

LINC Commission Meeting

September 23, 2019



Since 2014, the Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS) has partnered with LINC to extend educational services to students for whom regular school is not a viable option. Using technology and highly qualified teachers to provide remote educational services, Missouri Star School fills a much needed role in providing personalized instruction to help students obtain a high school diploma or equivalency.



Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



Monday, Sept. 23, 2019 | 4 – 6 pm
Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. Approvals
 - a. Approval May and June 2019 minutes (motion)
- III. Superintendent Reports
- IV. LINC 401(k) Update
 - a. Approval plan documents
 - b. Update
- V. LINC Opening School Year
 - a. Enrollment in After-School Program
 - b. Hickman Mills School District – Attendance Initiative
- VI. Missouri Star School
 - a. Presentation – Jim Dunn
- VII. Report Out
 - a. Community Diabetes Education
 - b. A+ Program
 - c. Medicaid Expansion
- VIII. Adjournment



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – MAY 13, 2019

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Co-chair **Jack Craft** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Sharon Cheers
Tom Davis
Aaron Deacon
David Disney
Mark Flaherty

Anita Gorman
Mary Kay McPhee
Ken Powell
David Ross
Bailus Tate

Minutes of the April 15, 2019, LINC Commission meeting were approved.

Superintendent Reports

- **Christina Medina**, Public Relations Director (Center School District), reported 150 students will be graduating this week. A video featuring teacher of the year **Emily Stoverink**, pre-algebra teacher at Central Middle School, was shown. The district recently held a resource fair for homeless families. Planning is under way for projects to be financed by the \$48 million bond issue that was approved by voters in the April election.
- **Steve Morgan**, Assistant Superintendent (Fort Osage School District), reported 336 students graduated last Friday. On Saturday volunteers did painting and landscaping projects at the former early childhood center, which will be converted into a new Mid-Continent Public Library branch. The last day of school is May 30; summer school begins May 31. A social worker will continue to work with students next school year through an ongoing partnership with Comprehensive Mental Health.
- **Yolanda Cargile**, Superintendent (Hickman Mills School District), introduced **Marissa Cleaver Wamble** and **Amanda Fischer-Penner** of the district Public Information Office. The district will hold graduation events this week including commencement at Ruskin High School. Forty-one district students were awarded scholarships, including four student who received full-ride Honeywell Hope scholarships. June 7 is the last day of school
- **Terry Ward**, School Board Member (North Kansas City Schools), reported three district math teachers received the Jedel Excellence in Mathematics Education award. For the third year in a row, 100% of district graduating seniors have been accepted to college, trade, apprentice, or military programs. The district recently gave a presentation on college and career readiness to the Northland Chamber of Commerce. May 31 is the last day of school; June 10 is the first day of summer school.
- **Gayden Carruth**, Executive Director (Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City), reported the Missouri legislature will adjourn this Friday. Twenty-three applicants have been recruited for EPFP.
- **Bob Bartman**, Director (Education Policy Fellowship Program), reported the EPFP fellows will visit the White House Decision Center at the Truman Presidential Library this week. Fellows will deliver group presentations on a policy issue in June.

LINC Caring Communities Administrator **Sean Akridge** introduced a report on Girls on the Run of Greater Kansas City, which held a 5K run on May 4. A slideshow of the event was shown. **Victoria Patrick**, Girls on the Run volunteer manager, reported on the Girls on the Run mission creatively integrates running in a fun, experience-based curriculum to inspire girls to be joyful, healthy and confident. This year 150 girls participated at 11 LINC teams in the 10-week program, which engages girls in outdoor activities with friends and “running buddies.” LINC site coordinators **Shelley Taylor** and **Yolanda Robinson** reported the initiative provides a positive experience for both the girls who participate and their volunteer coaches.

Rob Reiman, Executive Director, reported on the Giving Grove, an initiative to plant fruit trees in green spaces at schools and other community locations. The organization provides grants to plant orchards in return for commitments on the part of schools to maintain the trees over the long term. The Giving Grove provides opportunities for students to learn about trees, and eat fresh healthy fruit.

Brent Schondelmeyer, Deputy Director of Community Engagement, reported that several LINC staff recently visited Jefferson City to meet with legislatures and educate them about LINC's work in their districts. He introduced a panel discussion by LINC site coordinators including:

- **Jason Ervin** (Santa Fe Elementary School)
- **Steve McClellan** (Cler-Mont Elementary School)
- **Danielle Small** (Garfield Elementary School)
- **Jason Ervin** (Grandview Middle School)
- **Bryan Geddes** (Smith-Hale Middle School and Hickman Mills Freshman Center)
- **Jimmarie Stinson** (Ervin Early Learning Center and Freda Markley Early Childhood Center)
- **Darryl Bush** (King Elementary School)
- **Marlisa Collins** (Foreign Language Academy)

Topics included LINC's effect on employment through hiring staff and on business growth through contracting services; providing valuable experiences for children, school staff, and the community; assisting in the educational growth of adults as well as children; increasing parent involvement in schools; and creating a sense of belonging for all.

Cori Smith, project coordinator of Justice in the Schools, reported on the initiative of Legal Aid of Western Missouri to provide free legal assistance to families at school-based legal clinics in Kansas City Public Schools locations. The partnership is especially focused on legal issues related to evictions, housing, health care, and family law (domestic violence).

Aaron Deacon reported on the Expungement Day event on April 27 at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church. The event was part of a campaign to clear the old criminal records of people for whom the offenses pose a barrier to employment or housing. A video featuring volunteers and participants at the event was shown.

Rod Hsiao, CEO of InPlay, reported on the non-profit organization's online out-of-school-time activity guide. InPlay will soon launch the guide in Kansas City. A video explaining the tool was shown. Discussion followed.

Gayle A. Hobbs, LINC President, announced the retirement, at the end of the school year, of long-time LINC site coordinator **Roosevelt Dickerson**. LINC Caring Communities Administrators **Janet Miles-Bartee** and **Sean Akridge** spoke about his strong organizational skills and ability to engage with the Gladstone Elementary School community. Dickerson reflected on his time with LINC. Gifts were presented.

The meeting was adjourned.



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – JUNE 10, 2019

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Co-chair **Bailus Tate** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bert Berkley
Sharon Cheers
Tom Davis
David Disney

Rob Givens
Anita Gorman
Rosemary Lowe

Superintendent Reports

- **Yolanda Cargile**, Superintendent (Hickman Mills School District), reported the district's summer school program will run June 13-21; schools will provide meals to all children, even those not enrolled in summer school. The district is holding events for parents to discuss the reorganization of schools and to observe the closure of two elementary schools. The district is partnering with United Way of Greater Kansas City to provide washers and dryers for use by families at school locations.
- **Christina Medina**, Public Relations Director (Center School District), reported LINC will expand into Indian Creek Elementary School in the fall, including offering the Before and After School program. The design process for a new Indian Creek building is under way. The district summer school program started today. The Back to School Bash will be held on Aug. 3 at Center High School. A video of the Center High School commencement was shown. The board of education is working on a plan to hire a new superintendent.
- **Steve Morgan**, Assistant Superintendent (Fort Osage School District), reported summer school began on May 31. The district is organizing volunteers to work on summer clean-up projects at schools. River levee breaches near Levasy resulted in the flooding of 100 homes including those of district families; a fundraising event raised money to support the families.
- **Kevin Foster**, Executive Director (Genesis School), reported the school was recognized at the Kansas City Charter School Awards for the design of its Student Success Center, which has led to increased academic achievement. Eight-graders were promoted last week; the featured speaker was a 2015 promotee who graduated this spring from Lincoln College Prep and will be attending Notre Dame University. Genesis will provide free pre-K for families in the fall. Genesis will provide a Reading Workshop for 50 adults seeking early childhood education credits. Genesis will host LINC Chess Camp this summer.
- **Vivian Roper**, Superintendent (Lee A. Tolbert Academy), reported LINC will provide Before & After School for Tolbert's summer school program. Tolbert is working with LINC and Social Solutions to create opportunities to use data more effectively. Tolbert is partnering with H&R Block and United Way of Greater Kansas City on landscaping, painting, and repair projects this summer.
- **Gayden Carruth**, Executive Director (Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City), introduced **Kenny Southwick**, who will succeed her as executive director on Aug. 1. Southwick reported he looks forward to serving the 180,000 students served by the Cooperating School Districts. Carruth reported the Education Policy Fellowship Program offerings have improved over the years thanks to participant feedback. Next year's class has been filled.

Amy Torreros of Children's Mercy Kansas City and **Sommer Rose** of Promise 1000 gave a presentation on the Safe Sleep initiative to educate caregivers on the importance of safe sleep practices as a way to reduce Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome, particularly deaths caused by accidental suffocation. The state of Missouri provides funding for the initiative to perform home visits to infant caregivers and provides materials and training on safe sleep practices. A video on the initiative was shown.

Caring Communities Supervisor **Jeff Hill** reported on the expansion of LINC services into Indian Creek Elementary in the Center School District, and on the adjustments in LINC services to match the reconfiguration of grade levels among buildings in the Hickman Mills School District.

LINC Deputy Director-Community Engagement **Brent Schondelmeyer** reported on former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer's investment of \$59 million in Social Solutions to develop data systems to help communities improve outcomes for children; LINC is the second community to receive funding, which it is using to develop a shared data system among several school districts in order to address family mobility and student homelessness. **Oscar Tshibanda** of Tshibanda and Associates gave a progress report on LINC's implementation of the Apricot data system including number of users, programs, school districts and other partners, as well as data sharing agreements. LINC IS Director **Dave Horn** reported on the collaboration between LINC and Social Solutions, which includes LINC's having a seat on the customer advisory board, a dedicated Social Solutions support representative, and face-to-face opportunities to identify development projects.

Sharon Cheers reported the Kansas City municipal elections will be held on Tuesday, June 18. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is holding a special exhibition, "30 Americans," featuring work by prominent African American artists.

The meeting was adjourned.

Margaret M. Randle

Summary

Margaret is a graduate of Siena Heights University and has been a professional manager with over 30 years of experience in social services. She was an executive for 18 years and supervised a staff in excess of 800 people. She remained on as consultant after her retirement in 2015.

Professional Experience

- Designated Principal Asst. for FSD Statewide Operations (2014 - 2015)
- Kansas City Regional Administrator-Northwest Missouri (2003 - 2014)
- Kansas City Director for Child Welfare and Income Maintenance (2000 - 2002)
- Kansas City Director, Jackson County (1998 - 2000)
- Job Training Program Manager (1997 - 1998)
- Program Development Specialist (1995 - 1997)
- Supervisor, Welfare to Work FUTURES Program (1992 - 1995)
- Placement Specialist, JOBS Program, Welfare to Work (1991 - 1992)
- Income Maintenance Caseworker (1987 - 1991)
- Energy Assistance Technician (1980 - 1987)

Highlight of Leadership and Management Skills and Abilities

- Demonstrated ability to lead and direct large number of staff toward a clear set of goals and objectives.
- Ability to motivate people to achieve exceptional results.
- Effective in building strong external relationships within the business and political communities.
- Strong communication skills with the ability to positively influence others.
- A proven manager and leader who embraces change, personal growth and improving organizational performance.

Professional Accomplishments

- Met with President Bill Clinton in 1994 and 1996 for the purpose of promoting “Welfare to Work Program” and to present and discuss local initiatives in the Kansas City Region. This effort included working with the White House staff in completing advance preparations for the President’s visit.
- Welfare Reform Efforts were recognized by Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government as a national semi-finalist for the “Innovations in American Government Award” (Local Investment Commission in conjunction with Family Support Division).
- USA Today highlighted her agency’s welfare reform efforts in 2006, “How Welfare Reform Changed America.”
- Represented Social Services in presentations on a local, national and international level. Joined LINC Commissioners in March '07 for the International Initiative, hosted by the Israeli Government. Joined in round table discussions in Jerusalem with representatives from several countries and gave presentations on the Kansas City Model, shared our experiences and success on “Fighting Poverty through Employment.”

Education and Training

- Bachelor of Arts - *Siena Heights University*, Adrian, Michigan
- 1st National Summit - Exploring Effective Interventions in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment
- International Seminar on Employment and Social Services - Jerusalem, Israel

Awards and Professional Recognition

- Siena Heights University Alumni Leadership Award “Alumnus of the Year 2002”
- President Bill Clinton personal commendation letter for assisting in his multiple and successful visits to Kansas City
- Housing Authority of Kansas City - recognition of valuable contributions to HAKC
- U.S. Department of Labor - recognition for serving as an expert panelist for regional conference

'Your kids, Your families': Work against chronic absence in Hickman Mills means to get personal

August 14, 2019

By Joe Robertson, LINC writer

Beneath all her high academic research credentials, Hedy Chang has been that parent too — vulnerable and ignored in the front office of her child's school, waiting for help.

So many strategies spill from Chang's national not-for-profit, Attendance Works, to battle the heavy toll of chronic absence on schools and communities.

But some tactics, she told a workshop audience of educators in Hickman Mills Aug. 13, are as simple as a greeting — a quick, earnest show of concern.

"The consistent, warm welcome," she said.

It gets more complicated, of course, marshaling a crusade against the chronic absenteeism that puts some 8 million students nationwide at academic risk.

Hickman Mills School District Superintendent Yolanda Cargile understands it well, knowing the effort Hickman Mills and other school communities have put out for years.

"We've been wracking our heads," she said.

But she wanted to bring in Attendance Works — joining with LINC, the United Way, Turn the Page KC and SchoolSmartKC — to recharge the work, and help develop new and stronger strategies for everyone.

"I'm a firm believer that if you want different results you need to do something different," Cargile said.

The Aug. 13 workshop gathered attendance teams from all of the Hickman Mills schools, LINC program educators and staff from Kansas City Public Schools in an ongoing KC-area effort that began a year ago and is getting down to deeper, hands-on work in 2019-2020.

The task is daunting, Chang said, but filled with "hope, faith and capacity."

"The good news is we know we can address chronic absence," she said.

"Look around the room and see who's here," Chang said. She gestured to the teachers, principals, counselors, nurses, secretaries, after-school teachers, data strategists and community partners.

"You've got all the ingredients."

This is the work Chang said she imagined more than 10 years ago when she realized that academic efforts — like her research for the Annie E. Casey Foundation and reports such as her paper, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades* — weren't enough.

