

LINC Commission Meeting

November 16, 2015



The One Sight 'Vision Van' provided free eye examinations and eyeglasses to students in need. Over 250 students in the Kansas City Public Schools, North Kansas City and Independence School Districts received vision services. One Sight is a worldwide organization that provides access to quality vision care.



Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

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

Our Mission

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

Our Guiding Principles

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



Monday, Nov. 16, 2015 | 4 – 6 pm
Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. Approvals
 - a. **September & October minutes (motion)**
- III. Superintendents' Reports
- IV. LINC Finance Committee
 - a. Audit
 - b. IRS Form 990
- V. Kansas City Public Schools Master Plan
- VI. LINCWorks
 - a. Updated results
 - b. LINCWorks & Caring Communities partnership
- VII. Update Reports
 - a. LINC Data System
 - b. One Sight Vision Van
 - c. Giving Grove & Woodland
- VIII. Adjournment

There is no scheduled December LINC Commission meeting



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – SEPT. 21, 2015

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

Sharon Cheers
Jack Craft
Steve Dunn
Herb Freeman
SuEllen Fried

Tom Gerke
Rosemary Lowe
Richard Morris
Landon Rowland
David Ross

Superintendents' Report

- **Sharon Nibbelink** (Supt., Center School District) reported the school year is off to a good start with an increase in student enrollment. The district is building partnerships with other groups to provide professional development for teachers.
- **Jason Snodgrass** (Supt., Fort Osage School District) introduced himself as the new district superintendent. He reported that 238 families and 68 vendors attended Fort Family Fun Day, which LINC helped to organize; 289 students attended LINC summer camp.
- **Ralph Teran** (Supt. Grandview School District) reported the district is partnering with Longview Community College and Grandview Police Department to enhance student relationships with the police department.
- **Carl Skinner** (Deputy Supt., Hickman Mills School District) reported that the new STEAM initiative at Symington Elementary is underway. Next week the district will hold Parent University with the support of LINC.
- **John Tramel** (Director of Family Services, Independence School District) reported the high school learning academy initiative is providing teachers externships with businesses to enhance student learning. Truman High School will hold its first homecoming game since 1965 on the newly renovated football field.
- **Al Tunis** (Interim Supt., Kansas City Public Schools) reported district enrollment is up 2%, and 4% when pre-K is included. The district is working on a three-year academic plan. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently visited Woodland Early Learning Community School to speak about the importance of investing in early childhood education; a LINC produced video on the visit was shown.
- **Kevin Foster** (Executive Director, Genesis Promise Academy) reported the school is working to increase the student return-to-school rate to 90% by communicating to families the importance of sticking to the program. Genesis will participate in an Oct. 3 community-wide anti-bullying campaign with U.S. Wrestling League.
- **Gayden Carruth** (Executive Director, Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City) reported the 2015-2016 cohort of Education Policy Fellowship Program met for a reception last week at Drumm Farm Center for Children and for a discussion of the “myth of a culture of poverty” and leadership.

A motion to approve the July 20, 2015, LINC Commission meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

Jo Nemeth, Director of Elementary Education, Kansas City Public Schools, gave a presentation on the KCPS 2015 Summer School program. LINC was one of several community partners who offered an all-day summer school program at district elementary schools. The report included student participation, attendance monitoring, learning growth data, comparison to the previous year summer program, and proposed enhancements to next year's program. Discussion followed.

A video was shown on the Missouri Budget Project, which provides an independent nonpartisan voice on public policy. **Amy Blouin**, Executive Director, Missouri Budget Project, gave a presentation on financing of Missouri subsidized child care. Topics included numbers of children receiving subsidized care, eligibility levels, subsidy vs. market rate, provider wage income, and decreasing state revenue. Policy Director **Mike Sutherland** presented a proposal to earmark for childcare the revenues raised by streamlining Missouri's sales tax and use tax.

Oscar Tshibanda, Tshibanda and Associates, gave a progress report on the new Apricot data system including implementation by various LINC initiatives, the Independence School District, Office of Early Childhood, and FACT, and its connections to external data systems such as Independence's PowerSchool system. Jeff Phillips, Senior Manager, gave a demonstration of the system. Discussion followed.

Carl Skinner, Deputy Superintendent, introduced a video of the Hickman Mills School District's "It's on Me" customer service initiative and reported on the effort to recognize staff who go beyond expectations in providing service.

LINC Deputy Director-Community Engagement **Brent Schondelmeyer** and Turn the Page KC Executive **Mike English** reported that volunteers are currently helping to distribute 570,000 books to organizations who requested them from First Book. A video on the initiative was shown.

Scott Lakin of Lakin Consulting reported on a Healthy KC initiative to change area city ordinances so that the age of legal access to tobacco products will be raised from 18 to 21. The report included the effect of such a change on the rate of initiation to tobacco youth among young people.

The meeting was adjourned.



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – OCT. 19, 2015

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

Sharon Cheers
Aaron Deacon
Rob Givens

Anita Gorman
Rosemary Lowe
Mary Kay McPhee

Superintendents' Report

- **Sharon Nibbelink** (Supt., Center School District) reported the district is working on a new five-year plan and will include community partners in the process.
- **John Ruddy** (Asst. Supt., Fort Osage School District) reported a new health care center will be opening in Buckner this December. Services at first will include dental care, with primary care and mental health care services to follow.
- **Ralph Teran** (Supt. Grandview School District) reported on a meeting with Longview Community College to share data; it was learned there was a 33% increase in Grandview High School graduates moving from Longview on to a four-year college. The district is promoting the Grandview Reader Leaders initiative for parents and other volunteers to read with students.
- **Dennis Carpenter** (Supt., Hickman Mills School District) reported on two recent district events held in partnership with LINC, Parent University and Family Night at the Ruskin High School football game. The district is promoting discussion of equitable, as opposed to equal, school funding.
- **John Tramel** (Director of Family Services, Independence School District) reported 60 students are enrolled in the districts pre-K program. He also reported on a partnership with LINC where students will receive free eye exams and glasses.
- **Jerry Kitz** (Director of Early Learning, Kansas City Public Schools) reported the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development awarded \$30 million for the Housing Authority of Kansas City's Paseo Gateway neighborhood revitalization plan; the district is the educational partner for the project. The district will release its new master plan at the November board meeting.
- **Kevin Foster** (Executive Director, Genesis Promise Academy) reported 60 Genesis students competed in the U.S. Tennis Association tournament on the Plaza on Sept. 29. The school recently helped organize an anti-bullying awareness professional wrestling tournament. Genesis is planning the annual community Thanksgiving Dinner, which will include gift baskets for families in need. Recent parent-teacher conferences were attended by 70% of parents.
- **Vivian Roper** (Superintendent, Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy) reported Tolbert students received free oral exams from the Colgate mobile dental van, and had their medical records digitalized by Cerner. Students are participating in the Girls on the Run nutrition and endurance initiative. Next Step KC is helping families and staff with small-dollar loans. Students observed the processional for Fire House #17 which passed in front of their school.

- **Gayden Carruth** (Executive Director, Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City) reported the group has completed assembling its legislative priorities for the year. Three districts are working with **SuEllen Fried** and **Nick Lowery** on healthy communication and social media. Education Policy Fellowship Program participants will visit the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth this week.

Leigh Anne Taylor Knight of The DeBruce Foundation gave a presentation on Kansas City area student mobility. A video interview of a student who had moved schools several times was shown. Knight reported on the preliminary findings of a Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium study of student mobility data provided by the Mo. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education and area school districts and discussed the negative effect of mobility on student attendance and performance.

Jeff Phillips of Tshibanda & Associates gave an update on the implementation of the Apricot data system. He reported that 20 community partnerships have been trained on its usage and that the system now has 150 users.

Gayle A. Hobbs, President, and **Brent Schondelmeyer**, Deputy Director-Community Engagement, reported on the distribution of 570,000 books donated through First Book which LINC and several partners helped organize. A video on the effort was shown.

Donovan Mouton, Housing Authority of Kansas City, reported on the \$30 million Choice Neighborhood federal grant recently awarded to support the Paseo Gateway Transformation Plan. A key part of the plan is to move residents of the obsolete Chouteau Courts low-income housing project into new housing. Discussion followed.

Site Supervisor **Sean Akridge** reported that 38 LINC Caring Communities sites will hold events to celebrate Lights On Afterschool! on Oct. 22. A video of the LINC-supported Family Night at the Oct. 16 Ruskin High School football game was shown.

Brent Schondelmeyer reported on a presentation on the King-Crane Commission given by **Landon Rowland** on Oct. 18 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial.

The meeting was adjourned.

Nov. 4, 2015

Plan would close KC's Southwest High School

By Mará Rose Williams

Kansas City Public Schools wants to close Southwest High School, a 90-year-old school with a long line of prestigious graduates.

The planned closing of the school, now called the Southwest Early College Campus, was revealed Wednesday night at a school board meeting as part of a comprehensive master plan that will affect most of the district's schools in some way.

The plan, which needs the board's approval, would go into effect in fall 2016. Among other things, the plan would:

- Expand the programs offered at the African-Centered College Preparatory Academy.
- Reconfigure school attendance boundaries.
- Reduce the distance students walk to school.
- Implement college and career theme-based high schools.
- Phase in, over two years, year-round school for four of the lowest-performing elementary schools.

District leaders say the proposed plan would make better use of school building space, strengthen community ties with neighborhood schools and bolster student achievement. The district had 14,228 students enrolled at the start of this school year. But some schools are jammed with students while others have enrollments too low to have enough students available to participate in certain extracurricular activities.

The Kansas City district has been working toward improving performance to regain full accreditation from the state of Missouri.

This "budget-neutral" master plan, said interim superintendent Al Tunis, is vastly different from the last time the district closed schools in 2010 when it shuttered 28 school buildings. That was "strategic," he said, as those closures came without boundary changes and were mostly about saving the district from sinking in to a financial hole millions of dollars deep.

The proposed master plan focuses on ultimately raising student achievement by putting schools at the center of neighborhoods. That way, students and their parents can develop a bond with one another over the years as they move from one neighborhood school to the next.

Feeder pattern

Closing Southwest on Wornall Road reduces the district to four neighborhood high schools. Four elementary schools would feed into each of three high schools — African Centered, Central Academy and East. Six elementary schools would feed into Northeast.

