color Guard
& students singing Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Sunday, May 7, 2023
Game begins at 1:15 p.m.

Left Field Pavilion at Busch Stadium, downtown

Ticket includes voucher for Hot Dog and Soda!

Also, kids ages 15 years and younger (entering with a ticket) will receive a Cardinals long-sleeved hoodie pullover.

Limited U. City Day tickets available.

Ticket sales begin soon.

Details at
www.ucityschools.org/CardinalTickets



This Issue's Highlights:

- **Merging the Head and the Heart: The District's SEEAL approach to education, pages 10 & 11**
- **District Excels in Academic Growth: The 2020 APR results are in, page 1**
- **Camp U and Summer Learning Academy return in June 2023, page 3**
- **University City Board of Education Candidate Statements, page 4 & 5**
- **Black History Month Celebrations, page 15**