

# LINC Commission Meeting

February 26, 2018



Tillman



Nutter



McShann



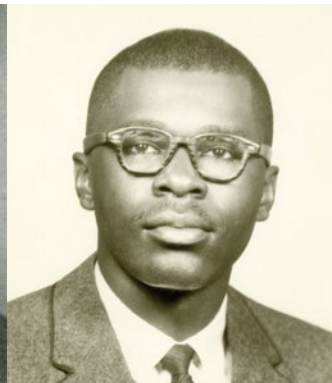
Keith



Smith



Coles



Mattox

## Kansas City Black History 2018

Dedicated educators and gifted musicians. A caring public housing servant. A trailblazing police officer. The seven African-Americans celebrated in this year's Black History edition left indelible imprints on Kansas City and the surrounding region, breaking down barriers, lifting and inspiring entire communities. The honorees include one of the most eminent figures in the city's African-American history, Joelouis Mattox, who devoted much of his life to researching, preserving, and promoting that history. A man whose contributions and influence transcended geographic and cultural lines, he was proclaimed "a treasure" by former Kansas City Councilwoman Sharon Sanders Brooks when he died in March 2017.



# 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, Feb. 26, 2018 | 4 – 6 pm  
Kauffman Foundation  
4801 Rockhill Rd.  
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

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## Agenda

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- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. Approvals
  - a. Approval January minutes (motion)
- III. Superintendent Reports
- IV. No Child Hungry
  - a. Children's Mercy Hospital
  - b. Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (SEBT)
- V. Student Mobility & Eviction Update
  - a. Empty Desks – KCUR and LINC project
  - b. Data Sharing Agreements
  - c. LINC McKinney Vento Data Project Funding
- VI. School Safety
  - a. LINC Report
  - b. Dominique Young Jr. video
- VII. Other
- VIII. Adjournment



## THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – JAN. 22, 2018

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

Bert Berkley  
Sharon Cheers  
Jack Craft  
Tom Davis  
David Disney  
Mark Flaherty  
Herb Freeman

SuEllen Fried  
Anita Gorman  
Rosemary Lowe  
Mary Kay McPhee  
Ken Powell  
David Rock  
David Ross

*Minutes of the November 20, 2017, LINC Commission meeting were approved.*

### Superintendent Reports

- **Neal Weitzel**, Director of College and Career Readiness (Center School District), reported the district is developing professional opportunity pathways for students grade K-12. The district is using virtual reality technology to provide “virtual field trips” for students to learn about geology and other topics, as reported in the Kansas City Star; a Star video accompanying the story was shown.
- **Steve Morgan**, Asst. Superintendent (Fort Osage School District), reported Emily Cross of Indian Trails Elementary School was named the Kansas City suburban region elementary principal of the year. The district is being recognized for its professional development efforts during a site visit by Missouri Forward tomorrow. The Osage Trail Middle School robotics team advanced to the regional championship. The new early childhood center groundbreaking will be held in April. The district is working with LINC to strengthen its Before & After School program.
- **Juan Cordova**, Asst. Superintendent (Grandview School District), reported Grandview High School held a Pizza with Police event last week. LINC programs expanded to Grandview Middle School this month. The elementary Lego League team competed at regionals, winning a trophy in design. The high school jazz ensemble will perform at Tan-Tar-A
- **Carl Skinner**, Deputy Superintendent (Hickman Mills School District), reported the district is planning STEAM activities to be funded through the TIF Committee with Cerner. Several buildings have recently been refurbished including the Compass and Millennium school choice programs, Smith-Hale Middle School, and administrative offices at Baptiste. District staff CARE teams continue to meet to discuss opportunities to improve student equity.
- **Dale Herl**, Superintendent (Independence School District), reported on expansions at the three district high schools. The district has purchased the MyArts Building, which will be used to house a student-run TV studio and art gallery; the district recently opened a student-run bakery. The Boy Scouts recently named Independence district of the year.
- **Dan Clemens**, Superintendent (North Kansas City School District), reported the district – the fourth largest and third most diverse in the state – is focusing on student equity. The district is working with J.E. Dunn Construction on the creation of a construction trades academy. District construction projects are underway.

The LINC in Photos 2017 slide show was shown.

Tate reported that **Dominique Young**, a nine-year-old student at Ingels Elementary School, was killed by gunfire over the weekend. Ingles site coordinator Carl Wade reported LINC and school staff are providing support to the family.

Tate reported that **Steve Dunn**, who resigned from the LINC Commission in December, has recommended **David Disney** for appointment to the board.

*A motion to approve the appointment of David Disney to the LINC Commission was passed unanimously.*

LINC Deputy Director-Community Engagement **Brent Schondelmeyer** introduced a presentation on evictions. Researcher and activist **Tara Raghuvver** reported on the Kansas City Eviction Project, which is studying the processes, patterns, and impacts of area evictions as well as policy implications. Researchers **John Ezekowitz** and **Carolyn Stein** discussed eviction as it relates to student mobility and achievement. **Michael Reynolds** of Kansas City Public Schools reported on its data sharing agreement with the project and the effect of forced student moves on achievement as reflected in composite ACT scores. Discussion followed.

**Oscar Tshibanda** reported on the use of LINC's Apricot data system by the Independence School District to track services to homeless youth. LINC is working on a plan to expand the functionality to other area school districts, which would allow districts to readily respond to needs of students who transferred from one district to another. Funding for the expansion may be available from area foundations.

A video was shown showing murals created by local artists **José Faus**, **Isaac Tapia**, and **Rico Rodrigo** at Richardson Early Learning and Woodland Early Learning Community Schools in the Kansas City Public Schools.

Schondelmeyer reported that LINC has produced posters and booklets on the lives of area African Americans for Black History Month. The effort is in partnership with the Kansas City Public Library and Black Archives of Mid America.

The meeting was adjourned.



# Addressing Food Insecurity

Children's Mercy's Response  
Presentation to the Local Investment Commission  
February 26, 2018



# Children's Health Priorities Identified by the Community

Access to Health Care  
Mental/Behavioral Health  
Infant Mortality

Priority Health Needs



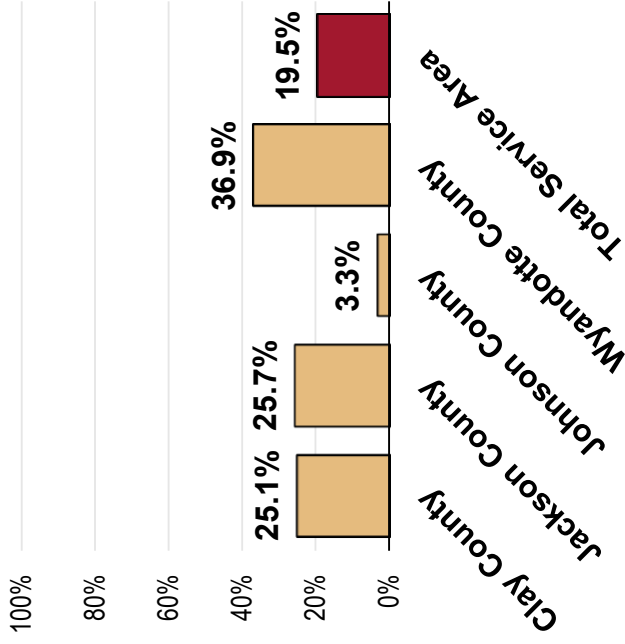
Parent Support  
**Obesity/Food Insecurity**  
Early Education  
Poverty  
Violence  
Employment  
Housing

