

ANNUAL REPORT

UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS

2024-25



UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS

AN INNOVATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS



UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS



EARLY LEARNING & RESEARCH CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Early Learning & Research Center

3771 Poplar Ave, Memphis, TN 38111
Brooke Willis, Executive Director
memphis.edu/lipman



CAMPUS SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Campus School

535 Zach Curlin St, Memphis, TN 38152
Dr. Rebecca Scott, Executive Director
memphis.edu/campusschool



CAMPUS SCHOOL KIMBALL

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Campus School Kimball

3749 Kimball Ave, Memphis, TN 38111
Stacy Adams, Executive Director
memphis.edu/campusschoolkimball



UNIVERSITY MIDDLE

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

University Middle School

Orgel Educational Center
330 Fogelman Drive, Memphis, TN 38152
Joy Gilliam, Executive Director
memphis.edu/middleschool



UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

University High School

Orgel Educational Center
330 Fogelman Drive, Memphis, TN 38152
Dr. Kristle Hodges Johnson, Executive Director
memphis.edu/highschool

LETTER FROM THE VICE PROVOST & DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS



Greetings University Schools Families, Faculty, Staff, and Partners,

As we reflect on the 2024-25 school year, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and pride for the remarkable achievements of our University Schools community. This year has been one of growth, innovation, and impact, as we solidified our role as Tennessee's first Innovative School District and continued to shape the future of education in Memphis and beyond. Thank you for being part of our village, for entrusting us with your children, and for sharing in our mission to foster curious, creative, and bold leaders.

Our first year as an Innovative School District was a resounding success. This designation has empowered us to push boundaries, experiment with cutting-edge practices, and tailor our programs to meet the needs of every learner. Our schools continued to earn "A" grades from the Tennessee Department of Education, and our early learning programs maintained their national accreditation, reflecting the excellence that defines University Schools.

The 2024-25 school year was a landmark year for University Schools. We celebrated the successful launch of our 11th grade at University High School, a significant step toward completing our high school program, which will culminate with our first graduating class in the 2025-26 school year. This expansion ensures our students have a seamless, high-quality educational journey from early childhood through graduation, all within the unique environment of the University of Memphis.

With the announcement of Campus School Kimball, set to open in the coming year, we will be able to serve even more students with our innovative, child-centered model. This new campus will allow us to further our commitment to providing equitable access to exceptional education across Shelby County. Our record enrollment this year, representing every zip code in the county, underscores the trust families place in our schools and our ability to foster a diverse, inclusive learning community.

This year, we deepened our partnerships across the University of Memphis and the Memphis community, creating unparalleled opportunities for our students. From dual enrollment courses to hands-on STE(A)M projects and community-based learning, these collaborations enriched our curriculum and connected our students with mentors, resources, and real-world experiences. Our athletic and extended learning programs flourished, serving over 500 students in activities that promote teamwork, creativity, and well-rounded growth with a number of state champions and state qualifiers across a number of sports. Additionally, we were recognized as one of the nation's best communities for music education by NAMM. In our commitment to supporting the whole child, we launched the University Schools Wellness Center, a transformative resource dedicated to nurturing students' physical, emotional, and mental well-being. This center has already made a profound impact, providing counseling, health services, and wellness programs that empower our students to thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Our Strategic Expansion Team, comprised of two dozen leaders in the education, governmental, corporate, and non-profit sectors, spearheaded the development of a 10-year strategic growth plan for our new Innovative School District. Their work resulted in the launch of our first elementary school in 113 years- with plans for future growth to allow us to serve additional children and families in search of a high-quality, innovative, public school option. We also saw a record year of private philanthropic support of our schools, which helped to address the funding gap that a prior year funded model presents to a growing district like ours. Thanks to gifts and gifts in kind totaling over \$4 million, we were able to ensure that funding discrepancy did not negatively impact our current and future students.

We also saw significant growth in our role as a training ground for educators. This year, we trained eighteen residency candidates within our buildings, an increase from previous years. These aspiring teachers immersed themselves in our innovative model, gaining hands-on experience that will shape the future of education. Additionally, we supported fifteen faculty-led research projects, reinforcing our position as a laboratory for cutting-edge educational practices.

Our schools continued to garner recognition for their excellence. University Middle and University High were once again honored as Innovative School Models by the Tennessee Department of Education, and our STEAM program expanded, inspiring students to explore science, technology, engineering, arts, and math through project-based learning. We also celebrated individual achievements, with students and teachers earning local and national accolades in academics, athletics, and the arts.

Yet, as always, the heart of our work lies in the everyday moments—the conversations, the breakthroughs, and the connections that happen in our classrooms. It's in the student who discovers a new passion, the child who finds their voice, or the peer who lends a helping hand. These moments, where confidence is built and potential is unlocked, are the true measure of our success. While we are proud of our academic achievements, our worth lies in how we help our students grow into the best versions of themselves.

To our faculty and staff, thank you for pouring your hearts into our students. Your dedication makes our schools extraordinary. It is no easy feat to launch a new school district, and I am particularly grateful for your belief, your determination, and the grace you extended as we navigated this new terrain together. To our families, thank you for your partnership and for trusting us with your greatest treasure. To our campus and community partners, thank you for investing in our vision and amplifying our impact. And to our students, thank you for your curiosity, your courage, and your joy. You are the reason we do this work, and we celebrate you every day.

As we look to the future, the possibilities are endless. With Campus School Kimball on the horizon, our high school program nearing a significant milestone, and our innovative model stronger than ever, we are poised to make an even greater impact. The future is bright, and we are just getting started.

Go Tigers!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally G. Parish".

Dr. Sally G. Parish

Vice Provost & Director of Schools

UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS

The University Schools at the University of Memphis serve over 1,300 students from six weeks through 12th grade at five schools and two partnerships. Our students hail from every zip code within Shelby County and our student body is 53 percent white and 47 percent Black, Latino/a/x, Indigenous, Asian American Pacific Islander, or another race/ethnicity. Founded in 1912, alongside the UofM, and now the state of Tennessee's first Innovative School District, our schools are consistently in the 99th percentile of all schools in the state of Tennessee for academic performance for both the number of students reaching grade level proficiency and for measures of student growth.

OUR VISION

To provide a transformative and innovative educational landscape where all students and educators belong, flourish, and inspire positive change.

OUR MISSION

University Schools provide the children of our community with educational experiences that enhance their development from birth to graduation and promote dynamic research, collaborative partnerships and innovative practices.

OUR CORE VALUES

CELEBRATE

Diversity
Growth
Innovation
Each Other

CULTIVATE

Kindness
Courage
Connections
Love of Learning

PREPARE

Leaders
Responsible Citizens
Lifelong Learners
Agents of Change

BY THE NUMBERS

The University Schools, when compared to the other 148 school systems across the state of Tennessee, performed exceptionally well on the 2024-25 administration of the TNReady (3rd - 8th Grade) and End of Course (9th & 10th Grade) exams. Below are our system percentile rankings when compared to all other school systems in the state. In our first year as an innovative school district, we are proud to continue to serve as a model for other school systems. The University Schools does not have an academic requirement for entry and serves all zip codes within Shelby County, Tennessee.



