

A publication for and about The School District of University City, Missouri

August 2020

# District Begins School Year with Health of a Lion

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### **HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined**

The School District of University City welcomed students back to school through distance learning on Monday, August 24, but not before students in nearly all grades were celebrated with yard signs, drive-thru welcomes, technology deliveries and more.

Though a rapid rise of COVID-19 cases over the summer presented District leaders with new challenges, the District begins the year with a confident plan that humanizes, personalizes and problematizes learning while weaving racial equity and well-being throughout.

"Though we had strategized for a safe, gradual and kind reopening of our school buildings and classrooms to students in August, the safety

and well-being of our students, staff and families took precedence," said Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley. "The decision to start the year virtually for all of our students was difficult. However, we had time to plan for it, and we are confident that we

"We are confident that we have developed a plan unique to U. City that enhances learning while keeping in mind the critical social and emotional needs of our children during a worldwide pandemic."

Sharonica Hardin-Bartley
Superintendent of Schools

have developed a plan unique to University City that enhances learning while keeping in mind the critical social and emotional needs of our children during a worldwide pandemic."

This is the first time ever that the District has started the school year without students in its classrooms and exemplifies the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. On March 23, 2020 – on the first official day of its spring break – the District made the painful decision to close its classrooms to students as the highly unknown new virus made its way into the region.

Under the motto of Health of a Lion, the 2020-21 school year has been painstakingly planned to ensure the health and well-being of our students, staff and teachers. Hardin-Bartley said the District approached this work



Joe Lion is the District's new mascot for health and well-being. Learn more about Joe and the District's Safe, Gradual and Kind plan on page 12.

with the understanding that rigorous learning must and will continue, but that daily routines both inside and outside of our schools will be very different and must always put the social and emotional health of our students and staff first.

Starting last April, internal and external community committees collaborated, researched and strategized to ensure that students and parents would have a choice on how their children would participate in learning during an uncertain pandemic. The District is offering two options for safe and effective learning in the upcoming school year.

**Brick Academy** – A blended learning model that will start online only, but will pivot to in-school instruction on some days and distance learning on other days when it is safe to return to school buildings. In this model, one group of preschool, elementary and middle school students will come to school on Mondays and Tuesdays and the other group with come on Thursdays and Fridays to ensure they are safely spaced apart in classrooms and common areas. On the days students are not in

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### Grab & Go Program Tops 375,000 Meals Served



### **PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined**

Nurturing families was a top priority this summer for The School District of University City and community, which distributed more than 375,000 meals to District families as part of its Grab & Go Meal Program.

The District created the curbside meal pickup when schools closed in mid-March and continued serving families throughout the summer. Students who needed food were given 21 breakfasts, lunches and dinners per week along with other necessary items such as facemasks, fresh produce, toiletries, books and school supplies.

"It has been a great support for our families, and they have been extremely grateful," said Gary Spiller, executive director of Student Services and Innovation. "I can't say enough about the team of folks who came together to make this happen."

The District, which emphasizes well-being in its vision of Learning Reimagined, fed an average of 1,700 students per day during the summer. The program will continue through the fall. Workers with Chartwells Food Service and dozens of volunteers prepared and handed out the meal packages at four school locations. Care packs included items such as



The District's Grab & Go Meal Program not only provides critical meals, produce, snacks and household essentials to District students during a global pandemic, it also enables families to connect with staff and other community members. Photo by Colter Peterson, courtesy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

### From our Superintendent of Schools



Sharonica Hardin-Bartley Superintendent

Greetings, University City Community:

Today, I write to you with gratitude. In March, COVID-19 closed classrooms around the world, including our own. It was devastating to me personally and to our students and staff. But, we pivoted quickly to Distance Learning.

I am honored to say we were a regional leader in responding to the needs of our families to ensure they were connected, empowered with technology, nourished with food and love, and celebrated.

As you may be aware, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected African-Americans in the St. Louis region. Many of our families have been impacted by COVID-19. And then, on May 25, George Floyd was killed while in police custody. This, too, was a trauma for many of our families.

Amid this profound turmoil, I was honored to see our staff and our community rally again and again to support our families. You will read in this issue how the greater community donated more than \$60,000 to ensure fresh produce, snacks and other essential items for families in need. You will learn that the District and volunteers worked tirelessly to provide more than 375,000 meals to families in the spring and summer. You will learn about how students rallied to put on their spring Shakespearean play, and how others graduated with dual degrees amid a pandemic. You will see how we celebrated our seniors even when we had to remain apart during a phenomenal graduation ceremony.

I am also proud that every senior at University City High School graduated amid this challenging period of our history. I hope you check out the photos and article in this issue on our unique graduation ceremony for our seniors. But now it is time to look ahead.

So here we are. On August 24 myself and staff welcomed back our students through online instruction. Though Zoom had issues worldwide that day, by mid-morning we were able to connect and welcome our students. We further start the 2020-21 school year with a great deal of hope and an excellent plan to gradually and safely open our buildings to students when the public health climate improves. I can honestly tell you that The School District of University City has a plan uniquely catered to its community and the needs

of its students, families and teachers.

In this issue of PRIDE you will find stories and resources regarding both virtual learning and what the eventual return to school buildings will look like.

We are excited to begin the very intentional work of rigorous learning, coupled with intensive social emotional support under our vision of well-being and joy.

I pledge to you that our plan is kind. I pledge to you that our plan puts the safety and emotional wellness of children, families and staff first. I pledge to you that racial equity will always be a part of this plan. I pledge to you that Distance Learning will be streamlined and easier for parents. And I pledge to be highly responsible with our resources – 70% of which come from you.

I did want to further let you know about our tremendously popular Parent Cafés that began in July. These virtual sessions are intended to not only inform parents about what the school year will look and feel like, but to present helpful guidance for parents on Distance Learning, daily routines and emotional support. In my mind, these public events have been a game-changer for our District, enabling us to communicate effectively with parents and the public and further enabling me to hear your voices and your opinions. I know of no other district that has been this responsive to its community. For more information and to register for future Cafés, go to www. ucityschools.org/ParentCafes.

The work to get to this point has been difficult, but thought-provoking. It has accelerated our District vision of Learning Reimagined. There have been moments of frustration and fear while building this plan. But those moments have been overshadowed by fantastic teamwork, evolutionary insights and immense gratitude in being able to serve our students and families during such a difficult time. I remain in awe of the resilient, kind and creative community of University City.

In Service of Our Children,

Sharonica L. Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR

Superintendent of Schools

### From our Board of Education



Kristine Hendrix Board of Education President

Greetings, University City:

Welcome parents, students, teachers and community as we head back to school. 2020 has taken us for quite a ride. During a normal year we would break around late May, and come back in August. Due to COVID-19, life has been different. For the last five months we have all been physically distancing while getting used to the new normal. Masks are our new favorite accessory; elbow bumps are the new handshake; and hugs are given through the air. COVID-19 has drastically changed how we live our lives and is changing how going back to school looks for everyone. Typically we see staff working hard getting the buildings ready to receive all the smiling faces of our students. This year we are hard at work to ensure that virtual learning is accessible to all families in the District.

The administration has done a wonderful job during the crisis. They have worked tirelessly without much state or federal guidance. Instead, they relied on peers, research, and local governance to aid in their decision-making. While going back to school full-time and in-person is our desired goal, we know that is not possible right now.

As things change, so will district recommendations. During planning, the District insisted that the learning environment could pivot easily from at-home to in-school learning. Your Board of Education and administration are also advocating for increased state and federal assistance to provide equitable access to resources so that all districts and all families will have what they need to learn safely either virtually or in person.

In order to slow the spread of COVID-19 and get back to in-person learning, we must remind families and friends to follow the CDC guidelines, including wearing face masks in public, frequently washing hands, staying away from large crowds and social distancing by 6 feet when possible. Please visit the CDC website at www.cdc. gov to learn more about preventing the transmission of coronavirus. Remember to stay safe, and I can't wait to see you again soon!

Knotine Hendrik

Kristine Hendrix

President, University City Board of Education

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

### **Meet our School Board Members**



Kristine Hendrix
President
Liaison to
Pershing
Elementary School

**LaVerne Ford-Williams** 

Director

Liaison to

Brittany Woods

Middle School



Lisa Brenner, Ph.D.
Vice President
Liaison to Julia Goldstein
ECEC, Lieberman Learning Center and Adult
Education & Literacy
Program

**George Lenard** 

Elementary School

Director

Liaison to

Flynn Park



Matt Bellows Secretary Liaison to Jackson Park Elementary School



Jaiden Smith
Student
Representative
University City
High School



Traci Moore
Director
Liaison to
Barbara C. Jordan
Elementary School



Joanne Soudah
Director
Liaison to
University City
High School

### **Board Meeting Information**

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, University City Board of Education meetings currently take place virtually on Zoom.

Community members are encouraged to register for virtual attendance and/or citizen comments. Upcoming meeting information with a registration link is available at www. ucityschools.org/BOEZoom2020.

Meeting dates and times are posted on the District and school website calendars at www. ucityschools.org. Agendas are posted at www. ucityschools.org/BoardDocs at least 24 hours prior to each meeting. Meetings are recorded and archived to the District's YouTube channel, with the most recent session available at www.ucityschools.org/ULive.

More information about the Board is also available at www.ucityschools.org/BOE.

To communicate with a Board member, contact Juli Ward, executive administrative assistant, via email at jward@ucityschools. org or call (314) 290-4002 or fax (314) 290-4076 or mail/deliver correspondence to (Board member's name), c/o The School District of University City, 8136 Groby Road, University City, MO 63130.

### **New Leaders Join the District's Team**



Grace Lee



Pablo Flinn



Deitra Colquitt



Jessica Hawkins



Christina Sneed

The School District of University City is delighted to welcome three new principals and a new assistant principal. They began their duties on July 1.

Grace Lee is the new principal of Brittany Woods Middle School. Lee is replacing Elliott Shostak, who retired on June 30 after serving as a teacher and principal in the District for 21 years. Formerly a middle school principal in Webster Groves, Lee is passionate about children and making sure they have a say in building a positive culture in schools. She is a leader in trauma-informed practices and equity in education.

Deitra Colquitt and Jessica Hawkins are the new co-principals of Pershing Elementary School. They replace Herbert Buie, who retired after 14 years of service. Colquitt and Hawkins previously served as Teacher Instructional Leaders at the school. They bring to the position established connections, enthusiasm and a deep understanding of the school community.

Pablo Flinn is the new assistant principal at BWMS. A 1990 graduate of University City High School and a former University City Board of Education member, Flinn returns to U. City with a wealth of educational leadership experience.

Former BWMS assistant principal Ernest Carter is now serving as assistant principal at UCHS.

UCHS English and AP teacher Christina Sneed is expanding her role and is now the curriculum and instruction leader for English Language Arts (ELA) in grades 6-12 and social studies in grades K-12 within the District's office of Curriculum and Instruction. Elizabeth Gardner, current director of instruction, is further assuming the curriculum work for English language arts (ELA) in grades K-5.

Mark Basi has transitioned from District coordinator of data and assessment to director of technology solutions.

Beverly Velloff's title has changed from District math and science coordinator to District STEM coordinator.

For more information regarding our new dynamic administrators, visit the District News section at www.ucityschools.org.



