

volunteer

Returning VICC Alum:

Childhood friends from early VICC program are together again at Hancock Place

When Tom Dittrich was in third grade at Hancock Place Elementary School Ward #3, he befriended classmate Michael Moultrie, a new transfer student who had come to the district through the VICC desegregation program.

"We have been more like brothers than friends for all of these years, as we attended Hancock Place School District and played basketball together," said Dittrich, who is now principal of the Hancock Place Middle School. Moultrie went on to attend St. Louis Community College at Meramec, then attended Central Missouri State for his post-secondary education — and he played basketball in both places. "We stayed in touch long distance, as we lived in different states."

Last year, Moultrie was hired by the St. Louis Special School District and assigned to the Hancock Place district, where he is a teacher's assistant in grades six through eight and the basketball coach at the high school. Moultrie moved his wife and two children into the district that helped shape his attitudes, friendships and career. Wife LaNessa is also part of the Hancock family through coaching girls basketball at the Middle School. Son Messiah, a junior, plays basketball and soccer, sings in choir and has a 4.1 GPA. Daughter NessAsiah, a sophomore, plays basketball and soccer and has a 4.2 GPA.

Coincidentally, Dittrich also has two children around the same ages in the district, son Trey, a junior, and daughter Aliya, age 15.

"Mike has been an outstanding hire," Dittrich said. "His efforts include building positive relationships with all of our students, families and staff. His heart bleeds blue and gold, and he loves our community."

Moultrie and his three brothers were among the first group of students in the desegregation program back in the 1983-84 school year. His oldest brother, Maurice, was "one of the first students to get off the bus in the deseg program," Moultrie said. "He set the bar and standard for the rest of us."

Maurice was the district's first black class president and was a member of the National Honor Society. Younger brothers Mike, Matthew and Marcus (who recently died) all followed him into the Honor Society, sang in choir and took drama with Mr. Hack.

"When we first came, it was kind of a shock," Moultrie said. "In the city, we had schools that were right around the block. But our mom wanted us to go somewhere else for educational opportunities. We were a little apprehensive at first, but as the years went on, we got used to it. At first it was tough for us and the community to get used to each other."

Before the program, most of the Moultrie boys' encounters with people of another race were somewhat negative, he said. "But when we got to Hancock, Ms. Langley, Mr. Hack, Mrs. Childress, Ms. Beard, Mr. Berndt and Coach Smith all made us feel at home. They made us feel very comfortable and very safe. Once we got off the buses at school, all of our teachers and administrators made us feel welcome."

And then there was that kid from Mrs. Alden's third grade class, Tom Dittrich — Moultrie was in Ms. Langley's third grade class — who played kickball and basketball with him during recess. Harold Cooper and Kenny Hayman often joined in. "We created a bond through the classroom and sports and athletics," Moultrie said. "I would end up staying the night at Tom's house for basketball practice. From third grade on, we have been more

Tom Dittrich
and Mike Moultrie



Continued on page 3:
Returning VICC Alum

Cultivating an inclusive environment to help students of color thrive

VICC was recently highlighted in a research brief reviewing the best practices for the social-emotional well-being of students of color for the National Coalition on School Diversity (NCSd).

VICC was one of four desegregation programs studied by Carole Learned-Miller, a doctoral candidate in the Education Leadership program at Harvard University. The other programs are Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity (METCO) in Massachusetts; Open Choice, in Hartford, Connecticut; and Urban-Suburban Program, in Rochester, New York.

Learned-Miller's research brief, released in September and titled "How to Support the Social-Emotional Well-Being of Students of Color," outlines best practices to support students of color attending schools with a majority of white children. The brief includes survey results and recommendations from districts with interdistrict integration programs that are focused on the dual goals of increasing access to educational opportunity and promoting integration.

"Parents, particularly parents of color, often worry about the conditions in racially and economically diverse schools," Learned-Miller said. "Merely putting a diverse set of children into schools together is not enough to ensure that they will thrive, both academically and socially."

Compared to peers in segregated schools, students in diverse learning environments show "increased academic achievement, an enhanced ability to solve problems, and diminished student prejudices and stereotypes, and they are more likely to be civically engaged as adults," said Gina Chirichigno of NCSd. "However, creating diverse learning environments can come with challenges, particularly for students of color."

Students of color participating in school diversity programs can face isolation, lowered expectations, limited opportunities for extracurricular activities and other challenges that result from institutional racism in schools and society. But the programs highlighted in the report, including VICC, are working to create welcoming, supportive and inclusive environments for all students, an NCSd spokesperson said.

Learned-Miller's surveys and staff interviews revealed that several key components are necessary to ensure the social and emotional well-being of the students of color in integrated settings:

1. Culturally Competent Educators — Cultural competency and anti-racist professional development training helps educators be more aware of their biases.

2. Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods and Curriculum — The history and values of different cultural groups should be represented in the instructional materials.