99th

percentile of all 148 school systems in TN for success rate across all subjects and grade levels



99th

percentile of all 148 school systems in TN for students with disabilities across all grades and subjects



99th

percentile of all 148 school systems in TN for reading language arts, science, and social studies



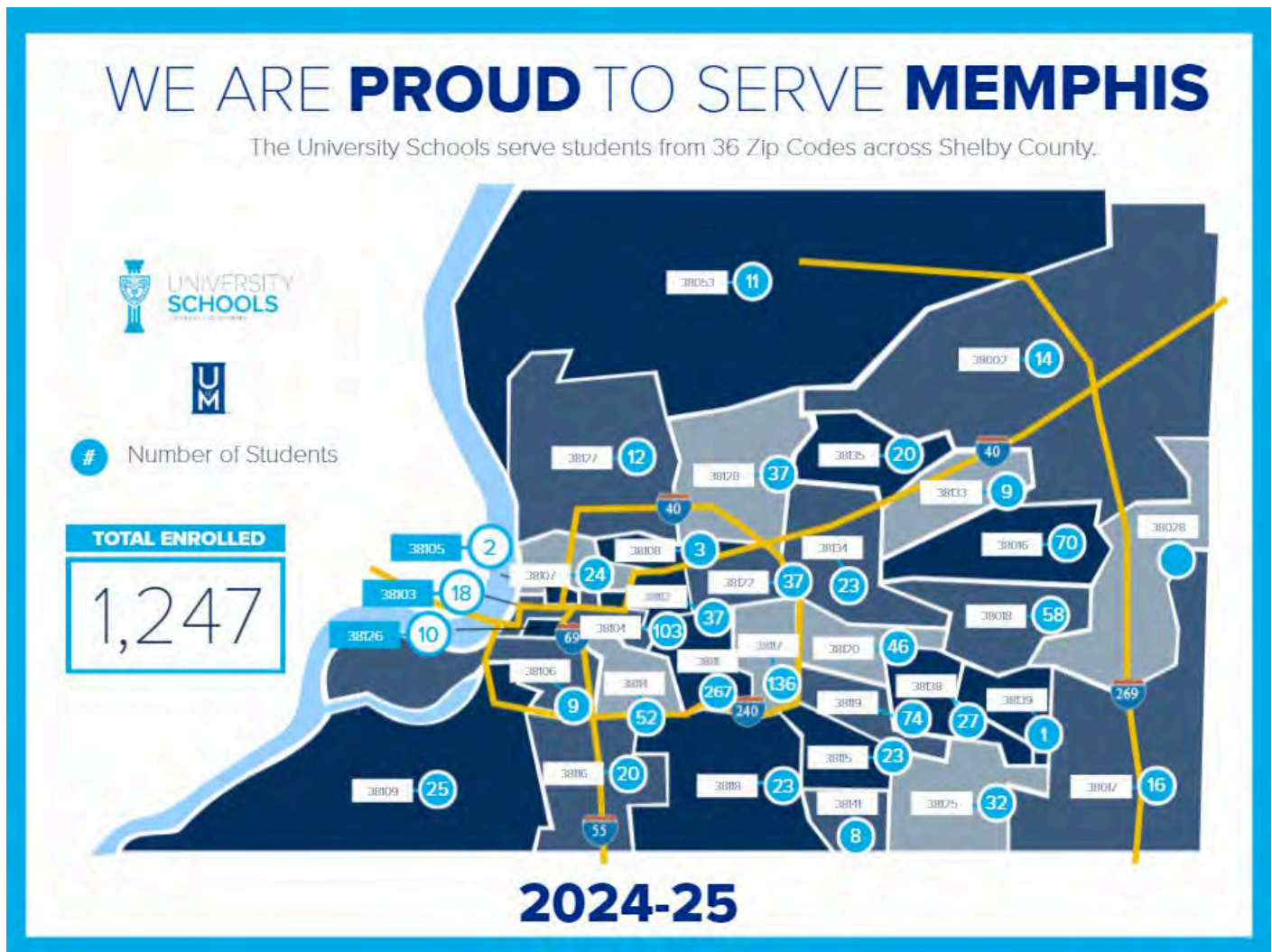
95th

percentile of all 148 school systems in TN for mathematics

SPOTLIGHT

SERVING EVERY ZIP CODE

The University Schools continues to serve children from each and every zip code within the boundaries of Shelby County, Tennessee. As training and laboratory schools, the University Schools compendium directly serves the children enrolled within our schools and the broader state and region by both preparing educators as a training site and producing cutting edge research. By serving a student population representative of the region, the University Schools is uniquely positioned to produce individuals and information relevant to all audiences.



The zip codes with the greatest number of University Schools students are:

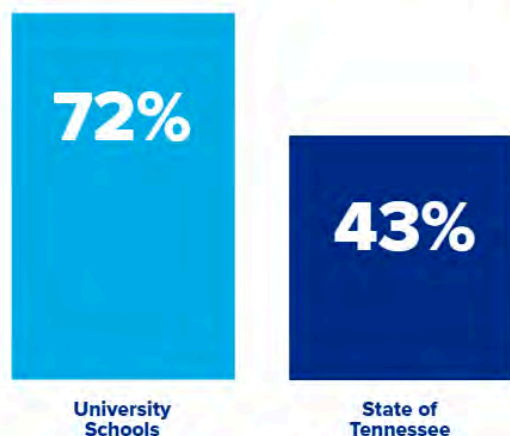
- 38111 - 267 students
- 38117 - 136 students
- 38104 - 103 students
- 38119 - 74 students
- 38016 - 70 students
- 38018 - 58 students
- 38114 - 52 students
- 38120 - 46 students
- 38128 - 37 students
- 38112 - 37 students

RESULTS

OVERALL SUCCESS RATE

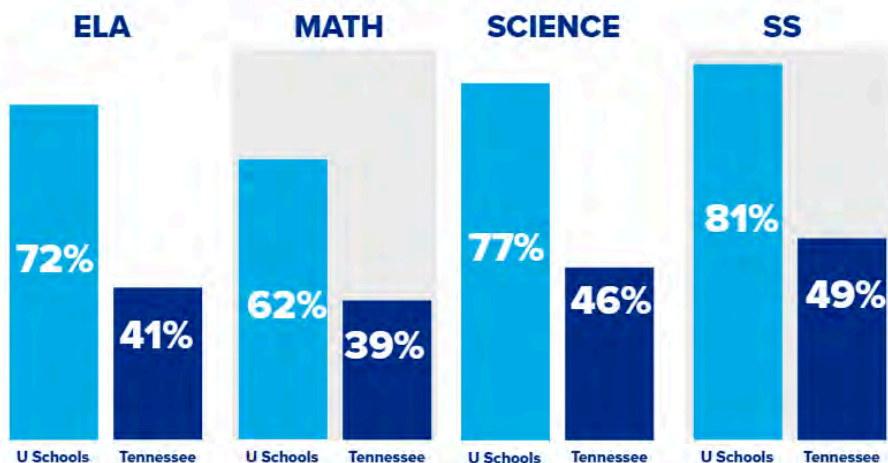
The University Schools led the way in academic results among all school systems and districts in the state of Tennessee on the 2024-25 TCAP administration. In third through eighth grade, students take the TNReady assessment in reading language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies each year. In high school, students take an end of course assessment in English I, English II, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, and U.S. History during the year they take these courses. The University Schools had the highest overall success rate and highest TNReady assessment rate when compared to the other 148 school systems in Tennessee. The success rate is the total number of passing exams (receiving either a “met” or “exceeded” expectations rating) divided by the total number of valid exams.

