LETTER OF INTEREST

A PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP FOR A KCPS INNOVATION CAMPUS

RIGOROUS. INNOVATIVE. WELCOMING.
Kansas City is on a roll: passing a major infrastructure bond and a new airport initiative, starting a streetcar system, and building an Urban Baseball Academy . . . we are doing things we only dreamed of a few years ago.

We are taking some big steps forward in urban education, too. The new Urban Neighborhood Academy is a daring and holistic approach led by a broad civic coalition; reopening Lincoln Middle School is expanding top quality seats; and now, we are teeing up a major investment in early education.

Yet, while whole industries are being roiled by technological change and we grapple with the rise of the “gig-economy” and its new expectations of workers, our fundamental approach to preparing our young people (class bells, discrete subjects, the receiving of information) remains largely unchanged from it origins in the Industrial Revolution. Does this approach still prepare them with the skills employers say they will need to be successful in this new economy? (See KC Rising Report on Common Sector Competencies after page 77)

Recognizing the need for change, communities across America are coming together to innovate. They are putting the learner at the center, and students are taking ownership and engaging in their education like never before. The movement comes in a variety of names: STEAM, Learner-Centered, Project-Based Learning (PBL). We’ve chosen PBL to describe our vision, although it is certainly learner-centered and it will be rich in STEAM subjects as well. This is not a fad or more tinkering at the margins. This is a fundamental shift back toward the learner; to the way most humans are meant to learn—by doing, and with joy.

Schools here in greater Kansas City are moving in this direction too. The LEAD Innovation Studio in Park Hill, Shawnee Mission School District’s Center for Academic Achievement, and the Blue Valley and Northland CAPS programs are a few examples of the way forward. We want to bring this kind of energy to central city students at the vacant, public facility at Southwest High.

The desire for an innovative Southwest Middle/High School is not limited to a small group of activists. Rather, as our Community Response Report demonstrates, there is a groundswell among civic leaders, elected officials, neighborhood associations, philanthropists and families, living both near and not-so-near to the building, who have pledged more than 2,000 students to this new vision. (Community Response Report at unitingatsouthwest.org)

As Kansas City Public Schools (“KCPS”) works to revitalize the entire district, the families who support Uniting at Southwest believe this new school could be a bridge to broader collaboration with the community, and a catalyst for innovation system-wide. Uniting At Southwest families are eager to come alongside KCPS, to participate in – and work hard at – creating a public school that serves students and families who believe this national movement belongs here in Kansas City too.

Representing parents and more than 2,000 future students, we, the Advisory Board for the Uniting At Southwest movement, propose to support the KCPS strategic plan, grow overall KCPS enrollment, and create an innovation school capable of radiating proven approaches to other central city schools, of all types.

Inspired by the Friends of Hale Cook and the Kansas City Neighborhood Academy movements, we propose to achieve this by creating a public secondary school in the Southwest facility that is rigorous, innovative and welcoming. Now is the time to unite at Southwest.

--The Uniting at Southwest Advisory Board
Before getting started, we would like to state that Uniting at Southwest is committed to developing with our proposed partners at KCPS a process for data sharing and academic and financial accountability that aligns with Missouri accountability standards.

We would like to also apologize in advance for the occasional redundancy the reader might encounter. We felt the need to answer each question fully, which meant sometimes repeating elements of our vision in this document. The Supporting Materials attached to this LOI are meant to draw broader connections and keep this to a minimum.

1. Collaboration category
   TIER ONE
   __ Shared best practices
   __ System-wide planning

   TIER TWO
   __ Contract for KCPS services/resources
   __ Shared contracting/purchasing (3rd party contract services)

   Tier Three
   __ X School model collaboration

2. Primary contact person
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Email: williamsphyllis3@gmail.com
www.unitingatsouthwest.org

3. Neighborhood or geography
Like many aspects of this program, we are eager to discuss with our proposed partners at KCPS a variety of approaches to create a school that serves both the surrounding neighborhoods and students living across the KCPS footprint who are excited about project-based learning. We are confident that this can be achieved in a manner that drives significant, net student population growth within KCPS while bringing minimal attrition to existing KCPS schools.

4. Desired timeframe for start of collaborative agreement
Research shows a strong start is critical to creating a world-class public school. An agreement with KCPS in place by this summer (2018) will provide the proposed partners the time needed to successfully launch 6th and 9th grade classes in August 2020.

This includes conducting a national search and hiring experienced PBL school leaders, thoroughly planning the program, engaging parents and the wider community to form the myriad partnerships essential to a PBL school, equipping the program and upgrading the facilities. This will also give us the time to raise the additional philanthropic dollars to achieve the above without reallocating start-up resources from KCPS.

5. Provide the proposed budget/funding resources needed/secured for the first five years of the proposed collaboration

   Philanthropic Backing to Make it Happen
To support the early planning and community engagement phases, the USW Advisory Board has requested commitments from a coalition of local foundations: The Marion and Henry Bloch Family

Local foundation leaders tell us a world-class public high school at Southwest based upon the four USW Pillars will generate a disproportionate societal return from their philanthropic investments. This offer of assistance is similar to the way our other public institutions such as local hospitals, universities, and early childhood centers have been created or upgraded through philanthropic assistance.

The foundation leaders tell us they feel a sense of urgency to improve urban education. They are investing in innovative educational initiatives across the central city; and they are eager to help realize this vision for a transformational school at Southwest should progress develop in a timely manner. They ask for no role in the operation of the school.

The consortium has responded to an initial USW request by agreeing to fund the joint planning process (research, school visits, community meetings…). These funds would become available upon KCPS agreeing to move to its Joint Development and Planning Phase with USW. Members of the funder consortium are also offering to assist USW in a larger capital drive to follow.

In order to create the confidence needed to plan and launch a public middle/high school, USW also commits to securing $10 million in “Trigger Funds” within six months of the execution of a Collaboration Agreement with KCPS. We suggest the Agreement stipulate that these startup funds be committed in full, and from non-KCPS sources, before the Agreement could go into effect. Our conversations with local foundations and individuals give us the confidence that this amount, and an additional $10 million over the following two years, (for a minimum total of $20 million) can be raised for this vision. This working capital ensures that the program can be properly planned and executed, and that it places no financial risk on KCPS.

**USW Proposed Funding Steps (draft)**

As a draft plan, these funding steps may evolve as we work through the partnership process with KCPS. It does represent our best understanding at the time of this proposal.

**May 31 (As Needed)**

Joint Development and Planning Agreement process initiated. Funds accessible via GKCC (Bloch, DeBruce, McDonnell, and Stowers Foundations). This funds joint research, planning and community engagement work.

**July 31 (6-month Clock Starts on Securing $10 million Trigger Funds)**

Collaboration Agreement approved by the KCPS Board of Education initiates a six-month USW capital drive to secure $10 million needed to trigger the agreement. If $10 million is not secured within six months, the Agreement will not initiate.

These monies may be accessed after the Agreement is executed to hire school leaders who will further plan the program and begin developing relationships with parents and partner organizations, to equip the school, and to begin Step I upgrading and right-sizing of the facility. **These funds will also provide a reserve needed to subsidize the program until it reaches a financially, self-sustaining student scale.**

**January 31st, 2019** (Commitments for $10 million in Trigger Funds secured. Agreement with USW comes into effect.)

**2019--2020** (Additional $10 million raised through a general Capital Campaign)
These additional funds will enable greater facility improvements and create a reserve fund for the program.

**High-Level Cost Estimates up to the August 2020 Launch**

   a. Research and joint travel to best-in-class schools
   b. Community engagement
   c. Planning Consultants

   a. Advance Staffing -- $ 650,000
   b. FF&E -- $ 2 million
   c. Initial Construction -- $7 million

3. Operation Phase – Approximately $13,000 per student, per year

We welcome the opportunity to sharpen these numbers with the financial experts at KCPS. Uniting at Southwest is committed to securing the resources needed to plan, equip, upgrade the facility and launch the school. We only ask KCPS to provide full use of the facility at no rent, and to continue its existing commitments to the facility for the first four years the program is in operation. After that, those funds could be directed to other KCPS needs.

**Financial Takeaways from Planning and Launch Proposal**

- Approximately $3 million reserve fund at launch when State funding commences on a per-student basis. These funds can subsidize the program as we carefully scale it up to a self-sustaining size, starting with small, 6th and 9th grade classes that increase in size over time.
- A second $10 million in philanthropic investments secured by February 2021, for a **minimum total philanthropic support of $20 million for this new, KCPS school**.
- Under this phased and cautious approach, there is no direct financial risk to KCPS for moving ahead with this project.
- USW shoulders the existing, KCPS facility expenses for Southwest after year four.
- KCPS remains the owner of a significantly upgraded facility, at no cost to KCPS.
- Once fully underway, the public school is sustained through the usual State funding mechanism, flowing through KCPS from the State of Missouri on a per-student basis.

**High-Level Student Counts and Budget Estimates**

**First Five Years of Operation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southwest Secondary School</th>
<th>Year 0</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Non-Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Total Headcount</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td># of HS Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of MS Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,419,470</td>
<td>5,313,782</td>
<td>8,805,798</td>
<td>12,096,616</td>
<td>13,686,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expense</td>
<td>336,718</td>
<td>4,798,977</td>
<td>6,991,289</td>
<td>9,889,368</td>
<td>12,429,224</td>
<td>13,614,445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Cash Flow</td>
<td>336,718</td>
<td>2,379,507</td>
<td>1,677,507</td>
<td>1,083,570</td>
<td>332,607</td>
<td>71,827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserve Fund</td>
<td>$3,663,282</td>
<td>$1,283,775</td>
<td>$393,732</td>
<td>$1,477,302</td>
<td>$1,809,909</td>
<td>$1,738,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above, high-level estimates are based upon many assumptions that we would need to clarify with KCPS. We are confident that a sizable Reserve Fund composed of philanthropic dollars not spent on planning or capital upgrades can subsidize the operations until the student scale reaches a self-sustaining size in year five.

6. Provide an overview of the proposed collaboration. Please include the following:

a) Purpose/goal of the collaboration.

We propose to support the KCPS strategic plan, numbers 2 - 5: The Whole Child: Safe, Challenged and Supported; Continuous Growth Toward Mastery of All Academic Subjects; 21st Century Critical Thinkers and Problem-Solvers; Readiness for College, Career and Life. See greater detail starting on pages 31 and throughout this LOI.

This will be achieved by creating a new kind of public secondary school developed through a deep and lasting partnership with KCPS based upon research-based guidelines, or “Pillars.”

USW Pillars for Success:
- Diversity By Design
- Learner-centered and Project-Based Learning
- Autonomy with Accountability
- A Community-Based School

We propose an optimistic, forward-looking approach, where the best practices of the best schools across the country are incorporated into a new school where families are encouraged to bring their kids and contribute ideas, energy and enthusiasm. In short, we propose:

- Development through a joint planning process with KCPS staff.
- A learner-centered and project-based, or PBL, school in an area of the city where public middle and high school participation is markedly low.
- A school that is welcoming to students from across the street and across the central city who are excited about this unique educational approach.
- A school that functions as an autonomous unit of KCPS, where students meet and exceed high standards set by KCPS and the State.
- To share what we learn district-wide, collaborating wherever possible.
- To incorporate a neighborhood middle school component into the PBL program as a response to the need in the south corridor.
- To secure the philanthropic resources needed to plan and equip the program, to hire an outstanding leadership team well in advance, and to right size (to the programs’ populations) and upgrade the vacant Southwest facility.
• Minimum of $10 million is raised before the Agreement goes into effect, ensuring that KCPS faces no financial risk for starting the school.
• To be held accountable to agreed upon annual benchmarks drafted in the same spirit of the financial and academic requirements of KCPS.
• To incorporate at a later date a CAPS-like program into the facility in order to provide “pull out” PBL and Career Exploration experiences available for all students living within the KCPS boundaries (KCPS, charter and parochial).
• To open our doors to the first wave of the 2,000 pledged students in the fall of 2020 with 6th grade and 9th grade classes.

b) How the collaboration would enhance education equity and opportunities for students?

Expanding Equity
This project can realize the KCPS Master Plan goal of expanding geographic equity by creating a middle school in the southern reaches of the city. Furthermore, individualized Project-Based Learning can be a powerful tool for equity as it enables students with different learning styles and from different backgrounds to engage according to their unique strengths and passions. PBL programs are flourishing in the KC suburbs and in other urban areas nationwide. It’s time to make these advantages available to KC central city students.

Project-based learning is showing strong results at engaging diverse learners and equipping them with the skills needed for the 21st Century workplace. Rather than “sitting and getting”, PBL students learn by doing. In addition to mastering the usual subjects, they go far beyond the school walls to undertake long-term, complex, and real-world projects that advance the work of local government, nonprofits, businesses and social justice causes.

PBL work is meaningful as students learn to: identify a problem/opportunity, conduct research and develop a plan, pull together a team and resources, fail and adjust, and to drive their big, real-world projects to completion. This work engages students with the adult world, exposing them to professional workplace culture, developing their “soft skills” and forming personal connections that can serve as a bridge to employment opportunities. In fact, local employers tell us these are the very skills they are seeking for high-paying jobs that are unlikely to be outsourced, or replaced by robotics or artificial intelligence. (See KC Rising report after pg. 77)

Enhancing these skills among underserved youth will greatly enhance their prospects for an equitable life. (More background on PBL as a means for greater Equity on pages 34-38).

This school presents an opportunity to shift our assumptions about how and where learning happens. Why is that necessary? Laura Evans, Senior Director for Talent Development at Cerner and USW Advisory Board member observes, “In a world of accelerating change and complexity, learning must be continuous and by definition cannot be confined to a building or formal, traditional roles of teacher/student. For example, with CAPS, accountability for learning shifts to the student, supported by teachers, business mentors, parents, counselors, even peers. Everyone has a substantive role to play and is highly engaged from the outset.”

As students progress through the program the nature of their projects will become increasingly external in nature. They will undertake meaningful projects in collaboration with local government, not for profit organizations, and companies. This career exploration will give students the opportunity to develop professional skills, form professional connections, and begin to identify the directions they want to take their lives. Many low-income students have little access to these experiences under present circumstances.
The other important way this new program can expand equity is through rich, racial and socioeconomic diversity at the school itself. Educators have long understood that working closely with people from different backgrounds not only enriches our humanity, it actually drives brain development. Forming lifelong relationships with people from other backgrounds can broaden networks that can become important later in life. (More on Diversity as an equity tool on pages 31-34)

Expanding Opportunity
While project-based programs are proliferating across the metropolitan area, there are presently no PBL schools in the KCPS system.

Opening a middle/high school at this location would also expand geographic opportunity for a large and growing base of new KCPS families. The US Census Bureau reports an increase of 1,261 children ages birth—14 living south of Brush Creek from 2010-2015, while the number of high school age students in the same area declined by 452 over the same period. This trend indicates that a carefully planned public secondary school could retain these and, like the recent Hale Cook experience, attract new families to KCPS.

A four-month survey revealed enormous demand for this school from parents of over 2,000 children. Most of the responding parents’ elementary-age children attended schools that are either charter or parochial, and the vast majority of parents (from all three sectors) were not considering a present KCPS high school option. This means that those students would be brand new to KCPS.

Parent responses to the below survey question reveal tremendous KCPS growth opportunity at the secondary level.

USW Survey Question: “If you had to choose from options available today, where would you choose to send your child to high school?”

![Bar chart showing survey responses]

**NOTE:** More than one choice could be selected

Note: *All USW* survey responders were indicating that they would like to send their child to the USW vision of a school at Southwest.
In addition to retaining existing KCPS elementary school families, this initiative would significantly contribute to the KCPS growth strategy by attracting students whose parents are not considering an existing KCPS option, as indicated in the above chart.

Supply and demand are on opposite sides of the same coin. Re-opening of nearby elementary schools, Hale Cook and Académie Lafayette (former JC Nichols School), demonstrate how unique and well-executed programs arising out of the community can generate new student demand and population. These once vacant schools are both oversubscribed, and are visibly repopulating neighborhoods with school-age children as families stop leaving the city for the suburbs and new families move in for the schools. We have been told some nearby real estate agents are calling this the “Hale Cook Effect”. The assurance of admission to this “neighborhood secondary school” helps keep young families in the city, and increases home sales to new ones.

c) Suggested roles/responsibilities of each entity and a description of how the proposing entity would work collaboratively with KCPS as an educational thought partner.

