

# INSIDE



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUMMER 2024



> Updates from  
Superintendent  
Dr. Michael Schumacher

> Strategic Plan Updated

> All In for Shawnee  
Mission Achievement!

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ON THE COVER: Ashlee Cruz Ayala, a member of the Class of 2024, celebrates at Shawnee Mission North High School's commencement.

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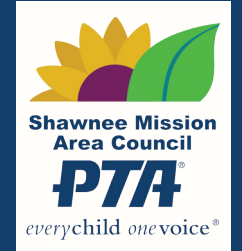
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**INSIDE**  
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# Schu's News

Updates from Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher

Hello Shawnee Mission! I am honored to officially begin serving as Superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District in the 2024-2025 school year. Shawnee Mission is an incredible community. I see it as a shining example of the unlimited possibilities that exist when dedicated people work together to serve the needs of students. As we begin this new year, I'm grateful our community has provided a clear road map for our work through the Strategic Plan. You can read more about the plan on pages 8 and 9. I'm thrilled to begin this work alongside a phenomenal leadership team. You will get to know some of the individuals joining this team and learn about how they will support our schools on page 6. I promise to be all in as we work together to serve the students and staff of Shawnee Mission.



Dr. Michael Schumacher

## ALL IN

Having served in Shawnee Mission for nearly a decade, I continue to be inspired by the commitment of students, families, educators, and community members. All of us work together to support student success. It is this dedication that has inspired our theme for the 2024-2025 school year. As we begin a new year, we continue to be ONE Shawnee Mission and we are ALL IN! Whether we are facing challenges head-on, working tirelessly to ensure students and staff feel a sense of belonging, or helping students achieve their personal best, I know we will be ALL IN.



## WIGS

I encourage everyone to join us in being ALL IN on supporting the Shawnee Mission School District's Wildly Important Goals (WIGS). As a district and as individual school communities, we took time this past school year to identify specific goals that will be areas of focus. These goals support the work of our Strategic Plan and our objectives for student success. Even in the early part of this process, I am encouraged by the gains we are seeing, especially among our youngest students. We're seeing progress especially as we all work to address chronic absenteeism and early literacy and math measures. As a district we'll be focused on Wildly Important Goals related to increasing student achievement and performance and improving the social and emotional wellbeing of students by focusing on motivation, attendance, and an overall plan for success. I am proud of what this district continues to accomplish. I invite everyone to find out more about recent achievements on Page 10.

## Read Across SMSD

We're looking forward to kicking off another season of Read Across SMSD. This district-wide celebration of books encourages reading for all ages. Each month, Shawnee Mission shares learning resources and kicks off a monthly theme for our community. Read Across SMSD honors our district Strategic Plan belief that our community's strength is derived from its diversity. We are proud to offer this opportunity in partnership with NEA-Shawnee Mission and are grateful that the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation provides access to Read Across SMSD books at each Shawnee Mission school. Watch for a new season on [www.smsd.org](http://www.smsd.org). Let's Read Across SMSD!



## Shawnee Mission Mic'd Up

I am looking forward to kicking off season 2 of Shawnee Mission Mic'd Up, the Shawnee Mission School District podcast. The first season was a tremendous success cohosted by Dr. Michelle Hubbard and Dr. Jeremy Higgins; I'm thrilled to co-host new episodes with Dr. Brittany Gonser, director of professional learning. The podcast will continue to be a great opportunity to meet our community and find out more about the students and staff who make us ONE Shawnee Mission and who are ALL IN for student success. You'll be able to download and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. Watch for a new season to begin this August on [www.smsd.org](http://www.smsd.org).



## Fall Breakfast

There are so many events I'm looking forward to as we begin a new year. One I am especially excited about is the annual Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Fall Breakfast. This is always such a fun celebration for our entire community. Our students and staff take center stage, and it is always an inspiring time to hear how the Foundation is



providing opportunities across the SMSD. I also am honored to be taking some time to speak with our community about our incredible district. The Fall Breakfast will be held the morning of Wednesday, October 9 at the Overland Park Convention Center. I invite you to visit [www.smef.org/breakfast24](http://www.smef.org/breakfast24) for more information. 📌

# Spotlight on Executive Team Members

The Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) has undergone an exciting leadership change, effective July 1. With Dr. Michael Schumacher beginning his term as superintendent, three key positions within the Executive Leadership Team have been filled.

