

AROUND

FALL 2024



THE MILL



HMC-1 Relentlessly
**MADE THE
GRADE FOR
ACCREDITATION**

Brewing Up
A LEGACY



Compass & Truman
**NAMED
GOLD
RIBBON
SCHOOLS**



AROUND THE MILL

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AS A COMMUNITY, WE MADE THE GRADE



With immense pride, I share some outstanding news: Hickman Mills C-1 Schools has officially Made the Grade on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) report card. This achievement signifies that we have met the full accreditation standards under two DESE frameworks to assess school districts. This milestone is a testament to our staff, students, and families' resiliency, commitment, and relentless efforts.

KEY DRIVERS OF OUR SUCCESS

Our district's achievements result from a collective focus on three foundational pillars: System Alignment, Fine Facilities, and Academic Achievement. Through these priorities, we have strengthened every aspect of our district:

- **System Alignment:** By improving teacher and staff salaries, realigning middle schools, and enhancing school board governance, we are building a stronger foundation for educational excellence.
- **Fine Facilities:** Transforming liabilities into assets, we have renovated vital middle schools and elementary buildings and launched new facilities like the Real-World Learning Center and our district warehouse.
- **Academic Achievement:** Our students continue to excel, with MAP results reflecting growth in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, and our graduation rates climbing to an impressive 92.1% in 2024.

CELEBRATING PROGRESS, AIMING HIGHER

Accreditation is more than a status – it impacts our students, families, and the stability of our community. While mobility rates among students in unaccredited districts can hinder academic progress, our district has proven that we can provide high-quality education in a supportive and inclusive environment.

To our community, staff, and families: your dedication has been instrumental in shaping HMC-1 into an unmatched district in the region regarding our relentless approach. We will continue to fight relentlessly for our students and their success.

PROUD TO LEAD, EXCITED FOR THE FUTURE

At Hickman Mills, we believe in Kaizen, the power of continuous improvement. As we celebrate this remarkable progress, we remain steadfast in our commitment to student success and community impact. Our journey is ongoing, but one thing is clear: we are a district that strives for excellence every day.

Thank you for your partnership and belief in our mission to achieve student success.

Yaw Obeng, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

On the cover:

United States Congressman Emanuel Cleaver receives a Relentless T-shirt from HMC-1 Superintendent of Schools, Yaw Obeng.



Below:

Students, parents, teachers, staff, community members, and government officials joined HMC-1 leadership on September 30, 2024 to celebrate the grand opening of the new Real-World Learning Center. This was the first new building HMC-1 opened in over a decade. Local officials, including Mayor Pro Tem Rayna Parks-Shaw and Darrell Curls, state officials Mark Sharp and Anthony Ealy, and national official U.S. Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, joined HMC-1 in celebrating the official opening. For more photos from the grand opening, visit the district's Flickr account at bit.ly/3ZQqLwn.

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From the President

Celebrating our **COMMUNITY'S DEDICATION & ACHIEVEMENT**

As the President of the Hickman Mills C-1 School Board, I am overjoyed to extend my heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to all of you. Our district has reached a significant milestone – we have Made the Grade on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) report card, meeting the full accreditation standards under two key frameworks.

This accomplishment is not just a reflection of our schools or administration but a testament to our community's collective effort, dedication, and unwavering support. The collaborative spirit that defines Hickman Mills has shaped our journey. Parents, educators, students, local businesses, and community leaders have all played pivotal

roles in our success.

What sets Hickman Mills apart is the deep-rooted connection between our schools and the community. Your involvement in school events, volunteer efforts, and active participation in decision-making have created an environment where every student feels supported and valued. We recognize that education extends beyond the classroom. It's in the conversations at home, the programs at local community centers, and the partnerships with organizations that provide additional resources and opportunities for our students.

While we celebrate this achievement, we acknowledge more work still needs to be completed. The journey of continuous improvement is ongoing, and

with your continued support, we are confident that we will maintain and surpass our current standards.