She started Attendance Works to more directly take on the impact of what the research found: That one in ten kindergarteners and first-graders miss more than a month of school nationwide, and as many as one in four in some cities. And that this lost school time cripples the potential of too many students, strains too many schools and shadows the health and prosperity of too many communities.

The collaboration of LINC, the United Way, Turn the Page KC and SchoolSmartKC with the schools affirms that this is the community's work, she said.

"You on the ground," she said, waving her hand across the roomful of frontline workers, "you are the most important.



Hedy Chang of Attendance Works gave the keynote address at a workshop on chronic absenteeism on Aug. 13.

We want to help you with strategies.”

The workshop’s program began in Tier 1, contemplating school-wide strategies to create an environment that encourages strong attendance and intervenes in the earliest signs of missing classes.

This begins with promoting a sense of belonging — from the first bus driver in the morning to the after-school staffer seeing a child homeward in the car line at night.

The group was challenged to develop other ideas to help in Tier 1 — how to make learning engaging, find restorative and non-punitive ways to respond, meet families’ basic needs and build awareness to the importance of attendance. She started Attendance Works to more directly take on the impact of what the research found: That one in ten kindergarteners and first-graders miss more than a month of school nationwide, and as many as one in four in some cities. And that this lost school time cripples the potential of too many students, strains too many schools and shadows the health and prosperity of too many communities.

In the months ahead, more work follows in Tier 2, using responsive data to identify children who are beginning to show attendance concerns and develop targeted, individual strategies to help them and their families.

LINC program leaders at the workshop know that they have been and will be important players in the work.

Danielle Small, site director of the Caring Communities program at Compass Elementary School, said she and her team intend to regularly talk with the school’s counselor, nurse, principal and teachers.

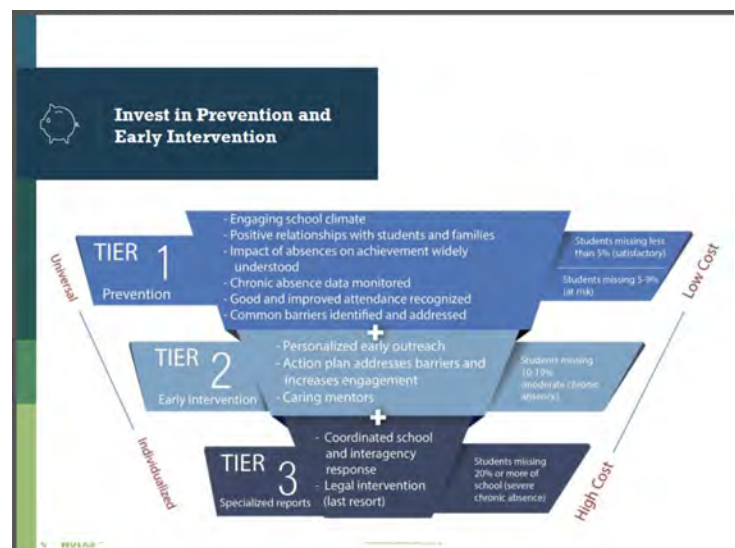
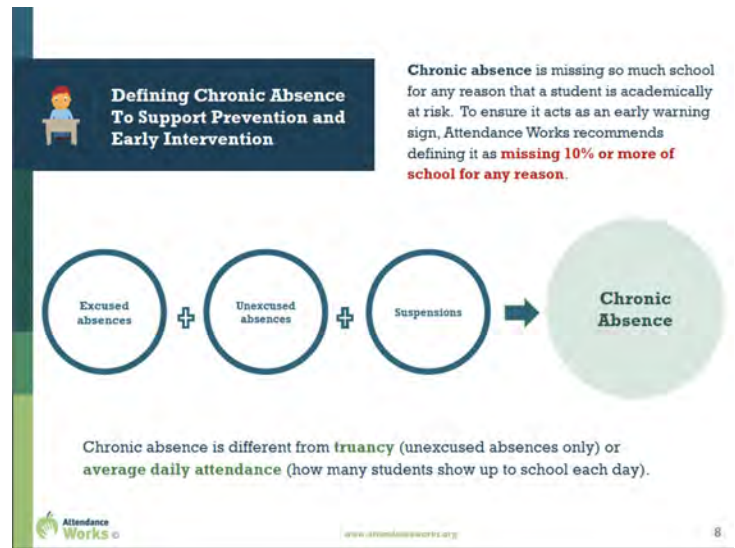
The “flow” of collaboration helps in “building relationships,” Small said, so everyone can be “honest and blunt about situations going on.”

A strong after-school program helps the attendance mission, said Jene Counts, LINC’s Caring Communities Site Director at Millennium at Santa Fe Elementary School.

“Some students want to be in the after-school program, and they know they can’t if they don’t come to school,” Counts said. “It’s incentive to come to school and stay in school.”

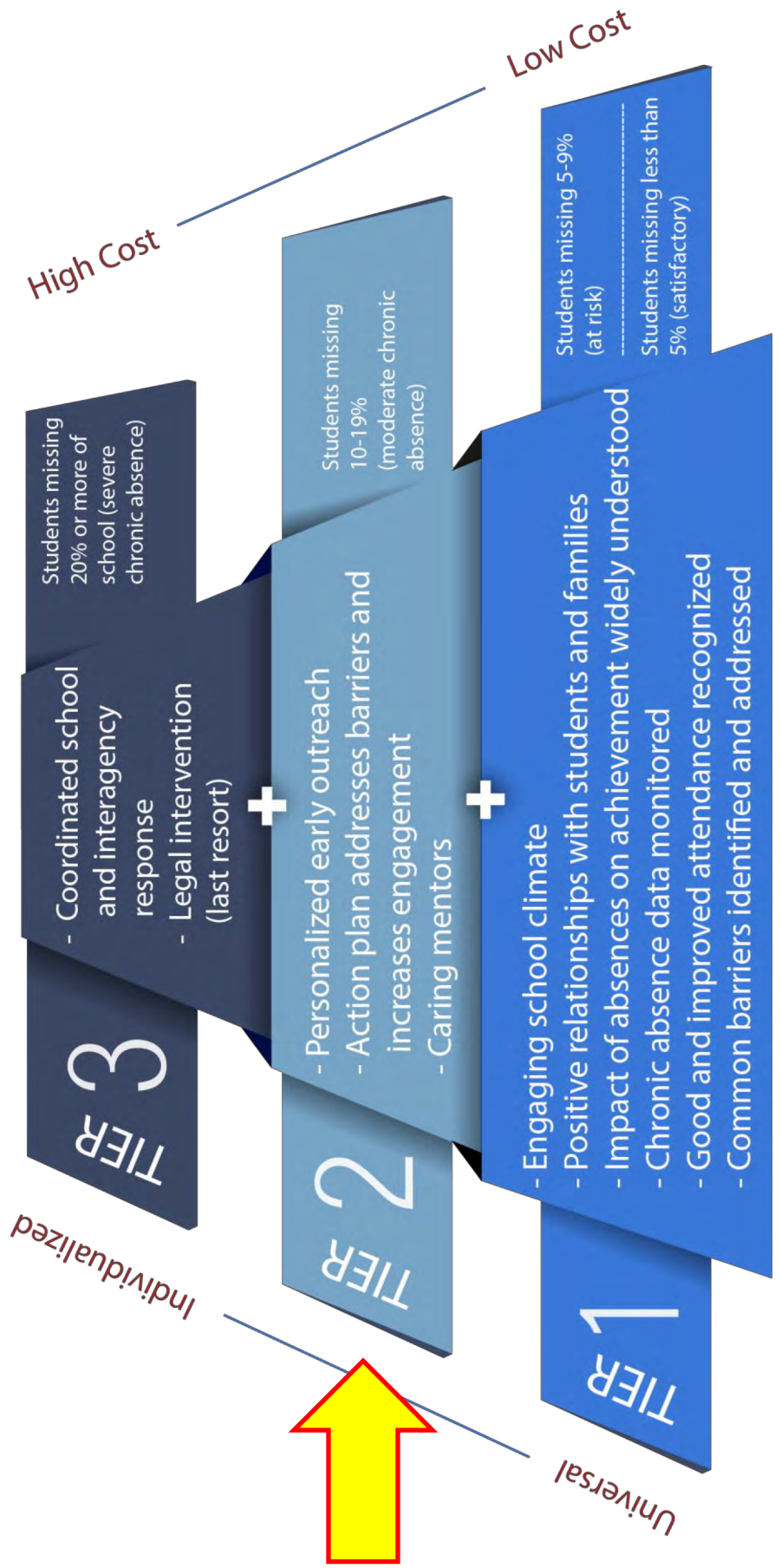
The best ideas, Chang said, are going to thrive on stronger relationships between everyone — school staffs, community partners, parents and students.

“Your solutions have to be built on understanding,” she said. “You tailor it to your kids, your families.”





Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





Data and Action

Tier 3 Children with 20% or higher absence rate

- Address severe chronic absence 20% or more
- Individualized support coupled with intensified collaboration with community services
- Recognize and celebrate improved attendance

Tier 2 Children with 10-19% absence rate

- Address moderate chronic absence 10-19%
- Individualized Outreach
- Recognize and celebrate improved attendance

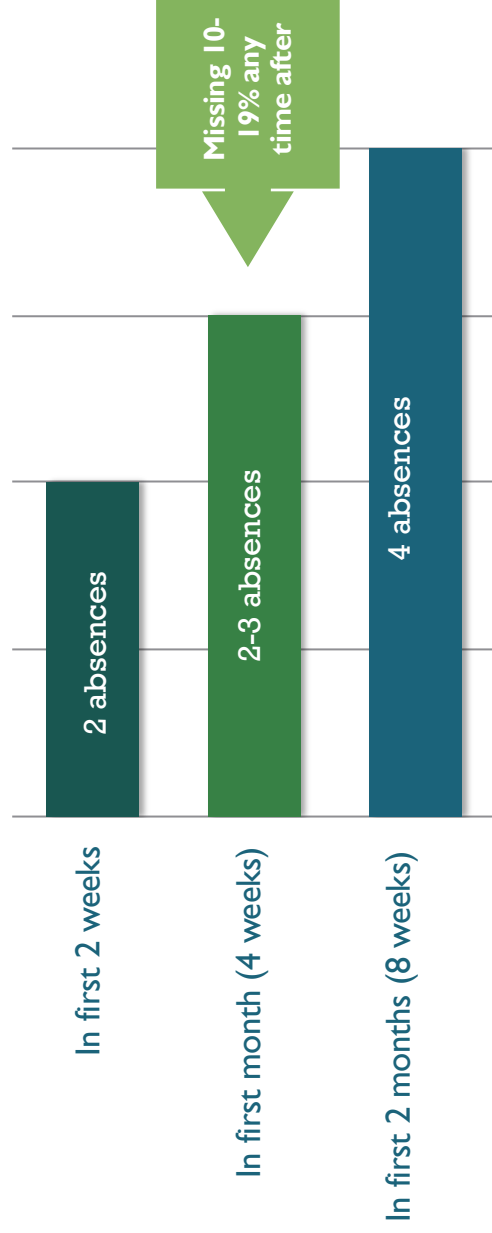
Tier 1 Includes all children and families

- Universal Prevention Strategies – Year Round
- Recognize and celebrate strong attendance



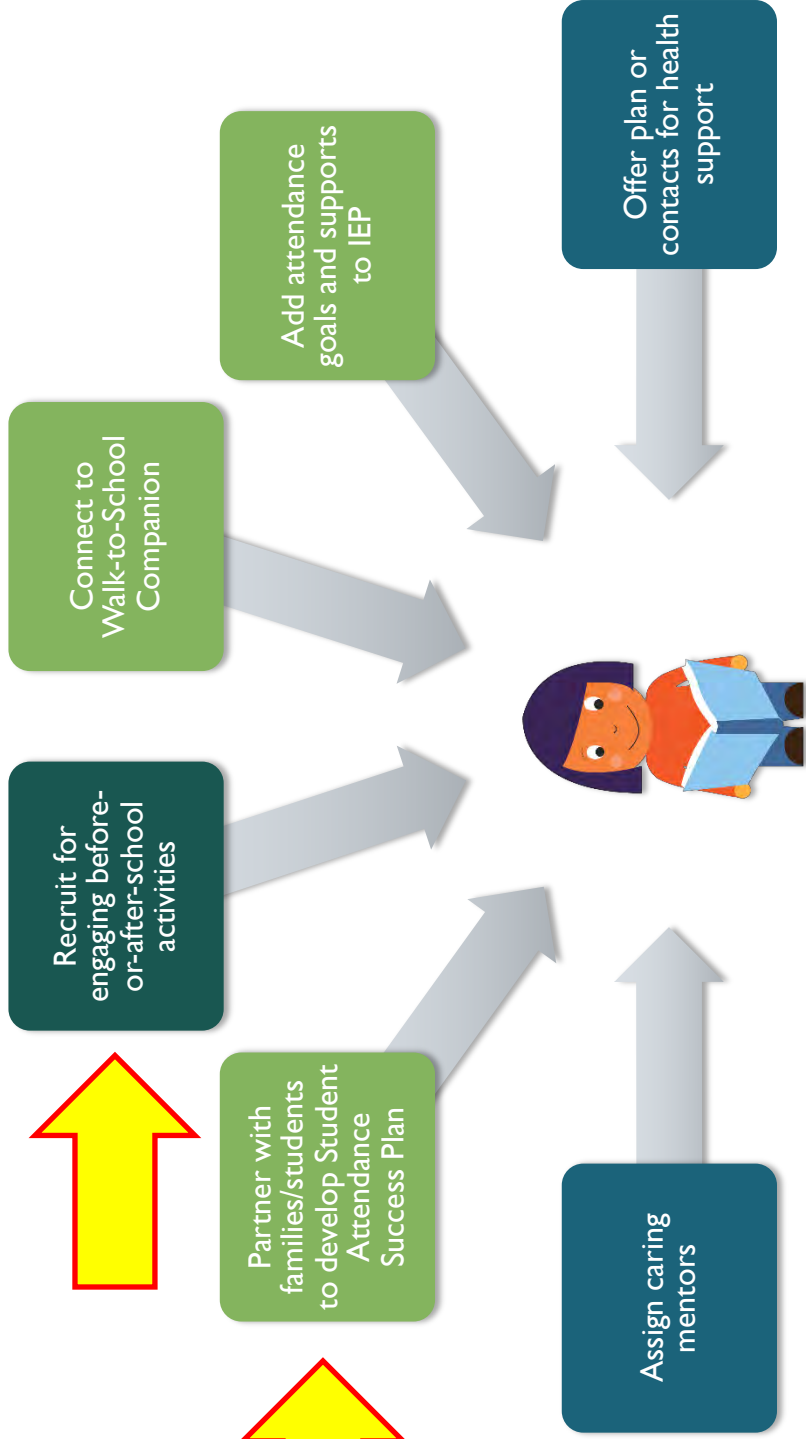
Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

- ✓ Chronic absence (missed 10-19% or more of school) in the prior year
- ✓ And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:





Examples of Tier 2 Interventions





The Missouri Division of Youth Services has formed **Missouri Star School Program** through a partnership with LINC. This blended learning approach provides a personalized educational experience by connecting technology to learning, career, community, and family.

