

LINC Commission Meeting

June 19, 2014



(above) A teacher and LINC staff help summer school students with math at Border Star Montessori in the Kansas City Public Schools.



(left) Students at Crispus Attucks Elementary in the Kansas City Public Schools work on a writing assignment with help from LINC staff.



LINC

Local Investment Commission
www.kclinc.org



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.



Thursday, June 19, 2014 | 4 – 6 pm
Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. **Welcome and Announcements**
- II. **Approvals**
 - a. **May minutes (motion)**
- III. **Superintendent's Report**
- IV. **Missouri KidsCount**
 - Laurie Hines and Bill Dent
- V. **LINC Summer Report**
- VI. **Eat, Live and Be Healthy**
Health Care Foundation Grant
 - Lucinda Noches Talbert, KC Healthy Kids
- VII. **Adjournment**

The July LINC Commission meeting will be Monday, July 21st



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – MAY 19, 2014

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Chairman **Landon Rowland** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bert Berkley
Sharon Cheers
Jack Craft
Aaron Deacon
Steve Dunn
Randall Ferguson
Herb Freeman
Rob Givens
Anita Gorman

Bart Hakan
Tom Lewin
Rosemary Lowe
Sandy Mayer
Mary Kay McPhee
Richard Morris
David Ross
Bailus Tate

Sister Berta Sailer reported the Missouri legislature has approved legislation that would lower the minimum age required to get a concealed weapons permit to 19 from 21.

A motion to approve the April 21, 2014, LINC Commission meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

Superintendents' Report

- **Dennis Carpenter** (Superintendent, Hickman Mills School District) reported the district is developing plans for expanding pre-K education, academic improvement efforts focused on ninth-graders, and an alternative school.
- **John Tramel** (Director of Family Services, Independence School District) reported over 7,000 students will attend the district's summer school program, which has a curriculum aligned with the regular school year. The district is developing a Freshman Academy to help students make choices about college and careers. Staff will receive training on supporting students with trauma.
- **Todd White** (Superintendent, North Kansas City School District) reported 10,000 students will attend the district's summer school program. White gave an update on legislation pertaining to education including HB 1490 ("Common Core" bill), HB202 (K-12 funding) and SB413 (school transfer).
- **Kevin Foster** (Director of Education, Genesis Promise Academy) reported 75-80 women (out of 108 families) attended the Pancakes for Moms event this month. The tennis fundraising gala last weekend was a success; three students will attend tennis camp this summer. Construction of a new Kaboom! playground will take place on May 28. Genesis will hold a summer program June 3-30.
- **Jerry Kitzi** (Director of Early Education, Kansas City Public Schools) reported 9,000 students will attend summer school offered in collaboration with LINC and other partners. To increase student achievement the district is focused on providing school throughout the year, starting earlier in students' lives.
- **John Ruddy** (Assistant Superintendent, Fort Osage School District) reported LINC staff will support student orientation for 2014-15. The district will be providing 1,600 devices for students and 400 for staff to improve digital learning.
- **Mark Tolbert** (Chairman, Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy) reported common

standards for schools throughout the nation are necessary to ensure good education for mobile families.

- **Bob Bartman** (Superintendent, Center School District) 80-90% of graduating Center students said they will go on to post-secondary education or military services. The Center summer school program will begin almost immediately after the end of the regular school year.
- **Gayden Carruth** (Executive Director, Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City) reported she gave a presentation at a Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce event on the economic impact of area school districts.

Oscar Tshibanda, Tshibanda & Associates, reported on recent LINC efforts around data. LINC has identified potential replacements for the NPASS data system and is seeking funding. Meanwhile, efforts to manage the current system are focused on the areas of data and reporting, infrastructure, process improvement, partner support and capacity building. Discussion followed.

LINC Director of Operations **Robin Gierer** reported on LINC's efforts to provide summer programs for students including before and after summer school programs as well as all-day camps. In addition, LINC will provide summer school programs at eight schools in the Kansas City Public Schools. In all districts, about 2,500 students are enrolled in LINC summer programs.

LINC Communications Director **Brent Schondelmeyer** introduced a presentation on LINC's distribution of 28,000 books – one for each elementary school student – in LINC partner school districts. The books were purchased from **First Book**. A video on the effort was shown.

John Tramel reported the Independence School District provided space at the district office's for fulfillment of the book orders to take place. LINC Community Organizer **Adam McClun** reported on the event as an opportunity to recruit volunteers from the community to assist.

Turn the Page KC Director **Mike English** reported a TTPKC also organized a separate book distribution in the Park Hill School District.

Landon Rowland reported on the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City's efforts to ensure HCA fulfills its obligations to fund indigent care.

Videos on the following topics were shown:

- Community-wide Cinco de Mayo celebration in Independence
- Born Learning Trail at Woodland Early Learning Community School
- Heart Gallery exhibit at Crown Center featuring photo portraits of foster and adoptive children in need of families.

The meeting was adjourned.

Summer school picks up steam to fight summer brain drain

By JOE ROBERTSON - The Kansas City Star



The scourge of Summer Brain Drain is under full assault.

Not since the heady days a decade ago when Missouri briefly doubled the state per-student funding for summer school have so many children poured into summer school programming.

There are 7,000-plus and counting enrolled in Kansas City Public Schools' programs.

More than 7,000 and counting in the Independence School District.

North Kansas City has its "Summer XLT."

"Camp Invention" is rolling in Grandview.

Park Hill is offering full-day summer school and providing transportation for the first time.

And so on, and so on...

Topping Elementary School Principal Dana Miller in North Kansas City turns her Kia Soul into a personal bookmobile and promises to let students who maintain their tested reading level plunge her into a water tank next fall.

All in the name of keeping kids' brains firing over the summer.

Typically, Miller said, about 40 percent of the students had regressed in their reading levels by the time they returned from the break.

Last year, the first year she broke out her bookmobile and accompanying water tank promise, that dropped to 31 percent, she said.

But now that the kids witnessed the joy of punching the water tank's red button, the popularity of the principal's summer reading program has ballooned.

They're all talking about running out to Miller's "Reading with Heart from the Soul" bookmobile when she makes her rounds among the schools' major apartment and housing complexes.

"They all want to push that button," Miller said. "I would love it if less than 10 percent regressed this summer."

Kansas City Public Schools is uniting with a host of partners to expand on its credit recovery and remediation classrooms, kindergarten boot camp and sixth-grade Summer Bridge.

The Friends of Alvin Ailey dance program, Boys and Girls Club, Freedom Schools, the Upper Room tutoring program, the Local Investment Commission and other partners are working with the district this summer.

"The summer is taking on the shape ... of a collaborative," Kansas City Superintendent Steve Green. "It's a synergy of different groups."

The partners will be picking up the district's math and English language arts curriculum and will be taking pre- and post tests, with principals visiting the sites.

"This is our extended school," Green said. "This becomes a year-round school model for us."

Summer school is giving Independence an opportunity to emphasize technology use and digital citizenship, said Superintendent Dale Herl.

"We want to carry it over into the school year," he said, "and reduce the summer learning loss."

It's not just that school districts want more kids in summer classrooms. Parents have to want it, too.

The programs are voluntary. Even the credit recovery and remedial courses can be offered only with strong recommendations.

Parents are getting the message about summer loss and want to keep their children from slipping, said Grandview's head of summer programming, Prissy LeMay.

"We are getting more than last year," she said of Grandview's enrollment. "Parents want their kids to have that extra learning. They want additional assistance in math and reading skills."

They also want their children in those enrichment activities, like Camp Invention and its emphasis on remote cars, robotics and "wet and wild" experiments.

"It's getting kids excited about science," she said.

To reach Joe Robertson, call [816-234-4789](tel:816-234-4789) or send email to jrobertson@kcstar.com.

June 04. 2014 6:20AM

Summer Success

By Brandon Dumsky

Summer is now being considered a period of regression for some students, with area school districts and teachers reporting they are having to reteach concepts from the previous school year again and again due to the number of students not being able to retain knowledge over the break.

To counter that, the Independence School District introduced its "Summer Success" program this summer school session that has a more academic focus than previous programs.

"Teachers have given us feedback letting us know that they spend valuable time at the beginning of the (school) year reviewing what students had learned in the previous year..." wrote Independence Superintendent Dale Herl. "According to one study, 'summer learning loss equaled at least one month of instruction as measured by grade level equivalents on standardized test scores.'"

Herl added the goal of the Summer Success program is to help reinforce what students have already learned, along with getting a preview of what they will be learning in the upcoming school year.

"It is our goal to mitigate that learning and need for review by creating a summer school that will bridge the gap between grades and give students a head start when they begin school in the fall."

More than half of the district's nearly 15,000 students are enrolled in Summer Success. From now until June 26, K-8 students are attending summer school four days a week that places emphasis on all four core subjects: Math, language arts, social studies and science. Physical education and technology sessions to take a break from studies are held every day as well. High schoolers were offered specific courses.



Sixth grade English Language Arts teacher Emily Miller, left, discusses how an author paints a picture in one's mind with students Aubrey Weixeldorfer and Summer Shields during "Summer Success," the Independence School District's new summer school program.

According to sixth grade Summer Success ELA teacher Emily Miller, the curriculum is similar to the one used during a school year. She wrote this change in the district's summer school program will help students stay in the structure and consistency of school.

"This year, the structure is much better and the kiddos are responding to it very well," she wrote. "They have adapted to it and are taking this challenge head on. I am so proud of them."

But what do the students think of this more academically rigorous summer program? Surprisingly, sixth graders at Bridger Middle School are being receptive to it.

"Good," Ms. Miller's class all said in unison Tuesday morning.

"Change is good," said one student. "If we just have fun, we can't keep it (knowledge) in our memories."

As with previous summer school sessions in the district, students are still eligible to receive a \$50 gift card if they have perfect attendance and \$25 gift card for those who miss one day, Herl wrote.

"It is amazing to me," wrote Miller. "The students are excited and willing to continue school, even on their summer break."

"I think the kids really enjoy being here (at Summer Success). They get to see their friends and keep growing as a scholar. It's a win-win."

