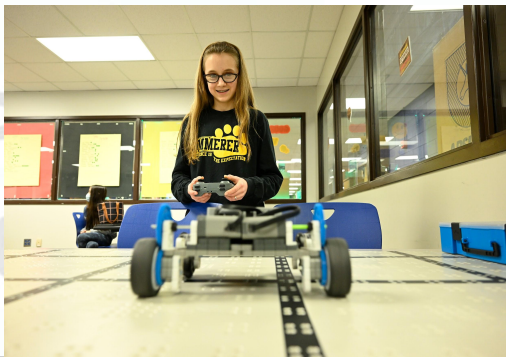




# Discover the Possibilities





**Dr. Heather  
Benfield**

—  
Assistant Superintendent  
Middle School Zone



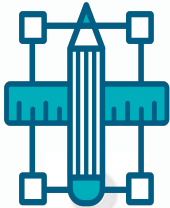
**Marcella Minogue  
Ed. S.**

—  
Executive Administrator  
Middle School Explore



**Dr. Stacie Bowen**

—  
Executive Administrator  
Middle School Zone



What is Explore?

Why Middle School?

Future Planning

Making a Difference for Kids

# What is Explore?

Explore is a groundbreaking, innovative, and dynamic initiative that transforms learning experiences for middle school students in Jefferson County Public Schools.





A photograph of two young girls in a classroom. The girl on the left is wearing a dark blue hijab and a black and white long-sleeved shirt. The girl on the right is wearing a white and light blue long-sleeved shirt and is leaning forward, looking intently at a LEGO Mindstorms robot on the floor. The robot is white and grey with large black wheels and orange accents. The background shows a classroom with blue lockers, shelves with purple storage bins, and a whiteboard.

# Our Mission

The mission of Explore is to engage, equip, and empower students to discover their passions, embrace opportunities, and take bold steps on their journey to success.





VS.



Learning  
is  
**Relevant**  
and  
**Meaningful**

# Core Beliefs of Explore Middle

Equitable access to opportunities and resources for *ALL* students

Increased student Engagement and Sense of Belonging

Student Empowerment through Design Thinking and authentic, relevant, classroom activities

Promotion of 21st Century Learning and the JCPS Success Skills through hands-on learning

Creating a bridge to high school with a clear connection to the Academies of Louisville



# In Explore Classes:

- » Students engage through hands-on learning.
- » Learning that focuses on student interest and skill building through their interest.
- » Students have real-world learning experiences linked to the community and career pathways.
- » Experiences that align with high school pathways, post-secondary opportunities and future careers.
- » Students are provided personalized and relevant learning.





# Why Middle School?



# Why Middle School?



## Challenging Time

"...there are dramatic changes that occur during this time of life requiring a radically different and unique approach to education" (Armstrong, 2006, ASCD)

- The Explore model provides a clear focus for learning and engagement, as well as short and long term goals to build confidence.

## Three Years

Middle School is the least able to build momentum with students and grow a community due to the length

- The Explore model sets a purpose and vision for the future, and creates a 6-12 trajectory of student learning.
- Potential for early certifications to start high school ahead of the game.

## Sense of Belonging

Students need belonging and connection to thrive in school

- The Explore model allows students to connect with a program of their choosing and exposes them to real-world applications for the content.
- Bridge from middle school to high school

# Pathway Options



**Business & Communication**



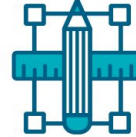
**Consumer Science**



**Healthcare Science**



**Public Service**



**Engineering & Design**



3 COHORTS  
18 SCHOOLS



**Cohort One: 2022-2023**

Ramsey, Kammerer, Westport,  
Farnsley, Grace James, TJ,  
Newcomer, Shawnee



**Cohort Two: 2023-2024**

Hudson, Echo Trail, Highland, DuBois, OAS,  
Johnson



**Introducing  
Cohort Three:**

Crosby, OAN,  
Carrithers, Meyzeek



---

**Making a  
Difference  
for Kids**



# Explore Pathway Data

Students' **Sense of Belonging has increased by 12%** since Spring of 2023, with over 87% of students agreeing with the survey item, "I feel like I belong at school," as of January 2025.

---

Winter MAP results indicate that the % of students predicted to be Proficient or higher on **KSA Math has increased by over 3 pts** since last year.

---

**Chronic Absenteeism has decreased by 6%** from January 2024 to January 2025.

---

Over 93% of students now express that **they are thinking about their future** career, with over 50% having a clear idea of their career path.

---

92% of students agreed that the **Explore pathways will help them prepare** for their future.



