

ACCESS

LAUNCH

THE VOICE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING IN MISSOURI

EXCEPTIONAL LEARNER SERVICES

Learn how Launch's ELD, Gifted & Special Education services give every student the opportunity to be a hero in the virtual classroom

TAKE A HIKE!

Explore the new middle school elective that's taking online students into the great outdoors

#12

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.

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. Students also have access to PE, Music, Art and Gifted services. Classes are instructed by a full-time Missouri educator, and class sizes are limited to meet DESE recommendations.

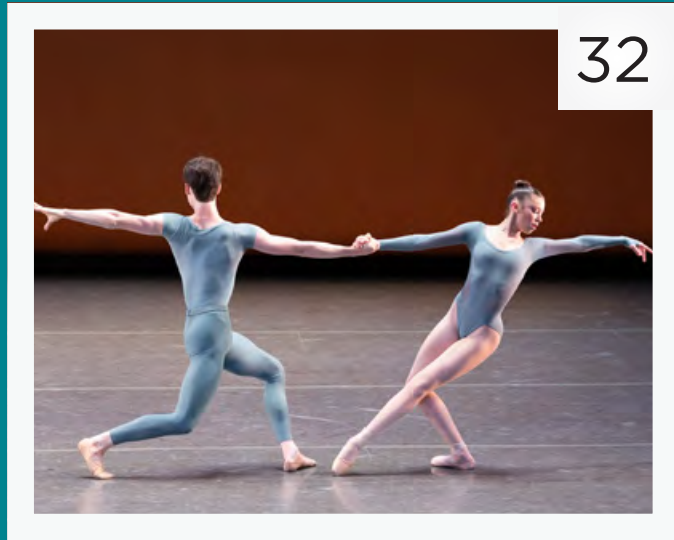
Middle School

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 classes 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. In addition to traditional courses, AP, Honors, dual credit and credit recovery courses are available. Class sizes are limited to 33:1 with live classes available, and teachers live and work in Missouri school districts.





WHY I LAUNCH

Launch makes it possible for Ladue High School junior Grace Scheffel to maintain an apprenticeship with the New York City ballet. Read her story.



LAUNCH EXCEPTIONAL LEARNER SERVICES

Learn how our programming for English Language Development, special education students and gifted students gives every student the opportunity to be a hero in the virtual classroom.

SUCCESS STORY

Meet Central High School freshman Ellie Rowe, a published children's book author and hybrid Launch student who has lived with type 1 diabetes since age 8.

DISTRICT PROFILE: WALNUT GROVE

When Walnut Grove needed a middle school science teacher last August, they turned to Launch for help. Learn the district's best practices for utilizing a Launch teacher of record.

DISTRICT PROFILE: MONTROSE

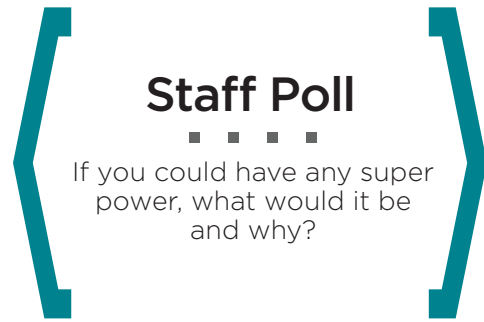
Montrose Principal and Superintendent Carey Drehle shares how her district is utilizing Launch Missouri's Workforce to supplement the district's current career technical education program.



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THE VOICE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING IN MISSOURI



Staff Poll

If you could have any super power, what would it be and why?

The Launch Team

Dr. Nichole Lemmon, *Director of Virtual Learning & Strategic Planning*

I would love to be able to control time. Some days I would speed it up, and some days I would slow it down.

Student Services

Dr. Brady Quirk, *Assistant Director, Virtual Learning*

Teleportation! What could be better than beach-to-mountains in a snap?



Jessica Johnson, *SIS Coordinator*

Telepathy! Although I wonder if that would cause headaches?

David Schuman, *Counselor*

Silvia Espinosa, *Counselor*

Amy Bollinger, *Special Education Liaison*

Abby Brownfield, *Department Secretary*

I would like to be fluent in all languages that have existed (this includes the ability to talk to animals as well, of course!)

Andrea Hackenwerth, *Department Secretary*

I want to be able to communicate with animals, specifically with my cat and dogs!

Jill Templeton, *Department Secretary*

I would twitch my nose like Samantha in "Bewitched" so that the house would be instantly clean!

Lauren Hendrix, *Department Secretary*

Can I have all of Superman's powers? If so, I wouldn't mind the speed, strength, flight or X-ray vision. If I had to pick one, I would pick speed—mainly for the metabolism boost!

Matt Burke, *Graduation Advisor*

Jared Dummit, *Graduation Advisor*

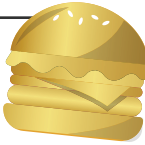
Engagement & Creative Services

Savannah Waszczuk, *Manager, Marketing and Engagement*

I'd want the ability to read people's minds or hear their thoughts. Hopefully I wouldn't regret it too quickly!

Jared Chester, *Graphic Designer*

Selective Midas Touch, cause you know, nobody wants a solid gold hamburger!



Janna Elfrink, *Student Success Coordinator, Kansas City*

My super power would be to rid the world of mean people.

Missy Sandbothe, *Launch Support Specialist, St. Louis office*

I would rid the world of hunger and homelessness.

Development

Dr. Meghan Roe, *Coordinator, Course Development*

I'd like to be able to fly. I have a lot of dreams where I'm flying, and I have to say I seem to be pretty good at it!

Linda Ayres, *Quality Assurance Specialist*

My super power would be telekinesis, because you can pretty much do anything with it—levitate, heal wounds by moving cells, move objects, etc. I would use my powers for good, and not evil.

Susan Brown, *Quality Assurance Specialist*

I would magically have the ability to change the size of frames to perfectly match the size of artwork I want to hang in my home.

Nicki Dickson, *Digital Developer*

I'd have the power to think about a place and snap my fingers—then voila! I'd be there!

Justin Thomas, *Digital Developer*

Teleportation—with my hectic schedule, being able to teleport from one place to another would give me more time in the day!

Amy Jackson, *Digital Developer*

Melissa James, *Digital Developer*

Amy Shaw, *Digital Developer*

My superpower would be the ability to fly! I hate to fly, so this way I would be in control. As an added bonus, I could also head to the beach whenever I wanted!



Eric Tran, *Digital Developer*



Gerri Flint, *Digital Developer*

Ashley Horton, *Digital Developer*

I would love to have psychokinesis. Imagine all the things I could get done without having to get up!

IT and Support

Darren Rush, *Launch Support Specialist*

Jay Grawe, *Application Specialist*

Mark Grant, *Software Developer*

Ivy Hamilton, *Software Developer*

Ever since I was a little kid, I've wanted to be an astronaut! I still think space is the coolest thing ever!

Curtis Brown, *Inventory Clerical*

Ben Cook, *Project Manager*

My superpower would be the ability to time travel! I am always wishing that I could have more time to spend with friends and family, do fun things, learn something new or stay productive!



Adam Shawley, *Launch Support Specialist*

I would go with the only reasonable answer, and that is the Zack Morris "Time out!" shout to stop time. I promise I would only use my powers for good (and to make it to school on time).



Wendy Arendell, *Launch Support Specialist*

I'd have the power of a super-green thumb. This would give me the ability to grow any fruit, vegetable or grain without water, sun, optimum weather, or soil.

Kaleigh Scott, *Launch Support Specialist*

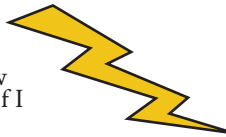
Michael Hamman, *Launch Support Specialist*

Robert Tinney, *Launch Support Specialist*

Student Services

Dr. Kim Spence, *Assistant Principal*

I would pick extreme speed! I can only imagine how much faster I could get things done during the day if I was as fast as lickety-split!



Billy Gosnell, *Assistant Principal*

My dream super power used to be flying, but now that I am a bit older I have switched to teleportation. It would be more immediate!

John Mott, *Assistant Principal*

Telekinesis.

Mary Edgerton, *Assistant Principal*

Brenda Dennis, *Assistant Principal*

Helen Williams, *Principal*

I think I would have the power of teleportation. I love to travel, but I don't always love how long it takes to get places!



Table of Contents (Continued)

- 4 DIRECTOR'S NOTE**
Dr. Lemmon shares a personal story that impacted her passion for education.
- 5 INBOX**
Our students love our teachers, and everyone loves the Launch support team!
- 6 SUPERINTENDENT'S NOTE**
Dr. Lathan shares the importance of meeting the unique learning needs of all Missouri students.
- 7 BY THE NUMBERS**
Find a list of fascinating figures from our fall semester!
- 8 WHAT'S ONLINE**
Liaison networking online? Yep! Learn how Launch Community is connecting districts statewide.
- 10 COURSE CATALOG**
Ready to plan for summer school, or get a headstart on next fall? See our full catalog here!
- 12 STUDENT Q & A**
Eighth grader Claudia Hayes fills her days with orchestra, horseback riding & Launch classes.
- 14 TEACHER PROFILE**
Learn how Launch's new ELD teacher is meeting the ELD needs of virtual students statewide.
- 15 MEET A STAFFER**
She designs gifted classes! She leads team fundraisers! She's Digital Developer, Amy Shaw!
- 16 WHAT'S NEW: LAUNCH MISSOURI'S WORKFORCE**
Students seeking careers in Hospitality & Food Service: We can help! See new LMW courses.
- 17 GET ONLINE AND GO OUTSIDE**
Outdoor U, our newest middle school elective, is getting your virtual students up and outdoors!

Contact Us

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✉ email
support@fueledbylaunch.com

🌐 website

🐦 twitter



*"Each of the students we serve has a story."
—Dr. Nichole Lemmon*

Director's Note

Launch Director Dr. Lemmon shares how knowing the stories of our students creates paths to success.

