TEC PROGRAMS GIVE STUDENTS A HEAD START IN THEIR CAREERS

HARMON STUDENTS CREATE PLAN FOR AN ACTIVITY HUB

DISTRICT CONTINUES EFFORTS TO ENHANCE SCHOOL SAFETY
At Kansas City Kansas Community College, “Making Life Better” is more than just a slogan. Since 1923, it’s been a tradition.
One of the reasons I enjoy living in Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) is that we have a clear sense of who we are, both as individuals and as a community.

We value family and community, and nurture self-determination in our children. We pull ourselves up by our bootstraps (or high heels) and move forward no matter what the obstacles and challenges. Here in KCK, we don’t wait for the door to be opened for us. With the support of our family and community, we open the door and take control of our own journeys.

So, what does this have to do with the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools? Everything! We don’t follow the path others may travel. We have the “attitude” to move away from the ordinary, and to take extraordinary actions to achieve results that matter for our students – both now and for their future success.

It was attitude and determination that led the district to establish a vision of becoming one of the top 10 school districts in the nation. That same attitude compelled us to establish a single goal: Each student will exit high school prepared for college and careers in a global society. Determination to prepare all our students for college and careers separates us from the ordinary, and requires a high level of focus and willingness to do things differently. Excellent education across the district, in every school and in every classroom, is what is required.

To reach our goal, we have put a special focus on early childhood education, literacy at all levels, and early college and career experiences. We prepare our students to be successful in college and careers, by providing them with college and career experiences, beginning early in high school. We constantly examine what the future may require of our students. We don’t have a crystal ball, but we do pay close attention to leading economic indicators. These indicators project that 64% of the jobs in Kansas will require post-secondary credentials by 2018. Our rapidly changing world requires that we continuously improve and evolve so our students are prepared.

Preparation begins with ensuring our children enter school ready to learn. We have formed strong community partnerships and will double the number of children served in preschool, from 800 to 1,600 starting in August of 2014. Those students must receive a strong literacy foundation. Today, walk into any classroom and you will find students highly focused on reading, writing, reasoning, and speaking across all subject areas. Classrooms are filled with the productive noise of students working together, debating issues, and solving real world problems. Business and industry leaders partner with us to expand our “classrooms” beyond the school campus, providing career exploration, workplace visits, internships, and leadership programs. Students attending each of our high schools begin college and technical college courses as early as their sophomore year. If I were to forecast where the district is headed, I would tell you that the graduating class of 2020 will have the supports and resources necessary to complete at least one full year of college, or a technical degree/certification(s), before graduating from high school. That preparation will give them the skills and credentials they need to be “prepared for college and careers in a global society.”

Attitude, absolutely! Anything less would not be the KCK way – “Inspiring Excellence: Every Grownup, Every Child, Every Day.”

Check out Dr. Cynthia Lane’s blog, “It’s Up to Us” at blog.kckps.org
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HOLIDAY CARD ARTIST

The artwork of third grade student Sunday One, of Silver City Elementary School, was recently seen by patrons and community leaders across the county and throughout the metro area. It was used on the district’s 2013 holiday card. Sunday was recognized by the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education for her outstanding art.

HANDS-ON LEARNING

Burns & McDonnell recently hosted 21 Wyandotte High School students for a worksite tour. The students were challenged with the task of designing a university and developing next steps for structural, mechanical, electrical and construction planning. With guidance from Burns & McDonnell engineers, students used math functions to support their design concepts. After the event, students walked away with a renewed excitement for math and a better understanding of what it takes to become an engineer.

SIGN UP FOR TEXT ALERTS

Parents, students and community members who want to receive important information about the district via text messaging can sign up for the district’s Text Alert Messaging System. This information includes emergency information, school closings and more.

Signing up is easy. Access the link through the homepage of the district’s website, www.kckps.org (click on “sign up for text alerts”). Register as a new user and provide your phone number. Be sure to complete all the information.
When parents put their child on a bus, or drop their child off at the school building door, their most basic expectation is that the child will return home in the evening, exactly as they left, just a little bit smarter. And research is very clear: The safest place for the vast majority of children during their week is school. However, tragic incidents whose names everyone knows, including Columbine and Newtown, Connecticut, have shaken some of our confidence around schools and safety.

In the October, 2013 issue of Education Connection, an article explained the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools’ (KCKPS) new Standard Response Protocol (SRP), which guides students and staff on how to respond in the event of a school emergency. The SRP has been implemented across the district, in collaboration with local first responders, and students and staff are being trained on how to respond appropriately to any emergency situation.

KCKPS Police Department

Another critical piece of the district’s crisis preparation for emergencies concerns the staff who are called on to respond. Last spring, the KCK Board of Education voted to transition from campus security to sworn law enforcement officers, through the formation of the district’s own police department. Other large school districts in Kansas, including Blue Valley, Shawnee Mission, and Wichita, already have police departments.

“After reviewing our safety and security procedures,” Superintendent of Schools Dr. Cynthia Lane said, “we came to the conclusion that converting to sworn law enforcement officers through the establishment of a police department was the best way to ensure the ongoing safety and security of our students and staff.”