Program building blocks

DYS Continuum of Services

Positive Youth Development

Invitational Education Model

Learning Coach



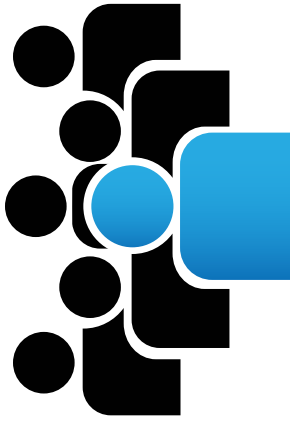
- Lives in same community as student, interested in their success, helps keep student goal-oriented
- Learning Coaches visit students regularly

Highly Qualified Teachers



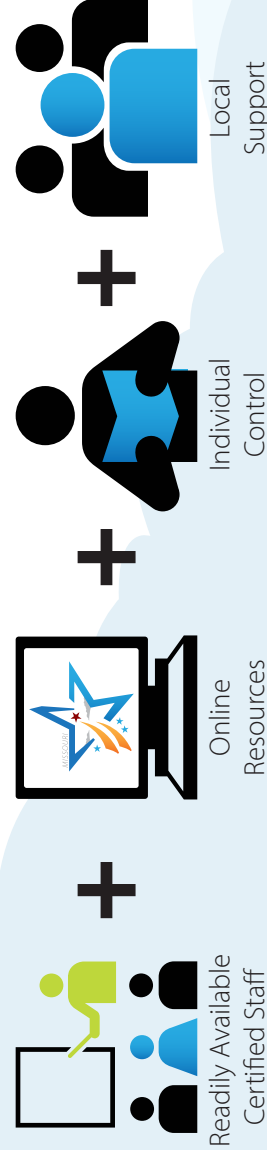
- Develop learning plans, teach new material, check for understanding, assign grades.
- Teachers contact students primarily using online communication tools, text and phone.
- Grade level and content specific teachers for each course

Community Connection



- Partner with local schools, treatment providers, and support services to address student needs.
- Encourage student positive involvement in the community.

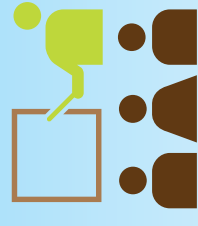
Online Learning



Online learning is any time a student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace. *(Innosight Institute)*

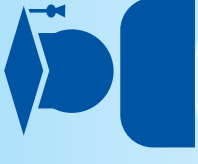
Our Results

(Since Inception FY2013)



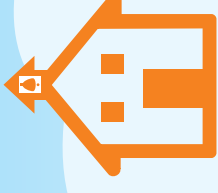
633

Students Served



96

Earned Diploma or Equivalency



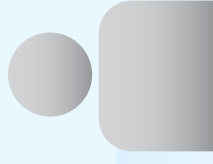
157

Returned to Public or Post-Secondary School



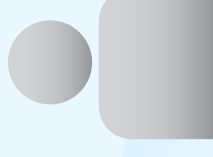
121

Withdrawn due to non-participation



35

Withdrawn due to new violations



124

Other (Unknown, absconded¹, return to care, formally withdrawn, referral to day program)



19

Contracted Teachers



4.5 Months

Average Length of Enrollment



Google Apps



4

National Board Certified Teachers

Missouri Star School utilizes G Suite for Education and a variety of other educational tools with a curriculum based on individual students needs.

Students Served and Outcomes

	Students Served	Received Diploma or Equivalency	Return to School	Ages Served
FY2019	122	12	16	13-21+
FY2018	104	11	27	
FY2017	110	14	16	
FY2016	112	11	23	
FY2015	93	14	17	
FY2014	92	19	23	



'They're on my side'; Star School puts court-involved teens on paths to success

September 12, 2019

By Joe Robertson, LINC writer

His mother had left her tears behind on the phone with her husband when she came to Adam, steeling herself to tell him the news:

The public school district won't allow him in.

Adam was two years past the crime committed at age 13 in a foster home that had put him into the Texas juvenile justice system. At 15, under probation, he had reunited with his biological mother, Kassie Argo, in Independence, Mo.

Argo wanted to hide her feeling of despair, knowing what another chance at school meant to Adam and his struggle to get out of juvenile justice's educational purgatory.

But Adam felt his mother's fear.

"I didn't know what was going to happen," he said, remembering that late summer day in 2017. "I was scared I'd end up nowhere."

This was before his probation officer — asking around for ideas to help the desperate family — found out about Star School.

This was before Adam became one of the more than 630 Missouri youths that Star School has helped since the state Division of Youth Services (DYS) partnered with the Local Investment Commission (LINC) to create the online school in 2013.

"These are real people, real kids — real families," Star School Principal Jim Dunn said. "They're not characters you'd see on *Locked Up* on cable TV."

Many of them are starving for family and advocates to help them recover the educational path they've lost. Many are dispirited or rebellious and need someone prodding them to take the opportunities that do come.

Some, like Adam, are eager to return to school and have a parent fighting for them — but don't know where to turn.

An area school district denied Argo's request to enroll Adam, which was within its rights, but hard for Argo to understand. Any other public district and private schools would require tuition, which she wouldn't be able to afford even if they allowed Adam in — which was unlikely.

She looked into homeschooling, only to find herself staring at curriculum costs, not to mention the overwhelming proposition that it would be on her to teach her teenager high school coursework.

"I barely finished high school," Argo said. "How am I supposed to help him? . . . I was mind-baffled."

Argo and Adam were not alone.

Until Star School came along, the anxiety over education options not only consumed families, but also troubled the juvenile officers who were trying to help them.

In his 25 years as a juvenile officer, Platte County Deputy Mike Emanuel often fretted over teenagers who got in trouble "just being dumb," and then could not return to school.



Adam, 17, of Independence, has a new chance at completing high school, going to college and pursuing his ambition of a degree in library science, thanks to Star School.



He dealt with parents in educational dilemmas they couldn't manage: Costly online programs. An uncooperative child.

"Sometimes our office would try to figure out if we could pay half," he said.

In 2012, Tim Decker, a former LINC executive who was DYS director, looked back to LINC for help to try to do something about it. DYS wanted a state-funded program to help youths involved in juvenile courts who either can't return to public school, or are uncomfortable returning because of their past.

They started Star School, with Dennis Gragg serving as its first director.

'It breaks my heart'

The work, many times, is emotionally hard, says Linda Davidson, Star School's educational coordinator. They're grasping after teens so far down a lost road.

But nearly 100 teens in Star School have earned high school diplomas or an equivalent degree since 2013. More than 150 returned to public high school or a post-secondary school.

Star School staff and teachers cherish these successes. They have traveled to numerous graduation ceremonies throughout the state. Pictures of graduates hang on the walls in Star School's Kansas City-area office.

"It is so life-changing for them," Davidson said.

Until they see their students at ceremonies, in most cases, the Star School teachers are just voices on the phone — encouraging presences behind text messages.

Star School students get access to a digital curriculum. Those who need a laptop computer get one from Star School. And their certified teachers hover digitally nearby, as much as the students let them.

"A lot have had so many things up against them, it's hard to trust people," Davidson said. "They are smart kids who didn't know they could be successful. They need somebody they can trust in their corner."

Students have their Star School teachers' personal cell phone numbers, Dunn said. They can reach out anytime.

In some ways, the freedom of distance learning is easier for students who may have had bad experiences in the past with teachers in classrooms, Dunn said.



The Star School Kansas City office posts pictures from their students' graduation ceremonies throughout Missouri.



Kassie Argo looks over Adam's work in their Independence home

“They had constant conflicts,” he said, grating his fists together, “having to see (the teacher) every day.”

With Star School, an unhappy student can simply go offline for awhile.

But the flip side, Dunn said, is that Star School teachers have to work harder to pursue relationships with their students.

“We’re a non-judgmental program,” Dunn said. “There is nothing punitive we can do. The school is voluntary. All we have is that relationship and a desire to see a kid get credits and get a diploma.”

The students who slip away weigh over the teachers, Davidson said. “It’s the hardest thing for me to get used to,” she says. “It breaks my heart.”

But a student can always come back. And some have, she said, at age 20 and 21, and earned their high school equivalency degrees. They’ve had some parents — who yearned as well to earn a high school degree — enroll in Star School and graduate alongside their children.

John Hawkins, the longtime DYS coordinator in Missouri’s southeast region, has watched many of these success stories. He knows how hard it is to restore broken lives and sees Star School educators as partners in an empathetic mission.

“You have to be up to the challenge, because sometimes you’re all they got,” he said. “There’s a lot of disappointment, but there’s nothing better than when a kid figures it out.”

Some of those “kids” in Hawkins’ territory graduated this spring and joined in a graduation ceremony in Poplar Bluff, Mo., Hawkins said.

Dunn and Davidson came down, and some of the teachers from around the state too.

“It was so commendable of them,” Hawkins said. “It’s just a wonderful program.”



Star School Principal Jim Dunn

What now, Adam?

As Adam turns 17 this fall, he’s back on course with schooling, eyeing college plans, looking all the way out to a master’s degree in library science.

He’d still like to be back in public school, with more opportunities to meet friends.

But he appreciates the adult friends he’s had in his teachers on the phone.

“They understand how hard it is,” he said. “If I need help, they’ll be there to help. If I’m stuck, they’ll be there to help me figure out something.”

Probation will pass and Adam will be able to leave his juvenile crime behind him, without sacrificing an education that can carry him forward.

That’s what Argo wants for him. That’s what his teachers want for him. That’s what Dunn wants for him.

They will be that “team on the other end of the phone,” Dunn said, that Adam and other students can turn to, assured by a feeling: “*They’re on my side.*”

Supporting Positive Transitions

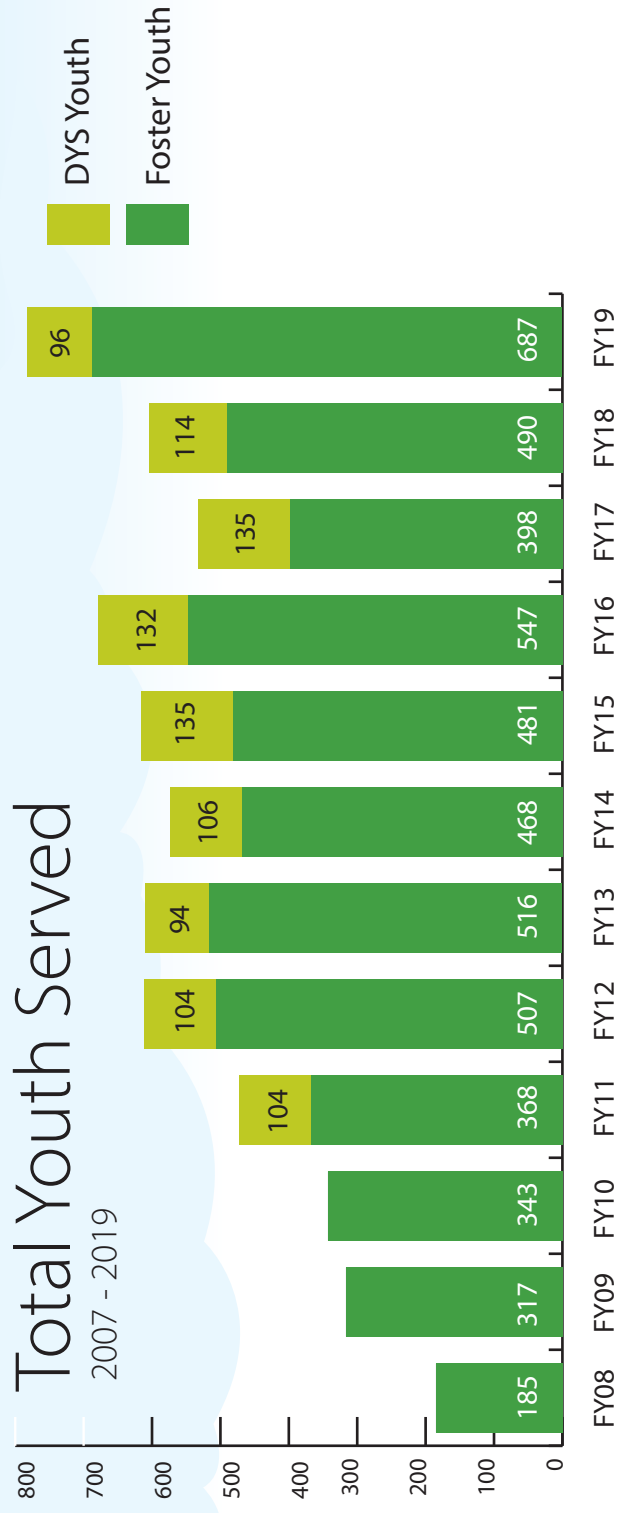
What we do

LINC supports positive transitions for two Missouri Dept. of Social Services groups, Foster Youth and DYS Court Involved Youth returning to the community. Services provided are similar, though those for foster youth tend to be less intensive and for longer periods of time.

