

NEW THIS SEMESTER: FULL-TIME VIRTUAL ELEMENTARY PROGRAMMING

Fall 2020

ACCESS

LAUNCH

THE VOICE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING IN MISSOURI

THE LAUNCH RESPONSE

Learn how Missouri's largest public virtual learning program adapted to serve more than 200,000 virtual course enrollments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

CONTENT CRAZE

Utilize Launch content with your district's teacher

Introducing: **Launch**

From the very beginning, Launch's online courses were designed to stand apart from other online providers.

What is Launch?

Launch is Missouri's virtual school that was created as a solution for our state's course access issues. We understand that all Missouri school districts are not able to offer students equal course offerings, so we made it our goal to create top-notch courses online and make them available to districts statewide. Launch's digital development and curriculum departments partner to create online courses that are aligned to Missouri Learning Standards and delivered to online learners by high-quality Missouri educators. Launch is partnered with schools across the state and serves the needs of thousands of Missouri students.

Where can I learn more?

Our website, fueledbylaunch.com, is the best way to quickly learn more about who we are and what we offer. You'll find a full list of current course offerings and learn course details, and you can even view sample assignments. We can also send a couple of Launch team members to your district to talk to your team and see how we can help your students with course access issues. If you have specific questions you can't find answers to online or would like to set up an appointment, contact our Marketing and Engagement Manager, Savannah Waszczuk, at (417) 523-0417 or savannah@fueledbylaunch.com.

Launch: **Serving K-12 Learners Statewide**

Recently expanded programming allows Launch to serve all Missouri learners.



Elementary

Launch's elementary programming is available for K-5 students and includes live, synchronous daily lessons with teachers as well as 6 hours of daily teacher-supported virtual instruction. Class sizes are limited to 20:1 (K-2) and 25:1 (3-5) and are instructed by a full-time Missouri educator.



Middle School

Designed for students in grades 6-8, Launch's middle school catalog includes courses in all core areas as well as multiple world language offerings and exploratories. All class sizes are limited to 33:1 with live teacher tutoring available, and teachers live and work in Missouri school districts.



High School

Launch offers a complete, comprehensive course catalog for learners in grades 9-12. To better serve all students, AP, Honors, dual credit and credit recovery courses are available. Class sizes are limited to 33:1 with live teacher tutoring available, and teachers live and work in Missouri school districts.

Contents



30

SUCCESS STORIES

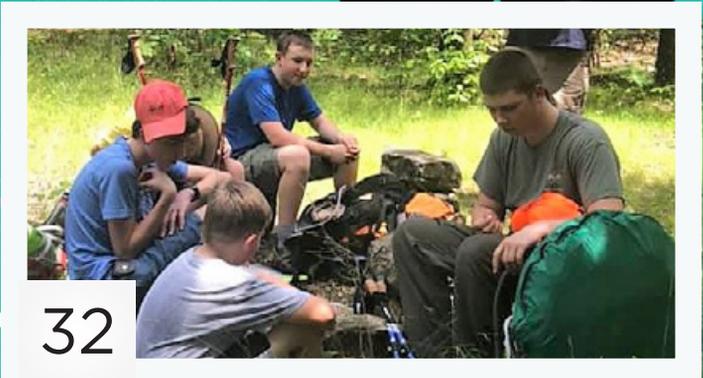
You go, girl! Recent graduate Alissa Schilling balanced a schedule of volunteering, working and learning with Launch—and she won local, state and regional Boys & Girls Club Youth of the Year awards along the way.



22

The Launch Response

When school districts statewide were directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew we had to help. Learn how Launch expanded and adapted to serve more than 200,000 virtual course enrollments.



32

WHY I LAUNCH

Full time learning throughout the week should be rewarded with full-time fun on the weekends—for Jackson Baskins, this means grabbing a pack and hitting the trails.

DISTRICT PROFILE: NIXA

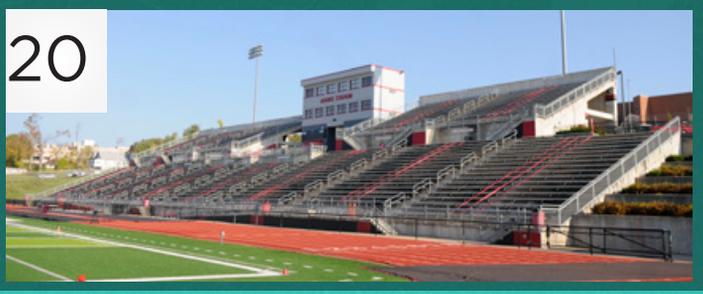
The Nixa school district is utilizing Launch's content catalog with their own teachers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn the details.



18

DISTRICT PROFILE: JEFFERSON CITY

Jefferson City Schools partnered with Launch in spring 2019—today they're one of our biggest users and serving nearly 1,000 full-time virtual learners.



20

ACCESS

LAUNCH

THE VOICE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING IN MISSOURI

Staff Poll

What's something you learned during quarantine?

The Launch Team

Dr. Ben Hackenwerth *Executive Director*
Never buy utilities when playing Monopoly—always buy railroads.

Dr. Nichole Lemmon *Director, Virtual Learning*
I learned that I missed a 4 a.m. alarm clock and watching the sun rise on a Missouri highway while on my way to talk to partner districts.

Caitlyn Kapple *Executive Secretary*
I really need to get more hobbies, there are only so many episodes of *90 Day Fiancé* you can binge watch!

Audrey Dlabach *Administrative Assistant*
I learned the value of having a hobby!

Student Services

Dr. Brady Quirk *Principal, Virtual Learning*
I learned what it would feel like to run a restaurant from my home—I never cooked so much in my life!

Dr. Kim Spence *Assistant Principal, Secondary*
I learned that my house was no cleaner with me being there all the time than it is when I am working 40+ hours a week!

Helen Williams *Assistant Principal, Elementary*
I can still do a flip on the trampoline, I love it when I get to read a whole book in one day and Great Danes eat as much as teenagers.

David Schuman *Counselor*
I learned that I am a going to be a father!
Editor's Note: Okay, David—you win! Congrats!

Sylvia Espinosa *Counselor*
I learned that being quarantined is tough! This Latina does not do well with social distancing.

Shelby Blankenship *Registrar*
I learned how to eat. I've decided the freshman 15 doesn't have anything on the quarantine 30.

Amy Bollinger *Teacher, SPED*
Being outside brings me joy, so I committed to running or walking daily.

Sarah Call *Teacher*
Laundry NEVER ends no matter how much time you have.

Shelby Castillo *Teacher*
I learned how much I enjoy having my family around a campfire.

Kerri Cox *Teacher*
I learned that it is possible to have too much introvert time. I missed conversations, colleagues, and coffee shops.

Maxcy Dimmick *Teacher*
I rediscovered my interest in gardening.

Josh Douglas *Teacher*
Buying the right house 14 years ago was a GREAT decision when you have to spend so much time there!

Amber Howard *Teacher*
I learned that teachers walk a WHOLE lot every day. So I had to get a treadmill.

Heather Huckstep *Teacher*
I learned that I miss hugging my friends and family. When we get back to normal, everyone is getting a hug.

Bethany Laws *Teacher*
I learned how much my family loves outdoor family movie nights!

Sarah Lile *Teacher*
I learned how much I love my time with my girls... and how much I need time to myself.

Megan Welcher *Teacher*
I learned how to install hardwood floors and how to build a patio! Quarantine meant lots of home projects!

Student Information System

Jessica Johnson *SIS Coordinator*
My kids taught me that snacks are timeless. Who doesn't want a burrito and a smoothie at 2 a.m.?

Reagan Cash *Attendance Secretary*
I really love the outdoors! I was never an outdoors person until quarantine, and now I try to go hiking as much as I can.

Development

Dr. Meghan Roe *Coordinator, Digital Development*
I learned to better appreciate my health, my family, and all of the advantages I enjoy!

Nicki Dickson *Developer*
I learned that my kids argue more when we are all home together 24/7. But, we were able to get in a tremendous amount of much-needed family time!

Justin Thomas *Developer*
I learned that working from home and homeschooling kids is tough, but with a good curriculum and awesome teachers is totally doable!

Brad Maples *Developer*
I learned I could probably live solely off of delivered Chipotle tacos.

Melissa James *Developer*
I learned I love to be home for lunch to take long walks with my dog, Mr. Hamilton.

Amy Jackson *Developer*
I really struggle with at-home workouts and am actually really lazy when the gym is closed.

Amy Shaw *Developer*
We really enjoy staying home and ordering in. We cut our entertainment budget in half!

Payton Halinger *Developer*
I learned that it was time for me to get a hobby. I eventually started grad school and enrolled in aerial fitness classes!

Ryan Lindsay *Developer*
I learned that going thoughtless is actually a lot easier than I ever thought it would be.

Linda Ayres *Quality Assurance*
I learned I actually enjoy gardening! I started planting all kinds of flowers outside AND managed to keep them alive.

Susan Brown *Quality Assurance*
I took an online class to become more familiar with coding, then switched careers.

Information Technology

Mark Myers *IT Manager*
I learned to reconnect with outdoor activities!

Darren Rush *Programming Supervisor*
I learned I'm a better cook than I thought.

Jay Grawe *Application Specialist*
I learned that my dog must really miss me while I am at the office!



Mark Grant *Programmer*

I learned that my life is a lot like quarantine, because not much changed, and I'm still happy!

Adam Shawley *Help Desk Supervisor*

I built a floor-to-ceiling climbing wall in my kids' room.

Tyler Gray *Help Desk*

I learned just how good I am at being at home. I knew I was good, but not that good!

Eric Tran *Help Desk*

I learned how to fix a lot of things around the house. Quarantine made me a DIY expert!

Ben Cook *Help Desk*

I learned how to skateboard. Since it's a solo sport, it is very easy to socially distance!

Myles Gildard *Help Desk*

I learned the value of a full night of sleep.

Jeweal Dickson *Inventory Specialist*

I learned that my boys enjoy singing and reenacting dances, so now I make a habit of performing one song a day after work with them.

Partner Engagement & Creative Services**Savannah Waszczuk** *Marketing & Engagement*

I learned that I can grow an entire vegetable garden from seeds. And that I can walk-jog 6 miles a day. And that I can eat a whole loaf of banana bread. If I try hard enough, I can do anything!

Janna Elfrink *Coordinator, Partner Engagement*

I learned that Amazon will truly deliver anything!

Shannon Gilland *Partner Engagement, KC*

I learned we have some awesome neighbors. Every Saturday night since March we've gotten together with a group of firepit friends, and I think that's something we will continue after the craziness is over.