I want to personally thank:

- **Our Students**, for their hard work, resilience, and enthusiasm for learning.
- **Our Educators and Staff**, for their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to nurturing young minds.
- **Our Families**, for trusting us with your children's education and being active partners in their learning journey.
- **Our Community Partners**, for your invaluable contributions and for believing in the potential of our district.

As we move forward, let's continue

to build on this momentum.

Let's keep fostering the strong relationships that have brought us to this point and remain united in our mission to provide the highest quality education for all students.

Thank you for being the driving force behind Hickman Mills' success. Your passion and dedication inspires us daily, and I'm honored to serve a community that shows how much we can achieve when we work together.

With most profound appreciation and excitement for the future,



Irene Kendrick
President, Board of Directors



Ruskin High School CORE instructors Dr. Leah La Faver and Andrew Smithson proudly hold their Outstanding Educational Achievement Award, presented by the South Kansas City Alliance, celebrating their innovative work empowering students through real-world learning and problem-solving.

AT THE **CORE** of Success

This October, Ruskin High School's Creating Opportunities for Ruskin Eagles (CORE) program earned a well-deserved spotlight, receiving the prestigious Outstanding Educational Achievement Program Award at the South Kansas City Alliance Awards Breakfast. This accolade celebrates the program's commitment to real-world learning, community connection, and student-driven achievement.

Guided by dedicated educators Dr. Leah La Faver and Andrew Smithson, CORE students dive into fresh, hands-on projects every six to eight weeks that bring learning to life. At the heart of each project is the Design Thinking Process, a structured approach to problem-solving

that encourages students to embrace creativity, dig into critical thinking, and foster a collaborative spirit. Tackling questions relevant to the world around them, CORE students research, team up with industry professionals, and present innovative solutions to pressing challenges.

Dr. La Faver and Smithson's vision and dedication to their students have created an environment where young minds thrive, confidently taking on real-world issues while building skills for a successful future, all at the new Real-World Learning Center. This recognition is a testament to their hard work and the students' inspiring achievements. Congratulations to the CORE team – our future innovators are in great hands!



GOLD RIBBON RECOGNITION:

Celebrating Academic Excellence

The Hickman Mills C-1 School District (HMC-1) is thrilled to announce that Compass Elementary and Truman Elementary have soared to new heights, earning the prestigious Gold Ribbon School recognition. This achievement is a shining testament to HMC-1's unwavering commitment to fostering student success and academic excellence.

This is the second consecutive Gold Ribbon honor for Compass Elementary, following its initial achievement in September 2023. Now joined by Truman Elementary, this accolade celebrates both schools' exceptional dedication to student growth and achievement.

Gold Ribbon status is part of HMC-1's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), emphasizing "Our District, Our Schools, Our Community"—three core pillars guiding progress, accountability, and future success. Superintendent Yaw Obeng highlights this accomplishment as a milestone in the district's educational vision: "To see every student achieve their own version of success, we need to rethink education. Our schools are working tirelessly to close the achievement gap, and Compass and Truman have proven that dedicated, innovative efforts are making a true difference."

The Gold Ribbon Program, modeled after

the Missouri Gold Star Schools and National Blue Ribbon Schools, recognizes schools achieving high academic performance. Principals Angela Owens of Truman Elementary and Erica Hoard of Compass Elementary attribute this honor to the extraordinary efforts of their entire school communities.

"Our students and staff have worked tirelessly with the goal of Gold Ribbon status," Principal Owens said. "With additional support, we ensure every student thrives. Our teachers innovate constantly, creating a vibrant learning environment fostering academic and personal growth."

Continuous improvement and creativity in student support drive Compass' ongoing success. Principal Hoard explains, "Our teachers, staff, and community partners, like Minding the Gap, bring passion and dedication. Together, they build strong, meaningful relationships with students, igniting a love for learning that fuels their success."

Through the Gold Ribbon recognition, HMC-1 celebrates the invaluable contributions of teachers, students, and community partners, each playing a crucial role in creating a bright future for every student in the district. It's a testament to the power of community in shaping our schools' success.