# Students say it best

**“On Explore days, I can’t wait come to school!”**

“They are good teachers because they are not just teachers. They are people with experience in what they are teaching. They also make things interesting for us.”

“The variety of the Explore program has made more kids interested in school since it started than before it was here by a lot!”

“I have noticed a lot of kids that our Explore teachers works really well with kids that struggle in other classes. She takes the time to talk to them and work with them, and they are able to do hands-on projects.”

“Even if I don’t pursue this career in life, I am learning so many skills I can use in everyday life and whatever I choose to do for work.”



**KAMMERER  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

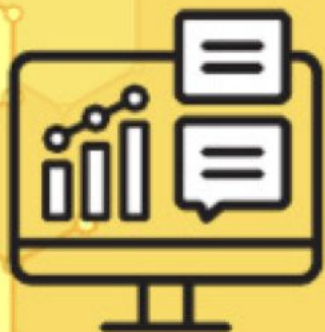


**Principal**

Shannon  
Corrigan



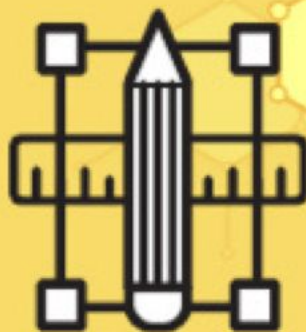
**KAMMERER  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**



