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SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUMMER 2026



> Supporting State-of-the-Art Facilities

> A New School for Our Youngest Learners

> Students Driving Innovation

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ON THE COVER: The Shawnee Mission East Choir singing at the 2026 commencement.

#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.

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Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction (Online)

Advance your practice.
Expand your leadership.
Deepen your impact.

The **Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Curriculum & Instruction** is designed for experienced educators working in **national or international K–12 contexts** who seek to develop advanced pedagogical expertise, professional leadership, and the ability to thoughtfully apply research to practice. This fully online program emphasizes **practice-based inquiry**, leadership development, and scholarly mentoring—supporting educators as they grow their **professional identity as practitioner–scholars** while remaining grounded in their own educational settings.

Program Highlights:

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- Emphasis on **contextualized research applied to real-world practice**
- Cohort model that fosters **meaningful connections with colleagues across the country**
- Ongoing mentoring to support development as an **educator, leader, and scholar**

Degree Requirements?

The Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction requires a **minimum of 94 post-baccalaureate graduate credit hours.**

With approval of the supervisory committee, **up to 30 graduate credits from a completed master's degree may be applied toward the program.**

Five Areas of Study:

- **Foundational Knowledge** – 12 credits
- **Research** – 12 credits
- **Area of Emphasis** – 48 credits
  (includes up to 30 credits from the master's degree)
- **Clinical Experience** – 12 credits
- **Dissertation Research** – 16 credits

Dissertation

Students complete a **dissertation focused on an important problem of professional educational practice**, using a systematic methodology aligned with accepted research paradigms.
The dissertation culminates in a **public, oral defense.**

Career Pathways

Graduates expand their expertise and leadership capacity as:

- **K–12 teachers or administrators**
- **College or university faculty**
- **Educational leaders and instructional specialists**

A Community of Scholar–Practitioners

This program intentionally supports students in:

- Developing their **professional and scholarly identity**
- Building sustained relationships with **educators from across the country**
- Engaging in **mentored research and inquiry** that matters to their own contexts

CONTACT: Dr. Sherri Martinie
martinie@ksu.edu

Schu's News

Updates from Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher

The 2026-2027 theme is Building Tomorrow Together. Building Tomorrow Togehter means preparing our students for the future. We continue our focus on Wildly Important Goals and tracking the benchmarks (like attendance) that we know will support student success. We look forward to a public update on student assessments in early fall to our Board of Education. We are making great progress and our students and staff are doing incredible work. Building Tomorrow Together also means providing learning environments that support continued success for our students and educators.



Dr. Michael Schumacher

One exciting example came this spring, when we celebrated the groundbreaking of the new early childhood education center, which will expand learning opportunities for our Pre-K students for years to come. Learn more about the groundbreaking on page 9.

Looking ahead, our community will have opportunities to discuss how we continue supporting students through investments in our schools, helping ensure Shawnee Mission remains a place where students can learn, grow, and thrive. You can read more about our strategic planning for what lies ahead for Shawnee Mission on page 8.

Supporting Public Education

I continue to be inspired by what I see in our schools every day. Our students are learning, growing, and achieving remarkable things because of the dedication of outstanding educators, support staff, families, and community partners who believe in public education.

That is why Shawnee Mission joined Blue Valley, De Soto, and Olathe Public Schools this spring in forming the Kansas Public School Funding Coalition. The coalition was created to address the state's longstanding failure to fully fund special education as required by law and to ensure Kansas students receive the resources they deserve.

For more than 15 years, Kansas school districts have been required to use increasing amounts of local funding to make up for the state's shortfall in special education funding. This coalition is about ensuring the State of Kansas fulfills its legal responsibility so our local resources can return to supporting all students.

At every level, we will continue to advocate for our students and schools. I encourage you to stay informed and remain engaged as we advocate for the resources our kids deserve.

Welcoming New Team Members

To successfully build tomorrow, we must also continue to recruit top talent to our leadership team. The Shawnee Mission School District is pleased to welcome two new Executive Leadership Team members.

Jake Potter- Chief Communications Officer



Potter officially joined the district on July 1 as the chief communications officer. In this role, he oversees district communications, community engagement, marketing, and strategic storytelling efforts.