OVERALL SUCCESS RATE



Based on % of students scoring "met" or "exceeded" expectations on the 2024-25 TNReady assessment & EOC Assessment across all subjects

RESULTS BY SUBJECT

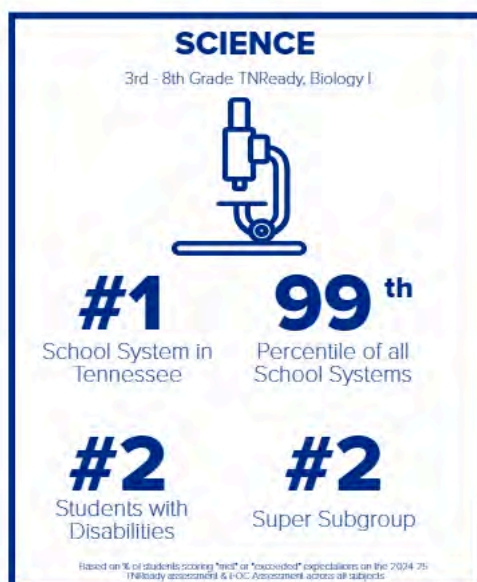
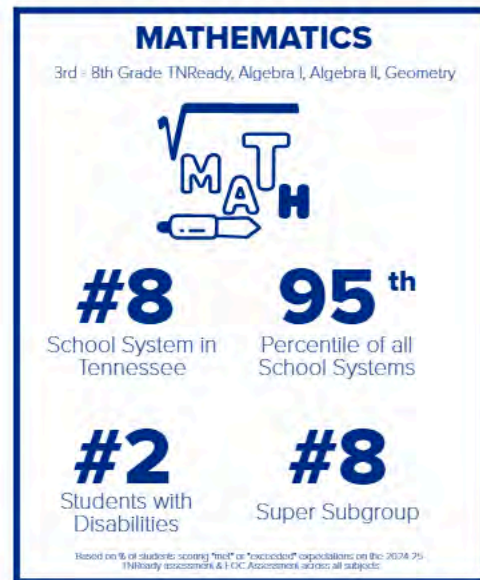
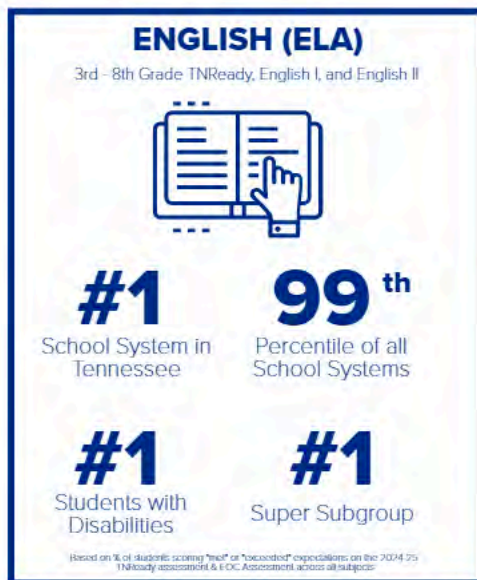


Based on % of students scoring "met" or "exceeded" expectations on the 2024-25 TNReady assessment & EOC Assessment across all subjects

RESULTS

TNREADY BY SUBJECT

The University Schools had the highest success rate in Reading Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies from last year's exam administration and we were a close second in mathematics. Building upon our constructivist approach across our schools, students both demonstrated the highest proficiency in the state while also pursuing project based learning and exploratory instruction. The University Schools, as schools without an academic requirement for entry, believe our approach, faculty, and leadership teams are the cause of these exceptional results.



BARBARA K. LIPMAN EARLY LEARNING & RESEARCH CENTER

The Barbara K. Lipman Early Learning & Research Center is a laboratory preschool which offers a unique and nurturing learning environment through child-directed learning and exploration that encourages children to explore their own unique interests. Here students are guided by specially trained teachers and are supported by the community.

At the Early Learning & Research Center, students are challenged to explore and learn about the world around them in a constructivist learning environment. Our interactive classrooms promote relationship, interpersonal communication skills, academic development, social emotional learning, and kindergarten readiness.

BY THE NUMBERS



39

Children of UofM
faculty/staff enrolled



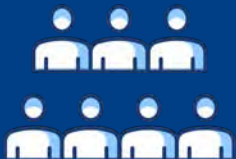
5

Children of UofM
students enrolled



77+

Years of excellence



106

Students served



1:3

Average Teacher to
Student Ratio of 1:4



PROGRAMS

Montessori | Reggio-Emilia | First 8 Pre-K

The Early Learning & Research Center is the only lab school in the U.S. that has three unique learning demonstrations in a constructivist learning environment.

SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATE INDIVIDUALITY

The ELRC fosters creativity through its Reggio Emilia and Montessori programs. In Mrs. Anna Grace's 3-year-old Reggio class, the "All About Me" unit emphasized self-love and began to build self-awareness in an age-appropriate setting.

After reading *I Like Me*, students created self-portraits, noting personal strengths, which were displayed school-wide to celebrate individuality. In Mrs. Ligia's Montessori class, students engaged in hands-on gardening, planting seeds and learning plant biology with support from parent volunteers and Colin Rye from the Memphis Botanic Garden. Activities like seed germination experiments and "Parts of a Plant" collages deepened their understanding of science and sustainability.

"These hands-on experiences foster curiosity and self-awareness, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning." – Brooke Willis, Executive Director of Early Childhood Programs

Providing opportunities for student-led learning rooted in community-driven interests allows the ELRC to continue to develop empowered learners.



The Reggio 2 class embraced artistic expression through photography and Black History Month projects. A bulletin board of class photos inspired imaginative play, leading to the introduction of a real camera to develop fine motor and social skills. During Black History Month, students read *Dream Big, Little One* and created an art museum with sculptures and collages inspired by Black artists like Augusta Savage and Alma Woodsey Thomas.

The museum walk-throughs engaged the broader ELRC community, fostering appreciation for diversity and creativity. Students took these lessons back to their classroom with continued books by a variety of authors building pride in individuality and community.

"Our child-led model and approach has become a regional and national model for what high-quality, accessible early childhood education can look like." - Brooke Willis, Executive Director of Early Childhood Education

SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE A MODEL FOR ACCESS

AN INNOVATIVE MODEL

This past year, the ELRC worked in partnership with First 8 Memphis to redefine an approach the community can take to provide equitable and accessible education to all families in the broader Memphis metropolitan area.

Driven by ELRC leadership team, the partnership with First 8 Memphis evolved to ensure all students who receive scholarships to attend the ELRC can enroll in classrooms across the school and not just in a First 8 Memphis designated classroom.

“We believe students have an opportunity for a profound additional educational impact when they learn alongside students from across the community.” – Brooke Willis, Executive Director of Early Childhood Programs. “This partnership with First 8 Memphis allows us to ensure each of our classrooms is representative of children from across our community.”

As a training and laboratory school, the ELRC continues to evolve the way the community thinks about early childhood education, and this model will provide another blueprint to educational community building that other early childhood programs can utilize in their work.

Now, children enrolled in early childhood programs across the entire Memphis community can benefit from this innovation. Students will now be able to enroll in early learning centers and be integrated into classrooms across the school rather than specific grant-funded classrooms.

Early childhood research shows that child-led learning across communities with students from a variety of cultures and backgrounds allows children to maximize their learning ahead of their primary and secondary education careers.

Further, the future educators trained at the Early Learning and Research Center will take the experience with this model to their future schools as faculty members, bringing first hand knowledge and experience to their classrooms.



“Evolving our child-led model to meet community needs supports the learning of all students across Memphis.” - Brooke Willis, Executive Director of Early Childhood Education

SPOTLIGHT

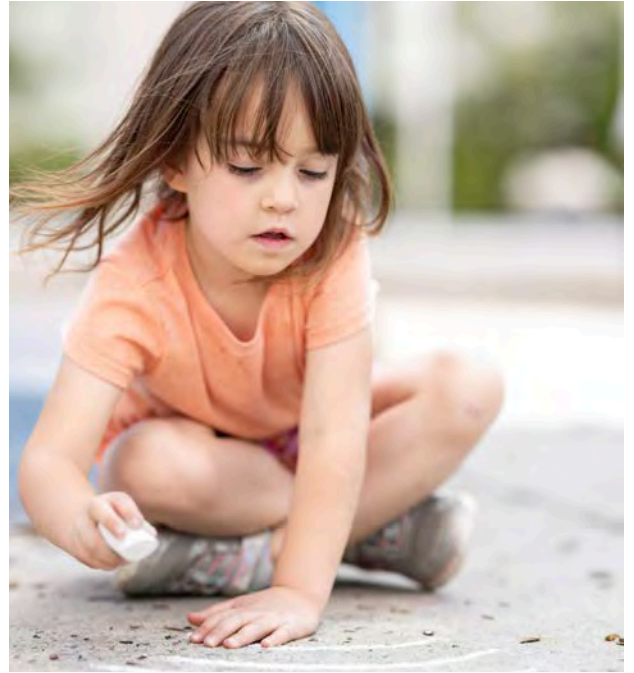
CULTIVATE COMMUNITY TRADITIONS

BUILDING ON OUR HISTORY

Throughout the year, the ELRC builds community across its six classrooms with annual events that allow all learners to grow together. This year, the ELRC hosted Bunny Day, an annual petting zoo event featuring bunnies, turtles, and goats, fostering joy and connection among students and staff.