**Business &  
Communication**



**Healthcare  
Science**

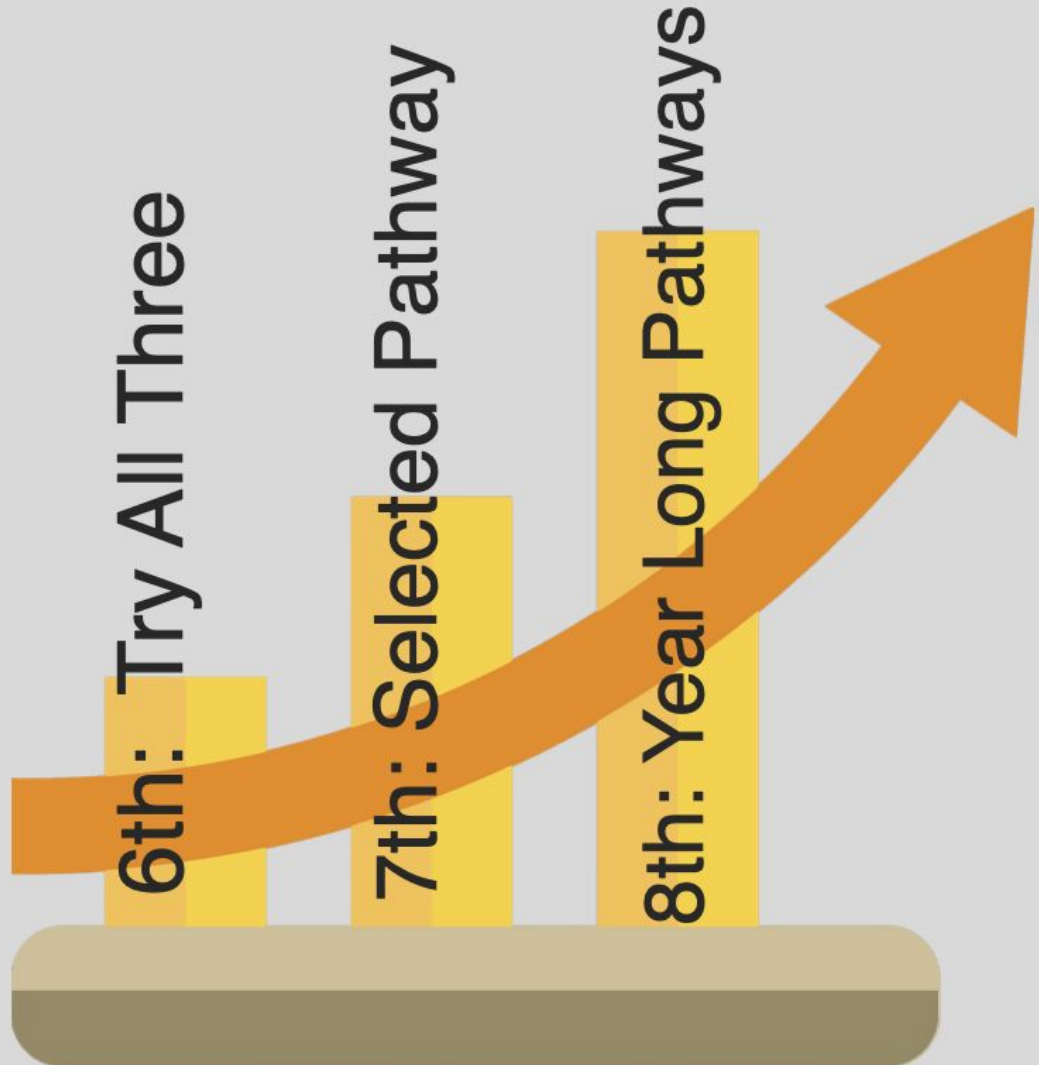


**Engineering  
& Design**





Elementary  
Experience



High School  
Academy





**Teacher**  
Victor  
Darrigrandi



**KAMMERER  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**



**Student**

Sophie  
Duncan



**KAMMERER  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**



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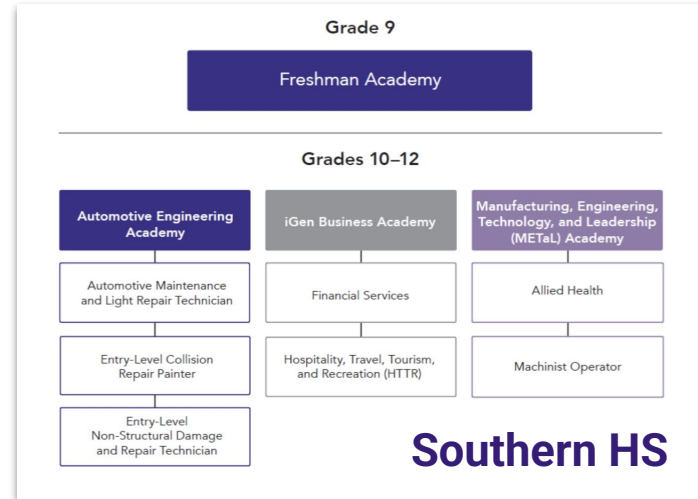
**Connecting to  
The Academies  
of Louisville**



“When students can see a possible future self that is positive, relevant, and achievable, they are more likely to take steps that bring that future into reality. Helping young people connect today’s learning with tomorrow’s opportunities fosters resilience and goal-setting habits that can last a lifetime.”

-Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954-969.

# Pathways to Academies







**Transforming middle school education by making it engaging, relevant, and future-focused.**

**Addressing key challenges and equips students with the skills they need to thrive.**





## **Middle School Students Prepared**

- » Knowing themselves as learners
- » Soft skill development
- » Service leadership experience

## **Transition with Success**

- » Ready to gain industry certification
- » Prepared for dual enrollment
- » Eager for internships
- » Serving in our community



# Academies of Louisville District Leadership Team



**Dr. Joseph Ellison, III**  
*Asst. Superintendent of  
JCPS High Schools*



**Kim Morales**  
*Executive  
Administrator, AofL  
High Schools*



**Mary Beth Smith**  
*Director Career  
Academies, AofL*



**Kristin Wingfeld**  
*Specialist,  
School Business  
Partnerships, AofL*



THE ACADEMIES  
OF LOUISVILLE

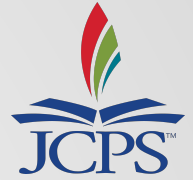
# Overview, Current Strategies, and Success

Presentation to Board of Education 1.28.25



# 4 Unique School Structures

*29 Schools Serve HS Students*



**Magnet** = theme-based, application only, districtwide access (*Brown, Butler, Central, DuBois, Grace James, Manual, Male, Western*)

**Alternative** = focus on behavior adjustment, district directed (*Breck Metro & Minor Daniels Academy*)

**Choice** = specialized learning environment, application only (*Pathfinder, Liberty, Phoenix & TAPP*)

**Academies of Louisville** = reside school, in-network transfers available



# CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN JCPS

## JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISTRICT MAP HIGH SCHOOLS

 Academies of Louisville Schools

 CTE Pathways Schools





# 2024 PSR in AofL Schools

**78%**

of 2024 Academies  
of Louisville  
Graduates were  
Postsecondary  
Ready  
(per KDE Measure)

**4.1%**

Increase over 2023  
Graduating Class

**136**

More students  
Postsecondary  
Ready than the Class  
of 2023





# All JCPS High Schools

2017-18

2023-24

**GRADUATION  
RATE**

**81.6%**

**87%**

**POSTSECONDARY  
READINESS RATE**

**50%**

**80.5%**

**READINESS GAP &  
GRADUATION GAP**

**34%/4%**

**21%/2%**



# Example: Fern Creek High School



**Dr. Rebecca Nicolas**  
**Executive Principal**

- Freshman Academy**
- Communications Academy**
- Education Academy**
- Tech & Trades Academy**



