# INSIDE

SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

WINTER 2025



> Achievements in the SMSD

> Real World Learning for Every Age and Stage

> You're Invited to Join an Action Team





## Features INSIDE


4 > Schu's News-Updates from Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher

6 > One Shawnee Mission Because Kids Achieve

7 > New Season, New Spirit: Middle School Cheer Kicks Off

8 > Real World Learning for Every Age and Every Stage

10 > SMSD Strong: Strong Schools, Strong Community

11 > Action Team Members Move Strategic Plan Forward

12 > From the SMSD Stage and Studio

13 > Save the Date!

14 > Building Real-World Opportunities for Students


ON THE COVER: To complete a Real World Learning project, Macey Heikkila adds detail to her original painting.

**#OneShawneeMission**

**Help us share great news from our district on social media at @thesmsd.**


INSIDE
Shawnee Mission School District
8200 W. 71st Street
Shawnee Mission, KS 66204

Inside Shawnee Mission School District is published by the Communications Team in the Shawnee Mission School District.



**Board of Education**

April Boyd-Noronha, President
Jessica Hembree, Vice President
Jamie Borgman
Mario Garcia III
Heather Ousley
Mary Sinclair
David Westbrook





Plan your summer now!

THANK YOURSELF LATER.

- Great **pay**
- **Flexible** schedules
- No-cost **training**
- Build **skills**
- Make **friends**

Apply NOW!

Lenexa.com/SummerJobs

Lenexa KANSAS

# Schu's News

*Updates from Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher*



*Dr. Michael Schumacher*

One of the best parts of my week is when I dedicate time to go visit schools across our district. It always leaves me even more proud to serve as Superintendent of Shawnee Mission schools. No matter what school community I visit, I see all that we do in our district Because Kids.

Everywhere I go, I see students collaborating, creating, problem-solving and innovating. I see staff members ensuring students are learning in the best possible environments and being encouraged to achieve their personal best. This collective work gives all in our community a lot to celebrate. I encourage you to read about some of our most recent accomplishments as a district on Page 6.

Even with many points of pride, we are a district that is always looking toward what is next. You'll see how we are planning for the future in our Strategic Plan update on Page 11. We are also working on Wildly Important Goals (WIGS) that hold us accountable toward the work of increasing achievement for all students and increasing graduation rates for all students. It is all Because Kids.

We appreciate the continued support and advocacy of our community. Whether it's through support of the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation, Real World Learning opportunities provided to students, or volunteer work—it all helps our students. We thank you for staying engaged, for reading Inside, and for helping us tell the true story about what is happening in our schools. We are ONE Shawnee Mission...Because Kids.

ONE SHAWNEE MISSION... because kids

## Teacher Recognitions

Shawnee Mission educators are the best among the best. We are excited to recognize four educators who have received district-wide recognition for their exemplary work.

The Shawnee Mission School District's Horizon nominees in the 2025-2026 school year are Jordan Dombrowski, a secondary Language Arts teacher at Shawnee Mission East High School, and Hope Smylie, a third-grade teacher at Rising Star Elementary School. The Horizon Award recognizes first-year Kansas teachers who "perform in a way that distinguishes them as outstanding."

Julia Orth, third-grade teacher at Nieman, and Audrey Gilroy, art teacher at Westridge Middle School, are the Shawnee Mission School District's Kansas Teacher of the Year nominees. They will be recognized as part of the Kansas Teacher of the Year program.









## National Merit Semifinalists



We are proud of the Shawnee Mission students who have been named semifinalists in the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program. These students are among the top nationwide, based on their results from the PSAT/NMSQT qualifying test. They are now in the running for scholarship offers.

Shawnee Mission's Semifinalists are: William Barcus and Adeline Clifford, SM East; Alyssa Walker, SM South; Brendan Hunn and Nathan Mestel, SM West.

## Podcast Update

Shawnee Mission Mic'd Up, the Shawnee Mission School District podcast, is in its third season and is a great way to learn about the students and staff that make us ONE Shawnee Mission. Recent episodes have featured students who have earned national recognition, Real World Learning, and Olivia Bloomfield, who used her superpowers to leave a lasting legacy in SMSD and our extended community. You can listen, download, and subscribe anywhere you get your podcasts or visit smsd.org for more information.