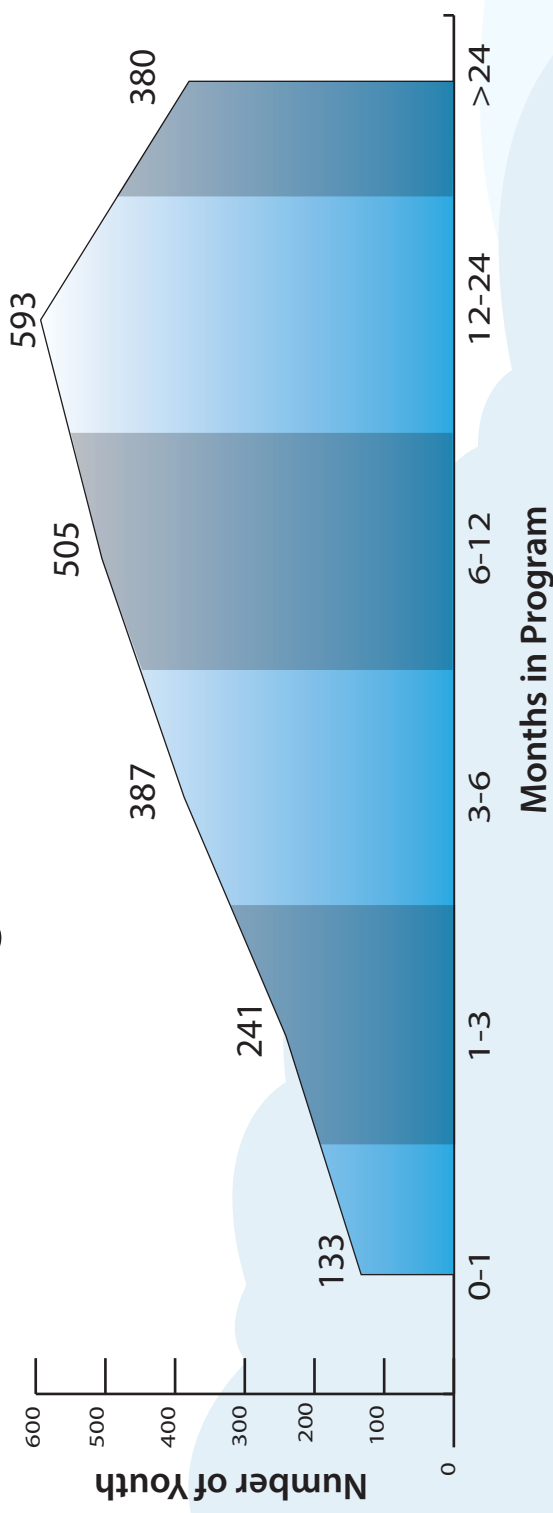
What we offer

- Survival Skills Classes
- Educational Assistance
- Support Services
- Emergency Funds
- Job Readiness Skills
- Community Resource Information

Total Youth Served



Foster Youth Length of Involvement

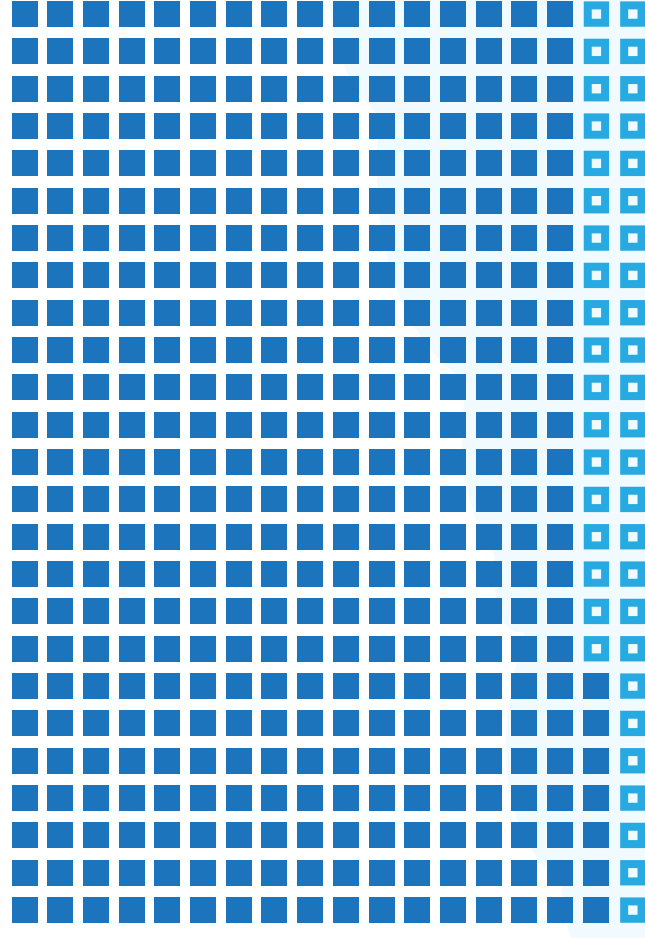


Outcomes FY19



* Outcomes Jul. 1, 2018 - Sept. 30, 2018
* Individual youth may have multiple outcomes

450 Active Cases

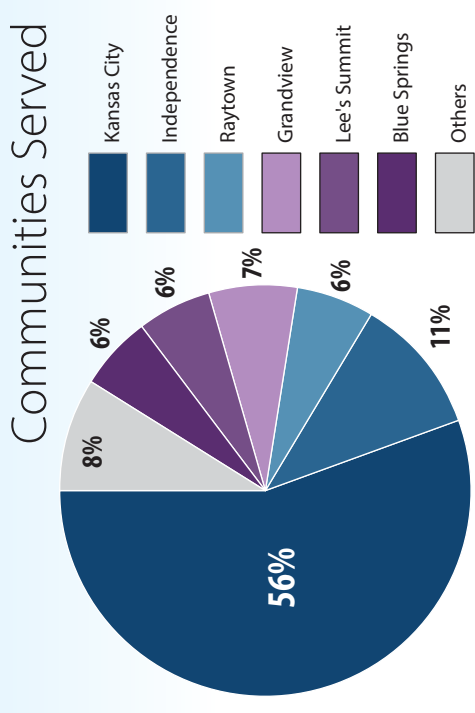
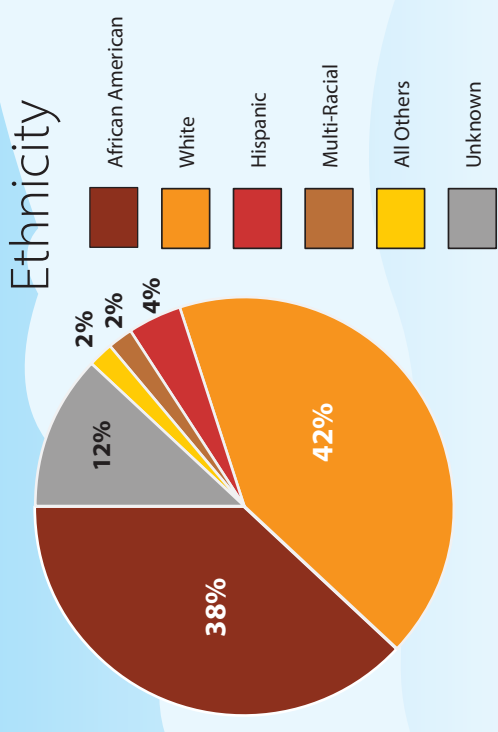


6 Case Managers

Foster Youth **407**

DYS **43**
= 1 Youth

Demographics



LINC advocates help aging foster children, former juvenile offenders bloom as adults

September 16, 2019

By Joe Robertson, LINC writer

He'd crossed so many rivers of pain, foster teen Dillon Spradley wasn't sure what he needed when LINC youth advocate Devon Robinson first appeared in the doorway of his guardian's apartment.

If need be, "Miss Robinson" says about those face-to-face moments with older foster youth, "I can be grandma. I can be the crazy aunt . . . I want to get them talking to me."

Who would she be now?

Her eyes fell on Spradley, then a 14-year-old who'd been separated from his mother upon her arrest when he was 12, who then fled his Kansas City Northland shelter and walked alone for a day on the shoulder of Interstate 35 in a wandering despair.

Spradley, now 21, remembers who he was then — too shy, expelled from school, unconfident, aimless.

His eyes went to Robinson's notable hair, and Robinson knew it.

"I," she declared grandly, "am your afro caseworker!"

The 14-year-old laughed: "What?"

There are so many small details in what LINC's team of six youth advocates do to help hundreds of Missouri teens who are transitioning from foster care or from the state's juvenile justice system into adulthood and independence.

And they are important details, like school supplies, tuition aid, life skills training, budgeting, driver's education, job searching, help with utilities, housing . . .

But just as important is being precisely the person a teen needs in a moment in time.

That's what Mark Hash, a LINC youth advocate, hoped to be when he rushed to a hospital rehabilitation wing after one of the court-involved teens on his caseload was crippled by a gunshot through his spine.

The boy was a quiet teenager who never opened up much about his thoughts or fears, Hash recalled. But he saw his advocate appear at his hospital bedside — and the teen said, "Hold my hand."

LINC has been managing the transitions of teens aging out of foster care since 2007 and for teens from the juvenile justice system since 2011, and now helps some 680 youths during a year — many of whom have endured trauma and felt lost to the world.

Some results are tangible. In 2019 the program had 211 youths in school, 94 were employed and 63 received high school diplomas or equivalent degrees.

Other benefits are harder to measure, but help change lives, Hash said.

"We validate" the journeys the teens have traveled, Hash said. "Some of these kids haven't had someone in their corner. It helps that they know someone sees what's going on."



Dillon Spradley

The resilience of a child latches onto the comforting idea of a mentor, he said.

The “integrity of being present,” Hash said, “is more powerful than we know.”

National alarm

States began looking for better ways to help teens in the 1990s when concern grew nationwide that social services were struggling to prepare troubled youth for adulthood, said Steve Winburn, head of LINC’s youth transitions programming.

Federal legislation, named after longtime youth advocate U.S. Sen. John H. Chafee of Rhode Island, boosted the resources provided to the states.

Social service agencies were combatting alarming statistics. The 20,000 youths nationwide leaving foster care each year were at high risk of mental illness, including post traumatic stress disorder. They were unlikely to complete their education and showed high rates of unemployment, homelessness and dependence on public assistance.

LINC had partnered with Missouri’s Children’s Division on several initiatives over the years, and when the state in 2007 put out a bid for help in running the transitions programming, LINC took on the work.

The LINC advocates stepped in as allies to support the important work of the state caseworkers, Winburn said, helping them better serve so many children in need.

“We started with one kid,” Winburn said, “and grew from there.”

What kind of help does the transition program offer teens?

Spradley knows. He learned first-hand when Robinson plied him with a checklist of things they were going to tackle together.

It was daunting. He had some motivation difficulties at the start, he said.

Get a state ID, a driver’s learning permit, start driving lessons, prep for job searching, get a bank account, start saving, get a driver’s license . . .

Just their first project — *get school right* — was too much at first for a kid without a motivating force in his life.

“But Miss Robinson,” Spradley said, invoking the image of his tutor with a snap of his fingers and a firm taskmaster’s point, “she was that figure.”

Will I live through the night?

Spradley keeps some of the pain of his past to himself, but he was very close to his mother and an older brother and sister. And all of them were separated, after several days on the run, when police found them and arrested his mother when he was 12.

He wasn’t sure what he was doing when he fled the youth shelter where police took him that day. He had another relative’s house in mind, somewhere back near downtown. He had a water bottle but no food as he walked for hours southbound alongside the rushing interstate highway.

“I didn’t know if I would live through the night,” he said.

The relative turned him in and — though Spradley considered fleeing again — his long road to recovery began at the shelter, then in a good foster home. He was able to reunite with his mother when he was 16, but she died of cancer that year.

Robinson helped him through it, he said. “She was there for me the entire time I was grieving. She said, ‘You can call me, it doesn’t matter what time it is.’ ”

For Robinson, the youth advocacy work “is a ministry to me.”

She got into it after age 40, knowing from years as a single mother what a helping hand can mean to a family.

“I’ve had so much help,” she said. “How could I not help?”

She finished her college degree at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and took on work as a substitute teacher at

an alternative middle school in Kansas City Public Schools.

Some people were concerned, saying, “You’re working with the *bad kids*?” she said.

“But I loved the kids,” she said. “They’re just kids. That’s when I got hooked.”

She knew her checklist was a lot for Spradley to take in. He didn’t even know yet that she was also planning eventually to push him to give college a try.

“Our job is to help them be successful,” she said. “Get them to stretch. They may not think they can do college, but why not try? Let’s try. I will help you.”

Can’t watch the news

The work comes with emotional risks.

The youths from juvenile court that Hash helps often have to figure out how to deal with difficult home and neighborhood situations that led them into trouble in the first place.

The youth advocates are trying to help them transition from the structured life in the Division of Youth Services.

Their advocates teach them life skills and help them find safe housing, but the youths often re-encounter people tangled in substance abuse or other risky behaviors.

“Sometimes there have been generations of poor choices,” Hash said. “That can be hard to run alongside.”

The office that Hash shares with other youth advocates displays a pair of small memorials to two teenagers who were lost to Kansas City’s gun violence.

Robinson is pained by a teenage girl she helped who was killed.

“You do get attached to kids,” she said. “You get to the point you don’t want to watch the news.”

Spradley went from being a young teen who didn’t know if he would survive the night to a college student eyeing a degree in engineering. He’s going to Metropolitan Community Colleges-Penn Valley, with plans to continue at UMKC.

“I never thought I’d go to college,” he said. “I didn’t like school.”

But the LINC programming helped him find his confidence. He became president of the Kansas City area Youth Advisory Board and joined the state board. He was part of the crowd on Youth Advocacy Day at the Capitol in Jefferson City in 2017, meeting legislators and their staffs.

All these things finally seemed real to him in the spring of 2018 when he walked across the stage in East High School’s graduation ceremony at the UMKC Swinney Recreation Center.

He wished his mother could see him — feeling joy he had thought wasn’t possible.

“The day I got my diploma,” he said, “I knew no matter how hard life was, or how hard I made it seem, now that I was doing this, I can do anything if I commit to it and accomplish it.”

Keeping the light on

At some point, every one of the advocates’ cases gets discharged, Winburn said. The teenagers grow into their 20s and they age out of the program.

But like good parents, the advocates are still there, a phone call away, text or email, always happy to receive a visitor.

The LINC advocates can’t spend any more program dollars on their graduates, Winburn said, but they can pass on tips — a good car mechanic who will give them a deal, a great place to get furniture, or just some good advice.

They’re on their own, just like Winburn’s own children are on their own, he said.

“But they still call.”

Missouri gives millions in college aid, but little goes to KC students needing it most

Kansas City Star

[BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS](#)

SEPTEMBER 10, 2019 05:00 AM

The state of Missouri gives millions of dollars to students every year to pay for two years of college. Yet most of the money goes to students in more affluent districts and not to those who need it the most.

Now educators want the state to reexamine the criteria for the 30-year-old [A+ scholarship program](#) so students who may not qualify — often through no fault of their own — would have a better chance at getting the money.

