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**QUARTERLY CONNECTION**

★ SPRING 2025 ★



Math in CPS  
Assistance League grants  
Annual performance  
results  
Kindergarten enrollment  
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**INSIDE ISSUE:**





# From equations to excitement: math in CPS

For many, the words “math” and “joy” may not go hand-in-hand. But math clubs at Columbia Public Schools are on a mission to change that perception.

“Kids tend to love math at an early age and eventually something switches,” CPS Elementary Math Coordinator Jenifer Smith said. “They start to hear messages that math is ‘hard’. We have been trying to combat that at CPS.”

In fact, Smith said she intentionally uses the words “math” and “joy” together when speaking to students, parents and teachers, and has also adopted the hashtag “#mathjoyCPS” when posting on social media. Her goal is to shine a positive light on math throughout our community.

One way Smith and fellow CPS math educators celebrate the joys of math is through CPS math clubs. Currently, CPS has eight elementary school math clubs. Clubs are active at Blue Ridge, Fairview, Mill Creek, Parkade, Paxton Keeley, Rock Bridge, Ridgeway and West Boulevard elementary schools.

For some clubs the main focus is to prepare students to compete in math competitions, however, there are many other benefits of math clubs at the elementary level.

Like all clubs, math clubs provide a space for students with similar interests to come together and create friendships. They work together as they take on new challenges and prepare to compete as a team, and they encourage and support one another.

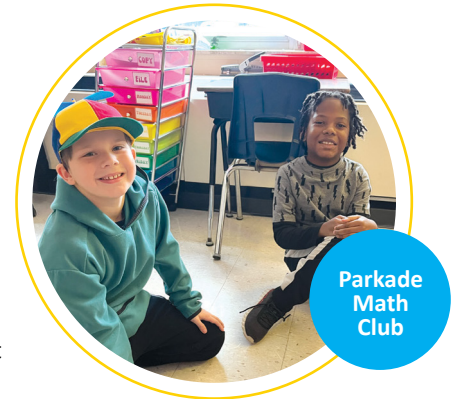
For students looking for more of a challenge in math, the clubs offer a higher level of math than what they may be learning in the classroom. For students who lack confidence in math, these clubs give them extra time and attention to improve their skills and grow their competency.

Most importantly, all math club students enjoy a place set aside for the exploration of math in a fun atmosphere, outside of the classroom.

“We’re making math a positive thing and not putting caps on kids,” Smith said. “We’re giving them a chance to try hard things and move beyond

what is happening in the regular classrooms.”

Teachers Nicole Burks and Susan Heath lead the math club at Parkade Elementary School, and this is their first year with the club.



Burks is a math teacher who naturally uses the club to focus on math, while Heath is an English Learners teacher and finds that math club is a great way to help students who speak English as a second language to improve math skills by becoming more versed in math terminology.

Together their mantra for this year’s club is “Bringing joy, curiosity, and meaning back to mathematics.”

Burks and Heath expect to have about eight students in the club, which allows them to zone in on specific skills that can then be applied in the classroom. They focus on 2nd and 3rd grade standards, starting with data and integrating geometry, addition, subtraction and other skills used in the everyday world, expanding from there.

The application of those standards through a project-based approach helps to make it fun for students. For example, when studying area and perimeter, it may be that students have the opportunity to design a city which they would get to name. They use skills of area and perimeter to develop the map of the city.

Projects like these are designed to provide choices while demonstrating math uses in the real world.

“We’ll hopefully allow them to see that math is everywhere and is not an intimidating subject, but really everywhere in everyday life,” Burks said.

Burks and Heath agreed there are many other benefits to students who participate. They said interacting with others their age or even at different grade levels fosters a cooperative learning opportunity and added support builds confidence that carries over to the classroom.

## FROM EQUATIONS TO EXCITEMENT: MATH IN CPS CONTINUED

"We have extra time to go a little deeper," Burks said. "We're consistently looking at their strengths and how we can build upon them. If there are skills they are lacking, are there alternative strategies we can offer to help them move forward? That's really the focus – tailoring math learning to engage students and help them excel."

Another first year club is coached by 4th-grade teacher Lauri Holcomb at West Boulevard Elementary School. There are currently 30 club participants.

Holcomb's main goal for her club is to improve members' math confidence and be another avenue to move students along in their math understanding.

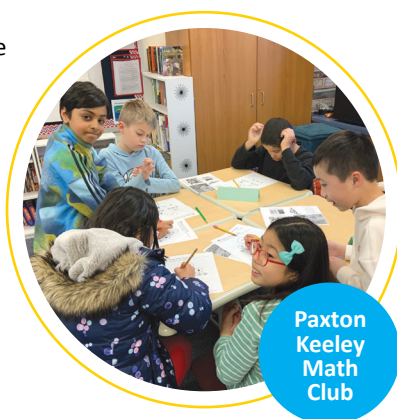
The students in her club have been working on a mock shopping spree through a Scholastic book fair. Students are given a budget along with multiple parameters. Holcomb said students love being able to work in groups and enjoy keeping track of how they fulfill the challenge.