## Read Across SMSD

We've proudly launched our fifth season of Read Across SMSD. This program encourages reading for all ages and supports our work to cultivate a culture of belonging for all students. In one recent episode, several of our students shared some tremendous examples of how they have worked to "Build Resilience." Find out more about Read Across SMSD at www.smsd.org.



ONE SHAWNEE MISSION...
because kids

# ACHIEVE!

**Because Kids... we dream big, work hard, and keep raising the bar. From national rankings to global achievements, here are a few reasons to celebrate our students, staff, and schools.**

## NATIONALLY RANKED

All five comprehensive Shawnee Mission high schools, SM East, SM North, SM Northwest, SM South, and SM West, earned a spot on the U.S. News and World Report's list of Best High Schools in America. SM East ranks in the top five in Kansas!

## MVA MOMENTUM

87% of the Class of 2025 graduated with a Market Value Asset (MVA). MVAs are resume-worthy achievements including real world work-experiences, industry-recognized credentials, entrepreneurial experiences, and/or college credit. The goal: 100% of students will graduate with an MVA by 2030.

## FORBES FAVORITE

For the third year in a row, the Shawnee Mission School District is ranked among the best employers in the state of Kansas by Forbes magazine.

### BILINGUAL BRILLIANCE

180 students from the Class of 2025 earned the prestigious Seal of Biliteracy, showing proficiency in two or more languages. This recognition highlighted student proficiency across 13 different languages.

### AP ACHIEVEMENT

2025 was a record breaking year with 1,423 Shawnee Mission students completing 2,510 Advanced Placement Exams-the most ever in Shawnee Mission history.

## IB EXCELLENCE

173 students completed 384 International Baccalaureate Exams in 2025, and 25 graduates earned the full IB Diploma, proving hard work pays off on a global scale.





Westridge and Indian Hills cheerleaders fire up the crowd in SMSD's first-ever middle school cheer season.

# New Season, New Spirit: Middle School Cheer Kicks Off

This fall, middle school football games across the Shawnee Mission School District received a boost of spirit with the debut of middle school cheer.

Following the recent additions of football and soccer, cheerleading is the latest sport to expand athletic opportunities at the middle school level. Now, each of the district's five middle schools has three cheer squads – one each for football, girls basketball, and boys basketball.

A total of 138 students are participating in cheer this school year, a number that director of athletics and activities Kent Glaser finds exciting. "The addition of cheer has brought lots of smiling faces," said Glaser. "We've seen incredible enthusiasm from students, families, and our school communities."

At Trailridge Middle School, teacher and coach Britt Qualls remembers exactly where she was when she learned cheer was being added to middle school athletics. "I ran to my assistant principal and said, 'You've got to be kidding me! I'm so excited!'" she recalled. "This has been missing for a long time at the middle level, and having it here makes it so much more accessible to all kinds of kids from every kind of background, and that is really important."

Tryouts at Trailridge drew more than 40 students, a mix of seventh and eighth graders. To make the process less intimidating, Qualls teamed up with the Shawnee Mission Northwest varsity cheer squad, who helped lead a four-day try-out clinic. The high schoolers taught cheers, chants, and jumps, and they've continued to return throughout the season to help.

"They've been incredible mentors," Qualls shared. "They have given our cheerleaders a glimpse of what high school cheer is like and have helped them build skills and confidence."

For eighth grader Zoe Pattison, joining the Trailridge cheer team has been a dream come true. "I'd hoped for middle school cheer since sixth grade," she explained. "When my mom got the email saying it was really happening, I was so excited!"

Cheer has given Pattison a chance to connect with her school community in a new way. "In cheer, we learn teamwork, that everyone counts," she said. "You have to be bold, positive, and responsible because you're representing your school. I've made great new friends and I've become more confident."

These days there's an extra buzz in the hallways on game days, Qualls said. "When you see students in their uniforms walking through the school, it brings a whole new energy. It's contagious."

As more students join athletics, the sense of school pride continues to grow. That's exactly the goal, said Dr. David Stubblefield, deputy superintendent. "Education-based athletics are an extension of the classroom. Students learn teamwork, resilience, leadership, and character. Those are skills that last a lifetime."