Missy Sandbothe *Partner Engagement, STL*

I was reminded that having all the kids back in the house comes with a lot of laundry and dirty dishes... and a whole lot of love!

Stacey Walker *Administrative Assistant, KC*

I learned that I should always have at least two weeks' worth of toilet paper.

Caitlin Seller *Administrative Assistant, STL*

Stocking up on Bath & Body Works soap and buying toilet paper in bulk pays off!

Jared Chester *Graphic Designer*

It is SUPER easy to pack on 20 lbs. when the kitchen is right next to your workspace.

Sean Wright *Video Producer*

I learned that sometimes it's better to call an electrician! #DIYfail

Contact Us

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Access Launch is published 3 times a year by Springfield Public Schools in Springfield, MO.

Table of Contents *(Continued)***4 DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

Dr. Nichole Lemmon shares how the Launch team responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 INBOX

Get a glimpse of our email inbox with these notes from parents and partners.

6 SUPERINTENDENT'S NOTE

Learn how Launch's COVID-19 response relates to our purpose-driven mission from Dr. John Jungmann.

7 BY THE NUMBERS

Our biggest summer ever followed by record-breaking fall enrollments equals some fascinating figures.

8 WHAT'S ONLINE

Partner district liaisons, rejoice—we've outlined all the latest and greatest Launchpad features!

10 COURSE CATALOG

Have you heard the news? Launch can now serve full-time learners in grades K-12! Explore our full elementary, middle and high school catalogs.

12 STUDENT Q&A

A full-time performing gig brought Ezra to Branson, and COVID-19 brought her to Launch's world of virtual learning. Read her star-dazzled Q&A.

14 TEACHER PROFILE

She teaches. She writes curriculum. She supports other teachers. Meet Amber Howard, Launch's doer of all the things!

15 MEET A STAFFER

Dr. Brady Quirk serves as Launch's Principal of Virtual Learning. Follow him around for a day of meetings and collaboration.

17 COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

Creative Writing I invites students to think outside of the box as they find their way with words. Bonus: They love it!





*“This issue is full of stories of resilience and creative solutions so many of you deployed across your communities.”
—Dr. Nichole Lemmon*

Director’s **Note**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a world of uncertainty to schools statewide. Dr. Lemmon shares how the Launch team stepped up to help.

March 12, 2020, was a great day. The Launch team had just wrapped up the second of three Launch and Learn events across the state. I chatted with a group of superintendents in our North Kansas City hub and was headed home to prepare for a spring break trip to Disney World with my 8-year-old daughter. We’d planned it for over a year—she was having her 9th birthday party in Cinderella’s castle. Then my sister called me, and the rest, as they say, is quite literally history.

Use any of the now-cliche words you would like to describe the last eight months: unprecedented, challenging, uncertain. In reality, we are living through one of the greatest shifts to occur in public education.

Since March, the Launch team has worked endlessly to focus on the needs of our partners and students. We created a content catalog that districts could use with their own teachers. Our summer sessions in June and July introduced expanded middle school options and debuted our elementary offerings. A full K-5 elementary program opened this fall, and we welcomed more than 4,000 of Missouri’s youngest learners to virtual education. The weeks have been long, but I could not be more proud of this team.

Of course, any pandemic, or other disruption at this level, leads to a reflection of processes and the constant goal of improvement. This issue is full of stories of resilience and creative solutions so

many of you deployed across your communities. I’ve always been proud to say that Launch was created by Missouri, for Missouri and that our partners make us better. And you do.

To end by thanking you for your partnership and patience also feels cliché. However, it is sincerely a feeling of gratitude that I carry into this work each day.

See you online,

Dr. Nichole Lemmon
Director, Digital Learning

Launch Letters

You talk, and we listen! Read on to see the latest notes we've received from Launch teachers, liaisons and students.



PARTNER PRAISE

"Good evening,

I just wanted to take a moment to email and thank you for all you are doing for our kids. I know pausing enrollment was a difficult decision, but I applaud you for doing so—especially considering the reasons. There are many MOCAP options that would load 40–50 kids into a section to help inflate the bottom line—I am thankful that Launch does not work under that mantra. Thank you for all you are doing and thank you for what you have already done, specifically for our kids and our school. I appreciate you all!

Mr. Christian Meier

Assistant Superintendent
Warsaw R-IX Schools

Mr. Meier sent the Launch management team this email after Launch announced an enrollment pause for the Fall 2020 semester. Launch paused course enrollment to ensure we could keep class sizes at the DESE-required student:teacher ratio and best serve students. We are now taking Spring 2021 semester enrollments and are hiring teachers—if you currently work at a Launch partner district and would like to work for Launch, apply at fueledbylaunch.com/careers—Editor

📧 SUMMER LOVIN', TEACHER EDITION

"Hi Mrs. Marler,

We are glad to have you as my son's summer school teacher—he is very excited about it. I feel very lucky that my son is not missing school, regardless of the current pandemic situation. He has already attended the June session of Mrs. Reagan's class and absolutely enjoyed it. Mrs. Reagan was an amazing teacher and helped my son very much!"

Sushma Dande

Launch Parent
Rockwood School District

Mrs. Dande shared this note with a Launch elementary teacher after her son completed Launch's June 2020 programming. Launch had great success with its two themed elementary summer 2020 courses—National Park Adventure and Olympic Tour—and plans to offer similar themed elementary offerings for the summer 2021 semester.—Editor



MORE TEACHER TALK

"I wanted to pass along some very positive feedback regarding Bethany Laws (pictured above). We have a student who is taking Personal Finance for dual credit and she has had a wonderful experience in Bethany's class. She says Mrs. Laws is very encouraging and supportive, and she has done a great job communicating. Recently, Mrs. Laws took the time to send an email to tell the student what a great job she's doing and to keep up the good work. We are very impressed and looking forward to more positive experiences for our students!"

Jamie McCoy

High School Counselor
Clinton School District

This note regarding Mrs. Laws was sent to the Launch management team. Mrs. Laws has been a full-time Launch teacher since 2018. Launch now has 11 full-time teachers and more than 1,000 adjunct teachers.—Editor

Contact Us

Do you want to learn more about how Launch can help your district and students with course access issues? Are you already a Launch partner, and you want to share your experience with our magazine readers? We would love to hear from you! Contact savannah@fueledbylaunch.com with all questions, comments or visit requests.



Superintendent's **Note**

Dr. John Jungmann discusses how Launch's COVID-19 response relates to our purpose-driven mission.

In 2017, Springfield Public Schools began asking bold questions. Could we expand our internal online school to the state of Missouri? Would districts be interested in a state-wide collaboration? Could we invest in virtual public education? How might we ensure students had course access, no matter their zip code?

Over the past 8 months, we've been asked many times if we ever dreamed Launch would be providing opportunities for virtual learning in a pandemic. The short answer: no. However, when we dig deeper, we've always believed that together, as public school districts, we are stronger.

The ongoing investment of SPS and our partner districts allows us to continue saying "yes." Over and over again, we've answered your call and continued to meet state-wide demand while keeping quality high. Together, we've assisted more than 340 Missouri districts to find solutions for their stakeholders.

Real-time, continuous improvement is a fundamental piece of our philosophy at Launch. For example, on a recent Friday afternoon a group of elementary teachers came together with our course

development and curriculum teams. They evaluated and made suggested changes to our newest programming based on your feedback. Our courses have been and will continue to be designed, developed and delivered by Missouri educators for Missouri kids.

No educational system has been perfect as we responded to the pandemic, but through those struggles each of us has grown. As we continue to overcome the challenges each of us are facing individually, collaboration amongst our Missouri education partners will be essential. Let us know how we can help meet the needs of your district and your students, and know that I am grateful for each of our partners. Without you we would not be where we are today.

- Thank you for sending us your teachers.*
- Thank you for sending us your feedback.*
- Thank you for believing in Launch.*

Dr. John Jungmann
Superintendent, Springfield Public Schools



“No educational system has been perfect as we responded to the pandemic, but through those struggles each of us has grown.”
—Dr. John Jungmann

By the Numbers

Check out the fascinating figures building Launch's world of online learning.

Summer



20 new courses released in summer 2020

855

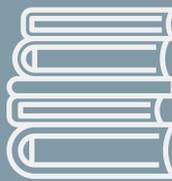
Summer 2020 Launch teachers

2,047

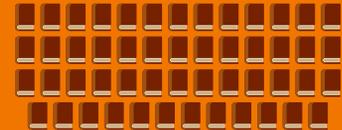
Summer 2020 virtual class sections

44,708

Summer virtual course enrollments



Fall



51 new courses released in fall 2020

1,031

Fall 2020 Launch teachers

3,661

Fall 2020 virtual class sections

104,378

Fall virtual course enrollments



6,187

Support calls answered in Q1 of the fall 2020 semester

SIX HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE
MISSOURI STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO LAUNCH COURSES

THREE HUNDRED FORTY LAUNCH PARTNER DISTRICTS

NO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT ARE LAUNCH PARTNERS

60%



Launchpad

Overview

As Launch grows and expands, so does Launchpad—our online enrollment and reporting portal.

When Springfield Public Schools began enrolling students in online classes years ago, the team shared a lot of information on Post-it notes and Google sheets. But after SPS Online transitioned to Launch and began serving hundreds and then thousands of students statewide, things had to change. “I used to make a joke that we ran a virtual school off of Post-it notes,” says director Dr. Nichole Lemmon. “But we grew really quickly, and we knew we had to create our own platform as soon as we were able.”

Enter Launchpad, our custom-designed online enrollment and reporting portal designed specifically for Launch and developed by a group of some of our most tech-savvy team members. Launchpad hosts enrollment, grade reporting and invoicing for our 340 (and growing) partner districts, and our tech team is continuously working to make it an even better tool based on district needs and feedback.

THE BASICS

You need a Launchpad account if you are a partner district liaison who:

- Enrolls students
- Needs access to grade reports
- Is in charge of invoicing

HOW TO ENROLL STUDENTS

After registering for a Launchpad account, liaisons simply click “Manage,” then “Create Student” to create a student’s Launchpad profile. Student guardian information, address, MOSIS ID, etc., is all required when creating a student in Launchpad for the first time.

UPDATE: While this information is required the first time a student is enrolled, liaisons who enroll students in subsequent years do not have to re-enter this info. A quick way to find the student is by entering the student’s MOSIS ID. This was one of our first Launchpad updates and is much appreciated!



