

## Patrick Henry's New Culture of Connection



Dr. Deborah  
Rogers,  
Patrick Henry  
Principal

**The support HOME WORKS! (HW!) provided us with the Getting Patrick Henry Connected (GPHC) initiative truly was the life-saver of the school in the face of extraordinary circumstances.** It's been

incredible to watch a community partner fundamentally transform our school and the way we approach communication

and engagement. Not only did we feel like we were being encouraged by the HW! community of supporters and donors, but **we were also equipped with practical, solution-based support at every turn.** HW! became an integral part of how we function as a school.

**With each layer of the program, we got closer and closer to better and better relationships with our students and their families.** Getting students desks so they weren't on Zoom in bed all day, providing alarm clocks for students struggling with attendance, connecting families with the Fire Department to install smoke detectors — each of these initiatives was a personal touch and connection that made families feel loved and cared for and, most importantly, empowered.

**One of my favorite things about GPHC is the deep-reaching and lasting changes to the way we communicate with our families and students — changes that will continue beyond the pandemic.** GPHC leveraged our school volunteers in ways we had never thought possible to strengthen how we engage our families in their children's learning. The Buddy reading program was incredibly valuable academically; it connected students with a one-on-one reader who helped

parents support their child's learning outside of the classroom. That level of attention is exactly what it takes to improve reading and test scores, advance students academically, and improve behavior in the classroom. That happened for so many kids last year and we will continue those initiatives into the next.

GPHC also connected Patrick Henry with vital community partners who will make our students safer in school and at home. With GPHC as the catalyst, we established a communication line to the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD). Now we have a police presence at drop-off and pick-up, emergency response time is faster, and SLMPD is keeping us updated on how they are serving the surrounding community and how that may impact our students. We are actual partners.

I had the opportunity to connect in person with **Alderman James Page**. I never met our last Alderman, despite a lot of communication efforts. This was a very different experience. Alderman Page listened to our concerns, and helped us identify opportunities and plan concrete next steps. Many of our youngest students got to interact with Alderman Page. Their number one question was, "Do you know my mom?" Students had the opportunity to talk about voting, elections, and what it means to be an elected official.

**GPHC brought us sustainable long-term, relationship-oriented solutions.** We are now empowered to continue building trust with our school community, our staff community, and our volunteer community with measurable results.



## GPHC Successes



What started out as HW!'s response to the pandemic's deepening of the digital divide quickly grew into the GPHC initiative. GPHC went well beyond addressing technological inequities; it was about HW! committing to do whatever it took to ensure that all students, parents, and teachers at Patrick Henry had what they needed to thrive during this past school year. As the school year progressed, we partnered with Patrick Henry staff and community stakeholders to tackle every challenge that came our way, with 29 different interventions in fact! Over the year we had many successes, and some failures, too, and learned from both how to make our partnership stronger. We are excited to share some of our successes with you.

- By the end of the first week of school over 90% of students were participating in distance learning, compared to less than 10% during the final months of the 2019 school year
- For the first time in recent memory, Patrick Henry enrolled enough students to host their own summer school location AND had the seventh highest attendance of all SLPS elementary summer schools



All 235 Patrick Henry students received critical supplies for distance learning



Thousands of phone calls, text messages, and hundreds of porch visits



Over 1,000 volunteer hours donated



\$5,800 in grocery gift cards to increase attendance



35 families received basic needs supplies



43 households received desks and chairs



4 technology sessions for parents



All families received an iPad manual tailored for distance learning

## Buddy Reading Program at Patrick Henry

Too many students at Patrick Henry were reading below grade level, so HW! recruited volunteers and partnered them with Patrick Henry students to provide one-on-one reading support. "Buddy pairs" met virtually on Zoom to read twice a week. The students and the volunteers were delighted to read together. In some cases the volunteers started relationships with the families and provided much needed support. **The Buddy Reading Program was a win-win-win-win. A win for the students. A win for the families. A win for the school, and a win for the community.**



## A New Parent Group at Patrick Henry

One of the challenges encountered at Patrick Henry is building a PTO—a Parent Teacher Organization. According to the current and former principals, there has not been a PTO in recent history. The former CEO, Karen Kalish, and I, a board member who works at Ameren, called parents to see if we could spark some interest in joining a Patrick Henry parent group. A few parents met with us on Zoom for the first time on March 11, 2021 and met every other week until the end of June. Parents attended to talk, share ideas, listen to presentations and, most importantly, connect with one another.

I facilitated and started every meeting asking for highs and lows, which they loved. One parent shared her high for the week was getting her first COVID-19 vaccination shot while a low for another parent was related to the stress of the pandemic.

We had speakers on subjects the parents requested: **Zasmine Johnson of Blueprint4SummerSTL** shared summer programs; **Reginald Garth of Operation Hope** shared ideas on financial health and wellbeing; two representatives from the **College Savings Program** presented on their program, and the local alderman of the 5th ward, **James Page** joined to give parents a voice in their community.

Even Principal Deborah Rogers attended and heard parents share ideas of programs they want at Patrick Henry. Parents said that they really enjoyed the meetings and learned something valuable from each one. One parent shared that it meant so much to her to be heard and to have her voice matter. In many ways, this pandemic, through the power of HW!, drew these parents together and empowered them to get involved at their child's school. **Special kudos to parent Ms. Chinna Harris** (photo below) who attended every meeting and agreed to take the first step to help start a PTO at Patrick Henry.



