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December 2020

INSIDE CLAYTON

claytonschools.net

## CHS Named a National Blue Ribbon School

Clayton High School (CHS) has been named a National Blue Ribbon School (NBRS) for 2020 and is one of only seven schools in the state to receive this honor. CHS was nominated in the Exemplary High Performing Schools category and now joins a select list of schools across the country who have received this award more than once since the program began in 1982.

"Receiving a nomination to even be considered a National Blue Ribbon School was a tremendous honor," said Dr. Dan Gutchewsky, Principal of CHS. "For CHS to officially be named to this list for the second time is incredible. An accolade of this stature isn't just handed out; it takes momentous amounts of hard work and dedication from both our students and staff," Gutchewsky added. "They are the faces behind this award."

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Every year the U.S. Department of Education seeks out and celebrates great American schools, schools demonstrating that all students can achieve to the highest levels.

"Clayton High School is nationally recognized for its

academic tradition and commitment to developing graduates who are capable of contributing to our global society," noted Superintendent Sean Doherty. "The faculty at CHS is the cornerstone of its success. Teachers and students, together, create an atmosphere of academic excellence and growth," added Doherty. "It's this kind of learning community that exemplifies the standards of a National Blue Ribbon School."



The NBRS is one of the highest awards given by the U.S. Department of Education and each state is allowed a limited number of nominees. The competition requires an extensive application process and uses numerous data points in their criteria. The National Blue Ribbon School award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.

Visit [nationalblueribbonschools.ed.gov](http://nationalblueribbonschools.ed.gov) to read the CHS award profile. •

## Superintendent to Retire

In September 2020, Superintendent Sean Doherty announced his intention to retire from the School District of Clayton at the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

Read Dr. Doherty's letter to the community:  
[claytonschools.net/superintendent](http://claytonschools.net/superintendent)

Following his announcement, the Board of Education committed to conducting a national search for Clayton's next superintendent. After interviewing multiple search firms, the Board has retained the services of McPherson & Jacobson, a search firm that has been conducting national searches for boards of education since 1991.

The search for Clayton's next superintendent will be structured to allow for heavy community involvement in the early stages of the search. McPherson & Jacobson, working in conjunction with the board and stakeholder groups identified by the District, will implement a systematic, comprehensive process culminating in the hiring of the most qualified candidate. The search process will use virtual stakeholder meetings and online surveys (available to anyone in the community) to gather information about

what the Clayton community is looking for in its next superintendent. The process began with several days of virtual meetings with students, parents, staff and community members in mid-November.

McPherson & Jacobson will be conducting a closed search, which means that the names of applicants and finalists will remain confidential throughout the search process. A closed process is routinely used in school districts across the country to fill high-profile superintendent positions. The confidentiality maintained in the process allows a search firm to encourage and recruit candidates who might not have applied if their interest was made public.

### Important Dates:

- Dec. 2020: McPherson & Jacobson Vetting of Candidates
- Jan. 6, 2021: Candidates Presented to BOE; Finalists Selected (closed meeting)
- Jan. 11-14, 2021: Finalist Interviews
- Jan. 27, 2021: BOE Approves/Announces New Superintendent. •

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*Inside Clayton* is published by the Office of Communications for School District of Clayton residents, businesses and families. Its purpose is to foster open communication, build understanding and promote accountability between the District and our stakeholders. Please submit comments, letters and questions to:

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## DR. SEAN DOHERTY SUPERINTENDENT

# From the Lead Learner...

*"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."*

- Albert Einstein

Dear Clayton Community,

I often hear in conversations (mostly virtual) with colleagues and friends about how they are looking forward to the end of 2020. The last eight months of our lives have been like nothing we have ever experienced and have changed us in ways we never expected. Although I have been one of those people who is looking forward to 2021, it would be a missed opportunity if we didn't learn and grow from our experiences and use them to determine potential changes for the future. The impact of the pandemic can be emotionally draining and cause fear. I also believe it is important to reflect on this experience and determine how we can grow from it and sustain positive changes that might last beyond the pandemic.

As a learning community, we had to pivot in our approach to instruction. Our learning environments look very different. Our teachers have become "front line" workers who are heading into the classroom everyday to make sure Clayton students learn and grow academically and emotionally. Our teachers are also innovators who have been able to leverage technology and pedagogical practices in new ways. In this edition, we highlight some of the ways we have been able to maintain high-quality learning throughout the pandemic. I hope that we can eventually look back from this experience and reflect on our resilience and personal growth.