As a new year begins, it is natural to reflect on what has been accomplished and what is still to come. After 11 years of leading a virtual school—two of those during a worldwide pandemic—the last few months have been an opportunity to take a deep breath and evaluate what remains and what is possible.

I first saw how the power of education could change lives when I was a classroom teacher at Central High School in Springfield, Missouri. I had the opportunity to work with students from a variety of backgrounds, and one of my favorite roles was serving as a homebound teacher. I would go into homes of new mothers who were juggling being teen parents with trying to graduate from high school. I met Sonja, a senior, in 2003. She had just had a son but was still determined to graduate on time. I held her newborn, Jonathan, as she took her finals.

Sonja and her husband now own a very successful Mexican restaurant in Springfield. The wait is always long, but every time she sees me in line, she makes sure I have the next table. She never fails to thank me for helping her find a path to graduation. Jonathan also works at the family business and took Launch courses throughout high school to provide more flexibility in his schedule. Jonathan graduated in 2021.

Each of the students we serve has a story. The opportunities we provide to students at all edges of our systems open doors to what is possible for the next generation. Throughout this issue of *Access Launch*, you will meet students, like Claudia on p. 12 or Ellie on p. 30 or Grace on p. 32, who are examples of what is possible when a state collaborates to create opportunities for all students.

Thank you Sonja and Jonathan (pictured left) for serving as my reminder that our investment in what is possible is the most important one we will make.

See you online,

Dr. Nichole Lemmon
Director, Virtual Learning



Launch Letters

Hey Missouri, thanks for the compliments! Read on to see a few notes we've received from Launch students and parents.

STUDENTS LOVE MRS. BASSETT

I just want to say thank you. I know I'm not the best student, and don't make the best grades, but your cheerful vibe when I come to Zoom sessions makes things better. I haven't been in the best mental state, and just coming here and trying to get the energy or motivation to do the work is just so hard, but you as a person make it a bit easier when I hear your enthusiastic voice. So thank you for being the teacher you are.

Irelyn
Launch Student

This student shared this thoughtful note with Launch English Teacher Airin Bassett after being in her class for two semesters. We are so appreciative of how Mrs. Bassett and our hundreds of other Missouri teachers take time to build relationships with our students!—Editor

SUPPORT SUPERSTARS!

The Launch support staff consists of six full-time employees who offer help by phone, email, and chat seven days a week, and our students, parents and partner districts love them! Check out a few compliments the support staff has received so far this semester.



"I love the tech support team. They are pretty fast about responding, and their responses are detailed on what to do to fix the problem."
—Anthony, Launch Student

"Thank you for helping so quickly! Launch has been a lifesaver for my five kids."
—Jennifer, Launch Parent

"The enrollment/support team is very professional and punctual."
—Tommy, Launch Liaison, Thayer School District

"Kaleigh was so supportive and helpful!! She figured out what was wrong and quickly took action to get in touch with the liaison to remedy the problem. I so appreciated her help. I've done customer service before, and she was really top notch."
—Glenda, Launch Parent

"I always appreciate the quick response and friendly, helpful service I receive. Thank you for making educating my daughter so much easier!"
—Starlite, Launch Parent

Mrs. Holcomb sent this note to Launch Director Dr.

Nichole Lemmon after some of her Japanese students came to volunteer in Springfield at the city's Japanese Fall Festival. We are thrilled to see these connections made outside of the virtual world!—Editor

Launch in Real Life

I wanted to send you this pic I took this weekend. I had several Launch students visit me and volunteer at the Japanese Fall Festival in Springfield. Gabrielle came from Ellsinore, three hours away, and Nathan came from Republic and has helped me at the festival the last three years. This showcases what Launch provides beyond content learning—these kids meet lifelong friends!

Kazumi Holcomb
Launch Japanese Teacher, Springfield Public Schools

Praise from a Parent!

Thank you for the work you did with my son in your class... You have always been so understanding and helpful when he needed support. He is shy and self-conscious because he is on the spectrum of autism—so he wants to do a good job—but sometimes struggles with asking for help. Since you have taken the time to get to know him, you know when he is in need and how to explain things to him, and I really appreciate it.

Virginia Long
Launch Parent, Branson Public Schools

A parent sent this note to Launch Social Studies Instructor Julia Armstrong after she had her son in class for two semesters. It means a lot when secondary parents notice the effort our teachers put forth into getting to know their students!—Editor

Contact Us

Do you want to share a positive Launch experience? We would love to hear from you! Contact savannah@fueledbylaunch.com with all questions, comments or visit requests.



Superintendent's Note

SPS Superintendent Dr. Grenita Lathan shares her passion for reaching every child.

As a public educator for over 30 years, I've seen the need to reach each child we serve grow in complexity and necessity. Of the over 850,000 students we serve in Missouri, 13 percent receive Special Education support, nearly five percent qualify for gifted services, and four percent have English language development needs. Each of these numbers represent children who require specialized support to reach their full potential, yet, in many cases, teacher shortages in our state are impacting these areas the hardest.

This is exactly why Launch exceptional services exist. As a state-wide collaborative serving more than 370 school districts, we are committed to providing the services required for all children. This issue is dedicated to introducing our partners to expanded Special Education, Gifted and English Language Development courses. At Launch, our students learn from teachers, not computers, and our highly-qualified staff cannot wait to meet your students.

We always say the best part about Launch is our ability to meet the requests of our partner districts. The supports you will read about in this issue of *Access Launch* came directly from your requests. What else do you need? How else can we help? I look forward to your ideas and feedback as we continue to build our purpose-driven platform.

Dr. Grenita Lathan
Superintendent, Springfield Public Schools



“As a state-wide collaborative serving more than 370 school districts, we are committed to providing the services required for all children.”

—Dr. Grenita Lathan

BY THE NUMBERS

Check out the fascinating figures that currently consume our world of virtual learning.

67% OF MO DISTRICTS USE LAUNCH

134,346

MISSOURI STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO LAUNCH COURSES

302
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN LAUNCH SPECIAL SERVICES (GIFTED, ELL, SPECIAL EDUCATION)

Learn more about Launch's exceptional learner courses starting on p. 22

377
LAUNCH DISTRICT PARTNERS

447
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN NEW LAUNCH MISSOURI'S WORKFORCE COURSES

Learn more about Launch Missouri's Workforce courses on p. 16

FALL 2022 SEMESTER SUPPLIES SHIPPED

498
CHROMEBOOKS

426
VISUAL ARTS 1 KITS

449
ELEMENTARY SUPPLY KITS + WORKBOOK

38
AP ART KITS

1,778
GARMIN HEART RATE MONITORS

6
IPADS

14
HOTSPOTS

31,962
FALL 2022 ENROLLMENTS

456
FALL 2022 TEACHERS

24,455,508
(AND GROWING!)
FALL 2022 CANVAS PAGE VIEWS

Get Connected With Launch Community!

Learn why you should join Launch Community, our all-new discussion forum designed to connect Launch liaisons statewide.

Districts helping districts. That's the idea behind Launch community, our new, custom-designed discussion forum that allows liaisons statewide to connect and collaborate on various Launch topics. "The reason behind Launch community was to make Launch—as an organization—more accessible to partners," says Ivy Hamilton, the Launch Software Developer who led the development of the new Launch Community forum. "We wanted to make it as easy as possible for our partners to get in touch with us, and also for them to get in touch with one another. Launch community is a custom-designed online network created exclusively for Launch users."

Community at a Glance

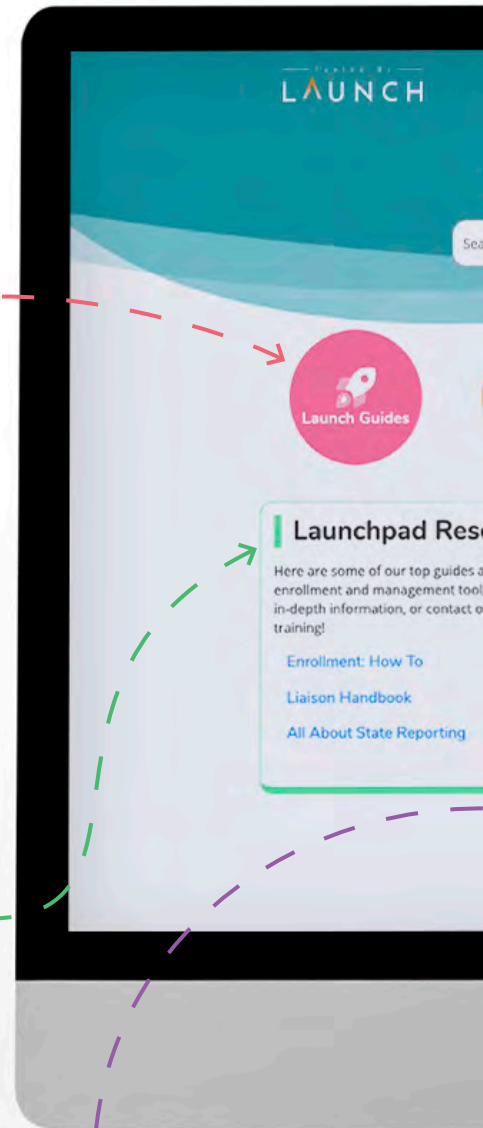
As you log in to the Launch Community homepage, you'll see a row of six brightly colored buttons lining the top of the page. "Those buttons act as a general navigation for the page," Hamilton says. You'll find buttons for our guides, common Q&As and Contact info that will quickly direct you to some of our most-popular resources, and you'll even find a "Suggest Features" button that allows you to tell us your ideas for suggestions and improvements!

Launchpad Resources Galore

Are you new to Launch and wondering how to best track student participation? Or maybe you're curious about how to code state reporting, or you want to add a student to a waitlist. Regardless of your need, our Launchpad Resources section can help! If you don't see your topic outlined in the Resources board, have no fear—you'll also find our Liaison Handbook here, and it's filled with 12 more pages of helpful info, tips and tricks.