We believe that KCPS would make a strong partner. With consistent and trusted leadership, the school district is making sustained progress on state performance measures, has earned provisional
accreditation and is on a path toward full accreditation. Further, senior district staff has tremendous experience in educating all students in new, innovative ways.

We want to continue the movement to launch new, community-driven approaches in partnership with KCPS as recently evidenced by the support of the Kansas City Neighborhood Academy and the Friends of Hale Cook proposals. The Hale Cook movement to reopen a vacant elementary school a few blocks from Southwest demonstrates the school district and its community can work together in reopening schools. Launching an innovative new secondary school is more complex, and will require broader civic collaboration and far more philanthropic resources, and the results of the USW campaign suggest the community is ready and willing to help.

USW supports the fifteen measures of success described in the KCPS five-year strategic plan. We believe starting a community-based PBL school at Southwest will help KCPS achieve these strategic goals. And we want this school to be accountable to the same high standards set forth in the plan.

**Expectations**

We request involvement from Dr. Bedell and his staff, bringing their deep and broad expertise to work with the USW team to shape and improve the vision, curriculum and the financial models. Once the school is operational, KCPS and USW staff would come together in regularly scheduled meetings, and conduct annual audits of the program’s performance and other metrics agreed to in the planning process.

While responsibility for daily operations of the program would reside at the school level for reasons of agility described elsewhere in this proposal, the program would be highly accountable to KCPS. **We propose to develop ambitious and attainable performance benchmarks with KCPS in the planning process.** KCPS would be responsible for conducting an annual performance review of the program and publish its results along with USW’s strategies to address any shortcomings identified. Should the program remain out of compliance over a reasonable, and pre-agreed upon “cure” period, KCPS would have the responsibility to terminate the relationship.

USW is eager to explore with KCPS how this project-based school might connect with other KCPS programs, perhaps sharing resources and combining students for unified extra-curricular activities. And naturally, the school could test and demonstrate best practices for this transformational approach to learning.

For agility and local accountability, the USW principal and the school’s advisory board would be responsible for day-to-day operations of the program: budgeting, hiring, facility improvements and maintenance, and meeting benchmarks agreed in advance with KCPS.

**Draft Overview of Responsibilities and Authorities**

**KCPS**

- Assist in the co-creation of the program
- Co-creating annual benchmarks
- Regularly-occurring meetings with the school’s leadership
- Provision of contracted support services (e.g. transport, SPED, insurance)
- Annual performance review

**Uniting at Southwest**

- Co-creating the program with KCPS
- Co-creating annual benchmarks
- Securing significant financial resources for a strong program
• Program operations: staffing, curriculum, budget
• Upgrading and maintaining the learning environment
• DESE reporting and annual KCPS audit to ensure quality and compliance

d) Describe how the proposal would promote inclusion to ensure diversity among students and staff.

Educators have long understood that working with people from different backgrounds not only enriches our humanity, it drives brain development. Our survey indicates that this program at this location can achieve something healthy for central KC: a truly diverse secondary school----one that looks like the world in which its students will live and work. We intend to develop upon specific strategies with KCPS described in detail below to ensure the school starts rich in diversity and remains so.

We look forward to working with KCPS to design an attendance framework capable of serving families across socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. It is important to lay this out in advance as we will need to fix into the “DNA” of the school from its very beginnings a culture where every individual is respected and differences are celebrated. We propose the school function as a “neighborhood” secondary school for families living within a reasonable radius, and as a kind of “signature program” for a smaller number of families living across the KCPS footprint who are excited to participate. This Diverse by Design approach is exciting because it enables the school to retain more existing KCPS elementary students living nearby (they have a neighborhood middle school), connect them with a growing base of new families (charter and parochial) living near the school, and serve a diverse population of students from around the city who are excited about a PBL program.

We also will create systems and structures that foster inclusion amongst our diverse student populations. One idea that particularly excites us: young, diverse facilitators leading all incoming 6th and 9th grade classes through an off-site diversity, equity and inclusiveness program each August before the start of school. Provisions will be made to ensure potential barriers such as transportation and summer employment are addressed so that all students can participate. Together, they would open discussions on sensitive issues of race, class and culture.

In addition to having some fun together, the aim is to develop a comfort level and the language needed to come together as a unified school and set the school culture that will persist for decades. Activities might also include breaking students into teams where they overcome challenges together such as a ropes course or a construction project with social justice benefits. Helping create the school’s culture, and many of its practices, will be among the most important projects that early students will complete. This is an exciting opportunity to very intentionally build this kind of culture from scratch.

We place a priority on creating a school where the school leadership and the teaching staff are representative of the diverse student body the school will serve. Four of the ten members of the nascent USW Advisory Board are people of color. We also plan to establish bold and achievable benchmarks for teacher representation as part of the planning process.

e) Describe how the collaboration would ensure effective student, family, educator and community involvement. Please include what community involvement has taken place to date.

Community Engagement to Date

In the summer of 2016, people interested in exploring opportunities for the vacant Southwest High School facility began meeting individually with local parents, educators, and civic leaders. They also began researching breakthrough approaches emerging around the country, touring schools from Boston to San Diego to Blue Valley. This group began synthesizing the ideas behind the successes
they observed into a handful of core principles. This group has grown and evolved over the months into what is now the Uniting at Southwest Advisory Board (details below).

In the spring of 2017, a public outreach campaign, Uniting At Southwest (USW), was launched to understand if other people throughout the district were also interested. Using the core principles they uncovered, the group opened up the dialogue to parents, teachers, elected officials, homeowner associations, churches, local foundations, parent-teacher organizations, and elected officials at the local, state and national level.

Meetings were held in both formal and informal settings – in living rooms and coffee shops, hosted as town halls in libraries and taverns, at parades, street fairs, art festivals, church basements – even engaged voters at polling places on Election Day. USW met with leaders and citizens throughout the urban core, the Wornall corridor and nearly every neighborhood in between, connecting with Kansas Citians of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds---more than 50 public meetings in total. (See full list on pages 53-54)

In addition to the public meetings, USW created a website where supporters could respond to a variety of questions and post comments. A USW Facebook page was also created as a way to reach out to the public via social media.

Throughout the process, respondents asked many questions, challenged ideas, and generally helped us make the vision stronger.

Broadly speaking, the community, especially the parents we met, supports the idea of growing through innovation. PBL was more widely understood and supported than we expected, with many people describing its benefits in their own lives at work, in the military, or at school. People in all neighborhoods also yearn for more integrated schools and recognize the advantage of creating a diverse environment from the school's conception.

We also encountered skepticism. A common concern is that this will draw KCPS focus and resources to serve families who have other options. There is deep concern that the creation of a new secondary school would necessarily come at the expense of existing KCPS schools' student base: Lincoln and Southeast High Schools, and Central Middle School in particular. We heard the belief that the recently opened charter schools to the east (Kauffman and University Academy) were meeting the secondary school needs of the southwest corridor. Some in the community view the USW movement as an effort to privatize or to “corporatize” public education.

We believe there are good answers to these concerns, and we look forward to continuing the community conversations at the next stage, after KCPS and the community has had a chance to review our thoughts in this proposal. A dialogue about creating a new school in a building that remains for many a powerful symbol of injustice was bound to bring many painful and legitimate feelings to the surface.

These conversations helped us clarify and distill our early principles into what became the Four Pillars that guide our thinking to this day. We also significantly modified the initial vision to incorporate a project-based middle school component that is so essential for many southern, KCPS families. After receiving feedback from many KCPS families that they might also need a 6th grade transition year, we expanded our thinking on the middle school to 6th -- 8th grades.

We also envision the new principal/s taking a “listening tour” of the community and feeder schools, drilling deeper to learn exactly which sorts of programs, projects and extracurricular activities are important to families and adjusting the plans accordingly. This will also be an opportunity for the
principal and other leaders to personally connect with and to expand the already large volunteer base, to put them to work in a variety of ways from painting to planting to planning . . . achieving Pillar #4: a Community-Based School.

**We Surveyed Support**

In March 2017 we launched a 3-month community engagement campaign to answer the very legitimate question, “Is there really parent demand for this kind of school?” We created a website (unitingatsouthwest.org) with the vision, pillars and people supporting the movement, and a Facebook page (facebook.com/UnitingatSouthwest) to broaden the circle.

We began canvassing at festivals, parades, grocery stores, and some door-to-door; we hosted more than 50 public meetings at neighborhood associations, libraries and taverns; and, most importantly, we launched an online and on-paper Survey of Support asking parents and others to “raise their hands” if they support the vision. Starting a public movement was never part of our early thinking. It emerged, as an attempt to answer the question, “Is there really parent demand for this kind of school?”

And the results are clear. There is a groundswell of support for this vision. Parents have “pledged” **more than 2,000 future students.** This was far more than we had dared hope. And the vast majority of them would be net additions to the KCPS rolls. **More than 1,000 yard signs** dotted the yards and shop fronts of surrounding neighborhoods and much of the city well into the fall, and a diverse array of individuals and associations have written **letters of support.** (See Pages 55-77)

**It can be difficult to measure what is missing.** Families who support the USW vision are many, but they were not a ready-made constituency. They live in many areas, and their children attend different schools---even different *kinds* of schools. Without a vision to rally around they might have continued to go unnoticed, and their need for a secondary school unrecognized. **The USW movement has brought them together around the recognition of this common need, and provided them a voice.**

The first word in our movement is “Uniting” because we cannot go at this alone. Launching a successful and enduring urban secondary school is a heavy lift---especially a PBL program. But this school can be successful because it is coming out of the community: families with students in KCPS schools along with parochial, private and charter school families, the local business community, elected officials, philanthropists, east side and west side -- people with many economic choices and people with few. This cannot and should not be achieved in isolation.

**A Draft Joint-Development Process Going Forward**

USW is proposing an inclusive and phased process to a viable and equitable Collaboration Agreement based upon the four USW Pillars.

Task forces would be formed to research each of the Pillars and to recommend how each can be best encased in the emerging school design. Members would be drawn from the USW community who are passionate about the vision and voice support for the Pillars. Select USW Advisory Board members and KCPS Administration Staff (if so desired) will participate in each task force as well. Task forces will visit best-in-class examples of the Pillars, as needed.

USW, with KCPS review and edits, would provide a research primer for each Pillar to task force members showing how the pillars support academic achievement, personal development, and skill-building for life success. Each task force will also receive a starter list of school models and structures based on the Great School Visits.
Task forces would develop concrete definitions and goal statements for their foundational Pillar, based upon research. These goal statements would serve as a checklist to verify the school model meets the intent of each Pillar.

To keep the process transparent and continue to build trust in the wider community, USW would send out regular correspondence to its broad supporter base via newsletter, social media, and website updates. USW will also post each Task Force’s recommendations at the USW website for the general public. We are committed to coordinating all communications with KCPS and addressing all inquiries with a unified voice.

Concurrent to the Community Engagement work, USW and KCPS leadership will open a dialogue. Small groups of USW Advisory Board members and KCPS leaders (Board/Admin) will sit down together to discuss the ideas and to air out past grievances. USW will incorporate feedback into the proposal as it determines.

KCPS Administration and USW Advisory Board representatives will meet on an ongoing basis to incorporate the Task Forces’ findings and recommendations into the body of a growing Agreement. Collectively we would also sharpen other aspects of the plan such as timelines, budget needs, and school policy.

Together, KCPS and USW would then present the more elaborated draft plan to the broader community at two public meetings to gather feedback and to sharpen the plans.

Proposed Engagement and Planning Timeline

March or April (within 60 days of USW LOI submission)
- KCPS Administration agrees to move to Step 4 of its partnership process: The Joint Development of Collaboration Agreement
- USW/KCPS makes an open call for Task Force participation among the movement’s approximately 2,500 supporters and followers. USW/KCPS staff interview applicants and select diverse groups of 4-6 constructive, community members for each Task Force
- USW provides each task force its goals, background materials, meeting spaces, and staff support needed to organize for its work ahead.

May
- Each task force discusses, researches and comes to fully understand the research behind its Pillar.
- Each task force closely reviews the draft USW proposal and begins to evaluate and elaborate the most effective ways to deploy its Pillar in the emerging plan.
- Members from each task force, along with representatives from the KCPS administration, USW Advisory Board, and perhaps representatives of the civic community visit one or two best-in-class schools incorporating two or more of the Pillars. Organizers will seek advice from the people at Great Schools Visits.

June
- USW/KCPS organize two open, community events across the central city where speakers from each task force present the core tenants of their Pillar and describe to the community their recommendations for its deployment in the plan. They take community feedback and incorporate as they determine.

July
- KCPS/USW produce a draft School Plan incorporating the work of the Task Forces, Community Engagement input, school visits, and their own collaborative work.
- KCPS/USW and Task Force Representatives Present the School Plan to the community
- KCPS/USW also produce a Contract or a Memorandum of Understanding describing the purposes of the partnership and the legal and financial relationships.
• USW shares the Contract with the local foundations offering to help finance the school for feedback.
• The KCPS Superintendent presents Agreement to the KCPS BOD for approval.

To more narrowly address the above questions: This PBL program is, by its very design, a means for extraordinary levels of student, family, and educator involvement as described in this proposal and the Background Document below. The early years of the program are likely to include many student projects connected with the development of the institution itself. Students may become involved with a range of “projects”, from designing the sports program, to logo development, to interfacing with the architects to create an environment that best matches the needs of the new school. Starting an innovative new school is a series of creative challenges that should not be missed.

We also intend to form a Student Planning Committee at least a year before the school opens. Drawn from the ranks of students “pledged” to attend the program later, they will assist the Advisory Board, and later the school's principal/s, in designing a program that inspires them and is culturally appropriate. Institution building is an incredible opportunity for a young person. Guided by the principal, these projects will be structured in a manner similar to the ones they will undertake later as students. They will have clearly stated goals and parameters and they will culminate in a public presentation.

7. Describe how the proposed collaboration would contribute to building a stronger KCPS and more coordinated and organized education system.

a) Identify whom the collaboration is intended to serve/benefit. (If applicable, include proposed demographics, including FRL, SPED, ELL percentages, 5-year enrollment projections by grade level)

We would like to further shape our vision and plans in collaboration with the professional staff at KCPS. This collaboration would allow us to better understand KCPS enrollment patterns so that we do not negatively impact existing district programs. Further, we would work with nearby charter and parochial schools in the area to better understand their enrollment patterns as well. At this time, we do have some guiding principles that shape our thinking about the school size and the students it serves.

Diverse by Design means creating a school that is representative of the diverse areas we aim to serve, including students with special needs. We believe that, with guidance from KCPS staff, an exceedingly high performing program can be created without the need for test-in qualifications.

The school will need to be large enough to provide students with the socio-emotional development opportunities so important for young people while they are coming of age, such as debate, music, sports, drama, and robotics. As school revenue is derived on a per-student basis, the program will also require a certain “economy of scale” to be financially sustainable.

But there are limits to scale. Research shows that students in smaller programs are more deeply connected with their teachers and classmates. These connections can lead to deeper relationships and higher levels of support and success. Project-based secondary programs also tend to be in the small to middle range.

Navigating these competing goals, we estimate the ideal size for the middle school to grow to over 5 -- 7 years is approximately 350 students and a high school of some 600 -- 700 students. Upon graduating middle school, some students will no doubt transfer to other high schools such as Lincoln, Rockhurst or Paseo, depending upon their interests. This means that roughly half of the incoming high school students would originate from KCPS elementary schools, and the other half would be available for new to the KCPS system, matriculating from nearby parochial and charter schools.
There are a variety of reasons we are proposing two, small-to-middle size programs. A smaller high school is a better fit for project-based learning and can be populated by students who would not otherwise attend a KCPS high school. A smaller middle school will likewise better serve the unique cultural needs of a project-based learning curriculum. The goal would be to populate it mostly by newly-retained KCPS elementary students that data shows are matriculating into Central Middle School at the lowest rates, thereby limiting potential student losses there. This was a high priority of the committee that studied the possibility of a southern middle school last summer.

A smaller number of matriculating middle school students would also preserve about 50% of the high school seats available for new KCPS students arriving from the many surrounding K-8 charter and K-8 parochial programs. While the two schools would be physically separated so that we can better serve the needs of both middle school and high school students, cohabitation would drive significant efficiencies making the programs financially viable at these smaller than usual scales.

