



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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University City Board of Education Passes Landmark Resolution on Social-Emotional Learning and Restorative Practices

The resolution is the first of its kind in Missouri to address student well-being, equity and ways to end the school to prison pipeline

University City, MO – The School District of University City Board of Education in partnership with District Administration announce the passage Thursday (Feb. 28) of a landmark Board resolution that will help drive the future direction of the district and set an example for other school districts to address equity and social justice in the K-12 educational setting.

The school board unanimously passed a resolution to “Humanize School Climate Through Restorative Practices and Social Emotional Learning.”

The Resolution was drafted after a 7-month process involving members of the Board, students, parents, District educators and administrators, and a Washington University graduate practicum student specializing in educational equity. It is rooted in both the Board and the District’s goals to enhance social-emotional development in the school setting for greater joy and well-being of students and staff. Research has significantly linked student health, well-being and inclusion with better academic performance.

Though modeled after similar school board resolutions in urban areas such as Boston, Chicago, Oakland, Philadelphia and San Francisco, this is the first of its kind in Missouri, and is catered to the needs of the University City school community.

The Board resolution details practices, timelines and goals to enhance and uplift relationships for all members of the District community and give students a voice and a greater sense of inclusion and empowerment to shape their community for the better.

The resolution mandates the District will accelerate its growing use of:

- Restorative practices to resolve disciplinary issues and other conflicts and issues.
- Trauma-informed awareness and practices to alleviate negative outcomes in the school setting and also build student resilience.
- Targeted health and well-being policies supported by resources.
- Coordination of wrap-around services.
- Training and support of staff to facilitate greater empowerment of students in voice and action.

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On February 27, 1911, with a City population of only 2,417, The School District of University City was officially established. Classes began in September 1912 with a total school population of 769. Today, you will find outstanding educational programs serving a student population of approximately 2,800 with a preschool, four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. In May 2018, University City High School held its 101st formal Commencement Ceremony.



Contact: Communications & Community Outreach Department
8136 Groby Road, University City, MO 63130

Communications@ucityschools.org
(314) 290-4001 - Fax: (314) 725-7846

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Board Secretary Chelsea Addison, a lead author of the resolution, said the Board wanted to demonstrate support for a culture and climate shift already happening in the district and further establish expectations and milestones going forward.

“The Board is serious about the culture shift that is already happening in the District. We would be remiss to not acknowledge there was a school climate where students didn’t feel heard,” Addison said. “We have pieces put in place and are adamantly working to create systems so that this shift is sustainable for the well-being and success of our students and school community at large.”

The main goal of the resolution is to “humanize” all aspects of the University City educational experience. But the resolution further addresses critical issues regarding equity and fairness, and recognizes the new policies can help alleviate serious issues like:

- The school to prison pipeline, in which African American students are disproportionately directed into the juvenile and adult courts through a series of escalating discipline practices in the educational setting.
- The use of in- and out-of-school suspensions that again disproportionately affect African American youth, setting them up for exclusion, academic decline, school drop-outs and other negative cascading effects.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D. and Gary Spiller, executive director of the Office of Student Support and Innovative Services, the School District of University City has been working to humanize its educational climate through multiple practices and partnerships. They include utilizing restorative circles at all grade levels to discuss conflict and deal with behavior issues to better avoid suspensions and build trust and community; partnering with Alive and Well Communities to become a nationally recognized “acceleration site” to train staff and students in trauma informed practices and systems; and working with Wyman to build a coordinated system of wrap-around student supports to empower the Whole Child.

The School District has already been highlighted by national organizations, including America’s Promise Alliance, for its accelerated use of social-emotional practices and its emphasis on supporting the health and well-being of its children.

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
UNIVERSITY CITY
Transform the Life of Every Student Every Day!

NewsRelease

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The policy passed by the school board last week also aligns with a national campaign by Child Trends to foster local, state and national policy that better supports the health and well-being of students in schools. In a recent review by Child Trends, Missouri scored low on state policies supporting these critical factors in schools.

“The Board made a powerful statement Thursday for our children,” said Superintendent Hardin-Bartley. “They put research and passion into the resolution to ensure that we stay on track in our efforts to provide a learning experience that is equitable, safe and infused with the spirit of well-being and joy. The labor of this work will bear many fruits, mostly notably empowered and successful students ready for college and careers – and to make a difference in the world.”

To read the full Resolution: www.ucityschools.org/HumanizeResolution022819

To view a video preview of the Resolution: www.ucityschools.org/BOEPromoVideo02281

#UCLionPride

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