Board of Directors

Steve Renne *Co-Chair*
Vice President
MO Hospital Association

Brian Kinkade *Co-Chair*
Interim Director
Dept. of Social Services

Lowell Kruse
Senior Fellow
Heartland Foundation

Gail Vasterling
Director
Dept. of Health & Senior Services

Roseann Bentley
Associate Commissioner
Greene County

Ann Covington
Chief Justice
MO Supreme Court (Ret)
Of Counsel
Bryan Cave

Jack Craft
Partner
Lathrop & Gage

Jerry Lee
Director
Dept. of Public Safety

George Lombardi
Director
Dept. of Corrections

Michael A. Middleton
Deputy Chancellor
University of Missouri-
Columbia

Chris Nicastro
Commissioner
Dept. of Elementary and
Secondary Education

Loretta Prater
Dean (Ret)
Southeast Missouri State
University

Ryan McKenna
Director
Dept. of Labor and
Industrial Relations

David Russell
Commissioner
Dept. of Higher Education

Keith Schafer
Director
Dept. of Mental Health

Kathryn Swan
President
JCS wireless

Mike Downing
Director
Dept. of Economic Development

Blanche Touhill
Chancellor Emeritus
University of Missouri- St. Louis

Bailus Tate
Black Economic Union of
Greater Kansas City

Bill Dent
Board Director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2014

The Annie E. Casey Foundation selects new KIDS COUNT partner for Missouri

The Family and Community Trust, also known as FACT, is the newest KIDS COUNT grantee in Missouri. FACT is a non-profit organization supporting 20 community partnerships around the state whose mission is to find solutions to improving the lives of the families and children in their communities. "FACT is celebrating its 21st year of service and this newest partnership with Annie E. Casey greatly increases our ability to impact children's lives," said FACT Manager and Board Director, William T. Dent.

KIDS COUNT is a national and state-by-state effort to track the well-being of children, through high quality data and trend analysis. "The selection of FACT provides a unique opportunity for a very well established statewide community-based organization, with state level leadership, to forge new partnerships and to expand access to valuable child-focused data and research" said Dennis Campa, Associate Director of Policy Reform and Advocacy with the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

FACT joins long-time KIDS COUNT partners, Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis at the University of Missouri, and the Children's Trust Fund. The KIDS COUNT in Missouri Data Book, which will offer relevant analysis of childhood well-being and the county rankings, as well as issue and policy analysis, can all be found at <http://oseda.missouri.edu/kidscount/>.

The 2013 Data Book will be released on March 17.

###

**Contact the offices of the Family and Community Trust at
573.526.3581, 3418 Knipp Drive, Ste A-2, Jefferson City, MO 65109.**

Missouri State Profile

Capital: Jefferson City

Outcome Measures	Number		Rate		Trend
	Base Year	Current Year	Base Year	Current Year	
Economic Well-being					
Students enrolled in free/reduced lunch 2008/2012	366,243	427,246	42.0%	49.4%	↓
Births to mothers without HS diploma 2008/2012	14,467	11,459	17.9%	15.2%	↑
Health					
Low birthweight infants* 2003–2007/2008–2012	32,037	31,123	8.1%	8.0%	↑
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births) 2003–2007/2008–2012	2,982	2,621	7.5	6.8	↑
Child Protection & Safety					
Child deaths, ages 1–14* (per 100,000) 2003–2007/2008–2012	1,225	1,050	21.2	17.9	↑
Child abuse/neglect & family assessments* (per 1,000) 2008/2012	45,628	50,392	31.9	35.9	↓
Out-of-home placement entries (per 1,000) 2008/2012	5,418	6,422	3.8	4.6	↓
Violent deaths, ages 15–19* (per 100,000) 2003–2007/2008–2012	1,348	1,229	64.5	58.5	↑
Education					
Annual high school dropouts 2008/2012	9,852	7,946	3.5%	3.0%	↑
Births to teens, ages 15–19 (per 1,000) 2008/2012	9,154	6,314	43.5	32.2	↑

LEGEND: ↑ Better ↓ Worse → No Change
*Outcome not included in Composite County Rank

Indicators

Economic Well-being

Children under 18 in poverty	2000	15.3%
	2011	21.8%
Children under 6 in poverty	2000	17.7%
	2011	26.3%
Children in single-parent families	2000	33.4%
	2011	24.3%
Children receiving child care assistance (per 1,000 in poverty)	2008	157.5
	2012	150.9
Children receiving cash assistance	2008	4.5%
	2012	4.7%
Children receiving SNAP (food stamps)	2008	32.5%
	2012	39.1%
Average annual wage/salary	2008	\$41,191
	2011	\$42,579
Adult unemployment	2008	6.1%
	2012	6.9%

Health

Children enrolled in MO HealthNet for Kids	2008	33.3%
	2012	37.4%
Children receiving public mental health services	2008	18,116
	2012	24,195

Education

Children with limited English proficiency	2008	19,053
	2012	24,402
Licensed child care capacity (per 1,000)	2008	103.7
	2013	106.0
Accredited child care facilities	2008	473
	2013	486
Juvenile law violation referrals, ages 10–17 (per 1,000)	2008	54.4
	2012	45.3

Demographic

Child population	2008	1,428,945
	2012	1,403,475
Children as % of total population	2008	24.2%
	2012	23.3%
Minority children	2008	23.3%
	2012	24.0%

Healthy Eating Initiation Proposal Narrative

Submitted by: Greater KC LINC, Inc.

Submission Date: February 19, 2014

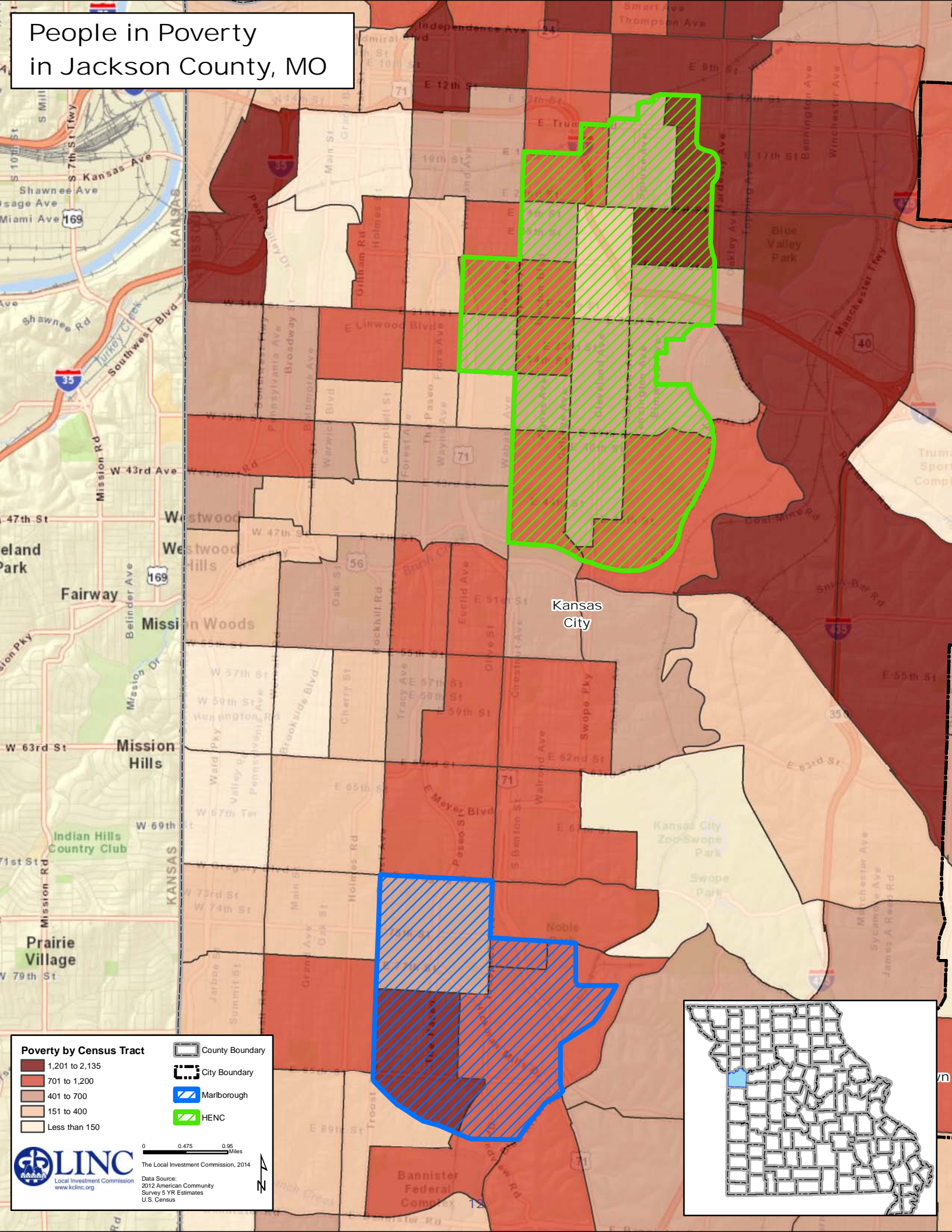
Narrative Abstract

LINC requests \$283,877 for two years of grant funding (\$146,498 for the first year) to improve access to affordable fresh food and advocate for policy and environmental changes in two Kansas City, Missouri, communities: 1) Historic East Neighborhoods Coalition (HENC), and 2) Marlborough Community Coalition (MCC) located in South Kansas City. Both communities have a high percentage of racial and ethnic minorities, high numbers of medically underserved and uninsured people, low education and literacy levels, high poverty rates, and high youth unemployment rates. Most recent census data indicates 40,998 people live in the two communities.

Grant funding will support staffing, contracted services, and supplies to build coalition capacity. Proposed strategies include: provide youth with job opportunities and education related to the food and agricultural system; advocate for city policy change around nuisance businesses and water access; sustain the community corner store initiative; develop and sustain a network of healthy food leaders; increase community awareness of the availability of healthier food choices within the community; and advocate for a new sidewalk that will improve the walkability of people using public transit to walk from the bus stop to the grocery store. Expected long term outcomes are:

1. Improvements to the built environment;
2. Increased education and awareness of area food pantries and corner stores selling fresh produce;
3. Maintenance or decrease in the number of nuisance businesses;
4. Increased water access for community gardens;
5. Increased resident opportunities to be physically active;
6. Increased resident access to fresh food.


People in Poverty in Jackson County, MO




Poverty by Census Tract

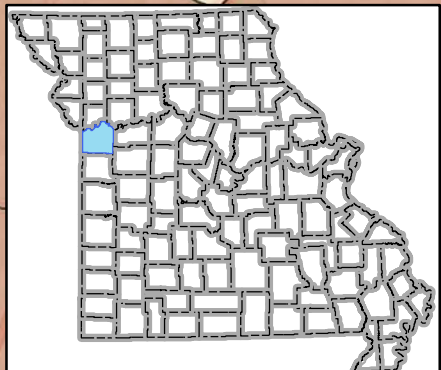
- 1,201 to 2,135
- 701 to 1,200
- 401 to 700
- 151 to 400
- Less than 150

County Boundary
 City Boundary
 Mariborough
 HENC


LINC
 Local Investment Commission
www.kclinc.org

The Local Investment Commission, 2014
 Data Source:
 2012 American Community
 Survey 5 YR Estimates
 U.S. Census

0 0.475 0.95 Miles




WHAT IS THE FOOD SYSTEM?

Implications for Our Community



The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition

The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition (GKCFPC) advocates for a strong local food system that provides healthy, sustainable, and accessible foods for everyone living in Greater Kansas City.

