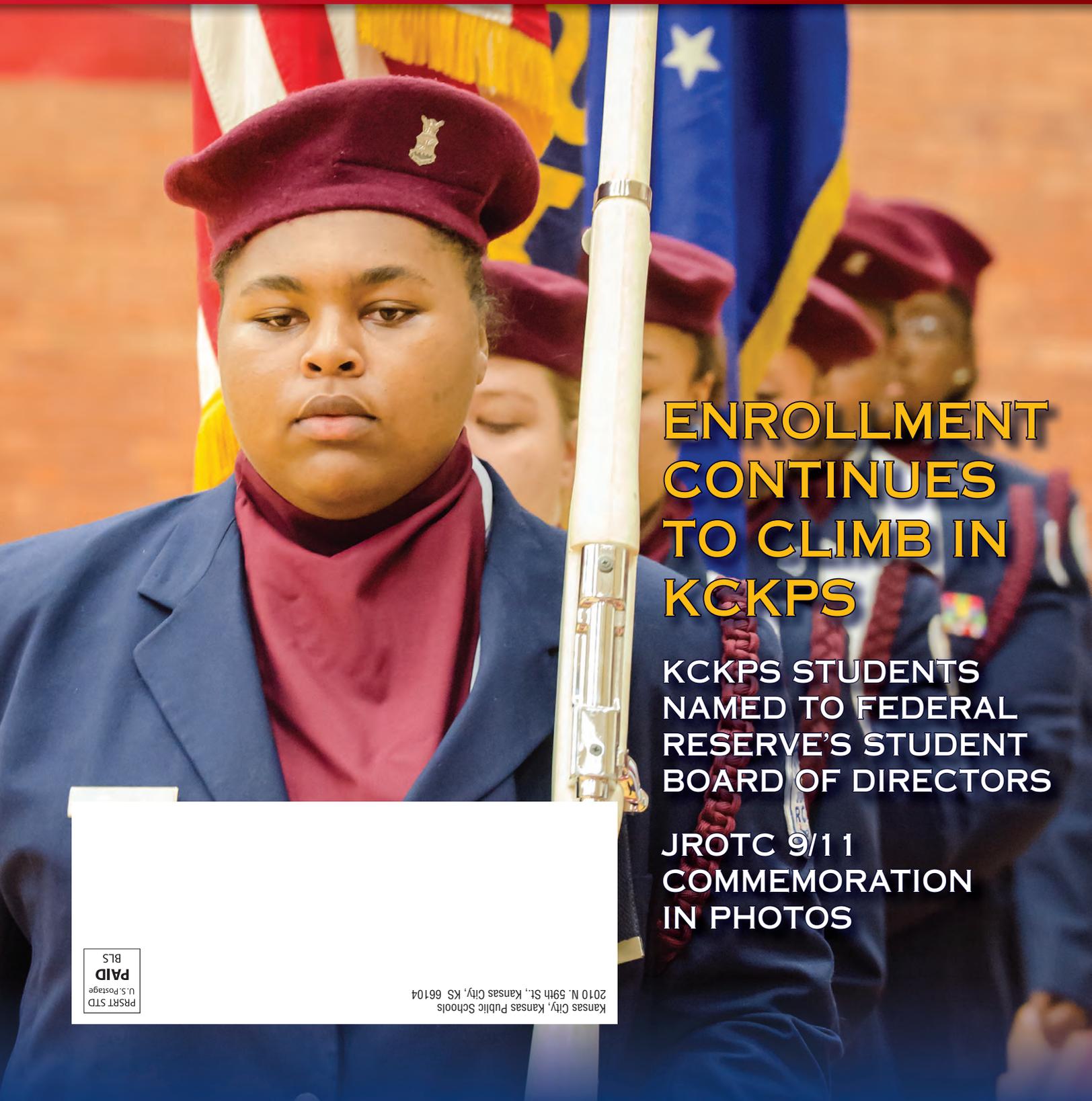


# EDUCATION CONNECTION



NEWS FROM THE KANSAS CITY, KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FALL 2014



## ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO CLIMB IN KCKPS

KCKPS STUDENTS  
NAMED TO FEDERAL  
RESERVE'S STUDENT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JROTC 9/11  
COMMEMORATION  
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# MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



**Dr. Cynthia Lane**  
Superintendent of Schools

## Getting Results Requires Focusing Our Attention on the Things That Matter Most

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools is a growing urban school district (21,599 students), with a clear focus to develop our students as highly literate citizens, pre-

pared for college and careers in a global society. A few years ago, a high school diploma would open doors to jobs paying a livable wage. By 2018, 64% of the jobs in Kansas will require some level of college, or technical credentials (Georgetown, 2009). Careers that require technical certifications are outpacing jobs requiring four-year college degrees.