**THE ACADEMIES  
OF LOUISVILLE**

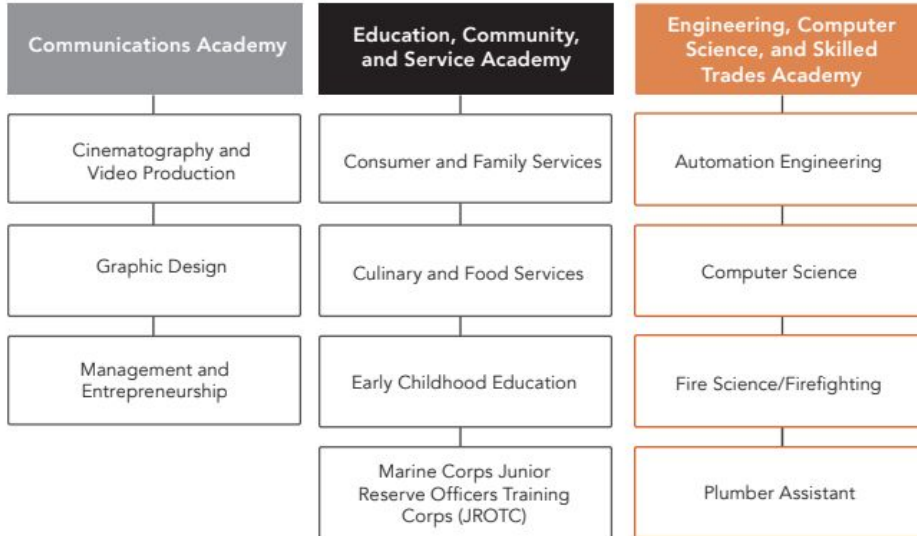
FERN CREEK HIGH SCHOOL

# Fern Creek High School Academies & Pathways

Grade 9

Freshman Academy

Grades 10–12



***EVERY***

- *Student*
- *Teacher*
- *Asst. Principal*
- *Counselor*

*Affiliated with an Academy*



# What is the Academy model?

*Career-themed small learning communities that connect classroom learning to the real-world.*



## Freshman Academy

Strong transition program to ensure all 9th EXPLORE careers and transition to academies!



## 10-12 Career Academies

4 course career pathway teamed with core content leading to work-based learning opportunities, field trips, tours, industry certifications



## Interdisciplinary

Find relevance through the lens of career academies – Project-Based Learning Authentic Challenges



## Leadership

Dedicated Assistant Principal and Counselor per academy & Academy Coach to connect partners



## Investment

Major financial investments in buildings renovations, teacher expansion, equipment, and resources



## Business Partnerships

Strong engagement with business partners to support LEARNING experiences and connects students with your content.



# National Career Academy Coalition: National Standards of Practice

1. Mission & Goals
2. Academy Design
3. Host Community & High School
4. Faculty & Staff
5. PD & Continuous Learning
6. Governance & Leadership
7. Teaching and Learning
8. Employer, Post-Secondary Education, & Community Involvement
9. Student Assessment
10. Sustainability



# Way to Go, Waggener!



## Model Status Recognition

Health Science Academy

IT & Law Academy

Freshman Academy

*WITH DISTINCTION*



# On Deck to Achieve Model Status

- Spring '25
  - Fern Creek HS - Freshman Academy
  - Seneca HS - All 4 Academies
- Spring '26
  - Atherton - Freshman Academy
  - Ballard - Freshman Academy
  - Doss - Freshman Academy
  - Iroquois - Create Academy
  - Jeffersontown - Freshman Academy
  - Moore - Community Academy
  - PRP - Manufacturing, Engineering & Design Academy
  - Southern - Freshman Academy





# Governance Structure



## JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Develops, implements, and monitors all aspects of the Academies*

### Student Ambassador Leadership Team

30 student ambassadors; focus on providing student voice in decisions for the development of the model

### JCPS Vision Team

30 school-based staff members; focus on Academies model development

### School-Level Advisory Boards

Academy partners, teachers, parents, and students; focus on XXX

## KENTUCKIANAWORKS

*Convening organization, provides staff and leadership*



Designated as the convening body; provides staff leadership and support for all Academies partners and activities



Team of business partner-facing and communications staff who work to strengthen existing relationships and foster community connection



## THE ACADEMIES OF LOUISVILLE



## GREATER LOUISVILLE INC.

*Business Partner Recruitment and Onboarding*

Recruits business partners and connects them to the schools; assists in partner development for all academies and monitors and celebrates partner outcomes

