District Prepares for “Next Steps”

On Feb. 1, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released its final 2018 annual performance report (APR) for all Missouri school districts. The School District of University City is pleased to announce that it remains fully accredited with 85.4 percent of APR points.

“While there is still significant work to be done,” Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said, “I am encouraged that our students and staff continue to proceed toward academic excellence in the classroom.”

More than 110 parents, staff, partners and other community members attended an annual State of the District community meeting on Feb. 25, 2019. They listened intently as Hardin-Bartley presented state testing results, accreditation status and the District’s Strategic Plan. She shared highlights of student successes and expressed appreciation to the school board, staff, volunteers and community partners for their support of the innovations and initiatives that have been instituted as part of Learning Reimagined.

A two-year, $300,000 grant awarded to a St. Louis-based nonprofit organization is helping The School District of University City humanize the educational experience for all of its students.

One of three St. Louis area districts benefitting from the grant provided by America’s Promise Alliance, University City is able to utilize the knowledge and experience of Alive and Well Communities, a group committed to creating trauma-informed communities throughout Missouri to better understand the impact of trauma and toxic stress on learning and develop practices that support the students.

“We are very much in the beginning stage of what it takes to become a trauma-informed district,” said Gary Spiller, executive director of Student Services and Innovation. “Trauma is real. It doesn’t know a race, a gender, an age, but it’s very real, and our district is taking a proactive step to number one, recognize the reality, and number two, support our students who are dealing with trauma, and provide our stakeholders with the means to navigate it.”

Trauma can play out in both obvious and subtle ways. For example, a home struggling with food and rent insecurity can stress children and present challenges to learning.

A key step in the process was the recent hiring of Roxi Isaguirre as the District’s trauma informed intervention specialist. She said that among her responsibilities, she helps students who are recovering from a traumatic experience or dealing with stress to learn different strategies or coping mechanisms that help empower themselves during those moments when they may feel overwhelmed.

“It’s just a very different approach and a way of humanizing how we

A video of the meeting along with printable handouts and other links are available online at www.ucityschools.org/APR2018.

Hardin-Bartley and her team plan to meet with U. City parents, staff and other interested community members in informal settings to talk more about next steps for U. City Schools and what these things looks like for students and families.

For more information regarding hosting or attending a follow-up talk, register online at www.ucityschools.org/2019NextSteps.

Tinker Tour Stops in U. City

Mary Williams, University City High School journalism teacher, was downright giddy to hear that UCHS alumnae Mary Beth Tinker, Class of 1970, would be speaking in her classroom.

Tinker gained prominence for her role in the Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District Supreme Court case, which in 1969 ruled that Tinker could not be punished for wearing a black armband in protest of the Vietnam War, while she was a student at Warren Harding Junior High School in Des Moines. The case set a precedent for freedom of speech in schools. Williams was excited that Tinker, now an American free-speech activist, was able to visit with the Introduction to Journalism, Newspaper and Yearbook students.

“I think she is a First Amendment rock star,” Williams said. “When I found out she was coming, I was on cloud nine. I’ll be honest, I think this is one of the coolest things that has ever happened to me.”

It was a memorable experience for the students as well, and a timely one for journalism students. Williams said they had recently studied First Amendment law, including how it pertains to scholastic education, and some students even worked on a project involving the Tinker case. Additionally, Williams said several of her Yearbook students had studied the case in Government class.

“I thought it was pretty cool seeing and talking to somebody who we had literally just learned about in class, who was a part of history and part of the legislation of free speech,” said junior Nathan Hill.

It was also pretty cool to know that Tinker graduated from UCHS, which Williams said made Tinker’s story more relevant for the students.

On Feb. 1, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released its final 2018 annual performance report (APR) for all Missouri school districts. The School District of University City is pleased to announce that it remains fully accredited with 85.4 percent of APR points.

“While there is still significant work to be done,” Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said, “I am encouraged that our students and staff continue to proceed toward academic excellence in the classroom.”

More than 110 parents, staff, partners and other community members attended an annual State of the District community meeting on Feb. 25, 2019. They listened intently as Hardin-Bartley presented state testing results, accreditation status and the District’s Strategic Plan. She shared highlights of student successes and expressed appreciation to the school board, staff, volunteers and community partners for their support of the innovations and initiatives that have been instituted as part of Learning Reimagined.

A video of the meeting along with printable handouts and other links are available online at www.ucityschools.org/APR2018.

Hardin-Bartley and her team plan to meet with U. City parents, staff and other interested community members in informal settings to talk more about next steps for U. City Schools and what these things looks like for students and families.

For more information regarding hosting or attending a follow-up talk, register online at www.ucityschools.org/2019NextSteps.

Tinker Tour Stops in U. City

Mary Williams, University City High School journalism teacher, was downright giddy to hear that UCHS alumnae Mary Beth Tinker, Class of 1970, would be speaking in her classroom.

Tinker gained prominence for her role in the Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District Supreme Court case, which in 1969 ruled that Tinker could not be punished for wearing a black armband in protest of the Vietnam War, while she was a student at Warren Harding Junior High School in Des Moines. The case set a precedent for freedom of speech in schools. Williams was excited that Tinker, now an American free-speech activist, was able to visit with the Introduction to Journalism, Newspaper and Yearbook students.

