

## Muse STEAM Service Academy “On a Trajectory of Excellence”

### Mission, Vision, and Innovation

Muse STEAM Service Academy (MSSA) proposes a 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school set in the Jeff Vander Lou (JVL) community, launching with grade 6 in the Fall of 2022. The mission is “MSSA combines the power of STEAM education with a strong commitment to self and advocacy for the community, equipping every student to thrive in the future.” The vision expands on the mission’s goal: “MSSA builds the capacity and orientations of all students as compassionate beings to succeed across disciplines.”

Named in homage to Frankie Muse Freeman Esq., a national civil rights icon, MSSA has flipped the art component of the STEAM model to advocacy. We believe that art is advocacy and advocacy is art. Scholars will learn to advocate for themselves and others. Like Mrs. Freeman, we believe the world’s best and brightest are in St. Louis. We are committed to create pathways that support our students in transforming their neighborhood, city, and the world. MSSA scholars are “On a Trajectory of Excellence”.

### School Design: Graduate Aims and Pillars of Learning

Muse STEAM Service Academy is centered on opportunities to foster critical thinking, allowing students to continually reflect on their understanding through questioning. Leveraging STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Advocacy, Math) as our focus, we ensure that students are not only building high leverage skills and knowledge but are able to be responsive to the needs of most industries. Their skills and understanding will be second only to their ability to lead out of an abundance of compassion, advocating for sound and tempered decision making that focuses on impact. Our goal is that students thrive at high levels academically, emotionally, and socially. Our graduate aims are:

- **Master Academics:** Grow a deep knowledge base across content areas, connecting to strong knowledge in STEAM fields.
- **Strong Habits of Mind:** The ability to think like a scientist across disciplines by tackling big questions.
- **Compassion:** Demonstrate empathy and care for self and others.
- **Advocacy:** An inward and outward stance that risks involvement for what is right, because it is right.
- **Innovative Solution Finding:** Approach problem solving with ingenuity.
- **Technological Fluency:** Utilizing technology to improve connections and solve human problems. Students will use a toolbox of visual (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grade) and text-based (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) programming languages by high school.

### Muse Steam Service Academy stands on these Pillars of Learning:

- **Reflection:** Intentional social emotional development, focused on creating a strong community that enables powerful critical questioning of all learning. *Questioning becomes the heart of all our meaning making. We do this through powerful restorative and reflective practices like circles and collaborative performance tasks.*
- **Connectedness:** Learning does not happen in silos, but rather connects across disciplines and to the world around us, through self-compassion to advocate for others. *We do this by creating conceptual themes that unify learning across the school. Unification looks like advocacy projects that are capstones to the iterative performance tasks. Performance tasks bridge content with real world experiences.*
- **Agency:** Autonomy and self-direction that develops the capacity to learn one’s strengths and identify areas of support. *We do this through students setting personalized goals that allow students to choose their level of collaboration. Student-led conferencing helps students to internalize their own data and set goals to achieve their milestones.*
- **Critical Thinking:** To be future ready and able to tackle complex challenges that build understanding, skill, and stamina by practicing thinking deeply. *We do this through the MSSA culture committed to codifying the habits of mind protocol throughout the academic, cultural, and operational school systems.*

*We will develop transferable, robust thinking skills and leverage high engagement strategies like Socratic seminars as a vehicle for discourse.*

### **Targeted Population**

Muse STEAM Service Academy seeks to serve the Jeff Vander Lou neighborhood located in North St. Louis City. Our school will be open enrollment and demonstrate enrollment preference for our most underserved student population in St. Louis City, specifically in these zip codes: 63106, 63107, 63113. This community is made up of a little under 6000 families. Over the next ten years, the population is expected to stabilize and decrease slightly as viable housing options are impacted by demand and eminent domain use. The families in this community have seen the consolidation of schools as part of the St. Louis Public School’s plan to merge under-populated buildings. With the school shifts, parents/guardians are limited in options and access to a high-quality neighborhood public school, especially one focused on middle grades. After conducting more than 30 empathy interviews formally and informally, it’s abundantly clear that parents are afraid for their children's lives and the dearth of opportunities available in St. Louis.