"Building their confidence is paramount," Holcomb said. "If they don't feel good they are less apt to try new things. Getting them excited to see what they can do will filter into classroom space."

Holcomb said she wants her students to see math as fun, and that everyone has different skill sets.

"I can already see their confidence growing and they want to share and show," she said. "They are already taking more risks. They are seeing the higher-level math. When they help one another, they make connections between their strategies and those of others, and they start to see efficiencies."

The math club at Paxton Keeley Elementary School is about 10 years old and is now sponsored by 5th grade teacher Shelli Thelen, who is in her fourth year as the coach.



This math club is focused primarily on competition and hosts about 25 4th- and 5th-grade students. Students in this club are selected to participate based on classroom performance.

Thelen said club members will meet six to eight times prior to the competition, focusing on math and competition skills. They work on some math content that may not necessarily be presented at their grade level, along with added components of strategy and cooperation.

Thelen said she encourages teamwork, as negotiating a problem with another student who may have a different approach is a good exercise in cooperation.

Thelen also said her students tend to have a lot of fun preparing for competitions, as for many of these students, math is their sport.

"We provide them with a challenge, and they just go crazy, which is awesome," Thelen said. "When you give kids time and space they can do amazing things, and they tend to push themselves in ways that exceed expectations."

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**ALL MATH CLUB STUDENTS ENJOY A PLACE SET ASIDE FOR THE EXPLORATION OF MATH IN A FUN ATMOSPHERE, OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM.**

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## ASSISTANT LEAGUE GRANTS YEAR IN REVIEW

The Assistance League® of Mid-Missouri (ALMM) awarded 201 Links to Learning Awards for the 2024-2025 school year. Teams of ALMM members read and evaluated the anonymous proposals and selected the recipients from more than 300 submissions.

Links to Learning provides funding for projects designed and implemented by Columbia Public Schools teachers in pre-K through high school. Previous awards have been used for classroom materials, district-wide science projects, field trips, and school-wide literacy programs.

"We are proud of our partnership with Columbia Public Schools and are pleased to continue funding Links to Learning requests from teachers," ALMM Program Chair Terry Gaines said.



The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recently released **Annual Performance Report (APR)** information for Missouri school districts, and **Columbia Public Schools scored in the top 20 percent of school districts in Missouri**, achieving 86.5 percent. This represents a 16.4 percent increase from the 2023 APR score.



DESE uses the APR to score districts on their improvement and performance, in accordance with the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP).

As a district, CPS remains focused on growth, innovation, and achievement. The district received 58 of the 60 available points possible in continuous improvement and received 115 out of 140 possible points in academic performance. The district improved in seven of the eight growth categories in academic performance.

For highlights of this year's report, visit [cpsk12.org](https://cpsk12.org) and click "District News"

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

### COLUMBIA AREA CAREER CENTER

Progress continues at CACC. Roofing and framing are complete on the new addition and several walls are up. Work on the exterior brick veneer and precast stone base is progressing. Renovations in the welding and agriculture spaces are complete. Work at the horticultural site is underway.



### EAGLE BLUFFS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Recent work includes framing, placing beams and pouring concrete. Plumbing for roof drains, curbs, and sleeves has been installed. Interior framing is complete and electrical and plumbing rough-ins are underway. Roof work and plumbing has also started in the administrative and kitchen areas.



### BATTLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The remainder of the existing building has been demolished, and the steel columns for structural tie-ins are set. Electrical and mechanical rough-in work has started, with door frames installed in the storm shelter and classroom corridor walls.



**\$102,889.56** ELEMENTARY AWARDS

**\$36,345.10** SECONDARY AWARDS

**\$139,234.66** TOTAL AWARDS



## 2025-2026 KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT



### Countdown to Kindergarten!

To be eligible for kindergarten in 2025-2026, a student must be five years of age before **August 1, 2025**. For additional information visit [cpsk12.org/kindergarten](https://cpsk12.org/kindergarten) or call Columbia Public Schools at **573-214-3414**.



# CPS Foundation awards \$150,000 in grants

The Columbia Public Schools Foundation (CPSF) awarded more than \$150,000 to 30 schools in Columbia Public Schools as part of its new Students First Fund grants.

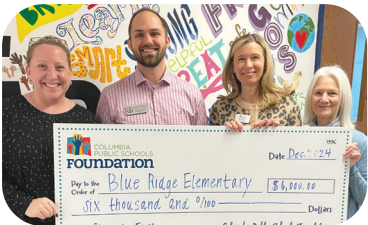
Since 1996, CPSF has allocated more than \$1.6 million to school programs throughout CPS, benefiting every school in the district. A private foundation, CPSF is made up of community volunteers dedicated to the enrichment of public education through community giving.

The Students First Fund is a new CPSF initiative designed to reach teachers and students in the classroom, with an emphasis on grants that have a building, grade-level or department-level impact. Grants are available for one school per annual grant cycle, with a maximum of \$6,000 per school.

“We are so excited to award these funds to schools as part of our new Students First Fund,” Katie Harris, executive director of CPSF said. “From a schoolwide One-Read program to robotics equipment, these grants directly reach students. We listened to our schools to learn exactly what they need to help students continue to be successful.”