The celebration of World Autism Acceptance Day in April highlighted our commitment to inclusion, with activities like sensory-friendly story times and discussions about neurodiversity, reinforcing the ELRC's role as a supportive community hub.

While each classroom community is unique, the ELRC also recognizes opportunities to bring the entire community together allows for cross-age learning and allows for the school to develop annual traditions that students and families alike look forward to each year.



As an early childhood education model that the entire community looks toward for excellence and innovation, the ELRC builds experiences that set the foundation for each child's education career.

"The ELRC has a history of excellence in early childhood education. We lead the way with both our demonstrations and our teacher training program in partnership with other University of Memphis Departments." – Brooke Willis, Executive Director of Early Childhood Programs

Over the years, each faculty member has added new traditions based on personal experience and passions. The ELRC now has a full set of traditions and experiences that provide a rich and developmentally-appropriate set of yearly events.

Providing our annual traditions also serves as a model for the student teachers and student workers from the University of Memphis who are studying to become early childhood educators and often graduate to serve as educators throughout the mid-South and broader region.

CAMPUS SCHOOL

The Campus School has been a resource to the Memphis community for over 100 years. Campus School is in a unique position of serving a diverse school population that allows for the building and collaboration of students and teachers from diverse educational, cultural, social and personal backgrounds. With its enthusiasm and excellence for learning, Campus School has consistently placed within the top 5% of Tennessee public schools. Campus School serves approximately 400 students in grades K-5 and has been designated as a National Blue Ribbon School, the most prestigious recognition given to a school, and has been named A Trauma Informed School and a STEM School by the Department of Education.

As a training & laboratory school, Campus School promotes excellence in teaching and enthusiasm for learning. Through integration of research into an innovative curriculum, the school can offer its best to aspiring teachers and to the urban community it serves. A diverse school population allows for valuable relationships and collaborations -- educational, cultural, social, and personal -- among the stakeholders who are involved. Teachers, students, and parents working together can maximize outcomes to the benefit of all involved.

BY THE NUMBERS



**BLUE
RIBBON
SCHOOL**



412

Students served



68%

Faculty members
with advanced
degree



108

Students of UofM staff &
faculty enrolled



**ESTABLISHED
IN 1912**

TOP 1%

Ranked 99th percentile in
ELA and Science, and 95th
percentile in Math



**TN STEM
DESIGNATED
SCHOOL**



SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE TEACHER CANDIDATES

Campus School, our flagship training and laboratory school at the University of Memphis, celebrated its 112th year in operation with continued expansion of partnerships across the campus and community. This past year, Campus School served as a mentor institution for other schools from across the state of Tennessee, continued to be recognized for academic achievement and growth, and worked alongside the University Schools Wellness Center to establish best-in-class student services supports to ensure all students had access to the rigorous academic program provided across all grade levels.

Throughout the year, Campus School continued annual traditions such as the STEAM Night, Brain-Based Learning, All Kids Bike program, the Physical Education demonstration, and the Taste of Campus School celebration at the end of the year. During this time, Campus School continued to host residency candidates and student observers from the College of Education located at Ball Hall, adjacent to the Campus School playground.



“Our faculty continue to rise to the occasion,” – Dr. Rebecca Scott, Executive Director of Campus School said. “They meet each and every child where they are and ensure we take empower them to realize their dreams and goals.”

“Working with our residency candidates each year allows our faculty to pour into our future classroom leaders,” – Dr. Aaren Cassidy, Assistant Director of Campus School said. “The partnership we see between supervising faculty members and their residency candidates demonstrates the power of educator preparation to pave the way for the next generation of faculty members across the state.”

The residency candidates, under the direction of their supervising faculty members, participate in all facets of the Campus School experience throughout the year and take these learnings and traditions to their placement schools once they graduate from the University of Memphis.

SPOTLIGHT

CULTIVATE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHING

STEAM NIGHT

In partnership with a number of colleges, schools, and departments across the University of Memphis, Campus School's 10th anniversary STEAM Night, themed "Once Upon a Time at STEAM Night," celebrated literacy and STEM with community partners hosting book-themed sessions.

Students collected character stickers on bookmarks, and food trucks like Eat at Erics enhanced the community atmosphere. Further, partners from the College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and School of Music participated in provided enhanced learning opportunities both at STEAM Night and throughout the year.

Building STEAM into the curricula at Campus School gives all future University Middle and University High students a foundational understanding of how math and science integrate with the humanities. This further prepares our students to enter middle school project based learning with a firm understanding of the specific subjects they will explore in their groups.



CAREER DAY

The Campus School Career Day engaged second through fifth graders with interactive booths from professionals in health sciences, engineering, and arts, while the Careers on Wheels: Tiger Talks series brought the Memphis Fire Department to educate kindergarteners about fire safety, inspiring appreciation for community helpers. Designed in alignment with project-based learning at University Middle School and the work-based learning dual enrollment program at University High School, early exposure to careers allows University Schools students to bring informed opinions to later conversations around course placements and career and technical education decisions.

"These events ignite a passion for learning and open doors to future possibilities, showing our students that they truly can be anything." – Dr. Rebecca Scott, Executive Director of Campus School



SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATE PARTNERSHIPS

As a long-standing institution in the Memphis metropolitan area, Campus School has developed decades long partnerships with non-profits, museums, governmental agencies, and fine arts programs that all work to serve the Campus School student body each year.

One such program, the All Kids Bike program, funded by a Green Fee 2023 grant and parent contributions, continued to train kindergarteners on biking skills as part of a STEM unit. Students learned balance, helmet safety, and bike mechanics, exploring topics like brain protection and environmental impacts of transportation. The program culminated in a family showcase, highlighting physical, cognitive, and social-emotional growth through biking.

Kindergarteners also explored food access through a St. Jude curriculum, reading *Get Your Dragon to Eat Healthy Food* and Saturday at the Food Pantry. Inspired by change-makers like Ron Finley, students organized a food drive for the Tiger Pantry and visited the Tiger Food Lab located at the Brad R. Martin Student Wellness Center, also on the main campus of the University of Memphis, to make fruit salad, learning about nutrition and community support. These activities fostered empathy and problem-solving skills.

All students and families benefited from the Ned R. McWherter Library's annual brain-based learning workshop. The workshop focuses on developing awareness of cognitive development and activities that families can do at home as well as learning opportunities Campus School faculty can develop at school that support whole brain learning.

These programs are a small highlight of the many educational opportunities and partnerships the Campus School leadership team and faculty have developed over the year and plan to continue both at the Curlin and Kimball campuses next year.



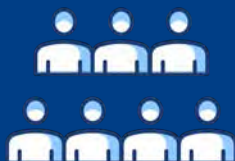
"We know learning doesn't just take place inside the four walls of the classroom," Dr. Rebecca Scott, Executive Director of Campus School. "We ensure students make the real world connections necessary to make learning a lifelong process."



UNIVERSITY MIDDLE

University Middle School started with the inaugural 6th grade class in the Fall of 2019. University Middle's full enrollment now serves over 265 children in grades 6 through 8. University Middle is structured to create diverse enrollment with the inaugural class feeding from over 20 local Shelby County Schools. As an extension of the laboratory lifestyle, University Middle Students follow a project-based learning curriculum that allows them to take their in-class education into the wider world and apply theory to practice. University Middle aims to challenge students at all levels of academic enrichment.