## GUIDING TEAM

Cultivates community-wide ownership

Primary advocates; mobilizes the community; provides strategic advice and oversight; sets goals for community engagement

### Executive Committee

**Subcommittees:** Business Partnerships, Fundraising, Student Engagement, Communications





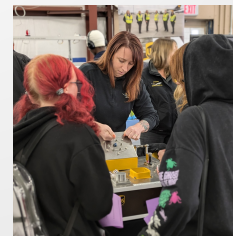
# Driving Outcomes



GOALS



STUDENT EXPERIENCES



# Student Experiences

	<b>23-24 Totals</b>	<b>24-25 YTD</b>
<b>Guest Speaker</b>	<b>6,896</b>	<b>5,634</b>
<b>Industry Tour</b>	<b>3,094</b>	<b>1,407</b>
<b>Job Shadow</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>571</b>
<b>College Visit</b>	<b>2,277</b>	<b>2,019</b>



# Partners in the Work



**Michael Gritton**  
Executive Director  
KentuckianaWorks

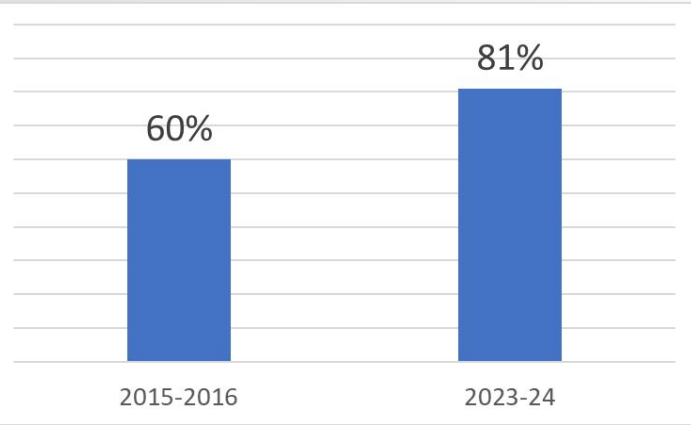


**Regina Phillips**  
Sr. Director, Special Projects  
KentuckianaWorks



# Connecting & Inspiring

Postsecondary Readiness  
15-16 vs. 23-24







THE ACADEMIES  
OF LOUISVILLE



**2024-2025**  
**Academies of Louisville**  
**Student Ambassadors**



# A Student's Perspective



**London Purdie**

*Class of 2025*

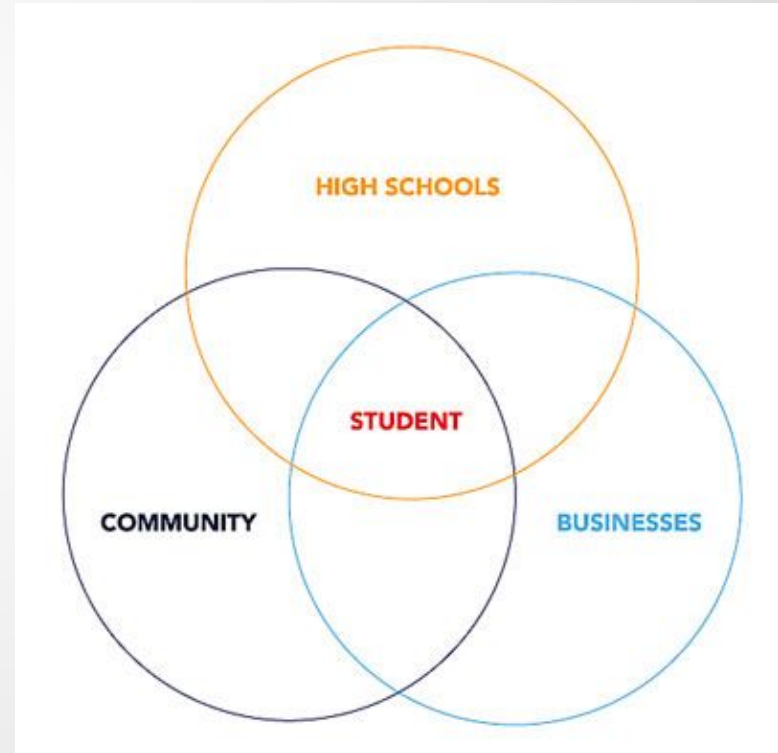
*Innovate Academy*

*Pre-Law Pathway*



# Looking Ahead

- Increased alignment with *Journey to Success*
- Continued partnership with *Explore* schools for a smooth and supportive transition for students from middle to high school
- Model Academies recognized in every AofL High School
- Increased number of postsecondary exploration experiences for every student





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

**Discussion/Questions**

# All Locations