Two elementary schools — Crispus Attucks and Satchel Paige — also are marked for closure.

Benjamin Banneker is the elementary school chosen for a pilot program that would add about 30 days to the school year for those students.

The feeder pattern calls for African Centered Preparatory Academy, at 3500 E. Meyer Blvd., to function as a neighborhood school that's no longer solely focused on African-centered education.

Most of the 350 students currently at Southwest high school would move into AC Prep (formerly Southeast High School). Other students would move into Central, East or Northeast high schools.

Board members expressed most concern about two of the racially diverse elementary schools — Hale Cook and Hartman in the south end of the district — slated to feed into AC Prep.

"I just can't believe that once the conversation is had, that those parents are going to want to send their kids to AC Prep," said member Amy Hartsfield.

The plan calls for AC Prep to become the district's first fully theme-oriented high school offering three college and career pathways, one of which would be African-centered education. Themes for the other pathways would be college prep and STEM, short for science technology, engineering and math.

Twenty-one other schools, including Central High, Central Middle, Northeast High and Northeast Middle, will see attendance boundaries change to some degree.

By reconfiguring boundaries, the district would ease enrollments at some schools and fill empty space at schools where enrollment is down.

School restructuring

School closings: Attucks, Paige, Southwest

Schools changing focus: African Centered Preparatory Academy

School boundary changes: Banneker, Central High, Central Middle, East High, Faxon, Garcia, Garfield, Gladstone, Hartman, King, Longfellow, Melcher, Northeast High, Northeast Middle, Phillips, Pitcher, Rogers, Trailwoods, Troost, Wheatley, Whittier

But equally important, said Tunis, new boundaries set up feeder school patterns. For the most part, a student could matriculate through middle and high school with the same set of students they started with in their neighborhood elementary school.

Improving bus transportation

Transportation changes are coming, too. Bus stops would be set no more than two blocks apart, and only students who live within a half-mile from school would be walkers.

More students will ride the bus, but all would ride a shorter distance. Currently some students ride across town to school. Drawing neighborhood school boundaries would end distance travel for most students.

"It's safer," said Jesse Lange, a district planner. And he said school officials expect that reducing how far students would walk to school will "eliminate one barrier to getting kids to come to school and increase attendance."

Closing Southwest

The boundary changes and closings would affect 15 percent or about 2,000 students districtwide who would have to change schools. None of the district's signature schools or Montessori schools — Lincoln Prep, Foreign Language, Holliday and Border Star — would be affected by the reconfiguring of the boundaries.

District administrators have been discussing the plan for nearly two years and have heard suggestions from community residents.

"We listened to the community," said Eileen Houston-Stewart, district spokeswoman. "This has been a thoughtful process. These are things that the community has asked for."

The community made efforts to save Southwest High. The district and the Academie Lafayette charter school had been trying to reach a deal to jointly run Southwest. Those talks dissolved in March.

Southwest, a community landmark, was built on a portion of the old Armour farm in early 1925 to serve what at that time was a rapidly growing Country Club District — now referred to as Brookside.

Over the years many of Kansas City's prominent citizens graduated from Southwest, including Lester Milgram, owner of Milgram Food Stores, in 1934; Henry Bloch, co-founder of tax preparation giant H&R Block, in 1939; and journalist and author Calvin Trillin in 1953.

District demographics changed through the years, resulting in fewer residents of the neighborhood around Southwest sending children to Kansas City Public Schools.

Five years ago, when the district sought to downsize, middle school-aged students were put in high school buildings. At the time, students from Westport High School moved into Southwest, which had been established as an early college prep school and by the 2009-2010 school year had established itself as one of the district's more successful programs.

With Westport, unanticipated behavior problems erupted at Southwest among students.

In 2010 the school principal changed twice. The graduation rate dropped from 68.5 percent in 2012 to 51.5 percent last year. At the same time composite ACT scores dipped from just above 16 to about 15 out of a possible 36. Enrollment at the school, which has capacity for about 1,600, dwindled to its current 350 students.

The Kansas City school board is set to vote on the plan in January after the district gets community input during a series of public meetings. The first of those is scheduled for Nov. 11.

Mará Rose Williams: [816-234-4419](tel:816-234-4419), [@marawilliamskc](https://twitter.com/marawilliamskc)

**STRONG SCHOOLS.
STRONG COMMUNITIES.
SUCCESSFUL
STUDENTS.**



MASTER PLAN: OCTOBER 2015

Community Engagement

2015

NOVEMBER

**NOVEMBER 4
BOARD PRESENTATION**

Share research, community feedback and recommendations

**NOVEMBER 11-16
COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS

Share with the community, listen, revise and refine with extensive community outreach.

- Surveys
- Textizen
- Meetings
- Electronic and paper communication

2016

JANUARY

AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR

Bring back revised recommendations based upon community feedback to the Board for approval.

ONGOING

Share with the community, listen, revise and refine with extensive community outreach.

- Surveys
- Textizen
- Meetings
- School-level communication tools for principals
- Concerted/integrated marketing and communication, may include digital, print, radio, TV, etc.

DECEMBER

FEBRUARY

SUMMARY OF KCPS MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Enhance transportation by amending current policy.
- ▶ Reduce administration.
- ▶ Close three schools.
- ▶ Prioritize capital improvements.
- ▶ Revise surplus property list.
- ▶ Adjust school attendance boundaries, establish feeder patterns.
- ▶ Enhance academic experience and improve achievement for all students.
 - Develop year round calendar for lowest performing elementary schools.
 - Implement college and career theme-based high schools.
 - Enhance co-curricular and extra-curricular offerings.
- ▶ Budget neutral master plan recommendation.

KEY FINDINGS:

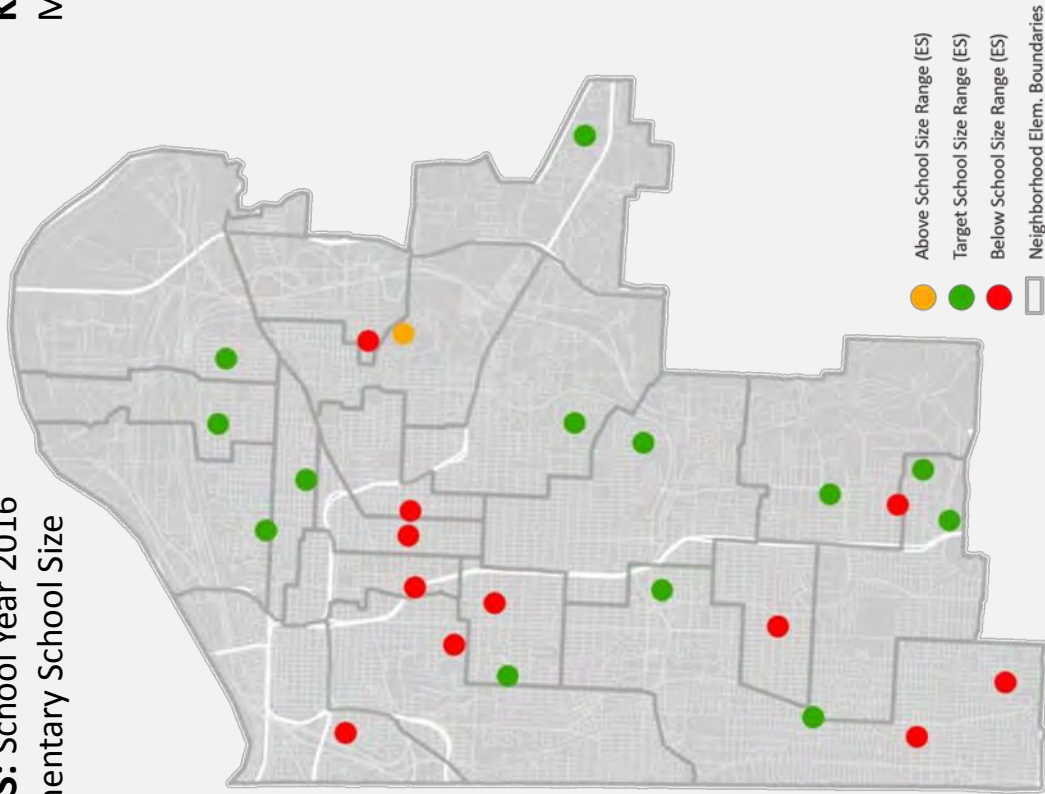
- ▶ In order to **reverse the trend** in declining enrollment, KCPS will need to implement strategic initiatives & programs.
- ▶ Need to identify educational program priorities to **improve student achievement and attendance**.
- ▶ High level of inefficiency in use of facilities impacts how limited **resources are being used**.
- ▶ Need to identify and implement cost savings **and reallocate the savings** to support new or expanded programs.