SHARING ENROLLMENT REPORTS

By clicking “Manage,” then “Students,” liaisons are able to see all students their district has enrolled. Student enrollment reports are automatically emailed to students before courses start, and the reports are always available to download in Launchpad.

UPDATE: Districts are now able to download all of their student enrollment reports at one time by going to “Reports,” then “Enrollment Printouts.” They can also download reports for specific buildings.

INVOICES

When published, invoices are automatically emailed to the partner district’s billing contact.

UPDATE: Districts are now able to have multiple billing contacts in Launchpad. This is a big benefit for districts in which one person reviews the invoices and another pays the bill.

GRADE REPORTS

Launch publishes both quarter/progress grades and semester grades. Launch liaisons are able to download these reports in Launchpad.

ATTENDANCE REPORTS

Liaisons should download attendance reports to track student progress. They can download this by clicking “Reports,” then “Enrollments & Attendance.” The “Participation” column on this report shares the number of days since a student has last logged in. If a liaison determines to drop students due to lack of participation, they should also do so in Launchpad.

LAUNCHPAD GUIDES

If it’s time to enroll and you don’t have this magazine handy, have no fear—Launchpad has a “Guides” tab that shares helpful guides with directions on enrollment, monitoring, state reporting and more. ■

Updates & Reminders

Note the following dates & info to ensure you keep your district and Launch students on track.

SPRING ENROLLMENT DEADLINE:

Launch enrollment deadlines are **end-of-day December 15, 2020** (for the January 4, 2021 start date) and **end-of-day January 5, 2021** (for the January 18, 2021 start date). It is important to place your enrollments by this time so Launch can ensure proper staffing. Enrollment requests after these deadlines may be considered on a case-by-case basis, pending available course seats.

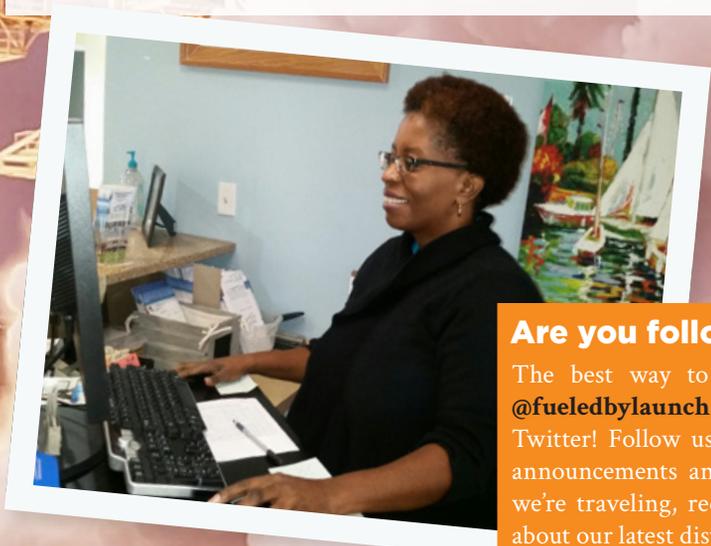
CONTENT COURSE REQUEST:

Districts currently utilizing Launch’s content courses will lose access to all Semester 1 content on January 18, 2021. In addition, districts that wish to utilize Launch’s content courses for the Spring 2021 semester must request their Semester 2 content in Launchpad ASAP. Launch liaisons can do this by selecting “Manage,” then “Content Requests” after logging in to their Launchpad account.

INVOICE TIMELINE ADJUSTMENT:

Launch changed our invoicing timeline to allow districts to utilize Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds for Fall 2020 tuition payment—Launch’s Fall 2020 semester invoices were published November 2. Adjusted invoices reflecting schedule changes, drops, additions and credits will

be available at the end of second quarter/the completion of the fall 2020 semester. **Please note:** These adjusted invoices will be published the week of January 25, 2021.



Are you following Launch on Twitter?

The best way to keep up to date with @fueledbylaunch is to connect with us on Twitter! Follow us to see breaking Launch announcements and offerings, learn where we’re traveling, request a meeting or learn about our latest district partnerships.



2020-2021

Launch Course Catalog

Recently expanded K-5 programming means that Launch can now serve Missouri students in grades K-12! Read on to review our elementary, middle and high school course offerings.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*Kindergarten - 5th Grade**

English Language Arts
 Mathematics
 Science
 Social Studies
 Health
 Physical Education
 Music
 Art

MIDDLE SCHOOL

ELA

ELA 6th Grade
 ELA 7th Grade
 ELA 8th Grade
 Reading Middle School

Exploratories

Discover Computer Coding I
 Discover Computer Coding II
 Music Journeys
 Visual Arts I
 Visual Arts II

Health & PE

Health 6th Grade
 Health 7th Grade
 Health 8th Grade
 Physical Education 6th Grade
 Physical Education 7th Grade
 Physical Education 8th Grade

Mathematics

Accelerated 7th Grade Math
 Algebra I
 Mathematics 6th Grade
 Mathematics 7th Grade
 Mathematics 8th Grade

Science

Science 6th Grade
 Science 7th Grade
 Science 8th Grade

Social Studies

Social Studies 6th Grade
 Social Studies 7th Grade
 Social Studies 8th Grade

World Language

French I
 German I
 Japanese I
 Spanish I

HIGH SCHOOL

Advanced Placement

- AP Calculus AB  ●
- AP Calculus BC  ●
- AP Computer Sci. Principles ●
- AP Computer Science A ●
- AP English Lit. & Comp.  ●
- AP European History  ●
- AP Physics  ●
- AP Psychology  ●
- AP Statistics  ●
- AP US Gov. & Politics I  ●
- AP US Gov. & Politics II  ●
- AP US History  ●

Electives

- A+ Tutoring ○
- ACT Prep  ○
- Driver Education  ○
- Employment Internship  ○
- FACS Internship ○
- HiSet Prep ○
- Volunteerism ○

English Language Arts

- Contemporary Lit  ●
- Creative Writing I  ○
- Creative Writing II  ○
- English I  ●
- English II  ●
- English III  ●
- English IV  ●
- Film as Literature I  ○
- Film as Literature II  ○
- Grammar & Comp. I  ○
- Grammar & Comp. II  ○
- Introductory Speech  ●
- Reading  ●

Fine Arts

- Fine Arts Appreciation I: Music  ○
- Fine Arts Appreciation II: Art  ○
- Music Theory ●

Health & PE

- Health  ○
- Physical Education I ○
- Physical Fitness  ○
- Lifetime Fitness ○

Mathematics

- Algebra I  ●
- Algebra II  ●
- College Algebra  ●
- Foundations of Algebra  ●
- Geometry  ●
- Intro. to Computer Science ○
- Pre-Calculus  ○
- Professional Math  ●
- Statistics  ●
- Trigonometry  ○

Practical Arts

- Child Development I  ●
- Computer Applications  ○
- Digital Communications  ●
- Financial Accounting ●
- Personal Finance  ○
- Web Design ○

Science

- Astronomy  ●
- Chemistry  ●
- Earth Science  ●
- General Biology  ●
- Introductory Biology  ●
- Introductory Chemistry  ●
- Physical Science  ●

Social Studies

- American Baseball History  ○
- American Civil War  ○
- Economics  ○
- Liberty & Law (Gov.)  ○
- Psych. of the Holocaust  ●
- Psychology  ○
- Sociology  ○
- US History  ●
- World Geography  ○
- World History  ●

World Language

- French I-IV  ●
- German I-II  ●
- Japanese I-II  ●
- Spanish I-III  ●

-  Honors Available
-  Credit Acquisition Available
-  Credit Recovery Available
-  Dual Credit Available
-  NCAA Approved
-  0.5 Credit Course
-  1.0 Credit Course

Launch, Camera, Action!

Meet Launch student Ezrahe Noelle, a 17-year-old senior who spent many of her school-age years performing in Branson.

Access Launch: When did you discover your love of performing?

Ezrahe Noelle: I started singing, performing and competing in talent competitions when I was 18 months old. In the very beginning I was singing at church for a couple of months, but then I started doing competitions. I was born in Oklahoma, but we ended up moving to Missouri so I could perform in Branson.

Access: What was your first big act?

E.N.: I started singing, dancing and yodeling in the Clay Cooper show when I was 9.

Access: You yodeled? Please elaborate!

E.N.: Yes! Whenever I was super young—maybe 6 or 7—I heard a video of someone yodeling and thought it was the coolest thing in the world. My mom knew how much I loved it and said I could get a mentor—well, yodeling mentors are kind of hard to come by! But we found a woman—Janet McBride. Janet also taught LeAnn Rimes how to yodel!

On Stage to Online:

Launch student Ezrahe Noelle, a senior at Branson High School, has 55,700 subscribers and more than 28 million views on YouTube. Ezrahe moved to Branson to perform in the Clay Cooper show at age 9.



Access: How long did you perform with Clay Cooper?

E.N.: I started out not knowing if it was going to be a summer thing or for a longer time—it ended up being six seasons.

Access: What was it like being in a show and going to school?

E.N.: I was homeschooled because of my schedule. I would do school work, then go to the show around 6 p.m. to get ready. Sometimes I would greet people. After the show I would sometimes stick around to talk with guests—I was there until 11:30 a lot of nights!

Access: When did you decide to leave the show?

E.N.: I stopped performing halfway through my freshman year of high school. I was having to do homework at the show, and if we had morning shows I'd miss class. I decided I wanted to try to be more of a 'normal' kid for a little bit. It got to be a lot being a performer.

Access: What was the transition like?

E.N.: Well, I was still able to perform. I did all of the school musicals and plays. Now that I'm full-time online I'm not performing, but I still make a lot of videos for YouTube. I have quite a few subscribers.

Access: What made you transition to a Launch schedule?

E.N.: I mostly decided to go online because I wanted to work, and also because of the pandemic. My mom and my sister are super high risk, and I wanted to keep them safe.

Access: Where do you work?

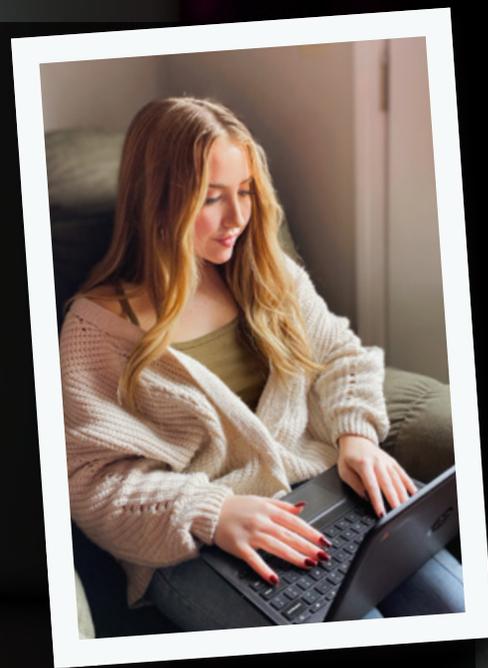
E.N.: I'm a hostess at a Branson-area restaurant. I work anywhere from 16-25 hours a week. That's another good thing about Launch—I can do homework at night when I get home or even before going to work in the morning—the flexibility is great for students who work.