The Executive Leadership Team, a group of administrators reporting directly to the superintendent, is responsible for making high-level decisions and guiding the district's overall direction.



## Dr. David Stubblefield - Deputy Superintendent

Dr. David Stubblefield, formerly the associate superintendent of leadership and learning, has been named deputy superintendent. In his new role, Dr. Stubblefield will focus on supporting initiatives in the strategic plan and overseeing bond-funded projects.

Stubblefield has served as the associate superintendent of leadership and learning in SMSD since 2021. He began his professional career teaching biology at Center High School in Kansas City, Missouri. Dr. Stubblefield then taught at Blue Valley North and Blue Valley Northwest high schools. His administrative career includes roles as an administrative intern at Blue Valley Northwest, assistant principal of activities at Blue Valley West, assistant principal of curriculum and instruction at Blue Valley Northwest, principal of Blue Valley North, and executive director of school administration for the Blue Valley School District.

"I look forward to serving the Shawnee Mission School District and community in this new role," shared Stubblefield. "I'm excited for the opportunity to collaborate with our dedicated educators, staff, and families and continue to provide a world-class education for our students."



## Dr. Jeremy Higgins - Associate Superintendent of Human Resources

Dr. Jeremy Higgins, who has served as the director of secondary human resources for SMSD since 2021, has transitioned into the role of associate superintendent of human resources.

Dr. Higgins began his career in SMSD in 2006 as a chemistry teacher, and later accepted roles as a teacher on assignment, athletic director, associate principal at both Shawnee Mission East and Shawnee Mission West, and principal of Shawnee Mission North.

"I am honored to step into the role of associate superintendent of human resources and continue my journey with SMSD," said Dr. Higgins. "I believe our people and our culture are our greatest strengths, and I am committed to cultivating an environment where everyone can thrive, both personally and professionally."



## Pam Lewis - Associate Superintendent of Leadership and Learning

Pam Lewis has been appointed as the associate superintendent of leadership and learning. With her extensive career in education and proven leadership abilities, Lewis is a valuable addition to the executive leadership team.

Lewis has held several leadership roles in SMSD, including director of elementary human resources since 2021 and director of elementary services from 2015 to 2021. She began her career as an elementary school teacher in the Basehor-Linwood school district. Her administrative experience also includes tenures as principal at Apache Innovative School, Ray Marsh Elementary, Crestview Elementary, and Basehor Elementary.

"I am honored and excited to lead our Leadership and Learning team and to serve our Shawnee Mission students, staff, and community. I look forward to working with the team to provide curriculum resources and the best professional learning to build the capacity of our staff to successfully prepare our students and increase student achievement," shared Lewis. ♦



## SMSD Pre-K Educator Is Teacher of the Year Finalist

Like many students and family members on the first day of school, Angela Armendariz was nervous as her daughter started Pre-Kindergarten. But it didn't take long for that feeling to change. She credits Amber Pagan, Pre-K teacher at Nieman Elementary, with making the difference.

"She was honestly one of the best teachers I've had an experience with," Armendariz said. "I hope she knows how much parents appreciate her. She really deserves recognition."

Pagan is indeed receiving recognition for her outstanding work. She is a Region 3 finalist for the 2025 Kansas Teacher of the Year program. This statewide honor recognizes excellent teaching in elementary and secondary classrooms in the state of Kansas.

Armendariz said she saw that excellence at work through all of the progress her daughter made in her

Pre-K class. Laylani Armendariz is an English language learner and by the end of the year, her English and speaking skills had greatly strengthened. She was able to count to 100, knew her colors and shapes, and grew to know not only what was expected of her, but also that school can be fun.

"Pagan's patience and understanding made everybody feel included," Armendariz expressed. "I think that made school easier for her students."

Pagan completed her 18th year of teaching in the 2023-2024 school year. She holds endorsements in Early Childhood Education, English for Speakers of other languages, and reading. She serves as an advocate and works to promote public school education throughout the community. She is passionate about early childhood education and each opportunity she has to ensure caregivers have the tools they need to help their children.

Visitors to Pagan's classroom will often see Pagan on the floor, at the children's level, whether she is providing instruction or engaging learners during intentional play. Dr. Leigh Anne Neal, chief of early childhood and sustainability described.

"Ms. Pagan meets students where they are and designs opportunities for every student to succeed and achieve in an environment that is caring and positive," Neal illustrated.