Making that transition means that all campus security staff will need to become certified as sworn law enforcement officers. To become certified, current campus officers will need to attend training at the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center (KLETC) in Hutchinson, Kansas. The training, which covers a wide variety of areas, including communication, first aid, use of physical force, constitutional law, and ethics and discretion, prepares participants to become certified law enforcement officers. The district sent the first class of campus officers to KLETC in November for the training, which takes 14 weeks.

Chief Rick Armstrong Hired

An important component of converting to a police department is having strong leadership to run the department, and the district is fortunate to have one of the very best coming in as its new police chief: retiring Kansas City, Kansas Police Department Chief Rick L. Armstrong. Armstrong will begin work for the district in February 2014.

“We are thrilled to have someone of Chief Armstrong’s experience and qualifications to assist us in forming our new police department,” Lane said. “I am confident that, with his leadership, we will be able to proceed smoothly and efficiently with the formation of our new department. Chief Armstrong has both the leadership and law enforcement experience necessary to lead us through this process.”

Armstrong has served as chief of police for KCKPD since 2010. During that time, he led the development and construction of a new police academy and Mid-Town Patrol Station, led a strategic planning process and department redesign, and led a 41% reduction in violent crime in KCK over the past five years.

Armstrong served his entire career with the KCKPD, becoming only the second cadet to rise to the rank of chief. He was the youngest captain in the history of the department to attain rank under competitive testing, and has served in patrol, planning the motorcycle unit and community policing. He has also served as an adjunct professor at the Kansas City Kansas Community College since 1991. He is a long-time resident of KCK, and a graduate of J.C. Harmon High School.

Along with the establishment of the new department, Armstrong is looking forward to establishing innovative programs to enhance student, staff and building safety.
“My vision is for the new campus police department to serve as an enhancement to the school district,” Armstrong said. “KCKPS has very safe schools. My goal will be to enhance district security, and to make sure that every campus is a safe environment that encourages students to become life-long learners, and adults to inspire excellence for every child, every day.”

Together, these changes will enhance the already safe environment in KCKPS so that students and staff can focus on learning.

KCKPS Police Department Chief Rick Armstrong has been hired to lead the district’s new police department starting in February. Armstrong talked with all campus officers when the announcement was made.

Retiring KCK Police Chief Rick Armstrong has been hired to lead the district’s new police department starting in February. Armstrong talked with all campus officers when the announcement was made.

Lace up your running shoes! The third annual “Are You Faster Than A Fifth Grader” challenge is coming on Friday, April 25.

Fifth graders from every elementary school in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) will again be challenging Superintendent of Schools Dr. Cynthia Lane and other school and community officials to a two-mile road race.

At the conclusion of the mini-marathon, an Academic Relay will challenge teams to focus their endorphins on questions from the KCKPS curriculum. The purpose of the event is to promote wellness of the mind, body and spirit.

All participants in the race must be registered. Details of the event will be announced in February.

Students in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools are gearing up for one of the largest and most popular events held each year – Math Relays. Math Relays will take place Saturday, February 15 at Wyandotte High School. The event is expected to draw elementary, middle and high school students for a day of fun and challenging math events. The relays will begin at 8:45 a.m. and will close with an awards ceremony at 1 p.m.

This event gives students an opportunity to showcase their academic skills and intellect. This marks the 10th year for the district-wide event.
F.L. Schlagle High School senior Kelsey Martin comes from a family of nursing professionals. So it was only natural that she would follow suit. And though she will not graduate until May, she has already begun her career journey.

Martin is one of several seniors in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) who is a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA). She completed the CNA coursework at the Technical Education Center (TEC) at Kansas City Kansas Community College last semester. CNA is one of many areas of study offered by TEC to help students jumpstart their careers. KCKPS supports students in their TEC coursework by providing career counseling, tuition and transportation.

“Being able to look at it as you’re going to start your career has been great,” said Martin, whose long-term goal is to be an emergency room registered nurse.

Students must begin preparing for their involvement in TEC programs early in their secondary careers. If they want to commit three to four hours a day their senior year to a TEC program, then they must have accrued enough credit hours to graduate from high school on-time. They also must be organized enough to keep up with their high school environment. For example, while they are at TEC, they may miss their morning announcements, school assemblies and more.

Another Schlagle senior, LeShaye Henderson, also completed her CNA last semester. She said her mom, who is an RN, recommended that she enroll in the program.

“I want to be a pediatric nurse,” Henderson said. “I did a lot of babysitting while I was growing up and I like helping kids. That’s what I like about the medical field; it’s about helping people.”

Being in the program has made both students more independent and confident. They have learned from not only their TEC instructor, but also from their classmates. And they have benefitted greatly from the hands-on aspects of their clinical time, which put them onsite locally at extended care facilities to help residents. They took residents’ vital signs, bathed them, fed them and assisted them with their daily activities. Henderson

“I want to be a pediatric nurse. I did a lot of babysitting while I was growing up and I like helping kids. That’s what I like about the medical field; it’s about helping people.