Access: Okay, back to show biz—you met Steve Harvey (pictured below)! Talk about that.

E.N.: Yes! I was on *Little Big Shots* with Steve Harvey. It was a really cool experience. They flew me out to L.A., and I did all of my school work while I was there on set. It's filmed in the same building as *Dancing with the Stars*, so I got to meet Paula Deen and a couple of other famous people. It was an amazing experience.

Access: What was Steve Harvey like?

E.N.: Well, I cried when I first went on stage because it was such a big crowd and it was so amazing. After I sang my first song, Steve asked me why I was crying. I told him that it was just such a blessing to have this opportunity and I felt so blessed with the life that I have. Afterwards he gave me a hug backstage and told me I did amazing. He talked about how he used to be homeless and shared that he was also so blessed to do some of the things he's done. He was an incredible person.



Access: Have you been on any other shows?

E.N.: No—I had a casting agent who was trying to get me on a lot of shows, including *America's Got Talent*. I was almost on there, but then I didn't want to do it because they wanted me to put yodels in a pop song, which was just really weird!

Access: What's your favorite thing about Launch?

E.N.: Flexibility. This year has been so difficult for so many people—for me, we don't have very good internet connection at my house, and my sister has to borrow my computer sometimes—but even with this, all of my Launch teachers have been super understanding. Launch has great teachers.

Access: What are your plans for after you graduate?

E.N.: I'm going to UMKC. I really want to study psychology and become a physician or a psychologist—this is partly thanks to my Launch psychology teacher, Mr Douglas! I just love that class so much! But I've already been accepted, and I'm moving to Kansas City. ■



Teaching With the Times

Fourth grade teacher Amber Howard shares her experience of teaching elementary school students online during a national pandemic.

I've wanted to be a teacher for as long as I can remember. My second grade teacher saw me helping one of my friends and said I was really good at teaching. It was like my life was changed forever at that point—I've wanted to be a teacher since that time. She made teaching look fun.

My undergraduate degree is in elementary education, and I got my masters degree in literacy. I'm certified K-12, but I've been teaching elementary for seven years now.

I was the teacher of one of the first classes at Springfield Public Schools to get laptops when the district went one-to-one five years ago, and I began adapting my own classroom curriculum right away. That flowed into me developing a skill set to teach online. I decided to put that to use

"I have students from all over the state, and they're really wanting to connect with a teacher right now, because of the circumstances. They want that relationship."



Fourth-grade teacher Amber Howard also writes curriculum and serves as the fourth grade department head.

when I heard Launch was hiring full-time elementary teachers. But my role here is a bit unique in that I'm not only teaching—I also write curriculum, and I'm the department head for fourth grade.

At first I was nervous on how I would develop relationships with students online, but now I actually feel more connected with these kids than I did my seated kids. I have students from all over the state, and they're really wanting to connect with a teacher right now, because of the circumstances. They want that relationship. Their desire to want it and my desire to have it is really funneling into some great connections. I also get more one-on-one time

with my online students than I did with kids in the classroom because of how my schedule is set up.

Every morning we have a morning meeting where we do team builders and get-to-know you activities, and all of my students say that's their favorite part of the day. They get to go to breakout rooms and talk about their favorite things—they're getting to connect and getting to know one another. They're developing friendships with their online classmates.

I'd say one of my favorite things about my job is that I actually have three different roles, and I enjoy seeing how they all work together. As the department head I get to support other fourth grade teachers, and that work has been really rewarding, on top of the already rewarding job of working with kids. ■



Amber Howard

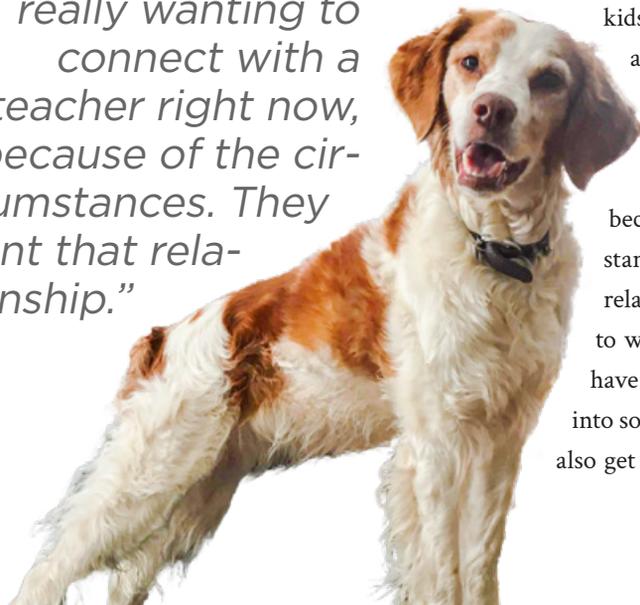
Launch Elementary Teacher

Home District: Springfield R-XII

Years in Education: 12

Degree: BSED, Elementary Education; MSED, Literacy; EdD (coming Spring 2021!), Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Fun Fact: Mrs. Howard's dog, Nutmeg (pictured left), comes to Mrs. Howard's online class once a week and hangs out online each day during daily announcements.



Behind the Scenes

What's it like to work for Launch? We spent a day following Dr. Brady Quirk, Launch's Principal of Virtual Learning, to learn a bit about his role.

7:24 a.m.: As many Launch team members are still arriving at the office, Dr. Quirk is already at his desk checking his email. It's a Monday, and he has multiple meetings on his morning agenda. "I wanted to take care of a few things early today," Dr. Quirk says.

9:28 a.m.: Dr. Kim Spence, Launch's Assistant Principal who oversees secondary learning, walks into Dr. Quirk's office. The two have a meeting to discuss proposed changes in Launch's grading process. "We're making adjustments to our practices so student grades better reflect the learning that's occurring," Dr. Quirk says. "Our goal is to more-closely align virtual grading practices with seated practices."

10:15 a.m.: Dr. Nichole Lemmon, Launch's Director, joins in on the meeting. Dr. Lemmon and Dr. Quirk are planning to present these changes to the Executive Leadership Team at Springfield Public Schools later this week. After the plan is presented to SPS administrators it will be shared with Launch partner districts.

11:30 a.m.: Dr. Quirk heads down the hall for his Launch leadership team meeting. "Dr. Lemmon and I meet
w i t h

the Launch team managers every Monday," he says. These weekly sessions are a great way for Dr. Quirk to stay informed on all-things Launch, as the Development, IT and Partner Engagement team managers share department updates.

12:32 p.m.: Monday meetings always take a lot of concentration—it's time for some brain food! Dr. Quirk heads to the Launch Virtual Learning Center's cafe for lunch. "I'm having leftover pasta today," Dr. Quirk says. "Since quarantine started we've been cooking at home a lot, and I've tried a ton of new recipes. I made baba ganoush last week!"

1:28 p.m.: Dr. Quirk quickly responds to a few emails, then begins working



on his agenda for tomorrow's meeting with the Launch counseling team—one of multiple teams he meets with weekly as a part of his role. "Being an online principal is a new adventure for me," Dr. Quirk says. "But ultimately, it's my job to work with multiple student service teams to ensure quality online learning is taking place."

3:57 p.m.: As the clock nears 4, Dr. Quirk takes one last look at his email before heading out—up next is a trip to the Y for an evening workout. "I try to exercise as often as I can," Dr. Quirk says. "It's a great stress reliever for me." ■





TWO HOURS
Endless Ideas
21 SPEAKERS

Attend Launch's **21 for 21**, an info-packed virtual experience created to educate and inspire Launch partner district leaders & liaisons. You'll learn best practices, hear inspiring stories and gain key knowledge—all from Launch leaders and partner district speakers—and all in 120 minutes or less.

January 21, 2021
9 a.m.—11 a.m.

RSVP now at fueledbylaunch.com/21for21

Anatomy of a Course

Creative Writing!

100 College ruled sheets
9.75 x 7.5 in / 24.8 x 19 cm

This course allows students to write about topics of their choice and sharpen their writing skills along the way.

There are classes that require students to write research papers and cite sources—and then there's Launch's Creative Writing I. "One of my favorite things about this class is that it's not full of essays or research," says teacher Julie Johnson. Creative writing students get started by writing autobiographies and memoirs and later dabble with poetry—all while sharpening their writing skills. "The thing that I notice the most about students in this class is the confidence they gain," says teacher Julie Johnson. "It's so fun to watch them grow as writers."

Course Facts:

Course Type: English Language Arts

Credits: Half (0.5) credit course

Estimated Completion Time:

1 Semester/9-18 weeks

Course Topics:

Unit 1: Toolbox

Unit 2: Writing a Memoir

Unit 3: Short Stories

Unit 4: Poetry

The Rambling Autobiography

Students take one of their first stabs at creative writing with Unit 1's rambling autobiography—an assignment for which students must write all they can about themselves in 5 minutes.

What's in a Name?

This assignment requires students to learn how their parents came up with their name, then discuss how it fits their personality. They also share nicknames and other fun anecdotes along the way.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Unit 3 allows students to write many short stories, including one as a part of "Picture Flash Fiction." For this, students pick any photo they'd like and write 1,000 words or less about it. "There are only a couple of rules," Johnson says. "It needs to have a conflict and follow a plot line, including a climax and a resolution for the conflict. No cliffhangers allowed in my class!"

Memories Engraved

Students take a stab at first-person writing as they tell an experiential tale on a memory of their choice. Johnson says that deciding on a topic often takes brainstorming, but the results are always rewarding and a perfect way for the teacher to learn more about the student.

Wait, there's more! Launch also offers a Creative Writing II course in which students write about an adventure of choice and script an entire play!

Meeting Needs in Nixa

Learn the multiple ways Nixa Public Schools uses Launch to serve its K-12 learners.