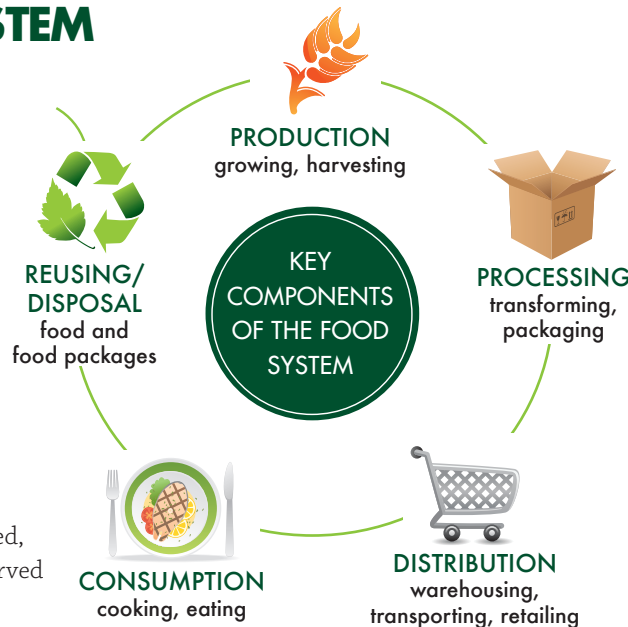
We are an alliance of individuals, government representatives, businesses, and organizations representing all critical components of our local food system, including healthcare, agriculture, education, social services, food distribution, government, private business, nonprofit agencies, and others.

But most importantly, we are consumers. We want the food that our families, our children, and our neighbors eat to be the best for our bodies, our environment, and our local community.

IF YOU EAT, YOU HAVE A STAKE IN OUR FOOD SYSTEM

What is the food system? It involves all of the steps taken and materials used in keeping us fed. It encompasses food producers (farmers) and food consumers (eaters) and all of the industries and actions that link them together.

Every community has a food system, whether we are aware of it or not. Decisions are made every day by government agencies, businesses, and organizations that directly or indirectly affect how and where our food is grown, how it is processed, distributed, purchased, prepared, and protected, and how it is served in our homes, schools, and restaurants.



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The food we eat affects nearly every aspect of our lives. If we don't have enough of it, we suffer food insecurity and malnutrition, which can negatively impact our **job performance**, our children's **academic success**, and our family's physical and emotional well being. If we eat too much unhealthy food, we are at risk for obesity and a host of related health problems that have a significant impact on our **economy** and **health system**.

Having a strong source of local and regional foods makes our region more **self-sufficient** and more insulated from **food safety** issues involving global and national food sources. It's also a more sustainable and **environmentally friendly** solution to shipping in food from long distances. And a strong local food system **keeps revenue in our community** and provides opportunities for small and mid-sized **agribusinesses** to develop and expand.

We can no longer take food for granted. It's simply too important. We need to be thoughtful consumers, conscientious decision makers, and effective business people to ensure that the food that we are eating not only nourishes our bodies but supports our community, our values, and our shared goals as well.

PRIORITIES

The GKCFPC has working groups focusing efforts around clearly defined initiatives. Each group works to promote policies, projects, and partnerships to improve that particular aspect of the food system.

FOOD PRODUCTION

GOAL: To increase the volume of foods that are produced within 250 miles of Kansas City and increase the purchase of those foods by consumers and institutions.

KEY EFFORTS: Supporting the development of local infrastructure and industries that help local farmers work successfully and at a larger scale and encourage community members to access, preserve, and use the food they produce.

EXAMPLES of related food policies:

- Identification and protection of urban and peri-urban land that should be preserved for agricultural use
- Property tax breaks for small-scale agricultural and food gardening, or land certified organic
- Additional funding support for educational classes on topics such as cooking, canning, and gardening

ACCESS

GOAL: To increase the availability and affordability of healthy, safe, local, and affordable food to all segments of the population of Greater Kansas City, and raise the capacity for residents to make healthy food choices.

KEY EFFORTS: Community food assessments at the neighborhood, city, county, and regional levels to better understand current needs and long-term impacts of our food system. Policy priorities will be developed based on those findings.

EXAMPLES of related food policies:

- Enabling SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) recipients to use benefits at farmer's markets
- Zoning regulations that affect community gardens
- Tax exemptions or policies to entice grocery

stores to locate in communities that don't have stores providing fresh, healthy food (these neighborhoods are often called "food deserts")

INSTITUTIONS

GOAL: To increase purchases of local, sustainable food products by institutions such as hospitals, colleges, corporate cafeterias, and restaurants.

KEY EFFORTS: Working with corporate and nonprofit institutional leadership to adopt food policies that utilize local, sustainable foods.

EXAMPLES of related food policies:

- Local food purchasing policies for city and county government
- A decision by corporate officials to purchase foods raised by local farmers
- Sponsorship of a farmer's market for employees at a corporation's headquarters

SCHOOLS

GOAL: To increase consumption of nutritious, local foods in the preK-12 school setting.

KEY EFFORTS: Supporting the development of systems that make locally grown foods an efficient and stable source of good nutrition for schools and an economically viable prospect for local farmers.

EXAMPLES of related food policies:

- Statewide legislation making purchasing locally grown foods for the school cafeteria a priority
- State and federal support for expansion of Farm to School programs
- Decisions by school officials to increase the availability of healthier food choices throughout the entire school system (including vending machines, concession stands, etc.)

PRESENTED BY

GREATER KANSAS CITY
FOOD
POLICY
COALITION

FUNDED BY

 BlueCross BlueShield
of Kansas City
An Independent Licensee of the
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

kchealthykids

 Health Care Foundation
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the GKCFPC and do not necessarily reflect the position of our funders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the food system, public policies, and local food resources, visit kcfpc.org or contact Beth Low, GKCFPC Director, at bethlow@kcfpc.org or 816.585.4738.

kcfpc.org

FOOD FOR ALL

Improving Access to Healthy and Local Food

1 IN 7 OF OUR RESIDENTS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT

Kansas and Missouri are above average, but in this case, it's nothing to be proud of. We rank 8th (Missouri) and 15th (Kansas) among the 50 states in food insecurity. In the heart of one of the richest agricultural regions in the country, **more than 15% of our residents don't have enough to eat.**

FOOD INSECURITY

While everyone knows what hunger is, food insecurity is a less well-known concept.

Food insecurity is the way that the USDA measures levels of access to food. Food insecure households are those that were not able to afford a nutritionally adequate diet at all times in the past 12 months. For individuals and families, food insecurity may mean reducing food portions or skipping meals altogether, and it means the uncertainty of not knowing where their next meal will come from.

Children in our region are at especially high risk of food insecurity. **In Kansas,**

20% of children under age 5 live in food insecure households. The rate is even higher in **Missouri, which has the 5th highest rate of child food insecurity in the United States.** Overall, families with children (especially single-parent families) are at highest risk for food insecurity.

Overall, families with children (especially single-parent families) are at highest risk for food insecurity.

Food insecurity is detrimental to our health, economy, and community. In food insecure households, children do worse in school and adults miss more days of

work. Because they often only have access to low-nutrient, high-fat foods, food insecure people have a harder time managing chronic illnesses and are more likely to suffer from diet-related health problems like diabetes and obesity.

More than 15% of our residents are food insecure

The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition

The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition (GKCFPC) advocates for a strong local food system that provides healthy, sustainable, and accessible foods for everyone living in Greater Kansas City.

We are an alliance of individuals, government representatives, businesses, and organizations representing all critical components of our local food system, including healthcare, agriculture,

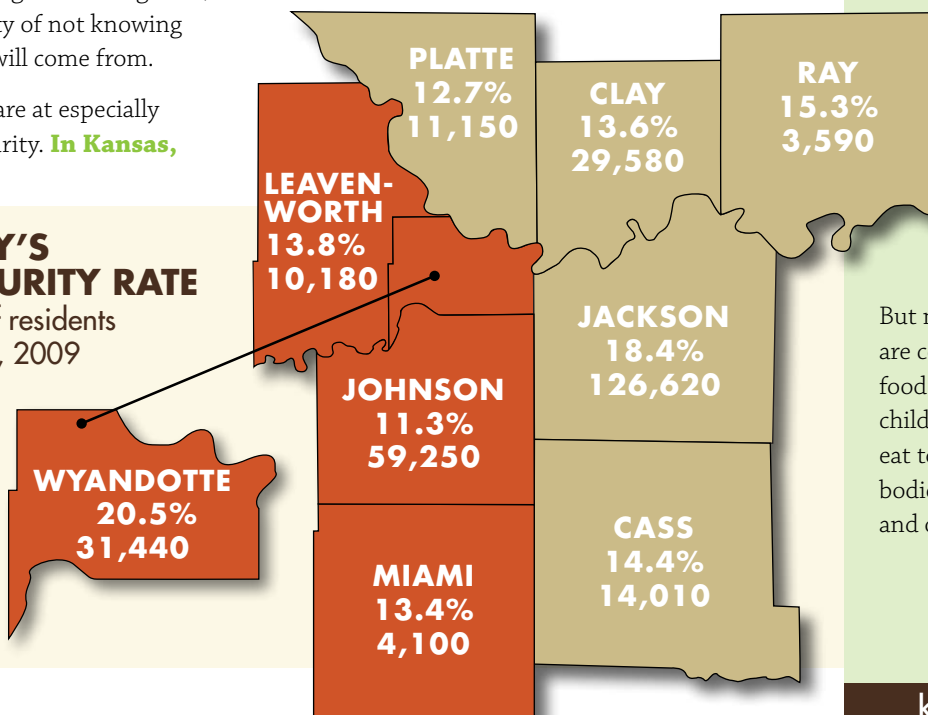
education, social services, food distribution, government, private business, nonprofit agencies, and others.

But most importantly, we are consumers. We want the food that our families, our children, and our neighbors eat to be the best for our bodies, our environment, and our local community.

KANSAS CITY'S FOOD INSECURITY RATE

and the number of residents affected by county, 2009

Kansas ■
 Missouri ■



Source: Feeding America and Harvesters-The Community Food Network

THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

The food environment plays a significant role in who does and does not eat healthy, fresh, and local food. **Neighborhoods that lack grocery stores**, supercenters, and fresh food markets **are called food deserts** because staple grocery items are not affordable or easily accessible.

People in **inner city food deserts** without adequate transportation may have to purchase food in nearby convenience stores that carry highly processed, high-fat foods, or get fast food. And when they are able to get to a grocery store, they can typically only purchase what they can carry.

With more small-town grocery stores closing every year, families in **rural food deserts** often have to drive many miles to get to a full-service grocery store. This can be a significant burden for families with time pressures, and as gas prices continue to rise.