### **Did You Know?**

The School District of University City is supported annually by the nonprofit University City Education Foundation, which provides more than \$30,000 in grants to our teachers and staff annually for classroom materials and special projects. The Foundation further raises funds for special projects, including more than \$60,000 this past summer to provide families dealing with the impact of COVID-19 with snacks, fresh produce, treats, wellness kits and household essentials.

Learn more: www.ucityeducationfoundation.org.

### **University City 2020 Board of Education Candidates**

Three University City residents filed for the spring 2020 candidacy for three, three-year seats on the University City Board of Education. The candidates ran unopposed and did not appear on the April 7, 2020 ballot. An asterisk (\*) indicates the incumbents. Appreciation is extended to Chelsea Addison for her term of service from 2017-2020. The 2020 candidates below, in order of filing, submitted the following statements and photos.

### **George Lenard\***

As I begin my third term on the Board of Directors of the School District of University City, I will use my knowledge and experience from two prior terms to



continue guiding the District forward in directions set during those terms.

My first term, 2014-17, was highlighted by the selection of Dr. Sharonica Hardin-Bartley as Superintendent, starting with the 2016-17 school year, and her initial assessment of district strengths and opportunities.

During my second term, 2017-20, the District initiated numerous improvements under Dr. Hardin-Bartley's leadership. These included adoption of the Learning Reimagined framework, with its triple pillars – humanize, personalize, and problematize – reflecting evidence-based approaches to enhancing student engagement and learning.

Another major achievement was the adoption of a strategic plan with input from all stakeholder groups.

We are starting to see improvements in student achievement and conduct.

The Board itself has worked on improved governance, utlizing an annual self-evaluation survey to highlight areas for improvement. One result is we have put an emphasis on using data more effectively in decision making.

My goals for my third term include continuing these and other improvements and enhancing our career and entrepreneurship programs. I support efforts to fund early childhood equitably across St. Louis County, and want to ensure our district is a part of that effort.

As part of its strategic plan, the District will address the wise allocation of resources to address academic and facilities needs. I will strive to educate the University City community about the continued improvement and successes in the District, and how they can help us further improve.

I am honored to serve on this Board, with this very successful Superintendent and administrative staff.

### Lisa Brenner, Ph.D.\*

I have been honored to serve as a Board Director for the School District of University City for the last six years. Three of those



years I served as Board President and one as Board Secretary. For those of you who do not know me, I am a 24-year resident of University City, parent of two recent University City High School alumni (Johanna and Nathan Hill), 15-year parent volunteer (including Girl Scouts and PTO), wife and daughter of educators, and a psychologist in private practice who formerly served as a director of children services at a community mental health center.

During these last six years, it has become infinitely clear to me that high-quality school districts are governed by boards that keep a laser focus on student achievement and needs. Successful boards provide structure through vision and clear goals, give the superintendent and her staff the authority to implement that vision and those goals, and hold the superintendent accountable for achieving outcomes. Fiscally responsible Boards must allocate limited resources to maximize student achievement.

This district has embarked on an amazing journey implementing the vision of "Learning Reimagined" with the three pillars of humanizing, personalizing, and problematizing learning. Regrettably, the pandemic has disrupted our forward momentum. Now it is imperative to make decisions that keep our children healthy while minimizing the damage of a disrupted educational system. When the pandemic is over, the Board will need to reestablish the journey of "Learning Reimagined" while incorporating lessons learned from the innovation and struggles that arose from this health crisis.

We all share a common interest in the well being of our children, our community, and our future. I am committed to ensuring our schools meet the expectations of that common interest.

### **Traci Moore**

Greetings
U. City
Family! It's
been an
interesting
ride joining
the school
board during
the pandemic.
I was excited



to join in April and have transitioned into this daunting role during a very important time in history. While our children and families are experiencing monumental challenges, our school leadership has been a leader in this fight to keep our children, teachers and staff safe, while continuing to educate.

As a lifelong U. Citian, a 1988 graduate of the schools and a proud supporter of our district, I couldn't be more inspired and driven to serve our children. U. City Schools have been key in the successes in my life as well as the foundation for many of my life-long friendships. The education I received was stellar, and the dedication from my teachers instilled a respect for educators that carries through to this day. I want all of the children in U. City to have the experience I had in the schools and I want to help make that happen.

I wholeheartedly support our superintendent and the administration that directs and leads our district, especially during these challenging times. I have faith in them and want to ensure that the children and the community are wellserved by them and the school board. I recognize that some of our children are struggling and that there is some doubt around our schools in the community, but I know that with the continued leadership of our administrators, educators and support team that we can become one of the leading districts in the region. Clearly we have work to do, but I'm impressed with what has been done in the past five years. I look forward to hearing from the community and I'm proud to be in this important role. Take care and stay safe!

# 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

# Community Embraces District's Heart Campaign

At the start of the 2019-20 school year, the District embraced both heart and courage in its school culture with the motto "Heart of a Lion."

That message of strength and community became a rally call when COVID-19 shut down classroom buildings.

Within days of the closures, staff and families began sending photos of themselves holding supportive messages written inside hand-drawn or cut-out hearts to the District's communications office. As the closure extended, the heart messages kept arriving, sometimes hourly, in a landslide of love and hope. The District posted more than 150 inspirational Heart of a Lion photos on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which inspired thousands of likes, hearts and smiles.

"It was truly a celebration of the school district's community and a remarkable sign of resilience and hope," said Nancy Cambria, director of communications. "Our office was honored to be a part of it."









### Health of a Lion Plan

Continued from page 1

school they will participate in both live (synchronous) and self-directed (asynchronous) online work. In the high school, when it is safe, freshmen will eventually return to school five days a week, while upper grade-level students will continue distance learning. In the high school, students in grades 10-12 who need additional support to succeed will also attend inperson instruction five days a week. Middle and high school students will have access to optional learning centers in their schools where they can do their virtual learning in a monitored, physically distanced way. About 98% of our families have chosen this Brick Academy option.

**Click Academy** – a virtual learning option through Project Launch, an online only education program based out of Springfield Schools, in which all work is done at home with the support of Launch curriculum and teachers. About 2 percent of our families selected this Click Academy option.

This issue of PRIDE is dedicated to communicating in detail what the school year will look like for students, staff and families and the resources available to our entire community to ensure rigorous learning and wellness in body and spirit. This issue also aims to tell just a few of the remarkable stories of student and staff resilience, academic excellence and community spirit that took place last spring and this summer when COVID-19 became a devastating reality for the District.

"The District has been honored and blessed to serve its students, families and the greater community during a crisis that harmed so many of our residents and children," Hardin-Bartley said. "We move ahead with the belief our work will be courageous, kind and rigorous despite these challenges. We operate under the motto Health of a Lion, but we will always have the Heart of a Lion in the work we do with students."

The District was ready for the first day of school. New teachers and staff joined together in both physically distanced, in-person activities as well as



District staff recieved shirts with this year's "Health of a Lion" theme during an Opening Day drive-thru event.

a variety of distance learning training and orientations. Veteran teachers and staff and new staff are trained in best practices regarding online instruction, student engagement and social-emotional wellness.

Our partners at Wyman along with Alive and Well Communities are working to ensure both students and staff are emotionally well and supported and that racial equity is ensured. When it is time to return to school buildings, we are ready. The District has a responsive sanitization plan; teachers and staff have a toolkit to effectively communicate social distancing and other precautions to our youngest of students; videos, Parent Cafés and a redesigned District website are underway to inform, inspire and support our families. Readers will find further details about all of these things inside this edition of PRIDE.

The School District of University City is proud to be a part of this amazing community. We are honored to educate University City's children during these difficult times. We move forward with the Heart and Health of a Lion.

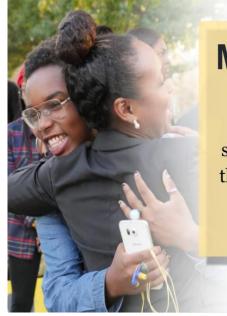
### Superintendent Hardin-Bartley Presents on #saysomething

On July 1, Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley presented to more than 400 people via a webinar on the topic "Heavy is the Head: The intersectionality of the head and heart for educational leaders."

That talk was part of a new virtual lecture series called #saysomething. The May death of George Floyd while in police custody combined with the severe impact of COVID-19 on the African-American community led Terry Harris, director of student services for Rockwood Schools, to create the virtual series in the St. Louis region. Talks have grappled with inequity, structural racism and the African-American experience in the United States.

Hardin-Bartley's talk focused on bringing equity, compassion and authentic relationships into school systems and the intentional work done in The School District of University City to achieve those goals.

To view a recording of her talk, go to www.ucityschools.org/saysomething.



### My Charge:

"To create structures and the space for leaders and teachers to develop skills, competencies, grit, and courage that will improve student achievement and close the **opportunity** gaps linked to poverty and race."

# Juneteenth Celebration Creates Healing Hub

A virtual Juneteenth Celebration hosted by Pershing Elementary School on June 19 created a place for people to heal while highlighting Black culture in University City.

Deitra Colquitt and Jessica Hawkins, co-principals at Pershing, organized and hosted the online webinar from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Hawkins said she wanted to create an opportunity for heartbroken students and teachers to gather as the community was newly grieving the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police.

They also wanted to celebrate Black culture, Colquitt said.

"We wanted to highlight Black culture and excellence and educate the community about freedom and liberation," she said.

The all-day Zoom featured a variety of sessions for participants to choose from, including West African and hip-hop dance classes, an art project, Black history trivia, another dance class and music time.

About 300 households registered for the event. The opening ceremony featured Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley and drew the largest crowd of the day, topping 120 viewers. Most the sessions averaged about 60 viewers.

In the opening assembly, Hardin-Bartley read aloud the names of people, past and present, who have given their lives in the pursuit of freedom and equity for the Black community. She called on participants to do more work beyond Juneteenth.

Billie Mayo, from Educational Equity Consultants, guided viewers through a visualization of community healing. She asked participants what role they want to play in bringing equity and justice to local neighborhoods.

Carlos Smith, the lead pastor at The Journey-Hanley Road, gave a lesson on the history of Juneteenth. Viewers learned what life was like for a Texas slave in June 1865 when slaves there first heard the news of the Emancipation Proclamation – more than two years after it had been signed into law. Juneteenth celebrates that monumental day and marks an independence day of its own for African-Americans.

"People were open and honest about what they didn't know about Juneteenth and Black culture," Hawkins said.

Children who participated told organizers their favorite sessions were the story readings, dance classes and the art lesson.

A'isha Hedges, art teacher at Pershing, led participants in an "art project for change." Students and adults used the time to create a protest poster with a slogan or picture that was meaningful to each of the artists.

Historically, the schoolhouse has been a central location for neighborhoods to gather and share ideas, especially in the Black community, Hawkins said. The school leaders want Pershing Elementary to be that place for its neighbors in U. City.



Jaiden Smith is a Pershing alum, UCHS senior and the student representative to the University City Board of Education. She discussed her documentary created in Christina Sneed's AP English and composition class after studying the 1619 project originally published in The New York Times. She read Hair Love after she discussed her documentary.



The Junteenth celebration art class with A'isha Hedges had rave reviews. Hedges asked students to select a cause and create art reflective of their passion.