Nixa Public Schools became a Launch partner district when the program began in 2017. “We have been easing into Launch the last couple of years to provide more opportunities and choices for our secondary students,” says Dr. Josh Chastain, the district’s executive director of curriculum, instruction & assessment. But after the COVID-19 pandemic closed the doors of schools nationwide last spring, the district needed a plan—and it needed it fast. “We had to make sure we could meet the needs of all of our students K-12,” Dr. Chastain says. “Instead of moving and rushing to develop a create-your-own program, we looked to Launch.”

UTILIZING LAUNCH’S CONTENT CATALOG

In early summer 2020, Dr. Chastain began meeting with members of the Launch

management team to discuss the program’s content catalog option. “We liked the content catalog because it allowed us to use our own teachers,” Dr. Chastain says. “Launch provides the platform, curriculum and resources, and our teachers are able to put the Nixa spin on it.”

Nixa Public Schools currently has more than 350 full-time K-5 students enrolled with Launch, and the vast majority of these students are educated through the district’s own teachers. Nixa’s number of Launch learners jumps to over 800 when you include middle and high school students, and content teachers are in place for the most-popular secondary courses as well. “And we still have students enrolled in classes with a Launch teacher of record,” Dr. Chastain says. “We are continuing to allow students to enroll in Launch for courses we typically don’t offer at our high school.”

Nixa teacher Kathryn Martin spent nearly 20 years in the classroom before becoming one of the district’s full-time Launch elementary instructors. Kyleigh (pictured opposite), one of her students, says she’s the “greatest teacher in the whole world.”

SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

Nixa has 18 full-time K-5 teachers and two full-time special education teachers instructing Launch courses. Third grade teacher Kathryn Martin is among these 20, as she made the move to online earlier this fall after nearly 20 years in the classroom. “Teaching with Launch looks a lot different than the online teaching we all tried last spring,” Mrs. Martin says. “The Launch program has made it much more organized. It’s so much easier on parents, too, because I’m actually online with the students—I’m not just sending home packets or plans.”

Mrs. Martin conducts her online teaching from her classroom at Nixa’s John Thomas School of Discovery—the same place that she taught her seated students—but her desk looks a bit different this year. “I actually have a 43-inch TV monitor for my screen,” Mrs. Martin says. “When we

“Teaching with Launch looks a lot different than the online teaching we all tried last spring. The Launch program has made it much more organized.”
—Kathryn Martin, Nixa Launch Teacher



started I just had my laptop, but I kept getting frustrated. It was so small—it was hard to see my 22 students on such a little screen. My husband helped me get this set up.” After members of Nixa’s board of education witnessed Mrs. Martin teaching on the big screen, it was decided all Nixa online teachers will be provided the same set up.

A GLIMPSE IN THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

Although Mrs. Martin’s third graders aren’t physically with her in the classroom this year, she still has a close relationship with each of them. “My students are very precious to me,” Mrs. Martin says. “Just hearing them talk or seeing their faces—it makes

me happy.” And she works to create a culture in which the students have relationships with one another as well. “We interrupt things,” says Mrs. Martin. “If we’re on a Zoom and a dog walks into the picture, we want to know the dog’s name. We ask about one another’s families. Things like that.”

Mrs. Martin’s goal was to create a virtual culture that was just as healthy as the culture she always created in the classroom—and it worked. Just ask 8-year-old Kyleigh (pictured). “I was kind of sad at first because I knew I wouldn’t see my friends by going full-time online,” Kyleigh says. “But now, I like this a lot. It feels the same, because I still have friends! And we do our work together but we also all play games together. We get to play hangman and things like that.”



And while no one knows what awaits next year or even next semester, Kyleigh does know one thing for sure... “I’m definitely staying online if Mrs. Martin stays online,” she says. “She’s the greatest teacher in the whole world.” ■



NIXA AT A GLANCE

K-12 Enrollment: 6,348

MASA District: Southwest

School Colors: Gray and Red

Mascot: Eagles

Fun Fact: Before Nixa was officially incorporated as a village in 1902, a town meeting was held to select its name. Here it was stated that “nix” best described the community, as it was “nothing but a crossroads.” An “A,” the middle initial of early civic leader Nicholas A. Inman, was added to arrive at the winning title of Nixa.



Launching in the Capital City

The Jefferson City School District first partnered with Launch in spring 2020—today the district utilizes Launch courses in multiple ways to serve nearly 1,000 virtual learners.



When the COVID-19 pandemic proved it was here to stay in spring 2020, school district administrators in Jefferson City picked up the phone and requested a meeting with Launch. “We had already been in communication with other districts on how they were serving virtual students,” says Shelby Scarbrough, Chief of Learning for the Jefferson City School District (JCS D). “As we considered our options, Launch trended to the top of our list because of its commitment to Missouri teachers and learners.”

Fast forward eight months, and the district is now utilizing Launch in a multitude of ways. The JCS D has both its own teachers of record and Launch teachers of record at the elementary level, and it serves all virtual students at the middle and high school level with Launch courses. In a district of more than 9,000

Jefferson City Launch Teacher Emily Roberts (above) plans many interactive activities for her virtual Kindergarten students (opposite).

K-12, this is a large collection of learners. “We have close to 1,000 students enrolled in Launch classes with Launch teachers,” says JCS D Director of Student Information, Planning and Assessments Dawn Berhorst. “We also have more than 125 students in classes with Jefferson City teachers using Launch content.”

THE DECISION TO PARTNER

Once COVID-19 sparked JCS D’s initial conversations with Launch, things moved rather quickly. “We needed a way to serve our students for summer school, because we knew we weren’t going to be able to do in-seat,” Scarbrough says. After the Launch and JCS D admin teams had a couple of meetings, the district jumped in full force.

In addition to having hundreds of students enrolled in summer courses, the district also had multiple teachers instruct Launch classes in June and July. With this came a lot of experiential learning. “We learned a lot about what it takes to become a successful virtual learner during the summer,” Scarbrough says. And while the district will continue to make adjustments and develop processes as it gets more first-hand Launch experience, administrators say they’re grateful for a working relationship. “The Launch team has been extremely responsive,” Scarbrough says. “A lot of last summer—and even the start of this semester—has been spent getting to know one another as districts. We feel like the Launch team truly cares about helping us meet the needs of our parents and students.”

MOVING TO ONLINE TEACHING

Jefferson City teacher Emily Roberts had just put the finishing touches on her Kindergarten classroom when she received a life-changing phone call. “I was asked if I’d like to become an online teacher,” Mrs. Roberts says. To help serve the district’s large number of K-5 learners, multiple Jefferson City teachers were asked to teach Launch content via the program’s content catalog option.

Although Mrs. Roberts was fully prepared to return to the building for the quickly approaching fall 2020 semester, she had spent the summer teaching with Launch and really enjoyed the experience.

“I do everything I can to build relationships and plan interactions. I think I’ve created an environment where students enjoy coming to their online class each day.”

—Emily Roberts,
Jefferson City Launch Teacher

“I thought, ‘This is awesome,’” Mrs. Roberts says. “I went for it.” After meetings and trainings with a handful of other Jefferson City Launch teachers and the Launch staff, Mrs. Roberts was ready to welcome students back virtually this fall.

Today Mrs. Roberts instructs her class of 15 kindergarten students from the comfort of her own home. “I honestly don’t feel any different than I did when I was in seat,” Mrs. Roberts says. “I feel a great connection with my students. We know one another’s quirks. I know their struggles. I’ve gotten to know their families. Their families have opened their homes to this.”

WELCOME TO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Mrs. Roberts puts extra effort into ensuring all of her students feel connected. “We do a lot of fun and silly things together,” Mrs. Roberts says. “We’ll get up and do yoga together in the morning. We’ll have dance parties, and I’ll read them stories.” For red

ribbon week, Mrs. Roberts planned virtual spirit days. “We wore crazy hats one day,” she says. “The next day we came in tie-dye. We’re all wearing our Halloween costumes tomorrow.”

In addition, Mrs. Roberts also does a handful of things off screen to ensure she creates an engaging online culture. For example, she ships students “happy mail” filled with activities as well as stickers and games. They’ll take a break from learning to color the same picture, or they’ll work on a craft together with items she supplies. “I do everything I can to build relationships and plan interactions,” she says. “I think I’ve created an environment where students enjoy coming to their online class each day.”

As Mrs. Roberts teaches her virtual class of kindergartners, her 11-year-old daughter, Ava, engages in her own Launch courses while sitting a few rooms away. “I think my very favorite thing about Launch is that I get to stay in my pajamas all day,” Ava says with a laugh. She continues to explain her preference of learning online. “My Launch classes are easy to navigate,” she says. And her mother agrees. “I rarely have to help her,” she says. “I feel like Launch is set up in a way that students can succeed. I see it in Ava’s classes and in my class as well—what Launch has developed is very easy to follow as a teacher, and as a student.” ■



