



Exploring Opportunities Beyond the Classroom at USD 473

At USD 473, we believe school is much more than a place to master math equations, analyze literature, or complete assignments. While our students excel in their core academic subjects—and our staff sets high expectations that consistently show in our results—the learning that takes place beyond the traditional classroom is just as powerful. Every day, when students walk through our doors, they step into a world of possibilities they may never have imagined.

Starting at the elementary level, students experience learning that extends well past textbooks and whiteboards. Field trips to a local pumpkin patch connect classroom lessons to real-world environments. Through the STARBASE program, students engage in hands-on STEM activities that ignite curiosity and help them understand how science, technology, engineering, and mathematics come alive. They also visit the theater to watch live performances, expanding their appreciation for the arts. Just as important, they learn to give back by reading to residents at the nursing home. This experience nurtures empathy, confidence, and a community connection.

Our middle school students continue this journey of exploration through programs that are both challenging and exciting. They can compete on the Trap Shooting team at Milford Lake or test their precision and skill through Archery at state and national competitions. Students who are drawn to technology have the chance to design and build robots in strategy-based competitions against other schools. Meanwhile, students can participate in a statewide stock market simulation, investing (fake) funds and learning firsthand how financial markets operate.

By the time students reach high school, their learning opportunities expand even further through our many Career Pathways. These pathways give students the chance to explore fields that match their interests and aspirations. Many take part in school-run businesses, gaining real-world experience in designing T-shirts, creating floral arrangements, producing wedding invitations, taking professional photos, or crafting custom metal signs. Some students even manage photo booths at community events. These practical experiences build both technical and customer-service skills.

For those looking to advance even more quickly into the workforce, USD 473 offers partnerships with Salina Technical College. Students can spend half their day at CHS and the other half earning industry-recognized certifications in areas like construction, auto body repair, diesel technology, welding, and more. Others earn their CNA and CMA while still in high school and apply those skills during internships at a hospital. These experiences give students a meaningful head start on their careers long before graduation.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our Transportation Department. A look at their weekly schedule is filled with field trips, competitions, activities, and professional development travel. It shows just how committed they are to supporting student learning to make it possible.

While classroom learning will always be essential, we also understand the importance of balancing core academics with real-life experiences. Just like a football team who blends running and passing plays, a successful school district blends knowledge with opportunity.

I encourage every student at USD 473 to try something new this year! You never know what experience might change your path or your perspective.

Go Irish!