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## ECRWSS POSTAL CUSTOMER

★ WINTER 2023 ★

## QUARTERLY CONNECTION



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## Early Learning in CPS

Early learning opportunities throughout Columbia Public Schools have increased over the years and continue to be a focus for the district.

Research funded by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) looked at districts across the state and found children who experience early educational opportunities have better state assessment scores, especially for language arts and math in third grade, better attendance rates, and are more apt to continue their education through graduation.

Early learning in CPS can start with the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, which serves approximately 1,300 children from prenatal to kindergarten. That's about 900 families, of which nearly 24 percent are English Learner families. CPS Parents at Teachers Coordinator Kristine Smith said the program has done a lot of outreach over the years to immigrant and refugee populations in Columbia.



The PAT program provides families with realistic expectations for development, guidance, knowledge, and strategies for parents, as well as connections to resources – all of which result in long-term benefits for kids. “We help at various levels, how ever we can best meet the families’ needs. The parent educator gets to know each family and can customize services accordingly,” Smith said.

For children aged three to kindergarten, the CPS Preschool program serves more than 600 children, with 28 classrooms located in elementary and high schools throughout the district. There are many full-day and partial-day options available to suit different families’ schedules.

Students who have participated in the early childhood program go on to demonstrate better performance on the state assessments in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, compared to students who did not have access to preschool.

Director of Early Childhood Education Nicole Langston credits a strong data team at CPS who helps track progress, and says their work allows educators to see the results of their efforts, which is very motivating. Smith adds that some of the most important developments are things you can’t show in data, like early attachment, and they see visible signs of progress daily.

CPS also offers Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), a program designed to address the developmental learning needs of children ages 3-5. In this program, educational plans are developed and tailored to each child as an individual, and specially designed services are provided accordingly at no cost to parents.

CPS early learning programs are open to all children throughout the district, but priority is given to those children who have lived in trauma, who need extra help academically, have economic hardship or are struggling with social and learning skills. Screenings are used to determine need, and thousands of screenings are done annually. Screenings are designed to assess all influential factors, including the educational background of parents, how children handle upsets, and their social and emotional foundation. Smith said families with young children can move in and out of stressors multiple times in the early years, so screenings can be repeated as needed.

Langston credits the program for strides made and said having a dedicated staff fosters greater success. “Our staff spend seven hours each day working on strategies with some of the toughest kids, and they do it effortlessly and tirelessly. Our staff is very skilled; we work with the whole family and welcome them all.”

Smith also commends the families. “We have wonderful families who have overcome so much and make me feel in awe of their strength, courage and love for their children. The little bit we can do to support them is such an honor.”





## CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATES

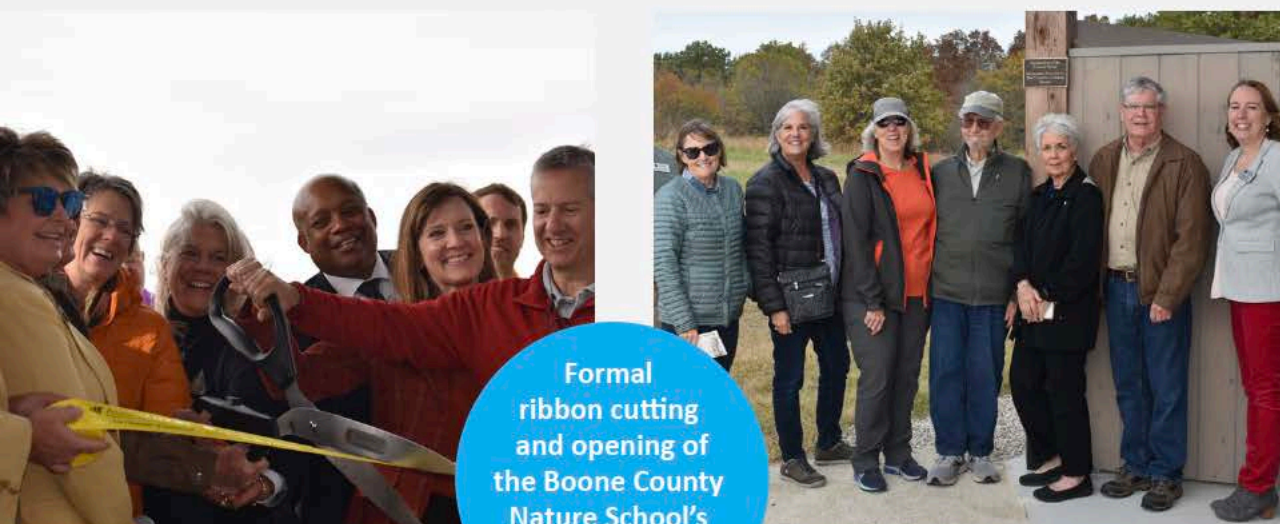
The **new southwest elementary school** has entered the final design stages, which means bid packages will be in development soon. With updated construction timeframes, the new school open date has been set for the fall of 2026.