JEFFERSON CITY AT A GLANCE

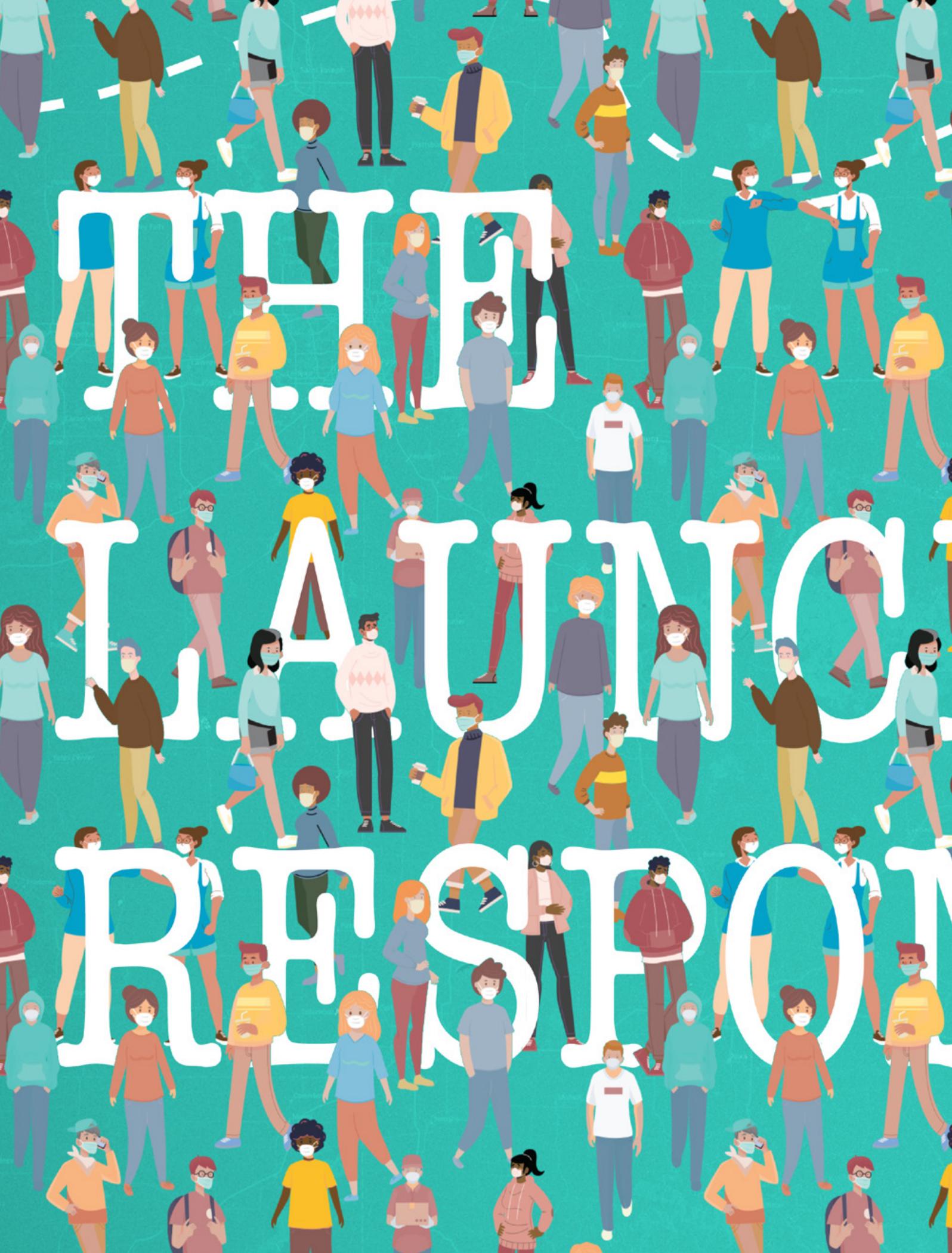
K-12 Enrollment: 9,073

MASA District: West Central

Vision: The Jefferson City Public Schools website states its vision by saying “We will strive to become the premier school district in the state of Missouri as we raise the bar in a culture of high expectations while growing our traditions of pride through excellence.”

Fun Fact: Housed in Jefferson City, the Missouri State Capitol is now in its third building. The first state capitol building was destroyed by fire in 1837. The second capitol was destroyed by fire on February 5, 1911, when a bolt of lightning struck the dome. The present capitol was built in the period of 1913-1917 and stands high atop a bluff overlooking the Missouri River.





THE
LAUNCH
RESPO



As COVID-19 grew into a global pandemic, industries and entities around the world faced copious challenges. Education was no different. And when school districts across the nation and our state began shutting their doors, we knew it was our time to step up. That's when we asked ourselves a very important question: **How can we help?**

Read on to learn how Launch—Missouri's largest public virtual learning program—has adapted and expanded to serve more than 200,000 virtual course enrollments since the COVID-19 pandemic began in Spring 2020.

CREATING CONTENT OFFERINGS

When schools closed as a result of COVID-19 last spring, Launch offered free course content to partners. Now districts can use Launch content with their own teacher of record every semester.

March 2020 was a month that educators will never forget. One minute, the nearly 25,000 learners at Springfield Public Schools were taking off for spring break. A few days later, these students learned they wouldn't be returning the next week. And it wasn't much later when they learned they wouldn't return for the remainder of the year. Schools statewide found themselves in similar situations, as Governor Parsons announced temporary and permanent school closures in March and April 2020.

LENDING A HAND

As a virtual course provider based at Springfield Public Schools, Launch knew it was our time to practice what we preach. A strength of Launch is working together with our partner districts—of which we had 267 at the time—to do what is best for Missouri students. We set out to see what that looked like in that time where there was such dire need. Launch Director Dr. Nichole Lemmon worked with Springfield Public Schools superintendent Dr. John Jungmann and other key district officials to formulate an immediate plan. It was decided that Launch would develop and offer a selection of content courses to our partner districts for free for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

Launch's digital developers immediately got to work editing and adapting our content courses—this took a bit of work, as content courses are designed to utilize Launch content with a district's teacher of record. The developers also created online learning modules on how to teach Launch classes in Canvas, our Learning Management System. The Launch creative team developed guides and tutorials filled with advice and best practices for teachers, and we began sharing.

While the completion of the spring 2020 semester resulted in many lessons learned, it became obvious that there was a definite need for Launch's content offerings. "The benefit of content catalog courses is that the district gets to provide the teacher," says Dr. Meghan Roe, Launch's Coordinator of Course Development. "It's the same idea as when a house is turn-key ready. Everything is there and ready to go!" The Launch team used summer 2020 to further develop and adapt the content catalog, and we began offering it as a service in fall 2020.



Launch Content Catalog

HIGH SCHOOL CATALOG

English Language Arts

- English I ■●
- English II ■●
- English III ■●
- English IV ●

Fine Arts

- Fine Arts Appreciation I: Music ●
- Fine Arts Appreciation II: Art ●

Health

- Health ●

Mathematics

- Algebra I ●
- Algebra II ■●
- Foundations of Algebra ●
- Geometry ■●

Practical Arts

- Personal Finance ●

Science

- Chemistry ■●
- General Biology ■●
- Introductory Biology ●
- Introductory Chemistry ●
- Physical Science ■●

Social Studies

- Liberty & Law (Gov.) ■●
- US History ■●
- World History ■●

World Language

- French I-II ●
- Spanish I-II ●

- Honors Available
- Full Credit Course
- Half Credit Course



MIDDLE SCHOOL CATALOG

English Language Arts

- ELA 6th Grade
- ELA 7th Grade
- ELA 8th Grade

Health

- Health 6th Grade
- Health 7th Grade
- Health 8th Grade

Mathematics

- Mathematics 6th Grade
- Mathematics 7th Grade
- Mathematics 8th Grade

Science

- Science 6th Grade
- Science 7th Grade
- Science 8th Grade

Social Studies

- Social Studies 6th Grade
- Social Studies 7th Grade
- Social Studies 8th Grade

Exploratories

- Music Journeys 6-8th Grade





CONTENT CATALOG IN ACTION

As the Branson School District entered the fall semester with more than 800 online learners, district leaders decided to purchase Launch content to deliver quality online curriculum with their own teachers of record.

Launch content, Branson teachers. This is the scenario for many Branson School District students in grades 6-12. And Deanna Sheets, the district's director of Curriculum, Assessment & Federal Programs, says it's going quite well. "At first our counselors felt a little bit overwhelmed," Sheets says. "But we quickly learned that we needed to figure out a process that works. Our administration decided to move two certified elementary interventionists into virtual coordinator positions, and that was a key in making it all work."

Rather than dividing students by the alphabet, these virtual coordinators are assigned students in family groupings. The coordinators spend their hours providing tech support, communicating and monitoring student progress and communicating with families, and this allows Branson's Launch teachers—all 18 of them—to focus on teaching. "I think proper communication has been the most important factor," Sheets says. "We communicate a lot with our content teachers. They have clear expectations with a primary focus of staying connected and providing feedback."

Launch provided training for all Branson content teachers before the start of the semester, and we still help as needed. "We are very pleased now and feel like things are running smoothly," Sheets says. "We've enjoyed our partnership with Launch and how much they've assisted us." Launch currently has nearly a dozen districts that utilize content services and plans to continue offering the content catalog in future semesters.



When the Branson School District had many students move to Launch courses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, they moved certified elementary interventionists Amy Dixon and Kristen Large into virtual coordinator positions. Amy and Kristen spend their days assisting Launch learners.



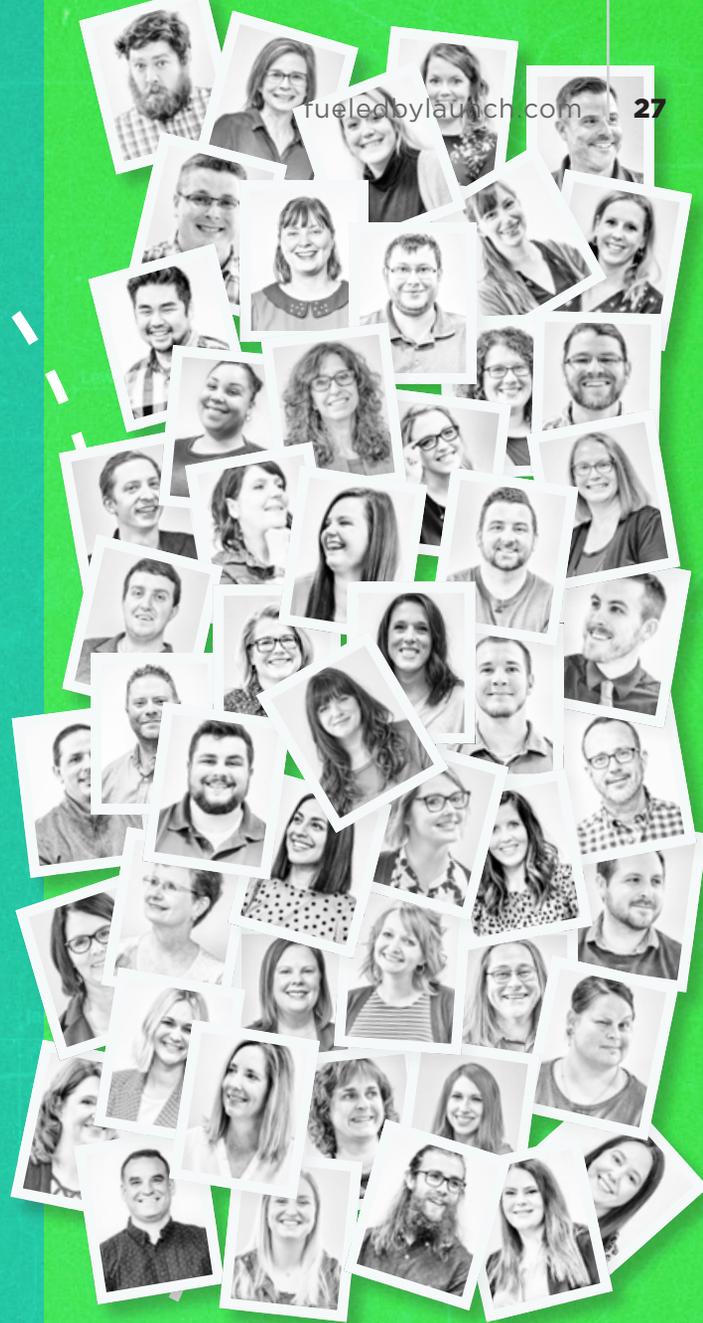
PROVIDING PARTNERS FLEXIBILITY

At Launch, we know offering quality content is only one part of the puzzle—learn how we have worked to best support districts and families both through the thick of the pandemic and today.