"I was so proud to be part of Pershing and the larger community that pulled together as one that day," Hawkins said. "It opened my eyes as a principal that we need to make sure all pieces of history are told. We need to make sure all our students can see themselves in the stories we share."

Colquitt said the celebration inspired her to host more community events that highlight Black brilliance and excellence.

During the opening assembly, a hacker jumped into the session and posted racist slurs on the public chatboard, organizers said. They moved quickly to shut down the hateful speech. But the incident reinforced their commitment to create safe spaces for learning and conversations.

"This is why we need to keep doing these types of events," Colquitt said.

### **Kindergartners Got It "MADE"**

Last year, The Magic House opened a new creative children's space just east of The Loop on Delmar Boulevard called The Magic House @MADE.

The new St. Louis location is intended to expand The Magic House's reach into urban neighborhoods where children might not be able to make it all the way to its Kirkwood space. MADE stands for the venue's four creativity sections: Maker's Space, Artist's Studio, Design Lab and Entrepreneur's Marketplace.

This past fall and winter, all of the District's kindergarten students from every school got a chance to visit @MADE during special field trips. They were some of the first students in the region to enjoy the new space. During their visits, students made stopaction videos, operated an ozone robot, created items with a 3-D printer, built large structures out of various materials, painted on electronic boards and generally let their imaginations come to life with hands-on activities that resulted in hand-made creations.

The visits were part of the Think Like a Scientist curriculum unit in kindergarten. They were made possible through a gift from the Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation. Additionally, the District was able to provide about 100 tickets to families in grades K-8 to enjoy @MADE during their free time.

The District is grateful to partners such as the Seidel Foundation and The Magic House who work with us to ensure our students receive modern, rigorous and relevant learning experiences.



kindergarten students get creative at Magic House's new @ MADE space near U. City.



### **Growing Together: Elementary PTOs Create One U City**

The School District of University City has six separate parent-teacher organizations representing each of its freestanding schools. This past school year, a group of parents at each of the district's four elementary schools recognized an opportunity to work together and build a strong partnership among their PTOs. Their goal is to build equity and community across the District.

One U City is a group of about 10 representatives from the PTOs at Barbara C. Jordan, Flynn Park, Jackson Park and Pershing elementary schools. They recognized that together they could strengthen their individual school-based PTOs by sharing resources, ideas and manpower. They continue to build awareness, connections and community among all families and schools in the District while also building U. City Pride.

With those goals in mind, One U City coordinated four district-wide events last year open to all elementary school families and the entire University City community. Each event was hosted by a different elementary school and provided a great way for parents and students

from all of the District's schools to get to know each other and the broader community.

"The School District of University City is a rich and diverse community with four incredible elementary schools, and all of our children deserve a community that works together to support them.

We want our children to feel connected and proud to be a part of the broader U City community," said Flynn Park parent Tricia Sanders. "One of the parents on the One U City team said,



'This gives me the chills – this just makes me feel U. City.' We all loved that – the idea that U. City is really a feeling, a feeling of community and deep pride. Pride in our history, our diversity and our collective future. One U City is committed to helping our school communities and all of our children 'feel U. City.'"

The One U City events for the past school year included:

- **Jazz and More Under the Stars**, a night of music and community in a festive, late-summer setting held on the lawns and lots of Pershing Elementary held on September 20, 2019.
- **Trunk or Treat**, a Halloween trick-or-treating party hosted by Jackson Park Elementary held on October 25, 2019.
- **Spice & Spark**, Chili Cook-Off and Social Action Expo, hosted by Flynn Park Elementary on January 26.
- Multi-Cultural Event, hosted by Barbara C. Jordan Elementary on March 3.

One U City is unique. PTO groups rarely function beyond their own schools. It is common for some schools to have more resources, parent networks and spare time than others in the same district. One U City organizers recognized this disparity in the district. One U City is part of an effort to ensure equity and build community across the district. It aims to amplify overall community pride and engagement in the historic school district. The tagline for One U City is Four Schools, One Pride.

Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said One U City is an outstanding effort that speaks to the heart of equity-building in the



In October, Jackson Park's PTO hosted Trunk or Treat for students to safely celebrate in costumes.



In January, Flynn Park's PTO hosted a Chili Cook-Off and Auction.



In March, Barbara C. Jordan's PTO hosted a Multi-Cultural Event showcasing countries from around the globe.

school district.

"It shouldn't be because of their circumstances that our children suffer. It's not all right for some schools to thrive and be fine while others don't," Hardin-Bartley said. "One U City is a great example for all of our students to see that the parents have their backs and are working in service of every child."

### Grab & Go Tops 375,000 Meals Served

**Continued from page 1** 

cereal, fruit, milk, chicken nuggets, sandwiches and chips.

They also distributed school supplies, hand sanitizer, fliers offering child-friendly at-home learning activities as well as advice on keeping things light at home.

Thanks to donations from the community, the District booked ice cream trucks at all pickup locations so students and their families could each pick out a cool treat.

Donations and volunteer support came from alumni, teachers, board members, U. City residents and residents from surrounding communities. Community partners, companies and local churches helped, too.

"A lot of the credit falls on the community who stepped up to love on these people and make sure they had good things to eat," Spiller said.

"University City as a community truly rallied to support its families and children during difficult times."

In May, The University City Education Foundation launched a Summer Meal



Appeal campaign to provide families needed extras with weekly care packages that contained produce, snacks and other items to supplement the basic meals. The foundation raised more than \$60,000, mostly from

the generosity of the local community, to help the families most struggling with the impact of COVID-19. Among the donations was a \$10,000 grant from the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund. The St. Louis Community Foundation awarded that generous grant.

The Summer Meal Appeal further provided 150 of the District's neediest families with essentials such as cleaning supplies, toiletries and other items.

As a Title 1 District with many families living near or below the poverty level, many University City children have long depended on the District to provide them with healthy breakfasts and lunches at school.

When COVID-19 closed school buildings and cafeterias, officials with the District realized immediately that these students would not get these necessary meals. Food insecurity was growing as businesses closed to ride out the stay-at-home orders.

"We simply could not let our families down. Students can't learn, and families can't function healthily if they are hungry or are making choices between paying for other essentials and purchasing food because they can't afford both," said Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley. "We knew very quickly that COVID-19 was both extremely stressful for our families and debilitating to many of them financially."

Wyman Center, a leader in student empowerment with team members embedded in all of the District's schools, helped design and implement the curbside pickup system.

Volunteers in face masks and rubber gloves gave away meals at four walk-up and drive-thru locations, where they displayed bright signs of encouragement reading "You've Got This" and "Just Breathe." Some wore costumes to ensure the atmosphere was light and supportive.

Children saw familiar smiling faces, and parents received information about other community supports. School social workers and counselors checked in with families at the sites and scheduled appointments to connect in the future.

This fall, the District's Grab & Go Meal Program will provide students with 15 meals per week. Pickup is Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Barbara C. Jordan, Jackson Park and Pershing Elementary schools and at Brittany Woods Middle School.









### **Entrepreneurial Students Open Uniquely U Store**

The store presents engaging hands-on learning for students with clear applications to life and entrepreneurship.



### **PROBLEMATIZE: Learning Reimagined**

When it comes to school spirit, you can never have too much black and gold – or snacks to keep the energy high.

That's the thought of a group of student entrepreneurs at University City High School who. last fall, unveiled the Uniquely U shop, a new school store run entirely by students in David German's Entrepreneurship 2 class. Hours for the store, located in the high school near the Balson Avenue entrance, were typically right after school. The store also had special hours during school events such as Homecoming.

Not only was the store stocked with healthy snacks and beverages for sale, but a growing inventory of school spirit wear, including T-shirts and hoodies designed by students. Spirit wear included T-shirts for Black Out and Red Out fan nights at sporting events, special sweatshirts and tees for homecoming, pink tees for Breast Cancer Awareness month and Black History Month.

Business was brisk from the start.

"We did over \$100 worth of sales after school the first day," German said. "There were nine kids standing outside the door waiting for the shop to open."

German said the store presents engaging hands-on learning for students with clear applications to life and entrepreneurship.

"They can think through problems creatively, collaborate and show grit when engaged in the store," he said. "I'm surprised at how good the kids are at this. It's amazing, two students programmed the point of sale register entirely on their own. The students are coming up with great marketing ideas. And then there was the amazing T-Shirt that a student-designed for Homecoming. It's really cool."

It took work and preparation to open the store. The students began planning in the spring of 2019 while in an Entrepreneurship 1 class with German. They came up with a list of needed start-up supplies and a business model. In summer 2019, German posted a Donors Choose page to appeal to the public for donations. Through the page, the class raised more than \$1,000 to buy a merchant refrigerator for beverages, wall and floor display shelving, hangers, and a glass-fronted display case for snacks.

When word got out about the planned store ther donations came in, including \$500 from Black Entrepreneurs Inc. Another person donated the point of sale cash register from Square.

Behind the scenes, the eight members of German's class continued to



Students in David German's Entrepreneurship 2 class at University City High School learned the ropes of retail, inventory, accounting, marketing, design and customer service when they opened and operated the Uniquely U store last year inside University City High School.

learn the ropes about retail and management. The students were split into groups: a design team in charge of developing the look and layout of the store; another team to create clothing designs and other inventory; a finance team to keep the store in the black; and an advertising and marketing team that utilized social media. Check them out on Twitter @ UniquelyUCHS, on Instagram at uniquelyu\_UCHS and on Facebook at uniquelyUCHS. Everyone staffs the store.

Profitswere used to improve the store, provide seed money for other student entrepreneurial projects and create a charitable fund to help other students afford functions that they normally could not attend.

Students also offered gift certificates as incentives for their peers. They reached out successfully to alumni for business and support. And, they partnered with the UCHS PTO to sell gold and black SDUC scarves. The school merchandise built a spirit of camaraderie and pride in the high school, German said.

The students also have bigger plans when the high school building is able to reopen. They hope to open up a small lounge area in a room next to the shop. German said it would be a place for members of the store staff to do their homework and collaborate after class hours on ideas and projects.

### **Teens Taking Action Targets Gun Violence**

Freshmen rock. They not only adjust to the challenges and routines of high school, they learn quickly that they have the power to be a dynamic part of a new community, despite their newbie status.

Take former ninth-grader Michael Simmons and his 12 classmates. On Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020, the group introduced their new high school club Teens Taking Action with an exhibit at COCA featuring poems and artwork about how gun violence harms youths and families.

Simmons, the group's founder, said he hopes to involve more people both at UCHS and the St. Louis region in the club, which aims to educate the public about the epidemic of gun violence. Simmons said the group hopes to further advocate for policy changes to stop gun violence.

Simmons founded the group in the fall of 2019 after personally experiencing gun violence after attending a football jamboree at Parkway North High School. Panic broke out among attendees after the conclusion of the event when a gunshot was heard.

"It was one of the most terrifying experiences of my life," Simmons said.

"I started this group in hopes to promote peace and unity within St. Louis and to hopefully try put an end to gun violence, because too many kids die by guns yearly, and it's time for a change."

Student artists were present during the exhibit to discuss their work. They included UCHS freshman Angel Wells. Wells said her pen and ink drawing of a woman with a flower flowing out from behind her represented how gun violence steals people of their joy and beauty.



Members of the Teens
Taking Action anti-gun
violence group at their
February COCA exhibit.
Founder Michael Simmons
stands third from the right
in the back row.