As we look to the future, we will use our new strategic plan as the road map for the District's work. The goals of the strategic plan are meant to be aspirational and bold. They represent the District's Mission, Vision and Profile of the Graduate. Ultimately, we are a learning community focused on excellence and high academic achievement. We also need to focus on developing



good humans who have the attributes to be successful in the different and difficult situations (like a pandemic) they will face beyond their years in Clayton. Our goals for the strategic plan are the following:

- We will ensure all learners, regardless of their identity, feel safe and valued.
- We will commit to the educational growth of our learners through an equitable, personalized and individualized learning experience.
- We will be dedicated to the personal growth of our learners in their social, emotional and physical well-being.

When we start the new year, I encourage you to reflect on your personal growth and challenge yourself to recalibrate your mindset. I understand that's often easier said than done, but I believe it is worth the effort. In the future, I hope we can look back at this challenging time and be grateful for how much we have grown and learned. This time has helped me gain new perspectives and resiliency. I hope the same for you.

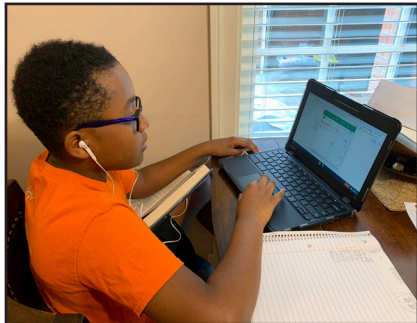
Best,  
Sean

Sean N. Doherty, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

# Looking Back at Learning During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented some of the greatest educational challenges of our time and has impacted learning environments throughout the country. Even though a typical day in school is very different, and may be for some time, the District continues to deliver the high-quality learning our students and families expect. And our teachers continue to be unwavering in their commitment to ensuring students learn

and grow academically and emotionally. From pivoting to emergency remote learning last spring to finding new ways to build connections with students and figuring out how to teach with students simultaneously in the room and on the screen, their work has been nothing short of incredible. Take a look back at a few select moments from learning over the past nine months. •



Clayton students tune in daily for virtual sessions with their teachers during **remote learning**.



Students prepared for and participated in their first ever **virtual National Field Day** in May.



The District's **youngest students** enjoy learning that stimulates their **sensory skills**.



Wydown students and staff gather classroom necessities to prepare for **in-person learning**.



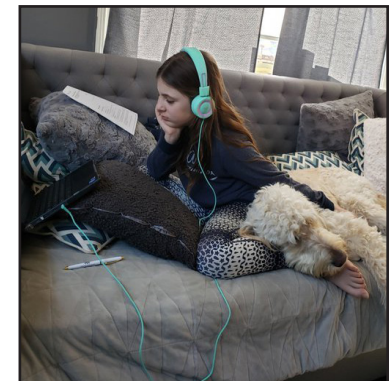
CHS seniors pick up their textbooks to continue on with **remote learning**.



Wydown orchestra students, though **socially distanced**, still play beautiful melodies.



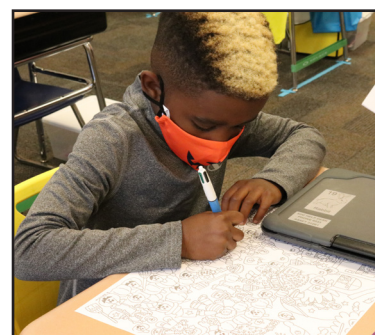
Who ever said learning from home couldn't be any **fun**?



Learning virtually can be hard work unless you have a **study buddy** like this!



Mrs. Hill gives each learner at The Family Center a squirt of **hand sanitizer** after recess.



Third graders at Meramec concentrate on their daily **in-person** assignments.



Students at CHS concentrate on their **socially distanced** lab assignments.



Mrs. Lawless discusses how to **creatively** work on art during **in-person learning** at Wydown.



Glenridge third graders study hard while **remaining healthy** in their classrooms.



Kindergartners at Meramec engage in their learning activities back in their **classrooms**.

# Class of 2020: A Year to Remember

Clayton High School's Class of 2020 celebrated its accomplishments over the past 13 years and prepared for new challenges and successes during its commencement ceremony on June 30 at the POWERplex - the former St. Louis Mills Mall.