## A Unified Focus Means Success for Our Students and Schools

Success for our students requires high levels of literacy, and some level of post-secondary education. Achieving excellence and preparing our students for their futures requires a unified effort from all of us. Several avenues exist for parents, business leaders, community volunteers and faith-based organizations to become involved in our schools. Two very important initiatives that are having a significant impact on our students' preparation for the future are "Read Today, Lead Tomorrow" (Literacy), and "Diploma+."

### *Read Today, Lead Tomorrow*

Parents, business persons, and community members are invited to join our campaign to read 20 minutes a day. Regardless of age, race, or wealth, we get better at reading by reading! The more we read, the better we perform on important assessments like the ACT, and professional licensure exams. The more we read, the more likely we are to be successful in college and in technical careers. The more we read, the higher our income is likely to be as adults (OECD PISA, 2001). Join our *Read Today, Lead Tomorrow* campaign by encouraging our children and youth to read each day. Twenty minutes a day is all it takes to become a proficient reader.

Encourage students to read anything that is of interest. Reading something that is personally meaningful generally has a lasting impact and generates interest in further study and learning. Reading with and to each other builds

common interest, and deepens our connections with the text and with each other.

Talking about what we are reading is also important, as is writing about what we read. Writing cements the learning as our own. And reading different kinds of materials makes a big difference. Reading technical manuals is as important as reading novels. Our leaders of tomorrow are our readers of today. Extending experiences with reading and writing beyond the school day will do nothing but advance our students' skills and prepare them to meet the demands of their future careers.

## Diploma+

Walk into any elementary school and you will see our students surrounded by fiction, non-fiction, and technical texts. Students are writing about their reading, defending their points of view, and researching. All of these skills are essential to careers of the future. We are emphasizing college and career exploration in middle school (see related article in this issue). Students have opportunities to visit college campuses and tour businesses and industries across the metropolitan area. They use their literacy skills to capture their experiences through writing. High school students visit college campuses, participate in internships in local businesses, and take courses aligned to career pathways. Juniors and seniors take college courses and/or complete technical certifications earning dual and concurrent high school and college credit.

We will continue to grow our college and career program so that, by the time the class of 2021 is ready to exit high school, each student will graduate from KCKPS Diploma+, with a high school diploma, plus at least one year of college, or a technical or industry certificate, or at least a 21 on the ACT.

## It Takes All of Us

*Read Today, Lead Tomorrow* and Diploma+ require involvement from parents, and business leaders, community volunteers, and faith-based organizations to be successful. Join our campaign to promote reading at least 20 minutes a day. Volunteer to sponsor a class visit to your place of employment; sponsor students to visit a college campus. If you only have an hour or two, consider participating in "Career Jumping," where students interview professionals from a wide variety of career fields and deepen their understanding of the work and preparation needed.

Getting results requires that we all focus our attention on the things that matter most to our kids. To learn more about opportunities to be involved with our schools and support our students, please refer to [www.kckps.org](http://www.kckps.org) or contact Lori Hewitt at [lori.hewitt@kckps.org](mailto:lori.hewitt@kckps.org).

Check out Dr. Cynthia Lane's  
blog, "It's Up to Us" at  
[blog.kckps.org](http://blog.kckps.org)

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## KCKPS-TV IS NOW ON GOOGLE FIBER

The district's 24-hour television network, KCKPS-TV, is now available to Kansas customers of Google Fiber. The network is on channel 145.

Those Wyandotte County residents who are Time Warner

Cable customers can still access the network on channel 18 or channel 98.18.

The station also can be accessed online through the district's website anytime, [www.kckps.org](http://www.kckps.org).

*Education Connection* is a quarterly newsmagazine of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS). Editorial copy and photography are created by the KCKPS Communications Department and produced by NPG Printing. To receive a copy of the magazine, call (913) 279-2242. A Spanish translation of the stories included in *Education Connection* is available on the district's website at <http://kckps.cloudaccess.net/community/education-connection.html>.