The good news is that there are **workable solutions** to food insecurity and the Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition is committed to implementing them. The GKCFPC seeks to **increase the availability and affordability of healthy, safe, and local food to everyone in the region.**

IDEAS FOR CHANGE

There are many opportunities to improve access to healthy, affordable food in our community:

- Implement the recommendations about food deserts that were recently identified in the GKCFPC's food system assessment.
- Support new and existing farmer's markets, community gardens, or mobile fruit and vegetable trucks by:
 - Supporting the increased use of SNAP benefits at farmer's markets.
 - Offering SNAP participants dollar-for-dollar matches toward the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at farmer's markets or mobile market trucks.
 - Adopting zoning ordinances that are supportive of urban agriculture production and on-site produce sales.
- Improve transportation options to healthy food sources for underserved areas and people by:
 - Adding or improving public transportation routes between food deserts and grocery stores and farmer's markets.
 - Providing transportation subsidies to low-income individuals or subsidizing supermarket shuttle services.

- Attract new food stores or improve healthy food options in existing stores by:
 - Offering incentives to supermarkets to locate new stores in food deserts identified in the community food assessment.
 - Providing incentives and technical assistance to help existing small grocers or convenience stores in low-income neighborhoods expand their fresh, local food options.



WHAT IS A FOOD DESERT?

A food desert is a place – often within lower-income neighborhoods or in rural communities – with limited access to affordable and nutritious food.

PRESENTED BY



FUNDED BY



The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the GKCFPC and do not necessarily reflect the position of our funders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the food system, public policies, and local food resources, visit kcfoodpolicy.org or contact Beth Low, GKCFPC Director, at bethlow@kcfoodpolicy.org or 816.585.4738.

kcfoodpolicy.org

LUNCH LINES, WAISTLINES, AND SUPPLY LINES

Improving School Food

GREATER KANSAS CITY



The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition

The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition (GKCFPC) advocates for a strong local food system that provides healthy, sustainable, and accessible foods for everyone living in Greater Kansas City.

We are an alliance of individuals, government representatives, businesses, and organizations representing all critical components of our local food system, including healthcare, agriculture, education, social services, food distribution, government, private business, nonprofit agencies, and others.

But most importantly, we are consumers. We want the food that our families, our children, and our neighbors eat to be the best for our bodies, our environment, and our local community.

MILLIONS OF KIDS DEPEND ON OUR SCHOOLS FOR BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND SNACKS

Each day, the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs provide lunch to more than 31 million children and breakfast to 11 million children.

But school food is more than just the federally supported breakfast and lunch programs.

“Competitive” foods are food and beverages consumed outside of the USDA school meal program. They are sold ala carte in the cafeteria or through vending machines, and are eaten by many of the **nearly 350,000 school-aged children in Greater Kansas City.**

The sheer quantity of food being consumed in schools every day makes its quality and nutritional value critically important. Childhood nutrition has a significant impact

RECENT STUDIES HAVE SHOWN:

- School food is higher in fat and saturated fat than recommended.
- 42% of schools do not offer any fresh fruits or vegetables.
- Only 5% of schools offer whole grain bread.

on a child’s ability to thrive, and the **long-term consequences of poor eating habits** developed in childhood will be seen in our **health expenditures for years to come.** The magnitude of the school food industry also has a significant impact on national and local food systems, shaping production through demand.

SCHOOL FOOD AND CHILDHOOD OBESITY

With **childhood obesity rates of 31% in both Kansas and**

Missouri, the health implications for our region are significant. While there are many causes of childhood obesity, the role of school food cannot be ignored. During school days, **children consume 30-50% of their total calories at school.**

kfoodpolicy.org



SCHOOL FOOD AND THE FOOD SYSTEM

The volume of food served in schools has the **power to shape food production and distribution**. School food programs rely heavily on commodity food purchases.

This system involves long supply lines and complex distribution systems, and does not allow schools to give local or regional preference in their purchases. Local farmers are often shut out of what could be a significant market in their own community.

The millions of meals served in our schools each year also help to **shape the preferences and eating habits of children**. Currently this means that children's taste buds are trained for heavily processed food that is high in salt, sugar, and saturated fats. This training is unlikely to create a demand for healthy, fresh foods among our consumers of the future.

OBSTACLES TO IMPROVING SCHOOL FOOD

- **COST:** In 2010, the federal government reimbursed schools a maximum of \$2.89 for a student who received a free lunch. After operating expenses, it is estimated that just \$1 is left for the purchase of food.
- **EQUIPMENT AND STAFF:** Many school kitchens have limited cooking and processing capacity; equipment is limited to sinks, freezers, refrigerators, and hotboxes for reheating prepackaged foods. Staff members are often paid low wages and have little food preparation training, making freshly prepared foods even less likely.
- **HOW FOOD IS PROCURED:** It is a federal requirement that 15-20% of school food comes from government commodities, such as wheat and poultry. Those foods pass through a long chain of suppliers and processors before arriving on school trays. Non-commodity foods are typically purchased from national vendors. Often there is no system in place for a school to buy food locally in an efficient and cost-effective way and, in fact, district contracts often forbid such procurement.

- **COMPETITIVE FOODS:** Fast food lunch options and high-sugar, high-fat snacks are easy for children to access in schools and make healthy choices less likely.

POLICY CHANGES TO IMPROVE SCHOOL FOOD

It is the goal of the Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition to increase consumption of nutritious, local foods in the pre-K-12 school setting. We support the development of systems that make locally grown foods an efficient and stable source of good nutrition for schools and an economically viable prospect for local farmers.

Policy changes could include:

- Increasing federal and state support for Farm to School programs.
- Improving nutritional requirements for school meals on the local, state, and national level.
- Increasing the availability of healthier food choices throughout a school or district (including vending machines, concession stands, class parties, etc.).
- Passing statewide legislation making the purchase of locally grown foods for the school cafeteria a priority.
- Securing additional funding at the national level for school meal reimbursement, school equipment, and staff training.
- Supporting the development of school gardens for taste-testing, food procurement, and experiential learning about healthy eating.
- Adopting policies at local schools that ensure that competitive foods are healthier.

PRESENTED BY

GREATER KANSAS CITY
FOOD POLICY COALITION

FUNDED BY



BlueCross BlueShield of Kansas City

An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

kchealthykids

Health Care Foundation
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the GKCFPC and do not necessarily reflect the position of our funders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the food system, public policies, and local food resources, visit kcfoodpolicy.org or contact Beth Low, GKCFPC Director, at bethlow@kcfoodpolicy.org or 816.585.4738.

kcfoodpolicy.org

Local Foods in Schools

PICK YOUR PROJECT

It's good to start a local foods program with a small-scale pilot project. Where do you think you can have the biggest impact and face the fewest barriers? Is it by starting a schoolyard garden or working with local farmers to provide healthy, local foods

- three times a week in one classroom?
- once a week to an entire grade level?
- twice a month to the entire school?
- throughout the school all year at celebrations in the classroom, and as food "rewards"?

Research other successful programs to see how they did it, both nationally and locally. Farmtoschool.org is a great place to start. And, most importantly, know what, if any, local foods are already served in your school. Can you build on an existing program, or are you starting from scratch?

FORM YOUR TEAM

Getting other people engaged in your effort is key. What school personnel do you need to make your project succeed? If you're going to involve just one classroom, it could be

- the teacher and the principal.

If you're going to involve the entire school, it could include

- the principal, food service director, custodians (more snacks can mean more messes), the school nurse, etc.

And, of course, involving other parents and students is critical to your success. You understand the importance of healthy, local foods, but you may need to be the cheerleader to convince others as well. Put together a group of like-minded parents and staff members to help.

IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS

You will certainly face barriers in your effort, so be prepared for them. If you're engaging in a school-wide effort:

- Talk with school food service personnel about the school, state and federal regulations they must follow when purchasing food.
- Visit with school food service personnel about current ordering, receiving and payment procedures they must follow.
- Find out what additional labor costs might be involved in working with fresh foods (such as washing, peeling and chopping carrots).
- Determine the ability of staff and program to be flexible and adjust to the seasonality of fresh produce.

And for any project, regardless of the scope:

- Be sure you've done your research about what local foods are available and in what seasons (don't forget that dairy and meat items are also options when produce may not be in season).
- Talk to local farmers for insight and ideas.
- Understand the financial and human resources that might be required.

BEGIN YOUR PROGRAM

It will likely take several months to engage in these conversations and develop a realistic program that will work for the school, staff and farmers involved. The program you imagined when you started may be quite different from the one you implement after you've engaged your stakeholders so remember to be flexible.

CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES

- Help your stakeholders promote the program both within the school (to staff and students) and outside (to parents, school support groups like the PTA and district officials).
- Provide regular updates to promote the project, raise awareness of the issue and keep the momentum going!
- Tell KC Healthy Kids about your success so we can spread the word, too. Contact us at www.kchealthykids.org.



JUNE
20
14

HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A VACATION
SUMMER NUTRITION STATUS REPORT 2014

National Findings for 2013

The Summer Nutrition Programs experienced considerable growth in 2013, more than matching the numerical decrease in participation that occurred during the Great Recession. While this increase moves the program forward, there remains substantial room for further growth. The Great Recession increased the number of children eligible for free and reduced-price lunch during the school year; however, only 15.1 out of every 100 of those children participated in Summer Nutrition.

- In July 2013, the Summer Nutrition Programs (i.e., SFSP and NSLP combined) served lunch to nearly three million children on an average day. The total number of children participating in Summer Nutrition increased by more than 161,000, or 5.7 percent, from July 2012 to July 2013. Since 2008 when the Great Recession began, this was the largest increase in the total number of children participating and was the largest percent-increase in participation since 2003.
- Still, in July 2013, only 15.1 children received Summer Nutrition for every 100 low-income students who received lunch in the 2012-2013 school year. That is, only one child in seven who needed summer food was getting it.
- The ratio of 15.1:100 in July 2013 was an increase compared to the ratio of 14.3:100 in July 2012. The higher ratio was due to more than 161,000 additional children participating in summer nutrition in July 2012 compared to July 2013, along with more than 27,000 fewer low-income students participating in NSLP during the 2012-2013 school year than in 2011-2012.
- Both the number of SFSP sponsors and sites increased in July 2013 compared to July 2012. Forty-four sponsors (a one percent increase) and 2,370 sites (a six percent increase) were added nationally.
- The Summer Nutrition Programs continued to struggle to feed children throughout the entire summer vacation, because many sponsors and sites do not operate the whole summer. The number of SFSP lunches served in June actually decreased by one percent from 2012 to 2013 (a decline of more than 279,000 lunches), and only increased by one percent in August (an increase of 117,000-plus lunches).

¹ In calculating the Summer Nutrition participation numbers described in this report, FRAC focuses on data from the month of July because it is the peak month for summer nutrition participation for most states. School schedules vary widely across the country, with many regular school years going into June or starting in August. July is when the vast majority of schools are closed for summer vacation.

² Because the rate of school lunch participation by eligible low-income children is quite high, the number of low-income children who are receiving free or reduced-price lunch during the regular school year is a useful way to estimate the need for Summer Nutrition Programs.

