

CONNECTION

WINTER EDITION | ISSUE NO. 22

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Park Hill School District

PARK HILL CONNECTION GOES TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD IN THE PARK HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.

On the cover: Plaza Middle School



Straight from the Superintendent

This fall we've been working through a community engagement process to help balance enrollment as we redistrict some of our elementary and middle school students due to the addition of our newest elementary school. Next year, Park Hill School District will open Angeline Washington Elementary, the district's 12th elementary school.

With 12 elementary schools and four middle schools, we've been working to establish new boundaries that create a "direct feeder" model in which three elementary schools will go to one middle school. The balanced enrollments at Congress and Plaza Middle Schools will feed Park Hill High School and balanced enrollments at Lakeview and Walden Middle Schools will feed Park Hill South High School.

We've had over 5,000 pieces of information gathered

through ideas, comments, likes and questions answered during our online and in-person engagement sessions. And we appreciate each of these conversations – it's clear that our families and staff love our schools.

In this edition of the *Connection* magazine, you'll learn more about Restorative Practices – a proactive approach to building a positive school community by emphasizing relationships, communication and accountability. Instead of relying solely on traditional disciplinary measures like suspensions or detentions, Restorative Practices focuses on repairing harm and restoring relationships when conflicts arise. Through open dialogue, students and staff can explore the root causes of behavior, understand the impact of their actions and collaborate on ways to make things right.

We want to always make things right in Park Hill. Whether it's through enrollment balance or emphasizing relationships and communication, our goal is to build successful futures for students of all backgrounds.

Thank you for being part of our community supporting successful futures for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J Kimbrel".

Dr. Mike Kimbrel
Superintendent

Welcome to the *Connection*!

Connection is a publication of the Park Hill School District, distributed quarterly, without charge, to patrons within the Park Hill School District boundaries.

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SCHOOL SNAPSHOTS:

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WALDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL



Building Stronger School Communities Through Restorative Practices

Cohort One schools lead the way in Park Hill's Restorative Practices rollout

The Park Hill School District is adopting restorative practices (RP) to continue creating a safe, inclusive environment where students and staff feel heard and valued. By encouraging responsibility, empathy and collaboration, RP helps create community, work through conflicts, strengthens our school culture and repair harm where it occurs. Or to put it another way, positive changes are more likely to occur when those in authority or people who influence us work with us instead of doing things to or for us.

Aligning with Our Vision

Belonging is a key component of our Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). To build successful futures for Park Hill students of all backgrounds, it is essential to foster an environment where every student, staff member and community member feels a sense of belonging. Building a strong community for all is the cornerstone of restorative practices.

Restorative practices are deeply embedded in our district's goals, including our CSIP and Access and Inclusion work. It is specifically called out in our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Drivers and Narratives.

CULTURE

Create an environment where all students, staff, and members of the Park Hill Community feel a sense of belonging.

Our CSIP Culture area emphasizes a comprehensive approach to building relationships and community, as well as repairing harm through restorative practices. Restorative practices are also featured in our DEIB Drivers and Narratives:

- **Expect Accountability:** We will foster a culture of accountability by using restorative practices to repair harm, engage in difficult conversations, and learn from our mistakes.
- **Engage in Purposeful Learning:** We will participate in meaningful learning and discussions, measure our progress, and support each other in building a more inclusive Park Hill community.

Our DEIB Glossary of Terms defines restorative practices as a social science focused on strengthening relationships between individuals and social connections within communities. When inappropriate behavior occurs, people are empowered to make things right through natural consequences. However, before harm can be repaired, a strong community must be established — one that is worth restoring.

Our Implementation Plan

Restorative practices is being rolled out district-wide in Park Hill. We began our RP work during the 2023-2024 school year with learning, design and readiness activities, including community learning sessions that are available on our Access and Inclusion webpage. We will have three cohorts of schools move through the RP model. Teachers and staff in each of these cohorts receive ongoing coaching and training.

“ Our DEIB Glossary of Terms defines Restorative Practices as a social science focused on strengthening relationships between individuals and social connections within communities. ”

In our first cohort of schools, students, teachers and staff are currently participating in circles, a core restorative practice strategy. Circles provide a structured approach to intentional relationship building, benefiting both students and adults.

“The circle is something that we use because it’s so important to show the kids we can talk through things and not have to resort to other forms of confrontation,” Tessa Sipp, fourth grade teacher at Renner Elementary, said.



Restorative Practices Are For Everyone

While students are at the heart of every school district, restorative practices benefit everyone in our school communities. These practices help build and maintain healthy relationships across all levels, from teachers and administrators to staff and parents. When all members of the school community engage in restorative practices, we reinforce a culture of respect, accountability and shared responsibility, creating successful futures for all Park Hill students.

You can hear from a student and teacher about their experiences with restorative practices on pages five and six.