“I think she is a First Amendment rock star,” Williams said. “When I found out she was coming, I was on cloud nine. I’ll be honest, I think this is one of the coolest things that has ever happened to me.”

It was a memorable experience for the students as well, and a timely one for journalism students. Williams said they had recently studied First Amendment law, including how it pertains to scholastic education, and some students even worked on a project involving the Tinker case. Additionally, Williams said several of her Yearbook students had studied the case in Government class.

“I thought it was pretty cool seeing and talking to somebody who we had literally just learned about in class, who was a part of history and part of the legislation of free speech,” said junior Nathan Hill.

It was also pretty cool to know that Tinker graduated from UCHS, which Williams said made Tinker’s story more relevant for the students.

On Feb. 1, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released its final 2018 annual performance report (APR) for all Missouri school districts. The School District of University City is pleased to announce that it remains fully accredited with 85.4 percent of APR points.

“While there is still significant work to be done,” Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said, “I am encouraged that our students and staff continue to proceed toward academic excellence in the classroom.”

More than 110 parents, staff, partners and other community members attended an annual State of the District community meeting on Feb. 25, 2019. They listened intently as Hardin-Bartley presented state testing results, accreditation status and the District’s Strategic Plan. She shared highlights of student successes and expressed appreciation to the school board, staff, volunteers and community partners for their support of the innovations and initiatives that have been instituted as part of Learning Reimagined.

A video of the meeting along with printable handouts and other links are available online at www.ucityschools.org/APR2018.

Hardin-Bartley and her team plan to meet with U. City parents, staff and other interested community members in informal settings to talk more about next steps for U. City Schools and what these things looks like for students and families.

For more information regarding hosting or attending a follow-up talk, register online at www.ucityschools.org/2019NextSteps.

Tinker Tour Stops in U. City

Mary Williams, University City High School journalism teacher, was downright giddy to hear that UCHS alumnae Mary Beth Tinker, Class of 1970, would be speaking in her classroom.

Tinker gained prominence for her role in the Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District Supreme Court case, which in 1969 ruled that Tinker could not be punished for wearing a black armband in protest of the Vietnam War, while she was a student at Warren Harding Junior High School in Des Moines. The case set a precedent for freedom of speech in schools. Williams was excited that Tinker, now an American free-speech activist, was able to visit with the Introduction to Journalism, Newspaper and Yearbook students.

“I think she is a First Amendment rock star,” Williams said. “When I found out she was coming, I was on cloud nine. I’ll be honest, I think this is one of the coolest things that has ever happened to me.”

It was a memorable experience for the students as well, and a timely one for journalism students. Williams said they had recently studied First Amendment law, including how it pertains to scholastic education, and some students even worked on a project involving the Tinker case. Additionally, Williams said several of her Yearbook students had studied the case in Government class.

“I thought it was pretty cool seeing and talking to somebody who we had literally just learned about in class, who was a part of history and part of the legislation of free speech,” said junior Nathan Hill.

It was also pretty cool to know that Tinker graduated from UCHS, which Williams said made Tinker’s story more relevant for the students.

On Feb. 1, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released its final 2018 annual performance report (APR) for all Missouri school districts. The School District of University City is pleased to announce that it remains fully accredited with 85.4 percent of APR points.

“While there is still significant work to be done,” Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley said, “I am encouraged that our students and staff continue to proceed toward academic excellence in the classroom.”

More than 110 parents, staff, partners and other community members attended an annual State of the District community meeting on Feb. 25, 2019. They listened intently as Hardin-Bartley presented state testing results, accreditation status and the District’s Strategic Plan. She shared highlights of student successes and expressed appreciation to the school board, staff, volunteers and community partners for their support of the innovations and initiatives that have been instituted as part of Learning Reimagined.
From our Superintendent of Schools

Dear University City Families,

It has been an exciting start to the new year in The School District of University City. Missouri. As we continue to make progress in our long-term goal of Learning Reimagined, let’s start with our State of the District event on Feb. 25 that was open to the public. That night I presented our strategic plan to 210 members of the University City community. You can learn more about the plan on our website at www.ucityschools.org/StrategicPlan. We are very proud of the path we have charted for our district through this plan. There are five essential components:

- Rigorous, modern and relevant learning experiences
- Joy and well-being
- Talented educators skilled and enabled in Learning Reimagined
- Leveraging all hands
- Resources for our vision

In this issue of PRIDE, you will see signs of these components already happening in our district.

On Feb. 14 a group of our high school students led by seniors Rowan Hoel and Leah Zukosky created their own memorial and silent protest to address gun violence by placing 46 pairs of shoes on the steps of University City High School. The shoes marked the one-year anniversary of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The shoes represented the 46 lives lost in school shootings since Columbine, and the fact these lost souls can no longer protest gun violence in our country — so our students decided to take the issue. The student voice is dynamic and we are proud of these students. In my mind, this is an embodiment of Learning Reimagined, when students are empowered to voice their opinions for change in our world.