BY THE NUMBERS



260

Students served



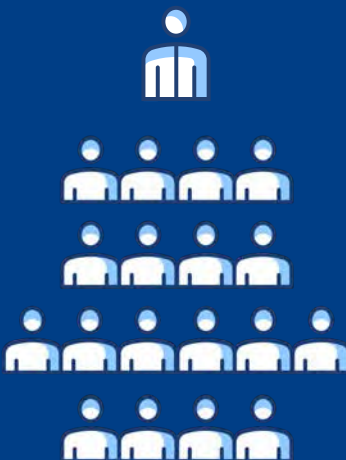
77%

Faculty members
with advanced
degree



2023-24

STEAM designated by the
Tennessee Department of
Education



18

Average class size



PBL

Over 60 project based
learning collaborations
produced by University
Middle School students
across the 2024-25 school
year

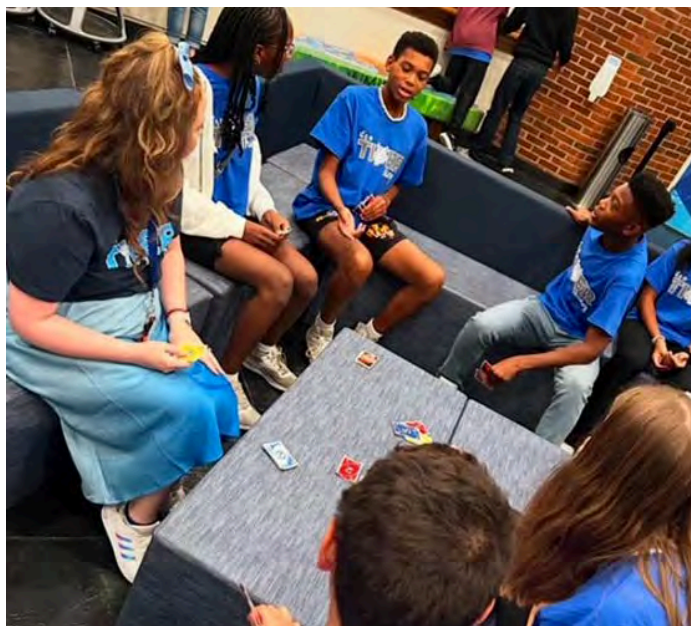
SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATE COMMUNITY

In its sixth year of operation, and first year under the leadership of Executive Director Joy Gilliam, University Middle School expanded its project-based learning mission, fully codified its approach to integrating Artificial Intelligence into the PBL experience, and expanded its impact by training schools from across the state of Tennessee.

In further alignment with University High School, UMS continued to refine the topics and approaches of its PBL explorations to ensure all students leave middle school with informed initial opinions about career exploration and development.

As an inaugural Innovative School Model grant recipient from the Tennessee Department of Education, UMS also presented their innovative models at conferences to educators across the state and region.



Throughout the academic year, University Middle School celebrated the various cultures and backgrounds of students including Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Women's History Month.

In the first quarter of the year, U Middle celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with Danza Quetzalcoatl, a cultural music event that deepened students' appreciation for diversity. In February, U Middle students partnered with their UHS counterparts to put on a Black History Month program that featured musical selections, presentations, and guest speakers. These celebrations fostered continued conversations about community and what each individual brings to our learning environment.

"Ensuring students have a broad perspective as they are developing into informed young people is a hallmark of the U Middle experience," Joy Gilliam, Executive Director of University Middle School, said. "We encourage this through individual and group exploration – especially given our campus location on a world class university."

SPOTLIGHT

CULTIVATE CAPSTONES

DRIVEN BY PARTNERS

Two years ago, U Middle adjusted its project-based learning design to have 8th grade students conclude their studies with a capstone project they would present at the end of the academic year. All students were able to develop research projects within their own interests, work with community-based subject matter experts, and then present their capstones in creative ways that demonstrated mastery of the subject.

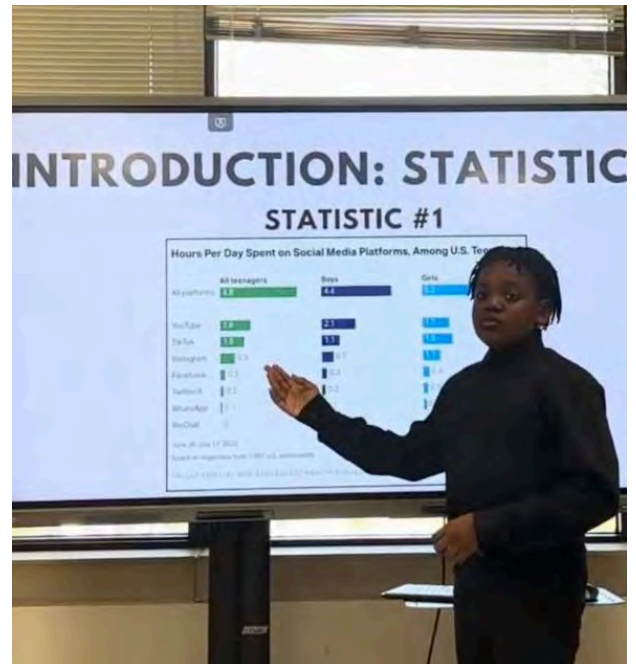
Students all presented capstone projects at the end of the year with advisement from their capstone chairs – individuals from non-profits, businesses, governmental agencies, and University of Memphis departments. These topics included health, education, business, artificial intelligence, community development, energy, and more.

One such example came from eighth grader William Russell who addressed food deserts in his Capstone project, organizing a food drive that supported 75 Memphis families via Sunshine and Daisy, a mobile food truck. His initiative included student-led collection drives and community outreach, showcasing leadership and compassion.

“William’s initiative exemplifies the leadership and compassion we nurture at UMS. Our students are making a tangible difference in our community.” – Joy Gilliam, Executive Director of University Middle School

As the capstone process continues to grow and evolve at U Middle, the overarching goal of having students refine their voice through partnership with a subject matter expert will remain central. As these areas of interest continue to evolve over time, so will the partnerships the UMS administration and faculty forge across the campus and community.

The capstone experience will provide all students the preparation necessary to enter high school with an informed opinion on the coursework they wish to pursue in dual enrollment, career and technical education, and work-based learning.



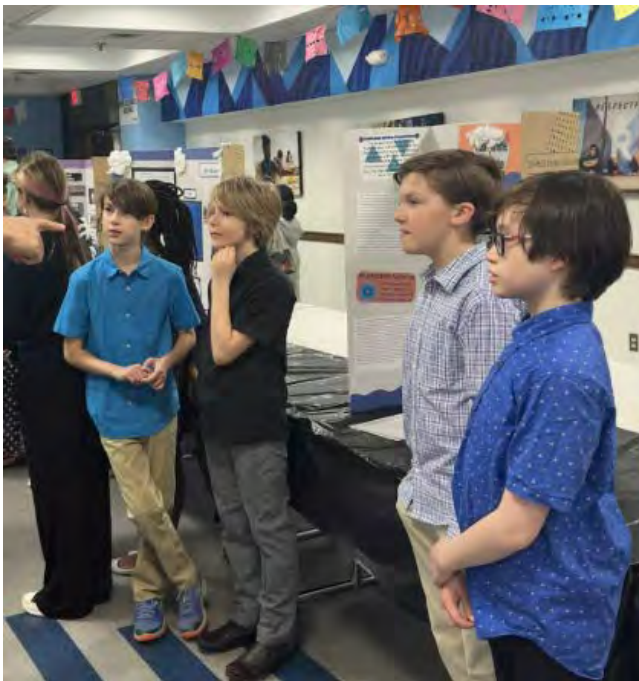
SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE FOR COLLEGE & CAREER

While students in 8th grade work individually on capstone projects, our 6th and 7th grade students continue to work through their cooperative learning in project-based learning. This programmatic approach allows students to both master a subject and learn to work with peers on final projects that require communication, planning, and coordination across learning styles.