Significant Health Needs



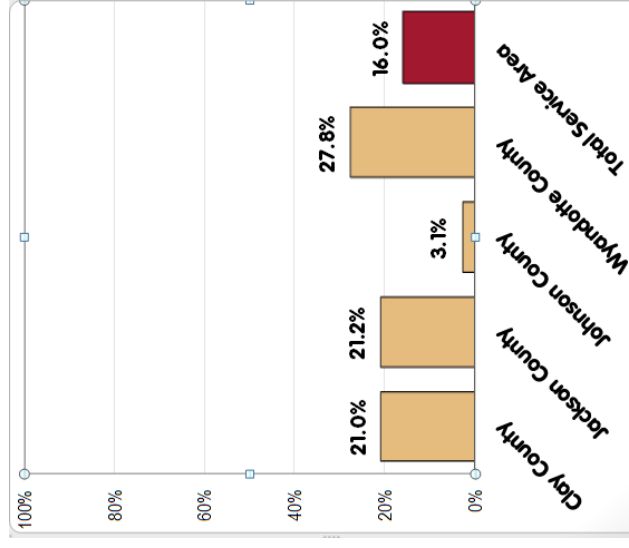
# “I Worried About Whether Our Food Would Run Out Before We got Money to Buy More”

## Insecurity



# “The Food Didn’t Last and Didn’t Have Money”

## Insufficiency



Notes: • Children’s Mercy Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, 2016. [www.childrensmc.org/About\\_Us/Community\\_Health\\_Assessment](http://www.childrensmc.org/About_Us/Community_Health_Assessment)  
 • Asked of all respondents about a randomly selected child in the household.  
 Source: • 2015 PRC Child & Adolescent Health Survey-Kansas City, Professional Research Consultants, Inc. [Items 326-333]





# Hunger Free Hospital Task Force

- Multi-Disciplinary Team
  - 25 members
    - Outside Agency Participants- Jonathan Barry (No Kid Hungry Initiative) and Emily Brown (Food Equality Initiative)
    - Co-Chairs: Molly Krager, MD and Laura Plencner, MD
- Meets on a monthly basis
- Identify policies, programs and practices that Children's Mercy can address to impact Food Insecurity

# Summer Food Program- 2017



# 19 Hospitals Participated in the SFSP Summer 2017

2014

- Hennepin County Medical Center
- Choctaw Nation Healthcare Center
- Preferred Family Healthcare
- Carthage Memorial Hospital
- Labette Health
- Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital
- Arkansas Children's Hospital
- Hillsboro Area Hospital

2015

Medical University of South Carolina

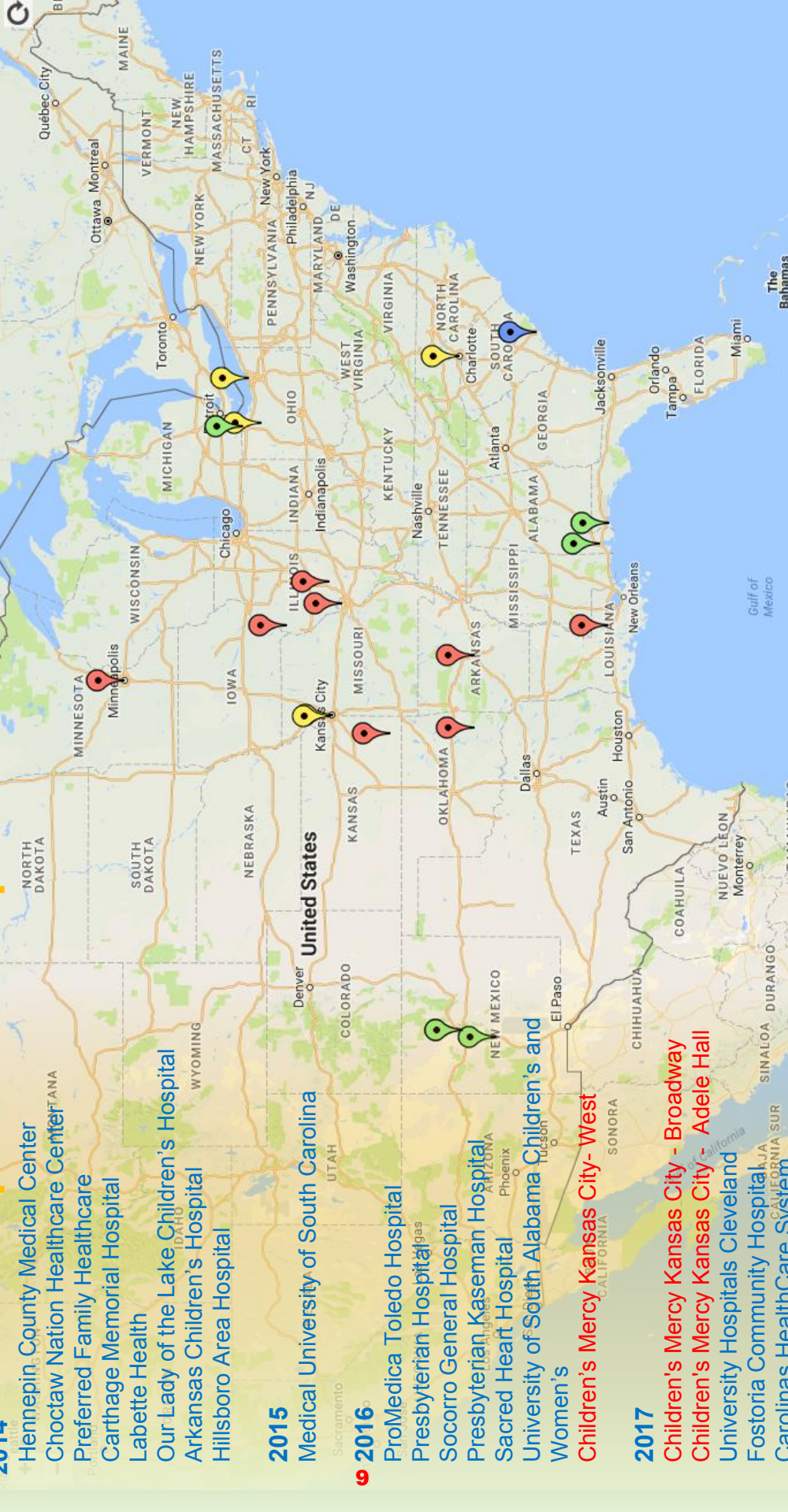
2016

- ProMedica Toledo Hospital
- Presbyterian Hospital
- Socorro General Hospital
- Presbyterian Kaseman Hospital
- Sacred Heart Hospital
- University of South Alabama Children's and Women's

Children's Mercy Kansas City - West

2017

- Children's Mercy Kansas City - Broadway
- Children's Mercy Kansas City - Adele Hall
- University Hospitals Cleveland
- Fosteria Community Hospital
- Carolinas Healthcare System



# 2017 Results

- Children's Mercy provided 4,836 meals
  - 1,806 Broadway in partnership with Harvesters
  - 837 Children's Mercy West in partnership with Harvesters
  - 2,193 Adele Hall with Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
- Estimated 40,000 SFSP meals provided by all participating health institutions. Children's Mercy provided 12% of the meals.