Potter brings more than 15 years of experience in school communications, having served in leadership roles in both Lawrence Public Schools and the Leavenworth Unified School District. He currently serves on the boards of directors for both the National School Public Relations Association and the Kansas School Public Relations Association and holds Accreditation in Public Relations (APR).

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Studies/Public Relations from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

"The key role of a school communicator is to deliver clear and consistent messaging that keeps families, students, staff, and the community-at-large informed and engaged," Potter shared. "Effective communication is more than just sharing out breaking news and timely updates, it also works to fuel a spirit of collaboration around a shared purpose of positively impacting student outcomes. I am honored to have been chosen to join the SMSD team and to help share the amazing stories that happen in our classrooms on a daily basis."

Allison Staroski- Chief Financial Officer



After more than a decade of serving Shawnee Mission in a variety of financial leadership roles, Allison Staroski has been named the district's chief financial officer.

Staroski joined the Shawnee Mission team in 2012, after beginning her career in school finance with the Santa Fe Trail School District. Throughout her time with the SMSD, she has helped oversee the responsible management of district resources, supporting students, staff, and schools through sound financial stewardship.

Staroski earned a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the University of Kansas and brings nearly two decades of experience in school finance to her new role.

A Shawnee Mission parent, Staroski is passionate about serving the district where her children attend school.

"The business office's responsibility is to ensure the district's financial resources are aligned with our strategic plan and directed toward what matters most– our students," shared Staroski. "When we manage resources well, we create the financial stability that allows our educators to do their best work and gives every student the opportunity to succeed."

Stay Up-to-Date

When I look at the future of Shawnee Mission, I am incredibly encouraged. Every day, I see students learning, educators inspiring, and our community stepping up. The future of our district is not something we simply wait for—it is something we build together. Whether you are in our schools every day or live in our neighborhoods, we hope you stay in touch with all things Shawnee Mission. Check out www.smsd.org for recent news and regular updates on the happenings across our community. Our podcast, Shawnee Mission Mic'd Up, returns this fall and so will our celebration of reading through Read Across SMSD. I also encourage you to follow us on social media. One of our regular segments is Hallpass, where I introduce you to the amazing students and staff in our SMSD schools – one walk at a time.

Thank you for your continued partnership. I look forward to all we will accomplish this year as One Shawnee Mission: Building Tomorrow Together.

Building Tomorrow Together!

NATIONALLY RANKED

All five comprehensive Shawnee Mission high schools–SM East, SM North, SM Northwest, SM South, and SM West–earned a spot in the U.S. News and World Report list of Best High Schools in the Country. SM East ranks in the top five Best High Schools in Kansas! U.S. News and World Report also named Corinth Elementary to the state's top spot at the elementary level, alongside multiple Shawnee Mission schools ranked within the top 10, 25, and 40 statewide.

ALL STAR HIGH SCHOOLS

SM Northwest, SM South, and SM West have been recognized as 2026 All Star High Schools by the Kansas Board of Regents. The designation honors schools that go above and beyond to support students with college and job applications, financial aid, and exploring postsecondary pathways.

MENTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

During the 2025-26 school year, more than 550 professionals from the community volunteered their time to mentor students, conduct mock interviews, and support programs like Women in Leadership, Men of Excellence, Leadership Shawnee Mission, and the Next Great Idea Pitch Competition.

NATIONAL SKILLSUSA CHAMP

Recent SM West graduate and Signature Program student Logan Sommerla, won the National SkillsUSA championship in culinary arts. He is the district's second overall winner at this national competition in the last four years. SkillsUSA is a workforce development organization for students which empowers them to become skilled professionals, career-ready leaders and responsible community members.

NJROTC SUCCESS

The Shawnee Mission North Navy Junior Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) team recently won the Area 15 Championship and qualified for Nationals for the 21st consecutive year.

Art Educator is Teacher of the Year Finalist



Shawnee Mission West incoming senior, Ada Knechtel, paints a positive picture when recalling her time in Audrey Gilroy's Westridge Middle School art classroom. Gilroy, she says, has an extraordinary gift for making each student feel seen, valued, and capable. Audrey Gilroy, art teacher, is a finalist for 2027 Kansas Teacher of the Year (KTOY).

"Every day I looked forward to going to her art classes because of the sense of community that the classroom was filled with," Knechtel shared. "I have the fondest memories of my classmates and I excitedly going around the room, table-to-table, admiring and complimenting each other's art. She cultivated such a positive environment."