Culturally responsive teaching involves:

- embracing cultural differences and seeing them as an asset.
- understanding structural and institutional racism and the impact it has had on communities.
- developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity.
- including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum.
- demonstrating caring and building learning communities.
- communicating with ethnically diverse students.
- responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction.

3. Recruiting, Retaining and Supporting Teachers of Color

- Teachers of color are role models and can help create an environment where students of color are consistently held to high standards.
- A higher percentage of racial-ethnic teaching staff is positively associated with behavioral and overall engagement.
- A lack of racial-ethnic staff can negatively affect students, leaving them with no role models or teachers who understand their heritage.

4. Rigorous curriculums with high expectations for success —

Teachers must convey the belief that students' cultural differences are assets that will help them achieve at high levels.

Other best practices include:

- Creating gender-specific supports for girls by providing successful female mentors and small-group activities.
- Combatting stereotype threats.

The report singles out the Parkway School District for its Equal

Opportunities Schools system, which identifies students of color who qualify for high-level classes, and its annual Spirit of Excellence Awards, which recognizes black students earning a GPA of at least 3.5.

Supporting the Well Being of Students: Practices from Interdistrict Integration Programs

"...merely putting a diverse set of children into schools together is not enough to ensure that they will thrive, both academically and socially."



VICC

4,400 students from St. Louis, Missouri are enrolled in surrounding suburban schools



METCO

3,281 students from Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts are enrolled in close to 40 suburban schools



OPEN CHOICE

The Hartford Open Choice program serves 2,300 students who attend schools in almost 30 suburban towns and Hartford. There are also smaller Open Choice programs in Bridgeport and New Haven



URBAN-SUBURBAN

600+ students from Rochester, New York are enrolled in 15 participating districts

Of the four interdistrict programs studied, VICC has the largest enrollment at 4,440. The report concluded that "as the evidence grows increasingly clear about the benefit of children attending diverse schools, interdistrict integration is an excellent option for districts looking to diversify their schools. Of course, these programs are not without their challenges — challenges that are a reflection of our larger social context. Educators must take affirmative steps to address them."

The National Coalition on School Diversity is a network of national civil rights organizations, university-based research centers, and state and local coalitions working to expand support for government policies that promote school diversity and reduce racial and economic isolation in elementary and secondary schools. NCSd's work is informed by an advisory panel of scholars and academic researchers whose work relates to issues of equity, diversity and desegregation/integration.

•Download the report at: <http://files.constantcontact.com/fd62f02c001/65c1ca0b-ba96-425a-a2e0-ab9b91132373.pdf>

•To watch a related video, "How to Support Students of Color," visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OmtkbtbEE&feature=youtu.be



Kirkwood PE teacher relishes VICC's influence on his life

For North Kirkwood Middle School's physical education teacher, Marvin Williams, his participation as a student in the VICC program made such an impression that he returned years later to VICC districts as a teacher.

Williams, who joined the staff of North Kirkwood Middle for the 2017-18 school year, attended Ladue schools through the VICC program from kindergarten through graduation in 2002.

Like Hancock Place basketball coach Mike Moultrie, another VICC student-turned-teacher (see story on Page 1), Williams had three brothers in the program and joined the VICC program

at the insistence of his mother. It was his mother's idea that the boys go to the Ladue School District. "My father was a Soldan man, and he was adamant that we go to city schools," Williams said. "But 20-plus years later, he admitted it was a good decision."

One of those brothers, Mark, is now a PE teacher at Spoede Elementary School in Ladue; another graduated from Kirkwood High School in 2007, and the third is a youth coordinator at the YMCA.

For four African-American kids who lived in South St. Louis, attending Ladue schools was "a culture shock," Williams said. But looking back on it, he said his experience in the VICC program was "the best thing ever. I wish they'd have it in all schools. It was the best experience of my life. I believe this program is mutually beneficial for both city and county students. I received both urban and

suburban experiences — the best of both worlds."

After earning a bachelor's degree in kinesiology from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville in 2006, Williams returned to the Ladue district. He served as a teacher's assistant for three years, working with some of the teachers who had taught him. "It was phenomenal to see the teachers see what a gentleman I'd become," he said. "I was kind of a knucklehead in school. They were amazed."

Williams then taught at Russell Elementary in the Hazelwood School District for eight years before coming to Kirkwood. During that time he worked toward a master's degree in education with an emphasis on athletics administration, which he received in 2015 from William Woods University in Fulton. Next, he plans to earn a doctorate from William Woods.

From Page 1:

Returning VICC Alum



Mike Moultrie (left), Tom Dittrich and Harold Cooper celebrate at their graduation in 1993.



Tom Dittrich and Mike Moultrie play it serious at school.



