

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**A Winning Formula for Math: Chiefs, Burns & McDonnell and KC STEM Alliance Help KC Students Beat National Benchmarks**

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — [KC STEM Alliance](#), in partnership with [Burns & McDonnell](#) and the [Kansas City Chiefs](#), has launched Team Up for Math, a numeracy program designed to help third-grade students across Kansas City strengthen their math fluency and build confidence in their mathematical abilities. The program brings these skills to life through board games, card games and other hands-on activities that make math approachable and fun.

With support from both organizations, the program will expand access to math games and activities while engaging community volunteers to support interactive learning experiences across the community. As part of this effort, the partners are contributing \$625,000 over five years to scale programming in additional schools, support educators and increase volunteer engagement.

Recent national and international data underscore the need to strengthen foundational math skills early. According to the 2024 [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), 39% of U.S. fourth-grade students performed at or above NAEP Proficient in math. In Missouri, 36% of fourth graders reached that benchmark, compared with 40% in Kansas. Both states closely reflect the national rate, while average fourth-grade math performance nationwide remains below pre-pandemic levels.

By reaching students in third grade, Team Up for Math aims to strengthen foundational skills before students enter a critical period in their math development.

Center School District will be the first to launch the program, introducing interactive games and activities during in-school mentorship blocks that help students apply math concepts to everyday experiences. By working through challenges that involve calculating, estimating and strategic decision-making, students get repeated, low-pressure practice with foundational skills. These hands-on activities strengthen number sense and logical reasoning while helping students see how math directly supports the choices they make every day.

“At Center School District, we see how students grow when they have opportunities to practice, make mistakes and try again,” said [Dr. Troy Hogg](#), superintendent of Center School District. “Game-based learning turns that essential repetition into an experience students want to engage in, helping third graders strengthen their fluency while discovering

that math can be enjoyable and rewarding. We are proud to bring this opportunity to Center students and to work alongside local partners who share our commitment to their success.”

“Strong partnerships turn shared commitments into meaningful action,” says [Leslie M. Duke](#), chair and CEO of [Burns & McDonnell](#). “Burns & McDonnell, KC STEM Alliance and the Kansas City Chiefs each bring unique strengths to this program, and together we can reach more students and create a lasting impact. This is an investment in Kansas City students and the future of our community.”

The program combines fluency development with social-emotional learning, helping students strengthen math skills while building confidence and teamwork. Resources will also be available for teachers and families to reinforce learning beyond the classroom, while volunteers from Burns & McDonnell and the Chiefs organization will support activities that make math engaging and accessible.

“The Chiefs are proud to join Burns & McDonnell in investing in students across our community,” said [Anne Scharf](#), vice president of civic affairs at the [Hunt Family Foundation](#). “This partnership helps students experience math in new ways and see how these skills connect to opportunities both on and off the field.”

“KC STEM Alliance is committed to helping young people see themselves as capable, confident problem solvers,” said [Dr. Chelsea Barbercheck](#), executive director of [KC STEM Alliance](#). “Team Up for Math gives students opportunities to build those skills in ways that feel relevant and empowering, laying the foundation for strong math skills that open doors to successful, in-demand careers right here in Kansas City.”

The initiative builds on Burns & McDonnell’s long-standing commitment to STEM education and the Chiefs’ dedication to youth development. Together, the organizations will work with local schools and educators to align the program with classroom needs and meaningful student growth. By focusing on math fluency, the program aims to help Kansas City students exceed national math proficiency levels.

The first phase of programming will roll out during the 2026-27 school year, with plans to expand volunteer opportunities and school partnerships in future years.

For more information about the Team Up for Math program, visit [KC STEM](#).

About Burns & McDonnell

Working from more than 75 offices around the world, Burns & McDonnell designs and builds critical infrastructure. Our family of companies — driven by engineers, construction professionals, architects, planners, technologists and scientists — delivers projects

grounded in safety and a desire to make a difference as we make our clients successful. Founded in 1898, Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee owned. [Learn more.](#)

About KC STEM Alliance

The KC STEM Alliance is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with a network of businesses, educators, and related organizations working to inspire interest in science, technology, engineering, and math fields within the Kansas City region.

About the Kansas City Chiefs

Founded as the Dallas Texans in 1960 as a charter member of the American Football League (AFL) by sports pioneer Lamar Hunt, the franchise moved to Kansas City in 1963 and became known as the Kansas City Chiefs. The team currently competes in the West Division of the American Football Conference (AFC) in the National Football League (NFL). Under the ownership of the Hunt Family and the leadership of Chairman and CEO Clark Hunt, the core values of the club are to Win with Character, Unite our Community, Inspire our Fans, and Honor Tradition. The Chiefs are deeply committed to the Kansas City community through numerous programs as well as the Hunt Family Foundation. To learn more about the Chiefs, visit www.chiefs.com.