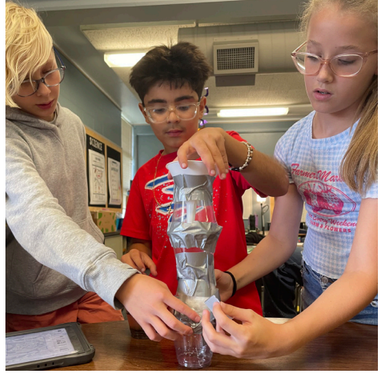
This first year has been full of learning, and Qualls is already planning for what's next. "This was our foundation year," she shared. "Next year, we'll have returning cheerleaders ready to lead. We're just getting started."

Scan to see an inspiring cross country story.











# Real World Learning for Every Age and Every Stage

When Savannah Ryan started her freshman year of high school at Shawnee Mission South, she and her classmates were tasked with helping the City of Overland Park solve a community issue that was keeping public pools from opening.

During her English and Language Arts class, Savannah listened to representatives from the city explain their struggle to hire enough lifeguards to keep the pools in service. It was a problem she says she previously didn't know about but was eager to help solve.

"I thought I came here to read *Of Mice and Men*," joked Savannah. "But, I got to now really dive in deep with my community and know that not only is what I'm learning at school important, but it connects outside of me, just sitting at my desk."

This was Savannah's first opportunity to participate in a Client Connected Project (CCP), an experience that gives students a chance to analyze and solve real problems in collaboration with professionals. Students receive feedback and guidance from the professionals throughout the process and present their findings with suggested solutions.

"I was just amazed by everything that I learned. I gained confidence in myself. I gained speaking skills."

Savannah and her classmates researched the problem by interviewing peers and current lifeguards and then put together comprehensive recommendations. For the final piece of the project, students presented their findings to Overland Park Parks and Recreation Department officials, who were able to use the student research to successfully staff all pools.

By completing this CCP, Savannah earned her first Market Value Asset (MVA), a credential that, by 2030, all SMSD grads will have. There are several ways to earn an MVA. A CCP, like the one Savannah participated in, is an example of a "Work Experience." Another work experience MVA might be an internship.

Students can also earn an MVA by obtaining Entrepreneurial Experiences, College Credit, or an Industry-Recognized Credential like an OSHA-10 certification, Certified Nursing Assistant, Emergency Medical Technician, or ServSafe Food Handler.

"An MVA will help make [students] marketable once they launch and go into the real world," explained Britt Sherer, a Real World Learning counselor at Shawnee Mission North. "They can put it on their resume, they can talk to employers about it. It makes them stand out when they're going for jobs."

Savannah earned another MVA this fall when she participated in another CCP with the City of Overland Park.

In her Advanced Placement Language Arts class, Savannah and her classmates worked on content for signage and plaques at the new Bietigheim-Bissingen Park. The park was a multi-year project built to honor the relationship between the city of Overland Park and its sister city, Bietigheim-Bissingen in Germany.

"We were focusing on explaining the history and the story of the place and the park," explained Savannah. "And we were like, what should we talk about, sports? Or music? What is going to tell the story of both Overland Park and Bietigheim-Bissingen? What intertwined them together?"

Travis Gatewood, the Language Arts teacher at Shawnee Mission South who facilitated this project, says the highlight of this experience was hearing the students' feedback.

"Multiple students have spoken to the project as one of their favorite things they've accomplished in high school," said Gatewood. "I think seeing their writing for a real world audience both when they had to pitch their presentations to city and district staff, and then to see it polished and put on the signs for the community at large to enjoy, I think that authenticity of it and the real world audience for their work is really the highlight and the takeaway from the project."

Through the completion of these projects, Savannah has proven herself to be a resilient learner, an innovative and critical thinker, a skilled communicator, a civic and global contributor, and an effective collaborator. These core competencies, which are the framework of Shawnee Mission School District's Portrait of a Graduate, are essential in real world experiences. However, developing these skills begins long before students embark on their first MVA. Follow the photos around this article to see how students at every age are gaining real world experience and building a foundation of tangible life skills.