We propose the school function as a “neighborhood” secondary school for families living within a reasonable radius, and as a kind of “signature program” for a smaller number of families living across the KCPS footprint who are excited to participate. This Diverse by Design approach is exciting because it enables the school to retain more existing KCPS elementary students living nearby (they have a neighborhood middle school), connect them with a growing base of new families (charter and parochial) living near the school, and serve a diverse population of students from around the city who are excited about a PBL program. This hybrid, “neighborhood/signature” approach also ensures that any attrition experienced by existing KCPS secondary programs such as Lincoln Preparatory Academy or Southeast High School is diffuse and minimal.

The USW vision calls for a full separation of the middle and high school programs to better serve the needs of students at each grade level. We plan to scale down the facility to match the two student bodies. And for each program we intend to remove walls and generally open up the 1925 facility to meet the needs of this more fluid and collaborative approach to learning.

Examples of Open-Plan Schools that Inspire Our Thinking for a Re-Engineered Secondary School at Southwest
We believe there is also ample space in the facility to incorporate a CAPS-type program at a later date. It would be a “pull out” PBL program undertaken in partnership with the school yet serving students attending other KCPS, charter and parochial high schools who live within the KCPS footprint. Students
living in nearby Missouri school districts might also participate should special agreements with their districts be reached. We have circulated this idea in the funding community and there is significant interest, but as a later step.

Research shows it is critical to establish a constructive and collaborative culture from the very start. This is why we suggest the middle and high school programs be grown carefully, with new 6th and 9th grade classes added each year until the program reaches optimal size. The size of the incoming classes themselves could also be carefully scaled up year-by-year as demand grows (from “pioneers” to “settlers”), and as a constructive school culture becomes more firmly set.

The middle school and high school programs are interwoven yet physically separated, operate under the same structure, and both enroll starter classes in August 2020. Middle school students can matriculate to 9th grade if they choose.

High School grades 9—12
- Incoming 9th grade class starts at 115 and grows to approx. 175 students over 5 years
- Backfill students to provide access to the program to additional students as seats become available.

Middle School grades 6--8,
- Incoming 6th grade class starts at 80 and grows to approx. 125 students over 5 years
- Backfill students to provide access to the program to additional students as seats become available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southwest Secondary School</th>
<th>Year 0</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
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<td>115</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>390</td>
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<td>625</td>
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<tr>
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<td>80</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>275</td>
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<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

USW provides an opportunity to close the gap between students choosing a public option at the elementary versus the secondary level. According to DESE, in 2013-14, there were 16,177 students in grades 2nd - 8th, yet only 12,139 students in grades 6-12th (KCPS and charter schools). This represents a loss of 4,038 public school students. USW seeks to retain many of these families that have attended a public option for elementary school but decide to go elsewhere for secondary school.

We also seek to serve families that are not currently attending a public option at all. Through these two target groups, there is an opportunity for net growth in the system. Now is the time for such an effort. After all, the DESE data also shows that there has been net growth for the KC’s youngest scholars. The number of students attending public schools in Pre-K and Kindergarten increased 14% and 3% respectively from 2016-17. This is up from an 11% increase and -1% decrease for the same grade levels from 2015-16. By closing the gap between the number of students attending elementary and secondary public schools, we strengthen investment within the entire ecosystem as parents achieve a goal they tell us is critical: map out a full, PK-12th grade trajectory for their child.

b) Including FRL, SPED, ELL percentages, 5-year enrollment projections by grade level.

We believe that public schools should be open and eager to serve all children. While it is difficult to predict exact percentages of FRL, SPED, ELL students at this early stage, we fully expect to serve students with these attributes in percentages consistent with the diverse, geographic areas we aim to serve. Enhancing the socio-economic diversity of the KCPS system, which the State counts at 100% Free and Reduced Lunch (although it is not quite), would be a constructive step.
A Word About the Past

Since 1927, more than 30,000 students have taken that final walk down the front steps of this KCPS school at 65th and Wornall Road and strode confidently onto successful lives. They count among their ranks famous authors, scientists, educators, entrepreneurs, movie stars and a director, a world famous rapper, even an astronaut, plus thousands upon thousands of solid, hardworking, Kansas City-proud citizens.

Southwest High School was ranked for many years as one of America’s finest public schools. And it can be again. The spirit of these successes lives on, and is one of the reasons why so many alumni are linking arms and planting yard signs in support with the parents in support of a re-energized Southwest that is rigorous, innovative and welcoming to all.

c) How the proposal addresses an unmet need and contributes to the academic performance of the overall system.

As mentioned in other places in this proposal, project-based learning is an important nationwide movement that is supported by a variety of studies. (See pages 34-38) Members of our leadership team have toured schools around the country and have personally witnessed how a true, learner-centered approach can release such passion and determination in students.

Over the last 20-years, most of the new innovative and high-growth schools in the central city has come in the form of charter schools. Partnerships such as this could be one of the ways KCPS pulls in new ideas, people and resources to respond.

This KCPS school could radiate learner-centered approaches across the central city (KCPS, charter and parochial) as they are proven effective. Several school districts administrators around the KC Metropolitan Area have mentioned their new, learner-centered programs are sparking conversation and innovation across their districts, so this would not be surprising.

The USW Advisory Board is also interested in exploring with KCPS how the movement might work to enrich the programmatic offerings at KCPS feeder elementary schools, equipping their students for success in this full-on, PBL secondary school.

Finally, the school’s students and their academic achievements would naturally count toward KCPS totals at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

d) How the proposal would impact existing schools. (District and charter)

An Enrollment Concept

Students in the surrounding KCPS elementary schools could automatically feed into their neighborhood’s unique, PBL middle school at 6th grade, should their parents choose.

At 9th grade, their neighbors matriculating from the many K-8 parochial and charter schools nearby could join them at their neighborhood high school. Incoming 9th graders from across the KCPS footprint who are excited about this unique educational experience could also enroll, further enriching this combined student body.

This is one approach to achieving a school that is diverse and grows overall enrollment without significantly stressing existing KCPS programs due to its diffuse effects outside of the high-growth area in the school’s adjacent neighborhoods. We are eager to explore this and other ideas with the professional staff at KCPS to find the best overall solution to achieve net growth, diversity, and minimal disruption to existing programs. To be clear, our goal is to serve families that are not currently opting
into a KCPS option for middle school and high school, while also recruiting new families that did not select a public option for elementary school. By working with KCPS, neighboring charter and parochial schools to better understand their enrollment data, we can populate the school while holding harmless existing KCPS programs.

**Retention and Attraction**

Uniting at Southwest is a movement to create opportunity for more children and families in Kansas City. This can be achieved through both retention and attraction. The recent KCPS Middle School Committee concluded that an inordinate number of KCPS families living in the southern regions of the district were leaving the system due to the lack of a nearby middle school. And the USW survey of support for a high school indicates there is ample demand to open a middle-size high school program at Southwest by combining the three, roughly equal streams of elementary families in the area: parochial, charter and KCPS.

We discovered this by inviting people to take a brief survey of support beginning March 15, 2017. As we are not connected to KCPS, or any parochial or charter schools, we reached parents and other community members through social media, community meetings, canvassing and through our personal networks. As of August 23rd, 2,079 individuals took the survey. Of those, 1,498 were taken online and 581 were paper surveys collected through community engagement events and canvassing. From their survey comments, they expressed strong interest in a diverse, PBL school.

We do not believe every student “pledged” will attend; nor do we believe we reached all, or even most, of the families who will want to attend this school. However, given the limitations of our efforts and the community’s overwhelming response, we are convinced there is (net) new demand for this school.
Baby’s First Steps: Considering High School
The number of “pledged” children is fairly consistent across the ages (above chart). However, we found the high number of one year olds interesting. Looking at parent comments, it appears they desire to remain living within the KCPS boundaries, but they are making decisions now on whether or not to stay, before their children are even of school age. For various reasons, the vast majority of these parents do not believe current options are viable for their child, but they do believe a USW high school under the KCPS umbrella would be reason to stay. This supports current DESE data that while parents are opting into public options for Pre-K and Kindergarten, we still have a gap between elementary and secondary options. USW is an opportunity to close that gap. (See unedited constituent responses at https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/5bef2a_95b3d3dcfcd04d9d9644a789f44f8db3.pdf)

A Diverse School is Possible
Our neighborhoods are substantially divided by income and by race. Where Southwest High School sits, the median household income is greater than $75,000. East of Troost, just blocks away, the median household income drops to below $35,000. Troost also remains a clear racial dividing line. Neighborhood schools reflect this segregation by default unless their boundaries encompass both sides. The boundaries for Central Middle and Southeast High School boundaries do this; however, neither school benefits from racial or economic diversity as few children from the west side attend---which has become somewhat of a student “desert” for public, secondary children. Compounding the matter, many middle-income families on the east side continue to leave for suburban districts.

In short, our public schools rarely reflect the demographics of our broader society . . . the world in which our children will live and work together. But they can. USW is for families who want diversity—and the many well-documented academic and social benefits that it creates for all students. The first Uniting at Southwest Pillar is Diversity by Design, and we have an opportunity to open a school that is truly diverse from conception.
KCPS GROWTH OPPORTUNITY
Public High School Enrollment (KCPS & Charter)

Blue dots are public High School Students (KCPS + Charter)

US Census Data
Jeff Pinkerton, Mid America Regional Council
March 2017
Some Perspectives on How Things Have Changed Since Southwest Early College Campus (SWECC) Launched Ten Years Ago

Perhaps the most common question we hear is, “How can this school attract a critical mass of students from the Southwest corridor when SWECC did not?”

We believe that an institution’s formative inputs largely determine its destination. SWECC did not result from a parent or neighborhood movement. It was envisioned and planned by outside experts who brought the program to the neighborhood largely formed. While the nearby community did engage, it was nearby churches and support groups that tended to lead as a worthy cause, rather than the parents of students and future students getting involved.

By contrast, USW is coming out of the ground locally, and it is led by local civic leaders, local foundations and businesses, and, most importantly, a lot of parents who want to send their children to this school. This provides a strong foundation upon which to build healthy and enduring Community-Based Schools. Pillar #4.

There were other barriers to local participation inherent in the SWECC design. The school’s mission was described as a “bootstrap program for first-generation college families.” There are very few of these families in the neighborhoods surrounding Southwest. The facility was not significantly modified, creating the impression from the street that this was the same school with a new name. This inability to properly upgrade and scale the learning environment to the size of its student population also caused serious programmatic and safety issues later on, of which the neighborhood was painfully aware. We will have to work hard to overcome these perceptions.

The generation of families living near Southwest High when SWECC launched in 2008 were, as a group, still highly skeptical of KCPS and public education in general (including charter schools). This was perhaps due to the absence of nearby public school successes to point to, with the exception of Border Star Montessori.

In the last ten years though, a new generation of parents have come of age during a surge of successful public schools nearby. Sitting just a few blocks to the south, Hale Cook was re-started by a neighborhood movement and is now an oversubscribed KCPS elementary school that is highly diverse and, by early accounts, a success. To the east, Académie Lafayette, the parent-started charter school in the formerly vacant JC Nichols School, has grown to nearly 1,000 students in the program and routinely ranks among Missouri’s top-ten middle schools.

US Census Bureau statistics describe something many casual observers have noted: there are a lot more children around the surrounding sidewalks and parks than there were ten years ago. These successes, both prime examples of “community-based schools”, have utterly destroyed the corrosive and self-fulfilling myth that once reigned in the area: prudent parents with “choices” should choose to not participate in public education in the city.
As the above chart shows, the number of young children in the southern region is rapidly growing while the number of high school-age children continues to decline. The more than 2,000 parents who responded to the USW survey again and again report that they are thinking about leaving in search of high-performing high schools. Slowing this hemorrhage of families would more than fill the new school. On top of this, the “Hale Cook effect” of new-families moving in, would further build attendance.

These developments have also not been lost on families at the many K-8 private schools within a few miles of Southwest. Our survey shows, in numbers and in their own words, a great many of this generation of families are eager to enroll their children in a public high school achieving this vision at Southwest (See Constituent Comments at: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/5bef2a_95b3d3dcd0d4d9d9644a789f44f8db3.pdf) And, if provided a nearby middle school bridge, there is every reason to believe far more of the region’s KCPS families will continue within the system through graduation. Both retain and attract.

There has also been a generational roll over. The parents who pledged more than 2,000 of their young children to attend this school did not participate in the flight of earlier decades. They were children then. These parents have mostly moved into their homes within the last ten years or so hoping their public school options would improve. And, as a group, the adults living in the SW corridor are increasingly inclusive in their beliefs. The corridor’s overwhelming support for the 1/8-cent sales tax for east-side development is a prime demonstration of these impulses. Many of these families are eager to contribute to and benefit from the public education renaissance. This can be a doorway for them.
A word about nearby charter schools. As mentioned above, we heard on several occasions that this region of the city is saturated with secondary options, that the nearby Kauffman School and University Academy could meet the secondary education needs of the growing, southern cohort. But neither program serves significant numbers of students from the neighborhoods surrounding Southwest High. This is likely due to their unique missions to serve primarily the highest need students, the recruitment precedents set in their early formations, or that they simply cannot accommodate this level of demand without undertaking significant facility expansions.

The Paradox of an Undersubscribed Secondary System and the Need to Innovate New Services

We agree with the recent University of Washington assessment that public secondary school supply and demand are misaligned in many ways. As the below chart describes, nearly half of all public school students (KCPS and charter) leave the system between 9th and 12 grades.

![Average Year-to-Year % Change in Enrollment by Sector Class of 2013 through 2017](chart.png)


Some of this precipitous decline can be attributed to students dropping out of high school. But what about the rest? Some are leaving for private schools, and many more are moving to suburban districts. Wherever they are going, it is clear that a large part of the family “demand” for public high school is not finding the kind of “supply” of schools that meet their needs, so they are opting out.

As any businessperson knows, supply and demand are at opposite sides of the same coin. **The right supply can generate fresh demand.** We have no way of knowing for sure what all families leaving public high schools are seeking. But we do know that parents of more than 2,000 children say in the survey, and in their own words, that they are eager to participate in the USW vision. (Parent comments in *Community Response Report* at unitingatsouthwest.org).
e) How the proposal would impact financial stewardship and sustainability of the system.

An Alliance at Southwest Would Strengthen the Public School System in Many Ways

- By leveraging community resources to innovate and create our city’s first “full-on” PBL school (Programs like Blue Valley’s CAPS are “pull outs”)
- Best practices in PBL can be modeled and disseminated across the KCPS system of schools.
- Retaining students presently in KCPS elementary schools by creating a nearby middle school option for them.
- Combining the middle and high schools under the same roof, sharing much of the same human and physical infrastructure will reduce per-student costs.
- Attract students presently attending parochial and charter schools, contributing to Dr. Bedell’s goal of 20,000 KCPS students. (KSHB Nov, 2, 2017)
- Facility funds presently spent heating, securing, and maintaining the empty Southwest High School (we estimate $500,000-$1 million annually with depreciation) can be redirected to existing KCPS schools after year 4.
- Purchasing services from KCPS will increase the district’s scale and buying power for its other programs.
- Increasing geographic equity by locating schools nearer to students
- Building a bridge to a new base of KCPS parents, civic leaders, local foundations, and other citizens—leading to potential support for other KCPS innovations.

We will work with KCPS to financially model what it takes to make this program sustainable and incorporate those goals into our agreement.

Furthermore, converting an unused, public facility back into a vibrant, secondary school will help build central city population and generate significant economic activity over a wide area. A Duke University study concludes this can increase home values in a wide area by 19%. **Even a smaller rise would drive significant, new property tax revenue to KCPS every year.**

([https://sites.duke.edu/urbaneconomics/?p=712](https://sites.duke.edu/urbaneconomics/?p=712)).