Straight From Our Staff

Melissa Burrows, special education teacher, Tiffany Ridge Elementary



PH: What does “restorative practices” mean to you?

Melissa: Restorative practices are a system and a perspective shift that focuses on building and restoring relationships among students and adults. It provides the language and activities for teachers to build safe communities within their classroom and connection throughout a school as a whole. It includes the belief that understanding perspective within a conflict is beneficial for all, and rather than punitive measures, restorative practices result in full resolution. On a deeper level, restorative practices are a way to equip our students (and ourselves) to be emotionally aware and healthy adults who can work through conflict with gentleness and understanding. It makes me super hopeful for our future!

PH: What have you learned about yourself through facilitating these conversations with students?

M: I have loved facilitating these conversations with my students since starting restorative practices this fall. Talking about feelings and conflict is something that I really enjoy, but I realized this year that I did not model it as often or effectively as I had thought. As an adult, it can sometimes feel awkward to be vulnerable with how a situation or comment made me feel when dealing with an elementary-age student. Through the use of restorative practices, I have been able to talk through my perspective with my students when harm was caused, which makes them better understand my choices, but also helps me keep more positive feelings about that student.

PH: What are your expectations for how restorative practices will change your school environment?

M: Our school environment has always been welcoming, loving and supportive, which I feel so grateful for. One of the biggest changes I have already noticed is how staff are interacting with each other thanks to our circles and reflection time on restorative practices. Work has always been an easy thing to separate from personal life, but our restorative practices initiative has allowed for the two to blend together. While we may try to detach from struggles we are going through outside of school, it absolutely impacts our work and our behaviors. The staff in my building have been able to support each other on deeper levels thanks to the safety and the culture of openness that restorative practices bring. It has made our staff a closer family.

PH: How do you think restorative circles are helping to build trust and understanding among students?

M: I see students in all grades K-5, with all different needs and backgrounds. The connection my students have built with each other through our circles has been so encouraging to see. Our conversations have gone from low-risk to medium-risk in the months where we’ve met, and my students have found so many similarities with others that they would not have known otherwise. Just as our staff has become a family, our students feel like they have a place to belong here at Tiffany Ridge. Every student will be heard, and every student will be given the space to share daily. Conflict of ideas is handled with respect, and students feel more willing to discover their own voice.

Straight From Our Students

Yara Omar, 8th grade, Congress Middle School

PH: What does “restorative practices” mean to you?

Yara: To me, restorative practices are ways to handle conflicts that focus on healing and building relationships. They emphasize understanding everyone’s feelings and viewpoints, which helps create a supportive community where people take responsibility for their actions. Using my Middle Eastern roots as an example, even though my background isn’t widely represented in our school, I appreciate how restorative practices give me a chance to share my experiences and help others learn about different perspectives, both good and bad.

PH: How do you feel when you take part in restorative circles or discussions?

Y: When I take part in restorative circles, I feel calm and included. It’s reassuring to have a safe space to share my thoughts and feelings. This openness helps me connect better with others and gives a sense of togetherness. When I share my experiences, it invites others to learn, engage and share their views, which is important for breaking down stereotypes and building genuine understanding among us. It is also very dear to my heart that Park Hill is not afraid to open their eyes to new stories and ideas to improve students and staff involvement.

PH: How do you think restorative practices can help build relationships between students and teachers?

Y: Restorative practices can strengthen relationships between students and teachers by encouraging honest communication. When teachers listen to students and involve them in finding solutions, it builds trust and respect. Using restorative practices can create chances to discuss diversity and inclusion, helping teachers appreciate the varied backgrounds of their students and fostering a more inclusive environment. It makes it so all I am focusing on is my career as a student and not my level of safety at school. Which is the way it should be.

PH: How do you think restorative practices can help you grow as a student and as a person?

Y: I believe restorative practices are essential for developing skills like empathy, responsibility and building courage to be able to resolve issues on your own through takeaways. By participating in these practices, I can reflect on my actions and their impact on others, which helps me grow as a person. Sharing my experiences through restorative practices allows me to advocate for more representation and understanding, of mine and others, in school. It encourages discussions of diversity, allowing for respect among my peers. Overall, restorative practices contribute not only to my personal growth but also to a more inclusive school.



Park Hill Celebrates Success Around our District

These are just a few of the awards and accolades Park Hill staff and students have received recently. Visit our website to catch up on the latest honors.

MASC Middle-Level Advisor of the Year for the Northwest District

We are #ParkHillProud of Walden Middle School nurse Heather Howell, who was recognized by the Missouri Association of Student Council (MASC) as the Middle-Level Advisor of the Year for the Northwest District. Howell is now in the running for state-level recognition at the MASC State Convention in May.



Trusted Learning Environment

We're #ParkHillProud of our Technology Department for having renewed its CoSN Trusted Learning Environment Seal by demonstrating the work it does every day across our district to help protect student data privacy. We are one of only 29 districts who have been able to attain this seal.