## Pre-K

In Nicole Hillmon's Pre-Kindergarten classroom at Crestview Elementary, students aren't just learning about recycling and the environment, they're experiencing it. In their dramatic play area, Hillmon created a recycling center where students get to sort real containers and materials, identify recycling symbols, and even pretend to drive a recycling truck. "Kids are like the biggest sponges for information you will ever meet," explained Hillmon. "And they want to be like adults and do adult things. So, this was a way for them to have a meaningful experience they can carry on. I have some kids that can read, I have some kids that just know their colors, or I have some that need help. And so this also gives it that social interaction, like being able to help each other play in this area, take turns, but also have some ownership to it." Through this play, these Pre-K students are practicing the foundational social and emotional skills—the very core of the Effective Collaborator and Innovative and Critical Thinker, while the content of the play exposes them to an age-appropriate lesson on being a Civic and Global contributor.

## 3rd Grade

At Rising Star Elementary School, third-grade students brought their social studies curriculum to life by working in groups to create their own fictional communities. Students decided whether their community would be urban, suburban, or rural. They worked collaboratively to determine the climate, landmarks, public spaces, and community elements. Then, they applied their map skills to create a large-scale map of their community and presented it to parents and other students. "I see a lot of growth with just working as a team," said Emma Greenlee, one of the teachers who facilitated the project. "They get a lot more independent and confident with conflict resolution skills and how to communicate as a team."

Lynelle Rall is one of the students who participated. She said she was nervous before presenting her project but felt proud after she finished. "I would want to tell other students that [this project] is really hard but it's really fun, too," said Rall. By working together and overcoming the physical and emotional challenges associated with this project, students practiced their skills as Resilient Learners and Effective Collaborators, while also working on their abilities as Skilled Communicators.

## 5th Grade

Fifth-grade students at Rosehill Elementary designed their own water filtration systems as part of their Water Cycle and Earth's Major Systems science unit. Students followed the "Ask, Explore, Model, Evaluate, Explain" framework, which encourages scientific thinking and inquiry. The initial question posed was, "How can I design a device that produces clean water?" Students then researched the question and created their own designs. In groups, they assembled their systems and put them to the test with dirty water samples. Afterwards, the teams assessed their designs for what worked, what didn't and presented their findings. "Testing was definitely a highlight for students," explained Hannah Hobert, a fifth-grade teacher. It brought both excitement and challenges. Some groups ran into issues such as their devices leaking or painfully slow filtration rates. These obstacles required teams to think critically, adapt their designs, and collaborate to improve their outcomes." Bella Suddath and Adi Sapenaro participated in the project and say they liked being able to try different things to get the water clear and the end result "helped us believe what [our research] was saying," said Suddath.

## 7th Grade

At Indian Hills Middle School, 7th-grade students participated in mock interviews with business and community partners and district officials to practice soft skills, including having a conversation with strangers, articulating their experiences and opinions, and conducting themselves professionally. "I thought in interviews they would just ask, "Oh, what do you do? Oh, that's nice." explained Hattie Stenger, one of the student participants. "But, it's a lot harder than that, and takes a lot more work to actually get the job." To prepare for their interviews, students compiled lists of their strengths and weaknesses and brainstormed questions they might be asked. Even after just this one exposure to a professional interview, Stenger said she feels more comfortable and confident going into another interview. "I feel like it was really, really good and in the future I will do a lot better and work harder," said Stenger.

# SMSD STRONG

Strong Schools, Strong Community

From new buildings to new lights, the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) has made every dollar of the 2021 Bond count. The $264 million bond, approved by voters in 2021, has benefited every building and feeder pattern across the district.

Through careful planning and efficient use of resources, the district has delivered on its promise to upgrade and rebuild facilities while being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. As of October 31, 2025, just $27.6 million remains from the bond authorization. These funds are dedicated to the construction of a new early childhood education center, underscoring the district's commitment to its youngest learners.

## Summer Construction

Many of last summer's major projects were made possible through a combination of 2021 Bond and capital funding, as the district nears the completion of its bond commitments.

Roofing overlays were finished at McAuliffe Elementary, Overland Park Elementary, Westridge Middle School, Horizons High School, and SM South High School. Concrete and asphalt improvements refreshed parking lots at Lenexa Hills Elementary, McAuliffe Elementary, Horizons High School, and SM North High School.

Inside buildings, upgrades created refreshed and more welcoming spaces. New flooring was installed at Bluejacket-Flint Elementary, Sunflower Elementary, SM South High School, and SM West High School. New furniture also arrived at Bluejacket-Flint Elementary, Overland Park Elementary, Prairie Elementary, SM South and SM West, bringing modern comfort and functionality to classrooms.