# Food Prescriptions

- Assessment of Food Insecurity at visits to Primary Care Clinic on Broadway
  - Complete self-assessment questionnaire related to a variety of social-determinants of health
  - The food insecurity and the food insufficiency question included on survey
- Positive with either of the questions, receive supplemental resources and a “food prescription” to TMC’s Healthy Harvest Market.
- 400 families identified as food insecure from April – October 2018
- Fifteen families redeemed the prescription



# Food Prescriptions-A Better Understanding

- Telephone survey of 65 families identified as “Food Insecure” and received a prescription.
- Reached 41 families of whom 6 redeemed a food prescription.
- **2** Top reasons Food Prescription not redeemed

- Forgot about it
- Transportation to market
- Too busy
- Unsure how to access the market
- Value of coupon

Follow-up Focus Groups to begin late Spring

# Community Garden

- Launch Spring 2018
- Corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Gillham Road
- Training site for students on the Health Sciences District
- Produce available to families in the Weight Management program at the Don Chisholm building

# For more information

Margo Quiriconi

Director, Community Health Initiatives

[mlquiriconi@cmh.edu](mailto:mlquiriconi@cmh.edu)

Visit: [https://www.childrensmercy.org/About\\_Us/Community\\_Benefit/Community\\_Health\\_Needs\\_Assessment/](https://www.childrensmercy.org/About_Us/Community_Benefit/Community_Health_Needs_Assessment/)

*Community Health Needs Assessment begins July 2018!*



# KANSAS CITY EVICTION PROJECT

## STUDENT MOBILITY, EVICTIONS, AND ACHIEVEMENT

### Initial Findings from KCPS for 2008-2017

Each year, roughly 9,000 evictions are filed in Jackson County. Many more evictions occur informally, outside of the court system, and with no data to represent them. Eviction is more than a forced move, impacting physical and mental health, access to schools and transportation, people's ability to keep their jobs, and much more. Eviction is both a cause and a condition of poverty.

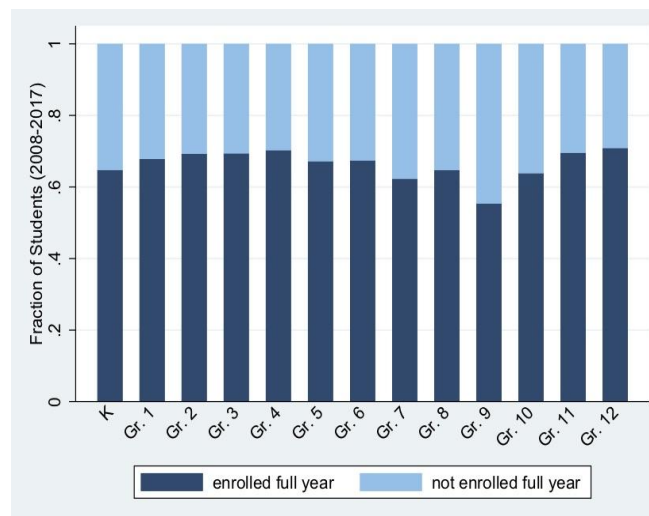
Insecure housing is particularly disruptive for kids, especially when they have to change schools many times over. Research has shown that student mobility, or the movement of students between schools within or between school years, is associated with lower achievement.<sup>1</sup> We believe that it is likely that physical mobility, in part caused by formal and informal evictions, contributes to student mobility, and therefore has important implications for student outcomes.

The purpose of our work is to study the relationships between housing mobility, student mobility between schools, and student achievement in the Kansas City Public School District (KCPS). Our initial dataset includes over 71,000 unique students enrolled between 2008-2017 school years, and 96,000 evictions filed between 2007-2016. Our work to date helps to quantify these phenomena and suggest an initial correlation between mobility and achievement. We have much more work to do to show a causal link.

### STUDENT MOBILITY

Students in the KCPS system are highly mobile. Over the past decade, at each grade level between 20-30 percent of enrolling students are new to the KCPS system. At end of each year, 15-20 percent of the students who started that year transfer or drop out. Of the 2,880 Kindergartners enrolled in 2008, only 360 (12.5 percent) remained in KCPS throughout our sample (ten consecutive years). Additionally, only approximately 60 percent of KCPS students are enrolled in the same school for at least 90 percent of the academic year.

**FIGURE 1: Full Year Enrollment by Grade SY 2008-2017**



Note that this includes approximately 15 percent of students who were coded as enrolled for less than 30 days. If we accept those students as ones who never were really enrolled, the full year attending percentage would be approximately 80 percent.

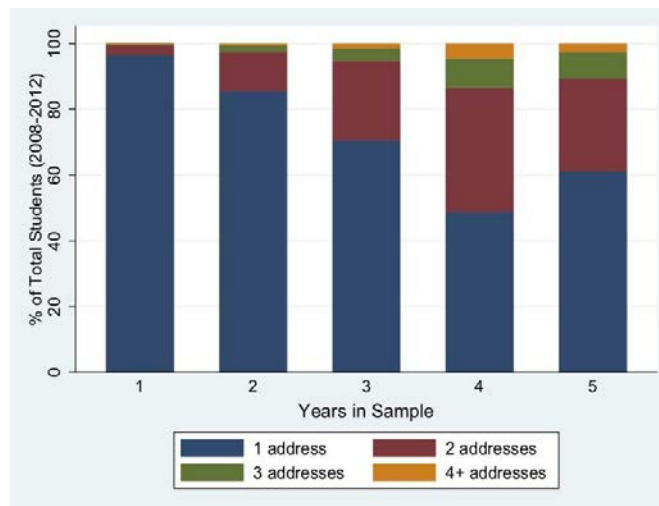
**JANUARY 24, 2018**  
**CONTACT: TARA@EVICTIONKC.ORG**

# KANSAS CITY EVICTION PROJECT

## STUDENT HOUSING MOVES

Using address data from KCPS from 2008-2012, we find that 40 percent of those students who were enrolled for four or five of those years have at least two unique addresses, likely reflecting a move. Additionally, approximately 10 percent of the students move at least twice in a four or five year span:

**FIGURE 2: Number of Moves, Based on Years in Sample**



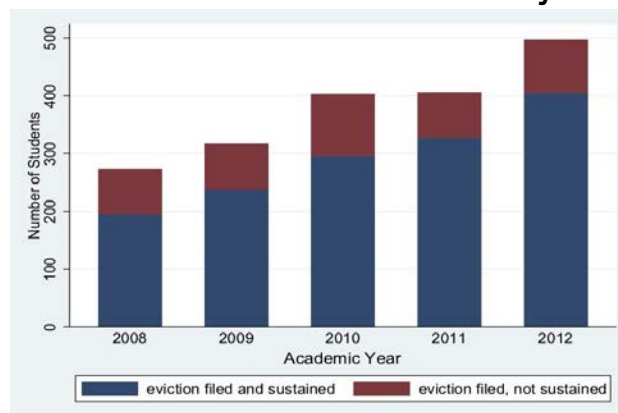
Note that this may understate the true mobility of students who enroll at KCPS because we don't observe moves for those who transfer or drop out.

## EVICTIONS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN KCPS

To study how evictions contribute to mobility, we take the student address data from 2008-2012 and attempt to identify students whose family faced an eviction proceeding. We only count evictions where we can confirm that the (a) student was enrolled in KCPS in the year of the eviction; (b) the evicted tenant's last name matches the student's or their parent's or guardian's; and (c) the address in the KCPS data and the eviction record match.