That sense of community extends to every student, said parent Amanda Connealy, who shared the impact Gilroy had on her child with special needs. Connealy noticed how from the very beginning, Gilroy worked to find out about her daughter's interests and inspirations.

"She used all of those elements to inspire the art projects she worked on, helping her better connect to the curriculum," Connealy shared. "The creativity and intentional teaching allowed my child to experience a sense of self-expression that was difficult in many of her other classes. Beyond artistic skills, Ms. Gilroy helped my child experience inclusion, success and joy – gifts that are truly invaluable to our family."

The art shared throughout Westridge Middle School is a celebration of student voice, Principal Martha Mendoza explained.

"The visual transformation of our school from murals to framed exhibits is a direct reflection of her commitment to a student-centered art program and inclusive school culture," Mendoza added. "She exemplifies excellence in teaching, advocacy for students, and believes in the power of what arts can do for students."

As a KTOY finalist, Gilroy received a $2,000 cash award from Security Benefit and is eligible to be named Kansas Teacher of the Year, to be announced at a statewide ceremony held in September.

"I am incredibly grateful and honored to be recognized as the Kansas Teacher of the Year Region 3 Secondary Finalist," Gilroy shared. "This recognition feels especially meaningful because I see it not as an individual accomplishment, but a reflection of the incredible students, colleagues, mentors, and families who have been part of my journey. I have been fortunate to work alongside educators who inspire me every day and students who continually remind me why this work matters."

This year, 142 educators from across the state were nominated for Kansas Teacher of the Year. Julia Orth, third-grade teacher at Nieman Elementary was also honored at a Region 3 banquet as Shawnee Mission's elementary-level nominee.

Strategy: Facilities Planning Underway for Potential 2027 Bond

SMSD Strategy:
Community- developed and adopted by the Board of Education in 2024, Shawnee Mission's Facilities strategy states:

"We will strategically focus resources to support state-of-the-art facilities to accomplish our beliefs, mission, and objectives."

SMSD is now developing a strategic bond plan to build community connections through sustainable, state-of-the-art facilities that serve as hubs for collaboration, engagement, and shared experiences.

Scope of Building Maintenance

The Shawnee Mission School District includes over 5.4 million square feet of facilities. "Our community has made it clear that they support our work to provide our students the best possible educational environments," Dr. David Stubblefield, deputy superintendent stated.

Work in Progress and Next Steps:

Strategic Plan Action Team 6.6.1. presented a list of recommended facility projects that was shared at the March 23, 2026 Board meeting.

Recommendations included:

- Selected elementary school rebuilds
- A Career and Technical Education Campus
- Athletic and performing arts upgrades
- Safety and security improvements

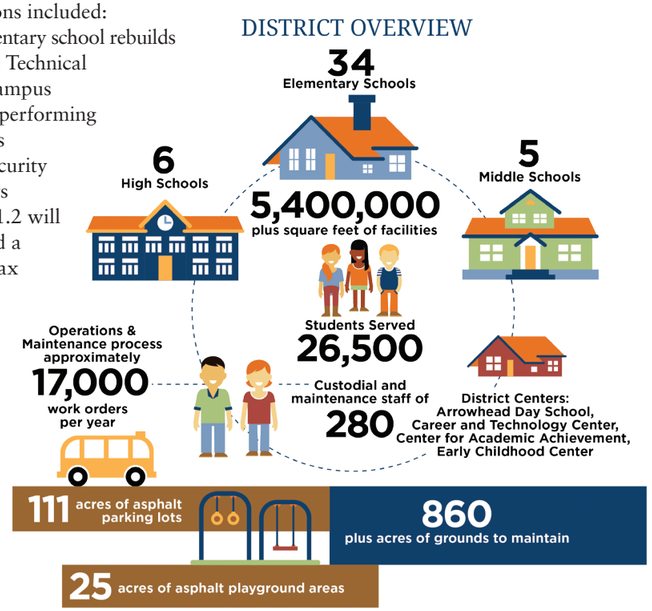
Action Team 6.1.2 will then recommend a minimal or no tax increase bond referendum.

Key Dates:

Aug. 31, 2026- Initial draft resolution presented to the Board.