# UCHS AP Class Partners with Gateway Journalism Review to Publish Projects on Racism and St. Louis History

# HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined

By RICHARD H. WEISS

COVID-19 slowed many educational programs nationwide and even brought some to halt. But the students in Christina Sneed's AP English Language and Composition class at University City High School kept their foot on the accelerator.

The diverse class of 22 students ended the 2019-20 school year with a variety of different projects. Some of them included thought-provoking essays focusing on the New York Times' 1619 Project; a podcast on how white privilege works in Clayton and University City; and a video on colorism and hairstyles.

Several student essays can be found in a special Spring 2020 edition of the Gateway Journalism Review (www.ucityschools.org/GJR); the video

is on YouTube; and the podcast will soon be available through the usual streaming channels. The professional-quality work is not just for teachers and peers, but a wider audience that includes young, old and in-between, people of various ethnicities and faiths, those who enjoy a great deal

of privilege, and people who live in marginalized communities. Overall, the student work addresses fact and fantasy when it comes to understanding the American Dream in the context of race.

Sneed said she wanted to help her students understand how language and rhetoric have been used to shape culture and society. The course was rigorous and not for everyone. Sneed said she started with 33 students last fall — with 11 dropping the course by the end of the first semester. As one of the "survivors," Zoe Yudovich, put it: the class "kicked our butts. This was one of the hardest classes that I ever had. But what kept me in it was the content. You were never bored."

Sneed's second semester included an examination of the 1619 Project, produced by New York Times staff writer and Pulitzer Prize winner Nikole Hannah-Jones. The project reassesses slavery, which arrived on the continent 400 years ago, and its

impact on American life right up to the present day. Hannah-Jones drew extensive praise for her work, but also criticism from some historians, in part, because it applied a racial lens to the motivations of the Founding Fathers.

The 1619 Project "really challenged everything the students had been taught up to this point," Sneed said. "I will tell you they had many uncomfortable conversations with each other, with their parents, with their teachers. They were like, well, why have we never heard about this? Why didn't we know that Abraham Lincoln didn't really want Black people to be free, and wanted to send them overseas? They had so many conflicting emotions, so many questions. So what I told them to pour all of that into their work to create a documentary that would explore their topics of curiosity and interest. They conducted the research, developed surveys, and identified people to interview."

Yudovich, though a top student, had never seen herself as either a big reader or a writer. She absorbs information in other ways, and she'd rather talk than write. But she was fascinated by the tens of thousands of words that Hannah-Jones and other correspondents produced for the 1619 Project.

At the start of the course, Yudovich had difficulties with her compositions. But Yudovich began writing with authority when she studied the 1619 Project.

"The American Dream is an ideal that the country embodies," Yudovich



While schools were closed due to COVID-19, Christina Sneed's University City High School AP English Language and Composition class got to work on final projects that grappled with racism across the region and across generations. The projects included published student articles in a regional journalism newsmagazine.

UCHS AP teacher

Christina Sneed said

to provide their own

she asked her students

assessments of history.

what is true from what

is not true?" she asked

the truth?"

them."How do we judge

"How can we learn about

wrote. "Humanity buys into it because it gives us a sense of hope. But it leaves us disappointed. In reality, the dream is not accessible to all people, especially African-Americans who helped create it..."

"While the Founding Fathers were writing our Constitution, slaves

were building their houses. While Thomas Jefferson established America as the land of the free, enslaved African-Americans were constructing the White House."

Others who produced essays on the topic for the Journalism Review were: Ian Feld, Merrick Hoel, Kelis Petty, John Ruland, Sahra Jamal and Reuben Thomas.

Gateway Journalism Review Publisher William Freivogel said the 1619 Project rallied the students to challenge the reality of the American Dream.

"Presenting student voices alongside those of professionals shows that the next generation of students is more aware than past generations that institutional racism exists today and that fundamental changes are needed to make the American Dream a reality," he said.

Other students in Sneed's class took on different projects. For example, Jaiden Smith produced a video documentary on hairstyles and colorism.

Here's how Smith voiced the introduction:

"My name is Jaiden Smith, and I am a Black woman, who loves other Black women. We are beautiful. We are intelligent. We are creative. We are outspoken. We can be quiet and mysterious, dainty and poetic, or we can be outspoken and resilient. We can be fighters. We can be lovers. We sing. We dance. We create. We lead. We discover. We overcome. I have to say these things because some Black women will go their whole lives without ever hearing it. Instead of being loved and praised, we are criticized for the way we wear our hair to the types of clothes we wear. This documentary will shine a light on the struggles of being a Black woman, and what that looks like in America."

In the second half of her video, Smith addressed colorism – the way that Americans make distinctions and discriminate based on skin-tone.

Smith's work was praised by nearly everyone who has seen it to date. The reception has given her further incentive to pursue a career in journalism. Those seeds were planted long ago.

"It was almost like I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't know it already had a name," she said of journalism. "Before I even knew how to write, I just, like, scribbled stuff in a notebook. I watched a show called Blue's Clues (a show for preschoolers on Nickelodeon) where a

Continued on page 11

# The Show Must Go On! High School Actors Perform Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' on Zoom

<mark>"Be gre</mark>at in

act, as you

thought."

William Shakespeare

have been in



### **PROBLEMATIZE: Learning Reimagined**

Each spring, under the direction of University City High School theater teacher Catherine Hopkins, Drama Club students present a Shakespeare classic. Last year, they performed "As You Like It" in the high school auditorium and invited the audience to sit among them onstage as they performed in an immersive, 1930s-inspired production set in a forest.

Hopkins had big plans this spring after spending part of summer

2019 at the famed Globe Theatre in England studying innovative ways to engage students and new techniques for accessing Shakespeare's text in performance. This year, the students were getting ready to perform "Twelfth Night," a romantic comedy written in 1601. It was a lighter, genderbending play written about 10 years after Shakespeare penned the tragedy "Romeo and Juliet."

The students were hard at work in late February and early March bringing

"Twelfth Night" to light, solidifying the comic timing and movement for each of the 25 scenes. Just before spring break, the cast of 15 were in their third week of full rehearsals. The actors left for vacation with the expectation of an opening night on April 24. But, as Shakespeare might put it, a pestilence descended on their plans in the form of COVID-19. (Indeed, there is some evidence that Shakespeare actually wrote King Lear while theaters were shuttered for several years during a plague.)

This did not stop Hopkins nor her students, because as we now know, "all the world's a stage." So, after spring break, the UCHS Drama Club troupe decided to go virtual – an option that Shakespeare never had. As the actors and the director became more proficient with technology through Distance Learning, they decided to perform the play entirely on Zoom. There were considerable readjustments. The actors played their parts from their homes in front of their computer screens while incorporating movement and "reacting" to their fellow castmates. Some used virtual backgrounds. Others created the world of the play in their basements with innovative lighting techniques. And, there were numerous surprise appearances of family members and pets during the rehearsals. The thespians fashioned their own costumes and props from what they had while sheltering in place.

They had some inspiration from "Saturday Night Live," which had done



The UCHS Drama Club presented Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" live on Zoom to a limited audience. To watch the May 15 presentation, visit www.ucityschools.org/12thNightZoom.

similar live broadcasts at the start of COVID-19.

Hopkins said the students' positive attitudes, flexibility, new-found technology talents and personal commitment to the show were heroic. In addition to their curricular studies, the cast of freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors dedicated two to five hours or more each week to rehearse together via Zoom. For some, this was their very first performance, while others had more than 15 UCHS productions under their belts. Regardless of experience, on Friday, May 15, they tackled their virtual stage fright, held virtual vocal and physical warmups, gave each other pep talks and senior speeches and then held their first-ever Zoom performance for an audience of about 50 excited guests. As Hopkins put it, "These happy few followed The Bard's directive to 'be great in act, as you have been in thought' and managed to make a little history of their own."

There were a few technical glitches. It took some time to piece the recording together. But the troupe and their director put on a phenomenal performance despite their challenges. A recording of the story can be found at www.ucityschools.org/12thNightVideo. Congratulations to the troupe for its resilience and creativity.

The players and their roles: Viola – Lydia Thoroughman; Sebastian – Cory Barber; Lady Olivia – Mya Blanks; Duke Orsino – Nathan Hill; Sir Toby Belch – Karl Nelson; Sir Andrew Aguecheek – Adam Holahan; Maria – Jamya Richardson; Feste – Kevin Worthy; Malvolio – John Ruland; Antonio – Beckett Wilke; Fabian – Sebastian Gunter; Captain/First Officer – Mia Robinson,; Juliet – Chloe Richardson; Valentine – Ella Chisholm; Curio – Sadie Malks; Director – Catherine Hopkins; Stage Manager – Julia Nelson; Poster Design – Ella Chisholm.

### UCHS AP Class Publishes Projects on Racism and St. Louis History

**Continued from page 10** 

dog carried around a little notebook with a crayon stuck in the binding. I told people I just wanted to write about things and report on things. Then I figured out that the word for that was journalist."

Cheering on Smith at every turn was Yudovich, one of her best friends. The two met in Brittany Woods Middle School but became closer in high school. They come from different backgrounds and neighborhoods. Smith went to Pershing Elementary School, which has a nearly all African-American student body. She lives in a working-class neighborhood just north of the school. Yudovich attended Delmar-Harvard Elementary School, then Flynn Park Elementary School, both of which were more ethnically and racially diverse. She lives in a more upscale neighborhood near Midland and Delmar.

"I learned a little bit about privilege just from being her friend," Smith said. "We talk about race a lot and we really like to debate each other. Because she's friends with more white students, she always tells me what they think and what they say. And it's interesting to hear. And I tell her how Black people feel about certain things and how we see it."

Yudovich was able to apply some of those insights to a podcast she put

together with classmate Ian Feld. The two examined the experience of Black students in the School District of Clayton. They noted that while Black students in The School District of University City may not have access to all the resources that their counterparts in the wealthier Clayton district have, they enjoy the advantage of going to school with students and faculty who are far more inclusive and accepting of who they are.

"The perspective is that Clayton students and some faculty don't know how to interact with minorities," Feld said.

Feld and Yudovich titled their podcast with a question: "Is it Racism or Ignorance?" They concluded that Clayton residents are well-meaning but ignorant in some respects because they lack experience in living, working and going to school with people of color and other socio-economic groups.

"Kudos to Christina Sneed and her students," said Arthur Lieber, director of Civitas, an educational nonprofit involved with bringing the discussion about the 1619 Project into schools and the community. "They are moving the dialogue further ahead and creating accessible media for a wide variety of students and adults."

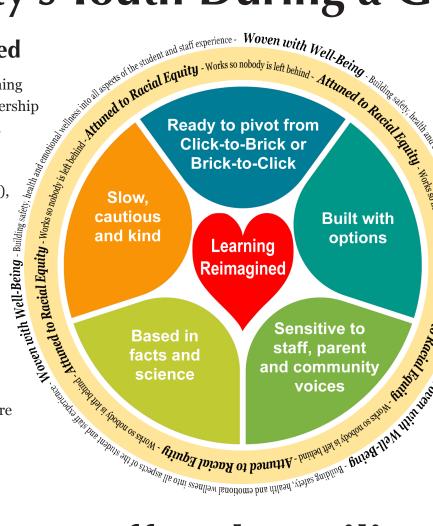
# Safe, Gradual & K Educating University City's Youth During a G

the way it educated its students practically overnight due to the frightening encroachment of COVID-19 in the United States and the world. The District, under the leadership of Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, declared all school buildings closed. Students, staff and parents pivoted immediately to distance learning. The District hoped the building closures would be temporary, but with the rapid rise of cases in the region in July and August, coupled with safety concerns from both parents and teachers (tabulated via surveys), the District will start the new school year in a virtual-only platform.