8. Provide support/information that demonstrates your team’s education expertise/operational/fiscal capacity.

An Advisory Board composed of diverse and capable civic leaders and parents leads the Uniting at Southwest movement. We have developed the board through the lens of best practice research on effective, education governance standards. Specifically, we have consulted the findings of Charter Board Partners and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). The below graph highlights the USW board’s capacity and composition benchmarked against the “Good to Govern: Charter School Founding Board Diagnostic Tool” created by NACSA. We are interviewing candidates with various skill sets, and plan to grow the board to 13. We have added communications and community engagement since this area of expertise is critical to our founding Pillars. ([http://www.charterschooltools.org/tools/NACSA_ArticleDiagnosticTool.pdf](http://www.charterschooltools.org/tools/NACSA_ArticleDiagnosticTool.pdf)).
Leadership Capacity

1. Phyllis Williams - (Board Chair) MA Educational Studies. Former elementary teacher, Troost Elementary. Former Teach For America Administrator.
2. Dr. Barbara Bichelmeyer - Interim Chancellor and Provost, University of Missouri Kansas City. PhD work-focus on learner-centered approaches. Former elementary school teacher.
3. John Couture - Owner/Operator The Bier Station. Former Communications professional, UMKC. Parent of prospective students.
4. Laura Evans - Senior Director, Talent Development, Cerner. Founding Advisory Board for Blue Valley CAPS, former chair of Northland CAPS.
8. Darren Woodruff - Think Shift. Educational Psychology and Communications, PhD from Howard University.
9. Courtney Wells - HNTB Manager of IT Project Delivery Office. VP BOD for Black Family Technology Awareness Assoc. of KC. Parent of prospective student.

*We intend to hire a principal and other staff leaders soon after a Collaboration Agreement initiates in the early winter, 2019.
Once the Agreement Initiates, we also intend to explore with KCPS the cost/benefit of contracting assistance from a national organization specializing in standing up project-based learning schools.

In addition to experience, these organizations often provide curriculum templates, teacher professional development, back-end tools such as PBL software, and access to a network of experienced PBL teachers and administrators to possibly hire. Further, some of these networks have successfully replicated PBL programs across district schools, which could enhance USW’s ability to radiate proven innovations to other KCPS schools.

9. **Provide a description of how the applicant is currently fulfilling the services/programs that are proposed for the collaboration.**

NA

**FOR TIER THREE COLLABORATIONS ONLY**

10. **Describe the desired school model and/or school models you are interested in exploring.**
    - (Contract school, partnership school, KCPS-sponsored charter, KCPS serves as a charter’s LEA, co-location)

We are proposing an in-district, autonomous school operating under the KCPS umbrella. Responsibility for strategy, budgeting, staffing and curriculum is at the schoolhouse level. This could take the shape of a contract school, a KCPS-sponsored charter school, or a new, mixed-model along the lines of what is proving successful in peer cities. **This is not ideological.** Together, let’s determine the governance structure that will deliver the best and most enduring results for the community, for KCPS, and for the students of this school.

School autonomy provides the space and the agility needed to create an entirely new kind of PBL culture, and to negotiate and manage the myriad community partnerships a PBL school needs. School-based responsibility could also help attract new students to the KCPS system, and to secure the philanthropic resources needed to start this KCPS program on a strong footing.

The school will be accountable to KCPS for reaching agreed upon benchmarks. We propose “claw backs” of the facility should reasonable benchmarks not be consistently met.

As mentioned above, we propose to develop performance benchmarks with KCPS along with a smooth and reliable means to share data. The school will also be subject to the same State policies and standards as every other public school. Ultimately, the school will be accountable to the growing number of students and families who conclude it provides them a unique and quality educational experience.

“Decentralized” schools that place greater authority and accountability at the school level are finding success in other cities where they independently operate within their local school district, and in partnership with their district for select services. This provides a new path for districts to steward the overall public school landscape while creating space for innovation and local community involvement within the district, other than through charter schools.

**A New View**

History is not destiny. We acknowledge grievous past mistakes, along with ongoing racism and structural disinvestment. We recognize this and we desire to learn from it. As a new generation of parents and civic leaders, we are committed to taking healing steps.
At the same time we are lifting our heads and looking beyond our city, beyond the Midwest, to find the highest performing public schools from across America and beyond. But this proposal is a draft. It is a good one, grounded in research, local realities, and common sense. We will attract school leaders with a proven record of standing up diverse, project-based learning schools. We are also looking to the community and to our proposed partners at KCPS to help make this vision sing.

By coming together now, we can have a transformational effect on how we think about education here in central Kansas City, how we connect our schools with our community, and how we bring our children together to form a welcoming community of learners.

The pieces are before us: Parent demand, broad community support, philanthropic backing, and a vacant public facility created for this purpose. Now is the time to put these pieces into place. Let's build something spectacular and lasting, for all of our kids.

With sincere desire to do this together,

--The Uniting at Southwest Advisory Board


Supporting Materials Document

Uniting At Southwest Pillars for Success

1. Diversity by Design

“Unless our children begin to learn together there is little hope that our people will learn to live together.”

Justice Thurgood Marshall, United States Supreme Court

We propose to work with KCPS to build a school that is diverse by design: a school for students of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and reflective of the diversity of the world in which they will live and work. We believe this school can attract local residents not currently attending a KCPS schools without causing a significant decrease in attendance at existing KCPS schools. We can rise above the lines that have divided us for too long.

Creating diversity is important for a variety of reasons described in a Century Foundation white paper (https://tcf.org/content/facts/the-benefits-of-socioeconomically-and-racially-integrated-schools-and-classrooms).

1. Low-income students attending mixed-income schools test higher, drop out less, and they are far more likely to attend college.
2. Students in racially mixed schools are less likely to hold stereotypes, more likely to form friendships with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and are more tolerant healthy perspectives in an increasingly diverse society.
3. Diverse school experiences also broaden personal networks, which can become especially important later in life.
4. And, perhaps most interesting, separate studies find the “mental mapping” required to interact with people from other backgrounds actually creates new synaptic connections. In short, diversity makes our kids smarter.

“The evidence is clear, but it is important to note that achieving school-level diversity does not immediately eliminate all disparities that affect students. Issues of tracking, bias, and differential treatment can still disadvantage certain populations, even if the school community is diverse. However, meaningfully integrated schools provide opportunities for enhanced social cohesion, cooperation across lines of difference, and eventually greater life incomes.

All students, regardless of socioeconomic status or race, are recipients of these benefits.” --Center for American Progress (https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2017/05/31/433014/isolated-and-segregated/)

Learning from Past Mistakes

Kansas City has a painful history of legal racial segregation. While the statutory barriers have been removed, many central Kansas Citians continue to live in neighborhoods that are largely separated by race. And more recently, divisions along socioeconomic lines have become more pronounced as middle class families continue relocating to the suburbs, which are becoming more racially diverse.
Closing Achievement Gaps

FIGURE 2
SUBGROUP COMPARISONS FOR MATH ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN HARTFORD AREA INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOLS


FIGURE 3
SUBGROUP COMPARISONS FOR READING ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN HARTFORD AREA INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOLS

These central city demographics are expressed in our public schools with KCPS described by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as a 100% free-and-reduced lunch district, against a State average hovering in the low 40% range. Many local educators describe the need for increased resources and focus to address the challenges of concentrated poverty and high rates of associated student mobility and trauma. We agree that this must be a priority. We also believe that if concentrated poverty is the underlying issue to many of our challenges, that we need a second-tier strategy to, over time, create more and more socio-economically (and racially) diverse public schools. We are presenting one approach to achieve one.

For its first forty plus years, Southwest High School was a segregated, white-only school. This reflected the redlining pattern of the city, which was largely traced by school attendance zones. Things began to change in the 1970s and ‘80s through both voluntary and proscribed means. There was a stretch when the school was a fairly accurate reflection of Kansas City demographics with the full spectrum of classes and races of students learning side by side.

But the broader forces of society of those years, which were driving energy out of our central cities (and not only at Southwest, nor just in Kansas City), along with lingering racism, were too great, and by the 1990’s the school had lost much of its socioeconomic and racial diversity. The school entered a spiral of declining performance and student population and was eventually shuttered in 1999.

As mentioned above, two attempts to revive Southwest in the early 2000’s were made. While well meaning, neither effort benefited from strong participation from the school’s surrounding neighborhoods. The first was an ill-fated charter school that was scaled up before achieving a solid, academic culture.

The second attempt, Southwest Early College Campus, was designed by outside experts as a bootstrap program for first-generation college families and was marketed as such. The program never benefited from strong, neighborhood participation: local students attending, local parent involvement, and deep connections with the surrounding business community. But the school did achieve impressive gains until a large number of students from the shuttered Westport High School were relocated there. A culture clash ensued, students left, and the program shut down a few years later. The school sits empty today.

The Families Leaving KCPS are Diverse
The KCPS Middle School Steering Committee data shows that families of all racial backgrounds have been leaving central city schools, and neighborhoods, for decades, and especially middle-class families of all races. This has contributed to the decline in KCPS enrollments from a high of 70,000, decreased tax revenue, and lowered public support for the institution. For instance, KCPS has not benefited from a school bond election in many decades. This loss of diversity and overall population is holding back our city, our schools, and our children.

Together, we can reverse the loss
The USW proposal presents KCPS with an opportunity to create a representative public secondary school where there is only an empty building now. To achieve true diversity, the school will need to attract students from both the surrounding neighborhoods and the broader community. And gaining Southwest Corridor participation in this partnership school can help rebuild support for KCPS as a whole.
Getting this right will not be easy. Trust, candor, and openness will be required. But we believe it is time for USW, KCPS and the broader Kansas City community to begin taking steps to make this vision of a diverse high school a reality.

**Building a Culture from the Ground Up**

They say established culture eats strategy for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And they are right. Firmly established beliefs and conventions have momentum of their own and are stubbornly resistant to change. This is why a radically new culture, such as a diverse, Project Based Learning school, is most likely to take root through careful planning, the space to grow something new, and a fresh start.

And a totally new culture is best created with the space and the independence needed to innovate, with new talent, and far from the norms of the existing organization. This is not unlike the reasons for the common corporate practice of launching innovative efforts away from a firm’s headquarters, in autonomous and accountable subsidiaries.

Local experience shows it can be very difficult to walk back school environments that have become made up of any one group. **Diversity is best achieved together, and from the start.** Former Brookings Fellow, Richard Kahlenberg, describes the sociology of this in detail in his book, “All Together Now.”

**Pillar 2: Interdisciplinary Project-Based Learning**

**Building Skills for the Modern World**

The world has changed. The skills taught for the industrial economy are different than the ones needed for today’s economy. Information has been digitized, democratized, and brought to our fingertips. This liberation is placing incredible power in the hands of the young people who understand how to deploy it. And it means that, in addition to content knowledge such as math, science and history, schools should also focus on developing skills needed to thrive in this modern economy.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a way to organize curriculum around projects instead of by specific subjects. For more than two decades, this model has been tested and refined to ensure that critical knowledge is gained plus the skills need for today’s modern marketplace.

PBL is a learner centered system where students work individually and in groups to explore big, real world questions and in the process master academic content and develop skills that are necessary for the highly fluid world in which we live. Done right, the approach is personalized, rigorous and culturally responsive. Teachers from multiple disciplines work together to frame challenge questions so that, through the journey to answer them, students meet or exceed state learning standards. From there, the students’ natural curiosity is engaged and as they ask more questions, further inquiry begins. The magic here is in the process as the students reflect, work some more, and begin the long climb toward their final product, which is publicly presented.

**KC Rising Common Sector Competencies**

Through PBL, students hone important “soft skills” needed for the world of work to create, solve problems, and get things done. The Kansas City business community, through the efforts of KC Rising, created a blueprint of the competencies they view as essential for the future workforce of Greater Kansas City. **KC Rising’s Common Sector Competencies** clarify the skills that are valued by employers and help teachers, schools and school districts align teaching and learning to the demands of the workplace.
These competencies include the ability to recognize opportunity, how to undertake research and to create a plan. How to bring people together, empathize with their needs and motives, marshal resources, fail and adapt, and to push a big, complex project through to completion. Jobs based upon these skills will be among the very last to be outsourced, replaced by robotics, or performed by artificial intelligence. These are also among the skills possessed by leaders and entrepreneurs.

Message received. Kansas City area schools should use KC Rising’s Common Sector Competencies as a blueprint for teaching and learning. With “wall-to-wall” PBL, a school at Southwest can do just that.

While students learn a great deal of “disciplinary” learning about math, science, the arts, they encounter this in more natural ways than the conventional “sit and get” approach of the last 120 years. They explore content more deeply through engagement in real world projects that they present to the public. In most cases, this is a public presentation/demonstration on a pre-specified date. Meeting the deadline and public speaking are additional skills derived from the process.

Closing the Achievement Gap
Studies show that project-based learning closes the achievement gap. Researchers from Michigan and Michigan State compared social studies classrooms taught using a project-based learning curriculum versus a traditional curriculum. Second grade students who were living in poverty were split into two randomly assigned groups. Teachers were asked to teach at least 80 social studies lessons, so that researchers could evaluate the effects of project-based learning and not just the effectiveness of the teacher teaching social studies. Here are the results:

1. The project-based learning curriculum had a strong positive effect on students’ scores across social studies and literacy. Teachers who used a project-based learning curriculum saw their students make in increase in social studies and informational reading. Students in the PBL group saw an increase of about 63 percent and 23 percent respectively, than the students in the control group. Additionally, students who were taught in the project-based learning curriculum saw their test scores draw closer to students who resided in more affluent-schools. The control groups students, who were taught in a traditional manner did not close the gap.

Low performing students showed statistically significantly higher growth rates on mathematics scores than high and middle performing students over the 3 years. In addition, student's ethnicity and economic status were good predictors of academic achievement. Results of the present study implied that STEM PBLs in schools benefitted low performing students to a greater extent and decreased the achievement gap.

In an evaluation of small, autonomous high schools in Oakland Unified School District, researchers found that, after controlling for other variables & student characteristics, certain school designs had a statistically significant, positive effect on school productivity. School productivity in this analysis means the amount of student growth (value add) that can be attributed to the school. The school designs with statistically significant, positive effect sizes included project-based learning, interdisciplinary courses, block scheduling, career/technical education, and advisory. Project-based learning has the greatest effect size of the five, meaning high schools using PBL were able to raise student achievement at a faster rate than other schools with similar students.

Supporting ELL and SPED students - A Framework
1. Project-based learning gives students something they can grasp onto while they are simultaneously learning a new language. This is more effective than studying words and skills then trying to translate it in the student's native language. Project-based learning allows ELL students to learn English for an authentic and real world purpose. These are some steps to consider when working with ELL students in a project-based curriculum.
a. **Analyzing- things to consider before starting the project:**
   i. What skills will students need in terms of the language?
   ii. What vocabulary instruction might they need?
   iii. What sort of speaking and listening skills should we scaffold?
   iv. What functions of the language must be considered?

b. **Teaching Academic Vocab:** Although the driving question and even the project launch may not be full of academic language, academic language will appear in a project. This might be specialized vocabulary whose meanings change depending on the context, or it might be technical words that represent only one concept. Knowing these words ahead of time can help plan instruction for teaching students inside the project. While all students will need this scaffolding, ELL students may require more targeted instruction.

c. **Collaboration:** Collaboration allows ELL students to be supported by their peers, which is critical to develop confidence and language acquisition for most students. It gives ELL students chances to orally express and practice the academic vocab that can be confusing, which allows students to understand their second language easier.

d. **Scaffold Structure and Function:** Creating lessons that scaffold how to justify what the students know. For example, If__, then__. You will need to give students critical tools for showing what they know about the content. Using sentence starters and stems can aid students’ language acquisition. These can also be used as assessments to see what needs to be changed to the project and students understanding.

e. **Assessment:** Not only do you have to assess content, but language too. As students progress in the project, you will need to assess vocabulary, structure, and function of the language, and assess skills that students learn from project-based learning.

f. **Leverage student Native Language:** Leverage students’ abilities to speak dual-languages. A good question to ask is if the students can create a product in both languages and if they can broaden the scope of the project's impact and audience.

**PBL Aligns to KCPS Strategic Plan**

Kansas City Public Schools Strategic Plan has 5 goals. Project-based learning is aligned directly with those goals in the following ways:

1. **Create nurture, ambitious, and ready learners:** project-based learning provides a hands-on approach that requires students to drive their learning. This gives students the choice and the voice to take their projects in a direction that is interesting to them.

2. **Students will be challenged, supported, safe, responsible, and productive citizens:** project-based learning teaches students to wholly approach a situation. Cultivating different ways of seeing a problem and an answer. This lets them be able to look at all aspects of a problem before making a final decision.