MGT TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

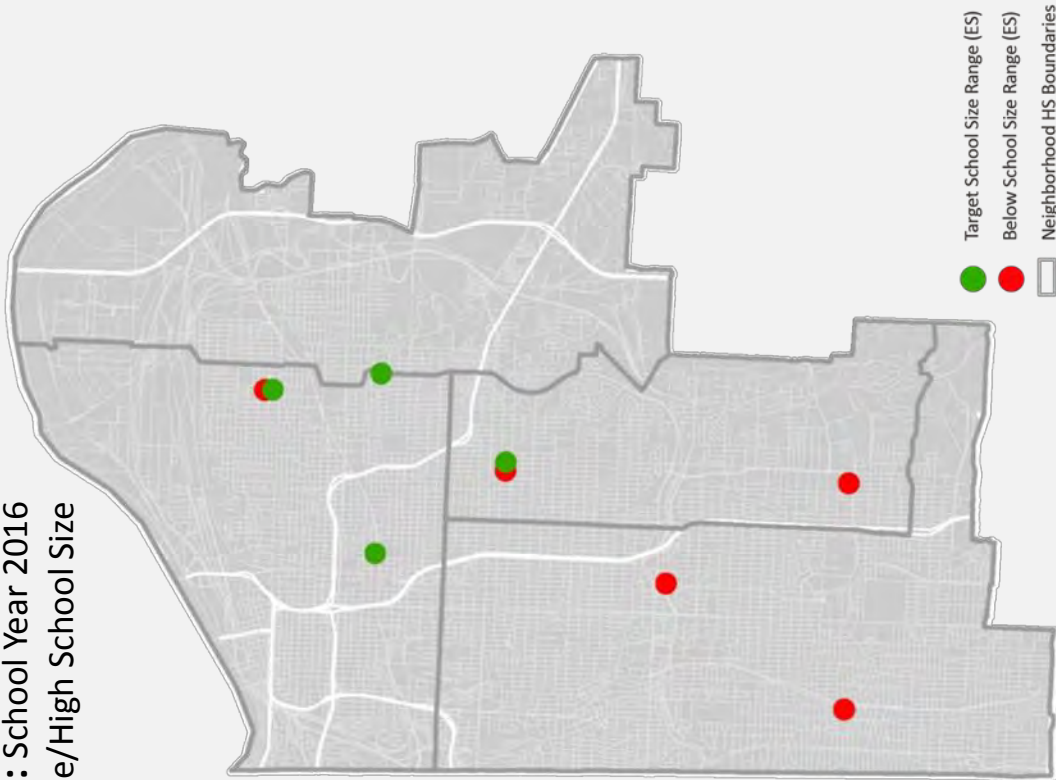
SCHOOL TYPE	DESIRED SCHOOL SIZE	BELOW	WITHIN	ABOVE
Elementary	350-600	11	13	1
Middle	450-800	0	2	0
High School	700-1200	5	2	0

Based Upon SY16 projected enrollment

KCPS: School Year 2016
Elementary School Size



KCPS: School Year 2016
Middle/High School Size



AREAS OF COST SAVINGS:

- **Administration - \$750,000**
- **Surplus Property - \$1.2 million**
- **Facility Utilization - \$10.9 million**
 - ▶ Reduce/repurpose 3-4 elementary schools.
 - ▶ Reduce/repurpose 1-2 high schools.
 - ▶ Relocate alternative programs.
 - ▶ Create partnerships with other agencies.
 - ▶ Co-locate programs in facilities.

OTHER KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ▶ Transportation Improvements
- ▶ Boundary Changes
- ▶ Develop Priorities for a Capital Funding Program.



Kansas Citians don't have to move to Kansas for good schools

By Yael T. Abouhalkah

Many educators, real estate agents and elected officials in Kansas City grit their teeth every time another negative media report emerges about Kansas City Public Schools.

These are people who support good schools for all — and they want to point out that current Kansas City residents and future ones have a lot more options than sending their children to that long-troubled district.



People can live in the fast-growing Northland, which features high-performing districts such as Park Hill, Liberty and North Kansas City, the largest area district in Missouri.

They can live in the parts of Kansas City south of the Missouri River that include the Center, Raytown, Independence and other districts, as well as a wide range of charter and private schools.

This week, Mayor Sly James' office supplied the estimate that about 49,500 children attend schools that are in Kansas City but aren't part of Kansas City Public Schools. That's more than three times the number of students in the urban Kansas City district.

The larger point is this: Kansas City's boosters need to be much more focused on making sure parents know they don't have to live in Kansas to get a solid education for their children.

Terry Ward, a North Kansas City School District member, recently capsulized some of the frustration well, saying, "I fully agree that the Kansas City School District is struggling. It is easy to beat that horse.... Why can't we put things in context and celebrate successes while noting where we need to improve?"

Getting the word out about the abundance of school choices, unfortunately, remains tougher than it should be.

[Part](#) of the Kansas City website includes this unhelpful statement: "The city lies within parts of four counties: Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and 15 public school districts." The mayor's office added, "But we know of no city-prepared promotional material or information sheets specific" to the message that lots of educational options exist in Kansas City.

A group called Show Me KC Schools includes a ton of information on its [website](#), comparing various schools. Alas, despite the group's name, it reviews only the public, private and charter schools that are located within boundaries of Kansas City Public Schools. Executive director Tricia Johnson said Wednesday that the group provides "accurate, unbiased" information about all the options available to parents.

That's a good and well-intentioned service. But it's still not the kind of all-encompassing effort that supporters of a stronger Kansas City really require.

True, chambers of commerce also can promote the attributes of their own school districts. But that material is often aimed at people who live in their cities, such as Grandview or Raytown.

Late last week The Star extensively [reported](#) more disappointing news about Kansas City Public Schools and the Hickman Mills district. Both suffered declines in annual performances on state tests, keeping them among the lowly ranks of being provisionally accredited. The story noted that districts showing improvement included Raytown, Independence and Liberty — though the last was the only Northland district mentioned.

Kansas City too often is judged as a place to live by how poorly its main urban school district is performing, despite years of much-needed attempts to improve things. The city loses out on people who unfairly won't give it a second look because of that district's reputation.

Until this community's leaders find much better ways to promote the wide variety of school options in *all* of Kansas City, it will be held back from even healthier future gains in population and national stature.

Yael T. Abouhalkah: 816-234-4887, abouhalkah@kcstar.com, [@YaelTAbouhalkah](https://twitter.com/YaelTAbouhalkah)

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS
CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND**

Representatives from the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division, will be conducting public hearings to answer questions regarding Missouri's triennial state plan for implementing the Child Care and Development Fund. The Child Care and Development Fund is the federal funding source that supports the Child Care Subsidy Program and various activities that improve the quality of child care programs in Missouri.

**IN-PERSON PUBLIC HEARING LOCATIONS
6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.**

<p>December 1, 2015 St. Louis</p> <p>ARCHS 4th Floor Conference Room 539 N. Grand Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63103 (Parking is in the Fox Theater lot on Washington Ave. Participants will enter the building on the Washington side before the entrance to the "City Diner at the Fox" at the intersection of Grand/Washington.)</p>	<p>December 2, 2015 Cape Girardeau</p> <p>Cape Girardeau Public School Administration Building 301 N. Clark room 214 Cape Girardeau MO 63701</p>	<p>December 3, 2015 Springfield</p> <p>United Way office 320 N Jefferson Ave. Springfield, MO</p>
<p>December 8, 2015 Kansas City</p> <p>Penntower Office Building Meeting Room 130 (first floor) 3100 Broadway Kansas City, MO 64111</p>	<p>December 9, 2015 Columbia</p> <p>University of Missouri - Rock Quarry Center 1400 Rock Quarry Road - Entrance 6 Large Conference Room (cafeteria) Columbia, MO 65211</p>	

Webinar

December 11, 2015 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

To join the meeting:

<http://stateofmo.adobeconnect.com/r6pftj3xan2/>

**Telephone Conference Information:
526-6119 / 866-630-9354.**

Make sure you attend to hear about upcoming changes to the Child Care Assistance Program. This is a chance for you to learn more about your child care subsidy benefits and make suggestions that may benefit you. The agenda for each Public Hearing will be the Draft Child Care and Development State Plan. Please have a copy of the plan available to you during the public hearing. Draft State Plan is available at <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/childcare/ccdplan.htm> Comments on the contents of the state plan may be emailed to the Children's Division, Early Childhood and Prevention Services Section at:

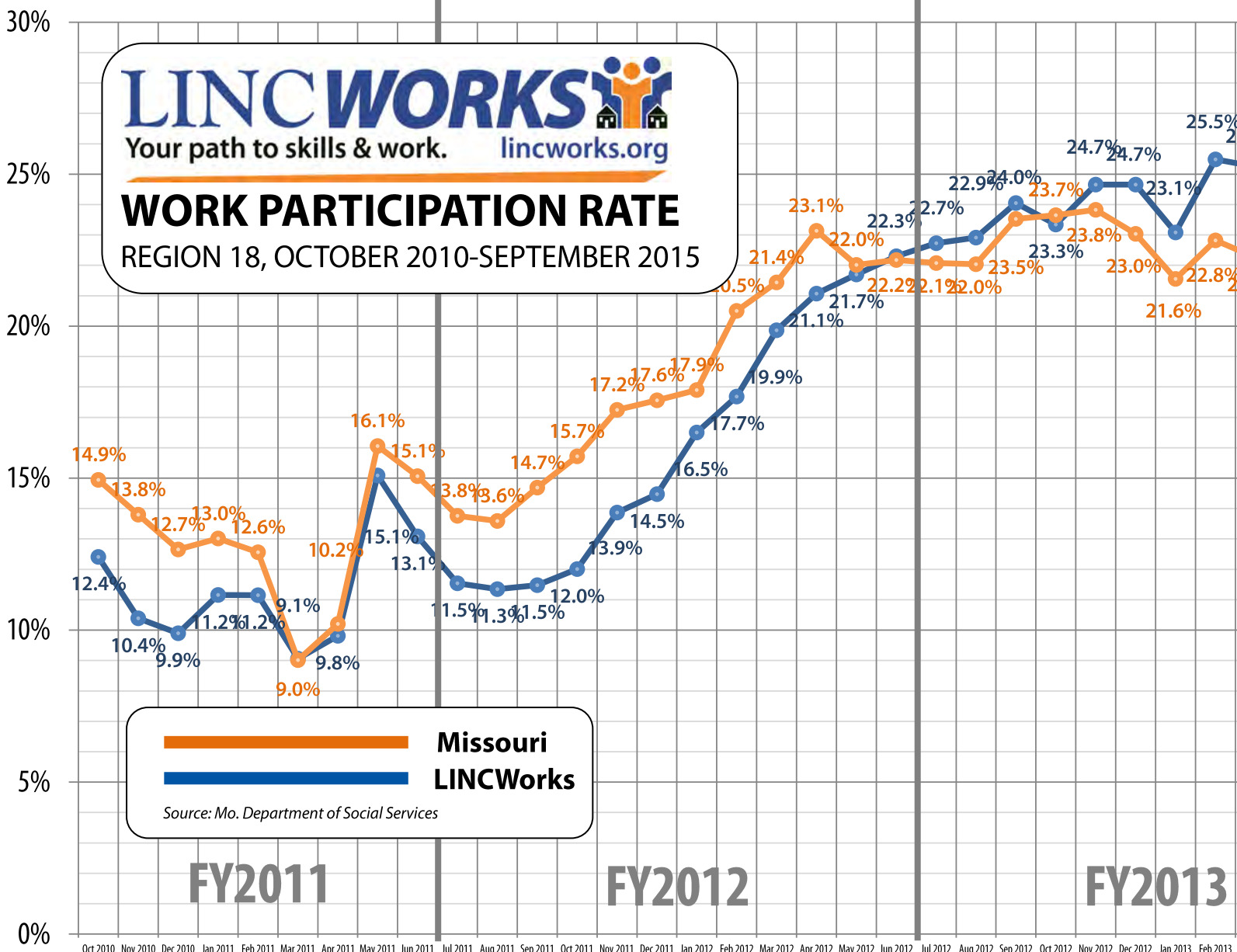
[**CD.AskECPS@dss.mo.gov**](mailto:CD.AskECPS@dss.mo.gov)

All comments must be received by December 21, 2015

Posted 11/09/2015



WORK PARTICIPATION RATE REGION 18, OCTOBER 2010-SEPTEMBER 2015



— Missouri
— LINCWorks

Source: Mo. Department of Social Services

REGION 18 AT A GLANCE (FY2015 TO DATE)

CASELOAD (AVG.)

