HANDS-ON LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE PREPARES STUDENTS FOR LIFE

Park Hill Professional Studies is a win-win for our community: It gives students hands-on career experiences to plan their futures, and it builds a pipeline into our local workforce.

Students learn professional skills and explore careers through observation and internships in Professional Studies’ three strands: Aspiring Medical Professionals, Aspiring Educators and the broader Aspiring Professionals, which includes other fields. The program empowers approximately 300 students each year to either confirm their goals or change their plans, saving them time, money and energy, said Dr. Stephanie Amaya, director of professional studies.

Park Hill High School student Irma Bienaime said participating in Professional Studies was one of the best decisions she has made in her education. Through the Aspiring Medical Professionals program, she has experienced watching surgery, learning about inserting IVs, talking with an anesthesiologist, and spending time in urgent care and intensive care units for babies and other patients. Bienaime’s studies took her to Saint Luke’s Multispecialty Clinic–Shoal Creek, Saint Luke’s North Hospital–Barry Road, Saint Luke’s North Hospital–Smithville and The Gardens at Barry Road senior living community.

Ms. Colleen Katzenberger Coursey, Professional Studies facilitator, was a registered nurse before she became a teacher. She said the medical strand

Irma Bienaime (left), Professional Studies student from Park Hill High School, studied an X-ray image with a nurse practitioner at Saint Luke’s Multispecialty Clinic–Shoal Creek. Bienaime is among 300 Professional Studies students getting hands-on career experiences in hundreds of different fields to help them plan their futures.

of our program shows students like Bienaime the spectrum of health care careers. “Being able to walk in everybody’s footsteps, in the long run, makes our students very well-rounded health care providers,” she said.

Bienaime said, “It’s given me a better understanding of health care because I always thought it was the fantasy they play on TV. It’s been like that, but at the same time it’s been more. There’s more hard work and heart in everything.”
Dear Park Hill Family,

Here in Park Hill, getting feedback is important to us. The comments, concerns and questions that we receive help us make decisions and communicate effectively with our families and community members. We’re very proud of the high marks our community gave us on our recent survey (see below).

As part of using feedback to find ways to improve, we have a new online tool, Park Hill Listens, at www.parkhilllistens.com. Park Hill Listens is an online hub for our public engagement. We will use this tool to get feedback about major issues that affect all of us in Park Hill, providing an easy-to-use system that gives us a better way to understand our stakeholders’ wishes. In addition to public outreach for input opportunities on issues, we will use Park Hill Listens to answer questions and collect nominations for our district awards.

I look forward to seeing the feedback in Park Hill Listens. With your support and ideas, we will continue to make the improvements that make us one of the best school districts in the region.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeanette Cowherd
Park Hill Superintendent

COMMUNITY GIVES DISTRICT HIGH RATINGS
We received the report on our annual phone survey that we use to understand the community’s opinions about the district. Among the results, 95 percent of respondents gave us an A or B overall grade. Ninety-six percent of respondents said they would either be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to recommend Park Hill. Both our teachers’ quality and students’ safety received a 4.47 rating out of 5, and our quality of education was rated at 4.46. We also received a 4.02 rating on our efforts to involve citizens in our decision-making, while other districts who administer the same survey average a 3.7 on this score.

ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO GROW
Our 2018-2019 enrollment is 11,617 students, which is a 1.4-percent increase from last school year. Our K-12 enrollment has increased for 35 consecutive years.

DISTRICT RECEIVES BEST RESULT AFTER ANNUAL AUDIT
We received our fiscal year 2018 audit results from an independent auditor. The auditor reported that we received an unmodified opinion, which is the highest possible result.

BIG SAVINGS FROM PURCHASING
We saved taxpayers $112,164 during the last year by using a purchasing card, receiving the largest rebate in the state. We have saved a total of $535,941 from the time we joined the program through August.
DISTRICT SUCCESS STORIES

NATIONAL MERIT HONOREES
Brian Francis and Carrick O’Bleness from Park Hill South are our 2019 National Merit Semifinalists. Brinna Roberts and Cooper Sturm from Park Hill High School and Meghan Pate and Maya Yildirim from Park Hill South received National Merit Commended student recognition.

DECA
PHHS student Josie Phillips will serve as Missouri DECA’s vice president of community service for the 2018-2019 school year. Philips won her election, which involved students voting, combined with her ranking for her written exam, interview and speech.

ADMINISTRATOR AWARD
Attending the Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals’ fall conference, Plaza Middle School Principal Dr. Tressa Wright received the Assistant Principal of the Year award that she earned this spring from the Greater Kansas City Missouri Principals Association. Dr. Wright got the award when she was still serving as an assistant principal in the Lee’s Summit School District.

COMMUNICATIONS AWARD
Samantha Fitzgerald, Park Hill communications specialist, earned recognition on the National School Public Relations Association’s annual list of the top 35 Under 35 professionals in the country in school public relations.

STATE COUNSELING AWARDS
Blanca Miller, counselor at Hawthorn Elementary, received the Elementary School Counselor of the Year award from the Missouri School Counselor Association. Dr. Stephanie Amaya, who supervises Park Hill school counselors and school social workers, received the School Counseling Director of the Year award from the MSCA.

QUESTBRIDGE FINALISTS
Four students at PHHS earned recognition as finalists for the QuestBridge National College Match program, qualifying them for full scholarship awards to one of 40 college partners, such as Yale University or Stanford University, if they are matched with one of the schools. Lily Graham, Hirad Hirad, Isis Irving and Dylan Klann are among the 6,507 finalists chosen out of the 16,248 applicants.

Visit our website at www.parkhill.k12.mo.us for more information on these stories and others.
In an effort to keep the community informed, the “Park Hill Connection” goes to every home in the Park Hill School District, even those without students in our schools. Thank you for your support of your community’s schools!

Through problem-based interactive learning, first graders at Prairie Point Elementary used stories, addition strategies and small chips to work on addition and subtraction.