Figure 3 shows that between 2008-2012, 300-500 students in KCPS faced an eviction at their stated address:

**FIGURE 3: Evictions Filed and Ordered by Year**



**JANUARY 24, 2018**  
**CONTACT: TARA@EVICTIONKC.ORG**

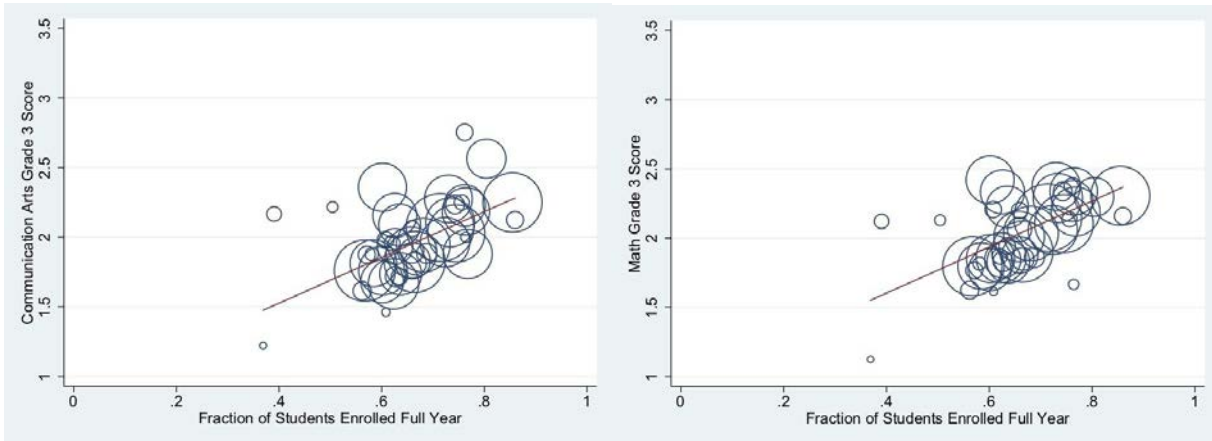
# KANSAS CITY EVICTION PROJECT

That equates to approximately 4 percent of the enrolled students in KCPS each year and is only the formal evictions we can match on the three criteria. Thus we believe our eviction total is conservative. 84 percent of the students facing eviction are Black as opposed to only 60 percent of the students who were never evicted in the sample. Additionally, 80 percent of the evicted students were on free or reduced lunch compared with approximately 65 percent of the non-evicted students.

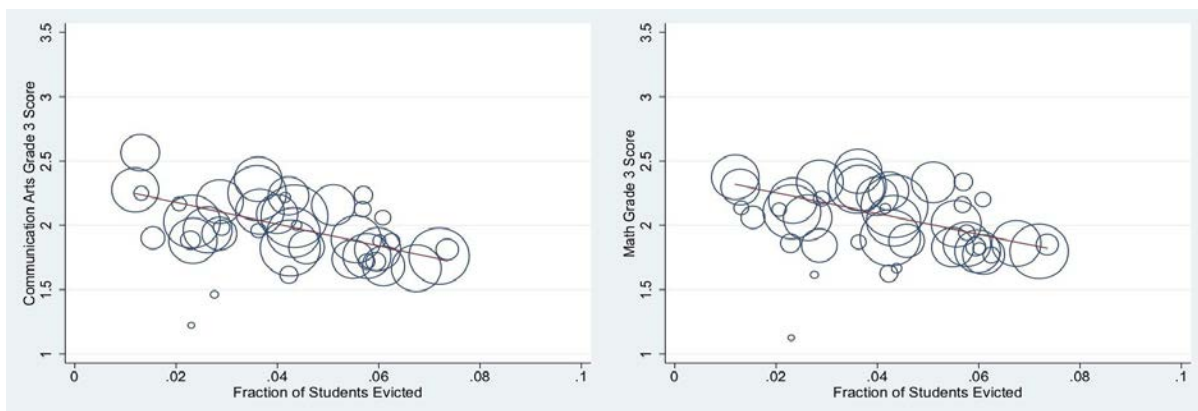
## MOBILITY, EVICTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Finally, we take an initial look at the relationship between mobility, evictions and achievement at the school level using MAPS test results for 3rd and 8th grade. The figures below use average MAPs score (between 1 - “below basic” and 4 - “advanced”) for each school between 2008-2017 as the y-axis. The figures show a strong positive correlation between the percentage of students who are enrolled for a full year in a school and MAPs scores, and a negative correlation between the fraction of students facing an eviction and MAPs scores.

**FIGURE 4: Correlation Between Grade 3 Test Scores and Full-Year Enrollment**



**FIGURE 5: Correlation Between Grade 3 Test Scores and Evictions**



While the correlations are in the directions we would expect, we caution against a causal interpretation for now. In other words, we cannot yet say for sure whether low levels of full-year enrollment *cause* low standardized test scores. For example, it is plausible that low levels of full-year enrollment and high student mobility is correlated with other variables: low average income, worse instruction, lower per-pupil expenditure, etc. In reality, it is likely that several factors are at play. Our goal is to isolate the impact of mobility and evictions by either (a) controlling for correlated factors, or even better, (b) exploiting quasi-random variation in student mobility and/or evictions.

**JANUARY 24, 2018**  
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# KANSAS CITY EVICTION PROJECT

## FURTHER STUDY

We aim to extend our analysis by:

- Matching evictions data for more years (2013+)
- Attempting to quantify informal evictions/forced moves
- Using models or natural experiments to attempt to isolate the causal impacts of eviction and student mobility not just at the school level, but also at the student level.
- Adding data from districts surrounding KCPS.

## DATA REQUEST

To further our analysis, we would request that other school districts in and around Jackson County provide similar data to what we have graciously received from KCPS. We are currently unable to track what happens to the significant number of students who leave KCPS and enter other schools in the area. Additionally, a significant fraction of the evictions in Jackson County (approximately 25 percent) happen outside the boundaries of the KCPS school system and thus we are unable to evaluate whether they are affecting students. Specifically, we would ask for:

- Annual enrollment data with demographic information
- Student address data with dates for changes in address
- Data on student achievement (MAPS scores, NWEA, graduation rates, etc)
- Data on within year student mobility (i.e., attendance, switching schools, etc)

We have set up a comprehensive data security system with KCPS such that data with individual identifying characteristics is on a cloud server that is only accessible by the researchers who have signed data sharing agreements with KCPS. No identifying data is on any personal computers or can be accessed without triple factor authentication.

We thank KCPS, specifically Mike Reynolds, Shannon Jaax, and Jerome Williams, for sharing their data and time for research.

*Kansas City Eviction Project is a collaborative effort involving researchers, community organizers, neighborhood leaders, lawyers, and policymakers to dramatically reduce the eviction rate in Kansas City and, in doing so, advance a comprehensive housing justice agenda that can serve as a model for the country.*

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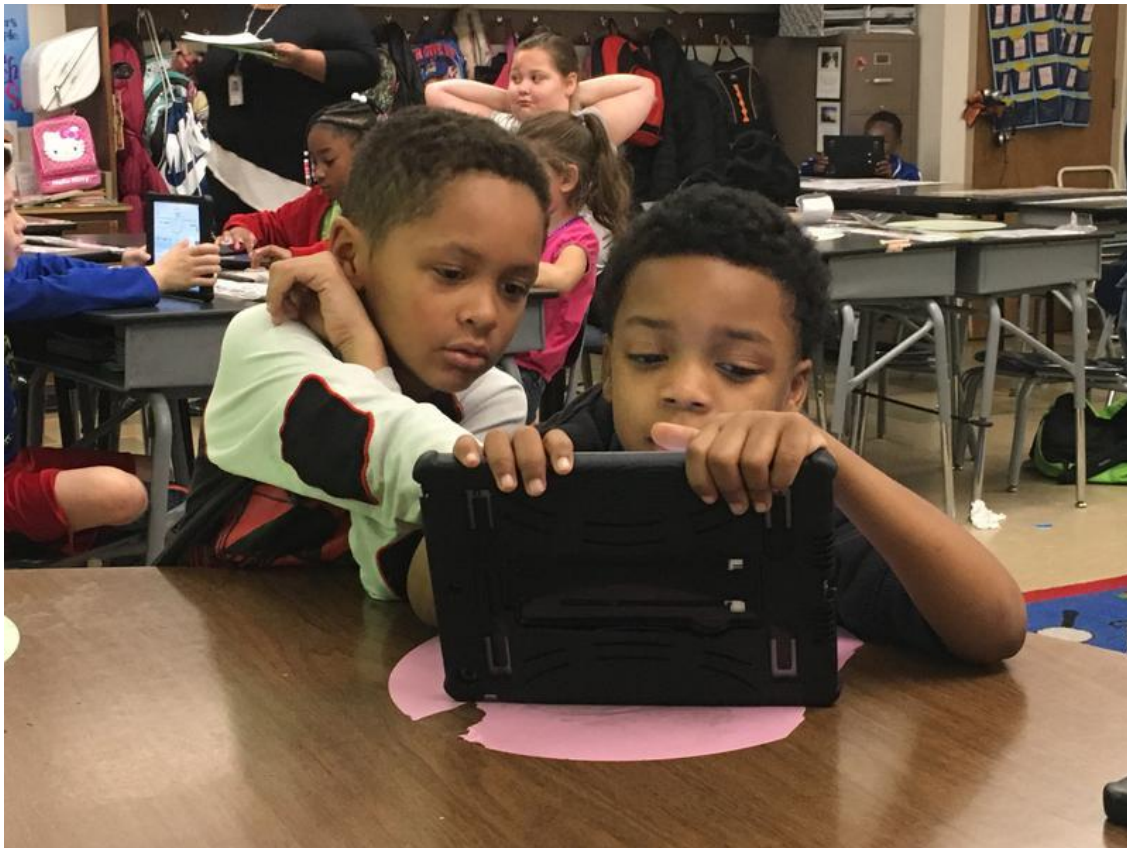
<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/student-mobility/index.html> for an overview of some research.