3,242

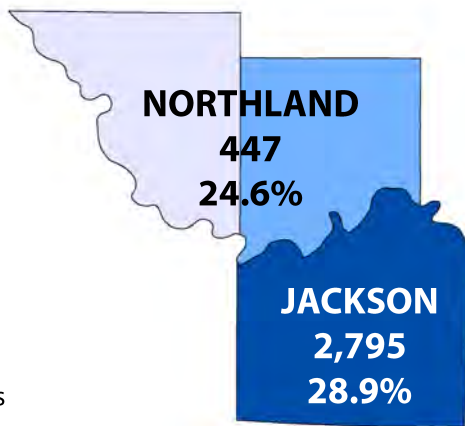
Adult single-parent household TANF cases subject to work requirement

PARTICIPATION (AVG.)

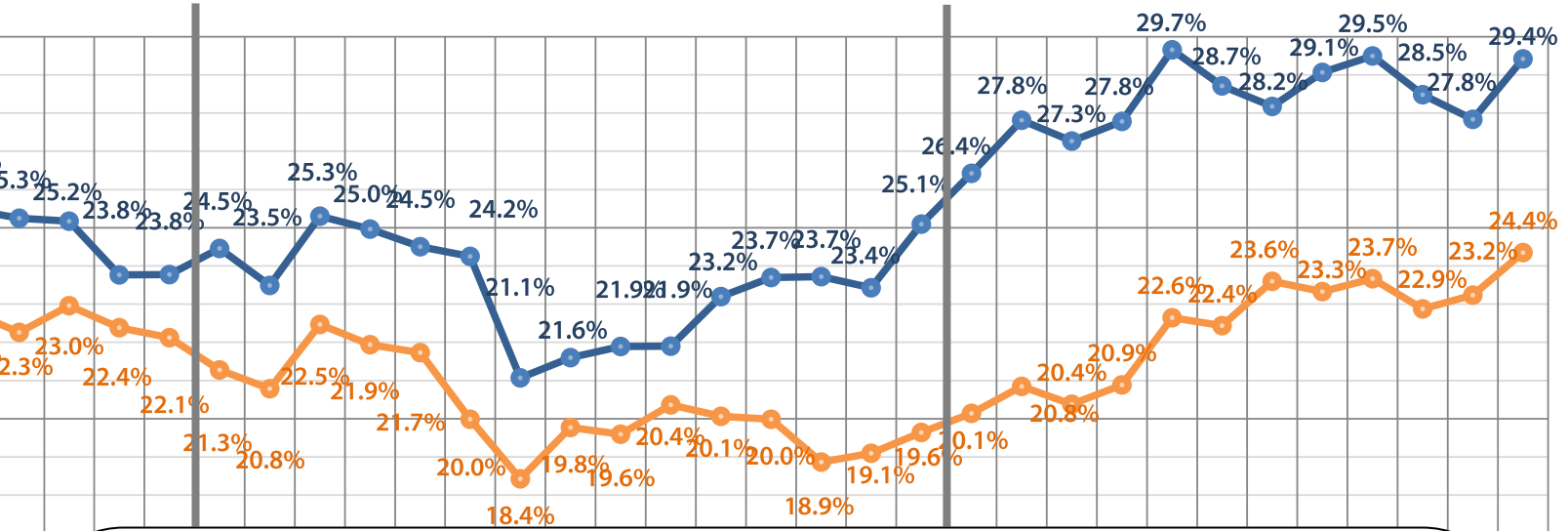
28.3%

Clients engaged in countable work activities

Average FY2015 caseload and participation within Region 18



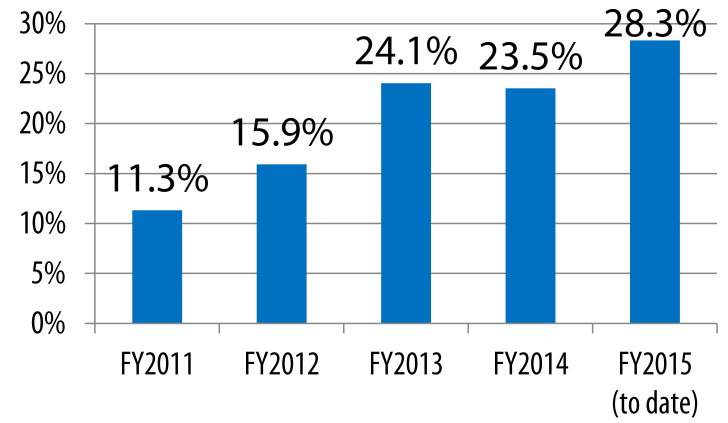
While the Region 18 MWA population resides predominantly in urban Jackson County, LINCWorks also serves participants in the Northland (Clay and Platte counties), where the population is more rural.



The line graph above shows the work participation rate from October 2010 (the beginning of the contract) to September 2015 (the latest month with available data). Since June 2012, LINCWorks has consistently enhanced the statewide participation rate.

Note on Fiscal Years: Prior to FY2015, July 1 was the first day of the fiscal year. As of FY2015, October 1 is the first day of the fiscal year. To reflect this change, FY2014 includes the 15-month period June 2013-September 2014 for the purpose of calculating the FY yearly average work participation rate in the graph at right.

**LINCWorks Work Participation Rate
Yearly Average, FY2011-2015**

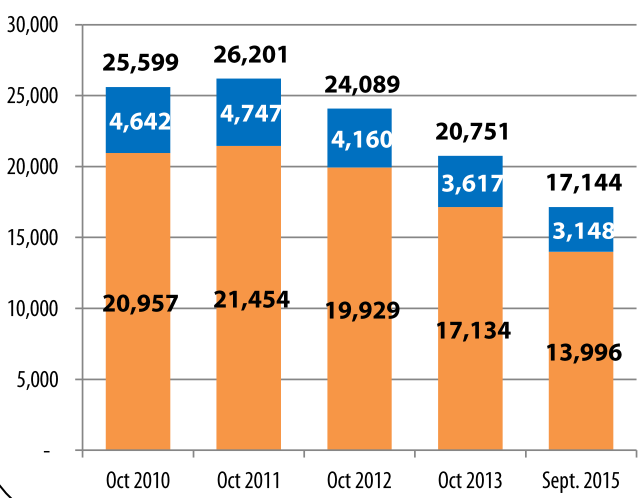


FY2014

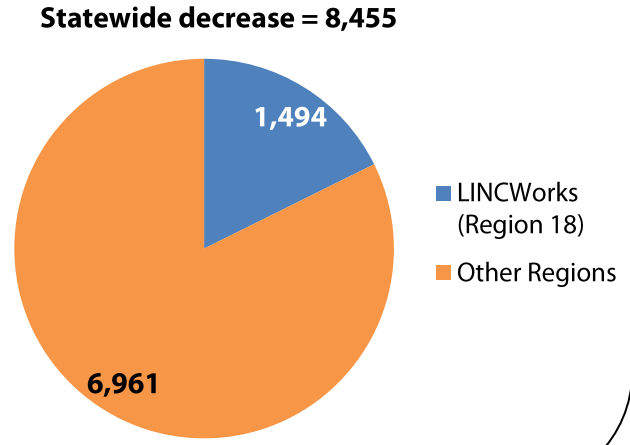
FY2015

MWA CASELOAD REDUCTION, OCTOBER 2010-SEPTEMBER 2015

MWA caseload, Oct. 2010-Sept. 2015



Decrease of Region 18 MWA caseload, Oct. 2010-Sept. 2015, as a share of statewide total



In Tulsa, a hot spot for early childhood education, the grade is ‘incomplete’

Joe Robertson jrobertson@kcstar.com

TULSA, Okla. - Everyone here loves their universal, publicly funded prekindergarten.

The setup seems perfect. Oklahoma pays for every 4-year-old statewide whose family wants in.

And in Tulsa, zealous [philanthropic support](#) has poured millions of dollars more into preschools to lift the neediest children.

Georgetown University researchers [praise Tulsa’s work](#). Accolades rain down from as high as the White House.

Look closer, though, and you’ll see a city still struggling to put more children on a clear arc to success.



As Kansas City moves toward a vote next year to raise property taxes for early childhood education, it can turn to Tulsa for a lesson in how hard it is, even with universal pre-K, to achieve results.

[Pre-kindergarten for all in Tulsa](#)

A Kansas City effort to make pre-kindergarten education available to all families can learn a lot from the struggles and triumphs in Tulsa's hard road to preschool for all.

The Tulsa elementary schools receiving the most pre-K resources — its highest-poverty schools — after years of investment are still getting an F on the state’s crude and controversial [single-grade rating system](#).

Statewide, Oklahoma only in the latest results on the [Nation's Report Card](#) finally caught up with the national average in fourth-grade reading and math — after 17 years of universal pre-K.

“It is not an inoculation,” said Steven Dow, executive director of [Community Action Project-Tulsa](#), one of the city’s staunchest early childhood program champions. “We need to quit thinking of it that way.”

What children get in Tulsa, he said, is “a boost.”

So be prepared, Kansas City, he and others are saying. If Kansas City voters approve a property tax levy dedicated to early childhood programming, the work will still be hard.