You will see more in this issue about our Early College program. Our students are now able to enroll in college credit courses while also completing their high school degrees. These students are on track to graduate not only with a University City High School diploma, but also an associate’s degree. After graduation they can go on to complete a bachelor’s degree or move into a career. This program gives our students quality options for learning that meet real-world needs. For example, having two years of college right out of high school is a tremendous financial relief for many of our families.

You will also learn about the hiring of Roxy Inguirere as the District’s new trauma informed intervention specialist. She will help us in our work to enhance social-emotional learning and development in our schools so we can spark joy and well-being in all of our students — because we know that students who are healthy, empowered, safe and supported learn better. And, by the way, it was exciting to learn that earlier this year the District was highlighted by the national group America’s Promise Alliance for our work with Alive and Well Communities to accelerate health and well-being in our schools.

As I write this, the University City Board of Education is preparing to approve a landmark resolution at its Feb. 26 meeting. It fully supports the District’s commitment to the whole child through both restorative justice practices and a social justice focus. This is a powerful statement about who we are in University City, the progressive mindset of our community and the deep resolve of our board to fully support all of our students. Two of our board members, Kristine Hendrix and Chelsea Addison, graciously took the time to explain the resolution on a video. I invite you to take a look at the video and read the resolution at www.ucityschools.org/BOE. I wish you all a bright and joyful spring.

Sharonica Hardin-Barley, Ph.D., PHR
Superintendent

From our Board of Education

Dear University City Families,

The School District of University City’s Lighthouse Study found that effective Boards of Education monitor data to ensure that the superintendent and, subsequently, the school district are effectively implementing their mission and vision. The School District of University City (SDUC) Board of Education is tasked with finding ways to quantify and evaluate the fulfillment of the District’s mission, “Transform the life of every student, every day” to quantify and evaluate the fulfillment of the District’s mission and vision, “Where all students graduate college and career ready.”

By now, you know that the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) finally released the Annual Performance Review (APR) for the District and our overall score was much improved. While the Board is pleased with these results, we recognize that APR does not tell the whole story. The ability to measure academic growth has been hampered by multiple changes in state standards and tests over the last five years. Therefore, the Board has been monitoring the District’s use of formative academic tests to ensure they are being used to monitor student growth and as a tool for meaningful interventions at the school, classroom, and individual student level. In addition, for our students to be truly ready for college and careers of the future, we know that they need to be well-rounded, adaptable, critical thinkers with the ability to collaborate with others effectively. Those skills are not readily apparent in standardized test scores. As a board we are challenged with looking for evidence to measure these qualities. We are doing this by monitoring multiple data points including suspensions, climate and culture surveys, attendance data, and teacher attribution. We also are looking for evidence that our students are being given opportunities to engage in project-based learning, to present to the public, and to be exposed to diverse and rich experiences. When the Board of Education gives clear expectations to the superintendent, has access to quality data, and monitors that data, the Board fulfills an important role in the success of the school district.

So, while our APR score was higher this past year, there is no complacency for this Board of Education. We have to continue to monitor beyond the state’s performance measures to ensure that our superintendent is making continuous improvement in fulfilling our mission and vision. Our children deserve no less than high expectations from the SCUC Board of Education.

Lisa M. Brenner, Ph.D.
Director, SDUC Board of Education

Humanizing Learning Reimagined from page 1

The school library is no longer a musty room filled with old books andencyclopedia. Today’s library media center is a hub for innovation and technology and research tools.

On Feb. 13, the School District of University City’s lead librarian Kelly Werthmuller, “Ms. W,” was officially recognized with the Making IT Happen award in the category of Library Media Specialist at the Library and Media Literature Luncheon during the 2019 Midwest Education Technology Conference (MITEC).

“Our mission is to change the way people use our libraries,” Werthmuller said. “We want to focus on emerging technology and digital citizenship as well as evidence that all of our students have access to quality books and research materials. Today’s library is a dynamic space, far removed from the rigid quiet zones of yesterday. We encourage students to explore, create and innovate, even if it means making some noise.”

Werthmuller has been with the District since 2007. She began her tenure as a middle school teacher and has spent the past 12 years as the teaching librarian at Britanny Woods Middle School.

Making IT Happen is an internationally-recognized award for educators and leaders in the field of educational technology integration in K-12 schools, sponsored by the International Society for Technology in Education.

For more information, visit www.metedplus.org.

Ms. W Makes “IT” Happen

The library school is no longer a musty room filled with old books andencyclopedia. Today’s library media center is a hub for innovation and technology and research tools.

On Feb. 13, the School District of University City’s lead librarian Kelly Werthmuller, “Ms. W,” was officially recognized with the Making IT Happen award in the category of Library Media Specialist at the Library and Media Literature Luncheon during the 2019 Midwest Education Technology Conference (MITEC).

“Our mission is to change the way people use our libraries,” Werthmuller said. “We want to focus on emerging technology and digital citizenship as well as evidence that all of our students have access to quality books and research materials. Today’s library is a dynamic space, far removed from the rigid quiet zones of yesterday. We encourage students to explore, create and innovate, even if it means making some noise.”