The 6th and 7th grade STEM and Humanities PBL projects at the Spring STRIPES Showcase featured tornado forecasts, genetic disease models, and creative retellings of Greek myths with intricate set designs.

“Our goal through the PBL process was to ensure we were blending student interests with scaffolded social skills development,” Yuriy Brodskiy, Assistant Director of University Middle School said. “We want students to learn how to create something big in coordination with their fellow students.”



“Aligning our project based learning topics to the high school subject clusters was a critical shift,” Joy Gilliam, Executive Director of University Middle School. “We want students empowered with the knowledge of their interests walking in the door as high school freshmen.”

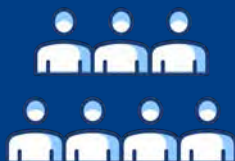
Using the Buck Institute’s Gold Standard PBL implementation standards, University Middle School faculty and staff worked with students to develop concepts, conduct deep background research, synthesize their learning, develop their projects, and practice presentations.

This work empowers student voice and choice and allows students to more deeply pursue their interests. Further, working in groups brings cooperative learning that will be critical in future work-based learning, dual enrollment, and career technical education training that is offered at University High School. Learning to work across differences is a critical component of the process.

UNIVERSITY HIGH

University High opened with its inaugural class in the Fall of 2022 and is located on campus in the Orgel Educational Center. University High School prepares a diverse body of students with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to thrive in the 21st century global community, through innovative and inclusive practices, transformational partnerships, and equitable access to opportunities that lead to success in college and in life. Hallmarks of the University High experience include college preparation on a college campus, cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset through project based learning and community engagement, and engaging in a diverse community of learners and leaders. Every University High student will have the opportunity to earn up to 36 hours of college credit through Dual Enrollment courses at the University of Memphis. Students can identify one track, or area of focus, for their time at University High (similar to a college major). University High School has been designated an Innovative School Model by the State of Tennessee.

BY THE NUMBERS



276

Students served



90%

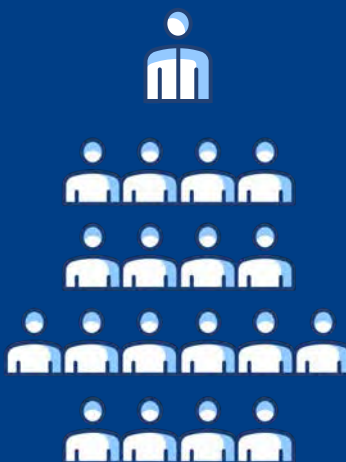
Faculty members
with advanced
degree



6

Dual Enrollment Clusters:

- Business Leadership
- Communication, Media, and Arts
- Exploratory
- Health Science
- Leadership
- STEM



18

Average class size



16

Dual Enrollment Pathways

SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE FOR OUR GROWTH

University High School completed its third year, adding 11th grade courses and work based learning options to the fourth floor of the Orgel Educational Center.

With expanded partnerships across the community and university, UHS continued to forge a new way of thinking out the nexus of dual enrollment, career technical education, and work based learning that maximizes postsecondary options for students.

Students traveled during the day to the on-campus physics lab, engineering labs, and college classes in multiple on campus buildings - earning college credit and high school credit at the same time. Students also began work based learning where they acquired hands on experience in future fields of study.

As a result, the UHS leadership team and faculty continued to present their innovative approach at local, state, national, and international conferences.



University High School grew from 200 to 300 students this past year, on their way to growing to 400 students for the 2025-26 school year with the addition of 12th grade. The additional of 11th grade meant the establishment of new traditions including college visits, Prom, and additional athletic and academic clubs.

The addition of 11th grade also meant the further expansion of dual enrollment courses where students flowed between traditional high school courses one period at the Orgel Educational Center and then moving to college courses located across the University of Memphis main campus.

"We started with just four classrooms located throughout the middle school," Dr. Kristle Hodges Johnson, Executive Director of UHS said. "Watching us grow to our own school facility, and seeing how the students have established their own rituals and routines with our library, our cafeteria, and our common spaces has been special."

SPOTLIGHT

CULTIVATE A NEW MODEL

REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE

As a member of the New Schools national portfolio, a recipient of the Innovative School Model grant from the TDOE, and a recognized reward school for performing in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state of Tennessee, University High School continues to display its innovative rethinking of high school to local, state, national, and international partners.

The inaugural class of 2026 utilized Naviance to explore college and career pathways this academic year, providing students additional information as they crafted their course selections, determined potential CTE career certifications, and partnered with work-based learning community and university-based partners. In addition, the UHS faculty and leadership team worked with students to build strong resumes, access ACT/SAT preparation resources, and ultimately achieve a composite ACT score of 24.

While many of these are traditional practices of high schools, the way the UHS course catalog allows students to select courses from across the University of Memphis to obtain college credits at little to no cost while also developing workforce skills through work-based learning during the academic day rethinks high schools. UHS students also gained real-world insights through a Workforce Development Barge experience on the Mississippi River, exploring careers in logistics and environmental science while dual enrollment Entrepreneurship II students learned about business financing from First Horizon representatives, developing skills in budgeting and strategic planning for future ventures.

“We have been contacted by so many local, regional, and even national schools to learn more about our model,” Lauren Beaupre, Career and College Coordinator said. “Our course catalog is open resource and our model is ready to be used at any school in the state of Tennessee.”

In recognition of this open access and innovation, UHS secured an additional CTE Chips grant from the US Department of Education to continue expansion of the work-based learning efforts at the school.



SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATE STUDENT SUCCESS

In partnership with the University of Memphis School of Public Health, University of Memphis 11th grade students presented at the United Nations Global Model World Health Organization conference in Geneva, Switzerland. Specifically, they presented their findings on global health challenges and pathways to solutions to improve health outcomes for at-risk populations.

“Our students’ achievements, from global conferences to ACT success, showcase their readiness to lead and innovate.” – Dr. Kristle Hodges Johnson, Executive Director of University High School

The UHS faculty and leadership team continue to expand and broaden community and university partnerships in the 2025-26 school year to provide opportunities for research and career exploration as the high school celebrates its first year as a full high school.



UHS students Chloe Hilliard, Elijah Schaffzin, and Sky Bomar were selected for the CAM Summer Fellowship, Bronfman Fellowship, and Governor’s School for Science and Engineering, respectively. These opportunities involved immersive arts training, Jewish studies, and STEM research, providing transformative experiences that prepare students for future leadership.

“Our students continue to amaze us” - Dr. Kristle Hodges Johnson, Executive Director of University High School. “Their unique talents continue to be showcased on both the local and international stage. We are so excited to see what the future holds for each of them.”



RESEARCH, GROWTH, EXPANSION

The University of Memphis, as a Carnegie R1 research institution, is a national leader in research production. The University Schools hosts research teams throughout the academic year from departments, colleges, and schools across campus to capture what is working, the thought partner about future innovative practices, and to introduce new theories to our teams. This past year, the University Schools worked with teams from the College of Education, the Psychology Department, the College of Engineering, the Educational Psychology Department to produce research that can both impact our students at University Schools and, through sharing, impact state departments of education, school districts, and school sites across the United States.

BY THE NUMBERS



5

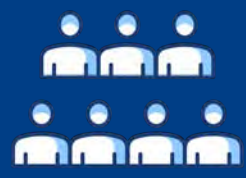
Research Topics:

- Growth Mindset
- Identity & Community
- Student Wellness
- Artificial Intelligence
- Secondary Post-Traumatic Stress



8

UofM Faculty Served



14,772

Teacher Candidates and
Residents Training Hours



\$996k

Grants Awarded to
University Schools
during 2023-24

SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATE A NEW DISTRICT

The 2024-25 school year marked a historic milestone for University Schools as we celebrated our inaugural year as Tennessee's first Innovative School District, authorized by the Innovative School District Act (SB 2557 and HB 2678). This transformative legislation empowered the University of Memphis to operate a local education agency (LEA), serving over 1,200 students from birth to graduation with innovative educational practices, and expand to reach additional family demand, as evidenced by the more than 2,000 students on our waiting lists.