Work on the **Columbia Area Career Center (CACC)** remodel and addition is going well. Bid packages are about 90 percent completed, which is important in order to control costs. The public can expect to see demolition start in late winter of 2023 to early spring of 2024. The remodel includes rebuilding the east and southeast corners of the original building. Additional remodeling will provide a fresh look to the remainder of the building. This project is slated for completion in the fall of 2025.

Schematic design has started on the **Battle Elementary School** addition, which will be followed by development of bid packages. The new addition will increase capacity of the school to approximately 600 students and is expected to be completed in the fall of 2025. This addition will also include a new storm shelter.

CPS has upgraded security features on the secure entryway vestibules at many buildings throughout the district, including **West Boulevard, New Haven, Two Mile Prairie, Shepard Boulevard, Parkade, and Derby Ridge elementary schools** as well as **Gentry, Smithton and Lange middle schools, and Battle High School.**

Columbia Public Schools and the Missouri Department of Conservation gathered in mid-October for a formal ribbon cutting and opening of the **Boone County Nature School's outdoor Council House**, made possible by a donation from the Columbia Audubon Society. The Council House will be a place for students to come together from schools throughout Columbia to discuss nature and the environment.



Formal ribbon cutting and opening of the Boone County Nature School's outdoor Council House



## Workforce development grows stronger

The Columbia Area Career Center (CACC) has long been a catalyst in helping community members and high school students acquire skills to perpetuate career development and growth.

Camden Fallon  
CACC engineering design and development student



Columbia Public Schools students can take CACC classes as part of their regular high school curriculum. For many students, it is an opportunity to "test drive" a particular career field, while others are able to gain enough experience to enter the workforce directly after graduation.

Riley Johnson  
CACC student and CASA participant



Students who have completed three years of course work within the same career path earn a Career Technical Education (CTE) certificate. This certificate demonstrates to local businesses that the student has gained hands-on experience beyond the high school classroom and specific to the field.

In addition to CTE certification, three CACC programs also offer students the opportunity to earn nationally recognized certification, without the need to attain further study. These fields are automotive, welding, and digital design.

CACC's automotive technology program is an ASE/NATEF accredited program. ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) and NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation) are recognized as the foundational education standards for the automotive technology industry. Second year students who participate in the program are eligible to take the ASE entry-level certification test, to demonstrate they have obtained the basic knowledge required to obtain an entry-level position at a dealership or repair facility.

CACC Auto Technology Teacher Jared Monroe says many students who choose to enter the industry and remain in the market get hired by local dealerships. "Currently there are former CACC students working at Joe Machens Ford, Columbia Honda, Mercedes Benz, and University Subaru," Monroe said. He also said most local dealerships start as a general service



**“ Multiple students get hired directly after graduation with earnings as much as \$25 - \$30 per hour or more. ”**

**Samuel Chapin, CACC welding teacher, Battle High School**

technician at \$15 - \$18 per hour. Some students choose to attend a post-secondary program in order to obtain a more advanced position, and these students have the advantage of starting their paid educational journey ahead of their peers.

