

*Starr Detroit Academy is dedicated to the mission of preparing kids for academic mastery, college, work and life.*

## Starr Detroit Academy undergoes leadership change, continues dedication to mission

When leadership at Starr Commonwealth decided to pursue education as a way to positively impact Detroit and the surrounding communities, Starr Detroit Academy was born and the foundation was set for Starr to change education in Detroit.

Over the past year and a half, Starr Detroit Academy has delivered exceptional educational services while helping students achieve significant academic gains.

The school has grown from serving 500 students in Year 1 to nearly 800 this year. But to have an even greater impact, more schools must deliver the same quality experience.

That's why Jeremy Vidito, former SDA principal, has accepted a new position with the Academy's management company, Starr Commonwealth Educational Services.

At SCES Vidito will serve as executive director of strategic planning and new schools.

He will be tasked with helping to replicate the success of Starr Detroit Academy with new schools across the area.

"I have been very fortunate to work with dedicated, passionate educators at Starr Detroit Academy, as well as the scholars and their families," Vidito said. "Starr Commonwealth Educational Services is committed to providing the great experience students get at Starr Detroit Academy to more children and families across Detroit. I'm excited to be entering into this new role and look forward to the challenge it presents. I look forward to working with SDA in an effort to help new schools prosper. SDA won't skip a beat under Kimberley Pressley. She's an accomplished educator who is well-equipped to lead our school."

Pressley is in her first year at Starr Detroit Academy, but she has a wealth of experience in education and charter schools. She previously worked for National Heritage Academies, where she held a variety of positions during her eight-year career at NHA. She most recently held the role of dean before arriving at Starr Detroit Academy.

She came to SDA looking to contribute to the school's mission of preparing students for academic mastery, college, work and life.

Pressley will be joined by interim assistant principal Laura Green, and Dr. Ray Johnson will continue to provide leadership and guidance to the school.



**Assistant principal Kimberley Pressley will now serve as interim principal of SDA.**

## Upcoming Events

**Dec. 23 - Jan. 3:** Holiday break  
No school

**Jan. 6:** First day back from holiday break

**Jan. 13:** NWEA Testing (K-6)

**Jan. 20:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day - No school

## IMPORTANT UPDATES

At Starr Detroit Academy, we are working diligently to provide your child with an excellent education in a nurturing and supportive school environment. We know you care about your child's future, and so do we. We are endeavoring to serve as positive role models for your child, in addition to being their educators. By working with parents, we can give our students every opportunity to become productive members of the community. Please know that as we develop new policies and procedures, we do so to become more effective and efficient. We are asking that you adhere to these requested procedures. The following new procedures will help us to accomplish this goal:

### Early Dismissal

We will not honor early dismissal after 3:00 p.m. on M, T, Th, F. On Wednesdays we will not honor early dismissal after 1:30 p.m.

### Transportation

If you need your child to not ride their assigned bus on M, T, Th, F, the request must be made before 2:00 p.m. that day in order to be honored. A request made after 2:00 p.m. cannot be honored. On Wednesday, a request must be made before 12:30. After 12:30 a request cannot be honored. We cannot make last minute bus changes. This poses a danger to our students.

### After-School Dismissal

Beginning Jan. 6, 2014, all students who leave by car will be waiting for parents outside of the front door of the school at 3:50 p.m. Parents must walk up to the front door area and indicate to the teacher that they are here for their child. Please do not call for your child to come across the parking lot to your car. Parents will no longer have to come into the building and sign your child out in the cafeteria. All students must be picked up no later than 4:00 p.m. If your child is not picked up on time, he/she will be placed in latchkey and the parent will be assessed a fee of \$5.00 every 15 minutes, which must be paid upon arrival.

### Latchkey Service

Latchkey service offered at SDA is a privilege. This service is provided to parents whose work schedule does not permit them to pick their children up at the 3:45 p.m. dismissal time. Too often, parents who do not need this service are leaving their children in latchkey. We can no longer allow this to occur. Latchkey is very expensive to operate because we must hire individuals to watch over our students. Therefore, please pick your children up on time. In January, parents must complete a form to verify your need for latchkey. For those students who are apart of latchkey, a contract must be signed by parents and students agreeing to adhere to the guidelines and expectations established for attending latchkey. This contract will be available for signatures Jan. 6, 2014. If the contract is not signed, your child will not be able to stay for latchkey after that date. Latchkey contracts must be turned in to their teacher no later than Jan. 8. After Jan. 8 your child will not be allowed in latchkey.

### Enrichment Program

The start date for the second phase of our Starr Detroit Academy Enrichment Program will be announced in January 2014.



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## Families should continue to work with students over break

As the holiday break approaches, staff and students will soon have time to spend with family and friends. But parents and families have the opportunity to continue working with their children during this time out of the classroom.

There are many things you can do with your child, including making flashcards on a variety of subjects. One example is creating math flashcards, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Families can also make a trip to the library, Michigan Science Center or Children's Museum.

Many families have large meals over the holiday season, and this can be an opportunity to help students with measurement and following directions.

Several daily activities provide learning opportunities, so get creative and continue to build on your child's skills!

## SDA given artwork from special event

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC), a program of Starr Commonwealth's Global Learning Network, held a special event, "After the Violence: Lessons Learned from Sandy Hook," on Thursday, Nov. 14, at the Macomb County ISD in Clinton Township, Mich.

Over 100 professionals from various backgrounds attended the presentation, which was aimed at working through lessons learned from traumatic events, specifically the Sandy Hook school shooting.

Special guests also included a staff member from Virginia Tech. Presenters included Dr. Anthony Salvatore, Assistant Principal, Newtown Middle School; Susan Connelly, School Counselor, Newtown Middle School; Gerard Lawson, Counselor, Virginia Tech; Laura Serazin and Misty Ramos, Bereavement and Grief Counselors, Cornerstone of Hope.

Participants contributed handmade mosaic glass tiles as part of a large piece of art. This unique piece of art, which reads "We Choose Peace" and is adorned with the TLC and Newtown logos, was given to Newtown Schools, which then graciously donated it back to Starr and TLC.

It was installed at Starr Detroit Academy in early December and serves as a reminder of the resilience displayed by schools across the country after traumatic events.

"We felt like putting this up at Starr Detroit Academy was a powerful message to the community and showed our support for Newtown Schools," said Dr. Caelan Kuban, the director of TLC. "It was so generous of them to gift the artwork to Starr, and for that we are extremely grateful."