Tulsa schools, as in Kansas City, still row against poverty’s steady current. Economic stress still batters state education budgets. Too many good teachers take their careers elsewhere.

There will be reasons to doubt.

If Kansas City is coming aboard on universal pre-K, take heed of what Tulsa has learned, said Paige Whalen at the [Community Service Council](#), which has been serving a consulting role in Oklahoma’s and Tulsa’s pre-K efforts.

“Somebody needs to do it right,” she said.

It bears repeating. Whatever frustrations Tulsa may be experiencing, you’ll be hard-pressed to find anyone who wants to take it down. That support goes statewide as well.

It’s telling that conservative Oklahoma, one of the reddest of the red states, carries on with the kind of programming often condemned as the work of a “nanny state.”

The law in 1998 that added pre-K in Oklahoma’s general education funding has stuck even though its author sneaked the original language into a bill [unnoticed by most lawmakers](#).

It says something about the early education practices in America, where most parents intuitively put their children in some amount of preschool, to the extent they can pay, to get ready for kindergarten.

And now, as Oklahoma has built up its capacity with certified pre-K teachers and interest has grown, nearly eight out of 10 children in the state pass through state-funded pre-K.

“There is 100 percent support for universal pre-K,” said Shawn Hime, executive director of the Oklahoma State School Boards Association. “There is no discussion of dropping funding from the system.”

Oklahoma was the second state after Georgia to make public pre-K available to all its children, and it is still one of only five states that have or are implementing universal pre-K.

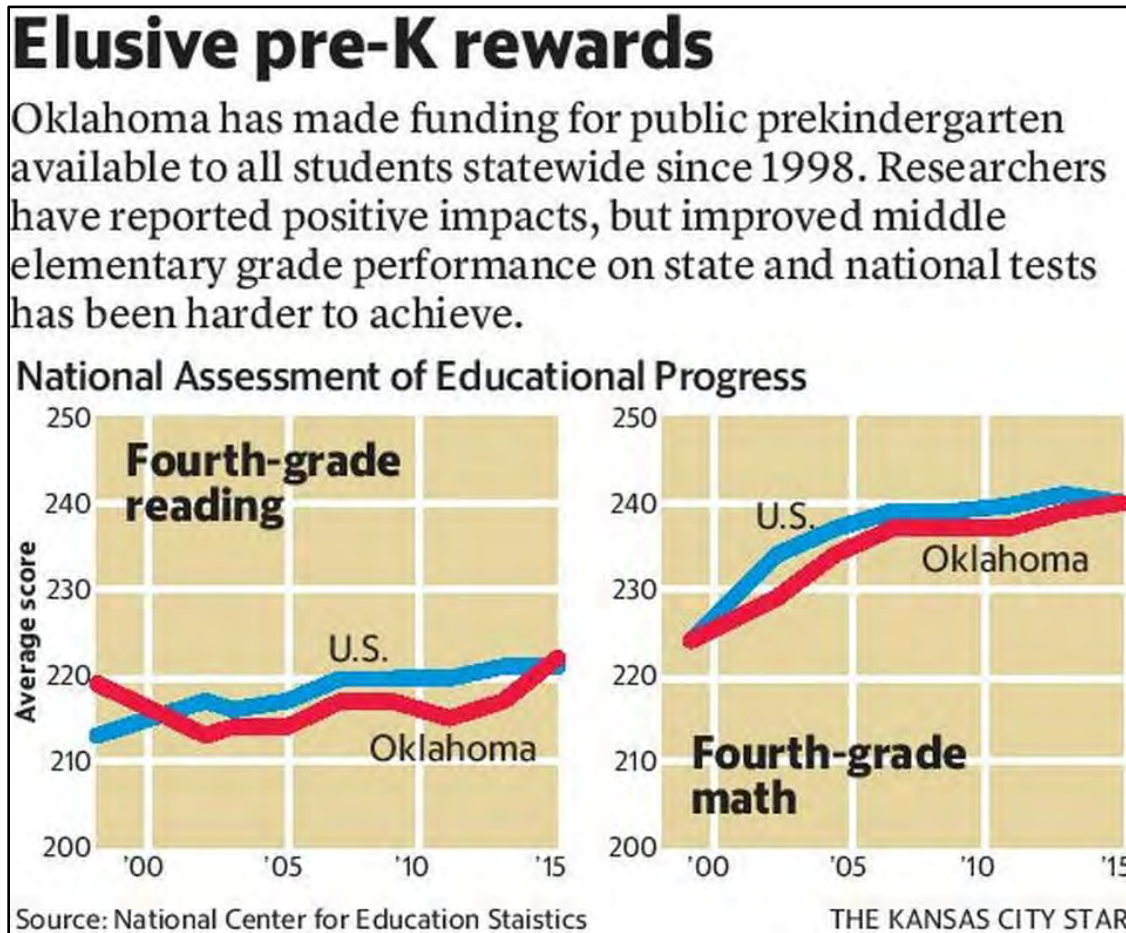
The work at hand, though, is achieving tangible student growth to reward long-held faith that established gains in kindergarten readiness will blossom in broader student success on a citywide, and even a statewide, scale.

And Tulsa in particular is accumulating data, and educators are reacting to it, collaborating between the pre-K and elementary grades, trying to breed that elusive long-term success.

Kansas City is watching.

“That’s the good thing about Tulsa,” said Jerry Kitzi, the director of early learning for Kansas City Public Schools.

“It’s causing a shift,” he said. “They’re saying, ‘Hey, we’re sending you children who are ready. What are you doing?’ ”



Tough start

Hold up a second. Consider the moment right before principal Jennifer Pense showed off Tulsa’s Skelly Elementary School’s pre-K classes.

A hurried dad had just dropped off his 4-year-old preschool child and two older siblings in the school’s office — way late.

Have they had breakfast, Pense asked. The dad said he didn’t know, and then he was gone.

There would be plenty of statistics to share during her tour — how more than 95 percent of the children in Skelly are economically disadvantaged, and how two-thirds of them are learning English.

And discussions to come would focus on the need in particular to help these families and develop strategies from pre-K up through higher elementary grades.

Pense would show off Barb Hansen’s class and the learning games underway and how her “hidden gem” of a school had pre-K teachers who knew the nuances of child development, who knew age “4 is not 5.”

These were teachers who know the importance of relationships with parents, who understand that especially in a school of such high poverty, “you’re teaching the whole family.”

But first, Pense had three hungry children at her feet.

Breakfast service was already shut down. She had to go in search of any of the morning's meat slider sandwiches that might have been left over.

She found some, fed the children and sent them to their classes.

Now where were we?

Test case

For Georgetown University researcher Bill Gormley, Tulsa presented a grand opportunity.

A very limited universe of pre-K research needed a test case like this.

Here were more than 100 classrooms in Tulsa schools serving more than 2,100 4-year-olds. These were "high quality" programs not just for high-needs children, Gormley said, but for children from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

Tulsa pre-K classes were not intense, high-cost programs but relatively affordable, extending similar costs of public elementary school to 4-year-olds at about \$8,000 per student per school year.

Here was a chance to see how pre-K for all works on a large scale, if it is done well.

Now some 15 years and multiple studies into their work, teams of Georgetown researchers have made encouraging findings.

The children who pass through Tulsa's pre-K classrooms have arrived at kindergarten more prepared for school — cognitively, socially and emotionally.

Disadvantaged students benefited more, but all students benefited significantly, their research showed, arriving on average nine months ahead of peer students in reading, seven months ahead in writing and five months ahead in math.

Georgetown has also taken its Tulsa data and blended it into formulas applied in other preschool research to project pre-K graduates' improved earnings potential as adults. Georgetown estimates that Tulsa will gain \$3 for every \$1 spent on pre-K, based on adult earnings alone.

"Again and again," Gormley said, research is showing that "Tulsa's prekindergarten program is first-rate and it improves readiness for all of the children who participate in it."

Questions in scores

Oklahoma test scores, however, have not been a source of encouragement.

It's impossible to isolate how pre-K might be working against all the other forces affecting state performance, but the overall picture is rough.

Elementary scores in reading and math have not grown since 2005 and have even slightly declined, even more so among economically disadvantaged children and students with limited English — the children who have benefited most from pre-K.

Perhaps, though, Oklahoma has turned a corner with the so-called Nation's Report Card — the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

For many years, results on the national test were discouraging. Since the inception of universal pre-K, Oklahoma had been mostly losing ground as it tried to match the average national gains in fourth-grade math and reading, until now.

In 2015 results released in October, Oklahoma essentially caught up with the national average, only now nudging past where it had been before expanding pre-K.

Gormley warns that anyone looking to statewide test results or NAEP to judge pre-K — because of all the other factors weighing in — is running “a fool’s errand.”

But state and NAEP scores “do tell us something,” argued Lindsey Burke, an education policy fellow at the [Heritage Foundation](#).

They are the “audit on how states perform,” she said. The lack of clear, sustained success on any large scale and the “scant body of research” should be enough, Burke said, “to question the wisdom of the large-scale government preschool.”

Keeping the faith

Tulsa’s response?

Keep working. Keep sharing ideas — even as the state system around them starves for funds and loses teachers to other states and professions.

Kansas City can do this too, say pre-K teachers Sara Smith and Lisa Williams at Tulsa’s Kendall-Whittier Elementary School.

They believe they are bettering the chances of their children.

They switched from elementary to pre-K more than a decade ago, getting alternative certification at a time when the district “needed an army” to meet the rising tide of 4-year-olds, Williams said. And they have become masters.

Smith and Williams meet regularly with other pre-K teachers and with elementary teachers, seeking out ideas to help propel stronger pre-K gains deeper into elementary grades.

Play-Doh and Legos are getting more action now in higher elementary grades, incorporated into lessons because a new generation of children playing with computer touch screens were losing the hand strength to write well with pencils.

And the pre-K teachers are taking key words in the elementary teachers’ lessons and introducing them to their 4-year-olds, like early fraction thinking with “part, part, whole.”

Many of the obstacles they have encountered and continue to encounter figure to weigh on Kansas City as well.

The overall education system has lost ground in funding as the needs of students and families have grown, said Andy McKenzie, the assistant to the superintendent for early learning services for Tulsa Public Schools.