Categories for All

Last but not least, you'll also find a list of popular Community Categories listed at the bottom of the homepage. This section provides you one last chance to discuss best virtual learning practices, reach out to the Launch staff with great ideas or even review helpful resources in the Liaison Library.



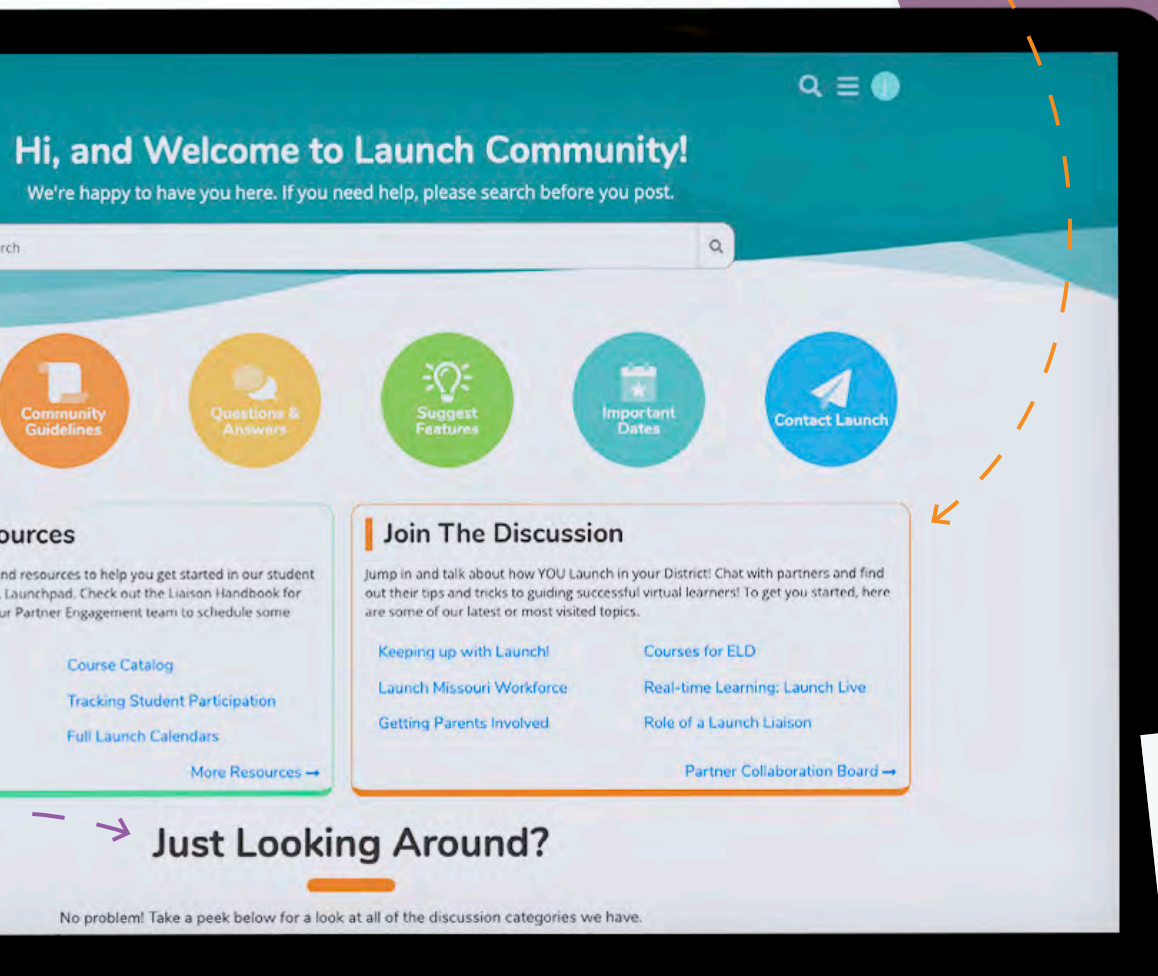
Jump in on the Discussion

Launch Community's Partner Collaboration board is perhaps the most exciting part of the entire forum. "This board is where partners can ask questions to other districts, or share ideas and best practices," Ivy says. A list of more than two dozen popular topics are currently populated in the forum and open for review and comment, and partners can also click the "New Topic" button to start a New Thread and ask their own questions.

Other ways to connect with Launch!

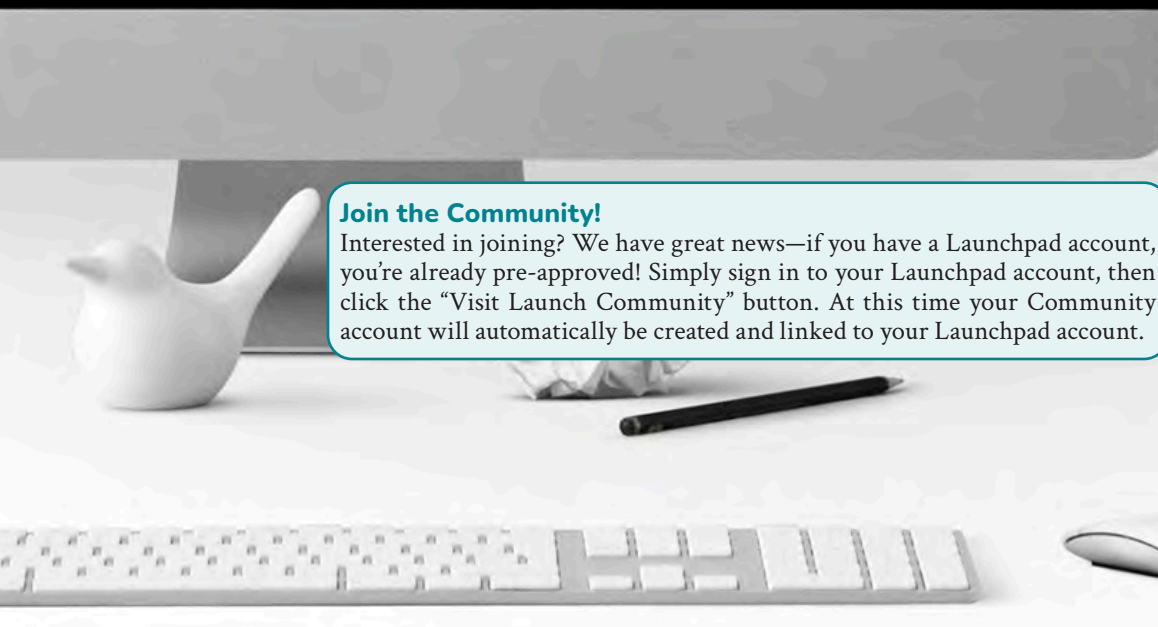
The best way to keep up with @fueledbylaunch is to connect with us on Twitter or like our page on Facebook! Get connected to see breaking Launch announcements and offerings, learn where we're visiting, request a meeting or learn our latest district partnerships.

#fueledbylaunch | #WhyILaunch



Join the Community!

Interested in joining? We have great news—if you have a Launchpad account, you're already pre-approved! Simply sign in to your Launchpad account, then click the "Visit Launch Community" button. At this time your Community account will automatically be created and linked to your Launchpad account.



MIDDLE SCHOOL CATALOG

ELA

- ELA (6th Grade) • LIVE
- ELA (7th Grade) • LIVE
- ELA (8th Grade) • LIVE
- Reading Middle School
- Strategic Reading & Writing (6th Grade)
- Strategic Reading & Writing (7th Grade)
- Strategic Reading & Writing (8th Grade)

Health & PE

- Health (6th Grade)
- Health (7th Grade)
- Health (8th Grade)
- Physical Education (6th Grade)
- Physical Education (7th Grade)
- Physical Education (8th Grade)

Science

- Science (6th Grade) • LIVE
- Science (7th Grade) • LIVE
- Science (8th Grade) • LIVE

Mathematics

- Mathematics (6th Grade) • LIVE
- Mathematics (7th Grade) • LIVE
- Accelerated Math (7th Grade)
- Mathematics (8th Grade) • LIVE
- Strategic Math (6th Grade)
- Strategic Math (7th Grade)
- Strategic Math (8th Grade)
- Algebra I
- Geometry

Social Studies

- Social Studies (6th Grade) • LIVE
- Social Studies (7th Grade) • LIVE
- Social Studies (8th Grade) • LIVE

World Language

- French I
- Spanish I

English Language Development

- ELD Secondary

Exploratories

- Discover Computer Coding I
- Discover Computer Coding II
- Music Journeys I
- Music Journeys II
- Outdoor-U
- Visual Arts I
- Visual Arts II
- Visual Arts III

Gifted Education

- TedEd Student Talks *(In collaboration with the Ted Talk International organization)*
- Cryptography

Special Education

- ELA Strategies (6th Grade)
- ELA Strategies (7th Grade)
- ELA Strategies (8th Grade)
- Math Strategies (6th Grade)
- Math Strategies (7th Grade)
- Math Strategies (8th Grade)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CATALOG

Kindergarten - 5th Grade*

Homeroom

- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Health

Specials

- Physical Education
- Music
- Art

English Language Development

- ELD Elementary

Learning Academies

- Launch into Math
- Launch into Reading

Gifted Education

Grades 1-3:

- Quarter 2: Paleontology
- Quarter 3: By the Dozens
- Quarter 4: Superheroes

Grades 4-5:

- Quarter 1: Alternative Energy
- Quarter 2: Mystery-ology
- Quarter 3: Time Traveler
- Quarter 4: STEAMatics

*Elementary students are required to be enrolled full time.



The Virtual Violinist

Meet Claudia Hayes, a 14-year-old School of the Osage student who enjoys orchestra, horseback riding and going to school full-time online with Launch.

Access Launch: How long have you been learning online?

Claudia Hayes: I started with Launch full-time in sixth grade, and now I'm in eighth grade. So this is my third year.

Access: What's your favorite thing about your Launch classes?