Harold Cooper, Mike Moultrie and Tom Dittrich reunite in 2017 at Marcus Moultrie's funeral.

like brothers than just friends. Tom's mom and dad always treated me as if I was their son. And my mom was the same way. We had so many great times in Lemay and in the city when Tom and Kenny would visit in the summer to play basketball at the parks. Those were some of the greatest times of our lives."

While playing basketball at Hancock Place High School, Moultrie earned All-Suburban East Athletic Conference Honors and played in the Metro All-Star Game. With the best Junior Varsity record in school history, he was inducted into the Hancock Place Athletic Hall of Fame, placing him in very prestigious company with other accomplished alumni athletes.

After graduation in 1993, Moultrie went to St. Louis Community College at Meramec, winning All-American, Conference MVP 95-96, and two All-Region basketball titles. He then majored in speech communications with a minor in coaching at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg. On the basketball court, he broke records for field goal percentage and blocks for a season two years straight.

Moultrie has coached basketball for more than eight years.

Before returning to the St. Louis area, he taught in Plattsburg, Missouri, a town

of about 2,500 people in Clinton County, for eight years. To make ends meet, he also worked at a gas station, substitute taught and worked for three years at an alternative school with a graduation rate of over 98 percent. He had an earlier opportunity to come back to Hancock Place, about four years ago, but he declined. "I thought I could really help the kids out in Plattsburg," he said. "But [for the 2016-17 school year] Tom talked me into coming back home, and it's been a magnificent experience ever since.

"I am so happy to come full circle at the place I call home with my true family of Hancock and the great people of the Lemay community."

Message from the CEO



Dr. King's words ring true for educational dreams

I am writing this message shortly after Martin Luther King Day, and his words, "I have a dream that one day my four little children will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," are still ringing in my ears. Certainly, that is a dream that all of us can support! As we think about Dr. King's words, what are your dreams? For several of the VICC participants highlighted in this issue who attended the program, it was their dream to return to a participating district and, in such ways as well as in many others, give back to our community and, as a result, support students in need.

Perhaps as a teacher or an administrator you will embrace the research on what you can do personally to cultivate an inclusive environment to help students of color thrive. Finally, perhaps your dream is to make one or two small changes to improve the quality of your collaboration with your parents.

Whatever your dream is, I would encourage you to dream big dreams, don't sell yourself short. Dream big!

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Checklist for Effective Parent/Professional Collaboration

Teachers receive a great deal of training on how to educate and interact with children. But teachers also must interact with parents while working as a team to help the children thrive and meet their educational goals.

The PA Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS) Student Assistance Liaison adapted a checklist for its March 26, 2014 Professional Development WebEx from appendices in a November 1996 Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) discussion paper, "Parent/Professional Collaboration: The Current Reality and Challenges for the Future" by Joyce Robin Borden and Glenda Z. Fine.

The checklist, further adapted for VICC educators, may help teachers evaluate their own effectiveness as a key half of the parent/teacher collaboration. It provides a philosophical framework for approaching parents as collaborative partners.

- Have I put myself in the parent's place and mentally reversed roles to consider how I would feel as the parent of a child?
- Do I see the child in more than one dimension?
- Am I able to keep in mind that the child is a person whom the parent loves?
- Do I really believe that parents are equal to me as a professional and, in fact, are experts on their child?
- Do I consistently value the comments and insights of parents and make use of their reservoir of knowledge about the child's total needs and activities?
- Do I judge the child in terms of his or her progress and communicate hope to the parents by doing so?
- Do I listen to parents, communicating with words, eye contact and posture that I respect and value their insights?
- Do I ask questions of parents, listen to their answers and respond to them?
- Do I work to create an environment in which parents are comfortable enough to speak and interact?
- Am I informed about the individual child's needs before the appointment, placing value on the parents' time with my own time?
- Do I treat each parent I come in contact with as an adult who can understand a subject or vital concern?
- Do I speak plainly, avoiding the jargon of sociology, psychology, education or social work?
- Do I make a consistent effort to consider the child as part of a family, consulting parents about the important people in the child's life and how their attitudes and reactions affect the child?
- Do I distinguish between fact and opinion when I discuss the child's problems and potential with a parent?
- Do I make every effort to steer parents toward solutions and resources?
- Do I express hope to parents through my attitude and my words, avoiding absolutes like "always" and "never"?
- Do I see as my goal for interactions with parents the mutual understanding of a problem so that we can take action as a team to alleviate the problem?
- Do I actively involve the parents of each child in the establishment of a plan of action?
- Do I make appointments and provide services at times and in places that are convenient for the family?
- When I make a commitment of action to the family, do I follow through and complete that commitment?

*Questions for the original checklist were stimulated by: Alexander, R. & Tompkins-McGill, P (1987).
Notes to the experts from the parents of a handicapped child. Social Work, 32 (4) pp. 361-2.*

A newsletter published by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation to spread the word about the positive things happening in the voluntary transfer program and to offer educators a glimpse at innovative programs helping students succeed at area schools.

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