Werthmuller has been with the District since 2007. She began her tenure as a middle school teacher and has spent the past 12 years as the teaching librarian at Britanny Woods Middle School.

Making IT Happen is an internationally-recognized award for educators and leaders in the field of educational technology integration in K-12 schools, sponsored by the International Society for Technology in Education.

For more information, visit www.metedplus.org.

Student Artists Win Walgreens Expressions

University City High School student artists Aravama Whitteman (front left) and Emily Steck (center right) were congratulated by their art teachers Mavis Claunch (left) and Todd Yaney (right) for being winners of the 2019 Walgreens Expressions Contest - Media Arts division. Read more at www.ucityschools.org/2019WalgreensExpressions.

From page 1

work with each other,” Inguirere said. “You’re validating what they’re going through and letting them know that it’s okay to have feelings, but how they react to those feelings is what we can control.”

Spiller said Inguirere is giving students the means to help themselves whether it’s in a school setting or the outside world.

“One of the things I like about Roxy’s work is she’s equipping students for life,” Spiller said. “These are strategies and mechanisms that students can use anytime they get into difficult situations so they can focus on the situation and move forward.”

Student Artists Win Walgreens Expressions

University City High School student artists Aravama Whitteman (front left) and Emily Steck (center right) were congratulated by their art teachers Mavis Claunch (left) and Todd Yaney (right) for being winners of the 2019 Walgreens Expressions Contest - Media Arts division. Read more at www.ucityschools.org/2019WalgreensExpressions.

Mas W. Makes “IT” Happen

The school library is no longer a musty room filled with old books andencyclopedia. Today’s library media center is a hub for innovation and technology and research tools.

On Feb. 13, the School District of University City’s lead librarian Kelly Werthmuller, “Ms. W,” was officially recognized with the Making IT Happen award in the category of Library Media Specialist at the Library and Media Literature Luncheon during the 2019 Midwest Education Technology Conference (MITEC).

“Our mission is to change the way people use our libraries,” Werthmuller said. “We want to focus on emerging technology and digital citizenship as well as evidence that all of our students have access to quality books and research materials. Today’s library is a dynamic space, far removed from the rigid quiet zones of yesterday. We encourage students to explore, create and innovate, even if it means making some noise.”

Werthmuller has been with the District since 2007. She began her tenure as a middle school teacher and has spent the past 12 years as the teaching librarian at Britanny Woods Middle School.

Making IT Happen is an internationally-recognized award for educators and leaders in the field of educational technology integration in K-12 schools, sponsored by the International Society for Technology in Education.

For more information, visit www.metedplus.org.

Ms. W Makes “IT” Happen

The school library is no longer a musty room filled with old books andencyclopedia. Today’s library media center is a hub for innovation and technology and research tools.

On Feb. 13, the School District of University City’s lead librarian Kelly Werthmuller, “Ms. W,” was officially recognized with the Making IT Happen award in the category of Library Media Specialist at the Library and Media Literature Luncheon during the 2019 Midwest Education Technology Conference (MITEC).

“Our mission is to change the way people use our libraries,” Werthmuller said. “We want to focus on emerging technology and digital citizenship as well as evidence that all of our students have access to quality books and research materials. Today’s library is a dynamic space, far removed from the rigid quiet zones of yesterday. We encourage students to explore, create and innovate, even if it means making some noise.”

Werthmuller has been with the District since 2007. She began her tenure as a middle school teacher and has spent the past 12 years as the teaching librarian at Britanny Woods Middle School.

Making IT Happen is an internationally-recognized award for educators and leaders in the field of educational technology integration in K-12 schools, sponsored by the International Society for Technology in Education.

For more information, visit www.metedplus.org.

Student Artists Win Walgreens Expressions

University City High School student artists Aravama Whitteman (front left) and Emily Steck (center right) were congratulated by their art teachers Mavis Claunch (left) and Todd Yaney (right) for being winners of the 2019 Walgreens Expressions Contest - Media Arts division. Read more at www.ucityschools.org/2019WalgreensExpressions.
Matt Bellows
Raised in a family of public school educators, I was taught that a strong school district is the backbone of a vibrant city. A strong school district teaches students how to be committed citizens. I am seeking a position on the School District of University City Board of Education because I want to ensure all students in our district progress successfully through our district’s schools, are career ready, and become engaged citizens.

I currently serve on the University City Education Foundation Board of Directors and chair the fundraising committee. The Foundation raises funds for distribution to teachers throughout the district who are implementing innovative learning, and it is incredibly rewarding to have a part in creating this margin of excellence. I also fully support the district’s “Learning Reimagined” initiative and hope to be a part of this initiative’s further implementation that humanizes, personalizes, and problematizes learning.

I was born and raised in Nebraska and graduated with a degree in finance from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Since moving to Missouri nearly seven years ago, University City residents have embraced my family like nowhere I’ve lived before. Our district has valuable assets that other districts try to replicate. We also have leadership that is dedicated to student achievement and community outreach.

As a “Big” in Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri, I am aware of the challenges and triumphs that students and public schools face. Our students deserve the best education we can provide, and through a strong partnership among our educators, superintendent, and school board members, University City can be the school district the St. Louis region looks to as the standard of what University City can be the school district the St. Louis region looks to as the standard of what.