"This inaugural year as an Innovative School District has been a testament to our shared vision of fostering excellence in education. By expanding our reach and resources, we're creating dynamic learning environments that empower students and educators alike." – Dr. Sally G. Parish, Vice Provost and Director of Schools

This year, we achieved significant growth, including the addition of 11th grade at University High School, the acquisition of Campus School Kimball, set to open in 2025-26, the launch of the University Schools Wellness Center, and we significantly expanded our central team to support the day-to-day functions of our new district. As a district, we established a high-quality school nutrition program to provide healthy meals and enhance student well-being, we expanded student support services across all schools to ensure inclusive, tailored support for every child, and we grew our partnerships for athletic and artistic flourishing across the Memphis metropolitan area. These initiatives reflect our commitment to excellence and equity in education for every Tiger.



"Our first year has been about building systems that prioritize student success and innovation. From nutrition to special education, we're creating a model that other districts can look to for inspiration." – Kerrith Griffin, Chief Academic & Operations Officer at University Schools

Our success stems from robust partnerships. We extend gratitude to the Tennessee Department of Education for their guidance and to local districts for their collaboration. At the University of Memphis, our partnerships with the College of Health Sciences, the College of Education, the College of Engineering, the Fogelman College of Business and Economics, and departments like Campus Recreation and Transportation have provided critical resources, reinforcing our role as a training ground for future educators and a continued laboratory for research activity at the university, a Carnegie R1 designated institution.

"Navigating the complexities of establishing a new school district required precision and partnership. We're grateful for the support that has allowed us to comply with state standards while pushing the boundaries of what public education can achieve." – Mary Tucker, J.D., Chief Policy & Compliance Officer at University Schools

As University Schools continues to grow, we will provide a rich and academically sound program for our students, from the tiniest Tigers to our graduating seniors, while also continuing to expand the training opportunities for future educators, speech language pathologists, school nurses, board certified behavior analysts, school psychologists, professional school counselors, licensed clinical social workers, and more.

SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES

CAMPUS SCHOOL KIMBALL

The University of Memphis Board of Trustees approved the acquisition of St. George's Independent School's Memphis campus at 3749 Kimball Ave., renaming it Campus School Kimball.

Set to open in the 2025-26 school year, this marks the University's first new elementary school since 1912. Enabled by the Innovative School District Act, led by Representative Mark White (R-83) and Senator Brent Taylor (R-31), this expansion strengthens our mission to provide high-quality education and to meet family demand throughout the community, as evidenced by our waiting list.

"The launch of Campus School Kimball is a pivotal step in extending our educational impact. We're excited to welcome new families into our district and continue a legacy of academic excellence in the Sherwood Forest neighborhood." – Dr. Sally Parish, Vice Provost and Director of Schools

Campus School Kimball will serve as the district's second public elementary school, welcoming current St. George's students and new enrollees, who can matriculate through University Schools' middle and high school programs. The Strategic Expansion Team, comprising local education and industry leaders, crafted a 10-year plan to promote excellence and address community needs in the Sherwood Forest neighborhood.

"This partnership with St. George's reflects our shared commitment to community and education. Campus School Kimball will be a beacon of opportunity for students and families in Memphis." – Cato Johnson, Chair of the University of Memphis Board of Trustees

To ensure continuity in program, Dr. Rebecca Scott will serve as the Executive Director, Elementary School Programs. In this role, Dr. Scott will oversee the day-to-day of Campus School on Zach Curlin Drive while also providing leadership to Ms. Stacey Adams, the new Executive Director of Campus School Kimball.

Dr. Scott brings decades of experience and legendary leadership to the role and, in partnership with Ms. Adams and the Campus School Kimball team, will ensure the school provides a rich and thriving whole child program. Ms. Adams brings decades of classroom leadership and faculty supervision from Campus School and will utilize these skills when leading this expansion opportunity for the broader Memphis community.



CAMPUS
SCHOOL
KIMBALL
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS



SPOTLIGHT

CULTIVATE FUTURE SCHOOL LEADERS



Each monthly session focused on a different dimension of leadership:

- **Self-Actualization & Emotional Intelligence (October)**
Participants explored personal leadership styles through assessments and reflection, grounded in the theme of leadership as stewardship.
- **Innovation in Education (November)**
Leaders examined what “innovation” means in the University Schools context and how leadership drives bold, student-centered practice.
- **Diverse Learners (December)**
Sessions highlighted the need for culturally responsive leadership and the role of special education in promoting socially just schools.
- **Data for Leadership (January)**
Leaders learned to leverage data to inform decision-making without sacrificing authenticity, creativity, or student engagement.
- **Leading Adults (February)**
Focused on trust, influence, and the delicate balance between accountability and support, this session explored what it truly means to lead adults in schools.
- **Boundary Spanning & Stakeholder Engagement (March)**
The final session connected leadership to the broader mission of the University of Memphis, helping participants understand how to engage families, community partners, and university stakeholders in meaningful, mission-aligned ways.

ASPIRING LEADERS DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

Building the Bench: Inaugural Year of the Aspiring Leaders Development Academy (ALDA)

As Tennessee’s first Innovative School District, University Schools continues to evolve in bold and intentional ways. One of the most impactful initiatives launched this academic year was the Aspiring Leaders Development Academy (ALDA)—a leadership pipeline designed to prepare future administrators for the unique context of operating K–12 schools on a Carnegie R1 university campus.

Coordinated by Kerrith Griffin, then Executive Director of University Middle and now Chief Academic and Operations Officer, ALDA was created to ensure our district is developing leaders who not only understand K–12 education, but who are also equipped to navigate the complexities of boundary-spanning leadership in partnership with the University of Memphis.

“ALDA is about empowering our faculty and staff to lead with purpose and creativity. This program ensures our district’s growth is guided by leaders who are deeply connected to our mission.” – *Kerrith Griffin, Chief Academic & Operations Officer*

Powered by Shanea and David McKinney, this inaugural program received 22 applications from across our elementary, middle, and high school campuses. Eleven individuals were selected to form the first ALDA cohort, representing a cross-section of passionate, equity-driven educators committed to the future of University Schools.

As a culminating project, participants were challenged to propose and develop a strategic initiative that could be presented to school and district leaders to improve some aspect of our district. This final task allowed aspiring leaders to apply what they learned throughout the academy in service of real, actionable solutions aligned to University Schools’ mission.

ALDA was not just a professional development experience—it was a declaration of our district’s long-term commitment to growing leadership from within, ensuring alignment with our values, and sustaining the innovation that defines University Schools.

As our district continues to expand, programs like ALDA will serve as a vital strategy to build internal capacity and cultivate a bench of visionary, equity-focused leaders prepared to shape the future of education—not only for our students, but for the broader Memphis community.

SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE ALL STUDENTS

UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS WELLNESS CENTER

supported by a grant from the Urban Child Institute, the University Schools Wellness Center provides direct services to students and training opportunities for University of Memphis programs

The University Schools Wellness, Training, Treatment, and Research Center (also known as the Wellness Center) opened in 2024-25, providing comprehensive support across the Early Learning and Research Center (ELRC), Campus School, University Middle School, and University High School.

The brainchild of Dr. Susan Elswick, the Wellness Center is supported through a partnership with the Urban Child Institute and provides both immediate student service supports to students and families at University Schools while also providing training opportunities for University of Memphis practitioner students seeking licensure hours towards certification.

The Wellness Center team for the 2024-25 school year included Dr. Marissa Gray (Nurse Practitioner), Ms. Katie Deaton (Registered Nurse), Ms. Emily Campbell (Speech-Language Pathologist), Dr. Rhonda Clarke (School Psychologist), Dr. Thouraya Al-Nasser (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) and others. These team members served as supervising trainers of resident interns across departments at the University of Memphis and ensured individualized, tailored student support services were provided to promote student health and academic success.