Pagan is now eligible to be named Kansas Teacher of the Year, which will be announced during a ceremony in September. The Kansas Teacher of the Year is eligible to be selected as National Teacher of the Year.

Annie Hasan, Arabic Teacher at Shawnee Mission South, was honored by the state of Kansas and represented the Shawnee Mission School District in the Kansas Teacher of the Year Program at the secondary level. ♦

# Strategic Plan Updated

Community Reaffirms Commitment to Helping Every Student Achieve their Personal Best



Members of the Facilities Action Team hold their first meeting.

The Shawnee Mission School District has updated its Strategic Plan. This plan, developed by the community and approved by the Board of Education on June 24, 2024, will serve the district through 2029.



Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher thanked the hundreds of individuals, including staff, parents, students, and community members who put this plan together.

“It is truly our plan,” he emphasized. “This is the entire community’s plan, bigger and more important than any one of us. It will be the primary responsibility for me and my administrative team to execute these action steps and to publicly report out to the community our progress. This will be our roadmap for success over the next five years.”

## The Success of Cycle I

This plan represents a second cycle of Strategic Plan adoption for the Shawnee Mission School District. Cycle 1 was adopted in 2019 and has served the district for five years. This Strategic Plan guided work that led to numerous accomplishments for students and staff across the district. Cycle 1 advanced diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to help create a sense of belonging for every student, marked the creation of Professional Learning Communities, and saw the rebuilding of five elementary schools.

Strategy 3 outlined that the district would “create the climate to cultivate quality educators so they can flourish in pursuit of the district’s mission.”

This work positively impacted Tatiana Briceno's time as a beginning math teacher at Shawnee Mission Northwest.

“Usually I hear that first year teachers are going to struggle, it will be tough, you will struggle with the parents, but during my first year I thought ‘This is great and I hope every year is like this,’” Briceno reflected.

Aaron Dean, SM South science teacher and soccer head coach, served on a committee that helped

efforts to move secondary teacher’s schedules from six to five periods a day. This change has resulted in a huge, positive change that helps him better support student achievement. More regularly, he is able to meet with each student to talk about their individual progress in meeting academic standards.

“If there are only five classes you are teaching, it allows you to have a deeper, personal connection,” he added.

## Process for Cycle II

Months of collaborative work led up to the final approval by the Board of Education.

A Strategic Plan Steering Committee, made of 31 representative community members, held a workshop in February. They reviewed district information and community input provided through ThoughtExchange. They also reviewed, discussed, and affirmed the mission, vision, beliefs, and parameters to include in Strategic Plan Cycle II. Finally, they developed strategies to guide the work for Cycle II.

While serving on this committee, Oreofeoluwa Oni, Shawnee Mission North student, shared that members made it clear they liked to hear everyone’s opinion.

“In big groups, sometimes you get overlooked, but not in this group,” Oni reflected. “Everyone’s voice is heard.”

Next, Action Teams met to develop action steps for each strategy and costs associated with the plans. On June 6, the Steering Committee met to hear the work of the Action Teams and finalize the Strategic Plan draft to forward to the Superintendent. The Board approved the Strategic Plan on June 24.

## STRATEGY 1: Learning

We will ensure meaningful and personalized learning experiences for all students.



## STRATEGY 2: Belonging

We will intentionally strengthen our unified, equitable, inclusive culture to ensure belonging for all.



## STRATEGY 3: People

We will enhance our community-centered environment to recruit and retain diverse and exemplary educators, staff, and families by being the best place to learn, work, and connect.



## STRATEGY 4: Technology

We will ensure the intentional and innovative use of relevant technology throughout the district to achieve our mission.



## STRATEGY 5: Mental Health

We will foster an environment that supports the mental, social, and emotional well-being of the entire SMSD learning community, including physical well-being.



## STRATEGY 6: Facilities

We will strategically focus resources to support state-of-the-art facilities to accomplish our beliefs, mission, and objectives.



## Strategies and Objectives

With Cycle II, Shawnee Mission’s work continues. This second cycle of the Strategic Plan reaffirmed the district’s Cycle I objective that each student will have a personal learning plan that prepares them for college and career with the interpersonal skills they need for life success. This work will be supported by six defined strategies outlined by the community. See the strategies outlined on the left side of this page.

## Next Steps

The Shawnee Mission School District has already begun its work implementing this Strategic Plan. In the coming months, Dr. Schumacher encourages community members to continue to be engaged in the process. He anticipates there will be opportunities for members of the community to provide feedback in the future and implementation will also require assistance from volunteers. Updates will be provided to the Board of Education, with the first planned for October.