Lamon E. Reed
Hello my name is Lamon E. Reed. I attended Pershing Elementary, Ronald E. McNair, Brittany Woods Middle and I graduated from University City High School. I’m a proud alum of the class of 1994. Shortly after graduation, I enlisted in the United States Navy. I pursued my passions and studied Culinary Arts and Business Management. I am now a Letter Carrier for the United States Postal Service. I grew up in a family of educators, social workers, nurses and like myself, military veterans. I have a family of who are currently employed or involved with the St. Louis Public School District. Education has and will always be a passion of mine. I take every opportunity to help children and needy families. I instill the same morals and values I was taught in my children and any child I come in contact with. I’m currently the President of the University City High School Alumni Association. I volunteer in the district whenever I’m available. I have partnered with many organizations and churches in the community to help with needy families and students. Helping others is something I’m very passionate about. I think this is truly needed in our community. So many families are having to do without.

I would be honored to serve on the University City Board of Education. I look forward to bringing fresh ideas to assist the district. I think we need to address the trauma a lot of the children are suffering from. I also think we need to figure out how to fix the problem of parent involvement with children and the school district. University City is the place I call home and I plan on giving back to this district and our community for a long time to come. I look forward to meeting and answering any questions you may have of me. I look forward to your vote and support.

Thank you.

LaVerne Ford-Williams*
After 37 years of devoted service to the School District of University City as a teacher and an administrator, I was blessed to retire and follow my passion of becoming a University City Board Member. During my tenure in the District, I worked at both the elementary and secondary levels. Early in my career, I taught at Pershing, Delmar Harvad, Nathesiln Havelorne and Ronald E. McNair schools as well as supervised summer school programs for several years at Jackson Park, Brittany Woods and University City High School. The last thirteen years of my career were spent working at Brittany Woods Middle School as the Assistant Principal. Now, I can proudly say that I continue to work diligently to build strong, productive and rewarding relationships with our students, their families and our community.

I have had the honor of serving you as a member of the University City Board of Education for three years. I continue to be dedicated to:

- Ensuring excellence in education for all students.
- Maintaining high expectations and sustaining full accreditation.
- Working with the current Board of Education to address any matters brought forth by parents, students and the community.
- Ensuring overall accountability for all employees within the University City School District.
- Upholding with all stakeholders to continue efforts towards overall improvement and sustainability of the District’s learning programs and services.
- Supporting efforts to ensure that educational funds are spent prudently and effectively to provide maximum educational benefits for our district students.

As a returning Board member, I will devote myself to continue making a positive difference and strive to support an effective learning environment.

I am seeking your support and vote on April 2nd. Feel free to contact me at: laverne@windows.com.

Facebook: LaVerne Ford-Williams for U-City School Board

Residency Artist Chabi Bayoc Creates Mural with UCHS Students

The students in Marnie Claunche’s Drawing and Pre-AP Studio Art classes can take pride in knowing their artwork will be seen by University City High School students for decades to come.

At the beginning of the school year, UCHS Principal Michael Peoples mentioned that it would be nice to see some murals around the school. Claunche talked to Chabi Bayoc, a local artist who has become known for his paintings depicting positive images of African Americans including an outdoor mural he produced with students and families at Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center in November 2018.

“I thought it would be perfect,” Claunche said. “I wanted the students to work with an artist and see, from beginning to end, what it’s like to actually think like an artist, how you envision and then follow through with a big piece like this.”

Bayoc met with 23 high school students in January to discuss the mural. After brainstorming, they decided to focus on the fine arts: dance, music, visual arts and theatre. Bayoc cut three wooden panels to look like a stage, then worked with the students to sketch their mural. Finally, the students started painting.

“The students were really motivated by being able to create a mural for their school,” Claunche said. “The idea of working with subject matter that looks like the people around you, that’s just really inspiring.”

Claunche said the mural will hang in the main hall over the entryway to the office. “The students are super excited,” She said. “I mean, we’re so excited. They love the idea that it’s going to be permanently installed.”

Elections will be held Tuesday, April 2, 2019 for two University City Board of Education seats. For more information, visit www.ucityschools.org/BOE or call (314) 290-4003.
New dance teacher at UCHS brings wealth of experience

It’s a new era of dance at University City High School as the students said goodbye to Heidi Morgan, the longtime dance teacher, and welcomed Nicole Thomas to the program.

Thomas is a professional dancer who received a bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Illinois. She has taught all over the world, including London, the West Indies and the Caribbean. With her extensive experience in dance, Thomas hopes to broaden the students’ horizons.

“She has lots of connections with choreographers around the world and has brought in many of them to help,” sophomore Rebekah Thomas said. “She wants the best for her dancers and really knows how to help us.”

The instructor’s main goal is to take the talents and gifts of her new students and give them opportunities to develop their skills to the highest level. She said the students possess talent and she wants to guide them to greatness.

“I am looking forward to developing community partnerships and relationships so people all over the metropolitan area can see how talented our students really are,” she said.

Despite following a long-time and well-admired dancer teacher, Thomas does not feel she is replacing Morgan, but continuing the dance program she built and nurtured.