“I would love to see A+ identify some flex criteria or tier the scholarship monies,” said Jermaine Wilson, director of counseling and support services for Kansas City Public Schools.

In a district where roughly 95% of students come from low-income households, landing an A+ scholarship “could really swing the pendulum and change the entire trajectory of their lives,” he said. “But all of the current research shows that schools in areas with immense poverty and trauma have multiple issues to navigate through.”

The program covers tuition for two years at any of the state’s community colleges or technical schools.

To qualify, students must meet certain academic criteria and volunteer to tutor or mentor other students for 50 hours. But they must meet strict attendance standards as well.

Yet for some students, it’s a struggle just getting to school every day. If Mama can’t afford child care, sometimes the oldest child has to stay home to care for younger siblings, says Marla Sheppard, the Kansas City district’s deputy superintendent.

Along those same lines, she said, is a problem educators call student mobility, when students don’t stay put in one school. Maybe because of evictions or because of homelessness, their family moves around, often in the middle of the school year. The student’s grades and attendance suffer, Sheppard said, two key areas measured to qualify for A+ money.

A+ students need an overall grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale and a cumulative 95% attendance over four years of high school. With 174 school days in the year, if a student misses 10 days, there goes the A+ attendance criteria. They also need to attend the same high school for three years immediately prior to graduation.

In Kansas City, “40% of kids end up in a different school from the one they started in before the end of the year,” Sheppard said. Her district has the area’s highest mobility rate. “Our kids are constantly moving, and those are not factors we can control. It’s poverty. Is poverty the fault of the child?”

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Urban education advocates argue that much of the A+ scholarship money isn't going where it is most needed.

Students from middle income families and those in the more affluent suburban districts consistently are the ones raking in the bulk of those dollars. The scholarship does not consider income as a qualifier, said Leroy Wade, deputy commissioner of higher education for the state. Students who meet the criteria, regardless of their family's economic status, are eligible.

Last year, for example, Raymore-Peculiar students received \$299,242 in A+ scholarship dollars. Blue Springs and Blue Springs South high schools each claimed more than \$150,000. Students attending Lee's Summit's three high schools pulled in a total of more than \$617,000.

At the same time, students at Kansas City's Lincoln College Preparatory Academy got \$12,004 — the most of any of the district's schools. East High School got \$1,235, and Central Academy of Excellence students got nothing.

Students at Hogan Preparatory Academy, a public charter school, also did not collect any A+ money, but Hogan's new superintendent, Jayson Strickland, said he intends to investigate why. "We are going through a reboot right now, and as we do that I want to be sure that Hogan students are prepared to take advantage of every resource that is going to give them access to college and set them up for success in life," Strickland said.

Some students jeopardize their chances for A+ money the first year of high school because they don't score well on the Algebra 1 exam at the end of the year.

"They may have the attendance, the 50 hours of tutoring and mentoring but don't qualify because of their algebra score," Wilson said. "It hurts my heart and why we are pushing so hard" in the earlier grades preparing students to perform better in math.

The most needy students are not only in the urban districts, said Brad Welle, deputy superintendent for Grain Valley schools in eastern Jackson County. Last year, Grain Valley High School students received \$301,800 in A+ money, more than any other school in the area.

"Grain Valley looks more suburban than it used to," Welle said, adding that part of the district is rural. "At its core we are primarily made up of working class communities, and for a lot of our students, if not for A+, they would not be college-bound from a financial standpoint."

Welle said that 30% of Grain Valley High School graduates start college at a two-year school.

"I think Grain Valley is a great example of A+ being realized the way it was intended," Walle said. "This money is going to families with need." Walle said his district has built A+ criteria into the high school curriculum and invested money into hiring teachers to focus on making sure students work the necessary tutoring and mentoring volunteer hours.

“I do think, though, that one area the state could look at adjusting is the 95% attendance requirement,” Welle said. “That is a high bar to hit.”

“I DID NOT WANT TO BE IN DEBT”

Cameron Shinault wasn’t going to let any of the obstacles get in his way. He grew up in a tough neighborhood on Kansas City’s East Side. Long before he finished high school, Shinault, the youngest of five children, decided he would be the first to graduate from college. It was going to be his way out, he said. But he knew his parents, even though their income put them somewhere in the middle class, could not help him pay for it.

“Let’s face it, college tuition is expensive. Crazy expensive,” Shinault said. “Nobody I know in Kansas City can just plop down \$10,000 or \$20,000 a year for college, unless you take out loans. And I knew I did not want to be in debt.”

So Shinault made a business decision: “The minute I graduated from high school I was like, I’m going to do A+.” Lucky for Shinault, Lincoln’s graduation requirements mirror qualifications for A+.

Now 20, Shinault is starting his third year at Metropolitan Community College-Kansas City, working toward a career in electrical engineering. “And the most I’ve had to pay so far is about \$150 for books,” he said. “If it weren’t for A+ I would be about \$5,000 in debt by now.

“I mean, the state’s giving you money for free college,” Shinault said. “Who doesn’t like free? It’s just good business.

“I know I was lucky. I came from a two-parent household that’s stable, and my parents, they pushed me. A lot of kids I know didn’t have anyone pushing them to wake up in the morning and get to school. It makes me sad that so many kids I know don’t or can’t tap into A+.”

The A+ program launched in 1993 as part of a high school improvement plan that gave public schools grant money to add rigor to their curriculum. In turn, only students who graduated from these improved A+ schools could qualify for two years of free community college.

In the late 1990s the state stopped granting money to schools for improvement but continued giving scholarships, eventually adding in students at private schools as well.

In 2018 the state doled out more than \$36.4 million to nearly 13,000 students. This year, Wade said, that rose to \$39 million for more than 13,000 students.



Cameron Shinault is determined to be the first person in his family to graduate from college. He is using Missouri’s A+ program to pay for classes at Metropolitan Community College-Maple Woods. JAMES WOOLDRIDGE/JAWOOLDRIDGE@KCSTAR.COM

In the Hickman Mills school district, [all the students have some financial need](#) — 59% of households have incomes less than \$50,000. About a third of the graduating class qualifies for A+.

But under the scholarship rules, the neediest students must get their college money from Pell Grants instead, the need-based federal financial aid program. They are required to first use those federal dollars — which are good for six years of college — before tapping into A+ money. The maximum Pell Grant award for 2019-2020 school year is \$6,195, which might cover the cost of a community college but not most four-year schools.

A+ money is only available for the first two years of college.

“So many of the most needy students never really get to use the A+ money they qualified for,” said Dena Norris, associate vice chancellor for student services at Metropolitan Community College. Norris said MCC has about 2,000 students a year paying for tuition with A+ money.

“I am a strong advocate of the program even if over the years the purpose of it has changed,” Norris said. “It still helps students, whether they are low-income or not, to pay for school.”

Missouri state Rep. Kevin L. Windham Jr., a Democrat from St. Louis County, hopes to get the rules changed. He plans to propose legislation in January that would make A+ money the first dollars a student uses so they could benefit from both A+ and Pell Grants.

For now, he points out, nearly 40% of the A+ money goes to students from families with an adjusted household income of \$100,000 or more.

Cameron is taking classes on MCC’s Maple Woods and Longview campuses. Next year he’ll transfer to the University of Missouri-Kansas City to complete the last two years of his engineering bachelor’s degree program.

A+ won’t cover his last two years at UMKC, where tuition and fees for undergraduate Missouri residents runs \$10,000 a year. But Cameron is hoping for some school scholarships to help him foot that bill.

While UMKC and the other University of Missouri System schools don’t take A+ money for tuition, several other four year schools in the area do. Avila University said this year it has 57 students paying with A+ money.

The University of Central Missouri this year is giving out its first A+ Recognition Scholarship. It is valued at \$500 per year, or \$250 a semester, and is given to incoming freshmen who have completed the A+ program at a Missouri high school.

Drew Griffin, the schools director of admissions, said the scholarship is renewable for one year after a student completes 24 UCM credit hours and maintains a 3.0 or higher GPA. It’s just one more way the college is looking to help reduce college debt load.

Why is Missouri giving college aid to affluent families — and not the neediest students?

BY THE KANSAS CITY STAR EDITORIAL BOARD

SEPTEMBER 16, 2019



Missouri's [A+ scholarship program](#) has opened doors for thousands of students by paying for two years of college. But too often, those who need the most financial help haven't benefited.

As The Star [reported](#), students in affluent suburban school districts are receiving the lion's share of the scholarships — not struggling families. Because household income isn't a criteria for the program, nearly 40% of the money is going to students from families with six-figure adjusted household incomes.

And while defenders of the status quo argue that the A+ program was not designed to be need-based, it's evident that it's time for an overhaul — as some educators and lawmakers have urged.

Administering the scholarships without consideration of financial need has excluded many minority students. And the requirements for the A+ program have precluded many low-income students in urban areas from qualifying.

Only 2% of the program's participants are African American. Sixty percent of current funding is awarded to students from families with an adjusted gross income above \$80,000, and approximately 12% is paid to families with an adjusted gross income above \$150,000.

Suburban school districts have been the beneficiaries, while students in urban schools have struggled to meet the program's requirements.

Students attending the three high schools in Lee's Summit received more than \$617,000 last year, while students at Kansas City's Central Academy of Excellence received not one dime. Students at East High in Kansas City received a paltry \$1,235.

State law requires students to exhaust any federal financial aid before using A+ funds. As a result, low-income students who qualify for Pell Grants are left with little or no A+ money.

The A+ program, which includes nearly every public high school in Missouri and some private and parochial schools, covers the cost of tuition for two years at one of the state's public community colleges, vocational or technical schools.

Requirements include at least 50 hours of community service or mentoring, a 2.5 grade point average or above and a 95% attendance rate. Participants must also score proficient or advanced in an end-of-course Algebra I exam.

In October, the [Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workplace Development](#) will release a report on the state of equity in Missouri higher education during its Equity in Missouri Higher Education Summit.

Revamping the A+ program through an equity lens should be at the top of the agenda. A tiered system based on financial need would be a start.

The [Missouri Community College Association](#) has opposed allowing award money to cover a limited amount of educational costs above tuition and general fees for students with financial need.

"We believe that A+ is an exceptionally successful program in its current form because it benefits all students who are eligible," Brian Millner, president and CEO of the organization said.

Many educators and college access advocates say it's time to rewrite the rules. They're right. The neediest students should benefit from both A+ scholarships and Pell Grants.

As long as A+ is a "last dollar" scholarship, the funds will flow to more affluent students. And too many students with the greatest needs will see their college dreams slip away.



Currents

Stories and insights that underscore the essential role of education and entrepreneurship in empowering all people to shape their futures, create vibrant communities, and grow an inclusive economy.

BY **BARB SHELLY** Freelance Reporter

Housing stability for students and families

Justice in the Schools helps families avoid housing disruption as hundreds of families live on the brink of homelessness in Kansas City.

In KC, 25% of homeowners and 50% of renters spend more than 30% of their income just to stay in their homes. Hundreds of families are living on the brink of homelessness.

Sherie Austin, who has two elementary-age children, received an eviction notice last March. She'd been renting a house under the Housing Authority of Kansas City's Section 8 program. But, after the property owner failed multiple inspections, housing officials withheld rent payments. The landlord moved to evict Austin.

"I was scared," she said. "I can't have an eviction in my name. That's going to be hard on me getting a new apartment."

Situations like hers are increasingly becoming a focus for educators and others around Kansas City, as the community becomes more aware of the harm that frequent moves and housing instability causes to students, families, and schools.

Research unveiled at a ["mobility summit"](#) in 2015 showed that a fifth of students in Missouri school districts in the Kansas City area move at least once during the school year, and students who move have poorer attendance and lower academic achievement than classmates who remain in the same class.

A more recent [study by the Center on Reinventing Public Education](#), commissioned by the Kauffman Foundation, focuses on Kansas City Public Schools and charter schools within the

district's boundaries. It found that students in the system change schools at higher rates than the region at large. About half of students leave the school district entirely at some point between kindergarten and 12th grade.

Justice in the Schools

Stephen Williams, lead litigator for the Kansas City Public Schools, has long been concerned about students forced to move for traumatic reasons such as evictions and violence in their homes. He knew cities such as Atlanta and Los Angeles have school-based legal teams to help families deal with crises.

Williams reached out to [Legal Aid of Western Missouri](#).

"We really had the housing crisis on our minds," said Alicia Johnson, deputy executive director.

Legal Aid and Williams made a case to [SchoolSmartKC](#), which works to raise achievement levels of students who attend public K-12 schools within the boundaries of Kansas City Public Schools. The nonprofit group, which is supported in part by the Kauffman Foundation, came through with \$87,000 worth of funding. The Kansas City Health Department stepped up as a partner with an additional \$50,000 in funding.

[Justice in the Schools](#) had its start.

The project is based in a classroom at Central Academy of Excellence, where lawyer Josh Murphy and paralegal Cori Smith meet with families who qualify for Legal Aid from any school in the district.

"If a family is experiencing an issue having an adverse impact on their stability, we try to help," Murphy said.

It was a Housing Authority caseworker who connected Sherie Austin with Justice in the Schools after she and her children were threatened with eviction. Murphy represented her when her case came up on the landlord-tenant docket in Jackson County Circuit Court.

"I went to the courthouse and he was there," Austin said. "He was like, 'I got this.'"

A judge denied the landlord's request for an eviction judgement against Austin.

HELPING FAMILIES AVOID HOUSING DISRUPTION

Multiple efforts in the Kansas City region are now directed at helping families avoid disruptive moves.

- Kansas City Public Schools is collaborating with [Legal Aid of Western Missouri](#) to staff a small legal office to assist district families threatened with eviction and other disruptions.
- [Heartland Center for Jobs & Freedom](#), a nonprofit focused on assisting low-wage workers, also provides advice and legal services to families faced with loss of their homes.
- [Community Services League recently started the Family Stability Initiative](#). The initiative serves families with school-age children who are at risk of transiency, with

the primary goal of keeping children stably enrolled in their neighborhood school and advancing academically.

- **And school districts are partnering with community groups, such as [Avenue of Life](#), to create venues where struggling families can find one-stop assistance for financial and legal troubles and other needs.**

Austin now lives in a different public housing unit and is hoping her children can remain in the elementary schools they attended last year. "I would hate for them to have to move and not see their friends anymore," she said.

At the very least, Murphy's legal representation kept her from the spiral of homelessness that often happens with an eviction.

Preventing school moves

Kansas City Public Schools data shows that up to 40% of school-year moves are caused by evictions and other housing crises, Williams said.