CPSF visited each school receiving a grant to surprise them with the good news about their award. In all, 30 schools received grants for a total of \$150,431.30, benefiting more than 15,973 preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF GRANTS AWARDED VISIT:  
[cpsf.org/student-first-fund-grants](https://cpsf.org/student-first-fund-grants)



## News You Can Use

### SPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Rock Bridge High School freshman **Katherine Kimes** and junior **Rebecca Stamose** won the doubles championship in the MSHSAA Class 3 Girls' Tennis Individual Tournament.

**Trey Clervi** of the Rock Bridge High School Boys' Swimming & Diving team won the MSHSAA Class 2 state championship in the 100-meter breaststroke, defending his title from last year.



Katherine Kimes



Rebecca Stamose



Trey Clervi

### ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Hickman High School student **Makayla Golden** has been admitted to Northwestern University and has been awarded a full, four-year QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship. Out of over 25,500 applicants, QuestBridge selected 7,288 finalists to be considered for the QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship. Makayla plans to pursue a degree in Journalism.

### DISTRICT RECOGNIZED

**Columbia Public Schools** has earned national recognition for high-quality School Psychological Services from the National Association of School Psychologists. CPS was awarded the status of “emerging” through its Excellence in School Psychological Services program. It is the first time CPS has received national recognition for school psychological services, and the district is the second in Missouri to receive recognition. The “emerging” status CPS achieved is awarded to districts that show their psychologists provide a broad range of services.

### EDUCATOR RECOGNITION

The Missouri State High School Activities Association is proud to announce that Hickman High School's Boys' Track & Field Coach **Stewart Johnson**, is among seven coaches recognized as 2023-2024 National Federation of State High School Associations Coaches of the Year. These outstanding educators have been honored for their contributions to high school athletics both at the Section 5 level and nationally.

**Valerie Broderick**, district behavior support coach, is a recipient of the 2025 Outstanding Educator by the Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavior Disorders.



# 2025 Summer School Programs

## JUNE 2 – JUNE 27

**Columbia Summer SUNsations** offers free summer school for students entering kindergarten through 8th grade.

**Gifted Education (EEE)** for grades 2-5 at the Gifted Center, and 6-8 at Gentry Middle School.

**Special Education Extended School Year (ESY)** with home building.

**Summer Expeditions** is a six-week program at Hickman High School for high-potential multicultural students grades 5-8 and are not enrolled in gifted education.

**Early Childhood Special Education and Deaf Hard of Hearing** is at the Early Childhood Education Center, 901 Rain Forest Parkway.

**Early Childhood Special Education** is at the Center for Early Learning North (CELN), 2191 Smiley Lane.

**The Secondary Summer School High School Credit Advancement** program is available for Columbia Public Schools students entering grades 9-12. This program offers opportunities for credit advancement in the form of online, blended or classroom course options.

**The Secondary Summer School High School Credit Recovery** program allows students to make up credits to stay on track for graduation. Successful completion of a credit recovery class results in the grade of P and .5 credit.

## JUNE 2 – JULY 25

**FUN CITY Youth Academy** partners with Columbia Public Schools to offer half-day summer school curriculum (math, science, social studies, reading and writing) and half-day FUN CITY programming. The program is located at Derby Ridge Elementary School.

## MAY 30 – JUNE 18 JULY 7 – JULY 24

**The Columbia Summer Enrichment Preschool** at Center for Early Learning North is a tuition-based program available for students ages three to five. It runs from 8:30 AM-11:30 AM.

## JUNE 9 – JUNE 27

**Arts Explorers' Program** is at John Warner Middle School from 8 am to 3 pm for selected elementary students entering grades 4-5. Enrollment is by recommendation only.

## JUNE 8 – JUNE 18 (Overnight program)

**MAC Scholars Honors Summer Academy** is an academic and enrichment experience for high-potential students entering 10th grade. This program is a partnership with the University of Missouri.

## JULY 6 – JULY 19

**Secondary Choral and Instrumental Music** at Gentry Middle School offers enrichment instruction in choir, orchestra and band courses for secondary music students entering grades 7-9.

[www.cpsk12.org/summer-school](http://www.cpsk12.org/summer-school)

## BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

**Adventure Club** is an extended day program at elementary schools provided by the University of Missouri - College of Education. It provides a supervised before- and/or after-school program during Summer SUNsations and summer enrichment programs. A non-refundable registration fee is required. Enrollment flyers are available at the elementary schools and via a link on the CPS website under Summer School. The Adventure Club website is:

[education.missouri.edu/adventureclub/summer-program](http://education.missouri.edu/adventureclub/summer-program)

## A+ TUTORING

**Opportunities for tutoring** in summer school may be arranged for secondary students enrolled in the A+ program. A+ students should contact the A+ coordinator in their high school building for additional information.

## ADDITIONAL SUMMER PROGRAMS

**Information regarding summer camps/programs** sponsored by various organizations, colleges and universities is available in school counseling and/or principal offices and via the Peach Jar electronic flyer system for families.