“It’s a transition and (Morgan) left a great legacy,” Thomas said. “I just want to continue that legacy and keep it growing.”

Directing and delivering the annual Kinesis concert in December was natural for Thomas, who has been producing concerts since college. As a new instructor, there were some challenges to overcome.

“The most challenging thing was getting students to adjust to a different style of teaching, though it hasn’t been too difficult,” Thomas continued. “The students were otherwise excited and in a good place.”

After the concert, students reflected on the experience. Sophomore Brenyn Wilke, who is participating in dance for the first time, found Kinesis to be a great learning and bonding experience.

“I liked the concert because I was outset getting to help all my friends get our act together,” Wilke said.

Thomas said she learned a lot and is looking forward to preparing for the spring Kinesis concert.

“Knowing what resources are available is important,” she said. “I can utilize those resources beyond what we do here in the classroom. It will help immensely.”

Brittany Woods dance teacher Clara Roddy, Chisa Lovely, Anna Herron, Annalise Forrester and Jamiya Miller take a bow at the end of the December 2018 Kinesis concert at University City High School.

While performing in her beginners to dance to a song by Scott Joplin, junior Maleah Clark looks out at the crowd. “My favorite part of Kinesis is the costumes,” Clark said.

As a student in Dance 1 and 2, senior Daquanye Carter performs a tap dance during the Kinesis concert. “Tap is my favorite part of Kinesis, and (our teacher Nicole Thomas) is showing us a lot of different things.”

First year University City High School dance teacher, Nicole Thomas, comes to the high school with a strong background.

“Fell like she has a lot of connections and experience,” Clark added.

Brittany Woods adds dance program to curriculum

A favorite quote of Ashrele McDo渭, dance teacher at Brittany Woods Middle School, is by Phyllis Rashad: “Before a child talks, they sing. Before they write, they draw. As soon as they stand, they dance. Art is fundamental to human expression.”

It would seem the families at Brittany Woods agree. After many years of gentle pressure from the community and a lot of support from Heidi Morgan, former dance teacher at University City High School, Brittany Woods has a full curriculum of dance classes this year. McDowell is eager to help students expand and discover their dance abilities.

“I want my students to be able to create art and their own personal expression and voice through dance,” McDowell said.

Before teaching at Brittany Woods, McDowell was the mind and movement leader at The Bisme, a charter school in St. Louis. She continues to work as a core dancer and choreographer for Consuming Kinetics Dance Company, where she is the assistant artistic and executive director.

When McDowell heard about the opportunity to teach at the middle school, she said she wasn’t extremely interested, but as she thought about it, she realized it was the best way for her to teach young people how to express themselves through movement and impart her wealth of dance knowledge.

“I really like sharing my art form with others, especially youth, but my goal is to inspire them to be creative in a different art form or just a new way,” she said. “I want my students to know that you can make a career out of doing what you love, and that the arts are just as important as being a doctor, lawyer, etc.”

As the new school year began, the Brittany Woods community came together to support McDowell.

“They made sure that I had everything I needed,” she said. “Any concerns that I had, I was able to express, and the community was on board to help.”

Several parents expressed enthusiasm for the middle school dance program.

“My first semester, a lot of parents were happy that they had the option of dance here because some of them went to U. City High School and they were a part of Kinesis,” McDowell said.

Some students are taking dance for the first time. A few seventh-grade dance students were nervous about being able to keep the pace, along with the new techniques, but were pleasantly surprised after they joined. Seventh-grade dancer Stefani Hunt had never taken dance before, but when she heard about the program, she knew it would be a great opportunity to meet people and discover something she now is passionate about.

“My favorite part is that the program helps students be active and social,” Hunt said.

Other dance students, such as seventh-grade dancer Lamiyah Martin, who has been dancing since she was three years old, have improved their abilities and become stronger in the routines.

“McDo渭 is patient with you no matter how bad you may be. She’s there to help and support you,” Martin said. “Dance has helped me not only fit physically but emotionally, too.”

McDo渭 has seen improvement in all her dance students. “In just this short amount of time, I have definitely noticed growth,” she said. “I am excited to see where they will be by the end of the year. I have no doubt that our concert in the spring will be just as amazing as our past winter concerts.”

In addition to the Brittany Woods dance concerts, eighth-grade students were given the opportunity to perform during the winter Kinesis concert at University City High School.

“They’re really stepping out of the box, and it can be exciting and it can be a little bit uncomfortable, but they’re trying and that’s all I ask,” McDowell said.
Social activist Mary Beth Tinker (UCHS Class of 1970) returned to her alma mater to share her experiences before, during and after a landmark 1969 Supreme Court decision that ruled students’ first-amendment rights do not end at the school house doors.

“She talked a little bit about her life here, and they thought it was cool that someone like them had become such an important figure in recent history,” Williams added. “The authenticity of it all was wonderful.”

Tinker’s message was powerful as well, Williams said. Tinker used her experience to encourage the students to be similar agents of change.

“To learn about someone who was so young, so close to our age who had that type of impact, it was really kind of inspiring,” junior Isabel Blumenhein said.