In many of Tulsa’s schools, more than half of the children move in or out within the school year, and those who move average four schools in that year, he said.

Meanwhile, when adjusted for inflation, Oklahoma’s budget for education has decreased 23.6 percent since 2008, according to the Center on Budget Policy and Priorities. Its 2012 average teacher pay, \$44,156, ranked 48th in the nation, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Missouri, at \$46,406, was 44th. Kansas, at \$46,718, was 41st.

“We’re strapped, no doubt,” McKenzie said.

It will be hard, said Whalen of the Community Service Council, to get university schools of education to ratchet up early childhood programming and produce the certified pre-K teachers who are the lifeblood of universal pre-K.

The mindset has to change, she said, that historically has equated a teacher's move from elementary to pre-K as a demotion.

And the work has to continue, said Dow of Community Action Project-Tulsa, stretching the science and understanding of how children learn.

"We need to understand why, when we have invested heavily in (early childhood education), that children are not staying on the trajectory we want them to be," he said. That is "the next step of what we need to do."

'The key window'

Through it all, the education and philanthropic worlds envy Tulsa.

Visitors frequently come, like Katherina Rosqueta, the founding executive director of the [Center for High Impact Philanthropy](#) at the University of Pennsylvania.

The center helps foundations around the nation look at research, link to other donor communities and learn from others' challenges.

Early childhood, Rosqueta said, is one of the center's primary recommendations, and the private-public partnerships in Tulsa serve as a powerful example.

"The research and evidence base on how brains develop show it is so obviously critical and important," she said.

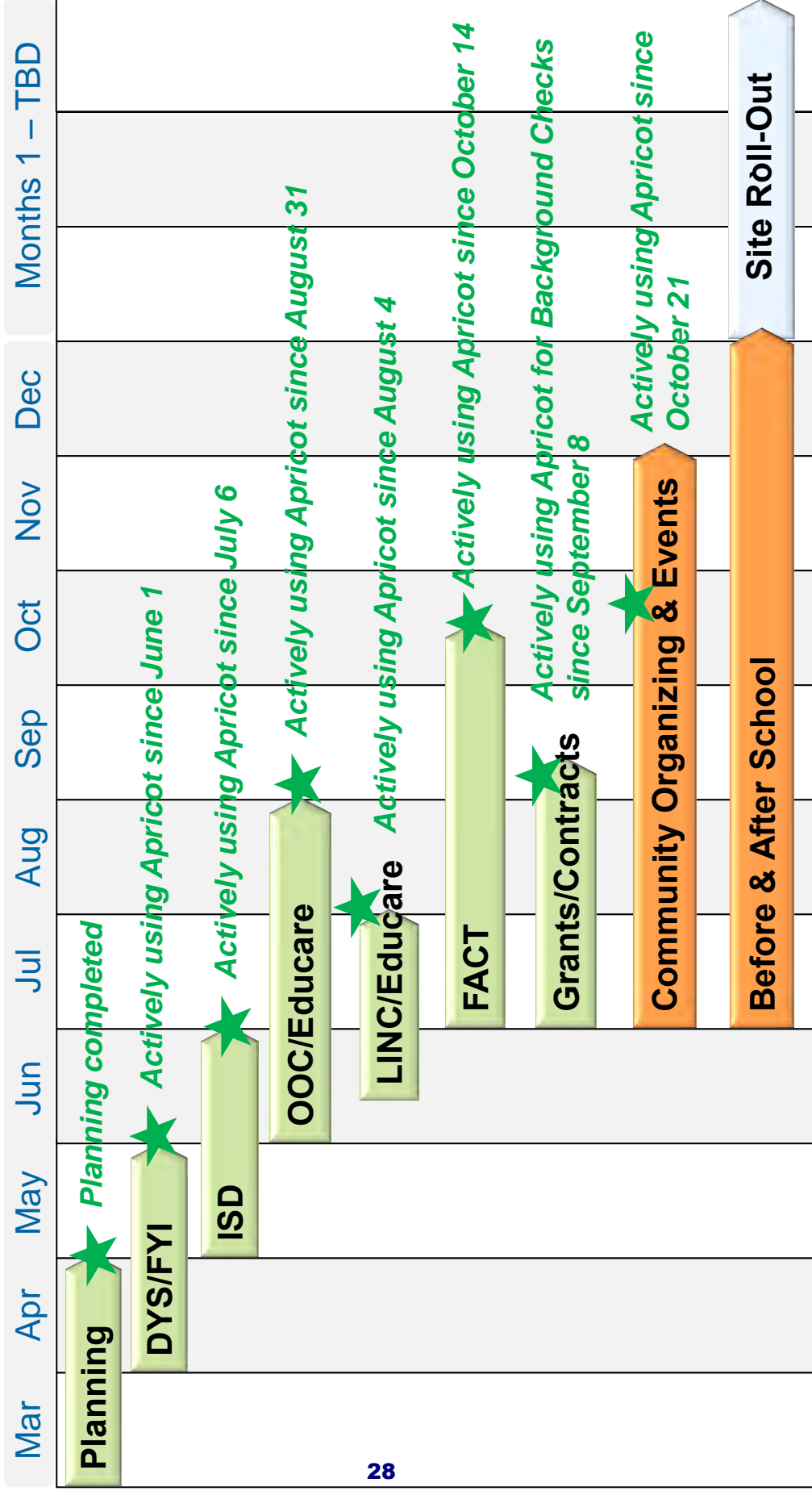
She was visiting one of Tulsa's Educare sites at Kendall-Whittier, where intense early childhood education programs help families with children from infancy to kindergarten.

The schools and the philanthropic investors don't doubt their mission.

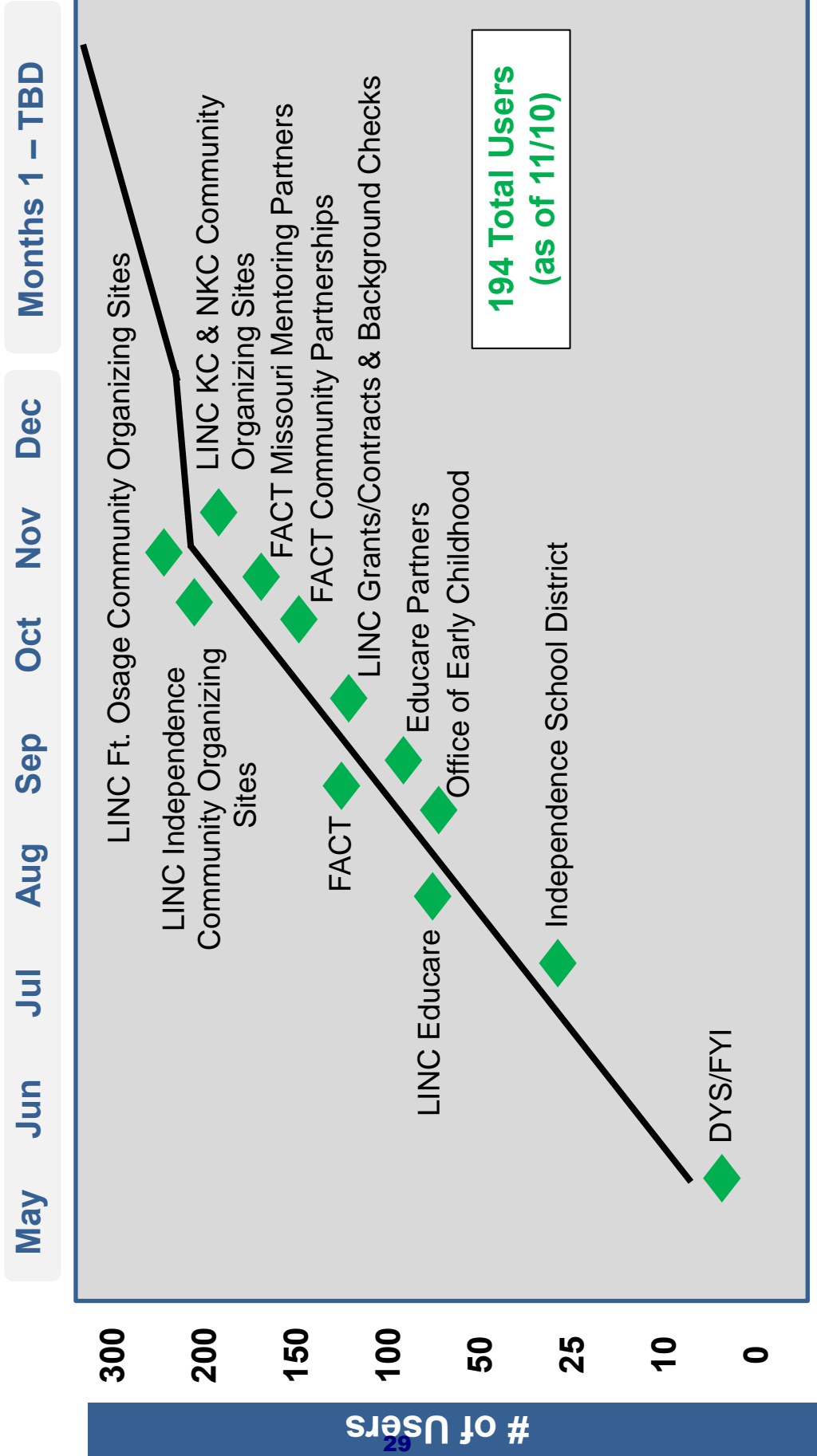
The gap in learning growth between advantaged and disadvantaged children "is discernible at 18 to 22 months," said Annie Koppel Van Hanken, senior program officer for the giant early childhood investor in Tulsa — the [George Kaiser Family Foundation](#).

Even the youngest children "have an amazing capacity for growth cognitively and socially," she said. "This is the key window."

Apricot Implementation Plan Update



Apricot Users & Trainings



◆ = Formal User Trainings



School districts nationwide should scale back excessive amount of testing

Oct. 26, 2015

By Lewis Diuguid

Finally someone with clout is saying what most educators and students have known for years. Too much valuable classroom time is being devoted to teachers administering and students sweating over standardized tests without a meaningful outcome.

President Barack Obama last weekend proposed capping standardized testing at 2 percent of classroom time. That would be one of the best things to happen to schools and the country since integration.