HMC-1
MADE
THE GRADE!



72.7%

2024 KANSAS CITY AREA APR SCORES:

- Lee's Summit - 87.2%
- Blue Springs - 86%
- Park Hill - 85.7%
- Liberty - 84.2%
- Independence - 80%
- Belton - 77.5%
- Excelsior Springs - 73.7%
- Ray-Pec - 73.2%
- Kansas City PS - 73.2 %
- **Hickman Mills - 72.7%**
- Oak Grove - 72%
- Raytown - 71.5%
- Fort Osage - 68.2
- Odessa - 68.2%
- Center - 66.7%
- Grandview - 63.7%

Hickman Mills C-1 School District has **MADE THE GRADE** on the 2024 state report card and has reached full accreditation standards according to two of the frameworks the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) uses to grade school districts.

KEYS TO OUR SUCCESS:

System Alignment

- Teacher and Staff Salaries
- Middle School Realignment
- School Board Improvements

Fine Facilities:

- Demolition of buildings
- Middle School renovations
- New Warehouse
- New Real-World Learning Center

Academic Achievement:

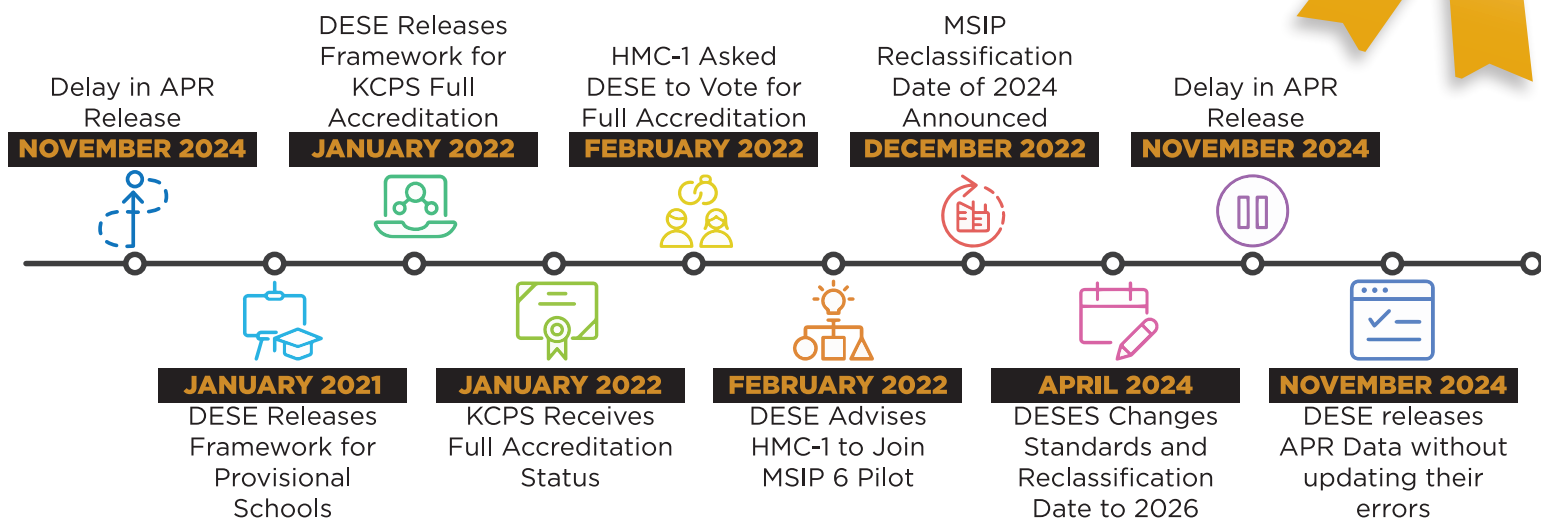
- MAP Results
 - 61% - English
 - 48% - Math
 - 46% - Science
 - 95% - Social Studies
- Graduation Rates
 - 2022 - 88%
 - 2023 - 91.3%
 - 2024 - 92.1%



RELENTLESSLY PURSUING FULL ACCREDITATION

The Hickman Mills C-1 School District (HMC-1) is a testament to resilience and determination, showcasing a relentless commitment to regaining full accreditation after losing it in 2012. Collaboration has been central to HMC-1's success. Teachers, staff, families, and the community have worked together to create an environment where

students can thrive. HMC-1's transformation began in July 2020 with a leadership change that sparked a renewed district-wide focus on achieving full accreditation. Below is the timeline of HMC-1's journey toward full accreditation.