As the discussion leader of this gathering of amazing parents, participating was immensely rewarding for me. We brainstormed solutions together. That's what you do when you are building a community beyond location, beyond a pandemic, beyond time constraints and societal barriers. You connect.



Constance Taylor



## Getting Our Learnings Out

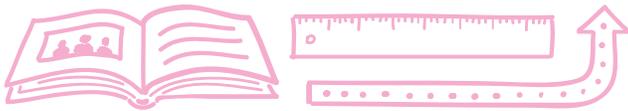
### The Case Study

When HW! invited me to help document the GPHC initiative, I jumped at the opportunity. I thought the project was important since it served a community already strapped for resources before the pandemic, and that HW!’s “Do what it takes” approach would bring forth a wellspring of innovative ideas. My hope is that the case study captures these innovations and will help other teachers, schools, and districts better understand how to make sure every student has what it takes to succeed as learners.



**Patrick S. Moreton Ph.D.**

Professor of Practice in Strategy and Management at Washington University in St. Louis



## The Playbook

To help more schools and communities learn from our work, we developed a series of tools and recommendations — an online “Playbook” if you will—for getting schools and families connected to each other and to their communities. We’ll present the Playbook to educators from around the country at The National Family Engagement Summit in Norfolk, Virginia in October and launch it on our website this fall.

### The Playbook Authors



**Lisa Dorner, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia



**Kelly Harris, Ph.D.**

Instructor of Occupational Therapy and Surgery at Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine

## What’s Next: The Learning Lab at Patrick Henry

In a school year of unprecedented and unpredictable challenges, our GPHC initiative pushed us to be bold, innovative, and responsive in our mission to connect families and school for student success. As the school year wrapped up, we observed a school culture that had shifted over the course of the year.

As we head into a new school year, HW! will continue to partner with Patrick Henry on innovative ways to engage families and continue to build a more connected and resilient school community. This academic year, HW! will support Patrick Henry to:

- Furnish, maintain and promote a Parent Resource Room at the school.
- Host family events at school—bringing people together to build trust and relationships.

- Start a Parent Teacher Organization—the first PTO in recent memory!
- Use volunteers to support communication (breaking down barriers with social media tools and texting), and continue our Buddy program for students who need extra assistance with reading.
- Pilot emerging ideas and interventions and, if successful, implement in our other partner schools.
- With volunteers and community partners we will continue to support Patrick Henry’s mission to deliver students and families an excellent education.



## GPHC Partners



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Families at the Center of Results



“

*I was overjoyed to see the happiness the police officers brought to my classroom. One of my students was wearing his badge proudly and even asked me if I thought he could be a police officer when he grew up.”*

— Jami Fales, Patrick Henry 2nd Grade Teacher

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Yes!

Patrick Henry students touring a police car at a GPHC organized event.

## We Couldn't Have Done it Without You!

### GPHC Volunteers:

Chad Baker  
Christopher Bedell  
Ben Beinfeld  
Harriet Blickenstaff  
Eric Bronner  
Jude Bronner  
Alex Clemmons  
Courtney Coslor Dale  
Heidi Currier  
Vivian Darrell  
Lisa Dorner  
Cindy Frank

Carol Frohlichstein  
Natalie Gilliam  
Kelly Harris  
Vickie Henson  
Molly Koebbe  
Susan Lammert  
Julie Lazaroff  
Jackie Levin  
Susan Loftin  
Ann Mandelstamm  
Molly McGraw  
Susan Mertens McGraw  
Tabitha Milon

Patrick Moreton  
Alan Nissenbaum  
Andrea Rosenblum  
Susie Rubin  
Thalia Ruiz  
Marianne Salciccia  
Christine Schmiz  
Matthew Schwartz  
Joy Sterneck  
Victor Thomas  
Oishka Vaid  
Miriam Wilhelm  
Marilyn Zucker

### Donors who made special gifts to GPHC:

Jeff and Amy Call  
Robin Ehrlich  
Jane Grady  
Amy Kanfer  
Nina Needleman  
Stephanie Riven  
Michael Staenberg

### GPHC Staff:

Colin Dale,  
Project Manager  
Susan Loftin,  
Project Coordinator

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St. Louis, MO 63105



## The Getting Patrick Henry Connected Newsletter

Over a year ago, because of the COVID-19 virus, schools were required to shift 100% to virtual instruction. Patrick Henry Elementary, one of our neighborhood schools, struggled to contact students and parents, struggled to provide technology and struggled to get students engaged.

### HWI: The Teacher Home Visit Program, a critical

**non-profit partner, came to the rescue.** They mobilized to contact parents by doing virtual home visits. They provided technology training to students and parents, and even paid parents to come to training. They provided food and supplies to students and parents. They simply removed every barrier, reason, or excuse that was presented to the faculty and staff. They even supported the staff with incentives and rewards.

### They remain today as a vital solution for the administration at Patrick Henry!

—Kelvin R. Adams, Ph.D., Superintendent, Saint Louis Public School District

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Patrick Henry students and SLMPD officers at the GPHC Ice Cream Social