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QUARTERLY CONNECTION

SPRING 2026



CPS students shape futures through choice, opportunity, and real-world learning. Assistance League Links to Learning grants News you can use Eagle Bluffs Elementary School construction 2026 Summer School programs

INSIDE ISSUE:

QUARTERLY CONNECTION



CPS students shape futures through choice, opportunity, and real-world learning



Columbia Public Schools offers one of Missouri's most comprehensive selections of courses, programs, and real-world experiences, allowing students to graduate ready for the future.

From advanced college-credit opportunities to more than 150 electives, internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on enrichment experiences, CPS students learn in ways that reflect who they are and who they aspire to become.

Whether students are preparing for a two- or four-year college, entering the workforce, or exploring emerging fields, the CPS curriculum is designed to provide flexibility, access, and a clear path forward.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT, DUAL CREDIT, AND EARLY COLLEGE

Rigorous academic opportunities are central to how CPS helps students shape their futures. CPS high schools offer more than 30 Advanced Placement (AP) and 58 dual credit courses (courses that allow students to earn both high school and college credits), along with an Early College program that allows students to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree simultaneously. These pathways give students the freedom to design an academic plan that aligns with their strengths and ambitions.

Hickman High School senior and 2026 National Merit Semifinalist, Liang Lim, said one of the biggest factors that helped him receive semifinalist status was his experience with AP exams.

"After a couple years of being exposed to standardized AP tests, the pacing, format, and testing environment of the PSAT felt familiar and easier to handle," he said. "I also found that resources on YouTube were great for preparing for the PSAT. Being a semifinalist has definitely opened up a ton of opportunities for college, helping with admission and access to scholarships. I'm honored to represent Hickman."

Students may take AP courses across English, math, science, social studies, and the arts; earn dual credit through university partnerships; participate in Early College, in partnership with Moberly Area Community College, graduating with a high school diploma and an associate's degree or a meaningful number of college hours already completed.

LANGUAGE PATHWAYS: Students in grades 6–12 can study Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, or Latin from beginning through intermediate levels. Since 2019–20, more than 127 students have earned the Seal of Biliteracy. Counselors align language study with AP and dual-credit plans to demonstrate true college readiness.

CAREER & TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: In 2024–25, 401 students participated in CTSOs across agriculture, business, health, trades, engineering, education, and more. Nearly 5,500 courses were taken, earning 2,925 credits.

GRADE-LEVEL EXPERIENCES: Students engage in hands-on learning from elementary through high school, from planetarium visits and nature programs to museums, the Truman Library, the True/False Film Fest, the ACT, and senior milestones like prom and graduation.



CPS students shape futures

continued

CPS also pays for all juniors to take the ACT or a skills placement exam, ensuring every student has equal access to key entrance exams.

Combined, these options help students personalize their schedules, reduce the cost of a degree, and gain confidence in the pace and expectations of postsecondary study.

Rock Bridge High School senior Lillie Spellman, who will graduate with her high school diploma and her associate's degree this spring, said the Early College program has been extremely helpful.

"It's a huge money and time saver," she said. "Knocking off two years of tuition and also two years of college in general. Prerequisites at big colleges are usually lectures with a lot of people, so this way the professor knows my name, and I feel like I can get help when I need it."

MORE THAN 150 ELECTIVE CHOICES

Student choice is central to the CPS experience, and nowhere is that more evident than in the district's extensive elective offerings. With more than 150 elective courses available districtwide, including options beginning in middle school, students explore their interests, discover new passions, and develop specialized skills.

Electives span fine arts, world languages, engineering, agriculture, computer science, health sciences, culinary arts, journalism, marketing, design, and more. Students can take unique offerings like interior design, law enforcement, biomedical innovation, zoology, forensic science, or learn to become an emergency medical technician (EMT), a teacher, or a certified nurse assistant (CNA), among many other options. CPS' elective courses are offered to encourage students to try new fields and refine what excites them, helping them build a personalized learning plan that supports long-term goals.

Battle High School senior, Olivia Marriott, said she's always been interested in healthcare as a career.

"The compassion in healthcare not only intrigued me to continue taking the classes, but the teachers at the Career Center also helped make this experience super fun as they care so much about our education and make sure we're having fun while learning," she said. "It really makes healthcare such an inspiring path every time I watch someone in the field."