**JANUARY 24, 2018**  
**CONTACT: TARA@EVICTIONKC.ORG**

# In Kansas City School Accustomed To Loss, Fatal Shooting Of 9-Year-Old Causes Anguish

By [Barbara Shelly](#) & [Elle Moxley](#) • Jan 23, 2018

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• Dominic Young Jr., right, plays an educational game on an iPad with his best friend from second grade, Isaiah Rogers.

Elle Moxley / KCUR 89.3

Children at Ingels Elementary School in the Hickman Mills School District are used to seeing empty desks.

Ingels is a “high churn” school, meaning students transfer in and out frequently during the school year. Often they depart with no notice, leaving their supplies behind and the school staff scrambling to determine their whereabouts.

But the empty desk in Angelica Saddler’s third-grade classroom this week is different.

Its occupant, Dominic Young Jr., should be practicing his math, working on his reading and interacting with classmates in his mischievous way. Instead, the school is reeling from news that 9-year-old Dominic was killed in a drive-by shooting over the weekend.

Initial reports from police said the child was riding in a car driven by his father near Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard and U.S. 71 when he was struck by a bullet, possibly intended for another vehicle. The father told police he did not immediately realize his son had been shot, and continued driving to his home in Grandview. He notified police when he found his son's body limp and unresponsive. Dominic was pronounced dead at a hospital. Kansas City police are asking anyone with information about the shooting to call the Homicide Unit or the TIPS Hotline at 816-474-8477.

KCUR profiled Ingels Elementary School last year as part of its ["Musical Chairs"](#) project exploring the issue of student mobility. We got to know Dominic from regular visits to his second-grade classroom.

He transferred into Ingels a few weeks into the school year from another school in the Hickman Mills district. At first he used his "new kid" status to vent his frustration when work seemed hard. "I don't know my numbers yet 'cause I'm kind of new," he said plaintively, while struggling with a math problem.

But Dominic quickly grew to regard his classmates and his teacher, Aubrey Paine, as his school family. In November, he told KCUR he enjoyed math "because it's easy." He enthused about football and said his favorite position was "linerback." And he said he enjoyed "brain breaks," interludes during which he and his classmates got to dance to videos.

"He loved to read," Paine says. "He had such a fascination with Martin Luther King."

Dominic combed the classroom and school library for books about the civil rights hero, she remembers. As the end of the school year approached, Paine loaded him up with a summer's worth of reading material on King.

By the end of second grade, Dominic was testing close to the fifth grade level in reading and math, Paine says.

"He was very, very smart," she says. "He loved to dance. He loved to draw. He loved hanging out with his family."

Dominic had a best friend in second grade, a boy named Isaiah Rogers. They shared a mutual love of football and eagerly sought out sports books during reading times. The two boys socialized outside of school on weekends and holidays, a happy friendship that was somewhat unusual in a school with an enrollment as transient as Ingels'.



Reporter Barb Shelly talks to Dominic and his friend Isaiah. The two met in second grade and spent time together outside of school until Isaiah's family moved away.

Credit Elle Moxley / KCUR 89.3

Isaiah moved out of the district over the summer – a loss, but something the school’s staff is accustomed to. The death of a student by homicide is something else.

The school district sent counselors to Ingels Elementary Monday morning, as students were beginning to hear reports that something terrible had happened to a classmate over the weekend. Two counselors spent much of the day in Saddler’s third-grade classroom, where Dominic’s writing on the dry-erase board and notebooks strewn in his desk served as a reminder of the loss.

Paine posted a photo that includes Dominic as her profile picture on Facebook. On social media, other teachers and staff at Ingels asked for prayers and vowed to get through the crisis “as the family we are.”

A family, like Dominic’s own, that now must find a way to mend a broken heart.

*Barbara Shelly is a freelance contributor for KCUR 89.3. You can reach her at [bshellykc@gmail.com](mailto:bshellykc@gmail.com).*

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

# The Cost of Churn: Evictions Hinder Classroom Progress for Kids

By [Barbara Shelly](#)

- January 29th, 2018

Tameko Davison's children were well into the routine of a school year when turmoil intervened in the form of an eviction notice.

Davison fell behind on payments, and the gas was shut off to her government-subsidized apartment in Kansas City. That violated a Kansas City Housing Authority rule and caused her to lose her rent voucher. Her landlord went to court to have her removed.

"They gave me 10 days to get out," Davison said. "I was just calling around to all of the shelters. Everywhere I called they had no bed or anywhere for me and my kids to go."

Finally, a space opened up at the City Union Mission's family shelter. After a month there, Davison said she was receiving invaluable counseling and life skills training, and was more optimistic about her prospects. But the displacement disrupted her children's school life.

Both her daughter, Baustyn, a second-grader; and son, Khiiro, in seventh grade, missed two weeks of classes because of the eviction and move. They returned to the Kansas City schools they'd been attending since August. But their new, temporary address means longer rides to and from school and more uncertainty in young lives that have never been predictable. Davison is contemplating transferring both students to other buildings.

If that happens, Baustyn and Khiiro would join a tribe of school-age nomads throughout the metropolitan area.

"The day we got back from winter break I had five phone calls from people who were getting evicted," — Heather Schoonover, community liaison, Olathe Public Schools.

Students change schools because their parents lose jobs or find jobs. Or someone in the household is on the run from an abusive partner, a landlord or bill collectors. They move because a new management company took over their home and raised the rent. Or the basement flooded, or the furnace doesn't work. Sometimes they move because they've found a better place.

Whatever the reasons, frequent moves in and out of classrooms are becoming a leading concern of educators in the Kansas City area. And conversations about student mobility — or churn, as it is often called — frequently overlap with the broadening discussion about the Kansas City area's unstable rental market and high rate of evictions.



“It’s staggering to me to think of how many formalized evictions there are and how many more are not formalized,” said Nicole Sequeira, family services coordinator at the Independence School District.

Sequeira was referencing numbers from an academic study that has caught the eye of educators and others. Tara Raghuveer, a Shawnee Mission East High School graduate who attended Harvard University, studied evictions in the Kansas City region for a university thesis. Through that research and subsequent work, she found that landlords in Jackson County filed an average of 42 eviction petitions on every business day in the period from 1999 to 2016. In 2016, judges handed down 25 eviction decrees per business day.