The CACC welding program provides D1.1 certification from AWS (American Welding Society) for structural welding and is available for students in their second and third years of course study. Samuel Chapin, CACC welding teacher at Battle High School, said most students who earn this certification are ready to enter the workforce directly after graduation, while others use this certification as a jumping off point to build additional training for specialized welding careers such as underwater welding or welding of stainless steel. Chapin reports many welding students take jobs at local companies, such as Hitachi Energy in Jefferson City or Hubbell Incorporated in Centralia. For other students, a welding career affords an opportunity to travel and see the country. Welding also offers a high earning potential.

“Multiple students get hired directly after graduation with earnings as much as \$25 - \$30 per hour or more,” Chapin said.

The third nationally recognized certification program CACC offers is in digital media. Students who have been in the field of study for a minimum of two years qualify to take a test for Adobe certification, an industry-recognized certification that demonstrates mastery of the Adobe Creative Cloud software, and the foundational knowledge required for digital media careers.

CACC has additional efforts to help students graduate workforce ready. A business and industry engagement coordinator reaches out to local businesses and industries to find opportunities for students to visit and participate in job shadowing or internships. And student organizations provide students with hands-on experiences.

Laynie Rucker, a digital media student who got involved with FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) and Skills USA, a national organization for students interested in skilled trades, feels participation in these organizations will be beneficial on her college applications and resume. Marketing students Evan Wade and Abby Eddy received an opportunity to compete in the DECA, a business student organization, competition. The CASA (Columbia Aeronautics and Space Association) class was visited by representatives from NASA and three students were later chosen to present their project at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. CASA student Riley Johnson has future aspirations of being an aerospace engineer and said the coursework, as well as participation in CASA, helped prepare him with advanced training and hands-on experience. And over the last two decades, the Culinary Arts program has had 25 students earn Skills USA state championships in culinary and baking arts and 18 students place in the top four at the national competition.

CACC also provides a strong adult learning program with courses for career and life enhancement. Courses are structured to provide necessary skills for obtaining professional-level positions for many in-demand occupations, such as information technology, construction trades, and health-related professions. The online programs are designed by a team of professionals from each respective field, and instructors and mentors are actively involved in the learning experience.

As part of Columbia Public Schools, CACC continues to serve the community by providing educational programs and certified courses to a variety of ages and is committed to continuing their efforts to enhance career opportunities for our community.



**Laynie Rucker**  
*CACC digital  
media student*



**Marley Poston**  
*CACC engineering  
design and  
development  
student*



**Rebecca Winters**  
*CACC student  
and CASA  
participant*



**Max Strode**  
*CACC student  
and CASA  
participant*



## GRANT FUNDS ENHANCE ESPORTS PROGRAMS FOR BATTLE AND ROCK BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOLS



Thanks to a grant of \$36,956 from the Columbia Public Schools Foundation (CPSF), eSports students at Battle and Rock Bridge high schools will enjoy upgraded equipment and infrastructure to enhance their programs.

In 2019, a similar grant of \$8,500 was provided to Hickman High School by CPSF. That grant has resulted in continued growth and success for the sport, including fostering the first CPS student to receive an eSports scholarship in 2022. Based on the success of the Hickman program, the Foundation felt it was important to offer equitable opportunities at Battle and Rock Bridge high schools.

The grant will be split between the two schools equally and support gaming computers, gaming chairs, and any infrastructure needed to upgrade electric and equipment.

Joshua Brown, a senior at Battle High School and student president for eSports at his school, says currently the gamers meet on the app. He is looking forward to the opportunity this grant will provide for him and his teammates to communicate and play together more in person.

Battle High School eSports Coach, Stefan Sheffeld, said thanks to these grants the eSports program should be sustainable for several years, with the equipment, the space, and the personnel needed to continue and grow.

CPSF is an independent, not-for-profit organization founded in 1996 on the premise that every child needs a strong foundation. Through private donors, CPSF is able to fund projects and programs throughout Columbia Public Schools that directly and positively impact student learning.



