THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT
KCPS Seniors showcase how even a pandemic couldn’t slow them down

EXCELLENCE IN & OUT OF THE CLASSROOM
2021 KCPS Teacher of the Year finalists found innovative ways to build community

KCPS JOURNEY
High school seniors continue course of study and athletic pursuits at the college level

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OUR VOICE

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When approaching this portion of our magazine, I always think about how our messaging supports the narrative of how we are continuing to increase student achievement in Kansas City Public Schools. Because we are.

Kansas City Public Schools continues to gain academic points in all our subgroup populations - this includes closing the gap consistently and steadily among our African American and Hispanic student scores against the state averages. Our African American and Hispanic students are making progress faster than the state. When recently visiting with a neighboring suburban school district superintendent, the neighboring superintendent said he looks to our KCPS African American student data to see trends in how we are consistently improving in this area. In fact, within all student populations, we continue to gain academic momentum.

As we’ve navigated a global pandemic and come through the other side while hosting seven graduation ceremonies at Arrowhead Stadium this year, we’ve never stopped pushing on the performance of our students. In fact, we’ve learned that despite a global pandemic, our schools remain a safe haven and point of connection for our students and families regardless of where we are physically. This will always remain our commitment - a commitment to performance and connection - for our students and families, our staff and our community.

Join us.

DR. MARK BEDELL
KCPS Superintendent of Schools

Super Views

“We like being part of the King family because my child feels safe and loved. They are always quick to help whenever we have a question. Plus, teachers make school fun and never hesitate to support our needs.”

– THE ESPINOZA FAMILY
Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School

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CLASS IS IN SESSION.
A KANSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORIGINAL
MONDAY – FRIDAY | 8:00 AM
Spring and fall are my favorite times of the year. These seasons are about transition. Fall transitions from the warmth of summer with the changing leaves signaling the chill of winter on the way. Spring transitions from the snow and ice we are accustomed to in the Midwest, to hot summer days full of block parties and plenty of outdoor play time.

What I have learned to love most about spring though is the abundance of commencement ceremonies and related family celebrations. The joy on our students’ faces as they walk across the graduation stage is one of the most heartwarming experiences a caring adult can see and feel. However, sometimes we may also see the look of uncertainty on a graduate’s face. What’s next? Am I ready for college? Do I have the skills needed to succeed in a career of my choosing, regardless of whether I go to college?

I am very familiar with the uncertainty our students may be navigating, so I have some perspective. To the student who may be feeling uncertain: if I can do it, you definitely can do it. At 47, I just graduated from an educational experience! NEVER GIVE UP! You’re already leaps and bounds ahead of where I was at your age.

Your KCPS Board of Directors has put a significant amount of intentional work into our college and career readiness initiatives. College and career readiness, internships, career pathways and business partnerships are primary goals of the district’s strategic plan in conjunction with our Blueprint 2030 process. We have made much progress (increased graduation rates, new career pathway offerings, increased academic performance), but there is significant work yet to do. We will continue to focus on ensuring our students are ready for the transition they find themselves in, and like me, learn to embrace the uncertainty. With these skills and capabilities, our students will change the world.
Tell us about your childhood in Kansas City.
Growing up in Kansas City, my mom always made sure I played a sport. Since my older cousin coached football and baseball, I played on his teams until about the sixth grade. That’s when I started playing basketball. Because Kansas City is small, I’ve met a lot of my friends through sports I played as a kid and still have some of the same friends.

How has KCPS supported your academic talents and dreams for your future?
Lincoln Prep staff really encourage you to think about college and do everything they can to get you there. For example, Coach Lowe would talk about all the opportunities that were available to me. He pushed me to believe I could go to college and do everything they can to try to get you there. For instance, Coach Lowe would talk about the benefits of college and how it would help me achieve my goals.

What is your hope for the future?
I want to be a leader. I want to be someone who makes a difference in society. I want to help others. I want to be someone who makes a positive impact on the world. I want to be someone who makes a difference in the lives of others.
Tell us about your childhood. I was born in Kansas City, Missouri. Living in this city, I have experienced a sense of community. In every house my family and I have lived in, my mom always figured out a way for me to connect with other kids on the block. When I was twelve, my mom led me to my entrepreneurial path. She encouraged me to start a lawn care service. My dad invested in my businesses and taught me how to maintain my lawn equipment. Also, my neighbors and their friends and family have supported my local businesses. Today I have a blessed family of clients that support me. I also experienced violence living in some neighborhoods. Overall, situations that I have lived through have motivated me to one day help fix and rebuild the community for the next generations.

What is your hope for the future? For the future, I hope there will be less violence and more awareness for other people who seek help. Many students suffer in silence at home. I believe KCPS and our community as a whole should provide service for them. Also, KCPS should treat health class as a core subject. Health class will help prevent teenage pregnancies and the spread of STIs and teach boys and girls about consent. I think if every student and individual that resided in Kansas City had a support system, there would be less crime. After college, I plan to create local businesses to help fund organizations that support the community. I would like to hire interns that live in the Kansas City area for them to save money for college or their entrepreneurial endeavors.