This is the first time ever that the District has had to start a school year with its buildings closed to students.

### But there is a big difference this fall from last spring.

The District has a comprehensive plan called **Health of a Lion**. It is a plan that is safe, gradual and kind. It is woven with health and well-being and racial equity throughout. The District's long term vision of Learning Reimagined remains at the center of educating its students during a global pandemic. Every aspect of this school year stands on the pillars of humanizing, personalizing and problematizing learning. This will happen regardless of where students do their learning, be it at home on a computer, in safe virtual learning centers in University City High School and Brittany Woods Middle School, or in physically distanced classrooms with the teachers when it is safe to return to school buildings.



### **Ensuring Wellness of Students, Staff and Families**

Meet Joe Lion. He stands proud, over 6 feet tall on his back paws, and embraces all of the members of The School District of University City community as a part of his Pride. As a leader with heart and courage, Joe Lion knows about wellness, safety and kindness amid a scary and confusing time for children and adults. That's why he's the District's "mane" mascot for Health of a Lion.

Thanks to Joe, our students and staff will be supported with kind messages about health, safety, wellness and learning. He understands that everyone is in it together during tough times. Joe's also got major style (and lots of hair product). He pounced on a chance to pose for more than 800 wellness signs posted in our school buildings for when they return to school. You can see some of the elementary school signs below.

Joe's also got a thing for acting. He's currently under contract with a

major motion picture studio to star in videos for U. City students and families. He'll be presenting well-being tips for students as they learn from home and when they come back to school buildings. And, Joe loves his fans. He encourages all of his Pride to write notes of support, gratitude and love to joelion@ucityschools.org. Joe will post those positive messages on social media – because he's got a gazillion followers.

Joe and The School District of University City understand that children cannot learn if they are not well, and children, staff and families need extra TLC during a global pandemic. Joe knows that some of our families are struggling with increased job, housing, health and food insecurity due to a virus that was not their fault. Joe knows that the virus is being particularly cruel to our African-American community. And he understands that learning and teaching is really hard right now amid

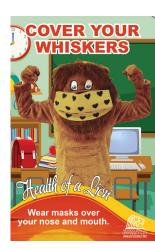












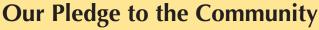




Meet Joe Lion...

Email your words of encouragment and well-being to JoeLion@ucityschools.org.

# ind lobal Pandemic



We remain in service to your children during a global pandemic.

Rigorous and relevant education will not only continue, but accelerate through necessary innovation, creativity and heart.

Safety and well-being for students, staff and families will not be sacrificed. Nobody will be left behind.

Students will engage in significant live instruction while working online (synchronous learning).

Our staff will be utilized responsibly and to their fullest potential.

Leadership and staff will be accountable and responsive. They will work full schedules.

We will continue to listen to parent and community voices and concerns.

We will embrace change and pivot to in-school instruction when it is safe.

We will continue to give parents options.

We will continue to support our communities and our families with critical resources.

We will remain attuned to racial equity.

## **During a Global Pandemic**

sruption and stress. Joe has a superstar team:

School nurses serving all of the district buildings.

Newly hired certified nursing assistant to help with safety and health.

Social workers and counselors.

Trauma specialists working with elementary school students.

Professionals from Wyman who work in all District schools to promote social and emotional learning.

Alive and Well Communities, which teaches our staff and students to understand, recognize and address trauma in our community – particularly the trauma of racism and racial inequity.

A crew of volunteers and partners to provide families with needed food and essentials. And more.

Thanks, Joe Lion, for taking care and having both the Heart and Health of a Lion!











# We've Got This!

### Looking ahead to bring students and staff back into classrooms

The School District of University City is currently teaching and supporting 98% of its students through a virtual-only format called Brick Academy. Another 2% of students are in Click Academy, a fully virtual model delivered by Launch, a separate online program operated by the Springfield, Missouri, school system.

Brick Academy is built on optimism and the latest scientific and health information. It is the District's great hope that the public health situation in the St. Louis region will improve so Brick Academy can pivot from all-virtual to a blended model, combining in-person instruction and distance learning. In this model, cohorts or groups of students will come to school on different days of the week and engage in distance learning with their teachers on the days they are not in school.

The plan to return to school buildings enables 6-foot physical distancing, lower student-teacher ratios for in-person instruction and the ability to keep students and staff in smaller groups to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

The District will base its decision to return to school buildings on science, research and specific data thresholds currently being developed in partnership with the St. Louis County Department of Health and an extensive group of school district leaders, including Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley.

As part of the plan, the current health and safety measures include:

- Six-foot social distancing in all buildings
- Required masks for students in grades K-12 and all adults
- · Purchase of masks and other personal protective equipment for students
- Rigorous sanitization in all buildings and school buses
- Purchase and dissemination appropriate sanitization supplies and
- Required daily personal health screenings completed online by parents and staff
- Grouping of students and staff to prevent transmission between grades and
- Limited visitors in school buildings
- Installation of plexiglass barriers in high traffic offices
- Retrofitting bathroom sinks to be hands-free
- Retrofitting water fountains to fill water bottles
- Installation of portable sinks in some schools buildings
- Installation of hand sanitizer dispensers throughout school buildings
- A complete audit and upgrade of ventilation systems
- Child-friendly health and safety signage in all District buildings
- Removal of all cloth toys and area rugs

Go to www.ucityschools.org to find more health and safety information.



### **A Blended Model:**

### For when it is safe to return to school buildings

When it is safe to return to school buildings, students will have a choice on whether they want to come back into classrooms or remain home in fully distance learning. Students who return will be placed in cohorts or groups with each coming to school on varying days of the week and also participating in distance learning on the days they are not scheduled for in-person instruction. This will enable:

- Effective and safe social distancing.
- Lower classroom student-teacher ratios for more intentional work on basic numeracy and literacy.
- Further ability to personalize instruction to student needs.
- Intensive social and emotional supports during a global
- Necessary staff and teacher training and time for regular student-parent check-ins.
- Options that enable students to continue full distance learning if they do not feel comfortable returning to in-person instruction.

### Health of a Lion: Learning in a Pandemic

### Click Academy

Virtual learning

continues through

Launch without

interruption

**Virtual-Only** Learning

# due to COVID-19

### **Brick Academy**

In-person attendance blended with online learning

# School buildings closed



### **Blended Model** In-Person & Distance Learning when safe

### **Brick to Distance** Learning COVID-19 closure



### **Blended** Model Brick days & Distance



### **Full** Return Modifications for distancing



### **Important Community Resources for COVID-19**

The School District of University City realizes this is a very stressful time for our community. The safety and well-being of our students, staff and families is always a top priority. Our Student Services Office has put together the following resources and contact information. Please use them when you need them.

### **COVID-19 Coronavirus:**

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has activated a statewide public hotline (877) 435-8411, for citizens or providers needing guidance regarding COVID-19. It is operated by medical professionals and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Free COVID-19 testing registration: stlcorona.com/covid-19-testing. Please also check the District website www.ucityschools.org/DistrictNews for regularly updated information on the virus and the District's response to it.

### **Emergency/Crisis:**

- Behavioral Health Response: 314-469-6644
- Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-392-3738
- Crime Victims Advocacy Center: 314-652-3623
- Crisis Nursery: 314-768-3201
- Homeless Hotline: 314-802-5444
- KUTO (Kids Under Twenty-One) Kid to Kid Hotline: 1-888-644-5886 (Hours: 4-10 p.m.)
- Life Crisis/Suicide Hotline: 314-647-4357 (24/7)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Poison Hotline: 1-800-222-1222
- Runaway and Troubled Youth Hotline: 1-800-786-2929
- Safe Connections (Women's Crisis, Rape): 314-531-2003 (24/7)
- St. Louis County Public Health: www.stlcorona.com.
- St. Louis County Youth Helpline: 314-628-2929
- Senior and Disability Abuse Hotline: 1-800-392-0210
- Youth Emergency Services: 314-727-6294 or 1-800-899-KIDS
- Youth In Need: 636-946-3771 (24/7)

### **Mental and Behavioral Health Services:**

- Telehealth Behavioral Health Services for Youth (2-page PDF from St. Louis County Children's Service Fund with live links and phone numbers of Agencies committed to helping during this time, as of 032520.)
- Via TeleHealth (www.telehealth.com)
- Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri www.lfcsmo.org
  - Already established services to continue at home
  - Office at 9666 Olive Blvd. 63132 is open by appointment only
- Preferred Family Healthcare: 314-972-8182 or stltoc@pfh.org
  - Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- (intakes on site; services at home until school resumes) St. Louis County Public Health department recommends visiting www.
- stlcorona.com.
- Candice Cox KHAOS: 314-898-6541 By appointment at www.aainspirations.com
- Additional website links available at www.ucityschools.org/SelfCare2020

### **Rent Assistance:**

St. Louis County Public Health department recommends:

- United Way: 1-800-427-4626
- Urban League: 314-615-3640
- Salvation Army: 314-646-3000

### **Utility Assistance:**

- Ameren: https://uwgsl.tfaforms.net/4602908
- Spire: https://www.spireenergy.com/coronavirus
- MSD: https://msdprojectclear.org/customers/billing/customer-assistance-
- Charter: 1-844-488-8395 Offering 2 months of free wifi for students.
- St. Louis County Public Health department recommends visiting www. stlcorona.com.

### **Food Assistance:**

Beginning March 23, 2020, The School District of University City provides free "Grab and Go" meals for all students: Go to www. ucityschools.org/GrabandGo for information.

(See related story beginning on page 1)

- Operation Food Search Hunger Hotline 314-726-5355 (x3)
  - They can direct you to local food shelters
- Emergency Food Stamps/SNAP Program www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/fstamp
  - Info Line: 855-373-4636 (x2)
  - EBT Customer Service Line: 800-997-7777
  - 3101 Chouteau 63103: 314-256-7000
  - 4411 N Newstead Ave., 3rd Floor 63115: 314-877-2000
  - Income Maintenance: 314-877-2400
- Meals on Wheels (must be over 60 or disabled) www.mowstl.org; 314-374-9549
- St. Louis Area Food Bank: 314-292-6262
  - Has multiple food programs to meet food needs for a wide variety of students and families
- St. Louis County Public Health department recommends www.stlcorona.com.
- WIC (Women, Infant and Child) www.wicprograms.org
  - Supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children
- Hope Food Pantry (City of Light Church) 8333 Fullerton Ave. 63132
  - Grace UMC Food Pantry 6199 Waterman Blvd. 63112: 314-863-1992
  - Open Tuesdays only from 9:45-11:45 a.m. and requires presentation of adult ID
- Mercy Neighborhood Pantry has developed a list of resources (pantries) available in St. Louis County

### For most current version of this information, visit www.ucityschools.org/CommunityResources2020.

To add a community resource to the District's website page, email communications@ucityschools.org.