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# THE GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION



**Dr. Evelyn Hill**  
Board of Education President

Greetings to each of you from the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education. We are excited about the new school year. Our engines are running, and we are beginning to push the accelerator as we move forward in the fast lane for excellence in education and in board leadership!

I want to express appreciation to both staff and the community for joining us in another productive year of education. When we work together, we win. It truly does take a village to raise a child. Your efforts and work are not in vain. We appreciate all of the sacrifices you have made with your time and your finances.

When I am out in the community, I have noticed that many people are not clear about what a Board of Education does. I want to share our vision with you, our accomplishments, and our work for the coming school year.

## What does the Board of Education do?

- 1) We work together as a team with the Superintendent of Schools to put policies in place that will benefit all students in a positive, quality educational experience.
- 2) We approve and monitor financial reports, to make sure our financial resources are equitable and appropriately spent for the benefit of our students and staff.
- 3) We approve the Human Resources reports. We monitor the new hires and those who are exiting the district.

- 4) We establish Board of Education priorities for the district, and monitor curriculum strategies and the practices of our administrators and teachers.
- 5) As the governing board for the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library system, we approve the library activities and financial reports.
- 6) We continue to examine and approve the new KCKPS Police Department policies.

## What did the Board of Education accomplish last year?

- 1) The Board of Education team developed a Board of Education Handbook. This handbook includes our purpose, goals, objectives and pertinent information for both current and future board members.
- 2) The Board of Education team embraced an exercise called "board self-evaluation." This allowed members to identify individually, and as a team, areas where we had challenges, along with areas where we are performing well.
- 3) We approved the establishment of the KCKPS Police Department, approved the hiring of the chief of police, and approved the new training for our school/campus police officers.
- 4) We adopted the Marzano tool for staff evaluation (including the evaluation of the superintendent).
- 5) We celebrated the work of our staff and students in a variety of ways.
- 6) We approved the Coalition of Innovative School Districts application.
- 7) We approved the Early Childhood Education Grant for 800 new 3- and 4-year olds (Head Start).

## What are some of the Board goals for this year?

1. The Board of Education will continue to support the Innovative School District model, and will examine policy changes that support that work.
2. The Board of Education will continue to participate in the "self-evaluation" process, as we strive to provide quality leadership for the school district.
3. The Board of Education will lead with knowledge and precision as we study trends, data and other information that leads to positive outcomes for student success.
4. The Board of Education will continue with the focus on literacy. Every student deserves the right to read.

Thanks again to each of you. Please remember, "Together We Win!"

## 2014-2015 DISTRICT CALENDAR

(SECOND QUARTER)

### November

- 11 Board of Education Meeting
- 25 Board of Education Meeting
- 26-28 Holiday/ Administrative offices closed

### December

- 9 Board of Education Meeting
- 18 Last day of 2nd quarter
- 19 ½ records prep/½ inservice
- 22-31 Winter break
- 24-26 Administrative offices closed
- 31 Administrative offices closed

### January

- 1-2 Winter Break
- 1-2 Administrative offices closed
- 5 Classes resume
- 13 Board of Education meeting
- 19 Holiday/ Administrative offices closed
- 27 Board of Education meeting

The full district calendar is accessible from the homepage of the website, [www.kckps.org](http://www.kckps.org) (click on "calendars").

# A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NOT ENOUGH;



In the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS), the district has established a goal for each student: “Each student will exit high school prepared for college and careers in a global society.” In order to get students to this goal, it is important to be clear and specific about what is meant by “prepared for college and careers . . .”

## Graduating Diploma+

In KCKPS, being prepared for college and careers means that it is not sufficient merely to graduate with a high school diploma, as it was a generation or two ago. In today’s society, students need more, and that has been articulated by saying that KCKPS graduates in the year 2021 and beyond will graduate Diploma+, with a high school diploma, plus at least one of the following:

- One year of college already completed

- A technical certificate or credential
- At least a 21 on the ACT.

In her “A Message from the Superintendent” article in this issue, Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lane writes about how important it is that the entire system, from early childhood through high school, is focused on this goal, and how a strong literacy program at the early grades sets the stage for later success. Even in elementary school, students need to begin thinking about the dreams they have for



# KCKPS AIMS HIGHER

their lives, and the work that it will take to achieve those dreams.