How has KCPS supported your academic talents and dreams for your future? KCPS and Paseo have supported my academic talents by allowing me and other students to have a chance to earn college credits. The Early College Academy (ECA) program has been a major asset because I am two years ahead in my academics. Thanks to the ECA program, I will graduate with my high school diploma and my Associates of Arts degree. KCPS has a program called P.A.V.E. the Way that supports my academics. The program gives me a chance to earn money from completing assignments and attending meetings. P.A.V.E. the Way awards students an annual scholarship and pays for senior fees. Also, the organization provides food and helps families with other household matters.

KCPS staff members like Joyce Nguyen Hernandez have supported my academics and clothing business. Mrs. Hernandez invited me to scholarly events where I connected with like-minded students. Also, she shared information about scholarships and revised my essays. She wrote a recommendation for me that I needed for scholarships. Thanks to her, I won the Resonance scholarship that awarded $10,000 and a guaranteed internship. Staff members like Mrs. Hernandez encouraged me to continue striving for greater.

What is your future – what will you be doing? This summer, I plan to manage my lawn care service, Dacia Cutz. Also, I will manage my clothing business, MOOD Attire, with my sister Loren Hindsman. I plan to grow my clientele for both businesses and use my earnings for college costs. This fall, I will be attending Langston University because I felt a sense of community there. I am majoring in business to learn how to be a better entrepreneur and marketer. This year I was awarded the Resonance scholarship, the Black Achievers Society scholarship, P.A.V.E. the Way scholarship and an athletic scholarship.
Tell us about your childhood. I was born in Kansas and raised here in Kansas City, Missouri on the north side of town. I grew up in a very loving, multicultural neighborhood, with lots of kids to play with. I was a very sweet, outgoing kid, loved to be around family and going to school. I attended Derrick Thomas Academy from kindergarten to fourth grade when they shut down. Derrick Thomas played a huge role in my childhood. I loved that school with a real passion, and had it not shut down, I may have still gone there. With a real passion, and had it not shut down, I may have still gone there.

After the summer of fourth grade, I moved to Montgomery, Alabama, and lived there for my fifth and sixth grade school years. I didn’t really like it there because I had no family or friends. It was just my mom, dad and myself. I moved back home and moved to the south side of town, where I attended Benjamin Banneker Elementary and lastly, the lovely Southeast.

How has KCPS supported your academic talents and dreams for your future? KCPS has provided the foundation to do anything I put my mind to. Southeast was the first public school I had ever attended, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I’ve grown and learned so much in these four years. It’s unbelievable, not just academically but culturally and spiritually. Southeast has provided the opportunity to take my education to the next level, meaning I will be attending college in the fall. I am sincerely thankful for everything KCPS and Southeast has done for me.

What is your future – what will you be doing? My dream is to own a food truck, where I would make food with love and positivity to spread to my community. I will be attending Rockhurst University for Business Communications in the fall. I plan to play volleyball. The first scholarship I received was the KC Scholars Traditional Scholarship. I earned it by maintaining a 3.0 or higher, good test scores and hard work. This scholarship is worth $50,000, but it’s set to spend up to $10,000 a year for up to five years. After I applied to Rockhurst University, when I was accepted, they awarded me the Knapp Scholarship, which is worth $20,000. I chose Rockhurst University because I had done my research on their business program and was extremely impressed because I knew it would be the next step in the right direction. Not only that but the school alone has lots of people talking about how great of a school it is. Though all of the other reasons are valid, when I got accepted into Rockhurst, it felt different – like home! I was accepted into many schools, but this one seemed right for me. What I want out of my college experience is to grow and become a more brilliant me. I want to gain all the knowledge I can to prepare me for the door I will walk into after college.

What has been the most impactful to you during your time at Southeast? This is a very tricky question to answer because I have so many, but if I had to choose, the most impactful moment at Southeast, for me would be sticking through one of the deadliest viruses in the world with my teachers and classmates. It was difficult at times, but worth every moment!

What is your hope for the future? I hope that we can reunite American citizens and try to heal our country from some of the hardships we’ve faced. And not just the country, but the world! I hope for peace and blessings for everyone. I hope for a happy, COVID-free life. And lastly, for myself, I hope I can continue to work hard and make my dreams come true.
The 2021 KCPS Teacher of the Year, Julia McClellan, serves as a lower elementary teacher at Border Star Montessori. She has been part of the KCPS family for six school years, serving the last five at Border Star. McClellan’s goal as a teacher is to offer children the tools to fully self-express themselves and have the confidence to continue to share their natural gifts into adulthood. It is through her first experience in Montessori as a child, that she discovered her own self-expression.

