

# LINC Commission Meeting

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November 16, 2009



A LINC staff member at Gladstone Caring Communities in the Kansas City, Mo. School District helps students with their Lights On Afterschool activity. (Photo: Joe Walker)



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# 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, Nov. 16, 2009 | 4 – 5 p.m.**  
**Kauffman Foundation**  
**4801 Rockhill Road**  
**Kansas City, Mo. 64110**

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## **Agenda**

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- I. Welcome and Announcements**
- II. Approvals**
  - a. October minutes (motion)**
- III. LINC President's Report**
- IV. LINC Finances**
  - a. 2008-09 Audit**
- V. Missouri Family Support Division**
  - a. Alyson Campbell, Director**
- VI. Adjourn to 4900 Swope Parkway Open House**



## THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – OCT. 19, 2009

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

Bert Berkley  
Jack Craft  
Sharon Cheers  
Herb Freeman  
SuEllen Fried  
Rob Givens  
Anita Gorman

Bart Hakan  
Rosemary Smith Lowe  
Mary Kay McPhee  
Richard Morris  
Margie Peltier  
Gene Standifer

All the attendees introduced themselves.

*A motion to approve the Sept. 21, 2009, LINC Commission meeting minutes was passed unanimously.*

**Gayle A. Hobbs** gave the LINC President's report:

- LINC staff will attend the Children's Aid Society's eighth Community Schools Practicum, Oct. 21-23, in New York City.
- The next LINC Commission meeting, Nov. 16, 2009, will be followed by an Open House celebration at the Family Support Division Midtown Office, 4900 Swope Parkway, which is undergoing conversion to a self-serve location. LINC is helping remodel the office.
- LINC Community Work Support (CWS) staff relocated from the LINC main office to Wayne Miner Community Center.
- Afrikan Centered Education Collegium Campus held a gala celebration on Oct. 17. The school, which is a LINC Caring Communities site, was created three years ago at the former Southeast High School campus after many years of effort. A video of the gala was shown.
- LINC founder **Bert Berkley** will receive an award from the NAACP at a luncheon, Oct. 24, celebrating its 100th anniversary.

**Jim Nunnely** gave a presentation on COMBAT (Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax), Jackson County's effort to save lives and save money by working with agencies that provide drug treatment and prevention services. LINC has received COMBAT funding in the past. On Nov. 3, Jackson County voters will decide whether to renew COMBAT for another seven years.

Hobbs gave a report on the LINC Caring Communities Before & After School program.

- LINC now serves 6,212 children in the Before & After School program, 11% of which are pre-K children.
- The Kansas City Call recently printed a column by Hobbs and LINC Deputy Director Candace Cheatem about the Oct. 22 Lights On Afterschool celebration. The *Kansas City Star* recently published an article about several LINC site coordinators serving at schools in the Kansas City, Mo. School District.
- Several LINC staff have been promoted to supervisor positions.

- Oct. 22 LINC is supporting Lights On Afterschool events at more than 40 locations.

**Rob Givens** presented the LINC Finance Committee report:

- BKD gave LINC an unqualified audit, with recommendations for improving processes.
- LINC investments have been performing well lately.
- The condition of LINC's budget is favorable.
- Next month conflict of interest forms will be distributed to Commissioners.

**Brad Smith** of LINC and the Independence School District reported that district voters will vote Nov. 3 on an \$85 million bond issue to fund remodeling, renovation and new construction for schools across the district. The ballot comes on the heels of the annexation of seven schools from the Kansas City, Mo. School District. The change added 3,000 new students to the district. The bond issue, if approved, would take advantage of interest-free bonds made available through the federal stimulus package.

Center School District superintendent **Dr. Bob Bartman** reported that Center voters will vote on a \$6.5 million bond issue on Nov. 3.

**Jack Craft** requested **Gayle Hobbs** give an update on LINC's entry into the Kansas City, Mo. School District. Hobbs reported that LINC has obtained good access to district staff and is moving personnel to accommodate principals and site needs.

**Givens** reported that Blue Parkway Shops will hold a celebration on Oct. 30, 10:30 a.m., and invited Commissioners to attend.

The meeting was adjourned.