This summer also marked the launch of Phase 1 of a district-wide LED lighting retrofit. SM East, SM North, SM Northwest, SM South, and SM West high schools all received new, energy-efficient lighting. The project will pay for itself in just six years through energy savings, while brightening classrooms and common spaces.

The district completed the final phase of HVAC upgrades, with new systems installed at Broken Arrow Elementary, Corinth Elementary, Merriam Park Elementary, Oak Park Carpenter Elementary, Ray Marsh Elementary, and SM North and SM Northwest high schools. Outdoors, new baseball infield turf was installed at SM North, SM Northwest, and SM South high schools, ensuring student-athletes can practice rain or shine.

## New Buildings

Thanks to the 2021 bond, five elementary schools have been rebuilt–Westwood View, John Diemer, Pawnee, Rushton, and Tomahawk. Each was designed with community input, to serve learners today and in the future.

## Looking Ahead

As Bond 2021 projects wind down, the district continues to plan thoughtfully for the future through ongoing facility evaluations, strategic planning and community conversations. The district Operations and Maintenance Team leads the district in keeping 5,400,000 square feet of facilities and 860 acres of grounds in top shape.

The Shawnee Mission community's support ensures students learn in safe, modern spaces designed to inspire. Because Kids deserve strong schools—and strong schools build strong communities.














# Action Team Members Move Strategic Plan Forward

*Community Members Invited to Contribute*



Hannah Phillips, junior at SM Northwest, joins Kaitlin Shulman, coordinator of belonging and engagement, in providing a Strategic Plan update to the Board of Education.

Since the 2024-2029 Shawnee Mission School District Strategic Plan was developed and approved by the Board of Education, community members have played a central role. Now in the second year of implementation, more than 25 Action Teams are at work on moving forward on this road map which guides district progress.

"We certainly need every single member," said Dr. Leigh Anne Neal, chief of strategic initiatives, during an October update about the Strategic Plan presented to the Board of Education. "They are doing valuable and critical work and we continue to highlight the need for community involvement."

Strategic Plan work ties directly to the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) process, School Improvement Plans, and the district's Portrait of a Graduate. All of this work combined directly impacts the classroom and the district's objective to have every student achieve their personal best.

## Apply Now

The district seeks applications and nominations for individuals to serve on Action Teams which support work on six strategies: Learning, Belonging, People, Technology, Mental Health, and Facilities. Residents who live in district boundaries, community partners, parents, students, and staff members are all invited to serve on action teams.

Visit https://qrco.de/SMSDStrategicPlan to apply or nominate someone to serve on an Action Team.



Highlights from Action Team Members:

**Michelene Krueger**, a parent of SMSD graduates and community partner from the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment, served on two Action Teams focused on mental health.

"If you care about your community and the importance of providing quality education, getting involved can bring you great pride, ownership, and a sense of belonging," she expressed.



**Madison Prince**, fifth grade teacher at John Diemer Elementary School, served on Action Team 1.3.3, focused on increasing professional learning for differentiated core instruction to meet individual student needs.

"It's important because all kids deserve to be able to reach success and achieve and grow at high levels. Being able to meet kids exactly where they were at and being able to know how to do this and what it looks like is something that continues to motivate me in my service on this Action Team and every day in the classroom," she shared.

**Hannah Phillips,** junior at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, served on Action Team 2.3.4, focused on continuing ongoing professional development for staff and increasing student voice and student learning opportunities which foster a sense of belonging for all.

"I think having a student voice makes a bigger difference," Phillips shared. "I think you can't make that difference without that voice of everyone. You can't have change without making change, so being able to be a part of that and have that say is very rewarding."

Strategic Plan Updates are provided regularly to the Board of Education, with the next scheduled to take place in February.

Updates can be found on https://qrco.de/SMSDStrategicPlan.

# From the SMSD Stage and Studio

*Audiences Enrich Student Learning in Visual, Performing Arts*

This fall, SM North senior Macey Heikkila was working on a huge art project for one of her largest audiences yet. She was selected to display her artwork at Oak Park Mall. Once complete, it will be presented in a sitting area recently enhanced by interior design students at Shawnee Mission Northwest.