The planned community for the school site has a free and reduced lunch rate of 74%. 97.2% of the JVL community is African American, 1.2% Mixed race, and 1.3% White. JVL zip code analysis shows that 13% of school age children had IEP’s in 2019, making up over 30% of the total special education population for St. Louis City. Positionally, JVL is home to the 40+ year hole (untouched land) that was Pruitt Igo Projects. It also is the projected new site of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) coming in 5 to 6 years. Current residents are shouldering the stress of eventually being pushed out, back, or down. From a historical context, families of this community have been marginalized from opportunity. Feeder school proficiency rates in the JVL community is 5.8% in Math and ELA.

### **Student Day in the Life**

The MSSA school day runs from 7:30 am until 3:30 pm on an 1A/B, 2A/B, 3E block schedule. Before and after-school activities will be run in rotation with content area teachers and support staff. Brian is a member of the inaugural 6th grade class.

<b>Bell Schedule</b>	<b>Brian’s Experiences on A/B Days</b>	<b>School-wide Initiatives</b>
<b>Before 7:30 am</b>	<b>ARRIVAL:</b> Brian arrives at 7:15 am. The Enrichment Class teachers are monitoring early arrival. He is able to meet with Ms. Lambus to discuss ideas for the advocacy project for 10 minutes. She uses the Habits of Mind questions to push his thinking.	Brian uses the capstone project rubric to decide the social issue and how advocacy looks to him.
<b>7:30 am to 7:45 am</b>	<b>BREAKFAST &amp; QUIET TIME:</b> Brian picks the breakfast-on-the-go option and finds an area in the cafeteria to update the MSSA Standards Matrix for his advocacy project.	Students have the option of choosing hot breakfast or breakfast on the go. Students clean up before morning meetings/circles.
<b>7:45 am to 7:55 am</b>	<b>CIRCLE CHECK IN:</b> Brian arrives in his Humanities class and sits in the morning circle. The teacher empowers a fellow student to conduct an Reflective Circle: (Muse SSA trains adults and children on two types of circles: Reflective circles are format-specific experiences that support students in questioning, reflection and building skills to be a compassionate member of the Muse community. Restorative circles are reactive circles that provide triage support when there is a conflict.	Students and teachers are trained by restorative coaches to conduct academic circles, mediations, and peer support.

<p><b>8:00 am to 9:25 am</b></p>	<p><b>Humanities = ELA + Social Studies</b>  <u>A Day:</u> Brian chose two leaders and change agents (one from USA and South America) and is building an interactive timeline (includes graphics, maps, and summaries) to parallel their lives and movements.  <b>Science</b>  <u>B Day:</u> MO State Science Standards will be combined with the quarterly concepts. Brian is working on ecosystems and disruptions (paced from the New Generation Science curriculum) aligned to freedom, movement and change quarterly conceptual theme.</p>	<p>It is the 3rd Quarter. The conceptual understanding is Freedom, Movement &amp; Change. They are reading a text set from <a href="#">@theblackiqproject</a> on social justice leaders and <a href="#">Facing History and Ourselves</a>. The Writing Across the curriculum B-day class will help Brian evaluate his summary writing.</p>
<p><b>9:30 am to 10:55 am</b></p>	<p><b>Math with Technology</b>  <u>A Day:</u> <a href="#">Illustrative Math</a> is looking at the representing and analyzing qualitative relationships between dependent and independent variables. Brian is using this understanding to tell the story of Selma, AL. Brian is making meaning by removing people/personalities as variables and hypothesizing what would have happened in Selma if changes happen. Brian will transition to NWEA on-line platform to focus on areas that need strengthening the last 30 minutes of class..    <b>Writing Across the Curriculum</b>  <u>B Day:</u> Brian is working on organizing his Avid-formatted binder and receiving feedback on his outline notes from all core classes. Brian’s binder check provides feedback using the binder check rubric.</p>	<p>The Numeracy Plan is to create an at-homeness with numbers and redesign how we <a href="#">integrate critical thinking in Math</a>.    MSSA has writing protocols that support writing in all contents: research paper, summaries, paraphrasing, note-taking.</p>
<p><b>11 am to 11:35 am</b></p>	<p><b>Lunch</b>  Today Brian has lunch with a buddy he met in the small counseling group for students with an incarcerated parent. <a href="#">5 minute “Finish Strong” Check-in</a> (motivational cheer committing to refocus to have a strong finish of the day)</p>	<p>Students will participate in groups facilitated by SLU doctoral students that support their compassion towards themselves. (self-selected or parent choice)</p>
<p><b>11:40 am to 1:10 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Movement &amp; Health</b>  <u>A Day:</u> Brian will have 45 minutes Physical Education and 45 minutes of <a href="#">Math &amp; Movement</a>. Brian notices one of the smaller students is being made fun of by a student in his small group. He reports it to the teacher for documentation but asks if he can have a peer conference with the offending student. The teacher agrees. They set up in the teacher’s office for a 10 minute meditation. The other student makes the decision to apologize.  <b>Marketing/Brand Building &amp; Avid Math Tutoring</b>  <u>B Day:</u> Brian will have a 45 minute split with each class. Brian is building his brand by increasing his social media presence focusing on the advocacy project he has chosen. Brian is glad to see the <a href="#">Avid</a> tutor from SLU to help with the algebra concept in IXL Math.</p>	