HMC-1's journey serves as an inspiring example of what can be accomplished when a community unites with a shared vision of excellence. The district's relentless pursuit of

accreditation underscores its commitment to providing quality education and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed.



Thespians Shine Bright in “Pippin: The Musical”

Four Student-Performers Earn Scholarships to NYCDA



The Ruskin High School Thespian Troupe #3732 took center stage and captivated audiences with their stunning *Pippin: The Musical* performance from November 14-16, 2024. This theatrical triumph wasn't just a showcase of student talent; it also paved the way for four performers to receive \$55,000 in scholarships from The New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts (NYCDA) through their prestigious Rising Star Scholarship Program.

Congratulations to Ruskin's scholarship recipients:

- Desmond Walker, III
- Zoie Harrington
- Lena Toombs
- Phoenix Bolen

The performance staged in Ruskin's beautifully renovated performing arts center, was a visual and musical feast. The cast brought to life the medieval-inspired tale of young Prince Pippin's quest for fulfillment with dazzling choreography, powerful vocals, and heartfelt storytelling.

"I am so proud of these amazingly talented students and want to congratulate them

on a job well done!" Assistant Principal of Academic Services Katie Roe shared about the opening night. "The lighting, the set, the large cast, the leads, the SINGING... I couldn't stop smiling. Thank you, Mr. Dishman, for your commitment to the program and for continuing to grow the theater program so that our students have opportunities to showcase their creativity."

Payton Dishman, Ruskin's Head Theatre Director and District Department Chair for Theatre and Speech, played an instrumental role in this success. Under his tutelage, *Pippin* became a vehicle for students to express their artistic talents and for audiences to enjoy the magic of live theatre.

The Rising Star Scholarship Program is NYCDA's way of celebrating exceptional high school talent, offering scholarships for their two-year degree program. Mr. Dishman nominated *Pippin*, and after witnessing the show, an NYCDA recruiter selected the four standout performers for scholarships, a testament to the production's high caliber.



Photos by Ali Nassir



GET INVOLVED in your community!

MAKE AN IMPACT within your community! Just one hour a week can make a world of difference in the life of a student.

Different ways to be a mentor:

{Reading Mentors
{Science Mentors

{Lunch Friends

{Leadership Mentors

{Math Mentors

{Career Mentors



GET INVOLVED! Visit HickmanMills.org/GetInvolved

IGNITING POTENTIAL



Susan Wally Shares Why PREP-KC Partners with HMC-1

In a world where zip codes often predict outcomes, PREP-KC redefines possibilities for Kansas City students. PREP-KC connects educators with industry professionals to pave paths to meaningful careers, equipping students – regardless of their background – for success. This partnership has been a game-changer for Hickman Mills C-1 School

District (HMC-1), bringing innovation and opportunity to classrooms.

FOCUSING ON UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

PREP-KC believes students in urban communities can excel with the right opportunities. With decades of experience in Kansas City's urban education landscape, PREP-KC's CEO and founder needed partnerships to close the "opportunity gap." The organization provides strategic funding, technical assistance, and innovative programs to empower students facing socioeconomic challenges.

THE START OF A POWERFUL COLLABORATION

HMC-1's partnership with PREP-KC began when Superintendent Dr. Marjorie Williams invited the organization to collaborate, recognizing its track record of boosting high school graduation rates and expanding college and career exploration. Since then,

PREP-KC has become a key partner in helping HMC-1 realize its vision for students by delivering resources that make a real difference in student outcomes.