"A lot of people go to Oak Park Mall, so it's really cool to have a piece that will be there," Heikkila shared. "Having a bigger audience can bring different perspectives and a lot more people are going to see this artwork than anybody who has ever seen my art before. It's out of my comfort zone, pushing me to do more."

Over the course of multiple weeks, Heikkila painted a swamp-themed artwork on a four-foot by four-foot canvas. Heikkila is gaining important Real World Learning experience through the opportunity to share art with a bigger audience, according to Stephanie Dalley, SM North art teacher. Heikkila first received feedback on her work when it was selected from a thumbnail to be the featured artwork.

"This is giving her some idea of what the client prefers instead of painting to only her preference," Dalley shared. "Painting on this scale is also tough. She is learning the challenges that come from scaling up from a thumbnail to a pretty big surface."

The student experience of creating art and sharing it with the extended community is a powerful learning opportunity and is one Megan Ellis, Lenexa Hills art teacher and visual arts coordinator, said she sees happen every day. "As students create, they exercise creative thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration," she explained. "They are learning to view the world through different lenses and approach challenges from multiple perspectives."

Then, when art is shared with an audience, it deepens the learning experience, she added.



Macey Heikkila, SM North senior, stands by her artwork in progress.

"They learn to see through the eyes of others. This helps them understand the impact of their creative choices, and see the value of their own voice. It also helps them build valuable future-ready skills in communication, reflection, and confidence. Ultimately, sharing art publicly, in any range of public settings and spaces, gives students the sense of 'what I think/feel/have to say matters,'" Ellis shared.

That same transformative experience of performing for an audience is just as important for performing arts students, Dr. Bill Thomas, SM West director of bands and performing arts coordinator explained. Many performances from Pre-K through 12th grade are little to no cost for an audience member to attend. "Without public performance, it would be like a sports team practicing but never competing," Thomas expressed. "Practicing with your friends is fun, but the thrill of performing with an audience is the real payoff. Many of our groups are quite accomplished and will leave the audience astonished at their professionalism. Some of our younger groups are just plain cute and adorable! Whatever our patrons may be looking for, we can provide a wonderful opportunity for community engagement."

**There are numerous ways community members can support student artists throughout the year:**

-Watch SMSD digital art shows on the SMSD YouTube channel, Search for Shawnee Mission School District on YouTube.

-Follow the district performing arts calendar- Available at www.smsd.org/calendar

-Sign Up for a Gold Card. This is available to those 60 years or older living within district boundaries. Gold card members receive free admission to all events at Shawnee Mission high schools (except play-off tournament games sponsored by the Kansas State High School Activities Association, and fine arts activities which are not sponsored by individual schools.) Visit www.smsd.org/families/gold-cards for information.

Many individuals support the arts through volunteering, PTA support, and providing resources to student artists. The Shawnee Mission Education Foundation supports arts education in a variety of ways, including "It Starts with the Arts" and the annual faculty art show.

# Save the Date

## Pre-K and Kindergarten Enrollment Opening



Enrollment for Pre-K and Kindergarten for the 2026-2027 school year starts Dec. 1, 2025.

Children must be 4 years old on or before Aug. 31, 2026 to enroll in Pre-K and 5 years old on or before Aug. 31, 2026 to enroll in Kindergarten. Visit www.smsd.org for enrollment links.

## R&D Forum Coming this Spring!

Open Houses 4-7 p.m. on April 21, 22, 23, 2026 at the Center for Academic Achievement, 8200 W. 71st Street.

Live Next Great Idea Pitch Competition - April 25, 2026 at the Center for Academic Achievement and live-streamed. An awards ceremony will follow in the afternoon.

## Summer Enrichment



Summer Enrichment offers week-long classes designed to help students currently in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through seventh grade explore areas of interest during the summer. Enrollment opens Wednesday, February 4, 2026. Watch smsd.org for more information.

**Jump Start to Learning** An exciting opportunity for incoming Kindergartners designed to help them learn academic skills and transition to their new school environment takes place July 6-24, 2026. Parents of incoming Kindergarten students are encouraged to find out more from your school principal.




# Building Real-World Opportunities for Students

*Powering Real World Learning in Shawnee Mission*



A community professional conducts a mock interview with an Indian Hills student.