“The Wellness Center expands opportunities for every student, providing direct support and fostering an environment where all can thrive academically, emotionally, and physically.” – Dr. Angela Hargrave, Senior Director of Student Services

The Center also serves as a training hub, partnering with University of Memphis colleges to prepare practitioners for regional and state-wide roles. This dual focus ensures students receive cutting-edge support while future professionals gain hands-on experience in our laboratory schools.

“Our partnerships with other colleges at the University of Memphis allow us to train the next generation of practitioners, equipping them with real-world experience to serve communities statewide.” – Dr. Lee-Ann Kight, Executive Director of Academics

This upcoming year, the Wellness Center plans to continue providing day-to-day support, expanding support to additional school sites, and working to continue to expand the number of University of Memphis students trained in the program. Dr. Elswick, Dr. Kight, and Dr. Hargrave see the partnership as a way for University Schools to fully realize its training and laboratory school mission.



“Having one center for families and students to access in our district that also serves as a central point for research and training merges both our higher education and our K12 mission.” – Dr. Sally G. Parish, Vice Provost and Director of Schools

Services Provided:

- Speech Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Nursing
- Social Work
- Professional School Counseling
- School Psychology

SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATE OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBER



MEET SIMONE

If you visited University Middle School or University High School this past year, you may have heard the clicking of the paws of a four-legged friend gently echoing through the halls of our building.

University Schools proudly welcomed our newest hire - Simone, a therapy dog named after Simone Biles for her strength and resilience, through a grant from Beyond Ordinary Learning Opportunities to the Orgel Educational Center this past year.

Simone has become a beloved staff member, providing emotional support and fostering a sense of community among our middle and high school students. Her presence helps students manage stress, build confidence, and engage more fully in their learning environment, aligning with our holistic approach to education.

"Simone has transformed our school culture, providing a unique source of comfort and joy. Her presence helps students feel supported and connected, making UMS a true community." — Joy Gilliam, Executive Director of University Middle School

This year, UMS and UHS celebrated Simone's first birthday with a vibrant assembly, where students and staff donned blue, white, and gray to show Tiger pride. The event featured a surprise message from Olympic legend Simone Biles, praising Simone's impact. Teachers have integrated Simone into social-emotional learning activities, such as reading sessions and mindfulness exercises, enhancing her role as a catalyst for connection and well-being.

Trained as a therapy dog, Simone is able to provide a calming presence, provide a consistent energy, and support emotional regulation for students and faculty alike. Simone also allows students to develop responsibility as they sign up for shifts taking her for walks, bringing her treats, and allowing her to accompany them to their next class period.

"Simone's impact extends beyond the classroom, touching the hearts of our entire school. She's a reminder of the strength and resilience we strive to instill in our students." — Dr. Kristle Hodges Johnson, Executive Director of University High School

Throughout the day, students and staff alike would sign up for opportunities to walk Simone, greet her in between classes, and have her visit homerooms for special occasions. University Schools looks forward to our continued partnership with Simone into next school year and continuing to grow our whole child approach to making sure school is a welcoming place.

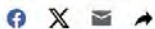
EDUCATION

This dog was left for dead in the Memphis summer. Now, she's a therapy dog for a school



Brooke Muckerman
Memphis Commercial Appeal

Updated Jan. 9, 2025, 4:36 p.m. CT



Injured Puppy Dumped with the Trash Gets 'Second Chance' as a Beloved Therapy Dog for Tenn. Middle School (Exclusive)

Simone the rescue pup is a therapy dog at University Middle School in Memphis and is named after Simone Biles

By Kelli Bender | Published on January 20, 2025 05:35PM EST

From Doomed to a Dream Come True: Simone Finds her Calling



UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

	UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS	ELRC	CAMPUS SCHOOL	UNIVERSITY MIDDLE	UNIVERSITY HIGH
2024-25 Total Enrollment	1,054	106	412	260	276
Average Class Size	18	12	20	18	18
Total Faculty Members	76	6	32	22	16
Average Years of Experience	11	9	10	10	12
Faculty Members with Advanced Degrees	73%	29%	68%	77%	90%
Total Staff Members	124	31	38	32	23
UofM Faculty/Staff/Students Served	204				
Teacher Candidates Training Hours	14,772				



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS	ELRC	CAMPUS SCHOOL	UNIVERSITY MIDDLE	UNIVERSITY HIGH
Black/African-American	35%	21%	29%	33%	51%
White/Caucasian	49%	47%	56%	53%	36%
Asian	6%	13%	8%	5%	3%
Hispanic/Latinx	5%	7%	3%	6%	6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multi-racial	4%	11%	3%	2%	4%
Other/ Prefer Not to Say	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%



EXTENDED LEARNING



The University Schools Extended Learning program was first established over two decades ago as the “Extended Day Program” at Campus School. Now, Extended Learning serves over 680 total student registrations across the ELRC, Campus School, University Middle School, and University High School.

With external partners and our supervising faculty leading a wide variety of programs, students at all of our schools have the opportunity to expand their day and explore new interests in the arts, world languages, athletics, and STEM fields. To ensure all students have access to these world class programs, the University Schools has implemented a confidential family support program to cover the costs of tuition for program enrollment using a sliding scale.

CELEBRATE OUR PROGRAMS



- Arrow Ceramics
- Bits, Bytes, Bots Robotics
- Board Games
- Campus School Basketball
- Campus School Cheerleading
- Campus School Guitar
- Campus School Novels and Crafts
- Campus School Volleyball
- Children’s Ballet Theater
- Department of World Languages and Literatures French Program
- Department of World Languages and Literatures Japanese Program
- Dixon Gallery Teen Art Garden
- Girls on the Run
- Girls Who Code
- Journalism & Strategic Media Department’s News Reporting
- Mid-South Chess
- Midtown Krav Maga
- Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) Character & Leadership
- Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music “Strings Project”
- Soccer Shots
- Sunfish Theater
- Tiger Food Lab Food Fusion
- Wings Gymnastics
- Yoga



ATHLETICS

Last year, University Schools' athletics program excelled. Fall sports included Golf, Volleyball, Cross Country, Soccer, and Tennis, with University High School (UHS) adding a Junior Varsity Volleyball team. Athletes attended summer camps across Arkansas and East Tennessee, and UHS and University Middle School (UMS) cheer squads earned All American status, performing at the University of Memphis football opener on August 31st.

Spring Track & Field saw UHS teams break school records in relay and distance events. UMS Soccer started undefeated, and Golf faced a tough schedule. Winter sports featured Basketball, Cheer, Bowling, and Swim, with UMS Boys Basketball winning a West TN Sectional game and UHS Girls Basketball claiming the District 15A Championship.

During the 24/25 academic year, across the University Schools District, we proudly featured:

- 46 individual athletic teams
- 385 student athletes
- Almost 200 “multi-sport” athletes

The 25/26 academic year will feature 55 individual athletics teams which will increase student engagement further. 65% of our teams are coached by University of Memphis faculty and staff. We know that athletics fosters physical fitness, character, and academic growth, and we appreciate the support of our dedicated families and coaches. Go Tigers Go!



CELEBRATE OUR PROGRAMS

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| • Campus Basketball | • UMS Golf |
| • Campus Cheer | • UHS Boys Basketball |
| • Campus Volleyball | • UHS Boys Soccer |
| • UMS Boys Basketball | • UHS Cheerleading |
| • UMS Boys Soccer | • UHS Cross Country |
| • UMS Cheerleading | • UHS Girls Basketball |
| • UMS Cross Country | • UHS Girls Soccer |
| • UMS Girls Basketball | • UHS Golf |
| • UMS Girls Soccer | • UHS Track and Field |
| • UMS Volleyball | • UHS Volleyball |
| • UMS Track and Field | |







UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS

AN INNOVATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

memphis.edu/universityschools

330 Fogelman Drive
Memphis, TN 38152