November 9, 2026- Board of Education members will meet to consider the approval of a bond referendum resolution.

March 2, 2027- A mail ballot election would be held for public voting on this date.



Published August 2026. Visit www.smsd.org for facilities updates about the potential 2027 bond.

Zūm Transportation Starts in 2026-2027

Shawnee Mission is thrilled Zūm will provide school transportation to students in the 2026-2027 school year. Families seeking information on bus registration are encouraged to visit smsd.org/families/transportation.

Zūm Parent App

The Zūm Parent App Allows parents / guardians to track their child's ride in real-time, receive pickup and dropoff notifications, cancel a ride if the student is not attending, and view driver and vehicle information for each ride. The Zūm App is currently available in 12+ languages.

Zūm Now Hiring

Certified drivers are encouraged to apply, and training and certification programs are available for those interested in becoming school bus drivers. Information about open positions and how to apply can be found on the Zūm hiring page: http://bit.ly/4xYXEWa



SMSD Breaks Ground on New Early Childhood Education Center

Small shovels and big smiles helped mark an exciting moment for the Shawnee Mission School District. On May 14, students, families, staff, and community members gathered to break ground on a new state-of-the-art early childhood education center.

Scan the QR code to watch a video about the event.

Designed for the district's littlest learners, the center will provide a space where 3- and 4-year-olds can explore, create, and build the foundation for future success.

"Today marks an exciting milestone for our district, our families, and our students," Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher said. "This project represents so much more than a new building. It reflects our community's commitment to giving every child a strong start."

The project is made possible through the remaining bond authorization approved by Shawnee Mission voters in 2021 and through the district's responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

Purposefully designed for young children, every part of the center will encourage movement, hands-on learning, and discovery. Students will have opportunities to learn, play, and grow in spaces created specifically for their developmental needs. The center will also bring together special education and general education classrooms in one inclusive environment where every child can thrive.

Inside, the building will feature a "Nature's Wonderland" theme with calming colors, engaging textures, and cozy spaces that spark imagination and invite exploration.

Outside, play and learning spaces will feature inclusive playground equipment, a trike path, gardens, walking trails, and open green space that can also be enjoyed by the surrounding neighborhood.

In addition to classrooms, the center will serve as a hub for Pre-K families by housing dedicated spaces for the Parents as Teachers program, audiology services, and conferences.

"Today is all about possibility," said Board of Education President April Boyd-Noronha. "It's about creating a place where children can ask questions, solve problems, discover who they are, and develop a lifelong love of learning with the support of caring educators."

Principal Carla Heintz noted the facility represents the true beginning of many educational journeys. "We are creating a place where students will learn and grow side by side, build friendships, and discover from the very beginning that they belong to a caring community," she shared.

Following remarks, members of the Board of Education and district leaders joined project partners from Hollis + Miller and Newkirk Novak for the ceremonial first dig.

The highlight of the event came just moments later, when a group of current Pre-K students grabbed their own play shovels to help turn the dirt.

Their participation and enthusiasm served as a reminder of why this work matters -- we are all Building Tomorrow Together.

Construction of the center is officially underway, with the building expected to welcome students and families in 2027.





Left- Sixth-graders at Briarwood Elementary School film morning news program, using green screen technology. Right: A student at Rising Star Elementary School creates a stop-motion animation film as part of a story-writing exercise.

Instructional Technology: An Intentional and Purposeful Approach

Anfel Bouchelarm says she has always loved fantasy books and stories.

Last year, while a fifth-grader at Rising Star Elementary School, she gained the chance to write one of her own — one that eventually turned into a script and stop-motion film.

This activity was all part of a lesson about how to write a fantasy narrative, said Hayley Prueter, fifth grade teacher. Students used a graphic organizer, drafted a story, peer revised and edited, wrote their final copy, and then made the stop-motion film using an iPad to represent their story and recorded themselves reading the story. The first step was helping the students solidify the writing process and then they made the story come to life, she shared.

“It was so fun to see their creative sides shine!” Prueter expressed. “They had been looking forward to this project and were very excited and engaged when they finally took to it.”

After the young filmmakers were ready, they all shared their films with each other in an informal film festival.

“I really liked it,” Bouchelarm said. “This was one of my favorite projects. I learned you could be creative and still make great stories with your own imagination and it was a great thing to do. Maybe we will make more stop-motion in the future.”