3. **Continuous growth toward mastery of all academic subjects:** project-based learning has shown that when implemented correctly, students have shown significant growth in all subject areas.

4. **21st century critical thinkers and problem solvers:** project-based learning let students challenge themselves and pose and answer their own questions of why our world is the way it is. This sets up students with transferable thinking skills to reason, communicate, and address issues.
5. **K-12 readiness for college, career and life:** project-based learning allows students to think beyond an end of course assessment and use their experiences as they develop in each grade level. Students will be college ready to tackle tough research projects, and challenging course loads due their work with asking and answering their own questions.

The Kansas City business community knows that excellent public schools strengthen their ability to attract the best and the brightest to Kansas City. Beyond attracting new residents, bringing the educational landscape up to the progressive standards of the Metro will help generate the homegrown talent needed to meet the needs of Kansas City businesses. In December, 2016, KC Rising published a list of competencies required for businesses to grow and flourish. A link to this document can be found below: (http://www.kcworkforce.com/Assets/reports/CommonSectorCompetenciesReport.pdf) The competencies described in this document directly parallel the skills that our students will acquire, making our graduates key players in our growing, local economy.

**Tailoring Instruction to Students’ Strengths**

In a PBL setting, students from various backgrounds work together and bring their own unique skills, life experiences, culture and content knowledge to their project teams. Working from positions of strength, their confidence grows as they learn to appreciate and to work with students from different backgrounds. **For these reasons, PBL is an excellent vehicle for educating students from different backgrounds and with different learning styles.**

Students also have lower rates of absenteeism because they are engaged with their projects, and their teammates are counting on them. They tend to make more cross-curricular connections and to see the bigger picture as a result of this holistic, rigorous and culturally relevant approach. And their learning is more durable because it was acquired in a natural way and it had utility that helped them complete a project.

The Buck Institute for Education has an excellent summary of research on this topic at: [http://www.bie.org/object/document/research_summary_on_the_benefits_of_pbl](http://www.bie.org/object/document/research_summary_on_the_benefits_of_pbl)


“Teachers may need time and professional development to become familiar with project-based learning methods, but those who make this shift in classroom practice report increased job satisfaction.” . Like their students, teachers who work in schools that value project-based learning increase their voice, choice and power. They enjoy the creative challenges associated with project design. They are expected and encouraged to collaborate and form collegial relationships with each other. The silo model of traditional education in which one adult spends most of her day behind a closed door with students, is thrown completely out the window in a project-based school. As a result, teachers experience less burnout and greater job satisfaction, which means establishing longer-term relationships with students and staying longer in the profession.

**Replacing the “Sage on the Stage” with the “Guide on the Side”**

Unlike traditional models in which the teacher leads the class as the source of all knowledge, the role of the teacher in a project-based learning context is as a facilitator and “guide on the side.” The goal is for the teacher to set the scene and provide the tools and structure necessary for students to make their own discoveries and solve their own problems. Our teachers will go through extensive training in project-based learning ahead of their work with our students.
Some of the ways the successful PBL teacher must break from the traditional teacher role:

- Generate activities based on knowledge of students
- Provide support, empathy and inspiration
- Facilitate thinking, growth and engagement
- Feel safe to experiment and free from strict time constraints

In PBL, teachers are part of the student journey of learning on multiple levels. Teachers must find balance as they are constantly engaging with students, peer teachers and educational opportunities in the PBL process.”

--Michelle Berkeley, GettingSmart.com

High Expectations
Teachers and administrators work together to create projects that meet Missouri learning standards and beyond. Students enter into the adult world, are expected to step up, and, with guidance and understanding, meet their full academic potential. The PBL model enables teachers to connect students to the ways they learn best.

Pivotal Partnerships Throughout the Community

Individual students, in groups, and often in partnership, conduct projects with adults working in various sectors of the community. The product might be an academic study of nearby water quality and the origin of its contaminants undertaken in partnership with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, a study of local food deserts and how social service organizations might combine resources to reduce them, a public art piece developed with local artists, a piece of learning software needed by the school or KCPS, a rocket, a piece of community theater, or almost anything the students dream up and their teachers, the guides on the side, approve.

No matter the product, students take responsibility to create something that wasn’t there before . . . and that can be a transformational experience for a young person. Appendix C has more information about interdisciplinary project-based learning and examples of projects with a social justice, civic, entrepreneurial and STEAM orientations.

A “Full-On” Project-Based Secondary School

This would be the Kansas City metropolitan area’s second school dedicated to this type of learning after Park Hill School District opened its LEAD innovation Studio High School last fall with 150 ninth graders. With KCPS, we would like to have exploratory conversations with several national organizations that are experts at helping educators create and operate PBL, including New Tech Network, Summit Learning and the Buck Institute for Education.

- Strategic Priority 2: Focus teaching on high standards, rigorous curriculum, and reliable assessments
- Strategic Priority 3: Tailor instruction and interventions to each student’s strengths & needs
- Strategic Priority 8: Invest in continuous professional development for all staff, so that, in time, each achieves mastery of their own craft
Pillar 3: School Autonomy with Accountability

School Autonomy and Student Achievement

School autonomy, by itself, is not a solution to improving student achievement at a low-performing school. Tom Vander Ark, when reflecting on his investments in small, autonomous schools as former executive director of the Gates Foundation told Education Week in 2005: “It turns out giving a failing school autonomy is a bad idea.”

But for schools that are not failing, autonomy is a mechanism by which to let them soar. We interviewed Dr. Zipporah Hightower, the Chicago Public School Director of Principal Quality. She said that the biggest feedback her department receives from high-performing principals are requests to be more autonomous. Chicago created the Independent School Principal program, which offers these principals minimum oversight from the District (in areas like budgeting, purchasing, professional learning, and evaluation) for the assurances of continued strong performance.

Autonomy is equally important to the success of a new school. The School of Education at Stanford University conducted a study on Oakland Unified School District in which it compared conventional schools to new schools that were smaller and had autonomy. These smaller schools were given curriculum and budget flexibility and control of teacher and staff hiring in exchange for being held accountable to student learning outcomes. For these schools, the Oakland Unified School District acted as a contract service provider, offering services for purchase based on the school’s needs.

After controlling for other variables, the study showed that after 5 years of operation, the average student in a new school gained 5 percentile points per year on standardized test beyond what they would have gained under the older school. While these amounts represent a small difference in any single year, this continuous growth is cumulative and becomes quite significant over time. As a result of these and other positive outcomes, Oakland Unified opened more than 40 small schools.

However, as with many wholesale district reforms, when funding dried up, leadership changed, and political will subsided, so too did Oakland’s small school strategy. But for the small schools that have persisted through the changes of the last fifteen years, they rank in the top of the most demanded and highest performing high schools in Oakland.

Research supports earned autonomy or a “defined autonomy” model. Superintendents who use defined autonomy “set clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction, yet provide school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals”

KCPS Strategy Plan: Non-negotiable Goals for Learning

USW fully supports KCPS recently approved five-year strategic plan and see these as “clear, non-negotiable goals to enable schools to create cultures and climates where students meet and exceed high expectations. We also appreciate that the fifteen measures of success are outcomes-based and focused on students.

We believe starting a high school at Southwest based on USW’s pillars will help KCPS achieve its strategic goals. We want this school to be accountable to high standards set forth in the strategic plan. We believe that school autonomy with a high-performing principal is essential for Southwest to start strong and be successful. Our four pillars (Diversity, PBL, Autonomy, Community) together will help us achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased percentage of students who feel that their school offers a safe environment for learning, and who have a sense of belonging and personally meaningful friendships.
• Increased percentage of students who receive effective social and emotional behavior interventions and continuous access to an advocate/mentor/counselor.
• Increased percentage of students participating in athletics or other extracurricular/co-curricular activities.
• Increased percentage of students meeting proficiency standards on local, state, and national examinations.
• Increased percentage of identified students who move up or out of tiered academic support (e.g., English Language Learners (ELL); Problem-solving Team, PST; Individualized Education Program, IEP).
• Increased growth rate by a minimum of one year for students at/above grade level and 1.5 years for students below grade level.
• Increased percentage of students who can solve real-world, interdisciplinary problems.
• Increased percentage of students who can use appropriate digital tools and resources to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions.
• Increased percentage of students meeting standards on performance-based assessments (e.g., Career/Technical Education, CTE; industry licensing or certification; Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, ASVAB; apprenticeships).
• Increased percentage of students with school attendance of at least 90%.
• Increased percentage of students who complete courses, activities, and experiences based on college and career plan.
• Increased 4-year high school graduation rates and decreased 4-year high school dropout rates.

Pillar 4: Community-Based and Parent-Driven

Parent Voice
To explore and shape our thinking we have met individually and in groups with parents, teachers, elected officials, homeowner associations, churches, parent-teacher organizations, and other civic groups. We’ve met in living rooms and coffee shops, hosted town halls and a video screening, and had a presence at parades, street fairs and art festivals, and engaged voters at polling places on election day. We have been up and down the city, connecting to Kansas Citians of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. A comprehensive list of public outreach activities can be seen below.

They’ve challenged our assumptions and provided fresh insight, which has shaped this study. Some 2,000 of them have expressed their written support. More than 600 have offered to volunteer. The response is exciting and convinces us that the concept is widely supported, can be successful, and will become an essential part of our thriving city.

And through all this engagement, we listened. We listened to Southwest alumni who were there during tumultuous times and fond times. We listened to folks who respectfully doubt us because they have experienced so many empty promises for a good school. We listened to parents, who know their child the best, who see before them no school options that will grow and challenge their child’s social and academic development. We listened to community members who went to school during court-ordered desegregation and know that forced integration doesn’t work. And then we listened to others who want a different school than the monochromatic one they had, so their children can be empathic to and part of a diverse community.

The feasibility study is a product of their voices. We believe continued parent and community voice and involvement is essential to building and sustaining a great school. Parents from all backgrounds want the best school for their child; they want to be welcomed and to offer their unique talents and skills to support their child’s education. As the USW idea is explored further with KCPS, we implore that parent and community members be part of the conversation.
**Holding Us Accountable**

Starting strong is essential. Many new schools stumble coming out of the gate. Often they are poorly planned, under-resourced, or lack parent and community ownership. By involving the community from the beginning, we avoid these missteps. We have to keep to our promises and our pillars, because parents, alumni and supporters will be there to hold us accountable. Their voice will matter and the school will respond to them. It is the community that will sustain this school and make it great for years to come.

**KCPS Strategic Plan: Community as Strategic Priority**

USW fully supports KCPS’ recently approved five-year strategic plan and that fifteen measures of success are outcomes-based and focused on students. We especially appreciate that one of KCPS’ four pillars (Pillar B) focuses on creating “Safe Climate and Strong Relationships with Families & Community”.

The supporters of Uniting at Southwest strongly support this pillar and believe our parent and community focus will help Southwest deliver on the Strategic Priorities embedded within Pillar B. These priorities are to:

- Strategic Priority 4: Provide a community-wide network of supports for students and families.
- Strategic Priority 5: Welcome the perspectives and embrace diverse voices of parents and caregivers.
- Strategic Priority 6: Leverage community resources for student growth and school/district improvement.

**Skilled Workers**

Thriving public schools make it easier to recruit top talent to local businesses and for that talent to live in the city, near where they work. Our students will be building the skills and competencies the business community says it needs to flourish. By mentoring and supporting projects at the school, employers will have a sneak peek at future hires --- effectively growing their own, right here in town.

**IS THERE DEMAND FOR A NEW KIND OF SECONDARY SCHOOL?**

The most important element to the Uniting at Southwest effort is that it is a community effort. It is a response from the community, a request to open doors to opportunity for more children in Kansas City. In this section we share the details of this support. In addition, we examine the larger demographic trends in KCPS boundaries and show how those trends indicate stabilization and growth in the area south of Brush Creek, and how that area can sustain a new school.

Note: For this analysis, we assumed a high school size (we incorporated the idea for a middle school at a later time based on community feedback) of approximately 600 students. Empirical data shows that most students, particularly “at-risk” students (e.g., low-SES), benefit from attending smaller schools as evidenced by, among many factors, better academic performance and rates of extra-curricular participation. This research also suggests that small- to middle-size secondary schools are able of achieve a curricular breadth comparable to that of larger schools.

Based on the supporter surveys data and the demographic trend analysis below, we believe there is ample, unmet demand to create a new kind of secondary school at Southwest. Again, this school size is an estimate for analysis purposes and not a recommendation for the ultimate size of a school at Southwest.
Uniting at Southwest Survey of Support

We invited people who support the four pillars of USW to take a one-minute survey. We scrubbed the data for duplicates (email addresses are the unique identifier) and incomplete entries (e.g., submitting 8 kids, but not recording their ages).

The results confirm that there is significant demand by families (both within and outside the KCPS school boundaries) for diverse, PBL school. From their survey comments they express interest in a school that is mixed income and mixed race. And many report they are looking for progressive education models for their children, such as project based learning. Note: USW provided KCPS staff the full data set in an anonymized form in November 2017.

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I support creating a new, innovative, rigorous, and welcoming high school at Southwest.
(whether you have kids or not)

**FIRST NAME**

**LAST NAME**

I would strongly consider sending my child to this new Southwest

___ Age of first child
___ Age of second child
___ Age of third child
___ Age of fourth child
___ Age of fifth child
___ Age of sixth child
___ Age of seventh child

**TOTAL NUMBER OF MY KIDS UNDER AGE 14**

**ZIP CODE**

If this project could also help create a new middle school in south KC, would your support:

- Remain the same
- Increase
- Decrease

Please contact me: (check all that apply)

- With news and updates
- When you need volunteers:
- Include me on the list of supporters
- Please don’t contact me

If you had to choose from options available today, where would you send your child to high school?

- A KCPS High School
- A Charter High School
- A Private High School
- Home School
- Move out of the KCPS District

Why is a Rigorous, Innovative and Welcoming school at Southwest important to your family, and/or how would you like to help?
The Community Supports the Vision
A broad section of the community who do not have children, express their support of Uniting at Southwest. These folks are future mentors to students, local business advisors on PBL projects, or boosters for after school clubs, willing to show pride and support of a school at Southwest.

Strong Support for a Middle School Component

A Middle School Component
The USW survey also asked supporters if their support would increase, decrease or remain the same if a PBL middle school were incorporated into the plan. More than half of the parents with children under 14 said that adding a middle school would increase their support. Those parents represent 874 children. This is especially important for families with children in KCPS elementary schools as they tend to be kindergarten through 6th grade programs, while most charter and parochial schools are K—8.

USW wants to meet the needs of the community, and put this public building to its best and highest use. This is why we are eager to discuss with KCPS the viability of incorporating a PBL middle school at the large, Southwest facility.

PERCENT OF RESPONSES SUPPORTING
A MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPONENT

SURVEY QUESTION:
If there was a middle school, support would....

- 52% INCREASE
- 30% STAY THE SAME
- 9% NO ANSWER
- 1% DECREASE
A Diverse School is Possible

Our neighborhoods are divided by income and by race. And not just a little bit, but substantially. Where Southwest High School sits the median household income is greater than $75,000. East of Troost, just blocks away, the median household income drops to below $35,000.
Survey Respondents Demonstrate a Significant Net Gain for KCPS
The number of families considering moving out of KCPS is also noteworthy. Of the surveyed families with 12 and 13 year old children, 66 children are potentially moving out of the district. Although the survey respondents may not be representative of the KCPS resident population as a whole, it is indicative that 28.7% of the 12 and 13 year olds who responded to this survey may be leaving the district in the near future.

Of the survey respondents, 41 students are considering attending a KCPS school. Even if these students choose the new high school in lieu of an existing KCPS program, the potential partnership between KCPS and USW would result in an additional 189 students being educated in a school affiliated with the district.

A Top Down View
The following three charts are from the 2015 KCPS Master Plan. The first shows the long-term trend of population loss within the KCPS district since 1980.
Population Changes by Ethnic Group

District School Population Accelerated with the Missouri Charter Statute in 1999. Innovation Campus is an Opportunity to Rebuild KCPS.
The 2011-2015 American Community Survey

The number of children by age drops at each bracket as families leave the city. There are 13,209 children under the age of 5 living within the KCPS boundaries, but only 11,294 children between the ages of 5 and 9, and just 10,529 10–14 year olds.

