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CONTACT: Vin Ko  
St. Louis Mosaic Project  
vko@worldtradecenter-stl.com  
(314) 615-3900



ST. LOUIS MOSAIC PROJECT

### **Ritenour School District Becomes the First Mosaic Ambassador School District**

The St. Louis Mosaic Project is delighted to announce the Ritenour School District, the first Mosaic Ambassador School District. Located in Northwest St. Louis County, Ritenour is one of the oldest districts in the metropolitan area. The school district serves approximately 6,400 students. Of those 6400 students about 800 of them are English language learners, speaking 28 languages. The St. Louis Mosaic Project Ambassador School program encourages member schools to reinforce an internationally welcoming and inclusive culture through pledges unique to each school.

In 2016 the Ritenour school district started with a one classroom school for their foreign-born students learning English. This is due to the to the growing Hispanic enrollment into the district, growing from under 1 percent in the early 1990s to 17% in 2016. The school district started the International Welcome Center because staff at the schools began to see that ESL students were missing school, struggling to fit in and eventually dropping out. With this growth in ESL students, Ritenour has added more ESL specialized teachers and have been hosting more school "international nights," where students have the opportunity to showcase food and culture from different countries. Due to the increase in English language learners in the schools, Ritenour has also begun to offer free adult ESL classes as well as parenting programs and resources that are open to the public.

The center is really meant to serve as a transition school for students, providing intensive English language programming for up to two-years in order to transition students into Ritenour High or one of the middle schools. In addition to learning English, students are taught things like how to act in an American classroom, and how to follow classroom and school rules. The amount of time that a student spends at the center varies depending on the progression of the student in both English and math. In September of 2017 it was announced that in partnership with Webster University, Ritenour will be one of three school districts who will have their teachers certified in teaching for English language learners by Webster University's education department. 120 regional teachers will be certified with this new \$2.7 million grant awarded to Webster University in partnership with the International Institute of St. Louis, the St. Louis Mosaic Project as well as the other partnering school districts, Parkway and the St. Louis City Schools.

#### **About the St. Louis Mosaic Project**

The St. Louis Mosaic Project was launched in 2012 in response to an economic impact report that showed St. Louis was lagging in immigrant growth and highlighted the potential economic benefits of

increasing its foreign-born population. The Mosaic Project is a regional initiative that is professionally managed by St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, World Trade Center and a 27-member committee. Its goal is to transform St. Louis into the fastest growing major metropolitan area for immigration by 2020 and promote regional prosperity through immigration and innovation. Learn more at [www.stlmosaicproject.org](http://www.stlmosaicproject.org).