District Strategy: Technology

Technology is one of the main strategies in the Shawnee Mission School District’s Strategic Plan, developed by the community and adopted by the Board of Education. It states “We will ensure the intentional and innovative use of relevant technology throughout the district to achieve our mission.” As technology continues to change and become more ingrained in daily life, Shawnee Mission continues its work to integrate an intentional and purposeful approach to the use of instructional technology in the classroom.

Across the district, students and teachers use both traditional or analog approaches and technology strategies to enhance student learning in lessons tied to curriculum.

Students will be graduating into a society that uses technology frequently and so it is important that students learn how to be astute users of the resource, Superintendent Dr. Michael Schumacher shared.

“We are listening and we must continue to partner with our families on this and we recognize this is something we need to continue to discuss and address,” Dr. Schumacher expressed." At the same time, those technology resources are necessary to move our kids forward."

He emphasized there should be no non-instructional use of technology in the classroom. Examples of non-educational screen time include using devices during indoor recess, as a reward, or after completing assignments, as well as playing video games and watching videos unrelated to education. This aligns with newly updated guidance for technology use across the district.

Using Technology for Instruction

Shawnee Mission is implementing several guides and frameworks to support staff and student technology use, with the guiding philosophy that learning must always come before technology.

One resource is the Developmental Guide for the Use of District-Provided Technology. This guide was created incorporating feedback from community members through Strategic Plan work. This framework is intended to provide an intentional approach to support any purposeful use of electronic devices for educational activity.

To give teachers a clear, reflective tool for lesson planning, SMSD’s instructional technology cadre (a collaborative group of educators) spent the past year researching eight different technology frameworks. They ultimately selected the Passive, Interactive, Creative, Replacement, Amplification, and Transformation (PICRAT) model, a matrix that encourages teachers to reflect on how students interact with technology and how or if the technology will enhance the lesson.

Teachers are being encouraged to look at an entire unit of study and first identify the desired learning outcome and teaching strategy. Only then do they decide whether a digital tool best serves that goal.

"I think that if you’re using tech all the time, you’re doing it wrong,” explained Jenny Collier, instructional technology coordinator for SMSD. “If we are not moving that needle on their learning using technology, don’t use the tech."

The expanding rollout of these resources will take place gradually over the next school year, through building level cadre members, instructional coaches, and then throughout individual school communities. The instructional technology cadre and instructional coaches will then personalize the learning for their specific staff. Consistency across the district will be driven by Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and building administrators.

When used with purpose, technology supports students and staff as they strive to meet the objective of the Strategic Plan to have every student achieve their personal best. It provides ways to communicate, collaborate, and create.

Industrial technology classrooms continue to be hands-on at Shawnee Mission South High School, shared instructor Joseph George.

“There’s nothing that is really going to replace that element of my class, but this technology has really been a great support for the products that we’re coming up with,” George stated.

Eden Wagner, Shawnee Mission South 2026 senior, noted that technology helped immensely when creating models in engineering-related classes.

“You can build things on your computer that you can’t necessarily build in real life,” Wagner shared. “Using computer-aided design (CAD) and other resources to make 3D models is really cool. You can see your ideas come to life in that way."

For Grey Jordan, it inspired interest in joining a school activity all the way from Kindergarten through sixth grade: producing Briarwood Elementary's daily video news announcements.

“In Kindergarten I thought they were the coolest thing to watch, just that I could look up to these people,” Jordan said. “I thought ‘I could be the person people could look up to.’”

Instead of intercom announcements, groups of sixth graders use classroom tech and green screens to anchor and deliver news to their school. Together, they film and present the Pledge of Allegiance, share school updates, weather reports, birthday wishes, upcoming events, and a few lighthearted jokes.

Ian Inyoin, who served as anchor for one of the last episodes of the year, says he likes that sharing these video announcements puts him in position for students in younger grades to look up to sixth-graders. It also was an opportunity to connect with classmates.

“It shows that despite our differences we can still work together and create something,” Inyoin added.