<p><b>1:15 pm to 2:25 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Advocacy Projects &amp; Restorative Circle</b>          Brian chooses to work on his advocacy project. He has partnered with Janet this quarter, after working independently at the beginning of the year. He and Janet have extended their study on the JVL as a food desert to creating a community garden. They are also supporting the movement to remove vacant homes and repurpose the land.  <b>Restorative Circle:</b> journey to personal excellence through focused sessions using The Four Agreements book as a ground text. Students work to use the principles to inform their collaborative time and support groups.</p>	<p>Students will use The Four Agreements book as the basis for building compassion and belonging.</p>
<p><b>2:30 pm to 3:30 pm</b>   <b>“Power Hour”</b></p>	<p><b>Reflection, Goal-setting &amp; Support</b>          Brian decided to find a space to continue working with Janet. He chose a maker space in the library to ensure they have access to technology and receive help from Mr. Bibbs, media/technology specialist..</p>	<p>Students have a MSSA created guide to guide them through reflection and goal-setting.           Teachers and staff sign-up for time in the maker spaces to answer questions and provide support.</p>

**Friday: Brian’s Self-Directed Day  
 (Day ends at 2 pm)**

<p><b>7:30 am - 11:40 am</b></p>	<p>After breakfast and circle, Brian is able to go on a focused field trip to SLU’s library. He and Janet had to be approved based on the progress made with their project. They have two different supervising teachers, both had to approve. They are able to have lunch on campus.</p>
<p><b>11:45 am - 1 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Coding: (Students choose between Coding, Robotics, Art, Chorus, and Drama as an elective. MSSA utilizes enrichment partners and St. Louis University for enrichment offerings.)</b>          Brian returns to participate in the visual coding class that teaches Scratch 3.0 and Blockly. Brian found the text-based languages he learned last semester more difficult but ultimately more useful.</p>
<p><b>1 pm - 2 pm</b></p>	<p>Brian has scheduled time with the Math teacher to ensure that he is now on track and mastering content at grade level.</p>

**Expected Academic Outcomes and Evidence:**

SEL: Utilizing the CT3, [No Nonsense Nurture model](#), MSSA will prioritize building relationships with students and families. This will create a culture of safety that enables students and teachers to take academic risks and become emotionally vulnerable. We also understand that organization skills are difficult for middle school children, we will incorporate the [Avid System](#) to teach protocols around binders, notes, thinking maps, etc. Parents, students, and teachers will complete [Insight](#) surveys to determine our progress towards culture goals.