C.H.: I really like Launch a lot because I can batch my assignments. So, for example, I'll complete all of my assignments for one subject on Monday—like English—and then my English is done for the week. Then I'll do my next subject on Tuesday, and Wednesday, and so on, and I only have to focus on one or two subjects each day. I've learned that this works best for me.

Access: What's your favorite Launch class?

C.H.: Well, I love French, because I actually also took French in preschool and kind of remember a little bit! But I'd say my very favorite class is reading. My favorite assignments are when we are able to read whatever we want for 20 minutes, then write about it.

Access: What types of books do you like to read?

C.H.: My favorite book is "Out of my Mind," and now I'm reading a sequel to that book called "Out of my Heart." I'd say that my favorite books are fiction books.

Access: What are your other hobbies?

C.H.: I play the violin, and I'm a part of two orchestras. I also like horseback riding—I go riding every other Thursday. I have riding lessons, and then we get to go trail riding a lot, too.

Access: What orchestras are you a part of?

C.H.: Every Sunday I go to Columbia for The Missouri Symphony Conservatory—that's the children's program of The Missouri Symphony. We have a music skills class and a music history class there, and then we get to play. I'm usually there around four hours every week. And then I also play in the Lake Area Strings—that's an adult group that I'm a part of. We play a lot of fun stuff, like Disney music and Christmas music.



Access: Can you play any other instruments?

C.H.: I'm trying to learn the ukulele, and I can play the piano, kind of. And the electric violin.

Access: What's your favorite type of music?

C.H.: I like all music. The playlist on my phone has something from every genre of music, really! But as far as what I play—I play classical music, pop music and country music, mostly.

Access: How about a favorite musical artist?

C.H.: Adele. And Alan Walker.

Access: And your favorite food?

C.H.: Pasta. Any pasta!

Access: What are you most likely to binge watch?

C.H.: "Girl Meets World."

Access: Describe your typical day.

C.H.: I wake up and take my dog out—I have a dog, Violet, who is a Shih Tzu. Then I eat something, and then get started with school. I'll take a few breaks throughout the day—like, I'll take a quick break to play with my dog or to practice—and then I'll get back to school work. Breaks help me stay focused. I usually try to get one subject done a day, but sometimes two.

Access: Do you have a scheduled start time?

C.H.: Not really—it all just depends on when I get up. I have a really hard time sleeping sometimes, which is another reason Launch has been good for me. I can wake up an hour or two later than I normally would.

Access: What's your dream job?

C.H.: Well, I have a lot of those! I don't know what I want to be, but I might be a violinist or something with children or dogs, or maybe even an archaeologist, because I really like fossils and rocks and stuff.

Access: Have you thought about where you want to go to college?

C.H.: Yeah. I kind of want to go to Notre Dame.

Access: What's another fact about yourself, or something that's interesting about you?

C.H.: Well, I was a preemie—I was born at 29 weeks. So on my birthday every year, I ask all of my friends for baby clothes, and then I go and donate them to the hospital in Columbia where I was born.

Access: What's something you look forward to every year?

C.H.: Memorial Day. I always make extra flower arrangements with fake flowers, and I put them on really old tombstones that don't have any flowers. Our Memorial Days are always very long, busy days! Last year we may have had 100 arrangements that we put out. We always bring extra flowers, just to make sure I have enough. ■



Serving English Language Learners Online

Launch English Language Development teacher Jan McClellan shares her passion for offering ELD courses to students statewide.

I had a job outside of education when my kids were young, but it wasn't too long before I decided that I wanted to be a teacher. I went back to school and got a master's degree, and I also got my teaching certification.

I started out looking for a job teaching high school English, but I ended up coming across an elementary English Language Development (ELD) position. I applied for it thinking that it sounded interesting and like something that I would like, and I got the job. And I've taught English Language Development ever since.

My first experience was teaching students who were English Language Development and also had additional life happenings—I taught students who were refugees and students who were newcomers to the country. I've worked with traditional students, and I've had students who have had limited and interrupted formal education. I've always loved every minute of it.

I started teaching for Launch during COVID, and I got really excited last year when Dr. Lemmon shared that Launch was adding opportunities for English Language Development learners. We were already doing so much to make content and learning accessible—we had counseling services, special education services and gifted—but this part was



missing. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted to be a part of it. I applied, and I was hired as Launch's full-time English Language Development teacher at the start of this year.

I start my day with live lessons for our upper-level ELD students. We focus on Advantage Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic language and work to ensure students are familiar with various words and themes that they'll encounter as they move through their various disciplines of study—English, math, science and social studies.

I also work with different Launch partner school districts to help them support their ELD learners, and I've started looking at the curriculum we provide in our main stream classes. I work with our digital course developers and Dr. Roe to make these classes more accessible for ELD students.

I'd say my favorite thing about my job is knowing that I am helping make content accessible for all learners—and of course enjoy working with the students. We are making their transition into language acquisition so much easier, and that means a lot. ■

Jan McClellan

English Language Development Teacher

Home District:
Springfield R-XII

Years in Education: 9

Degree: Bachelor's Degree, Communications; Master's Degree, Education; ESOL Certification

Fun Fact: "I love Fruit Loops," Jan says. "Like, honestly, I like them a surprising amount. They can be a snack, but they can also be a craft! I've liked them since I was a little girl."

Note: You can learn more about Launch's English Language Development on p. 24.

Behind the Scenes

What's it like to work for Launch? We joined Digital Content Developer Amy Shaw for a day of writing gifted courses.

7:27 a.m.

While most team members are just arriving at the office, Amy puts the final touches on page 37 of the third grade Math workbook. "We started compiling the workbooks during the Fall 2022 semester," Amy says. "Workbooks are distributed to all elementary Launch students. They include activities and exercises that supplement their online course work."

8:53 a.m.

Amy takes a quick look at her email before she packs up her laptop. "I have a course writing meeting at 9 a.m.," she says. "We're working on next quarter's gifted course today." Amy will meet with both a teacher and a curriculum specialist—her job is to deliver the content in a virtual format.

11:17 a.m.

Amy's back at her desk, and now she's creating a video for the gifted Superheroes course. "My first step is figuring out how the information may be best presented to students," Amy says. "This lesson has a lot of moving parts, so a video to introduce the lesson and hook the students works well."

1:30 p.m.

It's time for a late lunch! "I bring the same thing every day," Amy says. She heads to the cafe to munch on her usual: a ham sandwich and pretzels.

3 p.m.

Amy opens the Slack tab on her computer and goes to the "Fun-Launch" conversation. Each of Launch's 60-plus team members belong to this channel, which is perfect—Amy has big news to share! "Thank you all for your support for the United Way/SPS Foundation Campaign!" Amy types. "Our total raised was \$4,536!!! We completely crushed our goal of \$4,000!" Amy acted as Launch's Site Champion in our annual United Way fundraiser, so she has spent the last few weeks organizing raffles, giveaways and other incentives that motivated team members to donate. "I'm pretty excited about this number," Amy says. "It's so fun to see our team come together for a good cause."

4:03 p.m.

As the clock ticks past four, Amy sends one final email, then packs up her laptop. "I have to go meet Travis," she says, a huge smile taking over her face. Travis is her husband, and the two recently welcomed their first grandchild into the world. "We're going to go see that grandbaby tonight!," she says.



THE GROWING WORLD OF LAUNCH MISSOURI'S

Workforce

Check out what's new with Launch Missouri's Workforce, our latest initiative that offers high school students career-focused virtual education courses.

Pathway: Hospitality & Food Service

Our newest pathway for the Spring 2023 semester, Hospitality & Food Service introduces students to an industry that encompasses lodging, travel and tourism, recreation, amusements, attractions, and food/beverage operations. Students in this course learn how to use knowledge and skills that meet industry standards to function effectively in various positions. In addition to exploring the history of the hospitality and tourism industry, they'll also examine characteristics needed for success in the field—one that is ever-changing and has loads of growth potential!



HOSPITALITY & FOOD SERVICE

There's a Club for That!

Multiple Launch Missouri's Workforce pathways allow students to participate in virtual student organizations, including the following:

- **Education:** Educators Rising
- **Financial & Professional Services:** Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)
- **Information Technology:** Technology Student Association

Interested in learning more about Launch's virtual student organizations? Email Assistant Principal Mary Edgerton at medgerton@spsmail.org.

Teaching as a Profession I

Calling all future teachers! Launch's Teaching as a Profession I course allows students to explore the roles of a teacher, learn the qualities of an effective teacher and learn about the teaching profession as a whole. Students in this course will also learn how to prepare engaging lesson plans and learn various teaching strategies, all while studying education-related theories tied to learning and development. In semester 2, students further advance their knowledge of the teaching profession by exploring trends and patterns in education as well as learn about classroom management.



EDUCATION

AP Computer Science Principles

Students enrolled in this fast-paced course will learn about the exciting kinds of problems tackled by computer science, all while exploring the field's most important tool—programming. The course explores systematic problem-solving strategies that can be applied to real-world problems and focuses on both writing full classes and the logic and structures around building them. Throughout the course, students study common, reusable algorithms and learn to analyze them for accuracy and speed.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

AP Computer Science A

Have tech-loving students in your district? They'll love Launch's AP Computer Science A course! After being introduced to the Java programming language, students in this Computer Science A course learn how to compare bit representations of data types and create programming solutions by reusing existing code. They also learn about string and one-dimensional arrays, methods, user-defined classes, advanced classes and algorithms. It's perfect course for all of those students who have a science brain and love of computers!

Marketing I

Students in Launch's Marketing I course are introduced to the field of marketing by learning basic marketing principles and exploring marketing careers. In addition to studying a range of topics regarding product development, pricing strategies, promotional systems and distribution, students also have the opportunity to study advertising layouts and campaigns, leadership training and more. Students will also hear from a variety of professionals who work in a range of marketing careers.



FINANCIAL & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Intro to Business

For all the kids who dream of owning their own company one day—enroll here! This entry-level course exposes students to entrepreneurship and shares basic information on how to start and run a business. Students will be introduced to critical business management concepts and principles, and they'll also approach business operations from an entrepreneurial and management perspective. Highlight: One of the course's culminating projects includes writing a business plan for a food truck!