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## Blair, Duncan Push Schools as Community Hubs



Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair addresses the audience during the Community Schools event at the Center for American Progress in Washington on Oct. 28.—Christopher Powers/Education Week

By **Michele McNeil**

*Washington*

[← Back to Story](#)

The campaign to turn more schools into community hubs got an injection of star power Wednesday from former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who headlined an event on the topic sponsored by the Center for American Progress.

The occasion was the **release of a new report** by the Washington-based think tank pointing to England as a model for the nationwide spread of community schools, which offer a venue for both academics and social services.

By next year, all of England's 23,000 public schools will become "extended schools" open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. throughout the year—a key education priority of Mr. Blair's administration, which aimed both to make schools a place of learning and to give them a central role in the community.

The schools in England offer day care, after-school activities, social services such as health care, and central spots for communities to gather.

"The school should become the center for the support and nurture of the future generation, and a hub for the whole community," said Mr. Blair, who served as prime minister from 1997 to 2007 and is currently a visiting professor at Yale University.

The report by the Center for American Progress says that community schools are not just another program, but a way of changing the "school's role in the lives of students, families, and the surrounding community."

Specifically, community schools usually have extended hours before and after school, and during the

weekends and summer; social services, including health care and parent education; activities to engage parents and the community; and a partnership with at least one other community organization or public entity, such as a university.

The report names the Chicago public school system, Achievement Plus Schools in St. Paul, Minn., and the Children's Aid Society's community schools in New York City as successful American models.

### **Chicago's Example**

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, during his tenure as the chief executive officer of the Chicago district, partnered with private funders to launch 21 community schools in that city in 2001.

"Why do we continue to build Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs? Let's get out of the bricks-and-mortar business," Mr. Duncan said at the Oct. 28 event. Such community groups can, instead, be housed inside schools, he said.

Mr. Duncan and Roberto J. Rodriguez, a White House education adviser, who also appeared at the event, both said the notion of community schools is central to the Obama administration's aim of providing what Mr. Rodriguez described as a "complete and competitive education."

Whether the community schools movement takes off in the United States as it did in England remains to be seen. The new report says that increased federal funding is a key part of expanding the number of such schools.

Several funding opportunities are in the works. Mr. Rodriguez, who serves on the White House Domestic Policy Council as a special assistant on education, pointed out that President Obama has proposed \$10 million in the federal fiscal 2010 budget for planning grants for "Promise Neighborhoods" programs, similar to the Harlem Children's Zone, which is a broad-based program to meet the educational, health, and social service needs of residents in a 97-block area of New York City. ("**President Envisions Anti-Poverty Efforts Like Harlem's 'Zone'**," March 11, 2009.)

That \$10 million proposal, however, pales in comparison with other administration initiatives, such as the \$420 million increase the president has proposed for the Teacher Incentive Fund, a grant program for districts to create merit-pay programs for teachers.

But community schools also have powerful allies in Congress. Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., who is the House majority leader, has proposed legislation with Sen. Ben Nelson, a Nebraska Democrat, to establish a five-year, \$200 million grant program to encourage the growth of community schools.

Rep. Hoyer, who spoke at the Center for American Progress event, argued that not spending the money now would cost the country more later.

"Investing in community schools will be far cheaper than investing in the failures of our students," he said.



## About Family Support Division

The concern of Missouri citizens for the welfare of the people dates to the territorial period before the State was admitted to the Union. A law of 1807 provided for the care of dependent children by apprenticeship, and a territorial provision for care of the adult poor was enacted in 1815. Section 2 of the Bill of Rights of the State Constitution also states in part: that all constitutional government is intended to promote the general welfare of the people; .... Today, the administration of Missouri's programs for the welfare of its people is the primary responsibility of the Family Support Division, Department of Social Services.

The Director of the Family Support Division is appointed by the Director of the Department of Social Services who in turn, is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. With the exception of a limited number of unclassified [personnel](#), all FSD employees are selected under a state merit plan.

In order to provide a comprehensive service delivery system, FSD maintains an office in each of the 114 counties of the state and in the city of St. Louis.

The Family Support Division is a state-administered agency responsible by law for administration of the programs and services.

Any person who wishes to apply for any program or service must apply in the county in which that person resides. Each [FSD county office](#) can supply information regarding these programs and services.