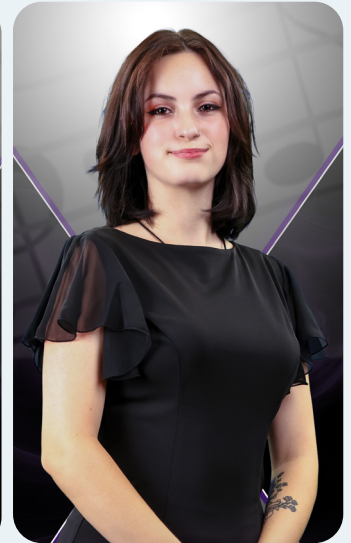
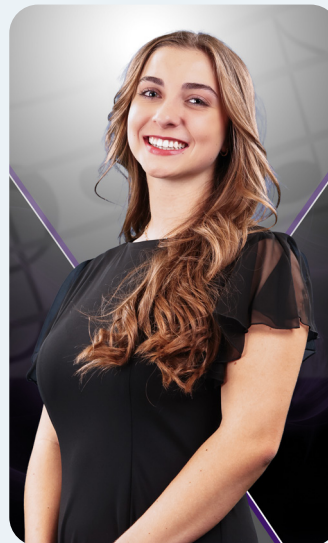


National Merit Semifinalists

We are #ParkHillProud of our seven National Merit Semifinalists. Congratulations to Park Hill High School's Tristan Erickson and Collin Peterson and Park Hill South's Gavin Fritts, Zach Hilzinger, Weston Peters, Alex Smith and Avery Swanson. Less than one percent of high school seniors were chosen as Semifinalists.

All-State Choir

Congratulations to Park Hill South seniors Lydia Ham (alto) and Artemis Kusters (soprano) on earning spots in the prestigious Missouri All-State Choir! They'll join top high school singers from across Missouri to perform at the Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) Conference in January.



Project ADAM Certified Schools

We are #ParkHillProud of our newest Project ADAM certified school, Walden Middle School!

Each certified school has a Cardiac Emergency Response Team (CERT) and has implemented emergency response drills in their buildings. We are on track to have every school Project ADAM certified by 2025.



Angeline Washington Elementary School

Opening in August 2025, Angeline Washington Elementary will be the 12th elementary school in the Park Hill School District. The Board of Education unanimously voted to name the school after Angeline Washington, honoring her resilience and dedication to education, especially as she overcame numerous barriers as a woman of color.

Excitement is building as we recently unveiled the school's mascot and colors! Meet the Angeline Washington Owls, proudly represented in purple and gold. The owl embodies a commitment to learning and excellence, symbolizing wisdom, knowledge and insight. Purple reflects creativity, individuality and ambition, while gold stands for achievement, excellence and success.



Visit our social media channels to tour the school and see how construction is progressing.



You belong here.

Build Successful futures with us.



In Park Hill School District, we believe that everyone belongs. We create an environment where all students, staff and members of the community feel valued and connected. Join us to be part of a place that creates this sense of belonging for all.

Come build successful futures with us! Apply today.



<https://www.parkhill.k12.mo.us/work-in-park-hill>



N O M I N A T E A **PARK HILL STAR**

Anyone can nominate an employee at parkhilllistens.com.

Our employees are the reason we are so successful here in the Park Hill School District, and we would like to recognize them for all they do for our students.

That is why we present the Park Hill Star award once a month to a pre-K or elementary teacher, a secondary teacher and a support employee.

Visit the district's Facebook page to see past Park Hill Star winners.



P A R K H I L L **HALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS**

Visit parkhilllistens.com to nominate someone today.

Each January, the Park Hill School District inducts three alumni into the Alumni Hall of Fame. This award honors those district graduates whose lives and careers are models of achievement and community service.

Do you know an alumnus or alumna who deserves to be in the Park Hill Alumni Hall of Fame? The nominee must be a graduate of Park Hill High School or Park Hill South High School who graduated five or more years ago. We accept posthumous nominations. The nomination form is open year-round.



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The Big Biscuit advertisement features a collage of images: a woman holding a drink, a close-up of a biscuit, a woman eating, a child eating, and a large biscuit with a strawberry. The text 'The Big Biscuit' is in a large, red, stylized font. Below it, the address '6332 NW BARRY RD' is written. A QR code is present with a red arrow pointing to it, and the text 'SCAN FOR OUR BIG MENU' is at the bottom.



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Park Hill Highlight

Park Hill High School science teacher Jen Damti was quite surprised when the Chiefs, in partnership with HyVee, awarded her with the VIP Locker Club Experience. Nominated by a fellow teacher for always wanting what is best for her students, Jen is known for her innovative lesson plans and her knack for breaking down tough concepts. She was selected from more than 2,500 nominees and got to attend the Chiefs vs. Broncos game on Nov. 10.

For more moments like this, be sure to follow our social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X) and YouTube.