ANATOMY OF A COURSE: OUTDOOR U

Launch's new Middle School elective invites students to study, explore and enjoy the great outdoors.

As hiking, camping and exploring continue to grow in popularity, there's no better time to educate students on the great outdoors. Enter Launch's Outdoor U class, a new middle school elective that invites students to lace up their hiking boots and head outside! "One of my favorite things about this class is that while students take it virtually, they're not required to be in front of their screens the entire time," says Launch teacher Kindal Plank. "It's our first semester offering it, and we're getting great feedback already—the kids are loving it!"



Take a Hike!

There's a lot more to hiking than just strapping on a backpack, and this assignment sends that point home. "Students learn about everything from what to take on a hike to various safety aspects, as well as the importance of informing others of their plans," Kindal says. The kids also plan their own trail-topped adventure during this unit: they are instructed to choose a Missouri hike from a reputable website, then plan out their journey as if they're actually going on the hike with friends. "They make lists of what they're packing, where they're meeting—everything," Kindal says.



Safe & Secure Shelter

We've all watched the popular show *Survivor*, but have you ever really thought about what you'd do if you had to learn how to survive outdoors on your own? In this assignment, students learn about the seven different varieties of survival shelters, then build their own real miniature shelter with items they find outside.



Identification Process

After learning about the various types of trees that grow in Missouri, students are instructed to go outside and identify all of the types of trees they see. "We use the Missouri Conservation Field Guide for tree identification, as well as for birds," Kindal says.



Write it Down!

While students are regularly outside completing assignments for this class, they're also invited to step into the open air and observe nature for a weekly journal entry. "A lot of times we will tie their week's entry to something they're learning about in class," Kindal says. "For example, when they learned about shelters, they went on a search to observe animal shelters."



Let's Get Local

While this course focuses on the great outdoors, many assignments and units focus on Missouri geography and conservation. In addition to studying Missouri trails and landscapes, students also learn about hunting and fishing that takes place in the Show Me State.



Unit breakdown: 1. Outdoor Adventure 2. Outdoor Survival 3. Discover Nature 4. Hunting & Fishing

Photo Courtesy: Kindal Plank



Walnut Grove's New Teacher of Record

Learn how the Walnut Grove School District is utilizing a Launch Teacher of Record for its sixth, seventh and eighth grade Science courses.

Walnut Grove hired a half-time Science teacher to teach its sixth, seventh and eighth grade students in the 2021-2022 school year. "That ended up working out really well for us," says Rory Henry, Walnut Grove's 6-12 Principal. "But then she retired, and the next teacher we hired ended up retiring two weeks before school started."

Rewind to August 2022, and Walnut Grove was preparing to welcome students back for the fall semester without a middle school science teacher in place. "We struggled to find a replacement in that short amount of time—especially now with all of the teacher shortages," Rory says. "We made a decision that what was best for our kids right now was to use Launch for our middle school Science courses."

Utilizing Launch for a Teacher of Record

Walnut Grove had been using Launch for a little over a year before they turned to the program for their middle school Science needs. "We actually used Launch

throughout the pandemic—all of our COVID shutdowns—for our full-time virtual students," Rory says. "I think we ended up somewhere in the neighborhood of 10-20 full-time virtual students at the time." This familiarity made it easier to turn to the program for a Science teacher of record. "Of course, we'd prefer a teacher face-to-face, if we had that option," Rory says. "But we didn't. And at this time, what we decided on is working out well for us."

Walnut Grove's sixth, seventh and eighth grade students still attend their classes at Walnut Grove each day—it's only when they head to their Science class that things look a bit different. "We hired Mr. Sanders, who is a student teacher here with our PE, to be a facilitator for the students," Rory says. "He's in there with them every day, making sure the students keep on track and on task."

Walnut Grove's middle school Science students log in to their Launch Science class when they get to the classroom every day, and they watch a video from their Launch Science teacher. Next the

I really like the routine—we start out with a lesson with the teacher explaining everything to us, and then we have time to get our work done.”

—Sadie Loehr, student

classroom facilitator goes over their assignment with them, and then the students use the remainder of the hour to complete coursework. “Mr. Sanders can help with immediate questions, and they also turn to their Launch teacher for help,” Rory says.

The Student Experience

Eighth grade student Sadie Loehr appreciates the additional flexibility she has with her Launch Science course. “I really like the routine—we start out with a lesson with the teacher explaining everything to us, and then we have time to get our work done,” Sadie says. As one of approximately 60 middle school students taking a Launch Science class in Walnut Grove, Sadie also likes how she still has the opportunity to interact with her classmates. “Sometimes we’ll do online labs, but we get to do them in class, too,” Sadie says.

On a recent science experiment, students chose like items to compare, then carried out science experiments to make their comparisons. “I did an experiment to learn which brand of paper towel could absorb the most liquid,” Sadie says. “Some of my classmates compared name-brand versus off-brand crayons and markers. It was fun to do those projects in class.”

Best Practices for a Launch Teacher of Record

Both Sadie and Principal Henry say the Launch training they received at the start of the semester made all of the difference. “Janna from Launch was on-site with us twice, both working with our classroom facilitator and working with the students,” Rory says. “She made sure everything was on track and everyone knew what they were doing. Those trainings were a must and really helped get everything started correctly.”



Walnut Grove student Sadie Loehr (above) likes how her Launch course allows her to work at her own pace while still interacting with her classmates.

In addition, Rory says it’s essential to have a classroom facilitator who helps keep students on track. “It was really important for us to make sure our students were still engaged,” Rory says. “Our facilitator keeps them working, and on our own timeline.” Rory also suggests aligning Launch’s schedule with your

own district’s schedule as best as possible. “Launch is a five-day program, but we’re a four-day district,” Rory says. “We went through and adjusted so our students didn’t have deadlines on Mondays.”

Last and perhaps most important, Rory says that communication is vital. “You’re going to have to have really good communication between the Launch teacher and your facilitating teacher,” Rory says. “You need to work on that relationship, especially in the beginning.” ■

WALNUT GROVE AT A GLANCE

- K-12 Enrollment:** 270
- High School Population:** 112
- MASA District:** Southwest
- School Colors:** Orange & Black
- Mascot:** Tigers
- Fun Fact:** Ken Gables, who was a pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates, was both born in and died in Walnut Grove.





Expanding Opportunities in Montrose

The Montrose School District is offering Launch Missouri's Workforce courses in addition to its current technical school offerings, all to offer students more opportunities to earn industry-recognized certifications and credentials.

The Montrose school district partnered with Launch in May 2018 with a goal of expanding its current course catalog. This is a common scenario in many small, rural Missouri school districts—they cannot always hire full-time educators to teach desired class offerings, so they use Launch to supplement their schedules and offer students as many opportunities as possible.

Today Montrose Schools has a new Principal and Superintendent—Carey Drehle took on the role in the district three years ago—but she kept the same mindset when it came to offering students Launch classes. And she's taking it a step further with the addition of Launch Missouri's Workforce (LMW) offerings. "A decent percentage of our juniors and seniors go to Clinton for their career-tech program," Carey says. "These are students who are looking into hands-on industries like welding and auto mechanics. But we have a good amount of students who don't go, and I'm excited to offer them something extra."

Expanding Student Opportunities

Launch Missouri's Workforce—which is Launch's newest initiative that offers high-school students free career-focused education classes and the opportunity to earn industry-recognized certifications and credentials—was first offered to students in the fall 2022 semester. "I had read a bit about Launch Missouri's Workforce when Launch made its announcement over the summer," Carey says. "But it wasn't until later—when I called Janna asking her a question about it—that she really explained the new program to me. That's when I really understood what a great thing this could be for our school. I was immediately excited about having this new opportunity to share with my students."

While more than 25 percent of Montrose’s juniors and seniors currently attend Clinton Technical School for career-focused education courses, Carey is excited to offer additional education pathways to students who may be interested in other industries. “I think that Launch Missouri’s Workforce will complement our current offerings with Clinton Tech very well,” Carey says. “We need to be able to tap into multiple different interests.”

Launch Missouri’s Workforce Offerings

Launch Missouri’s Workforce will offer courses in 11 career industries: Education; Financial & Professional Services; Hospitality & Food Service; Information Technology; Agribusiness; Health Science; Manufacturing; Transportation & Logistics; Bio-Sciences; Construction and Energy. There are currently courses available in four of these 11 pathways, and the remaining will be developed and offered within a three-year window from fall 2022.



Jaelynn Crowder (above) dreams of working in early childhood development. She’s getting a jumpstart on her career by taking classes in Launch Missouri’s Workforce’s Education pathway.

A Student’s Perspective

Soon after she learned about Launch Missouri’s Workforce, Carey reached out to a current junior to talk about her new opportunities. “I remembered having a conversation with Jaelynn, and her mentioning that she might want to go into the world of education and become a teacher,” Carey says. “She was very interested, and we got her enrolled in Teaching as a Profession for next semester.”

“I want to go into early childhood development when I graduate from high school,” says 17-year-old Jaelynn Crowder. “I’ve always liked working with children. When Mrs. Drehle told me about this, and how I would graduate with a para certification, I was really interested.”

While Jaelynn won’t start her Teaching as a Profession Launch course until January 2023, she’s no stranger to Launch. “I took a Spanish class with Launch and really liked it,” she says. “I like the layout of Launch, and how my teacher was always there any time I had questions.”

And while the future is still somewhat unknown for Jaelynn, she is excited for the upcoming opportunities. “I am still looking into what colleges I want to go to,” Jaelynn says. “But I also plan on working when I go to college, and now I’ll be able to start a job with a para license. I’ll be able to start a little bit ahead.” ■

“I also plan on working when I go to college, and now I’ll be able to start a job with a para license. I’ll be able to start a little bit ahead.”—Jaelynn Crowder, student

“While there are many students who choose not to attend Clinton Tech, it’s not because they don’t have the skills or desire to learn,” Carey says. “It’s just that they aren’t interested in the things that are offered.” This is why Carey is so excited about the various additional career pathways offered with Launch Missouri’s Workforce. “When I heard about this, and how our students can graduate with an IRC certificate in all these areas, I was beyond excited,” Carey says. “This is just what our kids need here.”