Applicants and recipients may appeal to the FSD Director if their claims or applications for benefits or services are denied in whole or in part or if they are otherwise dissatisfied with decisions made by [FSD county offices](#). Such appeals may be made, also, if benefits are canceled or modified or if a client is otherwise adversely affected by determination of FSD in the administration of its programs and services.



## **Biography of Alyson F. Campbell**

Alyson F. Campbell was appointed Director of the Family Support Division (FSD) effective May 18, 2009. Ms. Campbell began her career with child support enforcement in 1985 and served in many roles, including front-line, supervisory, and systems/policy training and management. Ms. Campbell also worked in the Office of the State Public Defender and the Audrain County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. Immediately prior to her appointment as Director, Alyson served as the FSD Deputy Director of Child Support Field Operations, a position she held for seven years. She successfully led the Missouri child support program through a restructuring effort to change Missouri's approach to the enforcement of child support obligations.



## Jackson County improves customer services, efficiency and effectiveness

The **Jackson County Family Support Division (FSD)** is taking an innovative approach to redesigning its local offices to provide better service and information to the public.

Under the redesign, the Midtown Kansas City office – located at 4900 Swope Parkway – is now a **Family Support Division Self-Help Center**.

Through paint and graphics, the space received a low-cost makeover that brightens the lobby, improves signage and provides valuable information about services and community resources.

In addition to office improvements, the Midtown Kansas City office now handles all Jackson County cases involving seniors and disabled services from a single location instead of multiple local FSD offices. There are several benefits:

- Timely processing of cases involving seniors and disabled
- Specialization resulting in better customer service for seniors and disabled
- Greater advocacy and case management for cases involving seniors and disabled

For walk-in clients, the Self-Help Center now provides computers that customers can access to get information about their cases.

Many cases and applications can be handled over the phone or online without the need to talk with a case worker or visiting a local FSD office. This can save families time, money and transportation costs.

The [Local Investment Commission](#) (LINC) worked closely with local Dept. of Social Services staff on improving overall service delivery and office redesign. The effort may be extended to the other local DSS offices.

The redesign is the most recent program improvement involving LINC. Other improvements include the FSD Community Work Support Initiative, which helps those facing a reduction in benefits obtain training opportunities or employment.



# Missouri Department of SOCIAL SERVICES

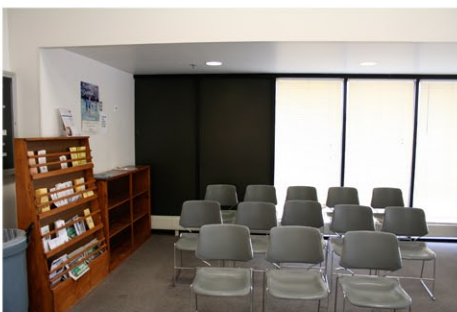
Family Support Division  
4900 Swope Parkway  
Kansas City, MO 64130



Before



Before



## Children's Division



Monday, Nov 9, 2009

## **A quarter-century after it began, the Parents as Teachers program has spread far beyond Missouri**

By JOE ROBERTSON  
The Kansas City Star

The news was spilling from journals on neuroscience:

Children were born to learn from the cradle. Their brains thirsted, and parents had to be their first and best teachers.

But parents weren't exactly reading scientific papers, so in the early 1980s Mildred Winter set off like a self-described missionary to take the message into the homes of Missouri parents.

Selling the notion that they should allow educators into their homes to train them to teach their newborns and toddlers wasn't easy, said Winter, Missouri's first director of early childhood education.

It's easier now.

Saturday marked the 25th anniversary of legislation in 1984 that forced all Missouri school districts to offer the experimental Parents as Teachers program to families living in their boundaries.

Not just to targeted families. Not just for low-income families. But any family in every district.

The universal mandate, inserted into the bill at the 11th hour, probably was intended to kill it, Winter and others said. Such scope, it seemed, would render the program unworkable and unmanageable.

But Parents as Teachers, with the backing of Gov. Kit Bond and Education Commissioner Arthur Mallory, forged ahead.

And it grew far beyond its Missouri roots.

It is international now, with more than 3,000 programs in all 50 states and six foreign countries, according to the Parents as Teachers National Center in St. Louis. Last year, state records showed, the program reached 43 percent of all families in Missouri with children ages 3 and younger.

The program still faces some challenges.

A school district using Parents as Teachers will spend \$1,400 to \$1,500 a year per family, according to program estimates.