For more information and updates on Strategic Plan implementation, visit [www.smsd.org/about/strategic-plan-2024-2029](http://www.smsd.org/about/strategic-plan-2024-2029).

Community member Wanda Vaughn, who served on the previous Cycle I Strategic Plan Steering Committee and the Cycle II Steering Committee, reflected on how the district uses the plan to guide its work.

“Everything goes back to the Strategic Plan,” Vaughn shared. “This is not a plan that sits on the shelf, but is a plan that the district actually works with and uses. I’m very impressed with that.”



Action Team members hold introductions during their first meeting.



# All In

FOR SHAWNEE MISSION ACHIEVEMENT!

## NATIONALLY RANKED

SM East, SM North, SM Northwest, SM South, and SM West are all ranked on the U.S. News and World Report list of Best High Schools in the United States. Shawnee Mission East was ranked #3 in the state of Kansas.



## AMAZING ATHLETES

Shawnee Mission athletes earned 18 state championship team and individual titles. More than 4,787 students engaged in sports in the 2023-2024 school year, including participants in the newly introduced middle school soccer program. In fall 2024, Shawnee Mission will offer middle school football to students.



## MVAs=REAL WORLD SUCCESS

SMSD aims for every student to complete a resume-worthy achievement, known as a Market Value Asset (MVA), by 2030.

- Work Experiences (Internships and Client-Connected Projects)
- Entrepreneurial Experiences
- Industry-Recognized Credentials
- Dual-College Credit



### 2 BLUE STAR AWARD WINNERS

Awarded by Starlight Theatre Kansas City, the Blue Star Awards recognize achievement and excellence in musical theater among area high school students.

### RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

Comanche Elementary and Shawanoe Elementary were named Challenge Award winners by the Kansas State Department of Education.



## TALENTED MUSICIANS

182 students selected to perform with District bands, choirs, and orchestras  
53 students selected to perform in All-State ensembles.



## TOP HONORS

Shawnee Mission North Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) competed at National Competition, earning first place in Armed Regulation Drill, Push Ups, and Color Guard. The Corps concluded the season with a record of 94-5.



# SMSD STRONG

Strong Schools, Strong Community



Left: Students and families break ground at the Tomahawk Elementary Groundbreaking. Right: A rendering of the new Indian Hills addition. Below: Students play on inclusive playground equipment.



Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) is busy with construction activity this summer, thanks to the community-approved bond referendum from January 2021.

### Elementary School Rebuilds

The bond has funded the rebuilding of five elementary schools, with the final two projects currently underway. Rushton Elementary is slated to open in August 2024. Following that, Tomahawk Elementary will welcome students in the fall of 2025. These new buildings are designed to offer state-of-the-art educational spaces that align with the district's strategic goal to be ranked among the finest school districts in the nation, employing exceptional educators where all learners achieve their full potential.

### Building Additions and Renovations

Two significant construction projects are also underway this summer:

- **Shawnee Mission West:** A two-story addition is being built on the north side. The new space will house a new weight room, new athletic training facility, and a renovated wrestling room. Additionally, the project includes restroom renovations.

The addition is expected to be ready by the second semester of the 2024-25 school year.

### Indian Hills Middle School:

- A large classroom and collaboration space is being added to the south side of the building. This new addition will include individual conference and breakout rooms, providing flexible spaces for students and staff. Restroom upgrades are also part of this project.

### Infrastructure Upgrades

Beyond these major projects, the district is investing in various infrastructure improvements to enhance the overall school environment:

- **HVAC Upgrades:** Several schools, including SM North, SM Northwest, SM West, Brookridge, Prairie, and Mill Creek, are receiving HVAC upgrades.
- **Asphalt Improvements:** These include mill and overlay projects at Brookridge, Highlands, Shawanoe, Benninghoven, SM North, and SM West. Sealcoating work will be done at Brookwood, Crestview,



Lenexa Hills, and SM Northwest. Approximately 55 additional parking spaces have been added at the Center for Academic Achievement.

- **Roofing Upgrades:** SM North, SM South, and SM East high schools will undergo significant roofing work.

### Inclusive Playgrounds

This summer also marks the completion of the district's initiative to install inclusive playgrounds at all elementary schools. Apache, Merriam Park, Ray Marsh, and Shawanoe will all see these updates, providing accessible and engaging play areas for all students.