## Career Exploration at Middle School

One of the most important steps in getting students thinking about the future is connecting them with caring and responsible adults, in whom students can see possibilities for their own futures. This process begins in earnest in middle school in KCKPS, where schools are working to craft a number of different experiences that fit under the category of "Career Exploration."

The first experience usually involves learning about some of the many different kinds of jobs that people do. Often, students have had little exposure to more than a handful of different occupations, and their dreams are limited by the few jobs they know. One of the activities that middle school students will engage in is "Career Jumping," where adults representing a wide variety of jobs will gather in a room, and students in small groups will talk with them about their careers. Student groups will move from person to person in a kind of "career speed dating," giving students a chance to get exposed to a wide variety of different careers.

Students will also get opportunities to get out into a variety of different workplace settings, through work-site and industry visits. Many students have little understanding of what specific careers actually involve, and what the environment in a factory, or a restaurant, or a hospital is. Students need the opportunity to spend time in these and many other different work environments, in order to figure out what they want to do with their lives. For many, getting a chance to see things first-hand inspires them to work harder, and to set goals for themselves.

## Job Shadowing in High School

As students move into high school, the experiences

become more specific, and more tailored to the interests of individual students. Many students take advantage of job shadowing opportunities, where students observe the work day of a profession or industry that aligns with their career interests.

These experiences can have powerful impacts on students. As one student noted: "One of the things that I learned on this job shadow is that no matter who you work with, the most important thing is to build relationships with the people around you."

They also have a powerful impact on the adults who volunteer to participate. A dentist who hosted job shadowing visits expressed appreciation for the experience: "We have had many students shadow, and never have we had such an engaged, interested young man . . . Thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about what we love!"

The culminating experience for many students is an internship, where a student spends a semester or a year in a structured learning experience with a company. In an internship, the student has the opportunity for a deep learning experience within a specific industry, while simultaneously learning how to succeed in the world of work.

All of these experiences help prepare students for the world of work, set goals for themselves, and move forward down the road toward success in college, and in life.



# ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO CLIMB IN KCKPS

## DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic makeup of the district continues to evolve. Ten years ago, African Americans represented 48 percent of the district, while Hispanics represented 28 percent. Now, Hispanics represent 45 percent of the district, while African Americans represent 34 percent. The percentage of students who are English Language Learners has almost tripled, from 14.7 percent in 2003 to 34.9 percent last year. This includes students from all over the world, representing a wide variety of cultures and languages. Last year, 63 different home languages were represented in the homes of district students.

Poverty continues to present a challenge for the district, as it does for schools across the state. Last year, 84.0 percent of students qualified for free/reduced lunch, up from 72.5 percent in 2008.

In some parts of the country, schools and communities are struggling to deal with the impact of a declining number of school-age children, and lower school enrollment. Often, this means closing buildings and laying off staff.

Here in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS), the opposite is true: enrollment numbers have climbed since 2008. At the same time, the composition of the student body has slowly changed, to reflect the changing demographics of the broader community.

While the final numbers for the 2014-15 school year aren't in yet, enrollment numbers seem to be continuing to increase, according to Dr. Kelli Mather, chief financial officer.

"We are seeing a lot of kids, and with the addition of the new Head Start kids, I expect our numbers will be up again," Mather said.

(In June, KCKPS assumed responsibility for the Head Start program for Wyandotte County, which enrolls approximately 800 three and

four-year-old kids in preschool programs.)

These numbers have been both a source of delight as new students are welcomed in, and a significant challenge, as the district struggles to figure out where to put all the new students. Since 2008, the district has grown by more than 1,750 students. While the district has worked hard to add additional space during that time, adding on to five buildings and replacing three others with brand new buildings, space continues

*"We are seeing a lot of kids, and with the addition of the new Head Start kids, I expect our numbers will be up again."*

*— Dr. Kelli Mather  
Chief Financial Officer*

to be extremely tight, especially at the elementary level.

"It really is a challenge with capacity," Mather said. "Our buildings are becoming more and more crowded, and many don't have space to add additional classes. This means larger class sizes."

Budget cuts from the state of Kansas have made the situation worse. For example, Mather noted, the state's decision to eliminate support for new building construction (New Facilities Weighting) will cost the district more than one million dollars over the next two years.

