

North St. Louis County neighborhoods grow more diverse, but local government representation lags



HAZELWOOD —As the St. Louis region prepares for municipal elections on April 5, Matlock said she intends to run as a write-in candidate for Ward 5 in Hazelwood. If she or Helena Smith, on the ballot for Ward 7, win, they will be the first African Americans ever elected to the council here.

Smith, running for a City Council seat, said securing financial stability is at the top of her list of things to do, should she win. She vows to be “forward-thinking, open-minded, data-driven and transparent.”

Her campaign slogan is: “United Together for Solutions.”

She said she’s worked for a long time as a program analyst for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Later in life, she earned a master’s degree in divinity. She has one grown son. When he was at Hazelwood West High School, Smith was active in the PTA and eventually served as president of the organization.



Kiekow: A reflection from a resigning educator

Educator resignations are becoming as contagious as coronavirus variants. On Feb. 6, I joined the education exodus by submitting my resignation as the director of communications for a school district in suburban St. Louis.

Retaining teachers has been a challenge for decades. Typically, teachers leaving the profession is attributed to low salaries. During the pandemic, superintendents and administrators, who command six-figure salaries, have also joined the growing list of those departing education. To prevent irreparable damage to the public education system, we have to identify and address why educators at all levels are walking away.

I believe unrealistic expectations and a lack of empathy are to blame.

As a school communicator, my role is all about storytelling. I love finding new ways to tell positive stories about students. Unfortunately, since March of 2020, I have spent most of my time entangled in nonsensical interactions about the coronavirus with competing factions. On one side, there are people who believe coronavirus safety measures are intrusive. They have deep-seated anger toward school districts that stems from the closures at the onset of the pandemic. On the other side, there are people who believe coronavirus safety measures are lacking. They have an entrenched belief that schools should provide the same level of protection and services as top-tier hospitals.

People in both factions expect their individual opinions to become policy. Another thread that connects the fabric of these factions is that neither has accepted reality: that our society, including our public education system, is not capable of functioning as it did before the pandemic.

Educators frequently use the word “stakeholders” as an umbrella term to cover students, parents, employees and taxpayers. For the purpose of this reflection, I am not referring to students. They are playing a very minor role, if any, in the culture that permeates education. Adults are the protagonists in this problematic production. The majority of stakeholders are supportive and do not belong to either of the aforementioned factions. However, those who do, often express their positions through accusatory and abusive language.

After pouring your energy into serving stakeholders during a pandemic, there is something particularly hurtful about those same stakeholders denigrating you for sharing vaccine information or blaming you for someone contracting the coronavirus. The inboxes and voicemails of educators across the country are filled with vitriol. In addition to attacks related to the virus, in some districts, educators are being targeted for simply teaching accurate history. I have lost track of how many times I have learned about a cruel message moving a colleague to tears.

Educator stress levels are further increased when school districts face pressure from states to immediately eliminate learning loss created by nearly two years of chaos and death. Despite genuine calls for educators to practice self-care, the pressure makes allotting time for self-care next to impossible.



Top stars, best performances in Missouri high school boys basketball

Dylan Owens, Hazelwood Central

Owens scored 23 points and three assists in a 49-44 OT win over McCluer on Saturday.

Trailblazers win in OT

LCCC's Kataya Grissom and Ariyah Jones provided their team with all the points it needed in the overtime. Grissom, a 5-foot-9 freshman from Memphis, scored six of the eight Lewis and Clark overtime points, including a three-point basket and a three-of-four performance at the free throw line. Jones added a two-point field goal. Jones is a 5-11 freshman from Fort Zumwalt West High school.

The defense shut down and shut out JWC in the extra period.

LCCC was led by Grissom and Mary Penland-Holmes, a 5-10 sophomore from Palm Bay, Florida, each with 13 points. Holmes made three 3-point baskets and Grissom made two, including one in the overtime. Mykel Mathews, a 5-7 freshman from Hazelwood West High School, scored 12 points.