“I had such a rich education with so many outlets for self-expression, that now I wanted to share what I had learned,” McClellan said. “It has been a joy helping young children feel safe enough to discover and explore their natural gifts and then find the confidence to fully express themselves.”

McClellan strives to create a safe space for students to openly discuss issues of importance. All children have the chance to share and comment. “Fostering independence is a key tenet of a Montessori classroom,” McClellan said. “I have always believed that children, no matter their background or ability, can rise to the occasion and far exceed curriculum standards.”

Fourth Grade Teacher Marquis Hall started at KCPS in 2018 after working his first two years with different schools. “KCPS is where I should have started,” Hall said. “They have provided an unbelievable experience through professional development, as well as opportunities to grow in my career and facilitate learning.”

Hall is familiar with KCPS; he started at Knotts Elementary when it was a science magnet school, later transitioning to Foreign Language Academy. In high school, Hall joined the after-school club Future Educators of America. “I wanted to become a teacher to give back to my school district,” Hall said. “I had some of the best educators. My hope for my students is they gain a love for learning that transcends beyond the walls of my classroom.”

At AC Prep, Hall founded a group specifically for Black students where guests visit and talk to the students. “I knew really early that I wanted to teach in an urban school district,” Peterson said. Peterson is focused on finding innovative ways to help students develop effective learning habits, as well as important critical thinking skills. He has already developed successful classroom norms to help students become successful, even through mistakes. “So many students equate mistakes with failure,” Peterson explained. “My goal is for our students to understand mistakes help us learn and grow.”

In his three years at Faxon, Peterson has made a place for himself in the staff. Over this past year, he was the go-to resource for technology questions for both teachers and students. In his second year, Peterson established a recycling program for his classroom and the building as a whole. He’s thankful he has the support of the wonderful Faxon staff. “I love the whole staff at Faxon; everybody is a family,” Peterson said. “I love the whole staff at Faxon; everybody is a family.”
The reason we came to America from Mexico is so my families, we leaned into disturbed between teachers net and resources. When the pandemic, I think our relation this past year because of the COVID-19. While our model changed ship became even stronger. What does Global FC have in KCPS? What kind of involvement and student mentoring.

What motivated your organization to become a Partner in Education? We leverage soccer to build players to ambassadors. Although soccer is the vehicle, we are passionate about the long-term educational success of the kids. Our vision is how can we come alongside the kids so they can discover and pursue their greatest gifts and potential. We can then create the pathways to help them pursue that at the greatest level. We believe resources get to the kids and families faster if organizations and partners lock arms to create an environment with innovation, creativity and synergy to benefit the students. When we do work together, we get so much more done together. From a school perspective, that family engagement component, especially with ELL students, is often difficult because of the language, cultural and religious barriers. As a community organization, we can come in between that gap and become that bridge. Ultimately everyone benefits.

How many hours does Global FC volunteer during the school year? In 2019-2020, Global FC gave a total of 1,830 programming hours and had over 10,000 volunteer hours. We have one of the most passionate dedication dedicated volunteer bases in the city. A lot of our volunteers fall in love with the program, not only because they saw the impact in the community, kids and families, but because their own lives were radically transformed. They go back to their networks and bring back more volunteers. Our volunteers have been tremendous for the community.

How has this work benefited your organization and students? As Global FC volunteers become part of the school, their perspective widens, and they become part of the community. Our education program doesn’t stop when school ends; it’s year-round. We know it’s critical to continue engagement in the summer so they don’t regress and are better prepared for the next school year. Our kids are held accountable, and they have to do community service. When kids are part of Global FC, they are being built up as servant leaders, giving back to their community.

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Why should other organizations consider becoming a Partner in Education? KCPS is one of the most hands-on districts at every level. From the board to the athletic department to teachers, they are genuinely hands-on and truly love the kids. Teachers will come out and watch games on the weekends just to support their students as they play. It’s a testimony to Kansas City, especially in the historic Northeast and KCPS, how active, engaged and intentional everyone is for the development of these kids. It’s an investment in community development; the more these kids thrive, the larger community benefits. KCPS gets it. They have made it so easy to partner from the very beginning, asking how we can work together for the overall benefit of the kids. KCPS is actively participating in our mission. Those who will benefit the greatest in a partnership are those who believe in the power and spirit of collaboration.
Our Mission
To secure supplemental funds and resources to enhance student learning in the Kansas City Public Schools district.

Our Programs
At its core, the Foundation exists to afford smart, talented and deserving KCPS students the same innovative educational enrichment opportunities available at other schools.

Educational Initiatives
- Kindergarten to 2nd Grade Initiatives
- Middle School Initiatives
- College and Career Readiness (CCR)
- Professional Development (PD)

Impact Programs
- Instructional Grants to Teachers
- Teacher of the Year Awards
- SummerFest® Back-to-School Readiness Event

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