"This was money that was promised, and we were counting on, when we made the decision to build these buildings," Mather said. "Not having it really hurts."

The manner in which the district pays for new construction also impacts the ability to respond to increased enrollment. Most districts are able to have a separate levy for building construction, while KCKPS pays for its major building projects by saving money over multiple years from its capitol outlay budget, and paying in cash.

Despite these challenges, the district continues to move forward with new building projects. The next project in the planning stages is the replacement of Frank Rushton Elementary School.

## CHECK OUT THE SELECTION OF EBOOKS AVAILABLE ON KCKPL'S MAGIC WALLS

Students, staff and community members now have another way to access books from the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library (KCKPL).

KCKPL has "Magic Walls" for all five library branches and each of the district's school buildings. Magic Wall is an online library bookshop that allows library patrons access to a large selection of ebooks. The books can be checked out using an app and downloaded to a computer, tablet or smartphone.

A library card is needed to access the Magic Wall at the

branch libraries. For school libraries, students and school staff use their school library accounts. The number and selection of books varies by school and library branch but the numbers will continue to grow.

Candee Hoffman, lead of school library services, said the system is providing more opportunities for students to read.

"We know that we can reach more students with this system," Hoffman said. "Some students prefer to not carry a book around, and others like reading on their computers or

iPads. This system enables us to reach every type of reader."

In some buildings, staff are downloading ebooks and projecting them on their classroom monitors with Apple TV so the books can be read aloud with groups of students.

Access is another plus of the system. Both students and patrons can check out ebooks online 24/7. And during summer months and holidays, students have access to the school library Magic Walls. Another advantage is no late fees. The system enables students and patrons to

"return" books when they finish reading them, but if the book is due, it will simply disappear from their online device if it has not been returned.

Books are available in multiple formats to work with different electronic devices including EPUB, PDF and Blio. Digital audiobooks are also available.

All school and branch librarians have been trained in the new system to help students and patrons become acclimated to it. And instructions are also available online.

# KCKPS STUDENTS NAMED

## TO FEDERAL RESERVE'S STUDENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS



KCKPS students serving on the Federal Reserve Board of Directors for the 2014-15 school year are (from left): Almanek Allums, Summer Academy; Joseline Martinez, Wyandotte High School; Rayfield Lawrence, Washington High School; Mary Perez, J.C. Harmon High School; Kaytlynn Pulley, Washington High School; Martha Linares, J.C. Harmon High School; David Houston, Washington High School; Koya Couch, Washington High School; Mylan Gray, Summer Academy; and Kyla Owens, Washington High School.

Ten high school students from the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools have been named to the Student Board of Directors for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

These students are chosen for the program and serve as representatives of their schools, their district and their community.

The goal of the Student Board of Directors Program is to help students learn skills to be successful and take those skills with them into the community.

Throughout their year-long position on the Board, the students will:

- Gain an understanding of the primary functions of the

Federal Reserve Bank and the Kansas City economy

- Learn about financial responsibility and money management
- Be encouraged to commit to academic excellence
- Gain exposure to potential career paths and outline the steps necessary to achieve

those goals

The students kicked off the year by attending a Youth Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. in September. This is the fourth year the Federal Reserve has coordinated this program for students.

## WYANDOTTE SENIOR IS A KC SUPERSTAR

Congratulations to Wyandotte High School senior Prince Russell Johnson, who received a \$1,400 prize in the finals of the 2014 KC Superstar competition. The event was held August 24 at Johnson County Community College.

More than 250 area young people tried out for the competition in the spring. Johnson made the first cut

to become one of 24 semi-finalists, and then the second cut to become one of the 10 finalists.