### PERFECT ACT SCORE

Charlotte Struckhoff, Hickman High School

### NATIONAL MERIT SEMI-FINALISTS

#### Hickman High School

Catherine Fajen  
Saathvik Kannan  
Augustus Lookingbill  
Szymon Slusarz-Kowalczyk  
Charlotte Struckhoff

#### Rock Bridge High School

Jackson Blattner  
Rebecca Buchly  
Paris Fang  
Shubha Gautam  
Donovan Kim  
Julia Kim

## ASSISTANCE LEAGUE OF MID-MISSOURI FUNDS MORE THAN 200 CPS PROPOSALS

Learning programs throughout the district have been enhanced thanks to Links to Learning, a program funded by the Assistance League of Mid-Missouri.

This year's Links to Learning awards totaled \$131,029.95 and funded 201 proposals.

Proposals ranged from less than \$100 up to \$2,000 and focused on programs designed to "enrich student learning experiences, improve students' achievement, or foster interdisciplinary study."

Awarded funds have been used for items like classroom materials, field trips, support of the Unbound Book Festival, district-wide science projects, school-wide literacy programs, and more.

Since 1991, the Assistance League of Mid-Missouri has helped thousands of individuals in the Mid-Missouri area through programs like Links to Learning, Operation School Bell, and more.



# EVERY DAY COUNTS!

SCHOLARS WHO ATTEND SCHOOL  
EVERY DAY ACHIEVE AT HIGHER LEVELS.



90% of students / 90% of the time

School attendance is a powerful predictor of student success, and in fact, chronic absenteeism can be directly traced to higher dropout rates. When children are absent from school even for a day, they miss consistent instruction needed to develop basic skills. Children in early grades are particularly susceptible to falling behind when not regularly attending class, and the deficiencies caused can impact future learning.

Columbia Public Schools recognizes attendance as a catalyst for academic success and personal growth, and fosters a culture where students are inspired and encouraged to attend class every day.

## How to help your student if attendance is a concern:



- 1 Talk with your student to discover the root of their absenteeism and work toward a solution.
- 2 Contact the school to start a conversation and demonstrate engagement. Teachers, counselors, and administrators may be able to offer insight into the cause of the absences.
- 3 Set attendance goals with your student to encourage better attendance and provide opportunities for conversation and support.

Through the combined efforts of dedicated teachers, supportive parents, and responsible students we can create a culture where consistent attendance is a habit and path toward a brighter future.

## When it snows

As winter weather approaches, we want our families to know how snow days will be handled.

School will be canceled, or a 2-hour delayed start implemented, only after roads are tested. Should cancellation or a 2-hour delayed start be necessary, efforts will be made to notify radio and television stations by 6 a.m. If a decision can be made earlier than 6 a.m., the district will make every effort to do so. Information will also be sent via the district's parent messaging system, posted on the district's website, and on CPS-TV.

Parents may make the final decision regarding their student's attendance. If the parent views the weather too severe or the road conditions too dangerous, absences will be excused.

Difficulty in contacting parents usually prevents early dismissals, but under appropriate circumstances, the district may dismiss early. On inclement weather days, please continue listening to local radio and television stations for news of early dismissal. Additionally, information will be sent via the district's messaging system.

Your child's school will provide direction and updates on specific after-school activities in the event of inclement weather, as each school building will have different scheduling and rescheduling needs.

## STAY INFORMED

Parents and guardians are automatically signed up to receive text, phone, and email messages from your student's school and the district via the district's parent messaging system. If you are not receiving text messages and emails, please contact the registrar at your students' school(s) to update your contact information. Email and text messages will be sent in the event of a weather cancellation to parents with correct contact information on file with their student's school.

Check the school district website at [www.cpsk12.org](http://www.cpsk12.org).

Tune in to CPS-TV on Mediacom 81 or Spectrum 985 or view live and on-demand streaming on the CPS-TV website at [www.cpsk12.org/cpstv](http://www.cpsk12.org/cpstv). CPS-TV is also available on Roku, AppleTV, and FireTV.

Download the free CPS mobile app on iTunes or GooglePlay. Search for Columbia Public Schools.

[www.cpsk12.org](http://www.cpsk12.org)