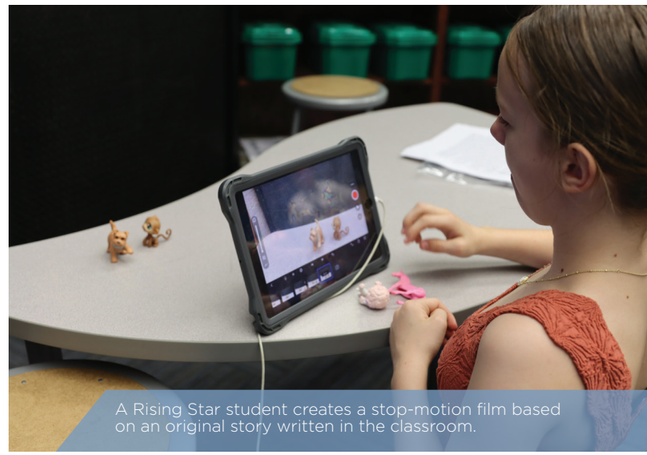
Use these Links to Review These District Technology Guidance Resources

Developmental Guide for the use of District-Provided Technology
https://bit.ly/DevelopmentalGuide

Passive, Interactive, Creative, Replacement, Amplification, and Transformation Framework
https://bit.ly/PICRATFrameworkSMSD

Spring 2026 Podcast on Instructional Tech
https://bit.ly/SMSDTechPodcast

Instructional Technology Webpage
https://bit.ly/SMSDInstructionalTech



A Rising Star student creates a stop-motion film based on an original story written in the classroom.

Next-Gen Innovation: How the Nation's Only Student Chamber is Shaping Overland Park's Economy

Shawnee Mission West student, Tre Knight, presents his startup idea, Connect Geek, at the second annual Student Startup Showcase.

The lights are dim and the stage is empty at the The Culture House Stage and Studio in Oak Park Mall, but seats are full as student entrepreneurs anticipate the second annual Student Startup Showcase.

"Welcome judges, [Shawnee Mission Education] Foundation Corporate Council members, Overland Park Chamber of Commerce business partners, and students. My name is Brendan Gillaspie and I am a student ambassador with the SMSD Student Chamber." The theater quiets and the judges pick up their pens and rubrics. As an SMSD Student Chamber signature event, the showcase allows students to present business ideas to local professionals, receive actionable feedback, and compete for prize money.

"This competition gave me a goal to look towards and gave me more opportunities and connections with the community," shared Ryder Sefchick, a rising senior at Shawnee Mission West.

Launched in 2024 through a collaboration between the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce and the Shawnee Mission School District, the SMSD Student Chamber is a curriculum-driven program created to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, collaboration, and hands-on real world learning experiences. In just two years the chamber has more than 400 students, has awarded 118 Market Value Assets (MVAs) earned by students who participated in three or more Student Chamber experiences, and has engaged more than 20 industry partners and over 3,000 community members.

"Our young people have real businesses and they have real goals to connect with others," explained Dr. Tiffany Dixon, a business teacher at Shawnee Mission West and Shawnee Mission South and the sponsor of the SMSD Student Chamber. "So the Student Chamber of Commerce provides that opportunity for young people to connect with business owners and various professionals around our community and each other."

Meeting quarterly, the first-of-its-kind chamber provides resources ranging from coaching and peer guidance to marketing and professional development.

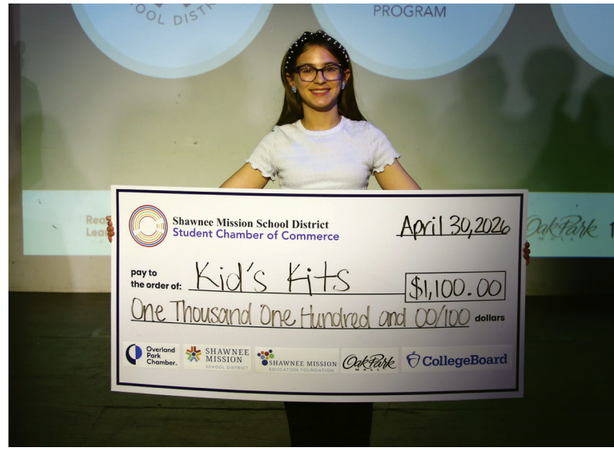
"As far as I know, we're the only Student Chamber in the country," said Dr. Dixon.

During the chamber's fourth quarter meeting, students visited the Oak Park Mall in Overland Park where Karla Engel, the facility's senior general manager, turned the mall into an exploratory classroom. Students visited 14 different business stations to meet with and learn from various local business owners and managers.