Shauna Hammett, Kindergarten teacher at Apache Elementary, leads students in a reading lesson.

# LETRS Supports Reading Education

*Teachers Commit to Additional Training to Boost Student Literacy*

Caitlin Perkins describes the first time she saw her son Nick learn how to read as a “magic moment.” Throughout his kindergarten year at Apache Elementary School, he would bring home reading exercises from Shauna Hammett’s classroom. Finally, one day after dinner, he picked them up and started to read them.

“To see how proud he was of himself, filled us with pride,” Perkins expressed. “It was like something clicked. We didn’t necessarily see all of those pieces falling into place, but they were there!”

While Perkins did not see those pieces, Hammett did every day in the classroom. There, she used a variety of techniques to personalize the experience for Nick and every beginning reader in the room.

“Every student is unique in the way that they learn,” Hammett shared. “Having skills that help me make certain decisions based on what I’m seeing from students in the classroom, informed by science and research, is helpful.”

Hammett will soon enter her 20th

year of teaching in the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) and she credits one training with lifting the bar of expectations for her students even higher. She completed the Lexia’s Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). According to Lexia, this professional development can take over 160 hours to complete. It includes face-to-face training over two years and additional coursework.

So far, hundreds of SMSD educators have completed this voluntary training, with hundreds anticipated to enroll over the next couple of years. The Kansas State Board of Education has provided statewide access to LETRS training, and has extended funding into 2026.

This training has teachers going above and beyond, according to Krista Carson, elementary coordinator for English Language Arts and social studies.

“It is an honor to work beside these educators and know they have that commitment to strengthening literacy instruction,” Carson expressed.

There are numerous resources and

skills SMSD teachers bring to the table, and the excitement around this opportunity for teachers has been contagious, expressed Pam Lewis, associate superintendent of leadership and learning.

Shawnee Mission already has a robust team of educators from across the district developing curriculum guides aligned with state standards, collaborating in Professional Learning Communities, and using a variety of resources and interventions to personalize learning for each student. Several teachers have expressed to Lewis that LETRS is the best training they have ever received and were able to implement what they learned in the classroom.

“Learning to read and reading to learn doesn’t happen by chance,” she emphasized. “It takes knowledgeable and skilled teachers working in collaboration to provide effective instruction and assess student progress. As a district it is our responsibility to provide the resources and training our teachers need to serve all students.”

## Meeting Students Where They Are

Some methods for teaching reading have traditionally focused heavily on a specific skill, like phonics or vocabulary. LETRS, however, focuses on familiarizing students with a broad variety of foundational skills and strengthening those skills. Lexia notes it “teaches phonological awareness (understanding of how to work with and speak word sounds) and phonics (relationships between written letters and spoken sounds).” It also builds foundational skill in “fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and written language.”

LETRS is also touted for being based in “the science of reading,” or methods that research and evidence show have been successful for literacy development.

Reflecting on her more than 40 years of teaching, Linda James has noticed that sometimes techniques for teaching reading have followed national trends. She remembers when phonics teaching was emphasized heavily, and then a time when opponents said phonics had too much emphasis.

“LETRS, however, provides a balance between phonics, comprehension, writing, and all foundational skills,” James, a Bluejacket-Flint teacher, explains. “To become a well-rounded reader, we have to have all of these skills.”

LETRS better prepares teachers to meet students where they are, as outlined in the district’s Strategic Plan, explained Kristin Ridgway, secondary coordinator of English Language Arts and social studies.

“Understanding how learning to read works gives us more tools to help

students when they start to struggle, and it helps us make sure students become readers for life,” Ridgway added.

That knowledge is so helpful, the SMSD has expanded the training opportunities to middle and high school (secondary) educators. Secondary teachers have traditionally received specialized training to teach students ready for high-level reading and literary arts, but not every student in the classroom reads at the same level, Ridgway explained.

“It can be very upsetting to realize as an English teacher that a student is struggling with reading,” Ridgway added. “LETRS is giving them greater insight for how to support those students, even in upper grades.”

Linda James shares that LETRS has strengthened her ability to meet students where they are at the elementary level. While she used to spend additional time with students who found reading difficult, she now has a better ability to understand what is causing the challenge and address it.

“I can ask ‘Is it a comprehension issue? Is it phonemic awareness?’” she explains. “Finding what students are good at and building upon that also helps a lot.”