State Findings for 2013

Summer Nutrition participation rates and state agency performance varied greatly throughout the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

- Five top-performing states reached at least one in four of their low-income children in July 2013, when comparing Summer Nutrition participation to regular school-year free and reduced price lunch numbers: the District of Columbia (ratio of 57.9:100), New Mexico (32.4:100), New York (28.2:100), Connecticut (26.4), and Vermont (25.9). Three additional states reached at least one in five children with summer meals: Arkansas (22.2:100), Idaho (22.1:100), and Delaware (21.4).
- Eleven states fed summer meals to fewer than one in ten of their low-income children in July 2013. Oklahoma (4.5:100), Mississippi (5.8:100), and Nevada (6.4:100) were the three lowest-performing states, and each had a 2013 ratio even worse than in the previous year.
- Thirty-two states experienced increases in Summer Nutrition participation, with 12 states growing the number of participants by more than 10 percent. Arkansas had the largest increase, growing participation by 39 percent, followed by Hawaii with 33.9 percent, and Louisiana with 32.2 percent.
- Nineteen states experienced decreases in Summer Nutrition participation, with three states shrinking by more than 10 percent. Nevada decreased by 21.5 percent, followed by North Dakota (13.3 percent), and Mississippi (13.1 percent).
- While not used in calculations for this report, it is important to note that 21 states had their highest SFSP participation during the month of June. Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma all served at least twice as many SFSP lunches in June compared to July, with Kansas, North Dakota, and Tennessee serving between 43 and 73 percent more.

Missed Opportunities

The child poverty rate is still much higher than before the recession, and it was far too high even before the recession. As the economy slowly recovers, it remains urgent that states continue and build 2013's progress in feeding children summer food. It is important to embrace policies such as Summer Nutrition not only to improve child nutrition and health but to boost state economies. Summer Nutrition Programs provide healthy meals to low-income children, and funnel millions of dollars to the states. For every lunch that an eligible child does not receive, the state and community miss out on \$3.4125³ in federal SFSP funding. When added together, it can mean millions of dollars are left on the table.

- If every state had reached the goal of 40 children participating in Summer Nutrition in July 2013 for every 100 receiving free or reduced-price lunch during the 2012-2013 school year, an additional 4.8 million children would have been fed each day, and states would have collected an additional \$365 million in child nutrition funding in July alone (assuming the programs operated 22 days).
- The five states that missed out on the most federal funding and failed to feed the most children were Texas (\$49.4 million; 658,000 children), California (\$39.7 million; 529,000 children), Florida (\$23.4 million; 312,000 children), Georgia (\$16.7 million; 223,000 children), and Illinois (\$15.2 million; 203,000 children).

Strategies to Increase Participation

In 2013, the Summer Nutrition Programs benefited from numerous promotional, outreach, and technical assistance strategies undertaken by USDA, state child nutrition agencies, and national, state, and local stakeholders. In addition, the Summer Nutrition Programs fit well into the increased focus of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign, with many summer meal sites also providing recreational and physical activities. Many sites also supported the Administration's focus on improving student achievement by providing educational and enrichment activities that helped temper summer learning loss. Below some of the most promising efforts are described.

³ Reimbursement rates are slightly higher than this number for rural or "self-preparation" sites.

USDA Summer Nutrition Program Initiative

In 2013, USDA Secretary Vilsack made increasing access to the Summer Nutrition Programs a top priority for the agency and set the goal of providing five million more meals than in the summer of 2012. USDA surpassed its goal, reimbursing seven million more meals in 2013.

To achieve its goal, USDA partnered closely with FRAC, Share Our Strength, Feeding America, and numerous other national and state organizations to increase the number of sponsors and sites providing summer meals and to increase the number of children who participated. It used a variety of strategies, including: offering technical assistance through webinars; providing promotion and outreach through traditional and social media; engaging partners; and taking important steps to alleviate administrative barriers to participation at the state and local level.⁴

Another key component of the USDA campaign was the targeting of five states—Arkansas, California, Colorado, Rhode Island, and Virginia—for intensive technical assistance. Leading up to summer 2013, USDA and the five state child nutrition agencies, with help from national and state partners, convened meetings of key stakeholders in each of the five states to develop action plans to increase participation. Following the first year of USDA’s targeted technical assistance project, all of the states except Virginia increased participation, and California experienced double-digit increases.

Increasing access to the Summer Nutrition Programs remains a top priority for USDA in 2014. This summer, it is targeting six additional states—Alabama, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, and Texas—because of their persistent poverty, high levels of food insecurity, and low summer meal participation, while continuing to work closely with the 2013 target states. USDA is conducting an aggressive outreach and promotion campaign and will hold its fourth annual Summer Food Week during the first week of June. FRAC, Share Our Strength and Feeding America, as well as numerous other national, state, and local organizations, continue to support USDA’s expansion efforts in the target states, as well as its efforts to promote the Summer Nutrition Programs nationwide.

⁴ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2014/004814>.

Table 5. Average Daily Participation (ADP) in Summer Nutrition¹ and Additional ADP and Additional Federal Reimbursement if States Reached FRAC's Goal of 40 Summer Nutrition Participants per 100 National School Lunch Program (NSLP)² Participants

State	Summer Nutrition ADP, July 2013	Ratio of Summer Nutrition to NSLP ³	Total Summer Nutrition ADP if Summer Nutrition to NSLP Ratio Reached 40:100	Additional Summer Nutrition ADP if Summer Nutrition to NSLP Ratio Reached 40:100	Additional Federal Reimbursement Dollars if Summer Nutrition to NSLP Ratio Reached 40:100 ⁴
Alabama	30,456	8.5	143,288	112,832	8,470,862
Alaska	3,664	10.2	14,357	10,693	802,777
Arizona	68,743	14.9	184,721	115,978	8,707,048
Arkansas	51,166	22.2	92,051	40,885	3,069,442
California	447,411	18.3	977,109	529,698	39,767,076
Colorado	19,457	8.5	91,973	72,516	5,444,139
Connecticut	38,107	26.4	57,643	19,536	1,466,665
Delaware	11,763	21.4	21,954	10,191	765,089
District of Columbia	23,868	57.9	-	-	-
Florida	174,517	14.3	487,300	312,783	23,482,184
Georgia	114,842	13.6	338,113	223,271	16,762,070
Hawaii	5,954	9.0	26,455	20,501	1,539,113
Idaho	21,685	22.1	39,333	17,648	1,324,924
Illinois	106,818	13.8	309,926	203,108	15,248,333
Indiana	75,781	17.9	169,696	93,915	7,050,669
Iowa	16,585	10.1	66,000	49,415	3,709,831
Kansas	12,361	6.7	74,314	61,953	4,651,122
Kentucky	26,587	7.8	135,562	108,975	8,181,298
Louisiana	48,189	12.7	151,706	103,517	7,771,539
Maine	11,535	19.6	23,512	11,977	899,173
Maryland	50,902	19.0	107,202	56,300	4,226,723
Massachusetts	52,938	19.5	108,868	55,930	4,198,945
Michigan	67,528	11.8	228,600	161,072	12,092,480
Minnesota	39,088	15.0	104,273	65,185	4,893,764
Mississippi	17,296	5.8	118,874	101,578	7,625,969
Missouri	28,090	7.9	142,118	114,028	8,560,652
Montana	7,245	16.0	18,123	10,878	816,666
Nebraska	10,683	9.3	45,832	35,149	2,638,811
Nevada	10,418	6.4	65,064	54,646	4,102,549
New Hampshire	4,725	12.2	15,540	10,815	811,936
New Jersey	76,117	18.3	166,522	90,405	6,787,156
New Mexico	51,943	32.4	64,213	12,270	921,170
New York	328,350	28.2	466,210	137,860	10,349,840
North Carolina	85,664	13.7	250,450	164,786	12,371,309
North Dakota	1,998	6.9	11,572	9,574	718,768
Ohio	66,015	10.4	253,209	187,194	14,053,590
Oklahoma	12,957	4.5	116,341	103,384	7,761,554
Oregon	34,560	17.3	79,740	45,180	3,391,889
Pennsylvania	105,607	18.7	225,542	119,935	9,004,120
Rhode Island	7,182	14.2	20,192	13,010	976,726
South Carolina	64,788	19.4	133,621	68,833	5,167,638
South Dakota	8,558	18.1	18,919	10,361	777,852
Tennessee	56,606	12.7	177,648	121,042	9,087,228
Texas	280,018	11.9	938,890	658,872	49,464,816
Utah	18,558	11.3	65,496	46,938	3,523,870
Vermont	6,673	25.9	10,303	3,630	272,522
Virginia	66,402	16.9	157,526	91,124	6,841,135
Washington	33,943	10.1	134,525	100,582	7,551,194
West Virginia	14,802	12.6	47,002	32,200	2,417,415
Wisconsin	40,817	15.2	107,550	66,733	5,009,980
Wyoming	4,749	19.0	9,982	5,233	392,867
United States	2,964,709	15.1	7,838,828	4,874,119	365,924,488

¹ Summer Nutrition includes the Summer Food Service Program and free and reduced-price National School Lunch Program during the summer, including the Seamless Summer Option.

² School Year NSLP numbers reflect free and reduced-price lunch participation in regular school year 2012-2013.

³ Ratio of Summer Nutrition to NSLP is the number of children in Summer Nutrition per 100 in NSLP.

⁴ Additional federal reimbursement dollars is calculated assuming that the state's sponsors are reimbursed for each child each weekday only for lunch (not also breakfast or a snack) and at the lowest rate for a SFSP lunch (\$3.4125 per lunch) and are served 22 days in July 2013.

Gamble by Kansas City school district, neighborhood is paying off

By JOE ROBERTSON

The Kansas City Star

Ninety-two.

Finally, Kansas City's sometimes fanciful determination to open Hale Cook Elementary School has an enrollment count with substance.

And numbers within the number suggest the district might have more than a new anchor in the mostly white, middle- to upper-class southwest neighborhoods that abandoned the district years ago.

With some 53 percent of the enrollees being white and 47 percent being of color, the school is lining up to be the district's most diverse.

It's by design, and it hasn't been easy, or by any means assured.

"It was scary going into the regular school district," said Loretta Phillips, who is black and who had started her 7-year-old son, Joseph Carter, in a private religious school as a kindergartner. "But I thought we would take the chance."

A diverse school entices her, she said. "(Joseph) will be able to keep up with kids of all diversity."

The district has assigned the school a principal. Crews are at work finishing renovations of the red brick building at 7302 Pennsylvania Ave.



Lael Ricks, 6, played with chalk on the sidewalk outside of the school as the rest of her family (Avery, 2, father Nick, Valery and mother Liz) watched and listened during a get together for families in the Hale Cook Elementary School neighborhood.

It's a public school, free, without waiting lists and with a coalescing core of families who want to stay in their Waldo and Brookside neighborhoods.

