

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2023

University City Superintendent Honored By School Administrators Association

The Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) has selected Dr. Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, Superintendent of The School District of University City, as the recipient of the annual Robert L. Pearce Award for 2023. A committee of her peers selected Dr. Hardin-Bartley. Each of the eight MASA regions nominated a superintendent for the award.

“I was honored to be nominated by my Region 7, St. Louis peers in this meaningful way. I try to make sure my own career never eclipses ‘my why’ - and that is the children that I serve,” Hardin-Bartley said. “It is my hope that this statewide recognition elevates the intentional work we are doing within The School District of University City to humanize our students by respecting their voices and their identities through a modern, rigorous and relevant learning process. Now, more than ever, we must ensure that meaningful relationships, equity, quality access to rich curricular resources and experiences, and social-emotional wellness are always entwined with learning so that all of our children are well and can succeed”



Dr. Hardin-Bartley attained her undergraduate degree from Harris Stowe State University in 1996. In 2001 she attained her Master’s Degree in Education Administration from St. Louis University. She completed her Doctorate in Education Leadership and Policy Studies in 2014 from the University of Missouri – St. Louis.

Dr. Hardin-Bartley began her career in education administration as a principal at the St. Louis Public Schools and she continued as a Special Assistant and Chief Human Resources Officer for that district. Dr. Hardin-Bartley went on to serve as an assistant superintendent for the Ritenour School District. Dr. Hardin-Bartley has served as the Superintendent of the School District of University City from 2016 to the present.

In her application, Dr. Hardin-Bartley noted her personal philosophy is rooted in her “why.” Her “why” encompasses her passion for an equitable and just educational system where all children can thrive; it aligns with her passion for supporting the adults who work with our children in the classroom, on the school bus, on the field, and at home; and it is what motivates her to be focused on supporting children.

In her application for the Pearce Award, Dr. Hardin-Bartley discussed the tremendous challenge of educating young people during the COVID pandemic. She stated, “As a public educator, this

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was completely alien to me. My day-to-day work involves curricular and student experience aspects. I'm a teacher and learner at heart; I have prided myself on being the lead learner in my district. Now, I also had to be the lead expert in the district on everything related to COVID-19. Overnight, I had to pivot from how I operated as a leader and how I typically lead. In my district and nationally, I became a trusted leader -- one who valued safety, well-being, and academic support for students. I'm incredibly proud of our community and understand that our success was attributed to the collective team."

Dr. Hardin-Bartley says a question she asks daily is, "How are the children? The well-being of our most vulnerable population, our children, is an all-of-us issue." In the University City Schools, educators partner with students and families to provide social-emotional supports. Well-being specialists were hired to support all buildings; trauma-informed practices and training are embedded in the district's professional development plan; parents and caregivers are seen as trusted partners and their child's first teacher; student voices are valued and amplified; and the district is viewed as regional and national leaders in the area of child mental wellness.

Dr. Hardin-Bartley is an active member of the Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA). She is a member of the American Association of School Administrators' Governing Board and serves as the MASA Greater St. Louis-Region President. Dr. Hardin-Bartley serves on the Missouri Education Commissioner Advisory Council, and she is a member of the MASA New Superintendent Mentoring Program.

Dr. Hardin-Bartley is active in a number of roles in her community including serving on the board for Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri, the

Alive and Well Communities, the Magic House, the American Heart Association-St. Louis, and United Way-St. Louis.

The Pearce Award includes a monetary award to the recipient and a scholarship for a student in the district of the award winner.

Dr. Hardin-Bartley is the 37th recipient of the prestigious Robert L. Pearce Award.

Other 2023 Pearce Award Nominees, including their school districts and MASA Region:

- Tracy Bottoms, Montgomery Co. R-II (Northeast)
- Jamie Burkhart, Green Ridge R-VIII (West Central)
- Dan Clemens, North Kansas City (Greater Kansas City)
- Aaron Gerla, Ash Grove R-IV (Southwest)
- Josh Hoener, New Haven (South Central)
- Ashley McMillian, Central R-III (Southeast)
- John Rinehart, West Platte County R-II (Northwest)

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