## LETRS in Action in the Classroom

Rising Star Elementary fourth-grade teacher Hayley Prueter “immediately jumped” on the LETRS opportunity. She said she is better able to help students gain a deeper understanding of how they are learning to read. She recalls times, before training, that she didn’t always have a complete

explanation for why certain English words were spelled or pronounced in a certain way. Now, she and her students will take time to understand word origins as they practice.

“Knowing that background

on words helps them understand it and remember it better rather than just thinking the reason is ‘Because the teacher says so,’” Prueter observed.

“They have developed a lot of independence with their spelling and their reading.”

Visitors in Hammett’s classroom will also see a variety of methods at work. Students will go from rapping the ABCs to identifying letters out loud, to reading, writing, and spelling exercises with wipe-off boards and flash cards. They may even find students going through an obstacle course, built throughout their classroom, where they sound out letters aloud through the process.

These exercises are important, especially in Kindergarten, because having strong, foundational skill in reading is important for learning in all areas, Shauna Hammett noted.

“Reading is king in all subjects,” Hammett shares. “If we’re a strong reader, it unlocks our ability to focus more on the concept instead of struggling. Having that strong foundation and competence is a gift that will last a lifetime.”

Since Nick Perkins has learned how to read, Caitlin says the family has been checking out lots of books and he is reading to the family after dinner. Caitlin shares that learning to read for her was a struggle. She remembers when she learned to read, teachers often said “just sound it out” and it was difficult. Now, she will see her child working through methods he was taught in class.

“Because of how Nick has been taught, he can look at groupings of letters and know the sound that goes with it,” Perkins shared. “It has been really impressive.”

Last year, Francesca Noravong was in Linda James’s class. She recalls when she started to learn, she expected reading to be hard. Now, her favorite book is “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.” Additional work on vocabulary helped her grow as a reader.

“I like it because I get to know the word and then I get to understand the story more,” Noravong shared. “I thought reading wouldn’t be my favorite subject, but now it is.”



# Gaining Real World Experience

Joy Partin, an incoming senior at Shawnee Mission West High School, has spent the past year gaining real world experience through an internship with the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation.

Read the Q&A below to learn how Partin's high school internship experience is setting her up for future success.

## How did you first learn about the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation?

I was invited to participate in the Leadership Shawnee Mission program the summer before my junior year. One Monday morning last summer, I came into the Center for Academic Achievement excited and ready to start 10 days of learning all about leadership. I learned about leadership, but it also just became so much more.

## What inspired you to pursue this internship opportunity?

In the fall, they [the Foundation] reached out to our Leadership class and mentioned they were looking for an intern. I thought that an internship could be something awesome because I knew I loved the people in the Foundation and I knew I loved the work they are doing. I wanted to see if I could be a part of it. So, I applied and got an interview. Then a week later I got the call back letting me know I was in!

## What is a typical day like for you as an intern at the Foundation?

With the block scheduling, my hours at the internship vary; sometimes I'm there in the morning, and other times in the afternoon. In the mornings, my tasks usually involve designing projects in Canva, organizing advertisements, or handling tasks such as folding and mailing envelopes.

In the afternoons, my work is more interactive. I discuss my ongoing projects with the team, gather feedback, and plan for the week ahead. This part of the day is enjoyable because it involves more communication and collaboration with people. It's been really fun.

## What are the most valuable skills that you think you're learning and that you'll take with you from this experience?

I've mastered using the large printer, which took me about eight tries to get the hang of. I've also grown to understand the importance of working with people. Collaboration makes tasks easier, more enjoyable, and more fulfilling. Time management is another skill I've developed. Procrastination



does get the best of me sometimes, but I've learned to set aside distractions like my phone. This helps me balance my responsibilities better.

I've also come to appreciate the long-term value of my activities. My internship is something I love now and will be proud of in the future. The things I'm doing now have purpose and will have lasting benefits.

## What's next for you, Joy?

Senior year! Literally, senior year and also starting to figure out where I want to go to college. I want to be an elementary teacher, and next year I get to do a teacher education class where I shadow a teacher and maybe teach a lesson or two. So, more real world learning and then choosing where I want to go. That's what's next. I'm really excited!

To help provide more students with enriching real-world learning experiences like Joy's, please consider making a donation to the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation at [www.smef.org](http://www.smef.org) or call (913) 993-9360. ♦

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