With their families and teachers in attendance, the students reminisced about their achievements as a class and as individuals - while maintaining appropriate social distancing.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed everything for these seniors and while they are ready to move on to the next chapter in their lives, none of these students are likely to forget how Clayton's schools laid the foundation for their future success.

Visit [claytonschools.net/chs](http://claytonschools.net/chs) to view commencement photos.



## Moving On to Higher Education

Members of the Class of 2020 have chosen to attend the colleges and universities listed below. The number of graduates attending each institution is included in parentheses.

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Arizona State University (4)                       | Georgetown University (1)                         | Occidental College (1)                       | University of Colorado-Boulder (7)                     |
| Babson College (2)                                 | George Washington University (1)                  | Oregon State University (1)                  | University of Denver (1)                               |
| Ball State University (1)                          | Grinnell College (1)                              | Pennsylvania State University (2)            | University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (5)            |
| Barnard College (2)                                | Harvard University (1)                            | Philander Smith College (1)                  | University of Iowa (1)                                 |
| Baylor University (2)                              | Honolulu Community College (1)                    | Prairie View A&M University (1)              | University of Kansas (2)                               |
| Bentley University (1)                             | Hope College (2)                                  | Princeton University (1)                     | University of Louisville (1)                           |
| Boston College (1)                                 | IE University - Segovia/Madrid, Spain (1)         | Rice University (3)                          | University of Miami (1)                                |
| Bradley University (1)                             | Indiana University-Bloomington (10)               | Roanoke College (1)                          | University of Michigan (5)                             |
| Brandeis (1)                                       | Indiana University-Purdue (1)                     | Rochester Institute of Technology (1)        | University of Missouri-Columbia (20)                   |
| Clark Atlanta University (4)                       | Iowa State (1)                                    | Santa Clara University (1)                   | University of Missouri-Kansas City Medical Program (1) |
| Clark University (1)                               | INSA-Strausbourg (1)                              | Southern Methodist University (1)            | University of Portland (1)                             |
| Cleveland University of Music (1)                  | Jackson State University (1)                      | St. Louis Community College (16)             | University of Puget Sound (1)                          |
| Colgate University (1)                             | John A. Logan Community College (1)               | St. Louis College of Pharmacy (1)            | University of San Diego (1)                            |
| College of Charleston (1)                          | Johns Hopkins University (1)                      | Syracuse University (1)                      | University of South Carolina (1)                       |
| Colorado State University (2)                      | Lake Forest College (1)                           | Tennessee State University (1)               | University of Southern California (1)                  |
| Columbia College (1)                               | Langston University (1)                           | Texas Christian University (1)               | University of South Florida (1)                        |
| Cornell University (1)                             | Lawrence University (1)                           | Texas Southern University (1)                | University of Tennessee-Knoxville (1)                  |
| Davidson College (1)                               | Loyola University (1)                             | The Colburn School Conservatory of Music (1) | University of Utah (1)                                 |
| Denison University (2)                             | Maryville University (1)                          | Truman State University (2)                  | University of Vermont (1)                              |
| DePaul University (1)                              | MIAD-Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (2)    | Tulane University (4)                        | Washington University-St. Louis (9)                    |
| DePauw University (1)                              | Miami University-Oxford (1)                       | University of Aberdeen (1)                   | Webster University (1)                                 |
| Duke University (1)                                | Millikin University (1)                           | University of Alabama (1)                    | Western University-Ontario (1)                         |
| Eckerd College (1)                                 | Missouri University of Science and Technology (3) | University of Arizona (2)                    | Xavier University (1)                                  |
| Edinburgh (1)                                      | New York University (3)                           | University of Arkansas (1)                   |  |
| Embry Riddle Aeronautical University -Prescott (1) | Northeastern University (2)                       | University of California-Santa Cruz (1)      |  |
| Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (1) | Northwestern University (2)                       | University of Central Missouri (1)           |  |
| Fontbonne University (1)                           |   | University of Chicago (1)                    |  |

# A Place for Everyone to Grow as Learners in Head and Heart

Every strategic plan should be a living document, a travel guide that takes an organization on a journey from good to great. For a high-achieving school district like Clayton, this plan maps out a direction that will move us from excellent to transformational. Clayton has a reputation for its excellence in academic achievement, its high-quality educators and for being fiscally responsible. These remain priorities and will be givens in all of our work. When developing our current strategic plan, we wanted to remain accountable to those givens, while also being aspirational in our approach.