This is not the norm for the Greater Kansas City region has a whole. The first column on the left represents the Kansas City MSA (Missouri and Kansas), and shows that, across the region, there are more 5 to 9 year olds than there are children under 5. When compared with the rest of the region, KCPS is missing a disproportionate number of 5 to 9 year olds.

**Young Families Want to Live in the KCPS Footprint**

The census data indicates the under 5-year age category makes up a larger percentage of the population in KCPS boundaries as compared with the MSA as a whole. Once kindergarten approaches, however, this trend begins a long-term reversal. At 6.9% of the population, KCPS has a higher percentage of toddlers, babies and preschoolers than the neighboring districts of Blue Springs (6.6%), Lee’s Summit (6.7%), Liberty (6.1%) and Park Hill (6.0%). If this cohort stayed for elementary school, there would be an additional 1,914 students living within the KCPS boundaries. A full, K-12 pathway of high-demand public schools is central to families’ decisions, from before they have children to where they end up retiring.

**Enabling the Return**

For at least 50 years, the call of the suburbs . . . Raytown, Grandview, Lee’s Summit and Johnson County has brought steep declines to the central city population, emptied our schools, and depleted our neighborhoods and businesses of human capital. But re-urbanization is a national trend, and central cities across America are once again growing in population as young families chase their version of the American Dream of an urban, diverse and walkable lifestyle.
USW examined the following charts created by the KCPS South Middle School Steering Committee in their March 4 presentation. It tells a similar story of flight, with families choosing to leave, as their children grow older. We agree with the recent KCPS Strategic Plan, “In order to reverse the trend in declining enrollment, KCPS will need to implement some strategic initiatives and programs.” (pg. 16)
Growing Enrollment by Bringing Together Charter, Parochial and KCPS Students at the Secondary Level

Demographic trends do not shift overnight. A new secondary school will need to be filled in the near term with existing resident students. To determine if enough of them currently live in the local education ecosystem, we examined KCPS data demonstrating enrollment trends for charter and KCPS schools for academic years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

As can be seen, there is a striking decrease in charter school enrollment between eighth and ninth grades. We believe this is due to a lack of charter high schools, so families approaching that threshold decamp for the suburbs. This is not unlike younger waves of families who made the move at birth, before kindergarten or at the middle school juncture, all big demographic cliffs in the city.

We compared the differences in enrollment over the three years in question and found, on average, every year some 340 charter school eighth grade students did not progress into a charter high school for ninth grade. At first glance, it seems most of these students chose to attend a KCPS public high school, as represented by the substantial increase in KCPS enrollment numbers between eighth and ninth grades. However, there is a consistent, substantial decrease in the number of public school students between ninth and tenth grades at KCPS. On average, KCPS has lost 421 students between ninth and tenth grades. The decrease is so large that it wipes out most of the gains that could be attributed to charter school students matriculating to a KCPS high school for ninth grade. We believe some of this considerable component of decline can be reversed by our proposal.

Although the enrollment size of the proposed school has not been finalized, Uniting at Southwest aims to create a high school with roughly 600 high school students. Therefore, only 150-200 students would (eventually) be needed to fill the incoming ninth grade classes. If the public school and charter school students that are "lost" after eighth grade enrolled in the new high school instead, the new school would immediately be oversubscribed.

There are other sources of potential students. USW assembled enrollment data from Show Me KC Schools for nearby parochial schools. The estimated eighth grade class size was calculated by
dividing the school’s overall attendance number by 9. (The denominator is due to the 9 grades that are in a K-8 school. Some of schools also offer pre-school, so there is a small margin of error in the estimated eighth grade class size.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Est. 8th Grade Class Size</th>
<th>Potential Capture Rate at USW High School</th>
<th>Resulting Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Cross</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame de Sion</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Elizabeth</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul’s</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Peter’s</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitation</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2419</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many parochial school students will follow family tradition and progress into private high schools, but our survey indicates a substantial portion of these students would attend this high school, if given the opportunity. Constituents have provided a variety of reasons in the feedback forms ranging from a need to save money for college, to a desire for greater diversity in their children’s lives, the attractiveness of the PBL approach, to an expression that they are “public school kind of people” at heart. A quick scan through the pages of unedited Constituent Comments from the Survey (unitingatsouthwest.org) paints this picture rather vividly.

Every year some 270 students graduate from the nearby K-8 parochial programs. A capture rate of just 25%, which would likely take time to build to, would result in about 70 students each year, or a public high school with some 280 former parochial students. This would represent a net gain for KCPS. Former K-8 parochial students would, along with former KCPS and charter school students, represent the third streams of students flowing into the program, forming a unique high school culture.

A Southern Baby Boom
The below KCPS data shows public/private school enrollments south of Brush Creek. The stark declines of 15% and 34% incurred between 2000--2010 became an increase of 5% and 8% the following five years, 2011--2015. The spread between this former loss and recent gains is statistically significant; and an opportunity for KCPS.
Population figures for the area South of Brush Creek (SOBC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Districtwide</th>
<th>SOBC</th>
<th>Districtwide</th>
<th>SOBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public (K-12)</td>
<td>31,669</td>
<td>21,764</td>
<td>20,647</td>
<td>9,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private (K-12)</td>
<td>5,675</td>
<td>4,549</td>
<td>4,436</td>
<td>3,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37,344</td>
<td>26,313</td>
<td>25,083</td>
<td>12,393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Percentage Change</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Districtwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2010</td>
<td>-31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011/15</td>
<td>-19.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Persons Under 18 Years Old</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>39,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Races</td>
<td>1,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Origin (of any race)</td>
<td>1,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>41,925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td>6,440</td>
<td>-2.4% -21.4% -11.5% -12.7%</td>
<td>7.0% 7.7% 6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 Years</td>
<td>6,116</td>
<td>-2.4% -21.4% -11.5% -12.7%</td>
<td>7.0% 7.7% 6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 Years</td>
<td>6,076</td>
<td>-2.4% -21.4% -11.5% -12.7%</td>
<td>7.0% 7.7% 6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 Years</td>
<td>7,909</td>
<td>-33.9% -8.3% -13.8% -4.9%</td>
<td>8.6% 6.4% 8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 Years</td>
<td>8,196</td>
<td>-32.1% -7.9% -5.5% 9.4%</td>
<td>8.9% 8.8% 7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 Years</td>
<td>16,654</td>
<td>8.1% -16.8% -8.5% 11.7%</td>
<td>18.1% 18.6% 16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 Years</td>
<td>9,005</td>
<td>39.8% 4.4% 28.0% 1.7%</td>
<td>9.8% 15.4% 15.7% 12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 Years</td>
<td>7,987</td>
<td>3.0% 33.3% -3.3% -4.2%</td>
<td>8.7% 9.4% 13.6% 14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 Years</td>
<td>8,210</td>
<td>18.0% 4.9% 35.2% 8.9%</td>
<td>8.0% 8.2% 8.4% 12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 Years</td>
<td>7,449</td>
<td>19.7% -21.1% -0.6% 14.3%</td>
<td>8.1% 7.3% 6.8% 7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 Years or Older</td>
<td>7,101</td>
<td>18.1% 25.6% 35.3% 3.1%</td>
<td>7.7% 7.3% 5.9% 5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census/ACS Data
A welcoming and diverse student body that reflects the diversity of the society at large in which our students will live and work is critical to the school’s mission and its long-term success. An admissions policy could be designed to both re-engage the surrounding neighborhoods and achieve and maintain diversity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon July 24</td>
<td>SKC Alliance</td>
<td>South Patrol Police Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues July 11</td>
<td>Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council</td>
<td>711 Woodland Ave. (former Woodland Elementary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues July 11</td>
<td>aSteam Village (PBL with MIT and Harvard)</td>
<td>1601 18th street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat June 24</td>
<td>Southwest High All Year Alumni Reunion</td>
<td>Swope Park Bandstand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed June 14</td>
<td>Rockhill Gardens Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Research Med Center Brookside Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat June 10</td>
<td>Southwest Alumni BBQ</td>
<td>Holmes Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs June 8</td>
<td>Volker Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Immanuel Lutheran Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed June 7</td>
<td>Southwest Class Of 67 Alumni</td>
<td>Waldo Pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat June 3</td>
<td>Troostwood Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Rockhurst Community Center / 5401 Troost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs June 1</td>
<td>City Wide Leadership / Screening of Most Likely to Succeed</td>
<td>Rockhurst U. Arrupe Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed May 31</td>
<td>Here's Waldo Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Sherwood Center / 8030 Ward Parkway Plaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 20</td>
<td>Blue Hills Neighborhood Meeting in the Park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 20</td>
<td>Troost Fest</td>
<td>3100 Block of Troost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 20</td>
<td>Town Hall</td>
<td>Bluford Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs May 18</td>
<td>MainCor luncheon</td>
<td>MainCor offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues May 16</td>
<td>Blue Hills Neighborhood Community Action Network</td>
<td>5309 Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues May 16</td>
<td>UNI Community Partners</td>
<td>2300 Main, Suite 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 13</td>
<td>Town Hall</td>
<td>Waldo Branch Library, room A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 13</td>
<td>Waldo Tower Neighborhood Meeting</td>
<td>Waldo Branch Library, room A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri May 12</td>
<td>6th District Council Meeting / Second Fridays</td>
<td>Trailside Center . 9901 Holmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed May 10</td>
<td>Operation Breakthrough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun May 7</td>
<td>Brookside Art Fair</td>
<td>Brookside Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 6</td>
<td>Brookside Art Fair</td>
<td>Brookside Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat May 6</td>
<td>Town Hall</td>
<td>Southeast Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri May 5</td>
<td>Brookside Art Fair</td>
<td>Brookside Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed May 3</td>
<td>STEAM Studio Luncheon</td>
<td>Indian Hills Country Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Location Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed May 3</td>
<td>MainCor Coffee Klatch</td>
<td>MainCor offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon May 1</td>
<td>Brookside Charter Family Picnic</td>
<td>Brookside Charter / 1815 E 63rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun April 30</td>
<td>Trolley Run / Kids Run</td>
<td>Mill Creek Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed April 26</td>
<td>Urban Neighborhood Initiative Board Meeting</td>
<td>2300 Main Suite 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed April 26</td>
<td>6th District Council Briefing</td>
<td>City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue April 25</td>
<td>Marlborough Community Coalition</td>
<td>Metro Patrol Station / 7601 Prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri April 21</td>
<td>Historic East Neighborhood Coalition</td>
<td>Central Christian Church. 3801 E Linwood Blvd. 64128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri April 21</td>
<td>Urban Summit</td>
<td>1710 Paseo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed April 19</td>
<td>Open House / aSTEAM fundraiser</td>
<td>Bier Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon April 17</td>
<td>Greenway Fields Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>450 W 62nd Terr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs April 6</td>
<td>Academy for Integrated Arts</td>
<td>7910 Troost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue April 4</td>
<td>Various Polling Places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon March 27</td>
<td>SKC Alliance Board meeting</td>
<td>South Patrol Police Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat March 25</td>
<td>Ivanhoe Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>3700 Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturdays in March and April</td>
<td>Southeast Library</td>
<td>6242 Swope Parkway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursdays in March and April</td>
<td>Southeast Library</td>
<td>6242 Swope Parkway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturdays in March and April</td>
<td>Bluford Library</td>
<td>3050 Prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesdays in March and April</td>
<td>Bluford Library</td>
<td>3050 Prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat March 18</td>
<td>Brookside St. Patrick’s Day Warm-up Parade</td>
<td>Parade Route ... Wornall / 63rd Street / Main Street up to and including to Meyer Blvd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

“THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN A BROAD CROSS SECTION OF PARENTS, CIVIC LEADERS, AND LOCAL PHILANTHROPISTS COME TOGETHER TO PARTNER WITH THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT”

-- Leo Morton, Chancellor Emeritus, UMKC
June 9, 2017

To Whom It Concerns:

The Volker Neighborhood Association enthusiastically supports the initiative of Uniting at Southwest to establish a new innovative and diverse public high school in the existing Southwest High School building. This school would be a win for residents with children and the entire city.

The presentation by Rhody Harris at the VNA general meeting on June 8, 2017 was well received. The Volker Neighborhood is home to many young families who have recently invested in midtown living, and they will need good high school options when those kids are older. We want these families to feel they can stay here without the need to move away in order to have good schools. Establishing good high school options is essential to the growth and stability of Kansas City MO neighborhoods.

We urge you to support this initiative in any way you can.

Best regards,

Susan Kysela
President
Volker Neighborhood Association
president@volkerna.org
816-809-2557
June 13, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell
Superintendent
Kansas City Public Schools

Dear Dr. Mark Bedell:

On behalf of the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, please know that we are pleased that you are the leader of our Kansas City Public Schools and we are confident that, under your leadership, our district will resume its rightful place as the one of the best school districts in our country. Currently, we are at a critical juncture where, with your leadership, there is a need to create a new and independent high school in the vacant Southwest High School building.

Our goals are complimentary of your goals — improving the educational experience for all of the district’s students, making the surrounding neighborhood, and the city proud.

Uniting at Southwest has done their research in connecting with the people who live in the area and learned that the demand for returning this vacant building to its former status is intense; this will be of great benefit to our city, our neighborhoods, tax payers, and, most importantly, to the students.

We urge you to support the vision of Uniting at Southwest.

Sincerely,

Margaret J. May
Executive Director

“A Thriving Community”
July 27, 2017

Memo To: Dr. Mark Beddell  
Superintendent of Schools  
Kansas City Public Schools

Please accept this letter of support for the new project-based STEAM high school at Southwest. As you know from your visits to Operation Breakthrough we have placed a heavy emphasis on early STEAM skills for our children from age 2 through 13. Providing an additional high school opportunity with a strong focus on math, science, engineering, technology and the arts will create a competitive choice for students who excel in self-directed learning environments that cultivate the critical 21st century skills of problem solving, communication, collaboration, curiosity, productivity and digital literacy. I believe as envisioned, Southwest, would embody personalized, student-centered learning at its fullest. It would provide a powerful addition to the portfolio of schools available to children in the community. I also believe the program will be an asset to the school district as a potential contract school. Ultimately it would make our community a stronger place to live and learn.

Next year we will increase our school-age program to 320 students. We are committed to working with the district to ensure every child has the opportunity to reach his/her potential. I believe this school would help make our vision a reality.

Thanks,

Mary Esselman Ph.D.  
CEO  
Operation Breakthrough  
3039 Troost  
Kansas City, MO  
64109
June 19, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell, Superintendent
Kansas City Public Schools
2901 Troost
Kansas City, MO 64106

Dear Dr. Bedell,

Thank you for your efforts to ensure that Southwest High School is reestablished as an exceptional school. As you may know, my wife Marion and I, along with so many other proud Kansas Citians, graduated from this once-esteemed institution.

I believe that children living in this part of Kansas City deserve a quality public education at a school near their home. I recognize that your strong leadership is important for Kansas City Public Schools to be successful. I hope that together we can achieve a new kind of Southwest High School that is inclusive, enduring and rigorous.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to making Kansas City better.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Henry W. Bloch
Evan Zarchan
641 E 73rd St
Kansas City, MO 64131

June 21, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell
Superintendent Kansas City Public School

Dear Dr. Mark Bedell:

I am the President of the Rockhill Gardens Neighborhood Association (RGNA). Rockhill Gardens is home to 520 households in the Waldo area of the city. I am writing to you today on behalf of the RGNA Board in support of the efforts of the community group United At Southwest to establish a new public high school at the former Southwest High location.

Accessible public education is a concern for many residents in our neighborhood. I have spoken to many families over the years who have made the difficult decision to move because of the lack of public schools providing education from K-12 in the area. The recent opening of the Hale-Cook elementary school has started the process of helping to keep families in the neighborhood by providing a quality neighborhood school option for young students. I encourage you to continue the dialogue and develop the necessary partnerships with United at Southwest to close the education gap for older students in our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Evan Zarchan
President Rockhill Gardens Neighborhood Association
August 7, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell
Office of the Superintendent
Kansas City Public Schools
2901 Troost
Kansas City, MO 64109

Dr. Mark Bedell,

Kansas City families are telling us very clearly that they want to live in and invest in our city. But, far too many of them are choosing to leave every year, often because they are dissatisfied with their public school options.