"This is awesome," said parent Susan Stocking, who is white and whose son Tucker is headed into the first grade. She and other families want to stay and raise their kids in the city.

Hale Cook will have students in pre-kindergarten through second grade.

A year ago, Superintendent Steve Green could have called it off. The recruitment effort by the Friends of Hale Cook fell short of its goal — again.

Hale Cook was one of five schools closed in 2009, shut down a year ahead of a massive consolidation in 2010. Combined, the two waves of closings cut in half the number of buildings in the shrinking district.

In 2011, then-Superintendent John Covington said he'd reopen the school if the neighborhood movement could recruit enough new families to fill it — about 300. That goal proved impossible to reach.

Green, after taking over as superintendent in 2011, saw promise in the movement as a chance to recover families who for years had mostly left by the time their children reached school age, or who had gone to private schools or tried the waiting lists of the few popular charter public schools in the area.

Green would be willing to let the school open with just lower grades, attracting new parents with children in kindergarten and first grade, and let it grow by adding higher grades one at a time.

The district wanted enough for two kindergarten classrooms and one first grade — some 50 or 60 children. The new school was able to secure enrollment for only 26.

Many families were taking notice of the school, however, including many whose children were not kindergarten age yet. Although those gathering at Hale Cook promotional events were almost all white families, they were city dwellers who wanted the diversity of the city.

"We (the families and the district) were both venturing down a path, not sure where it would lead," Green said. "But we trusted in each other. We had faith in each other."

They also worked together to design boundary lines for the school's enrollment area that purposefully stretched across Troost Avenue on its southern end toward The Paseo.

"We asked the district to help us with new boundaries," said Ashley Hand of the Friends of Hale Cook. "We didn't want to look like privileged people trying to (open a school) for ourselves. ... We were excited by the diversity it brought in."

The district enrolled the original Hale Cook families in fall 2013 by giving them a kindergarten classroom in Hartman Elementary School, about 1.5 miles southeast of Hale Cook at 8111 Oak St. The first-graders were inserted into one of Hartman's first-grade classes.

The district committed to preparing to open Hale Cook's building in fall 2014 on faith that more families would come.

Hand thinks the district's gamble gave the Hale Cook movement the footing it needed to finally secure enrollments for 2014-15.

They were no longer just prospective district parents trying to get others to take the first leap. The small group in Hartman meant there were parents now speaking with inside experience.

This spring, when the Friends of Hale Cook put a float in the Brookside pre-St. Patrick's Day Parade, they were led by a little band of red-shirted children and their teacher.

That's when Hand thought that Hale Cook really might happen, she said.

"We went from being a group of activists to being families with kids in a parade marching with their teacher," she said.

When the community gathered at the end of May to meet the school's new principal, Julie Lynch, Green called the school a gamble that was paying off.

"I know this is a day some doubted would come to fruition, but here we are," he said. "It's a proud moment ... (of) people taking a risk and staying the course."

Uncertainty still weighs over many families, such as Nate and Liz Ricks and their three children who joined the gathering to see the school and its principal. Their oldest child, 6, has been in a private school, but they would like for their children to be in public schools by the time all three of them are school age.

"A lot of families are thinking ahead," Nate Ricks said. "We love the area, and we'd love to make it a long-term home."

But then he added, pointing west toward the state line, "Or do we move a mile and a half that way?"

"We're still on the fence," he said. "We'd love to stay and be a part of the community."

To reach Joe Robertson, call [816-234-4789](tel:816-234-4789) or send email to jrobertson@kcstar.com.

New KC center for homeless veterans offers 'homes for the brave'

By LYNN HORSLEY - The Kansas City Star

06/08/2014 9:50 PM

Shortly after 7 a.m. Friday, dozens of men and a few women were already lining up to get help at the annual Heart of America Stand Down for homeless veterans.

Some said they were couch surfing with friends and family while trying to find an affordable permanent home. Others had spent time under bridges and were living in transitional housing while trying to find jobs and places of their own.



That just shows the needs of so many veterans, said Kansas City lawyer and Vietnam combat veteran Art Fillmore, who started the Stand Down events 21 years ago. Since then, Fillmore has had a bigger dream of providing permanent housing and comprehensive case management all in one place.

That dream will be realized at the end of this month, when St. Michael's Veterans Center officially opens the first of three

planned buildings, with 58 apartment units for homeless veterans and a full complement of social services in the same building. Many say the project is unusual and innovative, especially in this region.

"It's far more beautiful than I ever imagined it would or could be," Fillmore said of the three-story edifice at 3838 Chelsea Drive, on a hill just south of the VA Medical Center. "It doesn't resemble anything but first-rate market housing."

Navy veteran Markus Mack, 56, who has been homeless off and on for three years after a bout with cancer, said he had heard of St. Michael's and even applied but had then opted for a more portable type of veterans housing voucher.

Still, Mack said, St. Michael's will fill a real void for needy veterans in Kansas City.

“It will give them a good start to get their dignity back,” Mack said. “We’re men who fought for our country. We don’t want to be forgotten.”

The project has been in the works for more than four years and came together through a partnership between Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph and Yarco Co., a firm that develops and manages special needs multifamily housing.

For the 58 veterans picked to fill the new building, it will be a bit like winning the lottery. Designed by Rosemann & Associates and built by Yarco, the apartments have spacious wheelchair-accessible rooms, granite countertops and tile floors in the kitchens, stylish ceiling fans and walk-in showers.

“We’ve tried to make it as personal as we can, as friendly as we can,” Yarco Chairman Cliff Cohn said. “This is going to be somebody’s castle.”

The building also has large and small community gathering areas, outpatient medical care, and rooms for physical fitness, computer and job training. It’s close to bus lines, shopping areas, churches and the Truman Sports Complex.

After veterans know they have stable long-term housing, they can then begin to address other challenges, said Eric Verzola, a retired Army major and Iraq combat veteran who is now Catholic Charities’ veterans’ services director.

He said the best part of his job is being able to help those who are really struggling, including some living in their cars or in shelters with no place to store their belongings.

“When you don’t have a place to live, that burden is on you,” Verzola said. “It consumes you, and other things start getting out of control.”

Catholic Charities will work with a dozen other agencies on-site to provide everything from legal and financial assistance to post-traumatic stress recovery and companion animals.

Verzola and Fillmore, who serves on the St. Michael’s board, declined to identify the residents who will be moving in but said the building will be fully leased by the June 30 grand opening. About 70 or 80 have applied, and Fillmore said the facility will house one couple and 57 individual men, primarily Vietnam-era vets but some from Desert Storm and more recent combat.

Those chosen, Fillmore said, were the ones most motivated to take advantage of the services and the most employable, so they can begin to pay some rent at St. Michael’s and free up low-income housing vouchers for others.

When St. Michael’s is fully built out in several years it is expected to be a \$34 million complex with 180 affordable rental units in three buildings on a 24-acre property.

Fillmore, who has researched other veterans’ programs, believes it will be unusual in the country because of its comprehensive services, its proximity to the VA and its campus setting that lets veterans create their own supportive community.

He has a simple slogan for what St. Michael’s will be: “Homes for the brave.”

The project is also noteworthy because of what it replaces. It fills a site where a decrepit 198-unit public housing project called Holy Temples Homes once stood. Those units were torn down years ago, but the vacant land became overgrown and a dump site.

Finally in 2011, city government officials sought development proposals, and the St. Michael's idea beat out three other more traditional multifamily plans.

The need is readily evident. A Kansas City area count on Jan. 30 identified 200 homeless veterans, including 101 in emergency shelters, 62 in transitional housing and 35 unsheltered.

Catholic Charities estimates the metro area number is actually much higher, approaching 1,400 to 1,800.

Kansas City VA Medical Center and U.S Housing and Urban Development officials praised the completion of the first St. Michael's building as an important part of an emerging national campaign to end veteran homelessness.

"We are particularly pleased that the new center will be located in such close proximity to the main medical center. The Kansas City VA looks forward to being part of this exciting initiative," assistant director Michael Moore said.

The first building cost about \$11 million, financed with some federal grant funding and primarily with an investment from a U.S. Bank community development subsidiary using federal and state low-income tax credits. The city also contributed about \$1.2 million to grade the site and build a new road.

For a while earlier this year, it looked like tax credits to finance the second \$11 million building might be in jeopardy, but they were recently approved, said Stuart Bullington, deputy director of Kansas City's neighborhoods and housing department. The city will contribute \$1.2 million in block grant funds for a service center as part of the second building. Construction should begin this fall and take about 18 months.

The city will hold meetings soon, Bullington said, to try to figure out the final phase financing. "It would be nice if some national funders would step up and support this," he said.

Residents of the Seven Oaks Neighborhood Association, which includes the St. Michael's site, are thrilled with the new development, replacing what had been an eyesore and a nuisance.

"It's absolutely gorgeous," said neighborhood association president Gwendolyn Davis.

She said having homeless and at-risk veterans move into the area is not a concern, and the neighborhood welcomes them.

"Everybody deserves a better place," she said. "I think they'll fit right in."

To reach Lynn Horsley, call 816-226-2058 or send email to lhorsley@kcstar.com.

The chance to move from poverty to wealth defines the American dream. Today's reality?

Dream On

By DAVE HELLING

The Kansas City Star

Allison Gibbons has lived a lifetime of problems.

A difficult childhood in a broken home. An eating disorder, drug abuse, depression, alcohol — “obviously I was self-medicating,” she says.

She is the mother of a young son whose father is in jail.

Today she works for a better life, with dreams of becoming a nurse.

“I know it’s going to be a struggle,” she says.

It’s a strain Mary Jo Vernon understands.

Thirty years ago she was a single mother with three small children and three jobs, hoping others in the grocery store didn’t notice her food stamps.

“I was trying to keep my nostrils above the waterline,” Vernon recalls.

Education, hard work and public support marked the road back. Today, Vernon earns a six-figure salary as Platte County’s health director — a married, doting grandmother with grown, thriving children.

Mary Jo Vernon embodies the American dream, the deeply held belief that anyone who works hard and follows the rules can succeed.

Yet studies show that dream has been fading for decades.

Now experts believe meaningful mobility may be dangerously close to disappearing entirely. A wealth gap and stagnant growth have made success increasingly an accident of birth — more like feudal Europe than can-do America.

Social scientists are scrambling to learn why. And they’re advancing theories: financially divided cities, missing fathers, crumbling social institutions, broken politics. Those long-standing problems now take on a heightened urgency.

It’s clear the old questions and answers have failed, at least in part. Even Vernon’s success shows how far apart the rungs on America’s ladder to success are spaced.

“It feels some days like the American dream is slipping away,” she said.

Better than our parents?

Economists, politicians and academics have spent years examining the growing wealth gap among the rich, the middle class and the poor in America. They found that real income for all but the highest earners has barely grown for three generations.

Less noticed is the ongoing slump in social mobility, the ability to transcend one’s circumstances and achieve greater success.