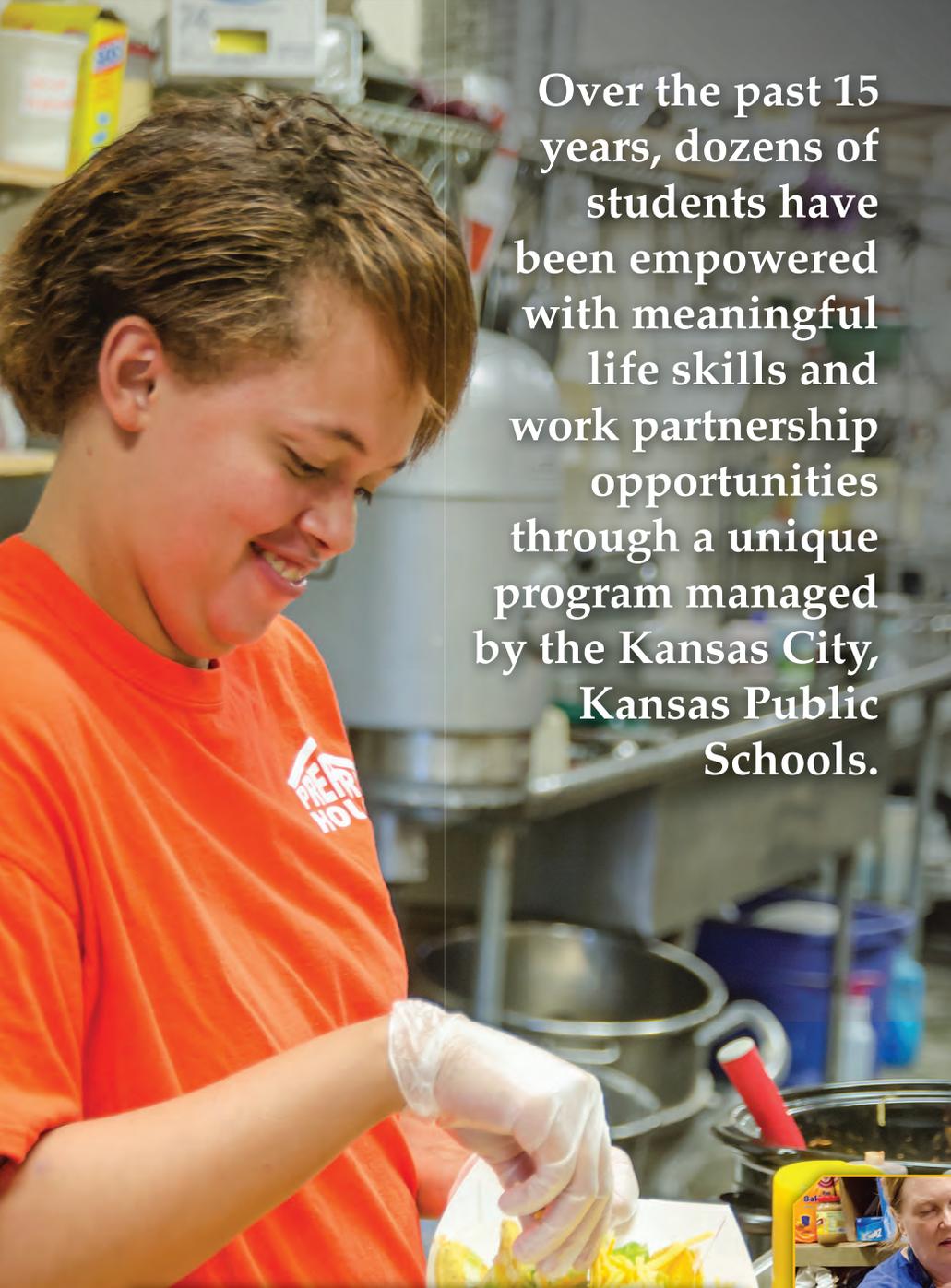
"It was so fun!" said the 17-year-old, who says he has always wanted to be a singer. He credits his hard work and his faith in God for his success.

During his final performance he sang, "Let Me Love You."

Johnson and the other finalists will be making appearances at Kansas City events and programs in the coming months, including the Plaza Lighting Ceremony, Sporting KC and the Kansas City Chiefs.

He aspires to go to Juilliard after he graduates, or the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in New York City.





Over the past 15 years, dozens of students have been empowered with meaningful life skills and work partnership opportunities through a unique program managed by the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

The program is called Prepare House. It is offered to post-high school students with exceptionalities. Areas of focus include: independent living, vocational/employment, social/leisure/recreational and lifelong learning. Students, ages 18-21, begin the program after graduating from high school and can complete it in as little as one semester or up to three years.

Kathryn Holmes is the instructor of the program. She worked with other staff to develop the idea for the program when she was a life skills teacher at J.C. Harmon High School.

“We saw the need for more individualized help for our older students who were graduating,” she said. “We knew that with some one-on-one support, these students could become more independent, secure jobs and become involved in their communities.”