The goals for the 2020-2023 strategic plan are as follows:

- We will ensure all learners, regardless of their identity, feel safe and valued.
- We will commit to the educational growth of our learners through an equitable, personalized and individualized learning experience.
- We will be dedicated to the personal growth of our learners in their social, emotional and physical well-being.

As a district with a growth mindset and a commitment to continuous improvement, we owe nothing less than our best thinking to the students and families who trust us with their learning. A strategic plan provides a road map for action that will help answer those hard questions and push us to take those uncomfortable risks. It also provides us with bookends that help sharpen our focus and keep us from getting overloaded with too many ideas or initiatives.

The School District of Clayton envisions having graduates who are self-actualized, intellectually curious, culturally competent, empathetic, creative and collaborative. The journey to those attributes starts as soon as students enter our schools. We want to develop students who are not only academically prepared but also attuned to their humanity and how they can improve it.

The strategic plan was approved in November 2020. Learn more at [claytonschools.net/strategicplan](https://claytonschools.net/strategicplan). •

## District Hires Cameron Poole as Director of Equity & Inclusion

In August, the School District of Clayton announced the appointment of Cameron Poole as Director of Equity and Inclusion beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. This new position will allow the District to grow its work and further its commitment to becoming an equitable and anti-racist community.

"Equity has always been the cornerstone of why I came into education," Poole said. "I am ready to start building systems that will stand the test of time. It's a process, but I am committed - to the students, community, staff - to bringing true equity to Clayton. I've done a lot of this type of work from a grassroots level and I will work diligently to put the correct systems and measures in place."

Poole served as Assistant Principal at Rockwood Summit High School in the Rockwood School District for the past two years where he helped lead orientation and transitioning programs as well as student equity groups. Poole spent the first six years of his career in education as a high school History teacher in both the Wright City R-II and Parkway School Districts. He is working towards his Doctorate in Educational Leadership and holds a Master of Educational Administration, a Master of Arts in Teaching and Education

and a Bachelor of Science in History.

"Cameron is a leader who has the knowledge, passion and insight to truly move the District in developing the goals, strategies and metrics needed to become an anti-racist and diverse, equitable and inclusive learning community," noted Superintendent Sean Doherty.

"He will strengthen the collective efficacy of this important work. I am looking forward to working and learning together and having Cameron as part of our leadership team."

Follow Poole and the latest developments about the District's equity work on Twitter at [@CP\\_EdEquity](https://twitter.com/CP_EdEquity). •



## Glenridge Nurse Wins Excellence in Nursing Award

Glenridge Nurse and Nurse Coordinator Heather Christman received the Excellence in Nursing Award (in the School Nurse category) by St. Louis Magazine.

Known to students as Nurse Heather, she has been a nurse for 16 years and a school nurse at Glenridge for four. As the District's Nurse Coordinator, she plays a critical role in the District's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She takes on new challenges every day as no two kids' cases are the same. In addition to



treating Glenridge students, Nurse Heather teaches nursing students at Saint Louis University how to conduct vision and hearing tests.

The job's greatest challenge: "You have to think outside the box because you're not in a hospital setting. I had a student last year break his nose on the playground. I immediately just took off my vest, put it on the kid's little nose, picked him up, and walked him into the office."

The job's rewards: "I have roughly 350 students that I happily call all of my own children." •

# Important Dates

More information on School District of Clayton events is available at [claytonschools.net](http://claytonschools.net).

December	
16	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
21-22	Remote Learning
22	End of First Semester
23-31	Winter Break
January	
1	Winter Break
4	No School PK-12: Grading Day
5-8	Remote Learning
11	In-Person Classes Resume
15	No School PK-12: Professional Learning Day
18	No School PK-12: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
27	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
February	
10	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
12	No School PK-12: Professional Learning Day
15	No School PK-12: Presidents' Day
24	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
26	Early Release PK-12: Professional Learning Day
KEY	
BOE	– Board of Education
CHS	– Clayton High School
CPT	– Captain Elementary
FC	– Family Center
GLN	– Glenridge Elementary
MER	– Meramec Elementary
WMS	– Wydown Middle School

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## NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL RANKINGS: Clayton High School receives national recognition for academic excellence.



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