"You get to understand where they come from and what they do in the community," shared Gillaspie, a rising senior at SM West. "It's awesome. It makes it seem like it is actually doable.

Here, you get to talk to them like they are real people."

The Overland Park Chamber sees this partnership with the SMSD as a building block for the local economy.





Top: Lexi Hitchcock, a fifth grade student from Christa McAuliffe Elementary School, won the grand prize at the Student Startup Showcase. Below: The top-five finalists are recognized at the Student Startup Showcase.

Andrew Weisberg, the director of talent with the Overland Park Chamber says that events like the Student Startup Showcase and the fourth quarter meeting at the mall help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset, critical thinking skills, and executive function. "For us, it's really about building the future," said Weisberg.

When the final student presenter leaves the showcase stage, the judges make their final notes. The youngest participant, Lexi Hitchcock, a fifth grader from Christa McAuliffe Elementary, fidgets nervously as she waits. Her idea, a subscription craft kit for kids, was a passion project that grew from a desire to minimize craft waste and create a more eco-friendly creative outlet for kids like her little sister.

"[The showcase] helped me learn what all goes into [being an entrepreneur]," shared Lexi. "It's a lot harder than I thought."

But the hard work paid off. As the judges announced the finalists, Lexi's nerves turned to excitement and joy- her Kids Kits took first place. The Shawnee Mission School District is providing Real World Learning opportunities for students as outlined in the district's Strategic Plan. Real World Learning opportunities prepare students for college and careers and support skill development connected to SMSD's Portrait of a Graduate. Find out more at www.smsd.org/academics/real-world-learning.

The Cares Fund: A Safety Net for Shawnee Mission Students

With new expectations, a new building, and an evolving sense of self, seventh grade can feel overwhelming.

But for Mya, the typical anxieties of her first year at Indian Woods Middle School were eclipsed when her family faced an unexpected eviction. After an extended hospital stay, Mya's mom lost her job and was unable to pay rent. Instead of thinking about who she would sit with at lunch, or stressing over a math test, Mya worried whether she would have a home to go to after school.

Unfortunately, Mya's story is not uncommon and many Shawnee Mission School District students carry the emotional burden of financial hardship.

"When basic needs become uncertain, students may struggle to focus on learning, participate in school activities, or feel comfortable at school," explained Rob Shackelford, director of student and family services for the SMSD.

To support families like Mya's, the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation provides immediate assistance through the Shawnee Mission Cares Fund— a vital safety net for families across the district.

"The Cares Fund allows us to respond quickly with compassionate support, helping families navigate difficult circumstances so students can remain engaged in school and continue to thrive in a caring and supportive learning environment," shared Shackelford.

Requests come from every school within the SMSD. Over the past few years, the number of requests has quadrupled and the amount of immediate support disbursed has nearly doubled.

When a school identifies a family in crisis, a principal, counselor, or social worker submits a request to the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation. Once approved, the Foundation pays the provider directly– whether it's a landlord, utility company, or another essential service. In many cases, help is provided the same day.



"The Cares Fund epitomizes the Foundation's mission to enable all Shawnee Mission students to achieve their full potential," said Kim Hinkle, executive director of the Foundation.

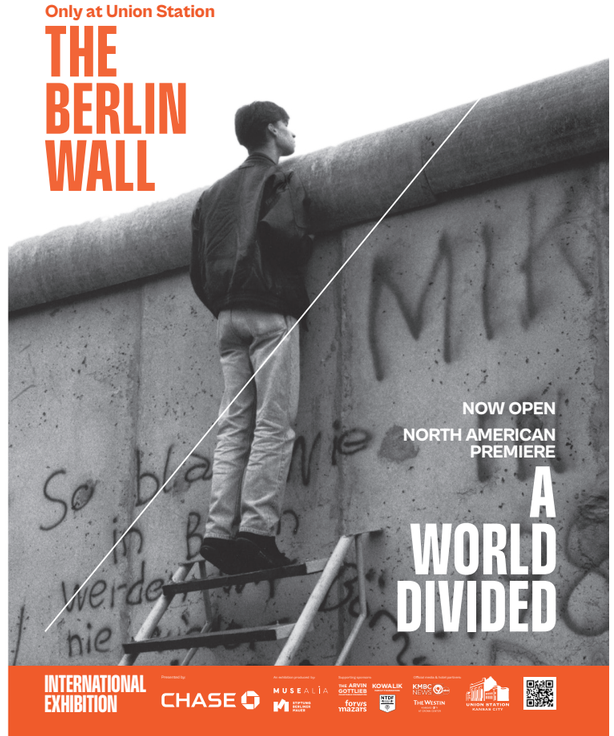
"Kids can't reach their potential when they're worried about basic necessities. Through the generosity of our community, we're able to support students and their families when they need it most."