“When (Tinker) speaks to students, she asks them about their lives— their issues and what is going on. She tries to get them to come up with solutions about how to positively address things,” Williams said. “She wants students to empower themselves to make a difference like she did.”

Tinker served as the keynote speaker for University City’s annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration on the evening of Jan. 17, and the next day she visited with students in the eighth-grade social studies classes at Brittany Woods Middle School. Cate Pautsch, BWMS dean of students and instruction, said the students were able to relate to Tinker, who was just 13 when she wore the armband to school.

“She’s clearly very passionate about the work that she’s done, and she’s very passionate about making that connection with the students, inspiring them to take a stand and use their own voice,” Pautsch said.

“She was a middle school student when she all began, just like they are, and she wanted them to understand that no matter how young you are, you have a voice that matters, and you can take a stand and make an impact. We have a great group of eighth graders who are recognizing their voice in this world and are excited about using their voice to make changes in the community, and it was very valuable for them to hear from such an historic person who was once like them.”

Pautsch said Tinker’s visit was equally valuable for the adults, too. “It was just as exciting for our staff and our school administration to have her here as it was for students,” Pautsch said. “She stayed after to talk with the teachers and share different resources she had for empowering student voices within our school. So it was a great day.”

Microsoft Hosts MLK Workshop

University City High School alumnae Arika Parr, Class of 1997, helped several current UCHS Lions get a taste of life as a professional in digital art on Jan. 16 during a workshop at the St. Louis Galleria store.

“Students came up with an idea that reflects Dr. King’s vision and then illustrated their idea,” Parr said. “Year after year, students create inspired pieces that reflect their feelings and pay homage to one of our great civil rights leaders.” This was the second consecutive year that Yancy coordinated this opportunity for UCHS students.

“One of our objectives is to prepare our students to be career ready,” Yancy said. “With this MLK workshop, we expose the students to the types of things they may encounter at the next level.”

On Jan. 22, the students brought their parents to the Microsoft store for a reception where they presented their artwork and explained to the audience the motivations for their illustrations. Each student also received a $20 Galleria gift card courtesy of Microsoft.

“Microsoft is a workforce is changing and education needs to respond to that,” she said. “Five years ago, no one would have dreamed of going after a high-paying job without a bachelor’s degree, but a lot of employers and major corporations are frustrated with the lack of skills and talent in their hiring pool. They’re playing more value on attributes like skills, certifications… and there are so many other options for young adults to get certificates and credentials that will secure well-paying jobs without a college degree.”

Over the past few years, the District has added new programs and experiences to address the rapidly changing world of work. The Entrepreneurship education program, led by UHS teacher David German, has already established a presence. Visit www.ucityschools.org/Entrepreneurs for more details.

“Programs like this are important,” German said. “This is our way of reaching out to all students and helping them make choices that lead to success.”

Sophomore Wins at The Big Pitch

Aspiring business owners from University City High School’s Entrepreneurs class competed at The Big Pitch, a national business competition coordinated by David German, UCHS mathematics and entrepreneurial teacher. UCHS sophomore Avarena Whittington placed second in the evening’s competition and won $500 for her unique jewelry company, Amy’s Creations.

Whittington makes one-of-a-kind earrings, necklaces, chokers, bracelets and handmade soaps. “The types of competitions are a great way for students to win capital for their business, but more importantly, for them to gain valuable experience speaking in front of people in a persuasive way,” German said.

“A diverse panel of judges from Black Entrepreneurs Inc., a non-profit organization that supports minority business owners, selected the winners,” Williams said. In addition to University City, students from Clayton, Jennings, Ladue, and Normandy high schools also competed at The Big Pitch.

Local educators and business professionals mentor German’s students throughout the school year. Students learn first-hand tips for growing a successful business. Community members interested in sharing their expertise may contact German at dgerman@ucityschools.org.

For more information about all the UCHS student-entrepreneurs and their business models, visit www.ucityschools.org/entrepreneurs.
The City Council voted unanimously to choose him after a nationwide search. He has worked in University City before, as assistant city manager from 1997 to 2001. A native of Texas, he is an Air Force veteran and holds degrees in public administration and public administration from the University of Texas at Dallas. He was city manager of Maricopa, Arizona before returning to University City.

Gregory Rose took over the job of city manager at the end of December, 2017.

No Cost Memberships for Seniors – Centennial Commons is a participating Weight Watchers facility. Meetings are scheduled Mondays from 6 – 8 p.m. for 8 weeks. No membership card is required for all others or there is a no visit punch card available for $20. For more information, inquire at our Centennial Commons front desk.

The Natatorium lap swimming is available now until Friday, May 24, 2019. The lap swimming schedule is as follows: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays – 6 – 8 a.m. and Tuesdays and Thursdays – 7 – 9 a.m.

Evigym Pickleball is available – Seasonal Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays – 5 – 6:30 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays – 1 – 3:30 p.m. and Sundays – 10 – 12:30 p.m. It is free for members, daily admission and ID card is required for all others or there is a no visit punch card available for $20. For more information, inquire at our Centennial Commons front desk.