SHARED VALUES AND GOALS

Both PREP-KC and HMC-1 are dedicated to preparing students for the rigors and demands of a 21st-century workforce. The partnership emphasizes earning Market Value Assets (MVAs) – certifications or experiences that make students more competitive in the job market. PREP-KC works year-round with HMC-1 leaders, educators, and industry volunteers to guide students toward meaningful futures.

REAL-WORLD LEARNING IN ACTION

One of the most exciting developments in this collaboration is the opening of HMC-1's Real-World Learning Center. This state-of-the-art facility allows students hands-on learning as they explore interests and talents. PREP-KC works closely with HMC-1's leadership, including Assistant Superintendent Katie Roe and RWL Coordinator Bethany Kelly, to maximize the center's potential.

VOLUNTEER POWER

PREP-KC's network includes volunteers from nearly every sector of Kansas City's

Continued on page 10



SUSAN WALLY
PREP-KC, President & CEO

Honoring a Lifetime of Service

Alvin Brooks

Alvin Brooks, a dedicated Hickman Mills C-1 School Board member, has been named the 2024 honoree of the Paul Morris Community Service Award by the FutureBuilders Foundation. The award, given in recognition of his lifelong commitment to community service, was presented at the Missouri School Board Association's (MSBA) Annual Conference at the Westin Crown Center this fall.

Mr. Brooks brings an unparalleled depth of experience to his role on the HMC-1 School Board, shaped by a career spanning law enforcement, education, and public administration. As a retired Kansas City Police Department officer and educator with the Kansas City Public Schools, Mr. Brooks has devoted his life to advocating for children, ensuring equitable access to education, and fostering safe communities. He previously served on the Hickman Mills School Board and has now returned to continue his advocacy for the district's students.

Among his many contributions, Mr. Brooks is perhaps best known as the AdHoc Group Against Crime (AdHoc) founder, established in 1977 in response to a rise in violent crime within Kansas City's African American community. Under his leadership as director since 1991, AdHoc

has taken on critical roles in grassroots efforts to curb crime, reduce substance abuse, and provide vital support to families affected by violence.

Mr. Brooks' impact reaches far beyond Kansas City. Appointed by President George H.W. Bush to the National Drug Advisory Council, he served on this national platform for three years, contributing to drug policy reform and crime prevention efforts. He was elected to Kansas City's council, and later appointed mayor pro-tem in 2003.

A committed advocate for civil rights, Mr. Brooks has held notable positions such as chairperson of the Missouri Human Rights Commission and membership on the Missouri Supreme Court Advisory Committee.

Mr. Brooks impact, built on a foundation of compassion and commitment, inspires the



Hickman Mills community and anyone dedicated to building stronger, safer communities. His legacy reflects a lifetime of meaningful work and solidified his standing as an irreplaceable leader within Hickman Mills and beyond. His award as the 2024 Paul Morris Community Service Award recipient is a testament to the positive and enduring impact he continues to have on the lives of countless individuals.

Pictured above left to right: Superintendent Yaw Obeng, Board President Irene Kendrick, and Director Alvin Brooks.

LET'S GO EAGLES! SHOWCASING RUSKIN FALL SPORTS



Photos courtesy of the
Ruskin Booster Club



Thank you Ali Nassir
for the amazing
photos!



From Banking to Brewing:

HOW ONE ALUM TAPPED INTO HIS ROOTS TO CRAFT A BEER LEGACY

When Steve Holle graduated from Hickman Mills High School in 1976, he had no idea his path would lead from banking and real estate to launching a celebrated craft brewery. Now, as founder of KC Bier Co., Steve has turned his German heritage and love for authentic brewing into a Kansas City institution. With a successful banking and real estate career under his belt, Steve left his mark on both industries before returning to KC to start his brewing legacy.

THE FOUNDATION AT HICKMAN MILLS

Steve credits his Hickman Mills education for laying the groundwork for his diverse career. He says his German language classes exposed him early to a culture that would later shape KC Bier Co. and its authentic German-style beers. Beyond academics, his experiences on the basketball court

instilled discipline and a drive for excellence.