Thanks to the Cares Fund, Mya came home that day and the rent had been paid. She didn't need to worry about where she would sleep that night. Mya was able to get back to enjoying the opportunities that come with this new stage of life.

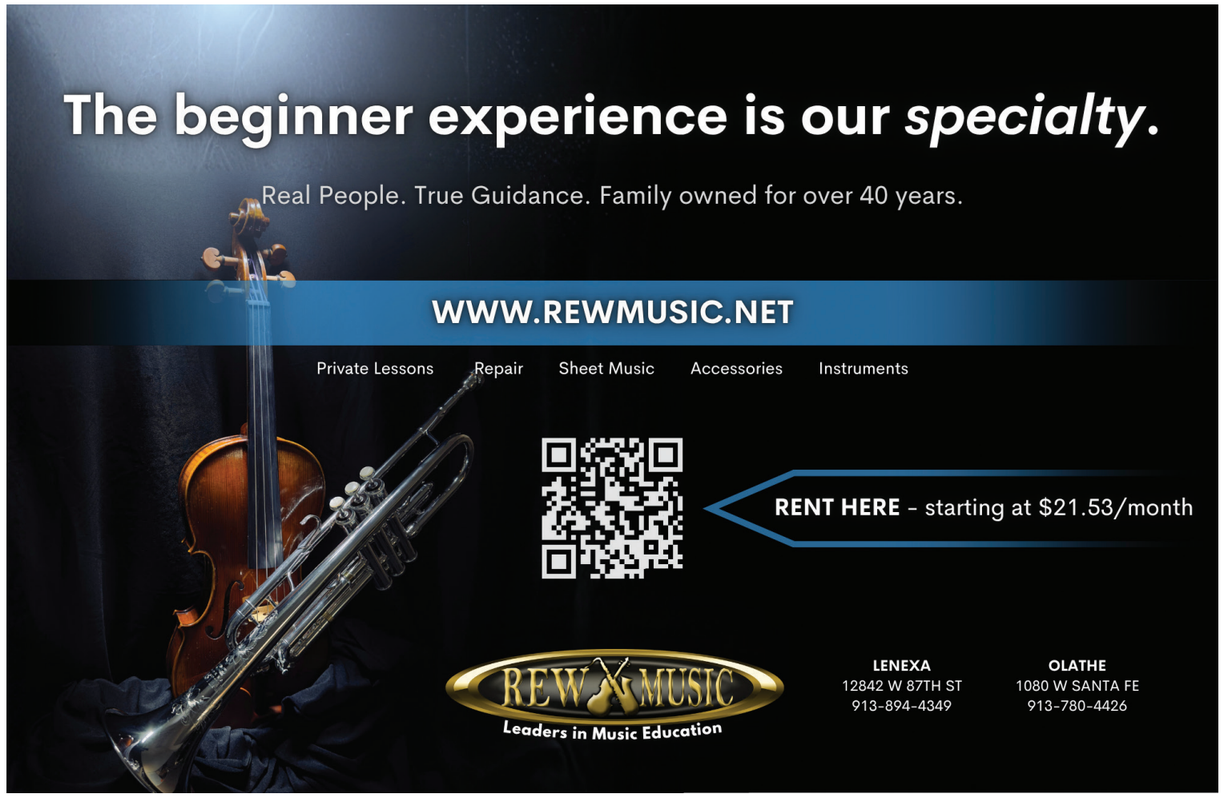
How You Can Help

You can make an immediate difference for Shawnee Mission students today. To make a gift to the Cares Fund, please scan the QR code below or visit www.smef.org/ donate and select "Shawnee Mission Cares Fund." Together, we can work to ensure every child in our district feels safe, supported, and ready to learn.









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