Students were required to take an average of 112.3 tests between pre-kindergarten and 12th grade, according to a study of the country's 66 largest school districts by the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), which includes Kansas City Public Schools.

"The average student in these districts will typically take eight standardized tests per year, e.g., two No Child Left Behind tests (reading and math), and three formative exams in two subjects per year," the report said.

The excessive amount of time devoted to testing is an outgrowth of President George W. Bush's signature No Child Left Behind law and the more recent Common Core academic program, which put a premium on standardized exams, determining students' proficiency in core subjects for their grade level.

As a result of those programs, too much time is devoted to teaching and training for the tests, and then students spend far too much time [taking pre-tests](#) and then the actual tests. I saw a lot of students being pulled out of class for testing during the time I spent in 2014-2015 studying with seventh-grade English students at [Paseo Academy](#).

Some students suffered extreme testing fatigue and failed to take any of the tests seriously, marking answer sheets without considering the questions just so they could get done with the test.

[Obama, in a video released on Facebook](#), quizzed people on whether they want any extra time at school to focus on learning to play a new instrument, studying a new language, learning computer coding or taking more standardized tests. Obama said the best teachers taught him to believe in himself, to be curious about the world and to inspire him to be a lifelong learner. He said he wanted that for all young people.

"First, our kids should only take tests that are worth taking," Obama said on the video. "Tests should enhance teaching and learning."

"Learning is about so much more than filling out the right bubble. So we're going to work with states, school districts, teachers and parents to make sure that we're not obsessing about testing."

The president and Education Secretary Arne Duncan began meeting Monday with teachers and school officials to work to reduce time devoted to testing.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education last week released its annual performance reports, which determine whether school districts and charter schools

in the state are fully accredited, provisionally accredited or not accredited at all. The Kansas City and Hickman Mills school districts' scores show they will continue to be provisionally accredited.

Missouri Education Commissioner Margie Vandeven noted in a teleconference last week that 98.5 percent of schools in the state scored at the full accreditation level.

The tests enable districts to see where they need to work more closely with students to boost academic performance. Kansas City school officials noted that the district has to work more with students on science.

The Council of the Great City Schools says testing consumes 4.22 days, or 2.3 percent of classroom time for the average eighth-grader.

"Test burden is particularly high at the high school level, although much of this testing is optional or is done only for students enrolled in special courses or programs," the report says.

Obama and the U.S. Department of Education hope to make it easier for states such as Missouri and Kansas to comply with federal testing mandates. Obama administration officials admit that in many instances, testing is redundant, poorly aligned with curriculum or just overdone.

Also, in Missouri it was not possible to directly compare student scores this year with those in previous years because the tests changed. The alignment won't fully occur until 2017.

Despite the rigorous testing in schools, Kansas faced the same concerns. Because the new state assessments in English and math were revised and more rigorous, scores can't be compared with last year's testing, education officials said.

Common Core's set of college-ready academic standards further complicate things. In some states there is pushback on accepting Common Core. But federal financial incentives are geared to get states to adopt it.

The Council of the Great City Schools wants to retain congressional requirements for states to test all students in reading and math annually on the same tests statewide in grades three through eight and once in high school.

"The annual tests provide a critical tool for gauging student achievement on a regular basis," the report said. But states should lower "the amount of time it takes to return assessment results to districts and schools." Other recommendations include:

- Clarifying the Education Department's policy on having student test scores for every teacher's evaluation.
- Establishing consistency from year to year in the assessments that states develop and require particularly those tests used for accountability purposes.
- Refraining from applying caps on testing time without also considering issues of quality, redundancy and testing purposes.
- Reviewing all tests to gauge whether they are aligned to state and district standards and to each other.

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Student Testing in America's Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis

October 2015

Summary of Results

Based on the Council's survey of member districts, its analysis of district testing calendars, interviews, and its review and analysis of federal, state, and locally mandated assessments, this study found—

- ❖ In the 2014-15 school year, 401 unique tests were administered across subjects in the 66 Great City School systems.
- ❖ Students in the 66 districts were required to take an average of 112.3 tests between pre-K and grade 12. (This number does not include optional tests, diagnostic tests for students with disabilities or English learners, school-developed or required tests, or teacher designed or developed tests.)
- ❖ The average student in these districts will typically take about eight standardized tests per year, e.g., two NCLB tests (reading and math), and three formative exams in two subjects per year.
- ❖ In the 2014-15 school year, students in the 66 urban school districts sat for tests more than 6,570 times. Some of these tests are administered to fulfill federal requirements under No Child Left Behind, NCLB waivers, or Race to the Top (RTT), while many others originate at the state and local levels. Others were optional.
- ❖ Testing pursuant to NCLB in grades three through eight and once in high school in reading and mathematics is universal across all cities. Science testing is also universal according to the grade bands specified in NCLB.
- ❖ Testing in grades PK-2 is less prevalent than in other grades, but survey results indicate that testing in these grades is common as well. These tests are required more by districts than by states, and they vary considerably across districts even within the same state.
- ❖ Middle school students are more likely than elementary school students to take tests in science, writing, technology, and end-of-course (EOC) exams.
- ❖ The average amount of testing time devoted to mandated tests among eighth-grade students in the 2014-15 school year was approximately 4.22 days or 2.34 percent of school time. (Eighth grade was the grade in which testing time was the highest.) (This only counted time spent on tests that were required for all students in the eighth grade and does not include time to administer or prepare for testing, nor does it include sample, optional, and special-population testing.)
- ❖ Testing time in districts is determined as much by the number of times assessments are given during the school year as it is by the number of assessments.

- ❖ There is no correlation between the amount of mandated testing time and the reading and math scores in grades four and eight on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- ❖ Test burden is particularly high at the high-school level, although much of this testing is optional or is done only for students enrolled in special courses or programs. In addition to high school graduation assessments and optional college-entry exams, high school students take a number of other assessments that are often mandated by the state or required through NCLB waivers or Race to the Top provisions. For instance—
 - In 71.2 percent of the 66 districts, students are required to take end-of-course (EOC) exams to fulfill NCLB requirements—sometimes in addition to their state-required summative test.
 - Approximately half of the districts (46.8 percent) reported that EOC exams factor into their state accountability measures.
 - In 47 percent of districts, students are required by their states to take career and technical education (CTE) exams if they are taking a CTE course or group of courses. This requirement can also be in addition to state summative exams and EOC tests.
 - About 40 percent (37.9 percent) of districts report that students—both elementary and secondary—are required to take exams in non-NCLB-tested grades and subjects. These are sometimes known as Student Learning Objective (SLOs) assessments or value-added measures.
- ❖ Urban school districts have more tests designed for diagnostic purposes than any other use, while having the fewest tests in place for purposes of international comparisons.
- ❖ The majority of city school districts administered either PARCC or SBAC during the past school year. Almost a quarter (22.7 percent) administered PARCC assessments and 25.8 percent administered SBAC assessments in spring 2015. Another 35 percent administered the same statewide assessments in reading and math as they did in 2013-2014 (e.g., Texas, Virginia). And 16.7 percent of districts administered a new state-developed college- and career-ready (CCR) assessment (e.g., Georgia, Florida). In other words, there were substantial variations in state assessments and results this past school year.
- ❖ Opt-out rates among the Great City Schools on which we have data were typically less than one percent, but there were noticeable exceptions.
- ❖ On top of state-required summative exams, EOCs, SLOs, graduation tests, and college-entry exams, many districts (59.1 percent) administered districtwide formative assessments during the school year. A number of districts (10.6 percent) administered formative

assessments mandated by the state for some students in some grades and administered their own formative assessments for other students and grades. Almost half of the districts using formative assessments administered them three times during the school year.

- ❖ Some 39 percent of districts reported having to wait between two and four months before final state test results were available at the school level, thereby minimizing their utility for instructional purposes. In addition, most state tests are administered in the spring and results come back to the districts after the conclusion of the school year.
- ❖ The total costs of these assessments do not constitute a large share of an average urban school system's total budget.
- ❖ There is sometimes redundancy in the exams districts give. For example, multiple exams are sometimes given in the same subjects and grades to the same students because not all results yield data by item, grade, subject, student, or school—thereby prompting districts to give another exam in order to get data at the desired level of granularity.
- ❖ In a number of instances, districts use standardized assessments for purposes other than those for which they were designed. Some of these applications are state-recommended or state-required policies, and some originate locally.
- ❖ The findings suggest that some tests are not well aligned to each other, are not specifically aligned with college- or career-ready standards, and often do not assess student mastery of any specific content.
- ❖ According to a poll of urban public school parents administered by the Council of the Great City Schools in the fall of 2014, respondents had very mixed reactions towards testing. For instance, a majority (78 percent) of responding parents agreed or strongly agreed that “accountability for how well my child is educated is important, and it begins with accurate measurement of what he/she is learning in school.” Yet this support drops significantly when the word “test” appears.
- ❖ Parents respond more favorably to the need for improving tests than to references to more rigorous or harder tests. Wording about “harder” tests or “more rigorous” tests do not resonate well with parents. Parents support replacing current tests with “better” tests.
- ❖ Finally, survey results indicate that parents want to know how their own child is doing in school, and how testing will help ensure equal access to a high quality education. The sentence, “It is important to have an accurate measure of what my child knows.” is supported or strongly supported by 82 percent of public school parents in our polling. Language about “testing” is not.

Hundreds of EJC students have no place to call home

By Mike Genet

mike.genet@examiner.net

Independence, Mo. - There are days, Felicity Clayton acknowledges, where she catches her mind wandering away from the matters at hand while sitting in a classroom at Fort Osage High School.

"I realize how different it is," the 16-year-old said, comparing her life now to what it was about three years ago, before she moved in with her great-grandparents and started going to school in the Fort Osage district.

Before that, she had been couch-surfing or living in a shelter for a couple years after her mother's abusive boyfriend had kicked her out of the house on the Kansas side of the metro area. She had attended several schools – "six or seven or eight," she says – too many to remember, at least, and had little chance to be a normal child going to school.

Clayton had been one of the hundreds of students in area school districts who are classified as homeless under several criteria. Now a junior at Fort Osage High School, she has been learning to adjust to normalcy and sometimes accompanies school social worker Deanna Rymer to raise awareness at local organizations.