However, with the new leadership, KCPS seems to be on a roll. Now is the perfect time to get creative and to form new partnerships and to embrace new curricular models such as project-based learning. I URGE KCPS to accept this hand of partnership, fulfill its mission in new ways, and join with this broad group to educate a healthy cross-section of our children and grow our city.

This is what it looks like when a broad cross section of parents, civic leaders, and local philanthropists come together to partner with their city’s public school district.

We at UMKC are ready to partner with you and the leadership of Uniting at Southwest to work for the success of this initiative.

Sincerely,

Leo E. Morton
Chancellor

Barbara Bichelmeyer
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
June 16, 2017

Alex Ayala
Uniting at Southwest

Dear Alex,

Please accept this letter as an endorsement of the efforts that you and others have undertaken as part of the Uniting at Southwest project. It is gratifying to see the outpouring of support the community has brought forward for such a worthwhile project.

The high school of the future has arrived in cities across America. From High Tech High in San Diego to P-TECH in Brooklyn, with dozens of XQ SuperSchools in between, this new breed of school brings diverse students together around project-based learning and connects them to the real world. By my estimation this effort is similar to efforts in the Northland with six school districts coming together to form the Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) program, another effort that tries to take learning to a different level for high school students.

This movement is extremely important to Kansas City as we seek to create the workforce of the future. That cannot be done without educational institutions that are designed with that need in mind.

I’m very pleased that your community is moving forward with this project and I look forward to learning how I can help support the effort.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Kansas City Public School District
2901 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, Missouri 64109

RE: LOS for United at Southwest

Dr. Mark Bedell,

The purpose of this letter is to voice my support of the United at Southwest’s initiative to partner with Kansas City Public Schools to develop a Project Based Learning secondary education facility at the 6512 Warnall Road KCMO site. I am a proud alumnus of Southwest High School and hope to see its legacy continue.

The families and students in the neighborhoods surrounding the vacant Southwest facility, along with citizens of Greater Kansas City, would benefit greatly from the development of an equitably welcoming and rigorously innovative high school. The opening of another excellent school will give families more options as they depend on public education to sustain quality of life.

United at Southwest, consisting of neighbors, parents, and community stakeholders, has galvanized the support of the broader community and can quantify the demand of more than a thousand students; who could potentially be added to the Kansas City Public School District. I am very proud of the legacy of Southwest High and I am equally proud to be a product of the public school system. My hope is that Southwest High School will continue as a staple of exceptional education in our city.

It is my desire that Kansas City Public Schools accept an offer of partnership with Uniting at Southwest as you both peruse excellence in education for our students. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Antoine Lee, M.Div., M.B.A.
Central Christian Church, Sr. Pastor

*Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.*
*Proverbs 9:9*

Central Christian Church
3801 E. Linwood Blvd. • Kansas City, MO • Phone (816) 921-3614
• Email: contactus@centralchristiankcmo.org
• Website: www.centralchristiankcmo.org
Dr. Mark Bedell  
2901 Troost Ave  
Kansas City Mo 64109

Dr. Bedell,

With the new leadership at KCPS, I have heard that Kansas City families now want to invest in their city. Far too many residents are leaving the area every year and this needs to change.

I am very proud of the success that KCPS has been having lately. I know it is difficult to adjust to new ideas coming from the outside but I have considered the vision and believe that this could help the community greatly.

This is what it looks like when a broad cross section of parents, civic leaders, and local philanthropists come together to partner with their city's public-school district.

Please keep an open mind, listen to your constituents, and make careful long-range decisions that are in the best interest of the entire community. From everything I can tell, project-based learning is the best way to prepare our students with the professional skills they will need to thrive in this ever-shifting economy.

Remember it takes a village

[Signature]

J. Erik Dickinson  
President
July 11, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell,

Kansas City Public Schools has been making steady progress for years. Now is the time to take it to the next level. Let’s have the hard conversations and develop the trust needed to bring our communities together, to look to the future and not the past, and to take calculated risks. We simply cannot keep doing things the same way and expecting a different outcome. From everything I can tell, project-based learning is the best way to prepare our students with the professional skills they will need to thrive in this ever shifting economy. Our children, our neighborhoods, and our city deserve this.

All of the pieces are on the table: a need to innovate how we bring together and how we develop our young people, an unused public facility in good condition, an obvious and demonstrated demand for an integrated and innovative school of this nature, and the philanthropic resources needed to create something truly remarkable and enduring. I believe this is a risk worth taking.

Sincerely,

Katheryn Shields
Superintendent Dr. Mark Bedell
Board of Education
2901 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, Missouri 64109

Dear Doctor Bedell:

My Name is John Murphy I am an elected board member and Vice-President of the Armour Fields Homes Association- the homes association that the still shuttered Southwest High School sits in. I am writing in support of the plan put forward by Uniting at Southwest (USW) that would re-open the shuttered school as an autonomous, community-based high school. As a long serving board member, I cannot tell you how many parents, many with tears in their eyes, tell me that they have to leave our neighborhood and KCMO for Johnson County- Why? It’s simply because they have school age kids and cannot afford to live in Brookside and pay for private education. This sad episode plays out every year -the lack of accredited schools drives the tax base across State Line Road. As a neighbor, taxpayer and board member I urge you to adopt the plan proposed by USW and partner with them. This will open a local high school; help keep the tax base from moving out -ultimately increasing the tax base and benefit the KCPSD. How? The plan calls for the KCPSD to be the LEA ensuring USW’s success will be the district’s success. This plan
also involves a large amount of capital from the local philanthropic community - something, I'm sure over time, will translate into philanthropic endeavors for the entire KCPSD.

Dr. Bedell we cannot continue doing the same thing time and time again only to continually fail. This is a great opportunity to create a win for the district, the community and most importantly the students.

Regards,

John J. Murphy
AFHA
Mike Zeller:

Thank you very much for twice presenting to the South Kansas City Alliance (SKCA) board your United at Southwest plans. The SKCA recognizes that high quality public schools are essential to preserving quality neighborhoods and livable cities. We commend your members for being proactive. We encourage your group to continue to work with the Board of Education and the administration of Kansas City Public Schools and to make every effort to reach an agreement.

We are well aware and extremely pleased with the recent progress of the Kansas City Public Schools system, and hope your plans can accelerate such progress in future years.

Please let us know if our organization can do anything to facilitate further constructive conversations between your organization, neighborhood leaders and school district representatives.

Thank you again for presenting your ideas to our organization and for caring about our community.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Stacey Johnson-Cosby
SKCA President
816-591-5921
StaceySKCA@gmail.com
TROOSTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

July 27, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell, Superintendent  
Kansas City Public Schools  
2901 Troost Ave.  
Kansas City, MO 64109

Dr. Mark Bedell,

I recently attended a meeting at Troost Elementary School to discuss the separation of Lincoln Middle School from the high school. Very good information was shared and parents and community members freely expressed our opinions and concerns.

Kansas City families are telling us very clearly that they want to live in and invest in our city. But far too many of them are choosing to leave every year, often because they are dissatisfied with their public school options especially middle and high schools. Lincoln is a great option but not all kids test well and there is not room for all who might want to attend.

I am impressed with the work you and your new leadership are doing. KCPS seems to be on a roll and I am thrilled to continue to support the district my daughter graduated from and I still live in.

Now is the perfect time to get creative and to form new partnerships and to embrace new curricular models such as project-based learning. I URGE KCPS to accept this hand of partnership, fulfill its mission in new ways, and join with this broad group to educate a healthy cross-section of our children and grow our city.

Uniting Southwest seems to be a capable organization and the Troostwood Neighborhood Association is excited and fully supportive of the possibility of this high school joining KCPS.

Best,

Wanda Taylor, President
Troostwood Neighborhood Association
July 28, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell, Superintendent
Kansas City Public Schools
2901 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, Missouri 64109

Dr. Mark Bedell,

The Blue Hills Neighborhood Association supports Uniting at Southwest and its goals to begin a quality school with an innovative curriculum focusing on project based learning. Uniting at Southwest has presented at our meetings and we are impressed with their dedicated efforts and thoughtful planning.

With the new leadership at KCPS, we are at a critical juncture where a new and independent high school can come alongside KCPS to create an innovative learning environment whose best practices can then be spread across the District, and the metro.

As KCPS continues to improve the educational experience of its current 15,000 students, the families and students in the neighborhoods surrounding the vacant Southwest facility also deserve a Rigorous, Innovative and Welcoming public high school.

Uniting at Southwest has demonstrated incredible demand, including more than a thousand students who will be new to the KCPS family. This new high school will benefit our city, our neighborhoods, our students and the tax-payers who fund our public schools.

Sincerely,

/l/ Paul M. Tancredi
Paul Tancredi, President
Blue Hills Neighborhood Association

5309 Woodland Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri 64110
P: 816-333-7232  E: bluehillsresource@sbcglobal.net
August 4, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell, Superintendent  
Kansas City Public Schools  
2901 Troost Ave.  
Kansas City, MO 64109

Dear Dr. Bedell:

As a long-time Kansas City resident and university administrator, I have admired all the positive changes taking place within KCPS. All students deserve a chance at pursuing the American Dream, and I applaud you for your leadership.

With change, comes opportunity.

We are at a critical juncture where a new and independent high school can come alongside KCPS to create an innovative learning environment whose best practices can then be spread across the District, and the metro.

As KCPS continues to improve the educational experience of its current 15,000 students, the families and students in the neighborhoods surrounding the vacant Southwest facility also deserve a Rigorous, Innovative and Welcoming public high school.

Uniting at Southwest has demonstrated incredible demand, including more than a thousand students who will be new to the KCPS family. This new high school will benefit our city, our neighborhoods, our students and the taxpayers who fund our public schools.

I am pleased to lend this letter of support to their effort.

Sincerely,

Erik Bergrud  
Associate Vice President for External Relations  
www.park.edu
August 9, 2017

Kansas City Public School Board
2901 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64109

RE: Support for Unitig at Southwest and Project-Based Learning

KCPS Board Members and Concerned Individuals:

On behalf of myself and my family, as well as my law firm and what I believe to be a significant percentage of interested Kansas City parents of school age children, I want to convey our support for the Unitig at Southwest initiative to bring a project-based learning high school into the Kansas City community at the historical Southwest campus. As a lifelong Kansas City and Brookside resident now with children of my own who will be presented with the choice of finding a challenging and inspiring opportunity for their high school academic career, I fully support the idea of bringing project-based learning to Kansas City.

As a parent of a child who has experienced some form of project-based learning in conjunction with specialized programs for children of dyslexia, I see this as a valuable resource and opportunity for those children who want to experience learning that is based upon problem-solving individually and in groups without the regimented and route testing education format that we see has been too stifling for creativity. Once a juggernaut of education in the community, I think the Southwest campus would be an ideal location to represent a pairing of the old history of Kansas City with these proven new ideas.

My family, going back to my father and mother who founded the 49/63 Neighborhood Association in the 1970s, are strong supporters of diversity in the community, and we feel that a project-based learning high school like Unitig at Southwest is proposing not only would draw a diverse student-body, but would also present more opportunities for students to work along Kansas City’s burgeoning business community in the tech fields, directly exposing them to such opportunities at a younger age. With project-based learning, children receive more exposure to real-life skill sets that they can use as they develop into working adults.

I’m a father of three kids, one who is entering 8th grade, and twins entering 2nd grade. My family is fully behind any opportunity to open up more possibilities in the area and especially the
opportunity to have such a successful model of education to represent the direction Kansas City
has been heading in recent years.

Our children deserve wonderful resources and more opportunities and I hope that KCPS
considers partnering with Uniti ng at Southwest to explore the development of a project-based
learning education system as an exciting choice for our children’s education.

Please feel free to let me know if I can offer any further input on this matter.

Sincerely,

Matt Hood

MLH/
08/08/17

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a local Waldo area business owner and long-time resident of the neighborhood as well. (Over 30 years)

I have been following the Uniting at Southwest initiative for some time. I can’t tell you how much I believe the that the Kansas City area would benefit from getting behind a project-based learning approach like the one proposed.

Project based learning appears to be one of the key elements to long-term student growth and life-long success and this approach would benefit kids all across KC.

I would certainly like to see a partnership develop between Uniting at Southwest and Kansas City Public Schools

John Jantsch
Founder
Duct Tape Marketing
August 10th, 2017

Kansas City Public Schools
2901 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64190

To Whom it May Concern,

Cornerstones of Care is a long standing Kansas City area non-profit organization. We have two primary office locations within the Kansas City Public Schools boundaries. Our corporate headquarters in Hyde Park and our historic Gillis campus in Waldo. We believe that partnership is key to creating safe and healthy communities. Kansas City Public Schools has been a tremendous partner of Cornerstones of Care for many years, on many levels, including our Day Treatment Program and Behavioral Health Programs.

One of the foundations of a safe and healthy community is access to quality and relevant education for children and their families. We would encourage Kansas City Public Schools to entertain a variety of partnerships to ensure that neighborhoods and communities have access to a diverse portfolio of educational opportunities for young people.

We are increasingly interested in the concept of “project based learning”. We have engaged in project based learning on several of our residential campus and in our day treatment programs. We have seen great success both educationally and emotionally as result of shifting our paradigm. We understand the proposed United at Southwest effort, is an attempt to expand project based learning under the KCPS umbrella.

Respectfully,

Stephen O’Neill
Chief Program Officer

Partnering for safe and healthy communities.

Cornerstones of Care • Gillis Campus • 8150 Wornall Rd, Kansas City, MO 64114 • 816-508-3500 • cornerstonesofcare.org
June 23, 2017

Dr. Mark Bedell,

As a longtime educator, though now retired, I am writing to add my support to the voice of Uniting Southwest.

Clearly KCPS faces many challenges that it has taken admirable steps to address. Its new vision deserves praise. I would like to encourage KCPS leadership to join in a discussion with the committed parents of Uniting Southwest and consider how a new and independent high school might help support the new KCPS vision and add to the district’s creative and innovative efforts.

United Southwest has gathered strong support that suggests it would bring student growth to the district as well as create an inclusive and diverse student population. Likewise strengthening the neighborhoods surrounding the vacant Southwest facility would add to the strength of the KCPS district.

The proponents of Uniting Southwest have generated a genuine community interest in a dynamic educational vision that should not be ignored. These are the voters who have supported a commitment to an inclusive KC metro. KCPS will be stronger by engaging with the creative energies of Uniting Southwest.

Sincerely,

Andy Anderson
Retired Vice President of Academic Affairs,
Johnson County Community College
From: Carl Cuda [mailto:brookside.jewelry@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, June 23, 2017 11:14 AM
To: Whitten Pell

We at Brookside Jewelry applaud the Uniting effort and as a small business owner and resident of the area as well, the economic diversity my neighborhood and of client's we serve and is large, and I want that protected. While most of our customers return time and again, we see many younger customers leave the area for the eastern suburbs or Johnson County. Mostly because those families were concerned about not having a good public high school nearby and not having the resources to afford private school. The cycle has happened many times over the last 20 plus years. A great public school will most certainly hold onto families in the city, driving up values and attendant tax revenues going to support KCPS. Furthermore, it will strengthen our community as more families will put down roots, invest in their community, and make it a better place for all.

-Carl Cuda
Attn: Uniting at Southwest

Dear Sir/Madame,

As a longtime resident of the Rockhill neighborhood and as the owner of the Peruvian Connection retail store in the Crestwood Shops at 55th Street, I am writing to express my strong support for the return of Southwest High School. Peruvian Connection hires several women from Midtown and a very local clientele patronizes our Crestwood store. Crestwood, its restaurants and its stores shore up that neighborhood in the way that a new Southwest High School would shore up the Crestwood, Brookside and Waldo neighborhoods. Nothing strengthens a community like its core institutions, and KCMO east of State Line is sorely missing a key educational institution open to the public.

Southwest High School would have been our choice for our two daughters and it will hopefully be our daughters’ choice for their children. I hope every effort will be made to make Southwest High School a reality.