Working with the [Kansas City Eviction Project](#), the school district can now access public data that alerts them to eviction notices filed against parents of district students. The staff at Justice in the Schools attempts to contact parents to see if they can help.

Justice in the Schools has helped more than 100 clients so far, but there is still work to do to increase awareness of the service and to ease the stigma of asking for help.

"A lot of parents still aren't very keen on letting us know when something is wrong," Williams said. "By the time we're able to figure out what's going on we're pretty far down the line."

Earlier intervention is also the aim of the [Family Stability Initiative](#), a national effort by Siemer Institute for Family Stability in Columbus, Ohio. Caseworkers at social service agencies work extensively with selected families specifically to prevent school moves.

That could mean anything from emergency financial assistance to helping parents improve their own educational credentials and find better-paying jobs, said Jim MacDonald, chief community investment officer for the United Way of Greater Kansas City, which supervises the initiative locally.

The initiative has worked with families in Kansas City Public Schools and the Independence School District since 2014. Last fall, it added the Shawnee Mission School District.

Of 244 families who participated last year, 92% avoided a school-year move. But the work is difficult, MacDonald said.

"We're hearing from caseworkers that it's getting harder to help families find affordable housing," he said.

In the Kansas City area, [nearly a quarter of homeowners and half of renters spend more than 30% of their income just to stay in their homes](#). That means hundreds of families live on the brink of homelessness.

Group launches petition campaign to place Missouri Medicaid expansion on 2020 ballot

Kansas City Star

[BY CRYSTAL THOMAS](#)

SEPTEMBER 04, 2019

JEFFERSON CITY - Groups hoping to make Missouri the 37th state to expand Medicaid officially launched a campaign Wednesday to put the question on 2020 ballot.

In Missouri, the state-run Medicaid program, MO HealthNet, provides health insurance only to children, pregnant women, those with disabilities and some seniors.

Expansion could mean coverage for an additional 200,000 Missourians under the proposal, according to [Healthcare for Missouri](#), the campaign committee leading expansion efforts.

The committee was formed in March and spent the summer exploring whether expansion was possible in Missouri through initiative petition. On Wednesday, it announced it would commit to putting the question in front of voters in 2020.

"I feel so strongly that hardworking Missourians across the state deserve affordable healthcare so that they don't have to decide between their medications and putting food on the table," Dr. Heidi Miller, a St. Louis physician and expansion advocate who submitted the petition on behalf of the group, said in a statement.

Signature collection has already begun and [signing events](#) have been announced for Kansas City, St. Louis and Jefferson City. Petition backers would need submit 172,000 valid signatures to the secretary of state to be placed on the ballot, according to the statement

The campaign has received financial support from the The Fairness Project, a 501(c)(4) "dark money" political nonprofit that is not required to disclose its donors. In working with local advocates, the organization was able to successfully expand Medicaid in Utah, Nebraska, Idaho and Maine within the last three years, according to its website. It also played a role in the successful push to raise Missouri's minimum wage to \$12 through initiative petition in 2018.

In contributing about \$31,000, the Fairness Project is the campaign committee's only donor so far, according to the Missouri Ethics Commission.

However, the campaign includes supporters like the Missouri Hospital Association, the Missouri Primary Care Association and a similarly named permanent advocacy group, Missouri Health Care for All.

A lack of Medicaid expansion has led to a financial burden of uncompensated care for healthcare providers, who are mandated to serve everyone who comes through the emergency room, regardless of whether they are insured.

At least nine rural hospitals have closed in Missouri since 2014. Of the 590,000 patients Missouri's Community Health Centers saw in 2018, 144,000 were uninsured, according to the Missouri Primary Care Association.

"Hospital closures in rural communities have increased the distance to lifesaving care for Missourians suffering from traumatic injuries, stroke and heart attack," Herb Kuhn, Missouri Hospital Association president, said in a statement. "Minutes count in medical emergencies. Medicaid expansion will help maintain access to emergency care in rural Missouri — benefiting those gaining coverage and all rural residents."

Missouri Health Care for All is grassroots coalition of individuals, local health care providers and faith organizations.

"After years of inaction by the Missouri General Assembly, we are thrilled to reach this moment, when a broad and powerful coalition of Medicaid Expansion supporters can at last say, 'We are bringing this straight to Missouri voters to decide,'" Jen Bersdale, its executive director, said. "It's the right thing to do for the more than 200,000 uninsured Missourians who would gain coverage, and it's the right thing to do for Missouri's taxpayers, budget, and hospitals."

Missouri lawmakers have long been reluctant to expand Medicaid, saying that the program already comprises a third of the state's budget.

Expansion, which is allowed under the Affordable Care Act, would be paid for almost entirely by federal dollars, with the state contributing a 10 percent match.

The initiative petition says it would affect those making below 133 percent of the poverty level. However, because of income considerations built into the law, in practice, it would make Medicaid available to those making less than 138% of the federal poverty level, or less than \$18,000 a year for an individual and \$30,000 for a family of three, according to Healthcare for Missouri.



Missouri's Community College Scholarship Program Isn't A+ For Low-Income Students

By [ELLE MOXLEY](#) • SEP 5, 2019

With college costs rising every year, Missouri's A+ Scholarship Program is a bargain – 50 hours of tutoring in exchange for two free years of community college.

College access advocates, however, argue that the money isn't going to the students who need it most.

"We know there are people who utilize A+ who come from families that make \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year," said Karissa Anderson, the advocacy director for the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis.

The program doesn't look at financial need, instead only considering whether students meet tutoring, attendance and academic requirements. It provides a full ride for two-year schools but cuts that if the student receives other need-based financial aid.

Often the biggest winners are students who go to big high schools in fairly rural areas – high schools like Fort Osage in Eastern Independence, where more than a third of 2018 graduates successfully completed the A+ program.

'Why not do it?'

The rules are simple.

"Come to school on time, be here every day, make decent grades ... and the state will reward you with some financial compensation to go to college," said Fort Osage High School Principal Scott Moore.

It's A+ coordinator Patti Horner's job to shepherd Fort Osage students through the process. Even if a student plans to go to a four-year college, she really encourages them to do A+.

"I feel like most of the students who are college-bound have a four-year degree in mind," Horner explained. "The ones who end up at community college, it's for financial reasons."

As a result, a lot of A+ students at Fort Osage aren't even sure if they'll use their scholarship, including Aubri Stewart. Stewart is only a junior, but she's already knocked out her tutoring hours, helping soon-to-be Fort Osage students at kindergarten camp.

"I watched a lot of lightning shoes ... they were super excited about their new shoes. I blew a lot of noses, wiped a lot of messes," Stewart said.



Fort Osage junior Aubri Stewart spent her summer tutoring little kids at a kindergarten camp. She's not sure if she'll use her A scholarship, but she likes the idea of free college.

CREDIT ELLE MOXLEY / KCUR 89.3

Involved in band, theater and choir, Stewart dreams of performing for a living someday, and she knows she wants to get a bachelor's degree. But if money's tight, she'll be able to use her A+ scholarship at a Missouri community college, then transfer to a four-year school.

"I just wanted to have that opportunity. I don't know if I will use my A+ scholarship, but to have the opportunity to do two free years of college? Why not do it?" Stewart said.

By the numbers, it's clear that A+ is a backup plan for many Fort Osage recipients. Just 61 of the class of 2018 A+ graduates actually enrolled at a community college. Almost as many went straight to four-year schools, some of which offer partial scholarships to A+ students, but not all.

Factoring in financial aid

Three of the five high schools with the most A+ graduates – Nixa, Kickapoo and Ozark – are in the greater Springfield area. The other two, Washington and Seckman, are outside of the St. Louis metro.

But college access advocates tend to point to more affluent suburban districts in their critiques of the A+ program. Also near the top of the list are the solidly middle-class Francis Howell, Lee's Summit and Liberty school districts.

“The suburban schools, their counselors have more time to do this sort of thing,” said Scott Baier with St. Louis-based College Bound, a program that helps urban teens get to and through college, “and they're assessing their students when they're freshmen and sophomores in terms of what their post-graduate path is.”

That’s certainly true in Fort Osage, where Horner wants every student to have a plan and a backup plan. But Principal Moore thinks his district has a lot more in common with rural school districts where college isn’t a given than it does some of its suburban neighbors.

“To some, I think college is perceived as an unattainable goal in all sincerity because I think being in this rural community, that's the mindset,” Moore said. “The financial compensation is huge. If you can talk to families early enough about the potential, they can see college as a possible future for their student.”

Some of those same attitudes about higher education persist in urban schools, too. Yet very low-income students don’t often participate in the A+ program.

“It’s probably a factor of time,” Baier said. “Our students that would be eligible are probably going to be getting full rides to community college.”

It’s not that the low-income students College Bound works with can’t meet the requirements of A+, Baier said. It’s that they already qualify for Pell Grants, and the state of Missouri requires students to use up any federal aid before applying A+ funds. So it doesn’t make much sense for really low-income students to spend their time checking all the boxes.

Anderson, the college access advocate, said as long as A+ is a “last dollar” scholarship, the money will always flow to middle-income students. She isn’t sure that makes sense in a state that’s made deep cuts to its higher education budget over the last decade.

“If we thought about college-going as a state, as a culture, we could probably come up with a program that will benefit both the folks in the urban areas and the folks in the rural areas who all need access to some type of schooling that will set them up for the future,” she said.

Elle Moxley covers education for KCUR. You can reach her on Twitter [@ellemoxley](https://twitter.com/ellemoxley).

Campaign asks Missouri voters to put Medicaid expansion on ballot



By [Bridget McCandless, MD](#) on September 5, 2019

President/CEO

Health Forward Foundation

Available. Accessible. Affordable.

Health Forward Foundation has been working toward these goals for health care services in our two states since our founding in 2003. While we realize health entails far more than just access to care, having quality health care still matters.

I arrived at Health Forward six years ago this week. It was a big week. Not just for me, but for our county. It was the roll out of the Affordable Care Act Marketplace. My first weeks were dominated by media interviews and conversations with partners about the impact the marketplace would have on access to health care in our region.

What I heard then, unfortunately, still rings true today. While the marketplace did expand coverage to some, many of those most in need in our region fell in the insurance gap, thanks to the decision that both Kansas and Missouri made to not expand Medicaid.

The ACA allowed states to voluntarily include low-income people under their own state's Medicaid coverage. At the time, Missouri and Kansas were two of many states that elected not to. However, over the years, more and more states have reversed that decision, leaving just 14 states which have not. Unfortunately, Missouri and Kansas are among them.

That decision has cost us in dollars and in lives.

As most of you know, I am a scientist at heart and as such rely heavily on data. The data from states that have moved forward with Medicaid expansion is as compelling as it is rich. These are studies from government, research institutions, universities, and policy organizations. You can access the 708 citations [here](#).

I'd like to highlight what that data tells us about the impacts of Medicaid expansion:

- States see improvements in early stage breast cancer diagnosis, reduction in infant mortality, improved diabetes care, and improved treatment for asthma.

- For rural areas, there is a particularly large improvement in insurance access. As of 2015, nonelderly individuals in rural areas within non-expansion states were nearly twice as likely to be uninsured as those living in expansion states (15 percent vs. 9 percent).
- 25 of these studies showed increased access to behavioral health services and medications.
- Medicaid expansion reduces inequity in coverage. Researchers have found that the coverage gap between blacks and whites declined from 11.0 percentage points in 2013 to 5.3 percentage points in 2017. The gap between Hispanics and whites, meanwhile, dropped from 25.4 points to 16.6 points. For nearly all groups, uninsured rates were roughly twice as high in non-expansion states in 2016.

Aside from all these figures, are the real stories. People report that they feel in better health. That is the point. People who are healthy enough to work, raise families, and fully participate in their communities.

So here we are. Six years later. Watching other states improve health access and outcomes while our states struggle to provide access to care. Still asking, why not Kansas and Missouri?

As I near the end of my time as president/CEO of Health Forward, I'm proud that we remain committed to advocating for available, accessible, and affordable health care. We *know* that Medicaid plays a vital role in that work.

Today, I feel as optimistic as I have in the past six years. In Kansas, legislative leaders have pledged to take up the debate on Medicaid expansion in the 2020 session. And this week, Gov. Laura Kelly announced that she will re-convene a working group to study the costs and benefits of Medicaid expansion models in other states.

And there was a big announcement in Missouri, too. Health Forward is among many partners of [Healthcare for Missouri](#), which announced plans to launch a campaign to put Medicaid expansion on the ballot.

The newly formed campaign will ask voters to bring home more than a billion of Missourians' tax dollars from Washington, D.C., every year to keep rural hospitals open, boost the state's economy, and deliver health care to people who have lower-paying jobs that don't come with insurance.

A signature collection drive is happening with volunteers from around the state. The coalition needs to collect 172,000 signatures from registered voters to put Medicaid expansion on the November 2020 ballot.

Now, more than ever, I'm convinced this is the moment.

I encourage you to visit healthcareformissouri.org to stay informed, to share your story, and to learn where you can go to to sign the petition.



Missouri-Kansas Chapter 2019-2020 Fellows

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Lee's Summit R7 Schools

Michael Cohron

Knob Noster R-VIII School District

Lisa Cummings

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Next Story

Article rank | 14 Sep 2019 | The Washington Post | BY LAURA MECKLER AND KATE RABINOWITZ

The changing face of school classrooms

Millions more American children are learning with students of other races, even as districts in metropolitan areas remain deeply segregated

The number of children attending U.S. public schools with students of other races has nearly doubled over the past quarter-century, a little-noticed surge that reflects the nation's shifting demographics, a Washington Post analysis has found.



Jonathan Godes, the mayor of Glenwood Springs, walks daughters Nolah, 9, and Addison, 11, to school. Godes said he was tempted to enroll them in a charter school in Carbondale but went with their neighborhood school, which is 45 percent Latino.

At the same time, children in most big cities and many suburbs remain locked in deeply segregated districts, with black students more likely to be enrolled in segregated districts than Hispanics or whites, The Post found.

In 2017, 10.8 million children attended highly integrated public schools, up from 5.9 million in 1995, an 83 percent increase that stems largely from rising diversity outside metropolitan areas.

The finding reflects profound demographic change, as Latinos move into small towns and suburbs that once were overwhelmingly white. These places, The Post found, are far more likely to have schools that mirror the new diversity of their communities than their big-city counterparts, which have long been home to a diverse population but have run schools that are profoundly segregated.