Academics: MSSA expects to achieve its mission and vision by leveraging our experiences and partnerships. The [Illustrative Math](#) curriculum is highly rated by [EdReports.org](#) as an interactive curriculum that focuses on high engagement and real-world application of practices and concepts. MSSA will combine ELA with Social Studies to create a unique humanities course offering. This will require an integration of the content from a variety of curriculums focused on advocacy and justice. [Teaching Tolerance](#) combined with the [EL Curriculum](#) (which has some aspects of advocacy and justice) will give students a rich foundation of a historical perspective intermixed with current events. For the science curriculum, we will use The MO State Science Standards. The science curriculum orients to STEAM components with “cross-cutting” concepts that align to universal themes across disciplines.

Governance: Muse Steam Service Academy will be governed by an independent board pursuant to Missouri State statute for public charter schools. Our board will ensure that MSSA operates through an equity lens to achieve the stated mission and vision. Each board member is expected to meet 80% of board meetings and meet the annual fundraising goal, collectively.

Financial: The [attached draft budget](#) is prudent in its estimation of income and costs. The intentional flat rate of WADA funds (weighted average daily attendance) allows for any increase to positively impact the financial

health of MSSA. We are not certain what the impact of COVID-19 on the WADA formula over the next few years.

In the first three years there is a fundraising goal of \$75000.00 per year. MSSA is seeking to ensure we are able to meet that goal through rigorous fundraising by grant writing, donation requests, strategic partnerships, and board member commitments.

### **Evidence of Impact**

Our Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) will increase incrementally as the culture becomes more ingrained with the high expectations and high self-efficacy necessary to become a world class school. Based on baseline assessment data and end-of-year proficiency scores, we set a Year 1 goal of 15% increase in growth above incoming student NWEA RIT scores. From the first year proficiency on EOY assessment, proficiency bar will increase by 7 to 10% minimally each year.

Using a suite of resources, we assess student mastery through formal and informal measures. Formally, MSSA will utilize NWEA MAP to measure quarterly progress in Math and Reading. The benefits are two-fold: individual plans for enrichment/support as well as class reports that can be sorted by RIT (equal-interval scale for achievement and growth: 100-300), goal, and projected proficiency. These components allow teachers to support students with structured interventions, accommodations, and modifications. The individual goals set in collaboration with students and families, will require a growth rate of +1 to +2 years in a single school year. MSSA will construct bi-weekly common assessments in all disciplines that will be used to inform tutorial schedules and reteaching plans. Missouri schools use NWEA MAP, which allows for MSSA to track growth and proficiency projections within a cohort of peers using the same measures and a common language. Mastery of advocacy projects will be assessed with portfolio rubrics for presentation, writing, and impact.

### **Founding Team**

#### **Vanessa Hopkins, Founding Executive Director and CEO**

Vanessa transitioned from a career in social services to education over 17 years ago. She served as a ELA teacher and Social Studies teacher in Atlanta, GA. After seven years, she was accepted in the national New Leaders Aspiring Principals Program (Memphis, TN). She has been a resident principal, vice principal, district literacy coach and school principal. She has demonstrated an ability to improve the culture and academics of struggling schools.

#### **Barabra Primm, Founding Board Member**

Barbara brings a wealth of experience to the school design team. She is the owner of [All Things Business, LLC](#), a firm that supports other businesses with incorporation, planning and design, marketing, operating agreements and financial forecasting. She also works part-time as an instructor with a local technical school. In her down time, she sponsors a robotics team for students 10 to 14 years old.

#### **Taylor Bass, Founding Board Member**

Taylor has her BA in Psychology from Rhodes College (Memphis, TN). She is currently a full-time graduate student and research assistant in the Masters of Social Work program at Washington University. Her extensive volunteering and part-time work with WePower, the Hospitality Hub (homeless intake counselor in Memphis, TN), Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations makes her a valuable addition to the team.

#### **Jeanette White, Prospective Board Member (interview in process)**

Jeanette is a community connector that brings her experience fund-raising and community involvement with Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville (SIUE). She has worked to support the university's outreach to the East St. Louis and St. Louis City area. A life-long St. Louis resident, she has built connections to many community stakeholders.