



Contact: Nancy Cambria, Director of Communications  
7700 Olive Blvd., University City, MO 63130

communications@ucityschools.org  
Cell: (314) 608-3958

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2023

### District Hires Interim and Permanent Principals to Lead Flynn Park Elementary School

**University City, Mo.** – The School District of University City is pleased to announce that Karen Jones, who is retiring from St. Louis Public Schools, has agreed to serve as the interim principal of Flynn Park Elementary School for the 2023-24 school year starting July 1, 2023. Jones will lead the school for one year until Darion Murdock, University City High School Class of 1996, will be able to join Flynn Park as its permanent principal on July 1, 2024.

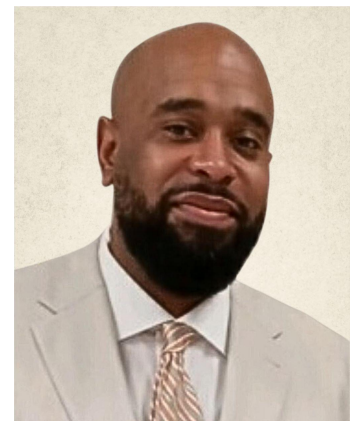
"I understand that this transition is a little different, and yet, I believe we are getting the best in this arrangement," Superintendent Dr. Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said. "Let me start by saying we had a truly impressive pool of candidates. Both of these individuals are powerful and compassionate leaders with strong experience in urban and suburban school settings. It is my strong belief that Ms. Jones and Mr. Murdock share unique sweet spots that will encourage transformative change to enhance the Flynn Park community, accelerate student academic growth, and ensure equity and intentional relationships. I feel truly blessed to have both of these talented leaders join our District and thank them for their flexibility to make this happen."

Jones brings a wealth of elementary school experience to the interim position, having served as a network superintendent for SLPS since July 2015, where she provided support to 13 elementary school leadership teams. She holds an Ed.S. in education administration from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, an M.S. in special education from Illinois State University, and a B.A. in elementary education from Harris-Stowe State University.

Murdock, who will become Flynn Park's permanent principal on July 1, 2024, is a proud UCHS graduate with further fond memories of attending Hawthorne Elementary School and Brittany Woods Middle School. He is a student-focused leader and educator with 19 years of experience. "He stood out to the selection committee for his ability to build loving, passionate and



**Karen Jones**  
Flynn Park Interim Principal  
beginning July 1, 2023



**Darion Murdock**  
Flynn Park Principal  
beginning July 1, 2024

- more -

## **District Hires Interim and Permanent Principals to Lead Flynn Park Elementary School**

equitable school communities," Hardin-Bartley said. "You will learn within the first few minutes of meeting him that he is a dynamic communicator who is a resourceful and results-driven leader."

Murdock said he is "overjoyed to be returning home to U. City."

"Having attended Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary, Ronald McNair, Brittany Woods, and University City High School, it's a dream come true to return home to the community that I grew up in to give back in such a rich way," he said. "The teachers and administrators that I encountered over the years as a student helped to inspire me to work hard and believe that I could achieve great things. As a student who participated in the then GATE program (Gifted and Talented Education), I want to inspire the next generation of students who will become educators, leaders, entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, artists, and difference makers in our society. There is a rich history of success at Flynn Park and I am excited to partner with the students, staff, and stakeholders to build on that rich foundation. As a school community, we will continue to provide a safe and inspiring space where all feel welcomed, included, and excited about learning and growing as one."

Murdock is currently the principal of Jury Elementary School in the Hazelwood School District, where he has cultivated relationships to build a unified community among students, staff, parents and caregivers of varying backgrounds. His leadership includes cultivating trauma-informed practices, strong teacher and staff professional learning and evaluation, restorative practices, and rigorous student and staff expectations.

Prior to Hazelwood, he served as the assistant principal of the Maplewood-Richmond Heights Early Childhood Center where he was also the federal programs coordinator. He has further held teaching positions in the Ferguson-Florissant School District and at Confluence Academy Old North.

Murdock holds an M.A. in school administration, K-12, and an Educational Specialist degree in educational administration from Lindenwood University.

The District sends its deep thanks and well wishes to outgoing Flynn Park Elementary School Principal Nicalee Wilson. The District plans to host an event soon to introduce parents and caregivers to both Jones and Murdock.

**#UCLionPride**