While segregation in parts of America has persisted, the number of students affected has inched up only slightly. Out of 46.4 million public school students, about 5.8 million attended schools that were not integrated in 2017.

The change is underway in places like Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley near Aspen. Twenty-five years ago, the valley's school district was 12 percent Latino. Now, Latinos represent more than half of all kids.

Unlike in big cities such as Denver, on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, white and Latino children in Roaring Fork are not segregated by school. Each building roughly reflects the district as a whole.

"We kept tinkering and working on this," said Rob Stein, superintendent of the Roaring Fork School District. "We want our schools to look like our community."

During this period of rapid diversification, the overall U.S. public school population increased by 6 percent. The Post analysis included all of the nation's 13,184 traditional public school districts. Not included are about 5.8 million children who attend private or religious schools, 3 million in public charter schools and those not enrolled in school.

The Post analysis comes as the race for the Democratic presidential nomination has focused attention on the nation's troubled history of segregated education. Former vice president Joe Biden's opposition to federally mandated busing of children in the 1970s has drawn scorn from some rivals, and the debate has spurred conversation over how to mitigate the segregation that remains in schools.

The challenge becomes more urgent as the United States approaches a demographic tipping point. Next year, the Census Bureau predicts, whites will no longer constitute a majority of American children. With that shift comes important questions: Can increasing diversity help U.S. schools shed their legacy of segregation, or will children continue to be clustered by race and ethnicity 65 years after the Supreme Court declared in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate schools are "inherently unequal"?

Many of the nation's heavily segregated districts are in the largest cities. Denver schools are typical. They were integrated after a federal court ordered busing in 1973 but resegregated almost immediately after the order was lifted in 1995. Segregation has climbed steadily ever since. Efforts to push for integration in Denver have been halting, even as white families arrive into the gentrifying city.

"We have unequal housing, segregated housing by design and by law," said Van Schoales, president of A+ Colorado, a research and advocacy group in Denver. "After busing ended, [school] boundary lines were drawn, and they reinforced the existing housing patterns." That's partly because families, frustrated by their experience with courtmandated desegregation and busing, demanded neighborhood schools.

Research shows integration benefits children of all races, who learn to appreciate diversity, producing lifelong benefits. It also shows that children of color do better academically and that white students do no worse when they attend diverse schools.

Integration isn't always possible: Many U.S. school districts don't have enough diversity to integrate, even if they want to.

Some of that homogeneity is driven by school system boundary lines. Districts face no obligation to educate kids who live outside their borders, and wealthy families often band together in districts.

Schools in Birmingham, Ala., are 91 percent black, for instance, while neighboring Mountain Brook schools are 96 percent white. Students do not cross the line that divides them.

To conduct its analysis, The Post used data from the U.S. Education Department to examine how many of the nation's school systems have sufficient diversity to create integrated schools. In 1995, the first year for which comprehensive data are available, 20 percent of districts — including

45 percent of all public school students — were diverse. To be considered a diverse district, no one race can constitute more than 75 percent of students.

By 2017, the most recent year of data, the number of diverse districts had risen sharply: Nearly 4 in 10 school districts, educating two-thirds of all public school students, had enough diversity to make integration possible, assuming the political will.

But just because a school system is diverse that doesn't mean its schools are integrated.

Are diverse districts creating and maintaining diverse schools? Or do all the white kids remain clustered in certain schools, with black and brown students in others, just like when the Rev. Oliver Brown won his lawsuit against the segregated schools of Topeka, Kan., in 1954?

The Post grouped diverse school districts into three categories — highly integrated, somewhat integrated and not integrated — using a measure called the variance ratio, which assesses how frequently students of the same race attend schools together, given the district's demographics.

In highly integrated districts, individual schools most closely reflect the demographics of the district as a whole. In districts that are not integrated, some schools are dominated by one race and others by another. The somewhat integrated districts are in between.

The number of students in the highly and somewhat integrated groups increased significantly. The rise was especially robust in the most integrated group, with percent more students — a total of 10.8 million — attending these schools than in 1995. The increase in the somewhat integrated group was 67 percent.

The most segregated group barely changed.

In historically diverse districts such as Denver — typically big and midsize cities — segregation was high and grew slightly higher.

But segregation was far lower in districts that grew diverse between 1995 and 2017. These are typically small cities and suburbs that used to be mostly white and where Latinos and, to a lesser extent, African Americans have moved. Experts cite a number of possible explanations, including that whites may harbor less bias and be more willing to live alongside Latinos than they are African Americans.

"Those newly diverse districts are encouraging. The key thing is how do we help them stay integrated and not transition?" said Erica Frankenberg, who directs the Center for Education and Civil Rights at Pennsylvania State University. "That's a potential opportunity. We don't have to undo bad patterns that have formed. We just have to keep them stable." Integration in Roaring Fork

The diverging trends are clear in two Colorado school districts, set on either side of the Continental Divide: Roaring Fork and Denver.

Twenty-five years ago, the Roaring Fork Valley was overwhelmingly white. As the ski mecca of Aspen boomed, Latino families began arriving in large numbers, drawn to jobs in construction, hospitality and landscaping. Aspen housing was far too expensive, so many families commute from towns down the valley: Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs. Together, they make up the Roaring Fork School District.

The valley's regional hub is Glenwood Springs, set at the juncture of the Roaring Fork and Colorado rivers and named for hot springs thought to possess medicinal powers. It once was a Wild West town known for coal mines, saloons and brothels. Today, there's a cancer-treatment center, a row of car dealerships, a Walmart and a coffee house serv83

ing three types of avocado toast. But this is far from the big city. In springtime, black bears emerge from hibernation to mess with garbage bins. Street parking in the center of town is free.

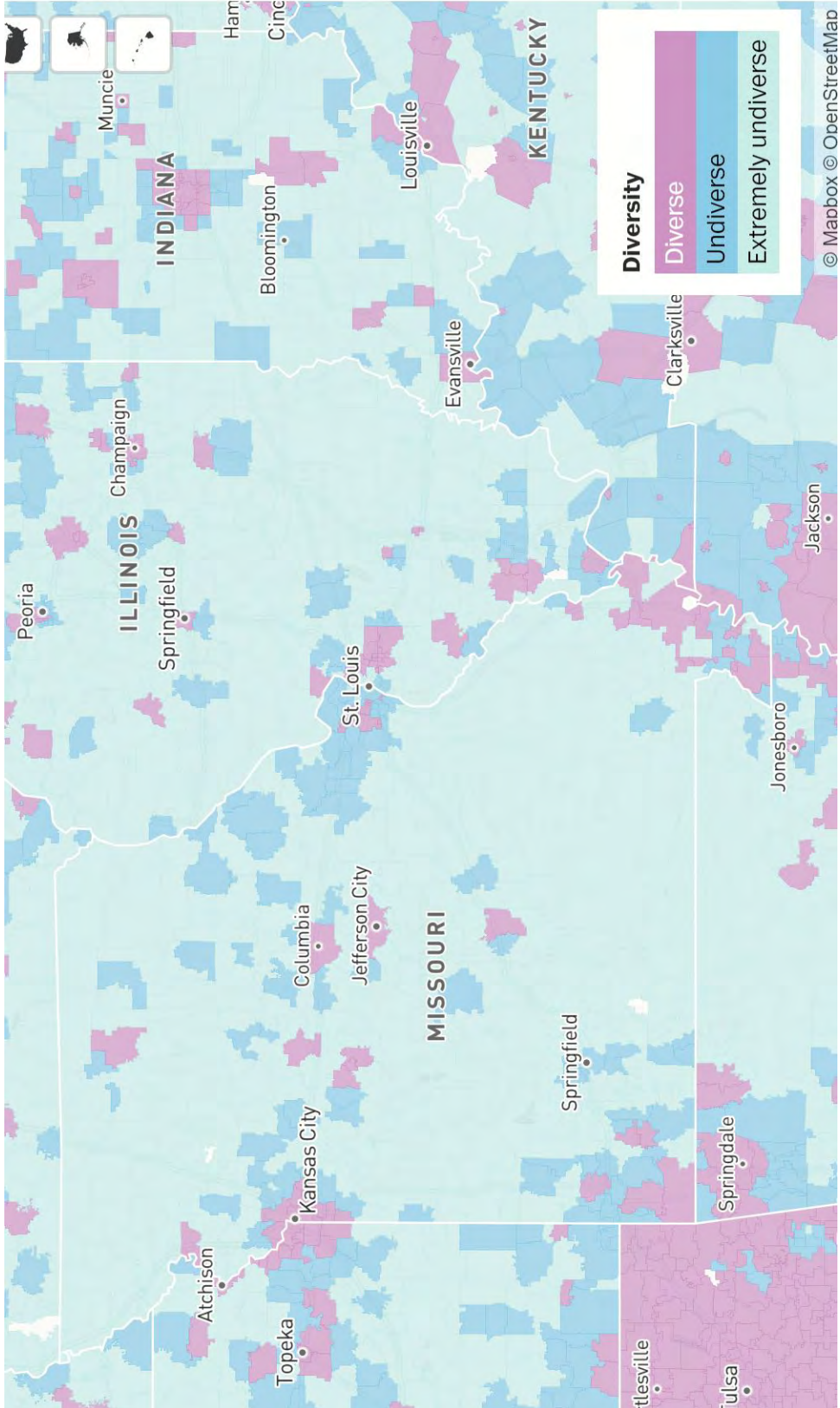
Managing the school district is the 59-year-old Stein, who lived through a tumultuous era of school desegregation as a student. When Stein was in eighth grade, his white Jewish family moved into the Denver school district, just as court-ordered desegregation was beginning. In 1975, Stein was bused to Manual High School, in the heart of Denver's historically black community.

It was a wrenching time for the city, marked by white flight, but not for Stein. "There was a strong social justice orientation in my family, so it was very hard to oppose integration," Stein said.

After the court order was lifted in 1995, Manual resegregated. Last year, almost no white students attended the school.

Stein has found integration far easier in Roaring Fork. That's largely because housing in the Roaring Fork Valley is more integrated. Latinos and whites live throughout all three towns.

How the nation's growing racial diversity is changing our schools



Details showing school diversity in Missouri. Interactive map provides diversity by school district. Go to <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/local/school-diversity-data/>

In Glenwood Springs, a trailer park populated mostly by Latinos sits not far from spacious, newly developed single-family homes. Two apartment buildings sit side by side across from a strip mall on the west side of town — one rents high-end apartments; the other offers federally subsidized, affordable units. And the community is small enough that people naturally mix in their daily lives.

“There’s one City Market in the middle of town where everyone shops,” Stein said.

Not every integrated district is actively trying to meld students from different racial and ethnic groups. But there are deliberate efforts to do so in Roaring Fork. In 2016, the district was deciding where to build an elementary school. One option was the west side of Glenwood Springs, a growing area that is home to many low-income Latino families.

Stein feared a school there would quickly segregate, partly because white families would hesitate to cross the Colorado River to send their children into a majority Latino area. Instead, the district opted to build Riverview School on the other side of town, where it could more easily draw a mix of students. Administrators then redrew the boundaries for the district’s elementary schools to balance the student populations.

At Riverview, classes in kindergarten through third grade are taught half the day in English and half in Spanish, and children are assigned language partners to help each other.

“She’s a Spanish speaker, and I’m the complete opposite,” said Anabelle Torres, 8, gesturing toward her friend Klarissa Lozoya. “Whenever things get hard in Spanish, she comes help me. We partner up, and we help each other.”

Overt tensions are rare, residents say, maybe because the economy is booming and immigrant labor is fueling the growth. Still, some have that unsettling sense the place has changed.

“There used to be two saloons, and old-timers could still spit on the floor,” said Mike Blair, 84, who is white and has lived in the area more than 50 years. “So many people are new; it’s not as comfortable or friendly as it used to be.” Still, he says, the newcomers have not caused problems, and he happily lives in a trailer park with many Latino families. “They are very attentive to their property. It doesn’t become a poor, crowded slum area like people feared.”

Still, three public charter schools in the district are disproportionately white, as are two private schools.

Census data shows that 46 percent of all 5- to 17-year-olds living in the district are white, but just 41 percent of students in the traditional public schools are white, suggesting a number of families are opting for alternatives.

One of the charters, Carbondale Community School, offers classes of 15 students, a school garden, outdoor education and schoolwide “mindful Monday” meetings, where the students form a circle and reaffirm principles such as social justice, responsibility and community. The school’s goal is to develop better global citizens, said Principal Sam Richings-Germain, who is white.

But last year, just 21 of its 135 students were Latino. Students are chosen by lottery, and the principal says she has tried to figure out why more Latinos don’t apply. She wonders if it might be the \$525 student fee, although the school waives it for low-income families. Families must transport children to school, which could be another barrier.

“I don’t like people to think of us as a white-flight school,” Richings-Germain said. She said families choose her school based not on race or ethnicity, but because “they are just looking for something different.”

For the past few years, the school has given preference in the lottery for kindergarten to children whose primary home language is not English. At first, it yielded only one or two Latino students, but this past spring, the school received six applications from Latino families. All were admitted for this fall.

As the Latino population has grown, its members have been slow to assert their potential power. Some are in the country illegally and purposefully avoid attention. Some don’t speak English, and that keeps them isolated. Until recently, serving on the part-time town council required taking a day off from work, every other Thursday. The council is entirely white.

One Latina mother told the story of her daughter, who loved volleyball but could not make the varsity team at Glenwood Springs High School. It turns out, most white girls had been playing private club volleyball for years, something the mom didn’t know about and would have had trouble affording. She complained but ultimately let the matter drop.

A few years later, her younger daughter, along with three Latina friends, failed to make the basketball team, even though the mom had spent \$600 or \$700 on a basketball camp. The

mother, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because she is living in the United States without authorization, was scared to complain again, but she did.

She challenged the principal, Paul Freeman, to look at recent yearbooks and said it was not until then that Freeman realized there were no Latina athletes on the volleyball or basketball teams. In an interview, Freeman said that he knew about the gaps before then but that looking at the photos reinforced the point.

Freeman sent the mother to Stein, who encouraged her to organize like-minded parents to press for change. The mother is working with a community group called Mountain Voices. "I was quiet for years, scared because of immigration," she said, adding that she hopes to work with Stein toward equity.

In a separate interview, Stein made clear that, while he will help, it will be up to this mother, and her peers, to press for change. The lesson of busing, he said, is that improvements must be based on relationships, not on policies. They must spring from the community, not be imposed.