Earlier this year, Missouri legislators, needing to cut state expenses, trimmed 10 percent from the \$34 million budget for Parents as Teachers.



Some critics question whether such early childhood programs are worth the cost, especially when achievement gaps between races and socioeconomic classes persist as students move into high school.

The balance of research has supported Parents as Teachers' impact on a child's readiness for school.

The Promising Practices Network, a project established by the Rand Corp., rates Parents as Teachers as "promising." It found that several studies generally have agreed that children in Parents as Teachers outscored their peers in measures of language skills, cognitive abilities, physical development and social development.

Evidence of the effects of early childhood programs diminishes through the upper elementary grades, but that doesn't mean the home visits aren't worth the costs, said Edward Zigler, the director emeritus of Yale University's Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy.

"You shouldn't oversell these programs," Zigler said. "We have to dovetail these programs together" with stronger elementary school education.

Zigler said Parents as Teachers works in part because it strives to reach out to all families.

"There's no stigma to being in the program," he said. "I'm supposed to be a world authority (on child development), but when we brought my son home from the hospital, I didn't know what to do. We *all* need this service."

Cathy Lee, a mother of three from Independence, agrees.

Her two sons — ages 2 and 4 — ran to the window last week watching for Shannon Shelton. Shelton is one of 20 parent educators in the Independence School District who each month visit more than 100 families each. But Lee's sons only know that Shelton always brings something fun to do. Homemade toys. New games.

This time they made chef hats out of tissue paper, then worked together following a recipe to make trail mix. Lee joined in, and she and Shelton took turns holding Lee's 6-month-old daughter where the infant could watch.

So many lessons were at play, Shelton said. There was math in measuring the recipe and social interaction in the family teamwork. The recipes and an accompanying children's book connected reading to everyday activities. And everyone learned a bit about nutrition, too.

The teachers usually bring handouts. This time, Shelton brought advice about child temperaments.

The program also screens children, assessing physical and cognitive development. Lee said that when one of her sons had early speech problems, Shelton helped the family get assistance.

"The kids really enjoy it," Lee said. "I like the tips ... checking behavior and development — and how to manage three at the same time."

Independence was one of four Missouri school districts in the early 1980s to participate in a pilot Parents as Teachers program with support from the St. Louis-based Danforth Foundation. The other districts were Farmington, Ferguson-Florissant and Francis Howell.



Advocates for the program then lobbied the legislature for state funding, which led to the statewide mandate. Meanwhile, consultant and researcher Burton White of the Harvard Preschool Project produced an analysis that said the pilot program helped prepare children for kindergarten.

In October 1985, The New York Times reported on the program's success.

"And that brought the world to our doorstep," Winter said.

In 1987, the state established the Parents as Teachers National Center to help provide training and support for far-flung school systems to import the program.

Missouri still is the only state that requires all its school districts to participate, and it is by far the largest user, serving about 150,000 families. Other states that are heavily involved include Kansas, Michigan and Illinois, which serve 12,000 to 20,000 families each.

The program has served 12 U.S. military installations and is expanding to 36, said Sue Stepleton, the director of the Parents as Teachers National Center.

Programs have started in Australia, Canada, China, Germany and the United Kingdom. New Zealand's program serves about 7,000 families.

Overall, the center reports, Parents as Teachers has served more than 3 million children since 1985.

Programs such as Parents as Teachers have helped lead the United States out of the days when many people didn't even think they needed to talk to their babies, Zigler said.

"Children are born preprogrammed to learn," he said. "They're born to learn the same way birds are born to fly."

Wednesday, Nov 11, 2009

## **Lunch programs tell tale of need for suburban kids**

By JIM SULLINGER and DAWN BORMANN

The Kansas City Star

The smiling faces of children at Bonjour Elementary in Lenexa seem much the same from year to year — bright and eager to learn.

But beneath those innocent smiles, Principal Alejandro Schlagel understands there's a deeper truth. More of his students are poorer in a suburban community considered by many to be economically affluent.

Four years ago, the rate of Bonjour students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches was 32.5 percent. Today it is almost 50 percent. The largest increase — 13 percentage points — occurred in the last two years.

This Johnson County school isn't alone. The recession is hitting many suburban communities hard, and some schools are seeing large increases in students applying for free or reduced-price lunches, which is one measure of poverty.