### Contacting School Staff: (See page 3 for University City Board of Education and page 19 for District Administrators)

Office of Communications Director: Nancy Cambria - ncambria@ucityschools.org / Specialist: CarolAnn Cole - ccole@ucityschools.org

### District employees are available to assist families:

### **Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education** (314-290-4390)

Principal: Crystal Cauley – ccauley@ucityschools.org Secretary: Barbara Dickerson — bdickerson@ucityschools.org Secretary: Milinda Coleman — mcoleman@ucityschools.org Social Worker: Allegra Grawer – agrawer@ucityschools.org Nurse: Pat Wilson – pwilson@ucityschools.org Counselor: Cynthia Ross – cross@ucityschools.org

### Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School (314-290-4360)

Principal: Dr. JaNae Alfred – jalfred@ucityschools.org Secretary: Darlene Holliday – dholliday@ucityschools.org Social Worker: Christine Parks – cparks@ucityschools.org Nurse: Erika Buckels – ebuckels@ucityschools.org Counselor: Anita Qualls – aqualls@ucityschools.org

### Flynn Park Elementary School (314-290-4420)

Principal: Nicalee Wilson – nwilson@ucityschools.org Secretary: Portia House – phouse@ucityschools.org Social Worker: Stacey Miller – smiller@ucityschools.org Nurse: Cherich Jones — cherichjones@ucityschools.org Counselor: Jona Ross – jross@ucityschools.org

### **Jackson Park Elementary School** (314-290-4450)

Principal: Dr. Rebecca O'Connell – roconnell@ucityschools.org Social Worker: Christine Parks – cparks@ucityschools.org Nurse: Johynne Farrell – jfarrell@ucityschools.org Counselor: Shalonda Haynes – shaynes@ucityschools.org

### Pershing Elementary School (314-290-4150)

Co-Principals: Deitra Colquitt – dcolquitt@ucityschools.org Jessica Hawkins – jhawkins@ucityschools.org Secretary: Tamara Wilson – twilson@ucityschools.org Social Worker: Stacey Miller - smiller@ucityschools.org Nurse: Patricia Chandler – pchandler@ucityschools.org

### **Brittany Woods Middle School (314-290-4280)**

Counselor: Michelle Turner – miturner@ucityschools.org

Principal: Dr. Grace Lee – glee@ucityschools.org Secretary: Kimberly Walker – kwalker@ucityschools.org Social Worker: Allegra Grawer – agrawer@ucityschools.org Nurse: Dena Bashiti – dbashiti@ucityschools.org Counselors: Emily Bardot – ebardot@ucityschools.org Rashad Davenport - rdavenport@ucityschools.org Kellie Douglass – kdouglass@ucityschools.org

Registrar: Chantaine Coffman – ccoffman@ucityschools.org

### **University City High School (314-290-4100)**

Principal: Michael Peoples – mpeoples@ucityschools.org Secretary: Britini Ward – bward@ucityschools.org Receptionist: Jaki Cooke – jcooke@ucityschools.org Social Worker:

Christine Woodward – cwoodward@ucityschools.org Nurse: Kendress Hughes - khughes@ucityschools.org Counselors (Last Names):

April Money (P-Z) – apmoney@ucityschools.org Kimberly Merrill (A-G) – kimerrill@ucityschools.org Melvin Bond (H-O) – mbond@ucityschools.org Katy-Jane Johnson (Early College) kjjohnson@ucityschools.org

Secretary: Bella Quintal – bquintal@ucityschools.org Registrar: Robyn Murry – rmurry@ucityschools.org

### **Lieberman Learning Center (314-290-4330)**

Principal: Dr. Paula Sams – pasams@ucityschools.org Counselor: Cynthia Ross – cross@ucityschools.org (See UCHS for Social Worker, Nurse & Registrar)

### **University City Adult Education and Literacy Program (314-290-4051)**

Director: Clarence Ware – cware@ucityschools.org

# Congratulations UCHS Class of 2020!

We, the Class of

2020, are the class

Though senior graduation looked much different this year, the University City High School community showed its "U Time" big time as it celebrated the Class of 2020.

On June 15, a month later than originally planned, 160 graduates received their diplomas in-person. Wearing the school's traditional black and gold caps and gowns, the students were the first-ever to walk across a special stage positioned on the grand front steps of the high school.

It was all part of an intricate plan originally conceived by UCHS Safety and Security Advisor David Lewis to conduct a personalized celebration while keeping necessary

social distancing. The graduation ceremony traditionally takes place in early May in Chaifetz Arena, but the venue was not appropriate for the ceremony this year given the COVID-19 guidelines outlined by regional health departments.

"Mr. Lewis and the entire graduation committee did an outstanding job planning something truly unique that I'm sure none of us will ever forget," said UCHS Principal Michael Peoples.

The students began their processional by lining up in their family vehicles to create a 2-mile long "Lion Line." The convoy wound its way from the intersection of Olive and Midland Avenues to the corner of Shaftesbury and Jackson Avenues in front of the high school library.

Students then stepped out of their cars and marched 6 feet apart down the sidewalk to a red carpet that led them to the stage. One-by-one they received their diplomas and a safely distanced

congratulations from Principal Peoples. "Pomp and Circumstance" played as they marched on a sidewalk lined with yard signs featuring inspirational graduation quotes. Along the way, they were greeted by a stilt walker in black and gold and posed for photos on a carside pedestal stage framed with an arch of black and gold balloons. After crossing the stage, they collected their yearbooks and picked up special gifts made possible by the UCHS PTO.

The weather was perfect as adoring family and friends drove alongside them on Jackson Avenue, snapped photos, honked horns and cheered loudly.

Roberta Booth, senior class president, said she appreciated the effort.

"They did a great job of making us feel special under these conditions," Booth said. "I really enjoyed the graduation ceremony, especially the gifts."

One-hundred percent of seniors attending University City High School graduated this year.

The District printed personalized posters to hang on the graduates' cars. Every graduate also received a commemorative 5x7 personal photo from the event. Teachers donated money to make sure every senior took home a yearbook.

Before graduation, the High School PTO delivered personalized yard signs to the homes of each graduate. Students who took a photo with their yard sign in their caps and gowns were also featured on the District's social media channels as part of a "Together" campaign.

Graduation was the culmination of many events intended to make the seniors feel special during uneasy times.

On the evening of May 11, the day and time students were supposed to be graduating at a ceremony at Chaifetz Arena, the high school PTO held a festive car parade for the seniors on the streets around the high school. Local and national news stations captured the fun.

And, in June, graduates who submitted a photo and details of their future plans appeared on the District's Facebook and Instagram posts.





# **Academic**

**Adrianne Albert** Ta Marra N. Anderson Ty'zell N. Anderson **Cory Lamount Barber** Jaylin Terrell Bartlett **Netsanet Belachew** Isabel Blumenhorst Maelisha Nahlee Boclair Melissa Foley Roberta Annette Booth **Quincy Box** Tiayana Brown

The Academic U is a long-standing tradition at University City High School that recognizes students who earned a 3.0 or higher GPA for the school year. First-time recipients receive an academic letter "U." Students who received the letter in previous years are awarded a pin.

**Jacob Cherry** Makayla Kalia Clark **DeAngelo Davis Unique Doll** Kayden Faddis Jonathon Edward S. Fletcher Kailon W. Ford Eliot Gresham Fuller Nicole Isabel Kellogg Erianna Nicole

**Funches** Grace Lauren Gardin Henry Hilton Giles Alexis R. Hambrick Nacim Hassoun Rhyan Haynes Nathan B. Hill Nyjah Hudson Ashanti Terryail Jones Grace Evelyn Klein

Salome Maragh Yeimi Matos Dawson McCree Jayde Leah McKenzie Aliyah Cherise Mitchell Karl Leith Nelson Dinmley Spencer Paul Abigail Marie Paulwell Yael D. Portman Linares Ivonne Quiroz Michael Anthony Redmond Kai-Ran Webb

Mary Ann Rhoades Shamya A. Shaw **Diamond Maria Smith** Makiaya Nakia Stewart Robert Taylor Farah N. Thabet Kristen Damia Thompson **Ellis Shiron Twiggs** Schylr Walker



Bre D. Westbrook Asa Worth Kevin Worthy **Gunnar** Wurst Charya Marnae **Chayil Young** Junxian A. Zhang



# Congratulations

# **University City High School**

# Class of 2020

- <sup>F</sup> Adrianne Albert
- R TaMarra N. Anderson
- <sup>c</sup> Ty'zell N. Anderson Keisha Nicole Atkins Aleyah Ball
- F Cory Lamount Barber Jaylin Terrell Bartlett Keyon J. Beasley
- R Netsanet Belachew Ashanti Bishop
- <sup>C R</sup> Isabel Blumenhorst
- M F Maelisha Nahlee Boclair Sasha Joaquina Bonilla
- <sup>C R</sup> Roberta Annette Booth
- R Quincy Box Jaden Brooks Bri'Asia R. Brown
- <sup>C F</sup> Tiayana Brown Justice Champion
- M F Jacob Cherry
  Makayla Kalia Clark
  Jaelah Cohee
  Jade Cohnes
  Justin Coleman
  Lawrence L. Coleman
- R Turran Makel Coleman Daivion A. Crawford
- <sup>E</sup> Ariana Culton Amoray Cunningham

<sup>E</sup> Timothy Terrell Dailey

Honesty Elise Daniels
F DeAngelo Davis

- Dayton M. Dent
  Pimmada Devagupta
  Unique Doll
  Kangni Charles Dotou
  Allen Dotson
  Xavier D. Douglas-Woods
  Woodrow T. Dowd
  Anaiah Easley
- Chloe' Joeel Easter

  R Kayden Faddis
  Naeem Verdell Farr
  F Jayla Michelle Fitch
  Jonathon Edward S. Fletcher
- Melissa Foley

  C Kailon W. Ford

  Kyren Fossett
- <sup>S N R</sup> Eliot Gresham Fuller
- <sup>C F</sup> Erianna Nicole Funches
- <sup>F</sup> Grace Lauren Gardin
- <sup>5 R</sup> Henry Hilton Giles Lamont Green Alexis R. Hambrick Bakari Hampton
- <sup>R</sup> Darius Hargrove
- F Andrea Doris Harris Crystal Lashay Harris
- <sup>R</sup> Dakaia Harris
- <sup>R</sup> Ryanne Harris
- M N R Nacim Hassoun Charity M. Hawkins Anthony L. Hayes
  - <sup>F</sup> Rhyan Haynes

- R Maximilian Henderson Eva A. Hill
- <sup>S N R</sup> Nathan B. Hill
- F Alexandria Hogan-Wilson
- R E Christian Alexander Holloway
- <sup>E</sup> Molly Antwonae' Holman
- R Arissa Howard
  Gabrielle Howard
- <sup>S F</sup> Nyjah Hudson David Rudolph Huling
- R Darion Hutton
- <sup>R</sup> Mykah Kayla-Noelle James
- <sup>R</sup> Isaiah Johnson
- <sup>R</sup> Justin Johnson
- R Kelsey Johnson Kevin S. Johnson Mar'yonna Johnson Ashanti Terryail Jones Jaylen J. Jones Jakahla Radaisha Jordan