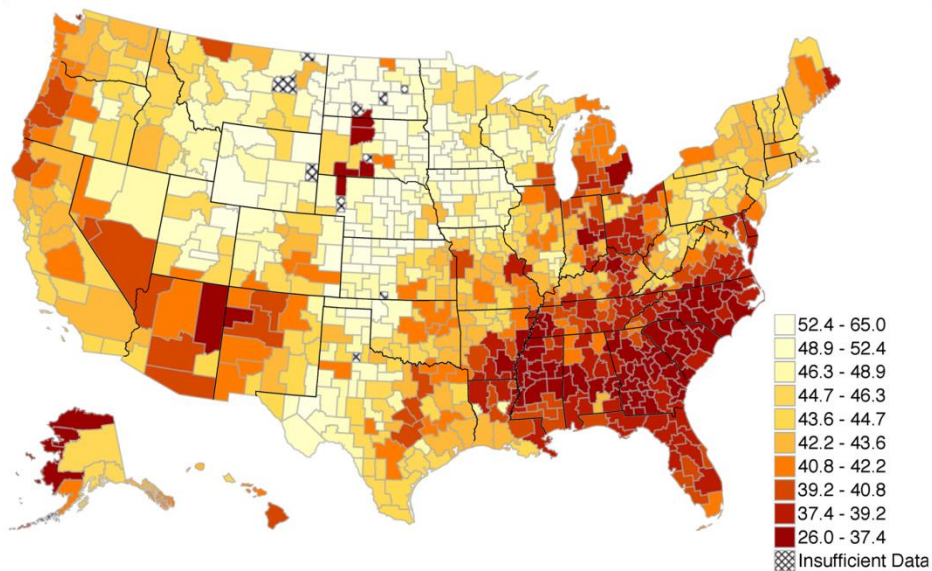


WHERE IS THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY? THE GEOGRAPHY OF INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY IN THE U.S.



Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, and Emmanuel Saez

Is America still the “land of opportunity”? We show that this question does not have a clear answer because the economic outcomes of children from low income families vary substantially within the U.S. Some cities have rates of upward income mobility comparable to the most mobile countries in the world, while others have lower rates of mobility than any developed country. These geographical differences in upward mobility are strongly correlated with five primary factors: segregation, income inequality, local school quality, social capital, and family structure. For further information, see the [non-technical summary](#) and the [complete paper](#).



Note: This map shows the average percentile rank of children who grow up in below-median income families across areas of the U.S. (absolute upward mobility). Lighter colors represent areas where children from low-income families are more likely to move up in the income distribution. To look up statistics for your own city, use the [interactive version of this map](#) created by the New York Times.

Upward Mobility in the 50 Biggest Cities: The Top 10 and Bottom 10

Rank		Odds of Reaching Top Fifth Starting from Bottom Fifth	Rank		Odds of Reaching Top Fifth Starting from Bottom Fifth
1	San Jose, CA	12.9%	41	Cleveland, OH	5.1%
2	San Francisco, CA	12.2%	42	St. Louis, MO	5.1%
3	Washington DC, DC	11.0%	43	Raleigh, NC	5.0%
4	Seattle, WA	10.9%	44	Jacksonville, FL	4.9%
5	Salt Lake City, UT	10.8%	45	Columbus, OH	4.9%
6	New York, NY	10.5%	46	Indianapolis, IN	4.9%
7	Boston, MA	10.5%	47	Dayton, OH	4.9%
8	San Diego, CA	10.4%	48	Atlanta, GA	4.5%
9	Newark, NJ	10.2%	49	Milwaukee, WI	4.5%
10	Manchester, NH	10.0%	50	Charlotte, NC	4.4%



Americans see rags-to-riches opportunity as their birthright.

“Upward mobility from the bottom is the crux of the American promise,” former Indiana governor Mitch Daniels, a Republican, said just a few years ago.

Yet studies repeatedly suggest Americans face steeper odds of escaping poverty than their counterparts in other modern economies. Some studies show children in France, Japan and even Pakistan stand a better chance than U.S. children to rise above their parents.

“There are an awful lot of people who are struggling, who will never get out of poverty,” says Stephanie Kelton, an economist at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

“It’s roughly three times harder to get from the bottom into the middle, or from the middle into the top, in the U.S. as it is in a place like Japan or some of the Nordic countries.”

Americans, President Barack Obama said last December, think “their kids won’t be better off than they were. ... This is the defining challenge of our time.”

He and others have offered some responses: a higher minimum wage, more job training and education, a broader social safety net.

Experts worry that such efforts stumble because policymakers rely on outdated assumptions and ineffective repairs.

What if stable, two-parent families and financially integrated neighborhoods are more important for mobility than nutrition programs or job training? How might communities of faith and fellowship bind neighborhoods closer together?

Fully answering those questions will prove enormously difficult, researchers caution.

“It will be 10 years or more before we have anything close to a consensus” on reasons and remedies for social immobility, said Lane Kenworthy, a sociology and political science professor at the University of Arizona.

Yet finding the answers is critical.

“Americans can tolerate a lot of inequality compared with people of other nations,” write researchers Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, “but only if everyone has a chance at upward mobility.”

Patrick Sharkey, a sociology professor at New York University, agrees: “This realization that the United States ... is unique in how low its level of mobility is, that’s kind of eye-opening to a lot of people.”

Rich streets, poor streets

Mary Jo Vernon’s journey from poverty to success began early. She grew up in a home built by her father, helping to care for a sister with Down syndrome.

“My goals were pretty small,” she recalls.

Her challenges grew dramatically as an adult when her marriage fell apart.

“Just trying to keep the lights on and water running and the groceries coming in was all I could do,” she said.

Vernon and her children might have fallen into a poverty trap too deep to escape. It’s a desperation all too familiar to Bianca Hunter, a single mother raised in a single-parent home.

“It’s almost impossible. It really is,” she said. “That’s why people are so bitter and angry and why kids don’t get the attention from their parents that they need.”

A Kansas City area child has just a 7 percent chance of moving from the bottom fifth of earners to the top fifth, according to a landmark 2013 study by the Harvard University Equality of Opportunity Project.

The national average — 8 percent — is less than half that of Denmark.

A child born in the bottom fifth of incomes in Memphis has just a 2.8 percent chance of reaching the top fifth, the worst urban performance in the nation. By contrast, a similar child in San Jose, Calif., has a 12.9 percent chance of achieving the top rank of earners.

“The U.S. is better described as a collection of societies, some of which are ‘lands of opportunity’ with high rates of mobility across generations,” the Harvard researchers write, “and others in which few children escape poverty.”

One explanation for that pattern is a history of racial segregation. Places with mobility problems, like Kansas City, often have a history of dividing the races.

Researchers increasingly believe economic segregation — the tendency of wealthy people to live with others equally wealthy, or for the poor to live with other poor — better explains why social mobility stalls.

“There are some places where growing up poor has less of an impact on kids,” Sharkey says. “They don’t live apart from the rich.”

A 2013 study by the Pew Charitable Trusts concluded that “the most economically segregated U.S. metro areas — those where the very rich and the very poor live far from each other — are also the least economically mobile, and vice versa.”

A wider range of incomes within a closely knit neighborhood, some researchers believe, builds the aspirations among the poorer children. At the same time, it helps convince higher earners to offer neighbors a hand up with better schools, health care and other services.

Vernon thinks her diverse neighborhood played a role in her own escape.

“Exposure to range of incomes and wealth gives children a broad perspective on life,” she says.

For decades, by contrast, Kansas City’s poor and wealthy spread away from each other in isolated pockets, driven by developers, cheap land and a car culture.

“Poverty is highly concentrated in the core of the Kansas City region,” the Brookings Institution concluded after the 2000 census.

A 2012 study said Kansas City’s “residential income segregation index” — a measure of the isolation of its poor — was higher than St. Louis, Boston, Chicago and the national average. It’s the 13th biggest residential income gap among the country’s 30 largest metro areas.

Some of that is changing.

A few local communities have relatively strong mixes of income levels. Between 2005 and 2009, figures show, residents in one part of Grandview had the most equal incomes in the nation. Olathe has a wide range of incomes in similar neighborhoods.

Both communities are likely to foster mobility better than places with more segregated incomes. Salt Lake City's incomes, for example, are also among the most equal in America, and that area is near the top of most economically mobile cities in America.

Atlanta, by contrast, is highly unequal — and immobile.

One answer to social immobility in the Kansas City region, then, may be to use zoning, incentives and regulations to develop neighborhoods with fully mixed incomes.

Some wealthier Kansas Citians may be drawn to such an environment.

Deanne Ricke of Leawood is raising two teenage sons, children who have enjoyed the amenities a suburban upbringing implies. She has worked hard to carve out a successful career as a communications and marketing specialist and author.

She wants her children to do better than she has, but through health and fulfillment, not necessarily material success.

"Sometimes I wonder if I didn't do (my children) a disservice by bringing them up in a wealthier neighborhood," she says.

"Because — we call it the bubble. The Johnson County bubble, where everybody is affluent that they know, and it just feels like it's easy and it's natural.

"It isn't easy and it isn't natural, and that's what I've tried to impart to them."

The schoolhouse door

Mary Jo Vernon's recovery began when she returned to school — while raising three children.

"They couldn't have Nikes," she says. "They couldn't have Jordache."

But the quartet would often study together in the evenings, giving the young students an early lesson in focus and discipline, key skills learned in the home and at school.

Kansas City's struggles with providing K-12 public education are well known. Decades of underperforming public schools provide at least a partial explanation for lower social and economic mobility in the community.

"One thing we know matters is schools," said Kenworthy, the social scientist. Good schools "do help equalize opportunity."

In 2012, the 34-nation Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development found that the U.S. was one of just three member countries spending less on disadvantaged students, on average, than wealthier students.

"The most able teachers rarely work in disadvantaged schools in the United States, the opposite of what occurs in countries with high-performing education systems," the OECD declared.

Stumbles in K-12 education hurt social mobility, some researchers believe, because they put college out of reach.

"A college degree can be a ticket out of poverty," the Brookings Institution recently concluded. Vernon's experience helps prove the point.

The claim is controversial.

Almost everyone agrees a man or woman with a college degree typically earns more than someone with only a high school diploma. But they say many disadvantaged students won't finish college because they're poorly prepared by public schools.

Families and parents

In 2012, according to data compiled by Kids Count, 51 percent of all children in Kansas City lived in households like the one Mary Jo Vernon headed — just one parent.

The national average is 35 percent.

Researchers increasingly believe stable, two-parent families are critical for social mobility.

"Having just one parent makes it harder," says Kenworthy.

The Harvard research team is blunt. "The strongest predictors of upward mobility are measures of family structure, such as the fraction of single parents in the area," it writes.

Most often, those single-parent families are run by a woman.

Conservatives say the breakdown of the traditional family explains much of the poverty trap, providing a rationale for making it harder to divorce and easier to deny benefits to single parents.