1. **Continued Flexibility.** When all students were moved online in spring 2020, those who were already enrolled in Launch courses had the option to pause. “We allowed this to help out various families—for example, those who live in rural areas and don’t have internet at home,” says Janna Elfrink, Coordinator of Partner Engagement.
2. **Extended Terms & Drop Dates.** Students enrolled in spring 2020 courses were given extra time to complete their work. Those enrolled in fall 2020 semester courses had a longer period of time to drop without penalty. “The extended drop date was especially helpful to districts with new online learners,” Elfrink says. “It allowed more of a trial period for students to determine if they felt they could be successful.”
3. **Lower Tuition.** In summer 2020, Launch announced a price decrease for the fall semester: High school tuition was lowered from \$255 per half credit to \$225 per half credit, and middle school tuition was lowered from \$255 per student per semester to \$225 per student per semester. “Providing a tuition discount was one of the main ways we were able to show appreciation to our partners,” says Launch Director Dr. Nichole Lemmon.
4. **District Support.** The Launch partner engagement team committed to hosting partner touch-base meetings all summer, and at the start of the Fall 2020 semester. “It was more important than ever that we stayed in constant contact with our partners,” says Elfrink. “As we learned their needs and how they were affected by the pandemic, we were able to provide better support.”
5. **Parent Support.** As thousands of students were moving online for the first time, there were many parents looking for support. Launch’s partner engagement team developed the Parent Start-Up Kit to provide parents with tutorials, guides and a “Getting Started” slideshow to help. Check it out at fueledbylaunch.com/students

Expanded Staff

An increase in virtual learners means an increase in virtual course enrollments—and this requires more staff. Since spring 2020, Launch has hired more than two dozen new employees, essentially doubling our team. In addition to a large number of full-time teachers, many of Launch’s new positions were dedicated to email and phone tech support positions.



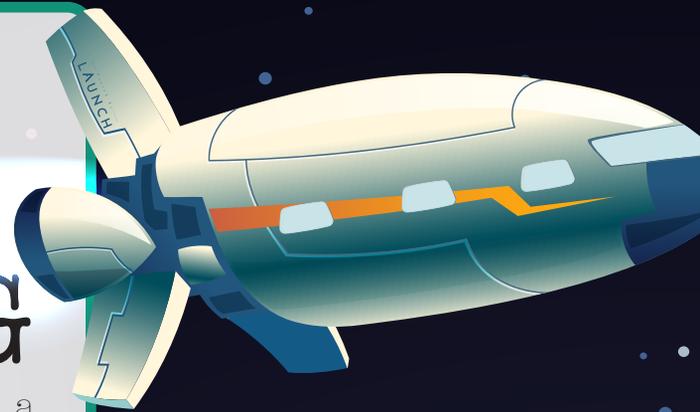
OFFERING ELEMENTARY PROGRAMMING

Developing K-5 programming was always a part of Launch's plan—the COVID-19 pandemic moved it up on the timeline.

“Once the pandemic began, we realized pretty quickly that there would be a need for a full-time elementary learning option across the state,” says Dr. Meghan Roe, Launch's Coordinator of Course Development. “We were confident that our Launch option would be better than any for-profit options and the best for Missouri students. We quickly readjusted our development schedule and hired additional staff to build out our K-5 content.”

BUILDING CULTURE ONLINE

“It was really important for us to find a way to help our teachers build a sense of community in their virtual classrooms,” says Assistant Principal Helen Williams. “We know that when kids are making connections, they're more likely to log on.” Live small group and full class lessons and constant teacher interaction helps this happen. “Yesterday I had a teacher tell me that she feels more connected with her students this year than she did in her seated classroom,” Williams says. “That really says a lot.”



FROM CONCEPT TO COURSES

Launch hired two full-time elementary teachers who would also work as curriculum advisors. These teachers/advisors worked with Springfield Public Schools curriculum coordinators and Launch digital developers to build out K-5 course content. The content is reviewed by a Launch Quality Assurance Specialist before being published.

CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS

“We’ve been able to have real-time feedback on our elementary courses, which has been extremely helpful,” says Williams. As the Launch developers continue writing elementary courses, they’re in constant contact with the teachers and curriculum directors and taking feedback from students, parents and districts into account. “This structure has been very beneficial, because we’re able to make changes on-the-fly,” Williams says.

THEME TIME!

After researching how to best engage K-5 learners online, the team determined that Launch elementary courses needed a conceptual theme. The development and creative teams worked together to make K-5 classes navigable with a space theme. When K-5 learners log on they meet “The Rocketeers,” three animated students aboard the International Launch Station (pictured left). They continue to complete “missions” each day, and “voyages” break up their content in easy-to-consume blocks.



GIRL'S FOOT GIRL

Recent Parkview High School graduate Alissa Schilling balanced a schedule of volunteering, working and learning with Launch—and she won local, state and regional Boys & Girls Club Youth of the Year awards along the way.

You probably wouldn't have found 8-year-old Alissa Schilling playing with her classmates at recess. "Instead I would have been tucked away in a corner somewhere, reading chapter books," she says. Alissa is 18 years old today, but she recalls these childhood memories as if they just happened last week. "The only time I really socialized with other kids was at the Boys & Girls Club," Alissa says. "I went there after school almost every day since first grade."

Fast forward 10 years, and Alissa now works at that same Boys & Girl Club unit as a COVID-19 Youth Development Professional. She's also a full-time student at Missouri State University, where she's using many of her hard-earned scholarship dollars to continue on a path she's always dreamed of. "I grew up in poverty," Alissa says. "I'm the first of five kids to go to college. A lot of generations in my family didn't graduate high school. I did what I had to do to break the cycle."



Life After Launch

After Alissa Schilling completed her senior year with the help of Launch courses, she began attending MSU full time and working with children at Boys & Girls Club.

FINDING THE BALANCE

Alissa hasn't lived with either of her parents since age 14. "I was in middle school at the time," she says. But despite her non-typical home life, she always made it a point to strive in school. This came naturally during her elementary years—but things changed. "I remember going into middle school and how classes got a bit harder for me," she says. "And then in high school, math and science got a lot more intense."

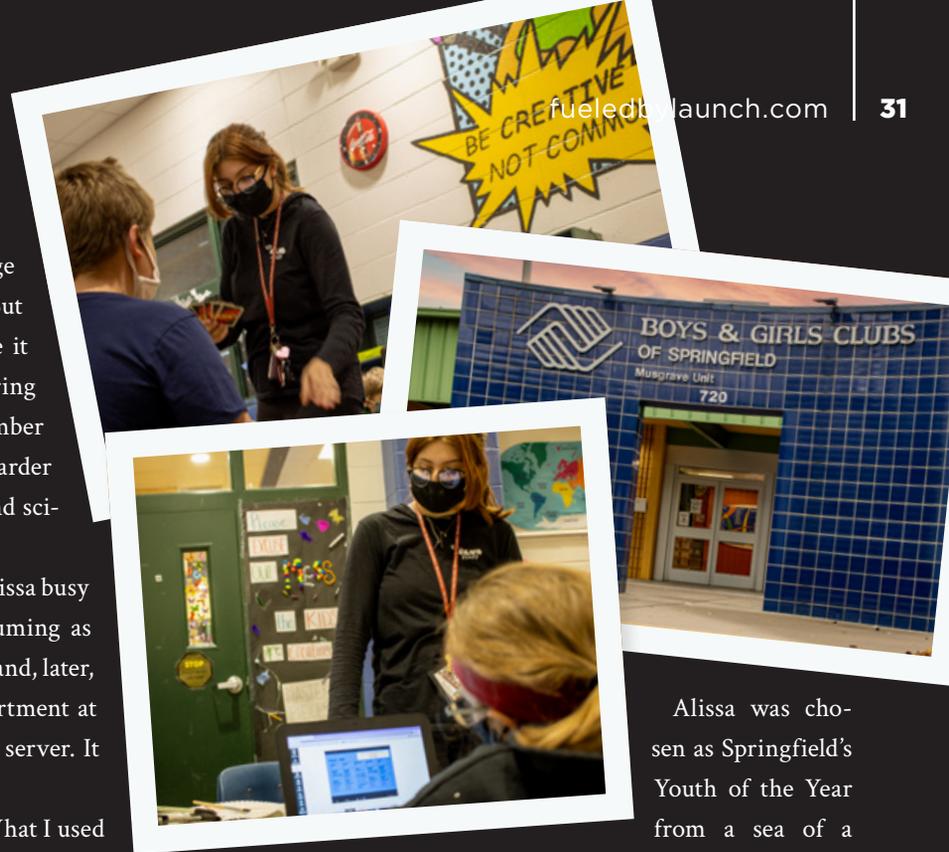
While a schedule filled with honors classes kept Alissa busy studying, her life outside of school was time consuming as well. She was also volunteering at Boys & Girls Club and, later, working a full-time job. "I moved into my first apartment at 16," Alissa says. "I worked at Rib Crib as a host and server. It was really hard to keep work-life balance."

As the days went on, they became more trying. "What I used to tell myself was, 'If I can just do this 100 more times, I'll be okay,'" Alissa says. "I would have to talk myself up, sometimes multiple times a day. But I wasn't sleeping much at all, and it really wasn't healthy."

Alissa eventually reached out to her school counselor for help. "That's when I ended up moving to Launch classes," Alissa says. "Launch gave me a lot more flexibility, and I was able to manage school and working at the same time." Launch also helped Alissa with another issue—a lack of transportation. "I couldn't always make it to school because I didn't have a way to get there," Alissa says. "I was always bumming rides and trying to figure out how to get to class." Thanks to Launch's expanded course catalog, Alissa was able to continue taking honors classes online. She continued to give it her all, and she eventually graduated from Springfield's Parkview High School with a 4.8 GPA. "I was one of the top 10 students in my class," she says.

BECOMING YOUTH OF THE YEAR

While Alissa's school and work schedule became more intense over the years, she never gave up on the Boys & Girls Club. Many of her elementary and middle school days were spent there out of necessity, and she continued attending as a volunteer during her high school years. "It was important to me that I continued to help," Alissa says. Her dedication and desire made her the perfect applicant for the Boys & Girls Club Youth of the Year—an award that recognizes outstanding contributions that an individual has made to their own family, school, community and Boys & Girls Club. The award also takes an individual's personal challenges and obstacles into account.