Kansas City PBS and its digital magazine, Flatland, are gathering in-depth reporting and engagement around affordable housing in the metro, including this story on how evictions affect education. Watch for resources, ways to get involved, and more reporting at our project main page, [Public Works? A Level Foundation](#). And tune in at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 9 to KCPT for the airing of a *Week In Review* special, *Evicted in KC*, a public Town Hall discussion.

The numbers add up to dozens of households — many with children — set adrift every week in Jackson County, and more in Wyandotte, Clay, Platte and even Johnson County.

“The day we got back from winter break I had five phone calls from people who were getting evicted,” said Heather Schoonover, community liaison for the Olathe Public Schools.

As workers in schools and shelters know only too well, an eviction is an express ramp to homelessness. It is an ugly splotch on a renter’s record that causes would-be landlords and property owners to disconnect phone calls and slam doors.

“Right now I have nine families, and seven are here because of evictions,” Cathy Asher, manager of the Salvation Army’s Crossroads Shelter in Independence, said one day in December.

Unable to rent decent housing, evicted families cycle in and out of shelters and homes of relatives. Some end up renting hotel rooms for weeks on end, or sleeping in vehicles or abandoned houses.

“I believe it delays (the students), because they are constantly starting over.” — Melissa Douglas, office of students in transition, Kansas City Public Schools.

Suyin Diemer, who was staying at the City Union Mission in December, blamed an eviction several years ago for launching her family into a cycle of transience and rental horrors.

“With an eviction, you’re high-risk, and there’s nothing suitable for you and your kids that you can really get,” she said. “I have to just deal with the landlords who will have me, the slumlord types.”

The last house she lived in had sewage drainage in the basement and no furnace, Diemer said. “When I brought these things to (the landlord’s) attention, that’s when he came down on me and asked us to leave. He didn’t go as far as an eviction, but he had the utilities shut off. I found places for my daughters to stay, and I stayed for almost two weeks in that cold house.”

Two of Diemer’s four daughters were with her in the shelter. One was with a sister, and another was staying with a friend. Diemer figures her family has moved five or six times in as many years, and she’s lost track of all the schools her children have attended.

“It affects them really bad,” she said. “We had to do those moves, and we ended up in places like this, you know, shelters and stuff. My daughters were rebelling against me because they have to be here. Our living situation has a terrible impact on their schooling.”

## Research

That is the case universally. Research has found that frequent moves, especially traumatic ones like Diemer and her daughters have endured, cause students to miss school, fall behind their classmates academically and be less likely to graduate.

A [study](#) completed a few years ago by the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium found that 1 in 5 students on the Missouri side of the Kansas City metropolitan area moved at least once during the 2015 school year. Those students in general had poorer attendance and lower test scores than their peers who stayed put. Prospects were even worse for the more than 6,000 children in the study who moved two or more times while classes were in session.

A recent analysis of second-graders in Kansas City Public Schools showed that students who had attended the same school since kindergarten had a better chance of meeting grade-level proficiency measures in reading and math than students who had switched schools.

[Studies from elsewhere](#) suggest that students lose three months of academic growth in math and reading with every transfer during the school year, and students who move three or four times before sixth grade may be a full year behind their peers academically.

Melissa Douglas, who runs the office of students in transition for Kansas City Public Schools, sees the toll that housing instability and frequent school transfers exact on children.

“I believe it delays them, because they are constantly starting over,” Douglas said. “It puts them at a disadvantage academically. We also see a lot of discipline problems that come with that.”

Classroom churn is hard on others besides the kids who move. Teachers throughout the metro area tell stories of children who simply disappear from classrooms, leaving their school supplies behind and their friends to wonder what became of them. On the flip side, frequent arrivals of new students during the school year consume teachers’ time and interrupt classroom dynamics.

Schools aren't required to keep data on the role of evictions in creating student churn. But informal record-keeping indicates it is significant.

Douglas, whose office has worked with more than 800 students so far this school year, says her staff estimates that evictions are a factor in almost a third of their caseload.

In the Independence School District, surveys indicate that about 1 in 5 families who seek services available to homeless students have been evicted, Sequeira said.

Leslie Washington, student services specialist for the Hickman Mills School District in south Kansas City, said more than 300 students had qualified for services so far this school year under a federal law requiring schools to assist homeless or transient children. Of that number, at least 35 students had been affected by evictions.

A federal law, the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), seeks to guarantee educational access and stability for children who qualify as homeless. Though largely an unfunded mandate for school districts, it helps some families avoid moves. In most cases, districts provide transportation from shelters or temporary housing arrangements so that students can remain in the same school through the academic year.

But creating new bus routes or funding cab rides for uprooted students is an expensive remedy, and one that often still requires students to transfer to different schools at the start of a new school year.

## **Prevention**

Around the area, some school districts are joining forces with social service and community groups to try to keep families from becoming homeless in the first place.

The Shawnee Mission School District, which works with about 425 homeless students a year, has enlisted churches and other community partners to raise money for back rent and overdue utility bills. So far this school year the partnerships have kept 20 families from becoming homeless, said David Aramovich, the district's McKinney-Vento social worker.

One of those families was Dawn Myers and her three children, two of whom are students in the district. Myers said she got into a jam due to a disruption in the child support payments she receives. Though her rental history was good up until then, the manager of the house she was renting evicted her.

That launched Myers, who works at Catholic Charities, into the same fix as many of the agency's clients. Even though she had gotten her child support situation straightened out and started working a second job, no one would rent to her.

“If you have anything other than a stellar record you’re not going to find housing in Johnson County,” she said.

With few options, Myers and her children moved into an extended-stay hotel for six weeks. She was surprised to learn how many other guests were renting rooms because of housing difficulties.



Dawn Myers, left, shares a laugh — and grilled cheese sandwiches — with her daughters, Mallory, 15, center, and Bailey, 20, at their new apartment in Johnson County. (Photo: Mike Sherry | Flatland)

It was Myers’ son, a high school student, who approached Aramovich. “He was on it right away,” Myers said.

The school district partnership helped pay a portion of the hotel bill, adopted the family for Christmas and made sure they had food and household essentials. Aramovich was researching housing options for Myers when her family found a two-bedroom apartment. She pays \$1,200 a month in rent.

“You think you understand challenges, but when you’re in a situation there’s so much more to it,” Myers said.

Aramovich said Shawnee Mission schools are seeing the effects of a rental housing market that is becoming prohibitively expensive for lower-income families. Johnson County has few homeless shelters, so most displaced families move in with relatives and friends — a circumstance known as “doubling up.”

“It’s getting less likely that you’ll find second-chance landlords,” agreed Valorie Carson, community planning director of United Community Services of Johnson County. “Households who have one eviction notice will find it hard to re-establish housing in Johnson County.”

The Johnson County Sheriff’s Department handled about 2,100 evictions in 2017, records show.

“If we can stop an eviction from happening, the kids will never have to move.” — Bruce Bailey, a vice president, Community Services League, Independence, Missouri

Olathe Public Schools also works with an extensive network of faith and social service groups, alumni, retired employees and others.

“A lot of my time is spent keeping people out of the McKinney-Vento program,” Schoonover said.

But that isn’t always possible. Olathe Public Schools worked with 413 homeless or transient students in the 2016-17 school year and is already up to 320 this school year. Of that number, almost 80 percent are temporarily doubled up with family and friends.

“They’re couch surfing,” Schoonover said. “A family might live in one room in a basement because they got evicted and they have no place else to go. There’s not enough shelters and not enough affordable housing.”