MONTROSE AT A GLANCE

K-12 Enrollment: 86

High School Population: 47

MASA District: West Central

School Colors: Blue and White

Mascot: Bluejays

Fun Fact: Montrose was founded in 1871, spurred by the building of the railroad through the territory. It was named after Joseph Patton’s horse—Joseph owned the land that is now Montrose.





LAUNCH EXCEPTIONAL LEARNER SERVICES

You have unique students with individualized needs in your district, and we want to help you better serve them—enter **LAUNCH'S EXCEPTIONAL LEARNER SERVICES!** Learn how our programming for English Language Development, special education students and gifted students gives every student the opportunity to be a hero in the virtual classroom.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Launch's new ELD services provide districts with everything from traditional elementary and secondary ELD courses to ELD assistance with curriculum and instruction.

When it comes to Launch's English Language Development (ELD) services, adaptability is the name of the game. "When we started offering this programming last fall, we promoted ELD courses for elementary students and secondary students," says Launch English Language Development Specialist Jan McClellan. "But once we started talking to districts, we learned that there were a variety of needs that expanded beyond our traditional course offerings."

At that point, McClellan started exploring the ways the program may be able to better serve Launch's partner districts. In addition to teaching traditional elementary and secondary ELD courses, Launch added an ELD course for newcomers. Jan also began meeting with districts upon request to discuss their non-traditional needs. The result? Several working relationships that support the ELD needs of multiple districts statewide.

One example is Momentum Academy, a St. Louis Public Charter School. "They came to us with a need to serve some of their long-term and higher proficiency ELD students," Jan says. "We work with 18 of their students. They're enrolled in a course with me, but it's also instructed by their EL teacher. We meet live twice a week."

Jan also provides a Newcomer ELD course to a student in the Marshfield school district, and she works with another district that utilizes Launch curriculum for ELD services. But it doesn't stop there. "I work with Dr. Roe and the course development team to make additional content is ELD accessible in core subject areas," Jan says. "For example, Fort Zumwalt is utilizing our Algebra 1A class for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). I'm able to help modify the content so these students can understand."

If your district has ELD students who need to be enrolled in Launch English Language Development courses, you'll find the option to enroll in elementary or secondary versions in Launchpad. And if you have additional needs, just ask. "One of my favorite things about this new programming is that we've been able to adapt it to work in multiple ways," Jan says. "I'm excited about what we're doing, and how we're making Launch's quality learning more accessible for ELD students."



AN ASSIGNMENT AT A GLANCE:

Students in the Launch's Newcomer ELD course spend one assignment working on identifying environmental prints (a.k.a. print and advertising that is intertwined in our lives) and asking for help. Since the course is specific to learning English, the lesson is developed with popular brands and logos of products and companies the students likely already know to help boost their confidence. For example, the letter "C" features the Chick-fil-a logo; "D" features a Dominos logo and "E" features a box of Eggo waffles.

"I LIKE THE READING AND LISTENING ACTIVITIES WE DO. IT'S HELPING ME TO LEARN TO READ BETTER"

—Camila Coronel-Rivera

THE ONLINE ELD EXPERIENCE

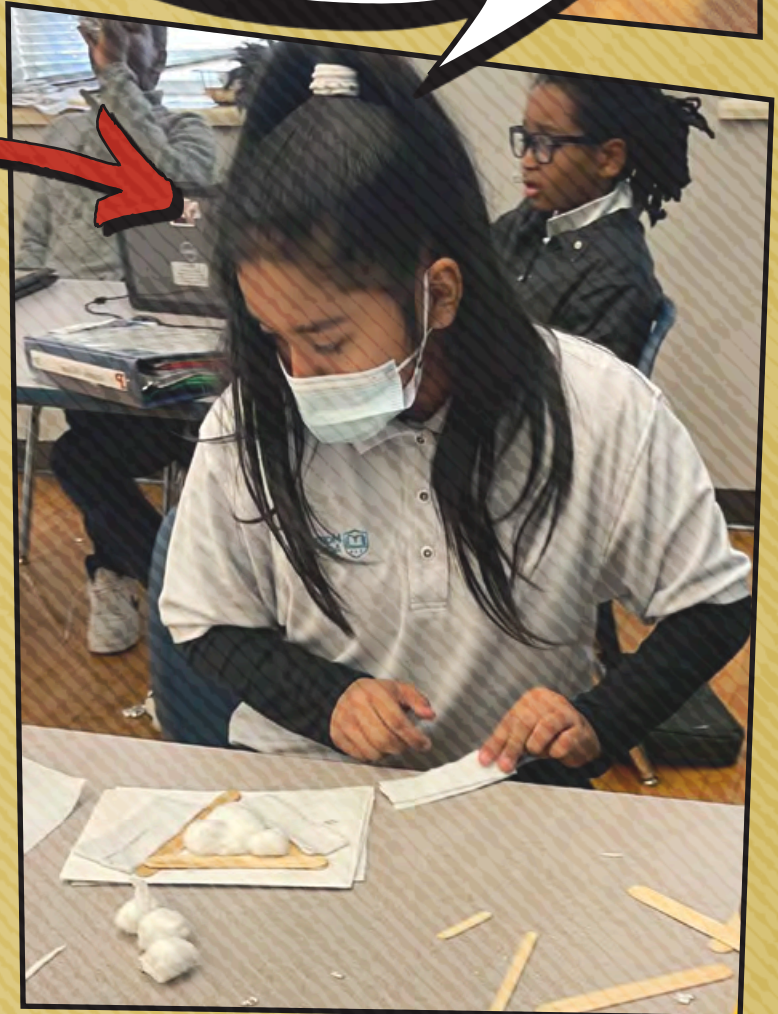
Sixth Grade Momentum Academy student Camila Coronel-Rivera enjoys listening and learning in her Launch English Language Development (ELD) class.

Camila Coronel-Rivera attends Momentum Academy, a St. Louis public charter school, for the majority of her classes. In addition, she takes an ELD class with both Mr. Pullen from Momentum Academy and Mrs. McClellan from Launch.

After Momentum Academy partnered with Launch to better serve its English Language Development students, Camila was one of the first students to be enrolled. "My mother and father grew up in Mexico," says 12-year-old Camila. "I have two brothers and two sisters, but I am the oldest."

Camila shares why she enjoys taking an ELD online with Launch. "I like the reading and listening activities we do," Camila says. "It's helping me to learn to read better." In addition, she also enjoys sharing fictional stories—both aloud and on paper. "For our next assignment Mrs. McClellan is going to have us write our own stories," Camila says. "I will write about a wolf in a pack, and a bear coming into a cave. The wolf follows. He is trying to get rid of the bears and take them out of the cave with him."

And just as Camila enjoys learning from Mrs. McClellan, Mrs. McClellan enjoys having Camila in class. "She advocates for herself and does a great job of asking questions and participating," Mrs. McClellan says. "Camila is a super sweet student who is eager to learn."



SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Now in its second year of offering expanded Special Education (SPED) services online, Launch serves more than 150 middle and high school SPED students statewide.

As Launch saw an increase in demand for our virtual SPED services, we increased the size of our team to keep up. “In addition to myself, we have five full-time teachers for our Special Education classes this year,” says Special Education Liaison Amy Bollinger. “We expanded to offer classes to middle students as well.”

Launch’s Special Education classes are designed to serve both full-time virtual and per-course students with mild to moderate disabilities that require accommodations, modifications and specially designed instruction in English Language Arts and Math. And while this naturally alters the course’s content, it also changes the delivery method. “Both our Strategies classes and our direct instruction classes are live,” Amy says. “Those students are having face-to-face contact with their teachers three hours a week. They’re working on modified grade-level curriculum and IEP goals, and they’re doing it with constant live support. I think that’s part of what is helping set Launch apart online.”

And what exactly does Amy mean by “sets us apart?” She’s discussing the feedback that Launch has received from both liaisons and partner school districts regarding our Special Education offerings. “I recently had a school district in Kansas City tell me they were working to move all of their virtual Special Education services to Launch,” Amy says. Her reasons included the amount of live Special Education offerings, the amount of one-on-one teacher support and the amount of communication provided to parents. “She also liked the fact that we provide data monitoring for IEP goals,” Amy says.

The positive feedback Amy refers to doesn’t stop with school districts. “We’ve been receiving great feedback from students and parents as well,” Amy says. “I’ve had multiple parents tell me that this is the most successful their student has been—even compared to seated—because we’re really able to individualize our instruction,” Amy says. “The students are getting more one-on-one time. And for a lot of these students, that makes all of the difference.”