The program launched in 1999 and since that time, community awareness and involvement, which is critical to the program’s success, has flourished. To date, more than 100 students have completed the program.

Since students are working on daily life skills, the program is not based in a school building. Instead, it takes place in a duplex provided by the Housing Authority of KCK. Students arrive there each weekday and their daily routine begins. They plan and prepare breakfast, complete household chores, grocery shop, exercise and work on arts and craft projects. They use a curriculum called



Each Tuesday, students at Prepare House job shadow and volunteer at MeMa’s Bakery, 78th and State Avenue. The students help prepare and serve tacos (the lunch special of the day). They also clean tables, sweep and help customers. MeMa’s is one of many long-time supporters of the Prepare House program.

# PREPARE HOUSE PARTNERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED

“Unique Learning” to supplement their life skills training. Three days per week the students report to local organizations or companies where they work a part-time job, job shadow or volunteer.

“We have a really heavy emphasis on employment. We work continually on making connections in the community so we can find the right fit for our students,” Holmes said.

A number of local businesses and organizations have partnered with Prepare House over the years to help students discover their career talents and to provide other means of support. They include: MeMa’s Bakery, Family Tree Nursery, Bonner Springs YMCA, Humane Society, KCK Community College, Longhorn Steakhouse, Pizza Hut, Accessible Arts,

Knights of Columbus, Crosslines, Great Wolf Lodge, Catholic Charities, Presbyterian Manor – just to name a few.

Several times a year, the students host sales to raise money to support their program costs. They sell items they have created such as baked goods, artwork (including paintings, stained glass pieces, ceramics and more), plants and flowers and specialty items such as holiday decorations. Students are proud to feature their work and host guests at their sales.

Keep up with Prepare House on their Facebook page at [facebook.com/preparehouse](https://facebook.com/preparehouse).



## JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE 2014 REASONS TO BELIEVE ALUMNI HONOR ROLL

Come to hear about the achievements and life work of 12 outstanding alumni from the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools as the district hosts its 2014 *Reasons to Believe* Celebration. The event is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, November 20 at the KCKPS Central Office and Training Center, 2010 N. 59th St.. The event is free and open to the public.

*Reasons to Believe* was established in 2002 to generate pride and celebrate the progress being made throughout the district. As part of the program, nominations are sought for the *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll, which spotlights successful alumni to encourage and inspire today’s students. The nominations are reviewed by a panel of judges that includes a member of the Board of Education, *Reasons to Believe* Steering Committee, students, business leaders, and a former Alumni Honor Roll recipient.

The Alumni Honor Roll annually showcases the high caliber of graduates that the district produces and brings a select group of them together with staff, students, community members, colleagues and key leaders for a night of honors.

Members of the 2014 *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll are:

- **Nedra Bonds**, artist/social activist, Wyandotte High School Class of 1966
- **Norman Brown**, jazz guitarist, Wyandotte High School Class of 1982
- **Wesley Guy Burt**, artist/illustrator, Sumner Academy of Arts and Science Class of 1999
- **Phil Dixon**, author/historian/speaker, Wyandotte High School Class of 1974
- **Dr. Simone Ariana Ellis**, dentist, Sumner Academy of Arts and Science Class of 2001
- **Lloyd Freeman**, attorney, Sumner Academy of Arts and Science Class of 2000
- **A. Drue Jennings**, retired CEO of KCP&L, Argentine Junior/Senior High Class of 1964
- **Marcus Newsom**, assistant athletic director/coach at Wartburg College, F.L. Schlagle High School Class of 1988
- **Dr. LeeRoy Pitts**, retired educator, Sumner High School Class of 1951
- **Harold Simmons**, retired police detective, Wyandotte High School Class of 1965



- **Dr. R. Jayson Strickland**, KCKPS administrator, Washington High School Class of 1990
- **Dr. Christi Walter**, health systems scientist, J.C. Harmon High School Class of 1976

For more information about the *Reasons to Believe* program, contact Tammy Dodderidge, [tammy.dodderidge@kckps.org](mailto:tammy.dodderidge@kckps.org).

To review past honor roll classes or to learn more about the program, go to [www.kckps.org/recognition/alumni](http://www.kckps.org/recognition/alumni).

# Washington High School's JROTC 9/11 Commemoration





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