The links between housing instability, evictions, student mobility and academic performance seem obvious, but it’s taken a long time to connect them in the local conversation. This year marked the first time that a Kansas City Public Schools superintendent [cited moves in and out of classrooms](#) during the school year as a factor in a disappointing accreditation report.

People who work directly with struggling families see the connection clearly.

“Our first priority is to keep kids in school. That’s usually done by keeping mom and dad in their home,” said Bruce Bailey, a vice president at the Community Services League in Independence.

Bailey and his agency participate in the Family Stability Initiative, a national effort funded by the Siemer Institute for Family Stability in Columbus, Ohio. With funding channeled through the United Way of Greater Kansas City, the Community Services League and Metropolitan Lutheran Ministries provide extensive counseling and support for at-risk families with the aim of preventing school moves.

“If we can stop an eviction from happening, the kids will never have to move,” Bailey said.

He and others at his agency work with 30 to 40 families at a time. They might help with overdue rent or utility bills, but their goal is to arm parents with the knowledge and tools to avoid the kinds of jams that lead to eviction.

“Keeping kids stable and enrolled in school so they can advance academically is going to make a huge difference in their lives and their chances of escaping generational poverty,” said Lynn Rose, senior vice president at the Community Services League.

But the resources available to help at-risk families remain in their homes are a drop in a very large bucket. Keeping more children in classrooms will require the kind of broad-lens look at policies around evictions and affordable housing that is only now getting started.

## **Ongoing Problem**

Meanwhile, the dislocation continues.

Terry Megli, family ministries director at the City Union Mission, said at least half of the parents who come with their children to the emergency shelter have evictions, either as the cause of their immediate dislocation or in their past. The staff can sometimes persuade a landlord to accept a partial payment to erase an evictions judgment, Megli said. But often the hole is too deep to escape.

That 50 percent includes Davison, who laments that her children have changed schools frequently. Baustyn, the second-grader, is at her third school already.

Davison herself had a transient childhood. Her father drove trucks, and the family moved around the country. “I loved to travel, but I didn’t like the instability,” Davison said. “I wanted the kind of life where I had a house and a good friend in the neighborhood. I didn’t have that. It left me kind of lost.”

Though she hasn’t benefited from a stable life, Davison has a picture of what one looks like. It revolves around a house, a family and a school. “I would like to give my kids that,” she said. “But so far it hasn’t worked out.”

*—Barbara Shelly is a veteran journalist and writer based in Kansas City. Follow Flatland @FlatlandKC.*

# Administration slashes federal afterschool funding

By [Erik Peterson](#)

Today the Trump administration released their [fiscal year 2019 full budget proposal](#) just days [after Congress approved topline spending levels for fiscal years 2018 and 2019](#). The full budget represents the president's vision for how Congress should spend federal funds for the upcoming fiscal year that begins October 1, 2018 (FY19).

Echoing the FY18 budget proposal released last year, the administration again proposes the elimination of the [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) initiative, which funds local afterschool and summer learning programs in all 50 states. Elimination of these funds for local programs [would devastate the 1.7 million children and families](#) who stand to lose access to programs as a result.

The budget proposal comes in stark contrast to the strong bipartisan support for afterschool displayed in Congress. Just in 2015, the Community Learning Centers initiative was reauthorized in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In 2017, bipartisan support in Congress in the FY17 omnibus spending bill increased funding by an [included a \\$25 million increase](#) to Community Learning Centers funding to meet the large need for these programs from working parents, students and communities across the country.

## **The research is clear: Afterschool works**

The budget proposal attempts to justify the proposed elimination of Community Learning Centers by claiming that a lack of evidence exists that links the program to increased student achievement. In fact, **[more than a decade of data and evaluations provide compelling evidence that Community Learning Center afterschool programs yield positive outcomes for participating children in academics, behavior, school day attendance, and more](#)**. Last fall yet another study was released by the [nonpartisan Rand Corporation](#), concluding afterschool and summer learning programs provide measurable benefits to youth and families on outcomes directly related to program content and demonstrably improve academic outcomes. While the effectiveness of Community Learning Centers funding is clear, the impact of program elimination is clearly devastating, with [thousands of students from pre-K to 12th grade in all 50 states](#) at risk of losing access to programming.

The administration continues to rely on outdated hand-selected data that ignores more than a decade of evidence from researchers showing that afterschool works. Furthermore, with federal funding serving under 2 million students, and the [parents of more than 19 million students wanting access to programs](#), there is a need for additional support to programs, not less.

The Department of Education's [most recent report](#) on Community Learning Centers finds that half of the students regularly participating in Community Learning Center programs improved their math and reading grades, two-thirds improved their homework and class participation, and more than half improved their classroom behavior. One out of four students moved from "not proficient" to "proficient" or better in both math and reading test scores. Considering that Community Learning Centers programs work with some of the most disadvantaged children and youth, many of whom would otherwise be unsupervised after school, we should be celebrating these victories.

### Who will be hurt?

In addition to the elimination of Community Learning Centers, the president's full budget proposal would slash funding for dozens of programs that are vital for children and families. Overall, the president's budget requests \$59.9 billion for the Department of Education, a \$7.1 billion or 10.5-percent decrease from the 2017 enacted level. However, after the passage of last week's budget deal, the White House added some funds to the agency's spending plan, now proposing a \$3.8 billion cut, which is a 5.6 percent decrease compared to the FY 2017 enacted level (final FY 2018 spending bills are still being written).

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG):** \$2.5 billion is proposed for FY19, down from \$2.9 billion currently. Note that Congress just agreed to double funding to almost \$6 billion as part of the FY18 and FY19 bipartisan budget deal passed last Friday.
- **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS):** Funding is set at \$31 million, down from \$766 million, with AmeriCorps VISTA funded at only \$5 million (down from \$92 million) and State and Local AmeriCorps funded at \$2 million (down from \$386 million currently).
- **Full Service Community Schools:** The 2019 budget will eliminate funding for this program, currently funded at \$10 million.
- **Title I:** The budget allocates \$14.6 billion, down from \$15.4 billion currently.
- **Title II:** Funding for educator professional development proposed for elimination for second straight year.
- **Title IV Part A Student Support Academic Enrichment Grants:** This grant will be eliminated, down from \$400 million in 2017.
- **Youth Mentoring Initiative:** The budget allocates \$58 million for mentoring, down from \$80 million in 2017.
- **Perkins/Career Technical Education:** \$1.1 billion in funding proposed for CTE, level with current year.
- Additional cuts to the **National Science Foundation and NASA** will also affect educational programming.
- **School Climate Transformation** proposed at 43 million for grants to help school districts implement multi-tiered, evidence-based strategies to prevent opioid misuse and address associated behavioral and academic challenges through interventions such as trauma counseling, violence prevention, and targeted academic support.



- **Promotes Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education.** Consistent with the 2017 Presidential Memorandum on STEM education, the budget provides a path forward to direct at least \$200 million to STEM education.

### Next steps

The president's budget request goes to Congress, where budget and appropriations deliberations for FY18 are wrapping up and FY19 appropriations deliberations will soon begin. This spring Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos is expected to testify in support of the president's education budget before the House and Senate Labor, Education, HHS Appropriations Subcommittees. In the meantime, supporters of afterschool from across the nation and political spectrum will be making the case that [#AfterschoolWorks](#). This week several major national organizations that provide or support afterschool and summer learning programs sent a [letter](#) to key Appropriators in support of 21st CCLC.

What could the elimination of federal afterschool funding mean for families nationwide? [Check this interactive map](#) to see how many thousands of children are currently served by Community Learning Centers in your state—and would be left without an afterschool program if the president's budget proposal is enacted.