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: INTERNSHIPS, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

Beyond the classroom, CPS pairs academic learning with hands-on experiences that allow students to explore career paths and develop



workplace skills. More than 60 organizations and businesses partner with CPS to offer job skill training, job shadowing, clinical rotations, internships, and apprenticeships. Through those partnerships and programs at each high school and the Columbia Area Career Center, students engage in opportunities that prepare them for the world of work.

Students gain industry-recognized certifications, supervised hours, references, and résumé-building experiences that help them stand out after graduation. Many also earn college credit or stackable credentials in fields including health care, information technology, business, agriculture, trades, early childhood education, and digital media. CPS Director of Workforce Development Katie Siegel said these real-world opportunities help students identify career interests.

"Participating in a registered youth apprenticeship or work-based learning opportunity gives CPS students a head start by allowing them to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings while earning valuable credentials and wages," she said. "These experiences help students clarify career goals, build confidence and professional skills, and transition into adulthood with practical experience that makes them more competitive in the workforce."

ENRICHMENT AND ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYONE

The district's commitment to giving students access to life-changing skills goes beyond the classroom by ensuring all students participate in enriching, real-world experiences connected to classroom learning. The district offers a unique field trip or specialized program experience for all students at each grade level. Some of the district grade level field trips and programs include studies at the Missouri River, hands-on learning at the district's Boone County Nature School, touring the

Missouri State Capitol, visiting CPS' planetarium, visiting America's National Churchill Museum, and participating in interactive problem-solving at the White House Decision Center at the Truman Library.

Extracurricular and after-school activities further expand student choice through clubs, fine arts, academic teams, and MSHSAA-sponsored activities and athletics. With options for nearly every interest, students build community, confidence, and leadership skills while strengthening their connection to school.

Rock Bridge High School senior and 2025 Prose Reading Missouri State Speech and Debate Champion Micah Hill said being involved in extracurricular activities reinforced his academic pursuits and connection to his school.

"Joining speech and debate and being involved in various activities provides the impetus to engage with school work more because it creates a regimen and structure in your life," said Hill. "Furthermore, you feel more intertwined with the culture at your school when you, the student, are actively working to create it."

These enrichment experiences broaden students' perspectives and help them determine who they want to become.

A PERSONALIZED PATH FOR EVERY STUDENT

No two course schedules are alike, and CPS is committed to providing every student with opportunities to build a future that reflects their aspirations. Students are encouraged to build individual career and academic plans (ICAP) with support from their school counselor to align their choices with their college-, career-, and life-readiness goals. From world languages beginning in sixth grade, industry-style labs and college-level coursework in high school, CPS equips students with the skills, confidence, and support they need to choose their path and thrive after graduation.



"These experiences help students clarify career goals, build confidence and professional skills, and transition into adulthood ..."

Dr. Katie Siegel
CPS Director of Workforce Development

Assistance League Links

to Learning Grants



The Assistance League of Mid-Missouri (ALMM) awarded 159 Links to Learning grants for the 2025-2026 school year, resulting in funding of \$144,139.17.

The Links to Learning program is one of several philanthropic programs ALMM supports. It provides substantial funding to teachers for projects, materials, and experiences for students that will have a direct impact on learning in the classroom.

Each year, CPS teachers preschool through high school are invited to submit proposals describing how the desired funding will enrich student learning experiences, improve student achievement, or foster interdisciplinary study. All submissions are reviewed by an allocation committee.

Teachers who receive awards provide evaluations at the end of the school year which convey how students benefited from the funding. Impacts range from test score improvements and academic opportunities to cultural enrichment experiences such as attending play performances or other field trips.

"We believe in supporting the children of Columbia and particularly the classroom teachers throughout CPS," Links to Learning Chair Terry Gaines said. "We are grateful for the community support that allows us the opportunity to award these funds and directly impact student learning."



159
RECIPIENTS

36
CPS SCHOOLS
RECEIVING GRANTS

\$144,139.17
IN FUNDING

NEWS YOU CAN USE

MISSOURI ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Columbia Public Schools has scored in the top 15 percent of school districts in Missouri, achieving 88.7 percent, according to the state of Missouri's Annual Performance Report (APR) for Missouri school districts. Columbia Public Schools maintained or improved in 19 of 20 performance categories, indicating that CPS is on track or has met the target in graduation rate, post-secondary outcomes, and the number of students taking college level or advanced training courses.