Alissa was chosen as Springfield's Youth of the Year from a sea of a

dozen competitors, and she continued on in the competition to take the top prize of Youth of the Year at the state level. "After that I moved on to regionals," Alissa says. "I made it to the final two of the regional competition."

While a great academic record and many volunteer hours helped Alissa's award application shine, her efforts around mental health awareness took it to the next level. "By the time I was in eighth grade, I could list five people I knew who killed themselves," Alissa says. "I organized a movement around mental health awareness that addressed suicide."

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Alissa is currently attending MSU full time and works 25 hours a week at Boys & Girls Club. Her years of volunteering gave her just the right experience for her current role—a COVID-19 Youth Development Professional. "It's essentially a crisis teacher," Alissa says. "I help students complete their school assignments." Alissa had a taste of elementary school education by taking part in the GO CAPS program in high school, so she went into her new position with a bit of experience. "I learned a bit about teaching then, but I've also learned a lot in my time here," she says.

As for what's next, Alissa isn't exactly certain—but she is confident that she wants an office job. "I just want to work somewhere with no bright lights or screaming children," she says. "I'm studying graphic design. I've thought about making business advertisements, or running my own online business." And while there are still endless possibilities for Alissa's career, there's one thing that's certain—once she decides on her dream job, she'll put in the work it takes to get there. ■

Take a **Hike!**

When he isn't working on his online classes, Jackson Baskins enjoys trekking dozens of miles on multi-day backpacking trips.

Glendale High School (Springfield) junior Jackson Baskins is a fan of consistency. That's why he decided to become a full-time online student at the start of the fall 2020 semester. "We had the option to go full-time online after the pandemic," Jackson says. "I chose to because I wanted to be able to work on my own timeline."

Jackson starts every week by making a list of all of the assignments he must complete, then makes a schedule to ensure he gets all of his coursework done by Friday at 3 p.m.—or, occasionally, by end-of-day Thursday. "If I really focus, I can work it to where I'll have a three-day weekend," Jackson says. And it's on these long weekends when he has time to enjoy his latest hobby—multi-day backpacking trips. "My first trip was at Busiek State Forest," Jackson says. "It was 16 miles with 21 water crossings." Since then, Jackson has been on two more trips—one at Hercules Glades where he trekked 24 miles over three days. "I'd say my favorite thing is the scenery," Jackson says. "It's great to get away from your computer and your phone and simply enjoy the outdoors." ■



Member District **Directory**

Below are the Missouri school districts who are partnered with Launch to help give all Missouri students equal course access.

Academie Lafayette • Adrian R-III • Advance R-IV • Affton 101 • Albany R-III • Allen Village • Alton R-IV • Appleton City R-II • Arcadia • Archie R-V • Ash Grove R-IV • Aurora R-VIII • Ava R-I • Awaken360 Academy • Bakersfield R-IV • Belton 124 • Bevier C-4 • Blair Oaks • Bloomfield R-XIV • Blue Eye R-V • Bolivar R-I • Bowling Green R-I • Branson R-IV • Braymer C-4 • Brentwood • Bronaugh R-VII • Brunswick R-II • Bunker R-III • Butler R-V • Cabool R-IV • Calhoun R-VIII • Camdenton R-III • Cameron R-I • Campbell R-II • Cape Girardeau 63 • Carl Junction R-I • Carrollton R-VII • Caruthersville 18 • Cassville R-IV • Center 58 • Centerville R-I • Central R-III • Centralia R-IV • Chadwick R-I • Chilhowee R-IV • Chillicothe R-II • Clarkton C-4 • Clayton • Clever R-V • Clinton Co. R-III • Clinton School District • Cole Camp R-I • Cole Co. R-I • Cole Co. R-V • Community R-VI • Concordia R-II • Couch R-I • Craig R-III • Crane R-III • Crawford Co. R-II • Crocker R-II • Dadeville R-II • Delta C-7 • Delta R-V • Desoto 73 • Dexter R-XI • Diamond R-IV • Doniphan R-I • Drexel R-IV • Dunklin R-V • East Carter Co. R-II • East Newton Co. R-VI • El Dorado Springs R-II • Elsberry R-II • Everton R-III • Excelsior Springs 40 • Exeter R-VI • EYC Academy • Fair Grove R-X • Fairfax R-III • Fairview R-XI • Fayette R-III • Festus R-VI • Fordland R-III • Forsyth R-III • Fort Osage R-I • Fox C-6 • Francis Howell R-III • Ft. Zumwalt R-II • Fulton 58 • Gainesville R-V • Gasconade C-4 • Gideon 37 • Gilman City • Glasgow • Glenwood R-VIII • Grain Valley R-V • Grandview C-4 • Green City R-I • Green Ridge R-VIII • Greenfield R-IV • Greenville R-II • Greenwood Laboratory School • Grundy Co. R-V • Halfway R-III • Hallsville R-IV • Hamilton R-II • Hardin-Central C-2 • Harrisonville R-IX • Hartville R-II • Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls • Hayti R-II • Hazelwood • Hickory Co. R-I • Higbee R-VIII • High Point R-III • Hillsboro R-III • Hollister R-V • Houston R-I • Howell Valley R-I • Humansville R-IV • Hume R-VIII • Hurley R-I • Iberia R-V • Iron County C4 • Jackson R-II • Jefferson City • Johnson Co. R-VII • Junction Hill C-12 • Kansas City 33 • Kearney R-I • King City R-I • Kingsville R-I • Kirbyville R-VI • Kirkwood R-VII • La Monte R-IV • Laclede Co. C-5 • Laclede County R-1 • Ladue • Lamar R-I • Laquey R-V • Lathrop R-II • Lawson R-XIV • Lebanon R-III • Leeton R-X • Leopold R-III • Lexington R-V • Liberal R-II • Liberty 53 • Licking R-VIII • Lincoln R-II • Lindbergh Schools • Logan-Rogersville R-VIII • Lone Jack C-6 • Lonedell R-XIV • Louisiana R-II • Macks Creek R-V • Macon Co. R-I • Macon Co. R-IV • Madison C-3 • Malta Bend R-V • Mansfield R-IV • Maplewood Richmond Heights • Maries Co. R-I • Marion C. Early R-V • Marion Co. R-II • Mark Twain R-VIII • Marquand-Zion R-VI • Marshall • Marshfield R-I • Maryville R-II • Maysville R-I • McDonald Co. R-I • Meadow Heights R-II • Mehlville R-IX • Meramec Valley R-III • Miami R-I • Mid-Buchanan Co. R-V • Midway R-I • Milan C-2 • Miller R-II • Moberly • Monett R-I • Moniteau Co. R-I • Montgomery Co. R-II • Montrose R-XIV • Morgan Co. R-I • Morgan Co. R-II • Mound City R-II • Mountain Grove R-III • Mountain View-Birch Tree R-III • Naylor R-II • Neelyville R-IV • Neosho School District • New Bloomfield R-III • New Franklin R-I • New Haven School District • New Madrid Co. R-I • Newburg R-II • Newtown-Harris R-III • Niangua R-V • Nixa • Nodaway-Holt R-VII • Norborne R-VIII • North Andrew Co. R-VI • North Harrison R-III • North Kansas City 74 • North Mercer Co. R-III • North Nodaway Co. R-VI • North Pemiscot Co. R-I • North Platte Co. R-I • North Shelby • North St. Francois Co. R-I • Northeast Nodaway Co. R-V • Northeast Randolph Co. R-IV • Northeast Vernon Co. R-I • Northwest R-I • Northwestern R-I • Oak Grove R-VI • Oak Hill R-I • Odessa R-VII • Orchard Farm R-V • Oregon-Howell R-III • Orrick R-XI • Osage Co. R-II • Osborn R-0 • Osceola • Palmyra R-I • Park Hill • Parkway C-2 • Pattonville R-III • Perspectives Preparatory Academy • Pettis Co. R-V • Pierce City R-VI • Pike Co. R-III • Pilot Grove C-4 • Plato R-V • Platte Co. R-III • Pleasant Hill R-III • Pleasant Hope R-VI • Poplar Bluff R-I • Portageville • Princeton R-V • Purdy R-II • Puxico R-VIII • Ralls Co. R-II • Raymondville R-VII • Raymore-Peculiar • Raytown C-2 • Reeds Spring R-IV • Renick R-V • Republic R-III • Rich Hill R-IV • Richards R-V • Richland R-I • Richland R-IV • Richmond R-XVI • Ridgeway R-V • Risco R-II • Ritenour • Riverview Gardens • Salisbury R-IV • Rock Port R-II • Rockwood R-VI • Rolla 31 • Savannah R-III • Saxony Lutheran High School • School of the Osage • Sedalia 200 • Seneca R-VII • Seymour R-II • Shawnee R-III • Shelby Co. R-IV • Shell Knob 78 • Sherwood Cass R-VIII • Silex R-I • Smithton R-VI • Smithville R-II • South Callaway Co. R-II • South Holt Co. R-I • South Iron Co. R-I • South Nodaway Co. R-IV • Southern Boone Co. R-I • Southern Reynolds R-II • Southland C-9 • Southwest Livingston Co. R-I • Southwest R-V • Sparta R-III • Spokane R-VII • Springfield Catholic Schools • Springfield R-XII • St. Charles R-VI • St. James R-I • St. John Vianney High School • St. Joseph • Stanberry R-II • Ste. Genevieve Co. R-II • Steelville R-III • Stewartsville C-2 • Stockton R-I • Strafford R-VI • Strasburg C-3 • Sturgeon R-V • Success R-VI • Sunrise R-IX • Tarkio R-I • Thayer R-II • The Goodwill Excel Centers • Tipton R-VI • Troy R-III • Union R-XI • University City • Valley Park • Van Buren R-I • Van-Far R-I • Verona R-VII • Victory Academy • Walnut Grove R-V • Warren Co. R-III • Warrensburg R-VI • Warsaw R-IX • Waynesville R-VI • Webb City R-VII • Webster Groves School District • Wellington-Napoleon R-IX • Wentzville R-IV • West Nodaway Co. R-I • West Plains R-VII • West Platte Co. R-II • West St. Francois Co. R-IV • Westview C-6 • Wheatland R-II • Wheaton R-III • Willard R-II • Willow Springs R-IV • Windsor C-1 • Winfield R-IV • Winston R-VI • Woodland R-IV • Worth Co. R-III • Wright City R-II Of Warren Co.