“The values I learned in sports – discipline, hard work, and teamwork – are the values that I carry with me to this day,” Steve explains.

His English classes, too, prepared him for professional life and, later, a career as an author in the brewing world.

A CAREER BREWED WITH PASSION

After earning degrees in German and business at Northwest Missouri State, an MBA, and a master’s in real estate investment analysis, Steve built a career in banking and then with Northwestern Mutual, where he led their Dallas real estate investment office. But brewing remained a hobby. Over the years, his home-brewing experiments and his passion for German beer grew, sparking the desire to bring authentic German beer culture

to Kansas City. He retired early at 55, returned to his hometown, and launched KC Bier Co., sourcing German ingredients and brewing in the Waldo neighborhood.

The brewery is now one of KC’s largest, occupying a 26,000-square-foot facility with a tasting room and spacious beer garden. He shares that KC Bier Co. has a second location in the works: a new site in Olathe with a beer hall, garden, and event space, set to open in 2026. Holle reflects on how the craft beer industry has transformed, with increased competition and booming interest in authentic, high-quality brews – a testament to how KC Bier Co.’s commitment to genuine German-style beer has resonated in Kansas City.

ADVICE TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Reflecting on his journey, Steve

encourages current students to pursue their passions and set short-term goals that lead to broader accomplishments.

“I wish I had been more assertive and confident when I was younger,” he shares. For him, success came from pursuing his passion and putting himself in a position to build on his strengths.

Today, Steve Holle’s legacy is brewing in more ways than one. His journey from Hickman Mills High to KC Bier Co. shows that it’s never too late to follow your passion and that an excellent foundation, whether in the classroom, the court, or the community, can make all the difference.



IGNITING POTENTIAL (CONT.)

Continued from page 8

workforce. These professionals visit classrooms, share their career journeys, and show students how lessons translate into real-world applications. Interested in making a difference? Visit PrepKC.org to learn how to get involved, or email College & Career Manager Candace Villanueva at cvillanueva@prepkc.org.

LOOKING AHEAD

With impressive results already – like a rise in MVA completion from 26% in 2019 to 67% in 2024 – PREP-KC and HMC-1 are setting their sights even higher. Their goal? To have 90% of

students graduate with an MVA by 2030.

From helping more Ruskin students graduate with MVAs to boosting K-5 literacy scores, this partnership delivers measurable success. According to the chief executive officer of PREP-KC, the secret to a successful partnership with HMC-1 is simple: align resources around the district goals and commit to students’ success.

As this collaboration unfolds, one thing becomes clear: PREP-KC and HMC-1 stand together to ensure every student has what they need to succeed in and out of the classroom.

INCLEMENT WEATHER OPTIONS 2024-2025



BLUE VIRTUAL DAY

Teach and learn from home day. Students will participate in live instruction via video conferencing. Student devices will go home the day before a virtual learning day.



ORANGE NO SCHOOL DAY

No-school day for students. Teachers and staff will work remotely.



RED NO SCHOOL - NO WORK DAY

No school, no work day for teachers and students.



BLACK DISTRICT CLOSED

Every district building is closed. No school, no work day for teachers and students.



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CALLING HMC-1 ALUMNI!

Have a story to share? Whether it's an epic adventure, a unique career, or a story about how HMC-1 made a difference in your life, we'd love to hear it. Connect with us today!



WORK Around the Mill!

Did you know? HMC-1 is one of the **HIGHEST-PAYING** district in the metro! Plus, we offer paid professional development for our teachers every month and many other benefits.

- { Teachers - Secondary grades 5-9 Math and Science, Special Education grades K-12, and Elementary Teachers grades K-5
- { Paraprofessionals
- { Nutrition Services Positions
- { Lunch Aides - Pre-K and Elementary Schools
- { Parent Educators - Pre-K

Full-time employees receive great benefits including paid health and dental plan options, plus a district retirement plan.



APPLY TODAY!
Visit HickmanMills.org/Careers