A SPECIAL EDUCATION SUCCESS STORY

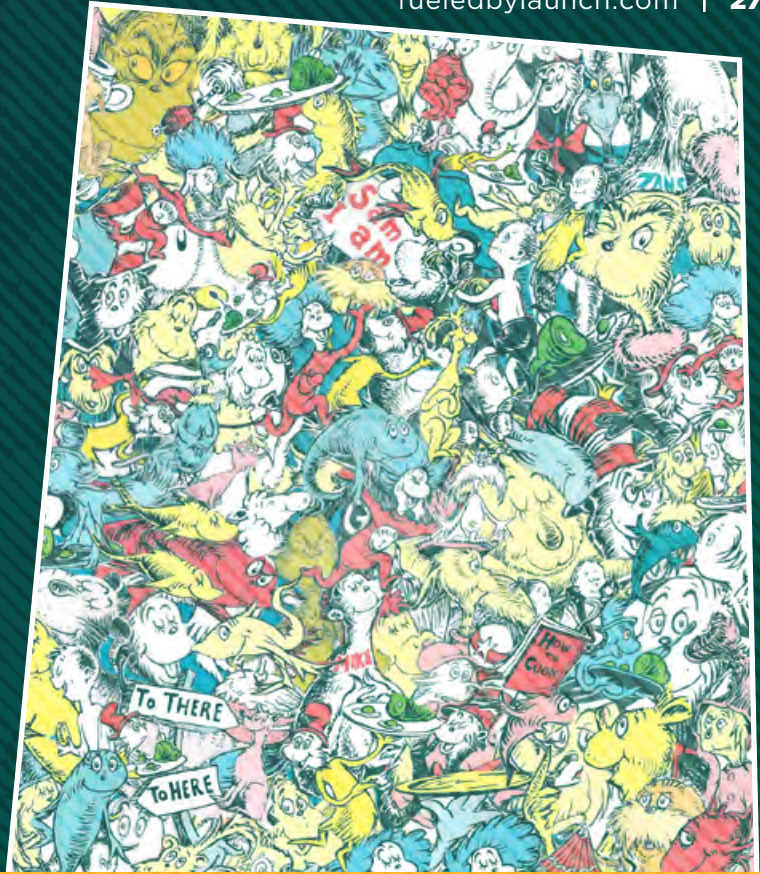
Launch's Special Education teachers provide junior Alysa Valentine-Pankratz with the attention and support she needs to be successful in her online courses.

As Jessica Hall describes the former education experiences of her daughter, Alysa Valentine-Pankratz, she emphasizes the fact that it was far from easy. "She's with me now, and this will be her permanent home," Jessica says. "But she's had a challenging past. From the time before she was even 8 years old her environmental situations at both home and school were very unfortunate."

At the beginning of her junior year, it became mandatory for Alysa to move to a virtual setting. She soon found herself enrolled in a full-time schedule with Launch through the Exeter school district. "She started online in late September of this year, so she was very behind," Jessica says. "But she's received a lot of tutoring from Launch teachers, the Exeter principal Ms. Fly & various Exeter teachers, as well as a great family friend, Raylin Gomen, and at home. These resources have been a tremendous support system for Alysa and she is now mostly caught up. It is rewarding to see her excitement in the little wins as she feels empowered knowing she can accomplish hard things and graduate on time."

Jessica says the one-on-one attention and support Alysa has received from her Launch teachers has made all the difference. "She has an IEP in place, and we're preparing to modify it even more," Jessica says. "But at this point, Launch is working with her to meet her needs, and it's been really great for her. Her teachers pay attention, and they're a constant support system. Alysa sees that and feels that, and it's obvious. It's what has made all the difference." And Alysa agrees. "I never liked school before," she says. "But my Launch teachers take time to work with me, and they helped me get caught up. Now I get on for every live class, and I actually like it."

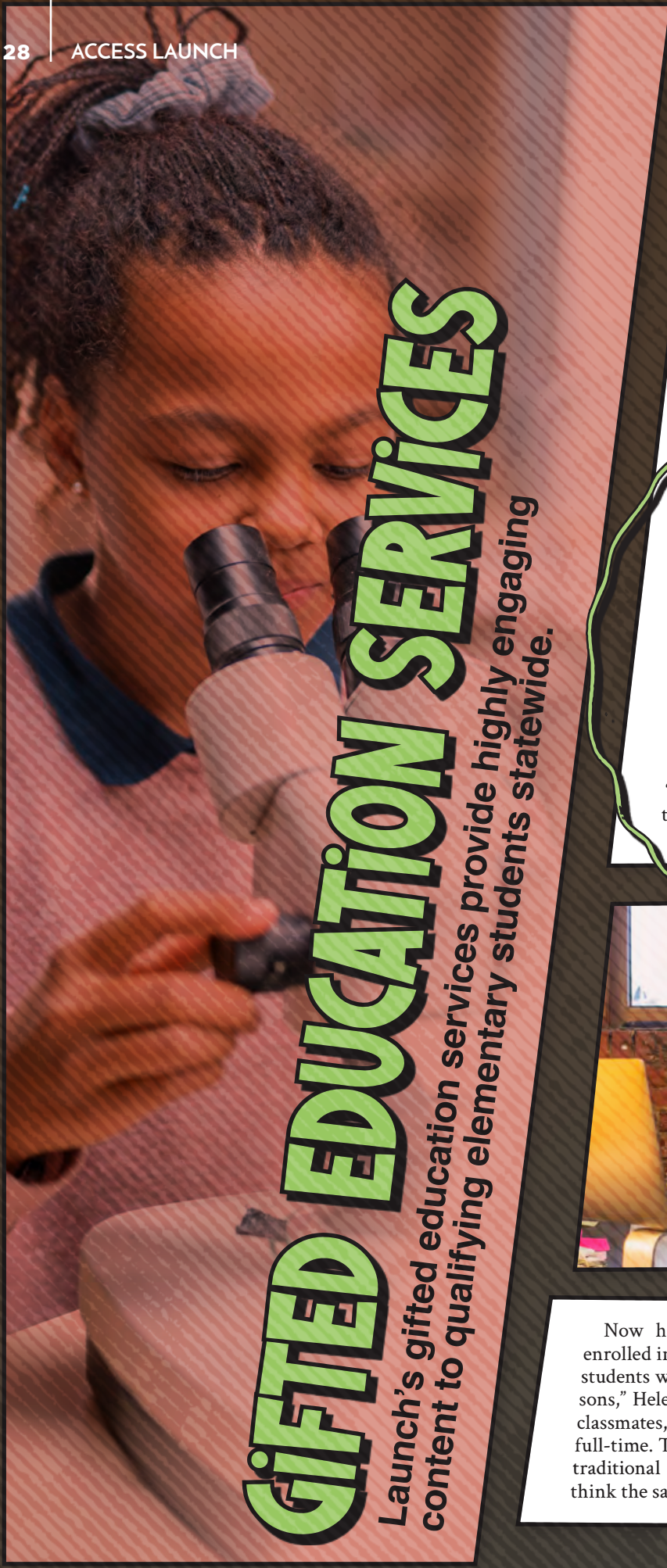
"I NEVER LIKED SCHOOL BEFORE... NOW I GET ON FOR EVERY LIVE CLASS, AND I ACTUALLY LIKE IT."
—Alysa Valentine-Pankratz



AN ASSIGNMENT AT A GLANCE:

In a traditional eighth grade ELA course, the curriculum requires students learn about alliterations and why authors use them. In Launch's SPED version of this course, students go into a deep dive: they kick off the lesson with an ice breaker where each student chooses a new name using an alliteration. Next they watch a video, then read a Dr. Seuss book aloud and collect alliterations as they go. A quick formative check using a jamboard preps students for the assignment.





GIFTED EDUCATION SERVICES

Launch's gifted education services provide highly engaging content to qualifying elementary students statewide.

Did you know that 60 percent of Missouri school districts do not offer certified gifted programming? Once the leadership team at Launch learned this statistic a few years ago, we knew we had to find a way to help. We quickly hired a team to write gifted curriculum, then added gifted-certified teachers to our roster and began offering gifted elementary courses statewide for the 2021-2022 school year.

Fast forward to 2023, and we have a bit of experience under our belts. And just as with all Launch offerings, we're continuing to adjust our gifted programming to best serve partners. "We've made the schedule a bit more flexible this year," says Launch Elementary Principal Helen Williams. "Students can take the classes live or asynchronously. We are also able to serve both full-time or part-time students. Really, if a student wants to take a gifted class with Launch, the only requirement is that they qualify for gifted services in their home school district."

While Launch's gifted curriculum is focused on core subjects, a lot of the gifted content revolves around taking student interests and exploring topics further—this is how we're able to offer exciting class selections such as Paleontology, Oceanography, Microcosmos and Myths & Legends. The curriculum is also designed to include both affective and thinking skills, which helps gifted students better understand and examine content and helps them work on their communication and problem-solving skills. "There's a lot of peer-to-peer interaction in these classes, too," Helen says.



Now halfway through year two, Launch has students statewide enrolled in gifted classes—and they're telling us they love it. "I think that students who are excelling in our gifted program enjoy it for a lot of reasons," Helen says. "They get to have live lessons with their teachers and classmates, which is especially rewarding for those kids who are online full-time. They also have the chance to interact with kids outside of their traditional grade level, and they get to know other gifted students who think the same way they do."

A GLIMPSE OF GIFTED PROGRAMMING

Meet twin sisters Jane and Lily Holland, two full-time virtual fourth graders who enjoy learning and interacting with other kiddos in their Launch gifted course.

Ask fourth graders Jane and Lily Holland their favorite thing about their Gifted Launch course, and they'll each have a list of answers. "I like the '-ology' section we're doing now," Jane says. "Last week we learned about herbology, and we each chose a specific herb to study. I chose lemon grass, which has a scientific name that's very hard to say!"

Lily joins in on the conversation by sharing her favorite things, which includes the class's small size. "We are in there with five other kids," she says. "We get to talk with all of them a lot. They're all very nice!"

Residents of the Ladue school district, Lily and Jane have been full-time virtual Launch students since the 2021-2022 school year. And while the twins also both particularly like Launch

because it allows them to work at their own pace—and because their kittens can sit on their laps as they learn—their mother, Kristy Holland, says she likes the small class sizes and the student-teacher interaction. "The teachers are accessible and interactive," Kristy says. "Overall, Launch has allowed them to excel."

When it comes to Launch's gifted program in particular, Kristy is excited to have the option for her growing girls. "They started gifted Spring of last year, when we learned it existed through Launch," she says. "It has been very fun and enriching for them. There's interesting and unique material, along with lots of games and brain teasers."

Looking ahead, the girls look forward to learning about time travel in their Spring 2023 gifted class, all while continuing to strive for the future of their dreams. "I want to be a YouTuber, and also live in a camper van and travel the world," Jane says. Lily's current list of career aspirations aren't quite as final—she's dreamed about being a photographer, a teacher and working with kiddos at a daycare—but she does know that she's heading South. "I know I want to live in Florida and live my best life," Lily says.