"She's my sidekick," Rymer said. "To put a face to youth homelessness is not something many people can do."

Who is, and how many

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which guarantees equal access to education for homeless students in local school districts, defines homeless children and youth as those who "lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence."

It includes those who are: doubling-up with relatives or friends; living in a motel, hotel, trailer park or camping ground due to lack of alternatives; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; awaiting foster care placement; and staying in substandard housing or places not ordinarily used for sleeping.

School officials say the definition is purposefully broad – more so than the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition, for example – in order to help more students vulnerable to falling behind academically.

John Tramel, director of family services for the Independence schools, said his district poses a series of four questions during enrollment that, if any one of them is answered a certain way, the district's McKinney-Vento liaison is notified.

"It gives them a level of anonymity, so we can provide help without spotlighting or them being stigmatized," he said. "We identify students all the time, all year. Overall, we learn

a few weeks into the year. We work hard to make sure to identify them so we can offer support under the McKinney-Vento Act.”

Independence schools, with an enrollment of 14,309 at the beginning of this year (not including pre-kindergarten, according to the state enrollment figures from September), has had between 940 and 1,000 homeless students the past three years, Tramel and M-V liaison Nicole Sequeira said, though it’s recently stabilized after a few years of increases.

“It started in 2005-2006 – for several years we were seeing a significant increase, about 20 percent from three or four years earlier,” Tramel said. “Our last few years we’ve seen a small increase, but it’s been pretty steady.”

“We didn’t have as big an increase (as some other districts),” Sequeira said, “but I think that’s because of how entrenched we were with the (homeless assistance) program.”

Keeping a child in their same school is paramount to keeping them on track academically, she said.

“With frequent moves, research has shown that when you change schools you lose about six months of learning,” she said.

The vast majority of Independence’s count, Tramel said, are students doubling-up with friends or relatives and bouncing around.

“Those situations tend to be tenuous,” he said.

At Fort Osage, Rymer said the district has identified 281 homeless students this year – almost 90 percent of them either doubled-up in a residence with another family or unaccompanied youths (not in custody of a parent or guardian). Others are in hotels or motels, shelters or crowded conditions (several families under a roof, sometimes with no utilities). That total will undoubtedly rise by the end of the school year, as officials identify more cases.

“Last year we were at about 500,” Rymer said. “When you have a student population just under 5,000 (not including pre-kindergarten), that’s a lot.”

“We’re growing at the high school since I’ve been here,” said Rymer, who is in her fourth year working at the high school but had worked in the district several years prior. “There’s definitely more awareness on the staff’s end.”

In the Blue Springs School District (enrollment 14,244 without pre-K), 456 students are in doubled-up housing and another 40 are in hotels or in a shelter or transitional housing. In addition, there are a handful of students living in Blue Springs hotels who attend school in a neighboring or nearby district, in order to avoid changing schools. The McKinney-Vento Act says school districts of origin must provide transportation, though if the district of temporary residence is a different one, the cost is split.

Katie Woolf, the Blue Springs district’s public relations director, said she has seen numbers of those doubling-up, as well as the time they are doing so, increasing of late.

“Instead of being doubled-up for a semester, these students are doubled-up for a year or longer,” she said. “That’s really the trend we’re seeing – not only more, but they’re staying longer.”

Lee’s Summit schools (enrollment 17,575) reported 46 homeless students at the beginning of this school year, compared to 47 the year before. The end-of-year counts have dropped from 124 in 2013 to 108 last year and 85 this past June.

How they get help

McKinney-Vento funds help school districts with those transportation costs, as well as student activity fees, transportation for off-site tutoring if needed and graduation fees. Rymer said she also uses funds to provide snacks for the older students, a complement to the district’s strong partnership with Harvesters and its BackSnack program that sends nutritious snacks home with young students for the weekend.

“We do a lot of partnerships with churches,” Rymer said. “We have an in-house clothes closet at Fire Prairie Elementary, and the special ed students there learn to wash clothes.”

In addition to Harvesters, Tramel and Sequeira cite organizations such as Daughters of the American Revolution, Junior Service League, Tabitha’s Closet and Hillcrest as among the many that help Independence students. The district has a partnership with Cargo Largo in which more than 900 backpacks full of school supplies are available to students who suddenly need them, and with a family-school liaison at each school building in the district, it tries to stay abreast of any new cases that arise.

Woolf said the Blue Springs district doesn’t have a specific program for homeless students, but they receive any assistance needed just like any other student.

“The community of Blue Springs is incredibly kind, caring and generous,” she said. “Anytime we have a student in need we receive assistance and support from our local churches, food pantries, eye doctors, dentists, non-profit agencies, businesses, Blue Springs Education Foundation and more.”

Janice Phelan, communications director for the Lee’s Summit schools, said the district collaborates with numerous local agencies to support its homeless students and connect families with necessary services and resources.

Those include Hope House, Hillcrest, ReStart, Synergy among other shelters, as well as Lee’s Summit Human Services Advisory Board, Lee’s Summit Cares, ReDiscover, Truman Medical Center and Lee’s Summit Social Services.

‘Poster child’

Clayton remembers the “bad feeling” of her couch-surfing pre-teen years even if she didn’t fully understand all the context.

“It was extremely hard, and I had bad grades all around,” she said. “I was too busy thinking about what else I have to do. It wasn’t that I wasn’t capable. I wanted to make it a priority, but I couldn’t.”

She finally wrested herself completely free from her mother and ended up with her great-grandparents because, as she put it, “There comes a time when you have to grow up and mature, and I realized if I wanted to grow up and be someone, I had to move.”

She started at Fort Osage High School in March 2014 in her freshman year. Still, she had little experience actually focusing on schooling, or simply “how to be teenager,” and she started experiencing mental issues before she met Rymer. Clayton lists post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and regressed memories.

The problem for Rymer was that Clayton’s mother had her paperwork and had since fled with her sisters and the boyfriend to Mexico – not the little town in Missouri, but the country.

“I about fell out of my chair,” Rymer said, remembering when Clayton first told her story. “Her mother was in Mexico!

“Trying to get mental services for an unaccompanied youth is hell.”

To fix that and get the proper paperwork, they had Clayton classified as a foster child and her great-grandparents as the foster parents.

Clayton still battles some mental flare-ups – “One time woke up for school and was about to go out the door, I dropped something and got scared and hid in the shower for two hours,” she said – but she’s well on her way to more normalcy. She did some student broadcasting last year, joined the speech and debate team this year and went to the Homecoming dance for the first time. Most recently, she went on a college visit.

“That was huge,” she said, adding that she hopes to attain a teaching degree and perhaps go into therapy work. “I never could’ve dreamed of that a few years ago.”

Right now, Clayton doesn’t mind an opportunity to speak about homelessness, whether it’s with Rymer or talking to fellow students who are going through some of her prior experiences. Many times, those students don’t know how or don’t want to talk about it.

“I’ve talked to some students who wanted advice,” Clayton said. “It’s not something most people know they can talk about.”

As she puts it, she doesn’t mind being a “poster child” by giving a first-hand account of the issue and putting a face to it.

“It brings awareness,” she said. “It makes people step back and realize it’s not just a story on television.”

Aged-out foster children around KC are getting new help to avoid homelessness

By Joe Robertson

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The transition from youth to adulthood is hard on just about anyone, foster youth advocates said Wednesday, but if you're a foster child leaving the court system without a permanent home, your odds are startlingly poor.

New grant funding announced Wednesday for CASA — Court Appointed Special Advocates — intends to ease much of the pain, putting volunteers to work with young people through the age of 26.

"The system is failing these children," said Martha Gershun, executive director of [Jackson County CASA](#).

The program is the first of its kind in CASA's national system, Gershun said.

She recited a litany of statistics from the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative:

- More than one in five U.S. teens in foster care who "age out" without a permanent home will become homeless.
- One in four will become involved in the justice system.
- Less than 60 percent will graduate high school by 19, compared to 87 percent for all youth. Only half will be employed by 24.
- Among girls, 71 percent will be pregnant by age 21.

CASA has nearly 600 volunteers serving about 1,600 abused or neglected children who are under court protection in Jackson, Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

Older foster children in the Kansas City area who have been at increased risk of homelessness, criminal activity, pregnancy and unemployment will now get additional mentoring support from CASA — Court Appointed Special Advocates — until age 26.

But until now, the work of the CASA volunteers has ended when the foster youths reach the court system's age limit — 18 in Kansas and 18 to 21 in Missouri, where judges have some discretion.

"It's a tremendous challenge" for many of the youths, said Lois Rice, executive director of [CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties](#).

"We're dropping an 18-year-old on society who may have no knowledge of transportation," she said. "They may have no adult in their lives with a job."

No idea about health insurance. No means to open a bank account or put down a deposit on an apartment. Some don't have a driver's license.

We're dropping an 18-year-old on society who may have no knowledge of transportation. They may have no adult in their lives with a job.

Lois Rice, executive director of CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties

Grant funding from the Hall Family Foundation and the William T. Kemper Foundation will be supporting CASA staffing and resources. The foundations did not want to disclose the amount of the grant, which is for three years.

Going forward, the main need for CASA will be recruiting and training more volunteer advocates, Rice said.

For people who want to help, the older foster youth program provides “a very specific way to step in and be a catalyst for change,” Rice said.

The program directors have begun talking with some of the youths about the chance they have to receive more support. The court system and the caseworkers supporting it work hard to help the children, but their loads are immense, Gershun said.

Many of the children who come through the court system, she said, rely on CASA’s “single point of contact, stepping up to be *their* person.”

The possibility of extra support, she said, has brought the youths “extraordinary relief.”

Between the two CASA offices, the programmers expect to serve 75 of the older foster children in the first year, Gershun said. In most cases, they will be served by the CASA volunteer who has already been helping them to this point, but the offices will need more volunteers to support more children throughout the system.

“It’s going to take more volunteers,” Gershun said. “But when we go out to the community, we’ve been able to get volunteers.”

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How you can help

To learn about volunteering, call CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties at [913-715-4040](tel:913-715-4040) or Jackson County CASA at [816-984-8204](tel:816-984-8204), or go to www.casakc.org.

Read more here: <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article40736478.html#storylink=cpy>

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