Sincerely yours,

Annie Hurlbut Zander
5115 Sunset Drive,
KCMO
64112
Sent from my iPhone
COMMON SECTOR COMPETENCIES

FOR THE Kansas City REGION

A blueprint for workplace competencies addressing multiple industry sectors, customized to the needs of the Greater Kansas City region.
KC Rising is a long-term vision for the greater Kansas City region to build capacity, bring existing businesses to scale and fully realize the Kansas City region’s economic potential. KC Rising is regional in focus, but global in perspective. Launched in late 2014 by the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, the Kansas City Area Development Council and the Mid-America Regional Council, KC Rising focuses on three key drivers of the regional economy — trade, people and ideas.

Thank you to the KC Rising Human Capital Common Sectors Competencies Task Force

**Timothy Carlson**, Task Force Chair  
Director of Human Resources, Bayer Animal Health

**Dr. Angie Besendorfer**  
Chancellor, Western Governors University

**Brenda Bott**  
Teacher, Shawnee Mission West High School

**Donna Deeds**  
President, Museum at Prairiefire

**Jeff Hagen**  
President, Grafton Staffing Company

**Cynthia Lane**  
Superintendent of Schools, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

**Richard Potter**  
Director, Kansas State University

**Phil Spencer**  
CEO, NewWave Communications

**Leigh Anne Taylor Knight**  
Founding Director, The DeBruce Foundation and ThinkShift

**Elizabeth Wenske-Mullinax**  
CEVA
Regardless of where, what or how educators teach, we all have the same mission — to prepare our students for the future. A key part of how we envision our students’ future success revolves around their ability to support both themselves and their families. However, significant shifts in the global economy, the prevalence and sophistication of technology and the impact of both of these dynamics on the national and regional workforce have generated uncertainty about the skills and knowledge students need in order to be successful in tomorrow’s economy. KC Rising’s Common Sector Competencies clarify the skills that are valued by employers and help teachers, schools and school districts align teaching and learning to the demands of the workplace.

The competencies provide educators with a clear set of skills, mindsets and knowledge that students need in order to compete for jobs in the regional workforce. In many cases, these skills are highly aligned with academic skills that state and local standards already prioritize. For other competencies, especially those that focus on workplace processes, educators will have access to activities, problems and assessments based on these Common Sector Competencies to guide teaching and monitor progress. Other competencies will complement students’ academic learning by increasing their potential to compete and succeed in the region’s workforce in the future.

Blending academic standards with Common Sector Competencies not only better prepares students for the workforce, it also provides the opportunity for deeper learning and mastery of academic skills and content. By integrating academic standards with workplace competencies, educators have the opportunity to create authentic assessments of student knowledge that require the creative, complex thinking that next-generation learning standards and evaluations require. At the same time, teaching and learning that blends real workplace competencies with academic standards can generate increased interest and engagement from students. This increased relevance invites engagement that results in students retaining knowledge and skills beyond a single lesson, unit or grade level.

When educators integrate the competencies into traditional teaching and learning, the entire bistate region benefits from the investment. Businesses across the region are eager to collaborate with school districts to bring the Common Sector Competencies into the region’s classrooms, and educators who are seeking partnerships with business and industry will find that projects incorporating the competencies are likely to attract the most interest and support from the region’s employers. Students who are able to demonstrate these competencies will be more competitive when applying to community-based internships, summer programs and other extended learning opportunities. Additionally, the community as a whole will benefit from students, teachers and schools that apply the Common Sector Competencies to service projects and other hands-on learning opportunities that seek to address a need within the community.

While we hope to see evidence of the competencies grow across every school district in the region, we know that each classroom, school and district is at a different place with this work. Many educators already emphasize some of these competencies with their students, and have a variety of instructional tools and methods to support integrating them into their teaching. Other educators are excited by the opportunity for integration, but are unsure of the best way to get started. Others may still need to be convinced that schools can or should take this step. The model described on the following pages gives us a baseline to begin this important work to move our region forward.
Common Sector Competencies

A competency is the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes required to successfully perform tasks in a defined work setting. Common Sector Competencies are the key strengths and essential qualifications for employee performance across key industries and sectors in the Kansas City region. The incremental cultivation of these skills and abilities in employees will reap exponential results.

To create this list, the KC Rising Human Capital Common Sectors Competencies Task Force surveyed established collections of competencies, identifying those which are readily taught and would have a significant impact on the workforce. The team also assessed job postings, looking for skills frequently requested by hiring managers, and consulted industry leaders about their competency needs.
As a result, competencies in quadrant 1 are easier to fulfill, while those in quadrant 4 are more difficult.

**ADVANCED LEADER**

- Display courage
- Manage ambiguity
- Solve complex problems
- Speak influentially
- Self-develop
- Manage projects
- Attract and develop talent

**DEFINITIONS**

The Common Sector Competencies model groups competencies based on needs identified across all sectors of the workforce.

**Fundamental core competencies** are basic, entry-level skills candidates must have for hiring consideration.

**Advanced leader competencies** are necessary for advancement or management consideration.

Competencies considered **price of admission** are skills important across all areas and are easier to develop through training.

Competencies in the **competitive edge** group are less intuitive, more difficult to develop and are in short supply.

As a result, competencies in quadrant 1 are easier to fulfill, while those in quadrant 4 are more difficult.
At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

**Focus on the customer**
Builds strong customer relationships and delivers customer-centric solutions.

**What does it look like?**
- Gains insight into customer needs.
- Identifies opportunities that benefit the customer.
- Builds and delivers solutions that meet customer expectations.
- Establishes and maintains effective customer relationships.

**Drive results**
Ensures accountability and consistently achieves results, even under tough circumstances.

**What does it look like?**
- Acts with a clear sense of ownership.
- Takes personal responsibility for decisions, actions and failures.
- Has a strong bottom-line orientation.
- Persists in accomplishing objectives despite obstacles and setbacks.
- Establishes a track record of achieving goals successfully.
- Pushes self and helps others achieve results.

**Collaborate**
Builds partnerships and works collaboratively with others to meet shared objectives.

**What does it look like?**
- Works cooperatively with others across the organization to achieve shared objectives.
- Represents own interests while being fair to others and their areas.
- Partners with others to get work done.
- Credits others for their contributions and accomplishments.
- Gains trust and support of others.

**Instill trust**
Gains the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity and authenticity.

**What does it look like?**
- Follows through on commitments.
- Seen as direct and truthful.
- Keeps confidences.
- Practices what he/she preaches.
- Shows consistency between work and actions.
Plan and align

Plans and prioritizes work to meet commitments aligned with organizational goals.

**What does it look like?**
- Sets objectives to align with broader organizational goals.
- Breaks down objectives into appropriate initiatives and actions.
- Stages activities with relevant milestones and schedules.
- Anticipates and adjusts effective contingency plans.

Read for information

Understands work-related reading materials such as memos, directions, policies and regulations to do a job.

**What does it look like?**
- Learns from text by determining the main idea or essential message.
- Summarizes ideas in his/her own words.
- Identifies relevant details, facts and specifications.
- Uses features of printed materials such as table of contents, introduction, summary, glossary and appendix.

Use basic applied mathematics

Uses basic mathematical ideas and techniques to solve practical, work-related problems.

**What does it look like?**
- Makes reasonable estimates and approximations without a calculator.
- Uses basic numerical concepts such as whole numbers, fractions and decimals in practical situations.
- Uses tables, graphs, diagrams and charts to obtain and convey quantitative information.
- Understands and uses appropriate techniques of probability and statistics such as ratio, percentage, mean, median, etc.
- Selects the appropriate arithmetic operation for the task.
At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

**Display courage**
Steps up to address difficult issues, saying what needs to be said.

**What does it look like?**
- Readily tackles tough assignments.
- Faces difficult issues and supports others who do the same.
- Provides direct and actionable feedback.
- Is willing to champion an idea or position despite dissent or political risk.

**Manage ambiguity**
Operates effectively, even when things are not certain or the way is not clear.

**What does it look like?**
- Deals comfortably with the uncertainty of change.
- Effectively handles risk.
- Decides and acts without the total picture.
- Is calm and productive, even when things are up in the air.
- Deals constructively with problems that do not have clear solutions or outcomes.

**Solve complex problems**
Identifies complex problems and reviews related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.

**What does it look like?**
- Identifies many possible causes of a problem.
- Approaches a complex task or problem by breaking it down into its component parts, considering each part in detail.
- Identifies a set of features, parameters or considerations to take into account in making a decision.

**Speak influentially**
Talks to others to convey information effectively and persuade them to change their minds or behavior.

**What does it look like?**
- Organizes and expresses ideas clearly and concisely in oral speech.
- Tailors content of speech to the level and experience of the audience, presenting information that will have a strong impact on the audience.
- Uses appropriate examples and reasoning to substantiate a point of view.
- Selects stories, analogies and examples to illustrate a point.
Self-develop

Self-identifies the need to improve knowledge or skills and systematically acquires new attitudes, concepts, knowledge or skills that result in improved performance at work.

What does it look like?
- Assesses own knowledge, skills and abilities accurately, identifying opportunities for personal growth.
- Sets well-defined and realistic personal goals and is motivated to learn.
- Monitors progress toward goal attainment and motivates self through goal achievement.
- Exhibits self-control and responds to feedback unemotionally and non-defensively.

Manage projects

Manages financial, material and personnel resources, as well as one’s own time and the time of others, to get the work done.

What does it look like?
- Determines how money will be spent and accounts for those expenditures.
- Obtains and sees to the appropriate use of equipment, facilities and materials needed.
- Motivates, develops and directs people as they work, identifying the best people for the job.

Attract and develop talent

Attracts and develops talents to meet both his or her career goals and current and future business needs.

What does it look like?
- Attracts and selects diverse and high-caliber talent.
- Is a good judge of talent.
- Places a high priority on developing others.
- Develops others through coaching, feedback, exposure and stretch assignments.
- Aligns employee career development goals with organizational objectives.
- Encourages people to accept development moves.
At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

**Manage complexity**

Makes sense of complex, high quantity and sometimes contradictory information to effectively solve problems.

**What does it look like?**
- Asks the right questions to accurately analyze situations.
- Acquires data from multiple and diverse sources when solving problems.
- Uncovers root causes to difficult problems.
- Evaluates pros and cons, risks and benefits of different solutions.

**Value differences**

Recognizes the value different perspectives and cultures bring to an organization.

**What does it look like?**
- Seeks to understand different perspectives and cultures.
- Contributes to a work climate where differences are valued and supported.
- Applies others’ diverse experiences, styles, backgrounds and perspectives to get results.
- Is sensitive to cultural norms, expectations and ways of communicating.

**Think critically**

Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.

**What does it look like?**
- Makes systematic comparisons of two or more alternatives.
- Notices inconsistencies in available information.
- Weighs costs, benefits, risks and chances for success in making a decision.
- Determines the priority of things to be done.
Listen actively
Mindfully hears and comprehends the meaning of words spoken by another person.

**What does it look like?**
- Gives full attention to what other people are saying.
- Takes time to understand the points being made, asks questions as appropriate.
- Does not interrupt at inappropriate times.

Write effectively
Communicates effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.

**What does it look like?**
- Organizes and expresses ideas clearly in written communication.
- Tailors written communication to effectively reach an audience.
- Uses graphics or other aids to clarify complex or technical information.
- Uses appropriate arguments, examples and citations to support a point of view.

Be flexible and adaptable
Open to change (positive or negative) and able to adapt to considerable variety in the workplace. Possesses the maturity, poise and restraint to cope with pressure, stress, criticism, setbacks, personal and work-related problems.

**What does it look like?**
- Demonstrates openness to new organizational structures, procedures and technology.
- Able to see the merits of other perspectives.
- Willing to modify a strongly held position in the face of contrary evidence.
- Switches to a different strategy when an initially selected one is unsuccessful.
**Demonstrate business insight**

Applies knowledge of business and the marketplace to advance the organization's goals.

**What does it look like?**
- Knows how businesses work and how organizations make money.
- Keeps up with current and possible future policies, practices and trends in the organization, with the competition and in the marketplace.
- Uses knowledge of business drivers and how strategies and tactics play out in the market to guide actions.

**Cultivate innovation**

Creates new and better ways for the organization to be successful.

**What does it look like?**
- Comes up with useful ideas that are new, better or unique.
- Introduces new ways of looking at problems.
- Takes a creative idea and puts it into practice.
- Encourages diverse thinking to promote and nurture innovation.

**Build effective teams**

Builds teams with strong identity who apply diverse skills and perspectives to achieve common goals.

**What does it look like?**
- Forms teams with appropriate and diverse mix of styles, perspectives and experience.
- Establishes common objectives and a shared mindset.
- Creates a feeling of belonging and strong team morale.
- Shares wins and rewards team efforts.
- Fosters open dialogue and collaboration among the team.

**Interpret and apply data**

Identifies underlying principles, reasons or facts of information by breaking down data into separate parts, and evaluates information to determine compliance with standards.

**What does it look like?**
- Summarizes and organizes information for analysis and evaluates its relevance.
- Determines the best information to be communicated and the best methods for presenting it.
- Analyzes information across multiple sources.
- Constructs trends from raw data, tables or charts and summarizes.
- Extrapolates information when not immediately obvious or known.
For many educators, the biggest questions about the idea of integrating the competencies into classroom instruction may be “How do I do this?” and “Where do I start?” The following four instructional approaches and mindsets are suggested starting points to explore integrating the Common Sector Competencies into the learning process in classrooms, schools or school districts.

**SIMULATION**

Research tells us that students learn in deeper, more meaningful ways when presented with authentic problems, activities and assessments. Opportunities for authentic learning provide a powerful intersection of academic skills and Common Sector Competencies. As a starting point for integration, educators should consider how to create simulations, projects, role-play activities and other authentic learning and assessment methods that require students to demonstrate both course content and standards and Common Sector Competencies in order to master the task.

**COLLABORATION**

Because so many of the competencies have an interpersonal dynamic, students must engage one another to learn, practice and demonstrate their mastery of these skills. This makes collaborative learning an excellent instructional practice for the integration of academic and workplace-based competencies. By asking students to work together to create solutions to complex problems, develop and exhibit projects and engage one another in creative endeavors, educators have the opportunity to provide authentic settings for students to develop interpersonal skills that are critical to the workplace.

At the same time, simulations and other authentic learning activities require more of a teacher’s time and attention when it comes to both planning and assessment. By asking students to work in teams, teachers not only facilitate the development of critical Common Sector Competencies, but also create time and bandwidth by reducing the number of student products or performances teachers need to evaluate.
For learning activities to be fully authentic, students must have the opportunity to exhibit, publish or produce their work. Student exhibition also requires students to demonstrate the competencies associated with delivering a final product to a client or customer, speaking in public and engaging in quality assurance. A myriad opportunities for student exhibition exist — from science fairs, debates and other competitive activities, to service activities, presentations to government officials and other community- and civic-oriented exhibitions.

Many members of the business, civic and non-profit communities, as well as parents, are eager to support, attend and participate in student exhibitions of authentic learning. These events also provide an excellent opportunity for educators to forge stronger relationships with students’ families. Most importantly, when educators give students the opportunity to exhibit their work and be recognized for their accomplishments, we increase student motivation, engagement and ownership in academic work.

Because so many Common Sector Competencies are process-driven, it’s difficult for students and teachers to accurately assess student learning solely by evaluating the product that’s created as part of the learning process. In addition, teachers and students need to engage in regular reflection focused on what students have learned through the successes — and failures — that occur as they work on a particular project, activity or assignment. By building reflection into the teaching and learning process, teachers give students the opportunity to engage in the culture of planning and reflection that many businesses expect their employees to adopt on the job. They also provide the opportunity for students to become more self-aware of their own strengths and needs, and to become better advocates for themselves in the process. At the same time, educators will find that engaging in reflection with students provides deeper insights into:

- What students have or have not learned.
- How students’ attitudes and mindsets have shifted.
- Where opportunities to both support and challenge student learning may occur in the next project.
The Common Sector Competencies give business leaders and educators a shared language going forward, facilitating clear communication and a strong alliance. Given the wide spectrum of awareness and understanding of the competencies, an iterative approach to implementation will be required. Learning from one another will produce the richest understanding of how educators can approach and integrate these competencies into the classroom.

The model identifies a broad set of competencies that span many industries yet has the flexibility to address industry-specific competencies. Look for the publication of Talent-to-Industry Exchanges (TIEs) that build upon this baseline set of competencies.

This process will take time, but incremental progress can generate exponential benefits for students and encourage educators to experiment with different learning designs as they discover best practices around this exciting, important work.