MERITORIOUS BUDGET AWARD

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) presented **Columbia Public Schools** with the Meritorious Budget Award for the fiscal year 2025–2026. The award recognizes districts whose budgets are comprehensive, accessible, and informative for stakeholders.



TWO CPS EDUCATORS ACHIEVE PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

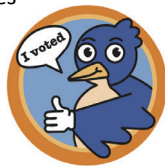
Hickman High School's **Ashley Fossum** and John Warner Middle School's **Cassidy Urie** have earned National Board Certification, one of the most respected professional credentials available to PreK–12 educators. National Board Certified teachers are known to positively impact classroom learning and student outcomes through enhanced instructional skills, thoughtful reflection, and leadership.

CPS ELEMENTARY MATH COORDINATOR HONORED WITH STATE MATHEMATICS AWARD

CPS Elementary Math Coordinator **Jenifer Smith** has been recognized with the 2025 Outstanding Mathematics Instructional Coach/Coordinator Award from the Missouri Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

CACC GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENT WINS BOONE COUNTY "I VOTED" STICKER CONTEST

Grace Radkowiec, a Rock Bridge High School student who takes graphic design classes at the Columbia Area Career Center, has been selected as the winner of Boone County's official 2026 "I Voted" sticker contest. Her artwork will be featured on thousands of stickers distributed to voters across the county during the 2026 election cycle.



ROCK BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWL TEAM WINS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

The Rock Bridge High School Ethics Bowl team has earned the title of state champions, demonstrating exceptional critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical reasoning skills. The team's state victory advances them

to the upcoming Super-Regional competition. The team members are **Ishita Gautam, Jenna Lin, Karina Xing, Sophia Li, and Isabel Kosiara**.

CACC STUDENTS EARN FIRST PLACE IN MAKE48 INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Students from the Columbia Area Career Center (CACC) earned first place in a recent Make48 classroom challenge, showcasing creativity, collaboration and real-world problem-solving skills. Hickman High School students **Logan Allen, Chase Trim** and **Ethan Childs** made up the winning team – Absorba Vent Cover. They won in the "Build for Living" challenge presented through the Building Science Symposium. Students designed innovative solutions related to building science and livable environments, applying STEM and design-thinking principles.



CACC Make48 Winners

SENIOR SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS U.S. SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

Hickman High School senior **Abdulrahman Adekunle** has been selected to represent Missouri as a 2026 delegate to the prestigious United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP). He will attend Washington Week with another Missouri delegate in Washington, D.C., to study the federal government and meet with U.S. senators, national leaders and senior officials. Each delegate receives a \$10,000 undergraduate scholarship. Learn more at ussenateyouth.org.



Jenifer Smith



CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS AT EAGLE BLUFFS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Flooring installation is underway in the classroom and collaboration areas, and all wooded doors and studio bench cushions have been installed. Finishing work such as painting, lighting, and shelf and door installation is underway in the commons, media center, and innovation lab. Bleacher installation is ongoing in the gymnasium. Flooring installation and court striping in the storm shelter and gymnasium were completed, and mascot wall panels were installed in the reception area. The rooftop HVAC unit has been installed and final calibration and integration is ongoing. Continued exterior and site work includes irrigation and fencing installation.



From left: Ishita Gautam, Jenna Lin, Karina Xing, Sophia Li, Isabel Kosiara



2026

Summer School Programs

JUNE 1 – JUNE 26

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 for high-potential multicultural students grades 5-8 who have been historically under-represented at the college level and not enrolled in the gifted program at Hickman High School.

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, 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 they did not pass to stay on track for graduation. Successful completion of a credit recovery class results in the grade of P and .5 credit.

JUNE 1 – JULY 24

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 Benton Elementary School.

JUNE 1 – JUNE 18 JULY 6 – JULY 23

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 at the Center for Early Learning North.

JUNE 7 – JUNE 17

MAC Scholars Honors Summer Academy is an academic and enrichment experience for entering 10th grade high potential multicultural students in partnership with The University of Missouri.

JUNE 8 – JUNE 26

Arts Explorers Program is for selected elementary students entering grades 4-5 and takes place from 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM at John Warner Middle School. Enrollment is by recommendation only.

JULY 6 – JULY 17

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.

JULY 7 – JULY 18

Secondary Theater for grades 7-9 at Gentry Middle School.

www.cpsk12.org/summerschool

BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

Adventure Club is an extended day program at elementary schools operated 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 there is also a link on the CPS website under Summer School. Adventure Club website is: 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 at their high school 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.