Summer Learning Academy Begins June 3

The School District of University City offers the 2019 Summer Learning Academy (SLA) for students who will be in first-through twelfth grades in the 2019-20 school year with varied criteria for enrollment. The 2019 SLA runs Monday–Thursday beginning Monday, June 3 and concludes on Thursday, June 27. Students will attend the SLA site for their 2019-20 grade level.

“One District’s Summer Learning Academy is a great way for students to engage in instruction based on their personal needs to ensure their readiness for success in the following school year,” said Elizabeth Gardner, director of instruction. “If you are looking for summer experiences for students beyond summer school, we have partnered with numerous local organizations to offer enrichment opportunities.” More information is available at www.ucityschools.org/UCHSSummer2018. Applications are available at www.ucityschools.org/UCHSSummer2018. Parent notifications began during spring Parent/Teacher Conferences. The pre-registration deadline is May 4, 2019. For more information, visit www.ucityschools.org/ SLA. Printed copies of any SLA form is available through the District’s office of curriculum and instruction. Call (314) 290-4020 for any questions or to request printed copies.

U. City Retired Educators Invite Their Former Colleagues to Lunch

The next date for the University City Retired Educators luncheon is Tuesday, May 14, 2019, at 12:00 noon. It will be held at The Pasta House Company - Party Room, 8243 Delmar Blvd. in University City.

“IT is a way to reconnect while supporting one of our local businesses,” said Jeannine Soudah, retired U. City kindergarten teacher and current president of the University City Board of Education. “All retired U. City educators from preschool through high school are invited for a purely social time.”

Those who have attended past lunches with this group, state how fun it is to re-connect with old friends and acquaintances over a good meal,” Soudah said. “And I would add - and not to have to rush off to recess duty!”

The $8 per person meal includes the buffet lunch with Italian grilled pepper, chicken flaminco, pasta with red sauce, steamed broccoli, Pasta House Company’s special salad and baby leaves of bread. Tax and gratuity are included.

Soudah also states the following disclaimer on her email invite: “The group is open to all interested retirees or past employees of The School District of University City. We are not currently sponsored by or affiliated with the school district, but may choose as a group to affiliate at a future time.”

A special thanks to another retired Flynn Park teacher, Donna McWilliams, who supported Soudah in organizing the group. For more information regarding this retirees’ luncheon, or to be added to the email list, contact Soudah at ucityretirededucators@gmail.com.

Annual “Safe at School - Safe At Home” Event Seeks Community Support

The University City community is invited to University City’s seventh annual National Night Out and Back-to-School Rally on Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2019, in a new location at Centennial Commons in Heman Park, 7210 Olive Blvd. 63130.

Help kick off the new school year, increase neighborhood spirit and strengthen community/police partnerships at this annual event co-sponsored by the University City Police Department and The School District of University City. The event’s theme is Safe at School - Safe at Home!

Last year’s free activities included a live DJ and other entertainment, food and beverages, hair cuts and styling, immunizations, enrollment help, backpack and school supply giveaways and more.

This year’s planning committee is seeking community support including sponsors, donations, booths and volunteers. More details including links to this year’s registration forms are available at www.ucityschools.org/NNOT/ or contact the District’s Communications Office at (314) 290-4020 or communications@ucityschools.org.

Summer Learning Academy Begins June 3

The School District of University City offers the 2019 Summer Learning Academy (SLA) for students who will be in first-through twelfth grades in the 2019-20 school year with varied criteria for enrollment. The 2019 SLA runs Monday–Thursday beginning Monday, June 3 and concludes on Thursday, June 27. Students will attend the SLA site for their 2019-20 grade level.

“One District’s Summer Learning Academy is a great way for students to engage in instruction based on their personal needs to ensure their readiness for success in the following school year,” said Elizabeth Gardner, director of instruction. “If you are looking for summer experiences for students beyond summer school, we have partnered with numerous local organizations to offer enrichment opportunities.” More information is available at www.ucityschools.org/UCHSSummer2018. Parent notifications began during spring Parent/Teacher Conferences. The pre-registration deadline is May 4, 2019. For more information, visit www.ucityschools.org/ SLA. Printed copies of any SLA form is available through the District’s office of curriculum and instruction. Call (314) 290-4020 for any questions or to request printed copies.
Looking for summer activities for K-12 University City students, including full/part-time jobs, internships, camps or other programs?

Invite your neighbors, friends and families for The School District of University City's "Showcase of Summer Camps, Summer Jobs & Careers in the Trades" on Saturday, March 9, 2019, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at University City High School, 7401 Balson Avenue, University City, Mo. 63130.

This event will host representatives from District partners including, but not limited to, corporations and nonprofit agencies. They will share current openings for full/part-time employment and internship opportunities specifically for high school students. Colleges, universities, nonprofit and community organizations will share information about their summer camps and summer programs for K-12 students.

“We hope that students and families will accept our invitation to join us as we work to support our community and empower our students, families and neighbors,” said Kimberly Merrill, UCHS guidance counselor and event co-coordinator.

More details, including booth registration, are available at www.ucityschools.org/Summer2019Showcase. For more information, contact Kimberly Merrill at (314) 290-4093 or kimerrill@ucityschools.org.