AN ASSIGNMENT AT A GLANCE:

In the First and Second Grade Gifted course, students enjoy a fun interactive "Dino Dig" assignment. For this engaging activity, students drag and drop pieces of sand from a roped-off area to a pile of sand near the shovel. They then work to piece together their discovered dinosaur bones to form a skeleton. After completing the skeleton, they infer the type of dinosaur they believe they constructed.



"LAST WEEK WE LEARNED ABOUT HERBOLOGY, AND WE EACH CHOSE A SPECIFIC HERB TO STUDY. I CHOSE LEMON GRASS, WHICH HAS A SCIENTIFIC NAME THAT'S VERY HARD TO SAY!"
—Jane Holland



Photo courtesy Kristy Holland



Sharing Her Story

Meet 14-year-old Ellie Rowe, a published children's book author and hybrid Launch student who has lived with type 1 diabetes since age 8.

Eating dessert is a special treat for most kids. For 8-year-old Elinor Rowe, it was an occasional necessity. "If her blood sugar ever went below 110, her doctor suggested we give her a bit of ice cream," says Elinor's mother, Megan. "Ice cream was good because it had fat, but it also had carbs. This combination was good for Ellie's blood sugar overnight."

Megan is sharing details from the early days of Elinor's (or Ellie's, as she calls her) type 1 diabetes diagnosis. "Before she got her current continuous glucose monitor (CGM) and insulin pump, we had to test her blood sugar two times overnight—once at midnight, and once at 3 a.m.," Megan says. "I'll never forget the first time I woke her up at midnight and said, 'Okay, I'm going to give you some ice cream.' She thought I had lost my mind!"

Fast forward six years, and Ellie is now a freshman in high school, a published children's book author and a master at managing her type 1 diabetes—no midnight ice cream sessions required. Read on to learn how she is using her experience with type 1 diabetes to help other kiddos, and how Launch is helping her on the way.



November 2016: The Diagnosis

Ellie describes the day she was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as a bit of a conundrum. “It’s weird, because I remember that morning so vividly,” she says, thinking back to what she experienced as a then 8-year-old kid. “I remember exactly what we did on the playground before my mom came to pick me up,” Ellie says. “I remember how one of my friend’s lost something, and she was looking for it as we were leaving. I really remember all the details up until they said, ‘You have diabetes.’ It was all a blur from there.”

Ellie’s mom chimes in, explaining why Ellie’s memories play out this way. “That all makes sense, Ellie, because you were very, very sick,” Megan says. Just hours after Ellie

was diagnosed, she learned she was in diabetic ketoacidosis, and she was immediately taken to Children’s Mercy Kansas City by ambulance. “It was November 18,” Megan says. “They let me ride with her, and my husband followed us. They played Christmas carols for her and gave her warm blankets.”

Adjusting to Live with Type 1

After numerous tests and multiple doctor and specialist visits in Kansas City, Ellie was sent back home prepared to navigate life with her new diagnosis—a process that took a bit of adjusting at first. “I had to learn how to divide and calculate the carbs in a serving of my food to determine how much insulin I needed,” Ellie says. “That’s not something that every third grader knows how to do!” Ellie had to test her blood sugar regularly, too—before she ate, before she exercised, two hours after she ate, and any time she felt dizzy. She also had insulin injections often, and she went to school with a note that listed the carbs of every item in her lunchbox.

Thankfully, things became easier a year later when Ellie received her new insulin pump with a CGM that helps regulate her blood sugar and sounds an alarm if there are concerns. “I felt like I had a little bit more freedom then,” Ellie says. “As a kid, when you have to stay behind from your friends to read your blood glucose—that’s not very fun. And being 8 and 9, I didn’t really enjoy looking at needles every single day of my life.”

Living, Learning, and Using Launch

While Ellie faced many challenges due to her diagnosis, she also learned a lot. So much, in fact, that she wrote “Type One Diabetes from A-Z” for a fourth grade class assignment. The book features each letter of the alphabet describing a part of life with diabetes, and it’s formatted in a way that is ideal for sharing with children who live with a type 1 diagnosis. “The book was purchased for all of the nurses at Springfield Public Schools elementary schools, and a diabetes educator at Springfield’s Mercy Hospital purchased copies to share with patients,” Megan says. A portion of proceeds from the book are donated to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

In addition to sales, Ellie also makes an effort to share the book herself—she has attended a librarian conference to discuss the book and has gotten copies into several regional libraries, and she also makes elementary school visits to read to classrooms and educate students.

Ellie is able to make these visits—and also able to better manage multiple other aspects of her life with diabetes—with the help of Launch. “I have three in-person classes at Central

High School, and my other five classes are online with Launch,” she says. “I go in-person every other day, so I schedule my readings and things like that on my Launch days.”

This hybrid schedule also helps with her doctor’s appointments. “We still go to Kansas City for Ellie’s endocrinology care,” Megan says. “We’re able to schedule those appointments on Launch days, too.” And perhaps the best part of Launch is that Ellie can work at a time that works best for her—even when she isn’t personally feeling her best. “I used to go to Springfield Lutheran School,” Ellie says. “If I ever had a day where I was feeling sluggish, I’d still have to go in. But with Launch, I can sleep in a bit and then do my work in the afternoon. I’m able to give myself a little bit of grace.” ■



Purchase a Copy!

Interested in purchasing a copy of the book for yourself or your school library? Scan the QR code to purchase Ellie’s book on Amazon.



Dancing Toward Her Dreams

Thanks to the flexibility of Launch, Ladue Horton Watkins Junior Grace Scheffel is currently finishing up her first year as an Apprentice with the New York City Ballet.

At age 11, Long Island native Grace Scheffel took her first steps towards fulfilling her dreams of dancing with the New York City Ballet when she started attending the prestigious program's official training academy. "I started at the School of American Ballet in seventh grade," Grace says. "We lived in New York until I was 16. But then my dad accepted a new job during the pandemic, and our family relocated to St. Louis." As Grace's family searched for a school district in the Show Me State, finding one with flexibility for Grace's travel, training and performance schedule was a must. "When we were interviewing with Ladue, I asked them about online options," says Grace's mom, Jennifer. "They told us, 'There's this program called Launch, and we think she may be a great candidate for it.'"

Fast forward two years, and Grace now has an apprenticeship with the New York City Ballet and is in her fourth semester of Launch classes. At press time, she had just finished a marathon of performances in George Balanchine's "Nutcracker." "I'd say the best thing about Launch, for me, is the flexibility I have with both my course work and the teachers," Grace says. "I've done different schools online in the past, and it's been really hard to find teachers who understand my schedule. Also, Launch has allowed me to travel between Missouri and New York and remain in the program, and even provided me the flexibility to accept the apprenticeship last summer." ■

Photo courtesy Rosalie O'Connor



Launch Student Grace Scheffel, pictured performing in a School of American Ballet 2022 Workshop Performance, takes Launch classes during the school year and in the summer.

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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 • Afton 101 • Albany R-III • Allen Village • Alton R-IV • Appleton City R-II • Arcadia Valley R-II • 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 • Carthage R-IX • 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 • Columbia 93 • Community R-VI • Concordia R-II • Confluence Academies • Cooper Co. R-IV • 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 • Dixon R-I • 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 • Eminence R-I • Everton R-III • Excelsior Springs 40 • Exeter R-VI • EYC Academy • Fair Grove R-X • Fair Play R-II • Fairfax R-III • Fairview R-XI • Fayette R-III • Ferguson-Florissant R-II • 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 • Gallatin R-V • Gasconade C-4 • Gasconade Co. R-II • Gideon 37 • Gilman City • Glasgow • Glenwood R-VIII • Golden City R-III • Grain Valley R-V • Grandview C-4 • Green City R-I • Green Forest R-II • Green Ridge R-VIII • Greenfield R-IV • Greenville R-II • Greenwood Laboratory School • Grundy Co. R-V • Guadalupe Centers Schools • Halfway R-III • Hallsville R-IV • Hamilton R-II • Hardeman R-X • Hardin-Central C-2 • Harrisonville R-IX • Hartville R-II • Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls • Hayti R-II • Hazelwood • Henry Co. R-I • Hickory Co. R-I • Higbee R-VIII • High Point R-III • Hillsboro R-III • Holliday C-2 • Hollister R-V • Houston R-I • Howell Valley R-I • Humansville R-IV • Hume R-VIII • Hurley R-I • Iberia R-V • Independence 30 • Iron County C4 • Jackson R-II • Jefferson C-123 • Jefferson City • Johnson Co. R-VII • Junction Hill C-12 • Kansas City 33 • Kearney R-I • King City R-I • Kingsville R-I • Kipp St. Louis Public Schools • Kirbyville R-VI • Kirkwood R-VII • La Monte R-IV • Laclede Co. C-5 • Laclede County R-I • Ladue • Lafayette Co. C-1 • Lakeland Behavioral Health System • 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 • Lift for Life Academy • 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 • Meramec Valley R-III • Miami R-I • Mid-Buchanan Co. R-V • Midway R-I • Milan C-2 • Miller R-II • Moberly • Momentum Academy STL • 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 • Mt. Vernon R-V • 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 • Normandy Schools Collaborative • North Andrew Co. R-VI • North Davies R-III • 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 • Otterville R-VI • Ozark R-VI • 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 • Potosi R-III • Premier Charter School • 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 • Rock Port R-II • Rockwood R-VI • Rolla 31 • Salisbury R-IV • 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 Private 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 • Stewartville C-2 • Stockton R-I • Stafford R-VI • Strasburg C-3 • Sturgeon R-V • Success R-VI • Sullivan • Summersville R-II • Sunrise R-IX • Tarkio R-I • Thayer R-II • The Arch Community School • The Biome • 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 • Wellsville-Middletown R-I • 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 • Winona R-I • Winston R-VI • Woodland R-IV • Worth Co. R-III • Wright City R-II Of Warren Co.

Disclaimer: Listed member districts are accurate as of press time (December 16, 2022).