Mariya Shalon Joshua

- <sup>S N R</sup> Nicole Isabel Kellogg
- <sup>5 R</sup> Grace Evelyn Klein
- <sup>R</sup> Malaikah D Lawrence
- <sup>R</sup> Kaylyn M. Little Jada Tyree Madison
- <sup>R</sup> Salome Maragh
- <sup>R</sup> Jaylen Martinez
- R Yeimi Matos Ian Maxwell
- R Tahtyana Maxwell
- <sup>R</sup> Nasir M. Maynard

- Angelia McClendon Dawson McCree
- <sup>R</sup> Jayde Leah McKenzie
- F Emma C. McMahon Terra Merriweather
- R Aliyah Cherise Mitchell Markeith Montgomery
- S N F Karl Leith Nelson Cameron A. Oliver Dinmley Spencer Paul Abigail Marie Paulwell
  - <sup>R</sup> Marco Pluma
- <sup>S R</sup> Yael D. Portman
- <sup>C F</sup> Linares Ivonne Quiroz
- R Michael Anthony Redmond Audwin Lawson Reed
- Audwin Lawson Ree

  5 N R Mary Ann Rhoades

  Dashavia Ridgel

  Trayvon S. Robinson

  Ariyon Savage
  - R Roman Scales
    Justus Sekou
    Jaliyah Crystal Selle<u>rs</u>
  - F Shamya A. Shaw
  - R Darrell Sheppard
  - R Aaliyah Slater Cameron Smith
- MR Diamond Maria Smith Jaylen Smith
- E Tamesha M. Smith Mariel Smith-Frazier Jashaun M. Sneed

- <sup>R</sup> Tyler R. Spear
- <sup>R</sup> Jaheim Stampley
- R Makiaya Nakia Stewart Cameron Jovan Summers Antanay L. Sutton Jakayla Janane' Sutton Shira Yehudit Tannenbaum
- <sup>C</sup> Robert Taylor
- <sup>C R</sup> Farah N. Thabet
- <sup>R</sup> Kristen Damia Thompson Karmale Treadway
- <sup>R</sup> Dennis C. Tucker
- <sup>R</sup> Titus Turnbow
- <sup>C R</sup> Ellis Shiron Twiggs
- <sup>R</sup> Caleb Aaron Walker
- <sup>E</sup> Schylr Walker
- R Davion J. Wallace
  R Rashad Warren
- Kai-Ran Webb
- R D Andre O'Byant Wesley
  F Bre D. Westbrook
- Da'Drianna Junton Weston Kelenna Williams
- R Amirah M. Willingham Demetrius Willingham
- R Asa Worth Kevin Worthy
- R Laurence Wright-Jones
- <sup>C R</sup> Gunnar Wurst
- <sup>5</sup> Aidin Jacob Yazdi
- <sup>R</sup> Charya Marnae Chayil Young
- <sup>S R</sup> Junxian A. Zhang

# You have the Heart of a Lion!

Key: Summa Cum Laude (4.0+) Magna Cum Laude (3.8-3.99) Cum Laude (3.5-3.79) National Honor Society Member R National Career Readiness Certificate Emergency Medical Technician Certificate Fearly College Experience

### **UCHS Launches Restorative Practices Class**

# HUMANIZE: Learning Reimagined

Matthew Tuths knew his students had the power to make significant changes in the way youths and staff got along in the University City High School community. The students had the passion, and they understood the issues in their school – they just needed the right tools and the training to use them.

This past fall, Tuths, a Latin teacher originally from Boston, launched an ambitious Restorative Practices class open to all high school students. The class teaches students the social science behind restorative practices and techniques to not only improve their lives, but build strong, positive relationships within the school culture.

The year-long class, approved by the University City Board of Education in the summer of 2019, attracted 17 students from all grades. It was the first of its kind in Missouri. The students didn't really know each other at first. But Tuths said their passion for the work made most

of them nearly inseparable. Their hard work sparked transformation both within themselves and with their teachers and peers.

"We've-had students who have, on their own, facilitated restorative conversations between fellow students and the teachers their peers are having

"The course helps them not just as students in the school, but as people in their own communities and as humans existing in the world for the rest of their lives — where they can naturally respond to harm in restorative ways and they can build relationships with people in other restorative ways."

**Matthew Tuths** 

University City High School
Latin and Restorative Practices Teacher

trouble positively connecting with," he said. "I've had teachers email me afterward and thank me, saying how amazing our students were. They have been able to get the teachers and their fellow students to be very vulnerable and to open up so they understand the teacher's perspective when a wrong has been done or a misunderstanding takes place."

Since 2017, The School District of University City has embraced the use of restorative practices and restorative justice as important tools to build healthy learning and social environments in its schools. Last year, the District's Board of Education also passed a landmark resolution in support of restorative practices.

In classrooms throughout the District, visitors may often find teachers, coaches, counselors and others leading restorative circles. The practice enables both youths and adults to have a chance to emotionally check in with one another and have a personal voice in the classroom community. In instances when a wrong has been done, restorative justice is used so that harm can be addressed and relationships can be repaired – an investment of time and reflective energy that experts say reduces in- and out-of- school suspensions and strengthens community.

It is all part of the District's efforts to build racial equity and strong relationships that fosters a culture of well-being and joy in its schools.

Restorative practices cannot be fully successful in schools unless the students also take ownership and leadership in using these tools. So that's why the course came to be, Tuths said.

The Restorative Practices class is held in a relaxed classroom space containing couches, beanbag chairs and group tables. The space invites collaboration and authenticity among the students.

Tuths' early morning class usually started with a restorative circle for everyone to check in. When a visitor came to the classroom last winter, Tuths was mindful of the mood of his students. He said he sometimes



Members of the 2019-20 UCHS Restorative Practices Class wore bright yellow T-shirts when they led restorative circles throughout the high school last February as part of a special event to build relationships and positive culture in the high school



UCHS Latin and Restorative Practices teacher Matthew Tuths (right) works with students as they develop special projects to enhance the school culture through restorative practices.

gives his students more time than usual to settle and focus, because many of them have complicated lives outside of school.

At times, the circles take on a life of their own, Tuths said. A topic that started the conversation may lead to deeper discussions about feelings and opinions on another topic.

"The emotional trajectory of the circle can be really interesting, going from kind of blah, to intense emotions, and very real expressions of support for each other," Tuths said. "They often end in a group hug."

Last year, students also welcomed a guest facilitator who helped them learn about effective social movements, protest and social change. Dr. Lee Ann Banaszak, a UCHS graduate and chair of the Political Science department at Pennsylvania State University, coached the students on developing Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects to restore and build authentic relationships in the high school.

YPAR projects require students to collect data on specific topics via surveys, interviews and other methods. The data collected helped them to better design their projects and provide evidence that change needs to happen.

Near the end of the first semester, the students worked in groups to develop their research methods.

Freshman John Hilton planned to survey and interview peers on attendance to find new ways to encourage students to show up to school. He said too many of his friends opt out of school and are sometimes

**Continued on page 19** 



When they were sophomores, members of the first group of students in the District's Early College Experience made a pledge to work hard and believe in their abilities during a special enrollment ceremony at St. Louis Community College – Forest Park. Two years later, 11 of them graduated from University City High School with both a diploma and a two-year degree, while most others had earned significant and transferable college credits.

### Early College Experience Graduates First Class



### **PERSONALIZE: Learning Reimagined**

Eleven University City High School seniors graduated in June with two degrees – a high school diploma and an Associate's Degree from St. Louis Community College.

The students were the first group to graduate from the Early College Experience Program in the The School District of University City. Six others graduated with 42 college credits that they can transfer to any four-year school in Missouri.

University City High School Counselor Katy-Jane Johnson, the program's director, said she was proud of the hard work the students put into their degrees.

"The amount of grit and determination this program takes cannot be overstated. These students charted a new course and did whatever they needed to achieve their goals," Johnson said. "Every single one of them had personal challenges along the way but stayed focused and determined."

The students signed up for the experience when they were sophomores. The competitive program requires a 3.0 GPA or above and a formal application. Students were selected based on academic performance, drive and commitment.

The students began their coursework in the summer before their junior year on the campus of STLCC-Forest Park. During their junior year, students took dual-enrollment courses at the high school. Between their junior and senior years, the students transitioned to the STLCC-Forest Park campus for the remainder of the program. They took six credit hours in the summer and a full courseload during their senior year.

The program gives students a head start on future degrees and significantly reduces future college expenses. The Early College Experience was no-cost to students.

Recent graduate Tiayana Brown, 18, enrolled because she needed financial help to reach her goal to be a clinical psychologist. She didn't think she could afford a degree at a four-year college on her own.

She found the experience to be challenging, but fulfilling. Her Black Humanities course was her favorite class.

"I was able to learn more about Black history talking about it in my class than we ever read in our high school textbooks," Brown said. "I learned a lot more about myself."

Brown said the District supported her and her fellow students with consistent mentoring, study groups and group text chats.

"Miss Johnson made sure we would get the proper resources and texted our professors when we had issues," she said.

Brown, who continued taking college courses this summer, is enrolled at the University of Missouri-St. Louis for the fall in pursuit of a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a certificate in trauma studies.

Johnson said the opportunity to take college classes during high school helps them transition to higher education with important support.

"Freshman year they are on their own in college. Instead of having to figure it out alone, they have people to help them on campus every day doing grade checks, problem-solving and getting them resources," she said.

Tyjah Hudson also graduated from the program in June and enrolled at Loyola University in Chicago. She plans to study biology and has her sights set on medical school.

She said she's nervous about moving away and living on campus. But, she's ready to tackle the course load because of her training in the Early College Experience. Hudson said she learned how to be organized and self-motivated in the program.

"My grades went up a whole lot after my sophomore year. I ended up with a 4.0," she said. "The teachers were totally different and treated us like adults."

Johnson said ending their senior year in a pandemic was an additional challenge. But the struggle made graduation even sweeter.

"Seeing them walk across the stage was just such a special moment," she said.

### **UCHS Launches Restorative Practices Class**

**Continued from page 18** 

enabled by parents.

"So I want to know how we can encourage more people to show up to school. Is it incentives or rewards? Or is there something students can do to get them here so they can learn?" he said.

Seniors Roberta Booth and Kailon Ford said they wanted to know why some of their peers avoid the college and career counseling office at the high school. The two have been active with the counseling office and have taken part in a variety of career programs and paid summer internships.

"There's a lack of preparation for postsecondary options among them, and they don't take advantage of the resources that are out there at the high school," Ford said of some peers.

"I think it's a confidence issue and I think it's a trust issue," Booth added.

Student emotional well-being was also a concern of the class.

"I feel like, in order to restore our school and our students, we need to have conversations with our students about mental health. And we need to be more mindful of health and mental illness," said sophomore Emma Schock.

In February, the students applied their newly learned tools and techniques with the high school community when they hosted a Restorative Practices day. Wearing bright yellow T-shirts that read "Restorative Leader," the students facilitated restorative circles in dozens of classrooms throughout the day to build community and relationships.

Tuths said the event helped all of his students grow as leaders.

"I think it helped them not just as students in the school, but as people in their own communities and as humans existing in the world for the rest of their lives – where they can naturally respond to harm in restorative ways and they can build relationships with people through other restorative ways," Tuths said. "They can be in a position where they can be leaders in whatever school they end up attending and in whatever job they end up in."