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback has organized seminars on the topic and urged policies and legislation promoting two-parent families. Conservatives have suggested caps on benefits for single mothers or grants for low-income families with two parents.

Others say single-parent homes compare poorly because a second income is missing.

"You cannot do well in school if you're hungry," says Alice Lieberman, a researcher and professor at the University of Kansas. "You cannot work and function adequately if you're hungry."

Some researchers say the number of adults in a home matters less than stability and positive role models. Children with bickering parents, for example, may be more harmful to mobility than conflict-free single-parent households.

Shauna Love of Kansas City, 29, grew up in a home without a father. She now raises two children without a spouse.

It's tough.

"You definitely need two parents to raise a child," she says. "It is so much harder by yourself."

Faith

Asked to explain her triumph over poverty, Mary Jo Vernon mentions education and work.

Then: "My faith. My groundedness in a power greater than myself."

Social mobility researchers aren't completely sure why, but there is evidence that moving up the economic ladder comes easier in communities organized around faith — churches, synagogues, other gathering places for worship.

Salt Lake City, a community largely organized around the Mormon religion, is highly mobile.

Yet the influence of a church on social mobility is complicated.

Churches remain important institutions in many poor neighborhoods, for example. Yet mobility is a problem because of other factors — education, family structure and the like.

Some communities considered more secular are still socially mobile. Boston and San Francisco are in the top 10 of socially mobile cities, Harvard says, but a Gallup poll puts both near the bottom of the list of the nation's most religious cities.

That suggests the influence of a church may be part of a broader picture, experts say. The goal is a strong community. Active engagement in civic life, strong social structures in neighborhoods, an ethic of shared sacrifice and ambition all contribute to socially mobile populations.

Writes Brad Wilcox for the conservative American Enterprise Institute: "Giving poor kids a shot at the American dream may depend on the nation's capacity to revive communitarian virtues and institutions" — churches, schools, neighborhoods.

Maintaining strong community structures grows more difficult as a city or region diversifies. Some in Salt Lake City fear poverty and social dysfunction are on the rise, threatening the city's ability to remain near the top of the list of socially mobile cities.

Intangibles

Mary Jo Vernon had a strong faith, help from sympathetic friends and neighbors, a strong work ethic and a little luck.

She also had help from the the community and government.

"I applied for food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, I got rental assistance," she said. "Medicaid. I got a Pell grant to go to school."

While social scientists agree on what helps mobility — economically integrated neighborhoods, stable families, good schools — they say fully fixing the problem will require a broader approach than tackling any one concern.

"What does it mean to be poor in Kansas City?" asked NYU's Sharkey.

"Does it mean you're growing up in a place with a higher level of violence where kids are under constant stress? Does it mean you're exposed to higher levels of air pollution, and unclean water, and toxins in the soil?

"These are questions that are fundamental to ask. "It's not just 'Are there people with low income there?' It's 'How does that poverty affect all the aspects of that family's life?'"

Indeed, those studying social mobility — and those fighting to improve it — worry the emphasis on family, neighborhoods and community may mean less support for other traditional tools: nutrition programs, for example, or rigorous job training and job creation.

"There are three reliable ways to help or 'lift' the bottom," writes economist Jared Bernstein. "Subsidies that increase the poor's economic security today, investment in their future productivity and targeted job opportunities at decent wages."

It involves more than just cash benefits. Recipients, some believe, must be convinced government programs can help.

"I felt like more than dirt," Vernon recalled. "But you know what? When people use it for what it's designed for, it's a very good tool."

At the same time, government aid can be a trap — a snare acknowledged by some who get benefits today.

Bianca Hunter is studying to be a radiologist. To pursue her education — and feed her son — Hunter relies partly on government assistance, just as her mother did.

Generational dependence on government aid is a common feature of uniformly poor neighborhoods, researchers say, because information on available support programs travels quickly from parent to child and from neighbor to neighbor. Eventually it becomes a multigenerational habit.

“You have people who settle,” says Hunter. “I don’t want to settle. I don’t want to depend on the government.”

Politics of mobility

All of this leaves policymakers in a tough spot.

What works in one city might not work in another.

Addressing any one shortfall might not change the others.

Liberals and conservatives increasingly say social mobility should top the country’s to-do list.

Yet researchers deeply doubt the political class has the patience or imagination to carry out better ideas.

“All of the areas that you talk about that might predict mobility — neighborhoods, schools, health care, infrastructure — we could shore some of those things up,” KU’s Lieberman says.

“But we do not have the political will and wealthy people do not have the desire.”

Still, people who have battled the poverty trap — Shauna Love, Mary Jo Vernon, Allison Gibbons, Bianca Hunter — show that while the American dream may be in trouble, American dreamers remain.

“It takes a village to raise a child,” Love said. “But remember: It’s your village. You’re controlling the village.”

“You can do anything you set your mind to.”

To reach Dave Helling, call 816-234-4656 or send email to dhelling@kcstar.com.

THE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

Raj Chetty, Harvard University
Nathaniel Hendren, Harvard University
Patrick Kline, University of California Berkeley
Emmanuel Saez, University of California Berkeley

The United States has historically been viewed as the “land of opportunity,” a society in which a child’s chances of succeeding do not depend heavily on her parents’ income or circumstances. But there is growing evidence that intergenerational income mobility in the U.S. is actually lower than in many other developed countries. Building on our prior research, we set out to study whether tax expenditures such as the Earned Income Tax Credit can increase the level of intergenerational income mobility in the U.S.

We began our analysis by compiling statistics from millions of anonymous earnings records to measure intergenerational mobility across areas of the United States. The core sample of children used to calculate these local intergenerational mobility measures consists of children who were born in 1980 or 1981 and are U.S. citizens as of 2013. We used family measures of (pre-tax) income (summing across married spouses) both for parents and children (when adults). We measure children’s household income in 2010-2011, when they are approximately 30 years old. We measure their parents’ household income between 1996 and 2000.

Using these income data, we calculate two measures of intergenerational mobility. The first, which we term “relative mobility”, measures the difference in the expected economic outcomes between children from high-income and low-income families. The second, which we term “absolute upward mobility”, measures the expected economic outcomes of children born to a family earning an income of approximately \$30K (the 25th percentile of the income distribution), which is the income range targeted by tax expenditures such as the EITC and Child Tax Credit.

We constructed measures of relative and absolute mobility for 741 “commuting zones” (CZ’s) in the United States. Commuting zones, constructed by Tolbert and Sizer (1996) based on Census data, are geographical aggregations of counties based on commuting patterns that are similar to metro areas but also cover rural areas. Children are assigned to the CZ based on their location at age 16 (no matter where they live today), so that the location can be interpreted as where a child grew up. When analyzing local area variation, we continue to rank both children and parents based on their positions in the national income distribution. Hence, our statistics measure how well children do relative to those in the nation as a whole rather than those in their own particular community.

We find substantial variation in mobility across areas. To take one example, children from families at the 25th percentile in Seattle have outcomes comparable to children from families at the median in Atlanta. Some cities – such as Salt Lake City and San Jose – have rates of mobility comparable to countries with the highest rates of relative mobility, such as Denmark. Other cities – such as Atlanta and Milwaukee – have lower rates of mobility than any developed country for which data are currently available.

Using the statistics we constructed, we turned to the question of whether the differences across areas in relative and absolute mobility are driven by tax expenditures. We found a significant correlation between both measures of mobility and local tax rates, which are tax expenditures for the federal government because they are deductible from federal income taxes. We found a weaker correlation between state EITC policies and rates of intergenerational mobility. Although tax policies account for some of the variation in outcomes across areas, much variation remained to be explained. To understand what is driving this variation and better isolate the effects of the tax expenditures themselves, we considered other explanatory factors.

We first evaluated three factors that could potentially bias our conclusions about geography and mobility. First, we verified that our measures of mobility are not significantly affected by accounting for differences in cost-of-living across areas by calculating real income adjusted for local price levels. Second, we documented that average income levels in an area were unrelated to levels of upward

mobility. We do find higher rates of upward income mobility in areas with high rates of economic growth over the past decade, but the vast majority of the difference in mobility across areas is unrelated to economic growth. Third, we evaluated the impact of race. We find that rates of upward mobility are significantly lower in areas with a larger African-American population, such as the South. But importantly, we find that white individuals living in areas with large African-American populations also have lower rates of upward mobility. Hence, the spatial variation we document is not directly due to race at the individual level: geography matters even for a person of a given race.

Finally, we examined a range of other factors that have been discussed in the economics and sociology literatures as well as the public debate. We found significant correlations between intergenerational mobility and income inequality, economic and racial residential segregation, measures of K-12 school quality (such as test scores and high school dropout rates), social capital indices, and measures of family structure (such as the fraction of single parents in an area). In particular, areas with a smaller middle class had lower rates of upward mobility. In contrast, a high concentration of income in the top 1% was not highly correlated with mobility patterns. Areas in which low income individuals were residentially segregated from middle income individuals were also particularly likely to have low rates of upward mobility. The quality of the K-12 school system also appears to be correlated with mobility: areas with higher test scores (controlling for income levels), lower dropout rates, and higher spending per student in schools had higher rates of upward mobility. In contrast, we found little correlation between measures of access to local higher education and rates of upward mobility.

Some of the strongest predictors of upward mobility are correlates of social capital and family structure. For instance, high upward mobility areas tended to have higher fractions of religious individuals and fewer children raised by single parents. Each of these correlations remained strong even after controlling for measures of tax expenditures. Likewise, local tax policies remain correlated with mobility after controlling for these other factors.

We caution that all of the findings in this study are correlational and cannot be interpreted as causal effects. For instance, areas with high rates of segregation may also have other differences that could be the root cause driving the differences in children's outcomes. What is clear from this research is that there is substantial variation in the United States in the prospects for escaping poverty. Understanding the properties of the highest mobility areas – and how we can improve mobility in areas that currently have lower rates of mobility – is an important question for future research that we and other social scientists are exploring. To facilitate this ongoing work, we have posted the mobility statistics by area and the other correlates used in the study on the project [website](#).



2014 Summer Programs

District	Location	Before & After Summer School	All Day Summer Program
Center	Boone Elem.	X	
Fort Osage	Blue Hills Elem.		X
Grandview	Butcher-Greene Elem.	X	
	Meadowmere Elem.		X
Hickman Mills	Truman Elem.		X
	Burke Elem.	X	
	Ingels Elem.		
	Santa Fe Elem.		
	Symington Elem.		
Kansas City, Mo.	Gladstone Elem.	X	
	Paige Elem.		
	ACCPA		X
	Attucks Elem.		
	Border Star Montessori		
	Garfield Elem.		
	Holliday Montessori		
	Melcher Elem.		
	Pitcher Elem.		
Trailwoods Elem.			
North Kansas City	Topping Elem.	X	
Charter	Tolbert Academy	X	