In Liberty, more students are showing up for breakfast and heading home on Fridays with backpacks filled with food to help feed them over the weekend. In the Park Hill School District in Kansas City North, a free clothing center is experiencing unprecedented use from district students in need.

"It's not just the urban schools. It's the suburbs as well," said Denise McPherson, one of three women who help run the clothing center. "Every district in the metro has a need. They may not realize the extent of it."

At Bonjour, the lives of children in the classroom are shifting, a pattern repeated throughout the district.

"The demographics of the Shawnee Mission District are changing," Schlagel said.

Two years ago, the free or reduced-price lunch percentage in the district was 21.7 percent. Today it's slightly over 30 percent.

In Missouri, Lee's Summit is considered one of the state's most affluent communities. But this year, Lee's Summit Elementary became the school district's first Title I school with its free or reduced-price lunch population reaching 57 percent, an increase of 24 percentage points over the last five years.

Cedar Creek Elementary has seen that student population rise from 1.2 percent in 2004 to 10 percent today. The Lee's Summit district has gone from 9.9 percent in 2004 to 17 percent this year.

In the Piper School District in Kansas City, Kan., Superintendent Steve Adams watched free and reduced-price lunch enrollment go from 7 percent to 13 percent in one year.

“There’s a lot of folks hurting,” he said.

The Blue Springs School District in eastern Jackson County had almost 12 percent of its students on free or reduced-price lunches in 2004. This year, that level rose to 22 percent of the district’s 14,162 students.

Leigh Anne Neal, a spokeswoman for the Shawnee Mission District, said the food service department has seen an increase in people applying for the free or lower-priced lunches for their children.

“There have been a lot more with families who are experiencing loss of a job who have never before had to seek assistance, and they don’t know what to do,” she said.

Dale Dennis, deputy commissioner for the Kansas Department of Education, said last year the number of Kansas students receiving free or reduced lunches increased 9 percent. This year that number rose 13 percent.

“We are seeing this all across the state. A lot of it has to do with job losses,” he said.

The increase in poor students comes with a big price tag. Dennis estimated that the Legislature will be asked to come up with an extra \$42 million next year because of the increase in students qualifying for free lunches and considered at risk. Last year, the state provided districts with \$198 million in additional state aid for that student population.

In Park Hill, McPherson is keenly aware of the economic struggle of families because of her work with the Park Hill School District Clothing Center, where students can receive new or gently used clothes for free.

“We have seen a tremendous, tremendous increase in the number of students who are using (the clothing center),” she said.

The center served 275 students four years ago and helped 1,259 students last year. This year, 929 students have walked through the door seeking clothes since August.

“It’s partly the economy and partly because the diversity within our school district has changed in the last few years,” she said.

Free and reduced-price lunch enrollment is up at Park Hill, said district spokeswoman Nicole Kirby.

“It’s interesting because there is a very pervasive impression of Park Hill as being very affluent. A lot of our parents are surprised to learn about the business that the clothing center is getting, because they’re surprised that there is that kind of need” within the school district, Kirby said.

At Lillian Schumacher Elementary in Liberty, the principal is seeing more students at the school’s breakfast table.

“Last year we had roughly 75 kids eating breakfast to whereas now we have about 115,” Principal Mike Dye said.

He also has seen an increase in students eligible to take home Harvesters-provided backpacks filled with food to tide children over through the weekend.

Two Blue Springs elementary schools are using the “BackSnack” program, and a third has applied to Harvesters.

Dye knows the same scenario is playing out at schools across the city.

Dye and other principals throughout the region said that social workers and counselors have tried to be vigilant about recognizing when parents are in need.

Many school districts send information home with parents in a back-to-school packet. The information goes to every family — not just the ones who teachers think might be in need.

“We do this as a reminder to let people know that this is here for a service. It’s not just a low-income, if you will, it’s for people in need at that time,” said Cindy Hormel, director of food nutrition services for Liberty schools.

Even districts with historically low percentages of poor students are seeing some changes.

The Blue Valley District in Johnson County may be the most affluent in the metro area. Al Hanna, deputy superintendent, said 129 students showed up at the start of school that the district was not expecting.

They were the children of parents who had lost a job or a home and had moved in with relatives living in the Blue Valley district.