— LeShaye Henderson, senior at F.L. Schlagle High School
said she missed them after she left. Martin said the experience made her think more about her patients’ emotional needs.

“Working with them made me see them as people and not just a project,” she said. Hands-on learning is so important for the medical field, she said, because it’s about caring for people and that can’t happen when you read about it in a book.

Both Henderson and Martin said they would not have been able to enroll in the TEC program without the tuition support provided by KCKPS. And both of them are looking forward to the ability to work a more “adult job” that they are invested in, instead of one where they are there just to make some extra money. They are pleased that their CNA will be an asset on their college applications, and that their clinical experience will be seen as community volunteer service hours.

Besides the CNA program, KCKPS students are involved in a number of other specialty fields at TEC, including auto collision repair, computer repair, early childhood education, welding technology and more.

In January 2012, Kansas Governor Brownback announced a plan to enhance career technical education in Kansas. Senate Bill 155 provides new state dollars to pay college tuition for high school students earning college credits in technical courses. So now districts are reimbursed for college credits and industry credentials earned by students.
February
5 Early Release/Family Advocacy
6 Family Advocacy/No School for Students
11 Board of Education Meeting
17 Holiday/Administrative Offices Closed
25 Board of Education Meeting

March
11 Board of Education Meeting
13 Last Day of Third Quarter
14 ½ Day Records Prep, ½ Day Inservice
17-21 Spring Break
25 Board of Education Meeting

April
8 Board of Education Meeting
17 Kindergarten Roundup
18 Teacher Non-Duty Day/No School
22 District ACT Testing Day
25 Board of Education Meeting

The full district calendar is accessible from the homepage of the website, www.kckps.org (click on “calendars”).
Marching Band Festival
A group of J.C. Harmon High School students are working to make their community healthier, and in turn, they are gaining critical skills that will help them in their futures.

The students have a plan to create an activity hub on the school grounds. This hub will be an activity center to promote healthy lifestyles for students, staff and the community. It will be built on the school’s 10-acre site, and will include walking trails, fitness stations, basketball courts, bicycle/tricycle racks, benches and more.

The plan came out of a 20/20 Leadership project assignment. 20/20 Leadership is a youth leadership program that exposes students to community issues, teaches leadership skills and builds community-wide relationships.

It may have started as a class assignment, but the Harmon Hub has blossomed into a long-term and ambitious goal that the students are determined to see to fruition.

**Birth of the Harmon Hub**

The students gleaned the idea from a class of former 20/20 Leadership students at Harmon and decided to build on it. Because they wanted it to be a true representation of the entire student body, they conducted a student survey for ideas. They received 250 ideas, which ran the gamut from a swimming pool to a new garden to basketball courts. They narrowed the entries to the top five, put them out for a student vote and the Harmon Hub was born. That was more than a year ago, and since that time, a core group of 20/20 Leadership students have taken the reins and have been living, eating and breathing this project, with the support of 20/20 Leadership Executive Director Marilyn Alstrom and their teacher Rick Malone.

Some of the students are looking at the long-term benefits of this project. They see it as affecting not only current students, but also future students and their own families some day.

“We want students to want to come back to this community to live and work and raise their kids,” explained D’Angelo Hicks, senior. They see the hub as a gathering place, but also as a way to contribute to a healthier community. They were alarmed by a 2009 report that listed Wyandotte County as having the worst health in the state. They knew that providing an area to promote fitness could help.

“Harmon is isolated by highways and there aren’t a lot of parks nearby,” said Angela Paez, senior.

We hope to leave a legacy for others to continue to build on.

— Ahmedin Issak
J.C. Harmon High School senior
There are three phases planned for construction of the Harmon Hub.

**Phase 1:** Walking Trail, Seating, Connection to Stadium

**Phase 2:** Outdoor Classroom and School Signage

**Phase 3:** Community/Student Gardens

**Learning Life Skills**

While the project itself will leave a legacy for these students, what they will take with them when they graduate is invaluable. It consists of a number of life skills that will guide them to success in their careers.

This includes presentation skills, networking and leadership. The have learned to present themselves in a professional manner – how to dress and how to act in a meeting environment. They have also learned the importance of teamwork, not to be judgmental of others, and, most importantly, that if you want to make something happen you have to work hard.

“We are the future leaders of the community and of the world,” said Ahmedin Issak, senior.

The project has broken down social norms for the students. Many in the group were not friends before starting this project. Now they have gained respect for one another and realize the importance of teamwork to get a project completed.

“Everybody’s ideas have been respected and heard,” Issak said.

And while this group of students has been learning from this experience, they believe the project has impacted the rest of the student body in other ways. There is no research to confirm it, but since the project began student attendance has gone up, there seems to be more involvement in school activities, and there is more of a sense of community spirit.

**Donations to Date**

The students have been seeking grants and donations for their project, and they have seen a fair amount of success so far: $40,000 worth! This figure include contributions by the Unified Government and the Kansas Health Foundation, among others.

Before the year is out, the students hope to break ground on the Phase I, which includes a half-mile fitness trail.

“We hope to leave a legacy for others to continue to build on,” Issak said.
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