"I can't whack-a-mole every problem," he said. "It has to be about people coming together and finding their highest priorities."

A still-segregated Denver

Manual High, where Rob Stein was bused, is still open, though barely. Enrollment has dwindled to about 300 students. It's one of many segregated schools that make Denver among the most segregated districts in the nation.

A decade after busing ended, enrollment had fallen, test scores were abysmal, experiments had been tried and failed. The district closed the campus, hoping for a reboot but enraging the community, which was protective of its school. The district hired Stein, who was then principal at an elite private school, to try to execute a turnaround as principal of Manual.

Stein said he was making progress but was also frustrated by various matters and quit in 2010 after three years.

Now, the school again faces jeopardy. After recording low test scores for five years in a row, the school is likely to be subject to state intervention, which could include closure, conversion to a charter school or new management.

Asked to offer his school's strengths and challenges, Principal Joe Glover mentions just one strength — a recent state championship in basketball. Walking the hallways, he admonishes students to get to class and says he's working on attendance. Turning the corner, he finds a teacher with good news to report.

"Tell him how much you improved in math!" teacher Jeny Garst, beaming, urges one of her students as Glover approaches. Andre Jackson, a junior, sheepishly reports that his math SAT score jumped by 140 points, improving to 470 out of a possible 800.

Jackson said he was helped by a change in the schedule. Now, he is in math class every day. It used to be offered only every other day. He's still short of the school goal of 530 — "but not by much," Garst says.

Glover, who is white, says he's not focused on his school's demographics and is not trying to diversify the school. "We can be successful with the students we have in the building right now," he said. His concern, he said, is expanding enrollment. "The community wants Manual to be successful."

Five miles away is Carson Elementary, where 76 percent of students are white. The school has grown so popular with families in its wealthy neighborhood that Carson can accept only a handful of children from outside its boundaries.

"Families are pulling students from private schools to [attend] the Carson school," said Principal Anne Larkin, who is white. The parent-teacher association raises more than \$100,000 a year to pay for an additional teacher, field trips and classroom materials.

The front hallway features a large bin for families to donate used clothing and shoes. In a first-grade classroom, students write riddles describing birds. "This bird can fly backwards," one boy writes, hinting at a hummingbird.

"I like this school because it's full of kind people," said Ava Gardenswartz, a first-grader. She adds another positive: "When our teacher gives us a math test, she makes sure we know the stuff on the math test before the test."

The history of segregation in Denver can be traced to how the school board drew campus boundary lines after a federal court in 1995 lifted the busing order. Busing spurred white flight, and powerful Denver residents of all races were calling for a return to neighborhood schools.

"The overwhelming sentiment in the community was, 'We want our neighborhood schools,'" said Laura Lefkowitz, who was on the school board at the time. Because housing was segregated, the results were predictable. "The voices for maintaining some integration, like mine, were very few and far between."

A particularly tricky question was where to put the boundary between Manual, a traditionally black school, and Denver East High School, viewed as desirable by white families, then and now. One board member noted that if school zones were separated by York Street, which runs north-south, both schools would be more racially balanced. But doing so would have put wealthy white neighborhoods in the Manual territory.

"The rest of the board members laughed at him," said Alan Gottlieb, who covered the meeting as a reporter for the Denver Post and is now an education consultant.

Instead, the board created an anvil-like shape for Manual's boundary, surrounded on three sides by neighborhoods that would feed into Denver East. The result was Manual would serve a high-poverty, almost exclusively black and Latino area. Middleclass African Americans, once a significant part of the area, had largely moved away.

Denver's level of segregation immediately climbed after the busing order was lifted and has been on the rise since. In 2017, Denver was among the nation's most segregated districts.

Some in Denver contend segregation is exacerbated by rules that give parents considerable choice in selecting schools. White parents are typically wealthier, better educated and better positioned to take advantage of options, experts say. The choice system allows them to flock to disproportionately white schools and was designed, some say, to attract white families to the city.

"One unintended consequence of school choice is, if you don't have certain means or you are unable to navigate the system of choice, then you don't really have a choice," said Allen Smith, Denver's senior deputy superintendent for equity until June.

In 2017, a city commission called Strengthening Neighborhoods made recommendations for better integrating the schools. They included providing transportation to increase access to schools and changing the way students are assigned to schools. So far, critics say, the ideas have mostly been ignored.

Some say segregation in Denver would be even worse without the system of choice that gives lower-income families access to schools outside their neighborhoods. Tom Boasberg, Denver's superintendent from 2009 to 2018, pointed to enrollment zones that allow some families to select a school from a larger geographic area as a way to balance each building's demographics.

"When you look at the data, it's very clear school choice leads to increases in integration," Boasberg said.

Not all Denver schools are segregated. Leaders at Denver Green School, just over a mile from Carson Elementary, work to recruit a diverse student body and are helped by the school's location in a more diverse neighborhood. The school's focus on project-based learning and environmental concerns has also drawn white families to choose it.

Along the main hallway, "diversity wheels" are on display, where fourth-graders have spelled out aspects of their identity. A wheel created by a girl named Zakia shows a family of five, lists favorites like swimming, reading and ice cream, and declares, "I am Muslim" and "I speak Arabic," all surrounding a self-portrait.

Parents who send their children to schools that are more segregated have a range of explanations. At Park Hill Elementary, the student body is nearly three-quarters white and few spots exist for students outside its affluent boundaries. Michelle Scott, president of the parentteacher association, said she is troubled by the inequities that stem from this concentration of privilege. Her group raises about \$200,000 a year to add staff and raise salaries at the school.

"Because we raise so much money and we give so much directly to the building, we have more staff. We have better test scores. We have higher achieving children," she said. "That's not fair, I'll admit it."

But she also values a neighborhood school, where parents meet one another on the playground, and said she would hesitate to send her children to a school that wasn't close by. "You should be able to get up and walk your kid to school," she said.

The choices they make

A range of factors may explain why newly diverse communities are more integrated than communities that have long had a diversity of students.

It starts with housing. When people live in the same neighborhoods, they are significantly more likely to go to the same schools.

Latinos have never been as segregated from whites as African Americans, experts say, and there is some evidence that white attitudes are less biased regarding Latinos. Urban housing patterns were established at a time when African Americans faced overt discrimination in government housing programs, zoning and mortgage lending. It was under those circumstances that neighborhoods were branded as home to people of one race or another.

But as Latinos arrive in communities, they may encounter more acceptance and a less hostile legal landscape.

“There hasn’t been this idea in the community that, ‘This is where the Latinos live.’ It’s new and in flux,” said William H. Frey, a demographics expert at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank. “In these small communities, things just aren’t as balkanized as they are in other places.”

In addition, white parents in smaller places who are unhappy about diversity have fewer alternatives. These areas are more isolated with fewer nearby school districts, making moving more complicated. There are fewer private schools.

And most of these newly diverse areas are still majority white, and whites are sometimes more comfortable with diversity as long as they are still dominant.

“There’s a tipping point at which whites are no longer comfortable, and they’ll start to leave,” said Kori J. Stroub, a research scientist at the Houston Education Research Consortium, a partnership between Rice University and Houston-area school districts.

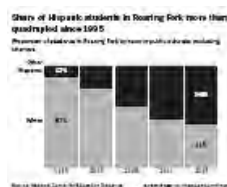
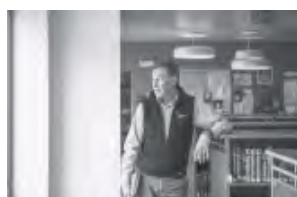
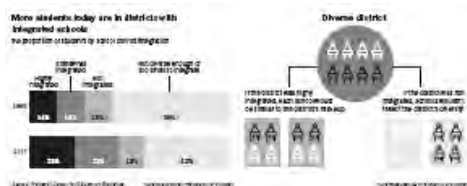
In these rapidly diversifying communities, parents of all races find themselves with decisions to make.

In Glenwood Springs, the city’s mayor, Jonathan Godes, 41, said he was tempted to enroll his two children in the Carbondale Community School, a charter that is a 12-mile drive to the next town. Godes, who is white, said he is worried so many privileged families were choosing private and charter schools, leaving the traditional schools with an overrepresentation of Latino children.

His neighborhood school, Sopris Elementary, is 45 percent Latino, and 39 percent of students come from families poor enough to qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, according to state data.

“When you see a 10-point difference in math and reading scores, all ideas of public education and neighborhood schools go out the window,” he said.

In the end, he was persuaded by convenience: Sopris is a threeminute walk from home.



“I have been very pleased. Great teachers and awesome administrators,” he said. “My wife and I comment pretty regularly on how stupid it would’ve been to send our kids anywhere else.”

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Six findings in The Post's analysis of diversity in school districts

Glenwood Springs High School students during an outdoor education class in Glenwood Springs, Colorado last April. (Nick Cote/For The Washington Post)

By [Laura Meckler](#) and
[Kate Rabinowitz](#)

September 12

The number of children attending U.S. public schools with students of other races has nearly doubled over the past quarter-century, a little-noticed surge that reflects the nation's shifting demographics, a Washington Post analysis has found.

1. The United States is growing more diverse. In 2020, whites will no longer represent a majority of American children.

Since its founding, the United States has been a majority-white nation, but it is becoming more racially diverse every year. Next year, the Census Bureau projects, will mark a tipping point where more than half of U.S. children will be part of a minority race or ethnic group. By 2060, the Census Bureau projects, just 36 percent of Americans under age 18 will be non-Hispanic whites.

2. Diversity has spread to school districts across the country, and there are many more diverse districts today.

The Post measured how many districts are racially diverse, which we defined as places where no one race represents more than 75 percent of students. We found a large increase. In 1995, just under half of all students were enrolled in a diverse school district. In 2017, it was two-thirds. And while diverse districts used to be concentrated in the South and on the East and West coasts, the newly diverse districts are dotted across the country.

3. The newly diverse schools are typically places that used to be mostly white and where Latinos have moved.

These newly diverse districts are typically small communities that used to have few students of color but have diversified in the past 25 years. There are not many places that grew more diverse because whites moved in, although the District is a rare example of that.

4. Schools in newly diverse districts have high levels of integration.

Put a different way, in these places, the diversity of the school system as a whole is reflected in the individual schools. Individual schools have a mix of students, rather than having, for instance, all the white children in one school and all the Latino kids in another.

5. On the other hand, schools in historically diverse districts are far more segregated.

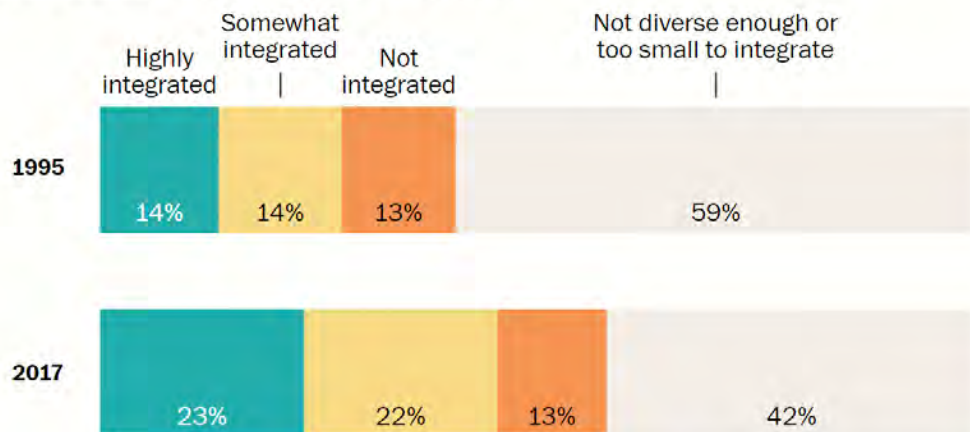
These tend to be big urban areas. In segregated districts, there may be a diversity of children, but those of one race tend to be in certain schools, and those of another race are in other schools.

6. The rise of the newly diverse, integrated school districts has led to a large increase in children being educated in an integrated school system.

We divided the districts into three groups — those that are **highly integrated**, those that are **somewhat integrated** and those that are **not integrated**.

More students today are in districts with integrated schools

The proportion of students by school district integration



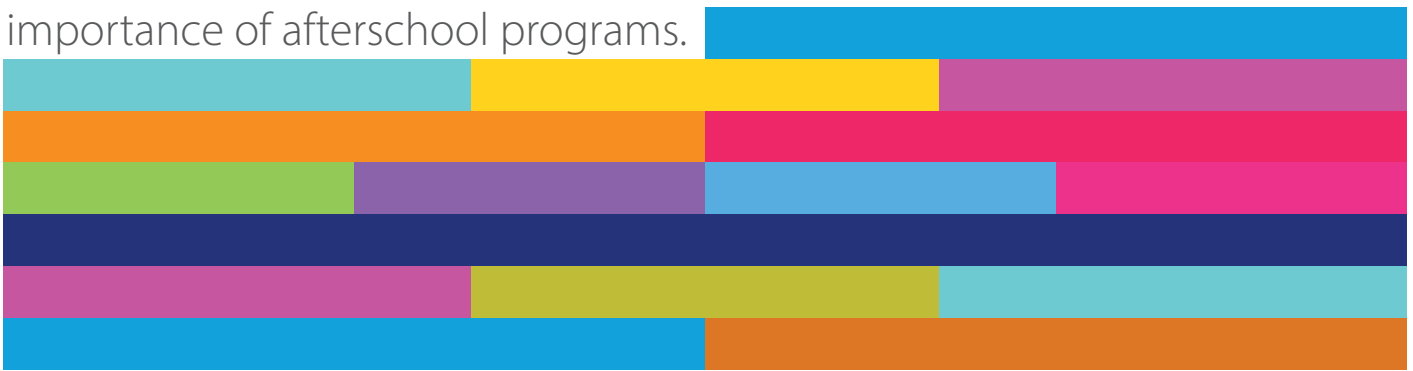
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AFTERSCHOOL

at LINC Caring Communities

A stylized lightbulb icon with a yellow glow and a blue base, positioned to the right of the word 'LIGHTSON'.

Join LINC as we celebrate our students & community, and focus on the importance of afterschool programs.



Thur., Oct. 24

Afterschool programs build stronger communities by involving our students, parents, business leaders and volunteers in the lives of our young people. LINC Caring Communities programs provide safe, challenging, engaging and fun learning experiences to help children and youth develop their social, cultural, physical, and academic skills.

Find an event near you:
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