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### **Hard times IN the burbs**

Affluent suburban school districts in the Kansas City metro area are seeing increasing numbers of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches as the recession takes a toll on families. The following chart looks at Kansas and Missouri and eight suburban districts and their rates of economically disadvantaged students over the last five years.

	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
State of Missouri	40.8%	43.7%	NA
State of Kansas	38.6%	39.8%	NA
Shawnee Mission	17.2%	27.1%	30.6%
Olathe	15.8%	20.35%	22.78%
Blue Valley	4.2%	5.3%	6.3%
Lee’s Summit	10.6%	13%	17%
Blue Springs	14.1%	20.7%	22%
Park Hill	18.3%	22.4%	23%
Liberty	16.1%	16.48%	19.01%
Piper	7%	7%	13%

Thursday, Oct 29, 2009

## **BackSnack program gets an 'A,' study concludes**

By JOE ROBERTSON  
The Kansas City Star

The first thing to go will be that chocolate cereal bar.

Probably about as soon as he gets to his apartment, he'll be munching on that, 10-year-old Isaiah Patterson said.

"And then this," he said, pointing at a fruit bar in a plastic bag stuffed with food and drinks.

The Boone Elementary fifth-grader in the Center School District was getting a sneak preview of one of the 10,000 bags of food that the Harvesters Community Food Network sends home in backpacks with children every weekend at 200 area schools.

The organizers of the BackSnack program have always thought that the nutritious, kid-friendly items — such as the chocolate milk box Isaiah pointed out next — have returned healthier and more attentive children to their school desks come Mondays.

Now they think they have research to back it up.

A study to be released today by the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership at the University of Missouri-Kansas City found that children in the BackSnack program mostly improved their grades, attendance, behavior and social skills.

Isaiah just knows that his mother is more relieved.

"When I go home she doesn't have to worry about cooking," he said. He has a 9-year-old cousin and 7-year-old little brother who also bring BackSnack bags home. "Sometimes she's at work."

He'd just stepped out of the day's math lesson, learning the distributive property to solve a multiplication problem. That's pre-algebra, and he's getting it.

"I like math," he said.

The study, generated from surveys earlier this year of children, parents, teachers and school officials, found that most students improved their grades in math, English and science during the survey period.

Absences fell by 22.5 percent. The average number of discipline incidents per child fell from 2.72 to 1.35. Survey questions indicated that participating children were friendlier, more respectful, more responsible and better behaved.

Many children are moving from apartment to apartment, or their families are doubling up in the homes of friends or relatives, said Center School District social worker Kathleen Eaton.

In some cases, their families are in disarray. Some are dealing with domestic violence. Eaton said she is frequently helping parents who've had their utilities cut.

Sometimes it's clear which children need the reassurance of a weekend ration of food. But social workers and cafeteria helpers watch for others, Eaton said.



“You see kids who eat up everything on their plate and ask for seconds,” she said. “They’ll ask other kids: ‘Can I have your apple? Or your cookie?’ ”

The BackSnack program, in the second year of a \$5 million, three-year expansion, provides these children with food purposely easy to fix, eatable right off the shelf, because some of them spend a lot of time on their own. It’s one less thing to worry about.

The schools also try to use the program as a self-esteem builder. They call the students to special clubs that teach nutrition. School officials were concerned that children might feel embarrassed to be offered food, but they have found that students want to be part of the club.

“We’re the D Team,” Isaiah said. The D comes from the last initial of the school’s counselor who summons them every Friday just before school lets out.

In return for the supply of food, they have to take care of the backpacks and return with them Monday. And that’s helping them strengthen another trait: Responsibility.

Students look forward to Friday, Boone Principal Sheryl Cochran said. And they make sure they’re back with their backpacks on Mondays.

All 200 of the schools in the program have a community agency partner that cleans out and restocks the backpacks every week. Boone’s partner is Holmeswood Baptist Church.

Numerous community partners, hundreds of volunteers and major donors have helped the program expand to 10,000 students since it began in the 2004-2005 school year, and Harvesters hopes to see it continue to grow.

“There are many, many kids depending on school lunches,” said Harvesters spokeswoman Ellen Feldhausen. “Our hope is to keep expanding to meet the needs of more of these children over the weekend. We know the need is out there. It’s whether we have the resources to do it.”

# Lights On Afterschool