The Shawnee Mission Education Foundation supports Real World Learning in the Shawnee Mission School District by connecting students to local businesses and industries. These partnerships help students build real-world experiences, professional skills, and the confidence to succeed after high school.

One of the ways the Foundation makes this possible is through its Corporate Council, a network of local business leaders who partner with the Foundation to support student learning. Corporate Council members meet throughout the year to share industry insights, promote career awareness, help create meaningful learning opportunities, and financially support the Foundation.

"Partnerships like these are vital," said Laura Harsch, business to education program officer for the Foundation. "When our business community gets involved, whether through mentorships, internships, or career fairs, students can see how what they're learning applies beyond the classroom."

Many Corporate Council members offer internships to high school students. These hands-on experiences are a type of Market Value Asset–credentials that demonstrate readiness for college or career and help students build strong resumes as they prepare for the future.

Real World Learning begins well before high school. For example, earlier this year, the Foundation supported a unique learning experience at Indian Hills Middle School. Seventh graders participated in mock interviews. With help from community professionals, students practiced sharing their strengths, interests, and goals with confidence and professionalism.

Nathan Daraban, senior project manager for JE Dunn Construction, volunteered as an interviewer and found the experience rewarding. "These kids are super impressive," he shared. "It is important for them to get to talk to people in the industry and work on the soft skills, like how to introduce themselves, shake hands, and talk about what makes them unique. They're going to be building their resumes too, but it's the interpersonal skills that I think are translatable and important."

Another way the Foundation connects students with real-world opportunities is through the Students Ready-to-Work Career Fair which is held each spring. The event features local companies and organizations with immediate job openings for graduating seniors, along with booths for students exploring long-term career paths.

The Foundation's work shows that preparing students for the future takes everyone—schools, businesses, and the community—working together.

The Shawnee Mission Education Foundation thanks its Corporate Council Partners and Fellows:

BURNS McDONNELL · DRAKE DEVELOPMENT · DS BUS LINES · HUNT MIDWEST · JE DUNN CONSTRUCTION · Kiewit · MetroAir · NEWKIRK NOVAK CONSTRUCTION PARTNERS · TRANE

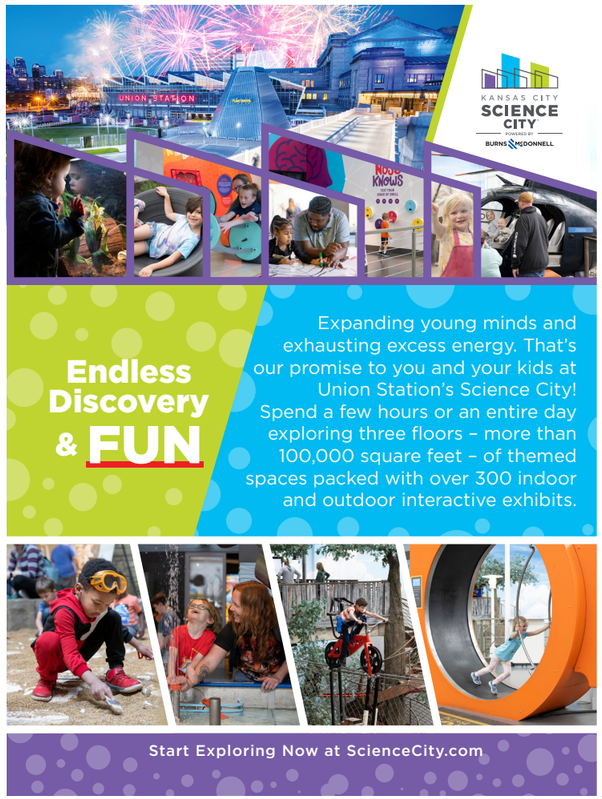
For more information about joining the Corporate Council, please reach out to Laura Harsch (lauraharsch@smsd.org) or visit www.smef.org/corporatecouncil.












Wish it here.
Wonder it here.
Weave it here.
Welcome it here.
**Watch it here.**
Write it here.
Waltz it here.
Weather it here.
Wander it here.



Indulge in endless entertainment options at Johnson County Library. Binge your favorite shows, get lost in a movie, jam to music, find inspiration with engaging programs and read the latest magazine and newspaper issues, all with no subscription fees or paywalls. **jocolibrary.org**

JOHNSON COUNTY LIBRARY