# Ready to Roux



Starting the school year during
a global pandemic was a challenge,
but not without some fun and celebration
for our families. Starting the week before school,
each of the District's schools sponsored drive-thru events
so students and parents could pick up technology, books,
learning kits, art, music and school supplies, and more. Joe Lion,
the District's new mascot for health and wellness, made a few rock star
appearances. The events featured music and circus performers, and even a visit by
Spider-Man at Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center. Most importantly, the
events gave students the chance to visually connect with their teachers and send lots of air hugs.

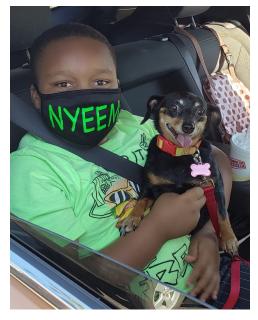












# We've Got This!















# Heart of a Lion

### THE TEACHER'S VOICE:

### Lanesha McPherson, **Brittany Woods Middle School**

Reprinted from the January edition of "The Hechinger Report," a national nonprofit independent news organization focused on inequity and innovation in education.

### How 'trauma-informed' practices are returning joy to one middle school

By LANESHA McPHERSON

Educators today hear a lot about attending to students' socialemotional needs and implementing "trauma-informed" practices.

For some, I'm sure this sounds like jargon, but that's not the case in the University City school district in Missouri, where I teach.

Here, we have embraced the goal of "humanizing" school and returning joy to our classrooms. Our district is located just six miles from Ferguson, where Michael Brown was fatally shot on August 9, 2014. That incident ignited racial tension and brought national attention to the problems of inequity and discrimination in and around St. Louis. In our district of over 2,500 students, the tensions were palpable both within and beyond our classrooms.

<mark>"By learning</mark> about and approaching our students as individuals, we learn how to tap into their strengths and reach them as learners."

Lanesha McPherson Brittany Woods Middle School Teacher

Then in 2016, Missouri launched a trauma-informed schools initiative to realize, recognize, respond to and resist the impacts of trauma. Trauma-informed practices have simple goals that are complex to achieve. But the hard work is paying off. Our district has seen the total number of student suspension days reduced by half since we started this important work. In my own classroom, I see much less off-task behavior, and I notice students taking a moment to breathe deeply when they need to

I have received training and support to bring trauma-informed practices to our school aligned with this "Missouri model." Our district is accelerating its use of restorative practices to resolve disciplinary issues and conflicts, and it offers training and support to staff members to facilitate student empowerment. Last March, our board of education passed a landmark resolution addressing student well-being and equity that guides our work.

Gary Spiller, executive director of our office of student support and innovation, describes this as building a culture of "with" — not "to" or "for" — students. As Spiller says, our work on trauma-informed practices is about creating powerful relationships in the classroom, so that students feel like they belong, have a voice and are supported to learn at higher levels.

When students come in feeling crummy, they know that someone will be there to help.

By learning about and approaching our students as individuals, we learn how to tap into their strengths and reach them as learners.

We need to remember that too often, students are told to sit and obey adults, but sometimes this is nearly impossible because they're experiencing things in their homes and neighborhoods that many adults don't face. When our goal is to teach students, the last thing we want to do is add to their stress. Instead, we need to give them the tools they need to thrive. They should want to come to school because it's a safe place where



Lanesha McPherson

concerns and successes.

connect with. For the middle-schoolers I teach, if there's something going on in their lives, focusing on science content can be hard. So I try to greet

they have trusted adults they can

students with a smile and give them a hug, an encouraging word or a fist bump — instead of asking directly what's wrong or "Why are you doing this?" Sometimes, we need to do a check-in through a restorative circle that we call "thorns and roses," where we ask students to share

When students are dealing with trauma and poverty in their lives, something as simple as not having the right binder can set a student back and prevent them from concentrating on a lesson. Instead of lecturing them about remembering their supplies, I ensure they know that a missing binder isn't the end of the world and give them one to keep them on task and feeling positive.

At my school, we strive to say four positive comments for every negative one. And this makes the infrequent less-than-positive comment easier to hear. By the way, not everyone — students or staff — has to be "warm and fuzzy" for this approach to work, because it's based on being real and being yourself. Kids always know when you are being real and when they can trust you.

Of course, teachers can't be flexible, positive and supportive without feeling supported themselves. In University City, there are classes for educators in yoga, meditation and wellness so that we can deal with the stress that comes with the work we do. Our community partner, Alive and Well Communities — with support from the Every School Healthy campaign of America's Promise Alliance — helps with ongoing coaching, working with school-level teams, while supporting us and sharing knowledge.

Through this, I've learned much more about how the human brain responds to trauma, and how learning can be affected by trauma. As teachers, let's all send a message that we are interested in these young people as human beings, and that school can be a positive place. It can be as simple as taking a few moments to ask a student about a favorite outfit or game, or even asking what a student did over the weekend. With adults in their corner, students and their brains can shift from survival mode to feeling safe and calm so they can settle in and learn.



Includes 15 meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner)

per week for U. City Schools students only

### **Legal Notices for School Families**

The following policies and information important for families are available in parent/student handbooks as well as the District website at www.ucityschools.org/LegalNotices. Please take time to read them. If you have any questions, please contact the office of Communications at (314) 290-4001 or email communications@ucityschools.org.

- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on Dec. 10, 2015, to replace the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002. ESSA was enacted to ensure educational equity and ultimately, to close the achievement gap. It maintains that all children, no matter where they live, what income level, what type of family unit or what challenges they have all are entitled to a quality education. ESSA includes:
  - **Title I.A:** Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
  - **Title II:** Preparing, Training and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders
  - **Title III:** Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students
  - Title IV.A: 21st Century Schools

All are federal programs under ESSA aimed at closing the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility and choice. More details including ESSA's Parents Right to Know letter and Complaint Procedures are available at www.ucityschools.org/LegalNotices. Any additional questions should be directed to Rebecca Soriano at (314) 290-4020 or via email at rsoriano@ucityschools.org.

- **ADA accommodations:** The School District of University City wants all students, parents, staff and community members to be able to attend and enjoy District events, meetings and activities. For special assistance or accommodations to participate, contact the office of Operations at (314) 290-4044.
- English Language Learners are offered appropriate instructional services and content modifications, as needed based on assessments.
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): Parents/ guardians and students who are at least 18 years of age have rights regarding education records. FERPA explains these rights and offers a process to file complaints if those rights are violated.
- **Students In Foster Care:** The School District of University City is committed to the identification, support and enrollment of foster care students living within the District. For more information, contact Gary Spiller at (314) 290-4045.
- The McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Act protects the rights of school-aged children of homeless and migrant workers. The executive director of Student Services serves as the link between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers and social service providers. For more information, contact the District's homeless liaison, Gary Spiller, at (314) 290-4045.
- **Notice of Non-Discrimination** is printed on the back cover of all issues of PRIDE as well as other school and District publications.
- Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes and certain physical exams.
- Senate Bill 319 calls for early reading assessments, reading improvement plans and student retention.
- **Students with Disabilities** are offered services in partnership with the Special School District of St. Louis County to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, with disabilities, under the District's jurisdiction.

### **School Closing Procedures**

When inclement weather or other emergency conditions exist, the health and safety of students and staff is the most important consideration. District administrators may decide to close school for the entire District or specific buildings, open schools on a late start schedule or dismiss early. The decision is usually made by 5 a.m., and notifications may begin as early as 5:30 a.m. through the District's automated phone and email system based on current contact information in Tyler SISK12 Parent Portal. Closings are also posted on the District website at www.ucityschools. org, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which are also streamed through the District app and local television and radio stations.

Parent contact information may be updated in the family's Tyler SISK12 Parent Portal account throughout the school year.

Days missed because of school closures are typically made up at the end of the school year as needed.

# The School District of University City Leaders Who to Contact

Board of Education
(See page 3 for names and offices of school board directors along with their school-liaison assignments)
8136 Groby Road, 63130314-290-4002
<u>District Administrators</u>
Sharonica L. Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR
Superintendent of Schools 8136 Groby Road, 63130314-290-4002
Ian P. Buchanan, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent
Curriculum and Instructional Services314-290-4020
Mark Basi, Director, Technology Solutions 314-290-4078 Elizabeth Gardner, Director, Instruction 314-290-4017
Kashina Bell, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent People and General Administration314-290-4021
Scott Hafertepe, Chief Financial Officer
Business and Finance
Gene Kieczykowski (Transpar), Director Transportation
Dereon Hill (Chartwells), Director
Food & Nutrition314-290-4068
Karl Scheidt, Executive Director, Operations 314-290-4044
Gary L. Spiller, II, Executive Director Student Services and Innovation
Nancy Cambria, Director, Community Relations 314-290-4001
Debbie Chase, Director, Development 314-290-4001
Ayinda Wayne (FantasTechs), Senior IT Manager314-290-4014
University City Alumni Association314-290-4126
University City Education Foundation 314-290-4037
School Administrators
Crystal Cauley, Principal,
Crystal Cauley, Principal, Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center
Crystal Cauley, Principal, Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center 737 Kingsland Ave., 63130
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University City Board of Education | The School District of University City

Lisa Brenner, Ph.D., Vice President Kristine Hendrix, President

George Lenard, Director

Traci Moore, Director

Joanne Soudah, Director

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Dated Material. Distribute as soon as possible. Sharonica L. Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR Superintendent of Schools

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT of UNIVERSITY CITY 8136 Groby Road University City, MO 63130

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A publication for and about The School District of University City, Missour

Transform the Life of Every Student Every Day!

# Join Us This Fall in Virtual Parent Cafés and Superintendent Chats

Cafés focus on specific topics and are conducted by staff and administrators. This fall, special sessions are planned during a global pandemic, The School District of University City hosts regular Zoom with the Superintendent and racial equity in schools. See the fliers below for the full schedules and links to register for each event. We hope to webinars when a high number of guests are anticipated. Zoom with the Superintendent meetings enable parents Parent Café sessions via Zoom. The meetings are typically in a Zoom meeting format, but sometimes are held as and staff to get updates from and to ask questions directly to Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley. Parent on district wellness resources for children and families, mindfulness and a talk presented by Hardin-Bartley on As part of its continued pledge to communicate and connect regularly with parents, staff and the community "see" you there.

Social Distal



Wed., Sept. 9 Wellness of a Lion

Wed., Sept. 23 Practice Mindfulness with Joanie Terrizz Thurs., Oct. 8 Sharonica Hardin-Bartley presents: of the Head and the Heart The Intersectionality Heavy is the Heart:

in Education

For more information regarding these sessions, visit www.ucityschools.org/Cafe2020. Register at ucityschools.org/CafeRegistration for Zoom Link & Instructions

Meetings will be archived at ucityschools.org/Cafe2020

Welcome! We have the Health and Heart of a Lion.

Community Resources: A full page of area supports for U. City families And More: Stories about scholarship, learning, resilience, resolve

 Grab & Go Delivers: More than 375,000 meals served to families Health of a Lion: A safe, gradual and kind 2020-21 school year

Meet Joe Lion: Our ambassador for wellness Graduation 2020: Nothing can stop U Time!

This Issue's Highlights:

Juneteenth Celebration Goes Virtual