### What can afterschool supporters do?

The response from the afterschool field and the public to the proposed elimination of Community Learning Centers last year was loud and swift. In calendar year 2017, advocates reached out with almost 80,000 calls and emails to Congress in support of Community Learning Centers. National media outlets from the [Washington Post](#) and [CNN](#) to [Time magazine](#) and [ABC News](#) covered the proposed cut to afterschool funding.

To make sure our allies in Congress stand strong for afterschool funding, we need to continue to tell them loud and clear: Americans support afterschool and summer learning programs! Add your voice and [take action now](#), and [join us](#) on February 14 to send a clear message of support for afterschool funding for 2019, 2018, and for years to come.

# Three Light luxury apartments are headed downtown. But where's the affordable housing?

By The Kansas City Star Editorial Board

February 04, 2018 03:30 PM

This week, the [Kansas City Council will consider public subsidies for Three Light](#), a 300-unit high-rise apartment building planned for downtown. The city will borrow \$17.5 million for the project, mostly to pay for a parking garage.

Kansas City provided similar subsidies for One Light, a 307-unit building downtown, and Two Light, a 295-unit structure at Truman Road and Grand Boulevard.

[Two Light opens this spring](#). It's already fully leased. A 1,000 square-foot unit will cost about \$2,200 a month on average.

Last month, Kansas City Councilwoman Katheryn Shields asked if any of the Lights — One, Two, or Three — contain so-called “affordable” units, with rents low enough for poorer Kansas Citians to afford.

The answer was no.

That's a concern. City subsidies for the three high-rise structures — mandated by agreements signed years ago — will soon exceed \$50 million. Yet many Kansas Citians can't even dream of actually living in one.

Cordish, which owns the buildings, says they have designed them to be affordable for renters of moderate incomes, about \$48,000 a year. They also argue — as does the city — that the apartments are an overall benefit for the community, providing enough cash to pay for the parking garages over time.

Perhaps. But it's increasingly clear that City Hall must spend time this year to better match its incentive structure with the need for quality affordable housing in every part of the community.

The need is unmistakable. [According to a recent KSHB report](#), more than 13,000 Kansas Citians are waiting for affordable housing. Some families are waiting for months, even years, for access to homes with rents they can pay.

The squeeze will only get worse. On Tuesday, Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens bragged to a Riverside audience about his efforts to [eliminate tax credits for low-income housing](#) in the state.

Greitens said the credits are inefficient, and some critics agree. To date, however, there is no credible plan for replacing the credits, or for providing incentives for developers to build low-cost housing.

Local governments will need to step in. And that means more than [leaning on Washington](#) for additional funds.

Instead, Kansas City must review its policies to make sure affordable housing is a top priority. One council member said Friday that review could include more “carrots” — incentives for developers who include low-cost units — and “sticks,” which would punish builders who leave affordable units out.

It’s crucial that the discussion include the need for affordable units and homes across Kansas City, not just in certain areas. That includes downtown.

To its credit, Cordish said Friday it is amenable to having that discussion. That may not change the plans at Three Light — the city’s agreement with Cordish requires some subsidies — but it serves notice that future construction help will need to meet higher standards for bolstering the entire community.

This year and next will be a critical opportunity to develop a comprehensive housing and neighborhood strategy in Kansas City. The City Council must address the need for better homes and neighborhoods, whether they come in small single-family homes or big skyscrapers downtown.

# A Letter from Mayor Sly James to Students

Posted on [February 20, 2018](#)

Originally published in [The Kansas City Star](#).

Dear Students,

I've been listening and watching the news for several days since the violence in Parkland, Florida and wondering how did we, once again, allow more of you to be mowed down by an apparently disturbed, young man wielding a high-powered, military-style assault weapon with a large capacity magazine. This is especially sad and ridiculous, even infuriating, considering the situation was both predictable and preventable.

Seventeen more of you dead in Florida. Valentine's Day. 2018.

If this were the only such incident, or at least an infrequent one, it would be immensely sad and tragic. The reality that such massacres are now relatively commonplace, however, is more than that. It is unbelievably incredible. Undeniably horrendous. It's totally incomprehensible that these mass murders have turned America's students into the most endangered group of people in any industrialized country in the world.

According to the *New York Times* ([2/15/18](#)), more than 438 students and teachers have been shot in at least 239 school shootings since Sandy Hook in 2012. There have been 63 people injured or killed in 6 school shootings in the first 45 days of 2018. [Education Week, 2/1/18](#)

Although mass shootings have been generally increasing in different settings, schools are unfortunately frequent targets. "The third deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history was at Virginia Tech University in 2007, when 32 people were killed, and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, which is tied for the fourth-highest casualty shooting, with 26 deaths." [ABC news, 2/15/18](#)

This carnage is spreading like a raging infection left untreated. The difference between an infection and school shootings, however, is that at least a doctor diagnoses, treats, and tries to cure the infection. Politicians and other adults who should act like doctors, caring for a nation infected by gun violence, make absolutely no effort to diagnose and treat this disease. In fact, many argue that if gun violence is a disease, the best way to cure it is to inject it with more guns and bullets. That makes no sense and it does nothing to protect you all – the future of our country.

The reality is that Congress has refused to even consider the public health impacts of gun violence. They passed legislation prohibiting the Center for Disease Control (CDC) from even researching the issue. You only have to live in a city suffering from any level of gun violence to understand just how big a public health issue it is. State government has aggravated the problem

by refusing to allow cities like ours and St. Louis from doing anything to try to control the number and types of guns on our streets and in the hands of those who shouldn't have them.

Students, it should be clear to you by now that the adults responsible for protecting you have been unable and/or unwilling and/or incapable of doing so. They see you shot and dying, wring their hands, shake their heads, say they care and then pass laws to make it easier for almost anyone to get any gun. This is not leadership. It's politics at its worst.

There is so much money tied up in gun manufacturing and sales that politicians become weak in the knees when they consider it may be withheld from them or used to finance an opponent if they dare advocate for common sense.

The NRA spent \$11,438,118 to support Donald Trump and another \$19,756,346 to oppose Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election. And how about contributions to other politicians? The NRA [pours money](#) into elections for both the U.S. Senate and House to maintain the insanity that is our gun policy in the United States. They make contributions to, or spend significant sums in support of lots of "right minded" politicians or in opposition to their "wayward" opponents. Some argue that the NRA is, in reality, more of a marketing agent for gun manufacturers, rather than a benign club of gun lovers and second amendment protectors. You be the judge:

Gun manufacturers in 2015 showed annual revenue of \$13.56 billion with \$1.5 billion in profit. Gun and ammunition stores chipped in with \$3.1 billion in revenue and \$478 million in profit (IBIS World). 10,847,797 pistols, revolvers, shotguns, assault weapons, etc. were manufactured in the U.S. in 2015 (ATF). Only 4% of that total was exported outside the U.S. It is estimated that there are 270-310 million guns in the U.S. which has a population of 323.1 million men, women and children in 2016.

With so much money involved and so many politicians and businesses addicted to it, it's not surprising that not even surviving victims or images of the bloodied and destroyed bodies of first graders are able to shake common sense from the "cold dead hands" of those who have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

Students, I'm afraid this country needs YOU to show the ADULTS the way! You, those who are increasingly in the crosshairs of murderers, need to protect yourselves, and by extension, US! You may be our last and best hope for change. You can't leave it to us adults alone. We need you to demand that the politicians protect your constitutional right to life with as much or more commitment and intransigence as they apply to protecting a dubious right for 19-year-olds, domestic abusers, and domestic terrorists.

You have to unite in your own self-interest. I know though, having raised kids of my own into and out of school age, that some of you don't think such violence could ever visit you or your school. "Those things don't happen where I live." Really?! Here's a short, partial list of locations of where students and teachers were killed:

- Florence, Alabama
- Ashland County, Ohio

- Knights Ferry, California
- New York City, New York
- Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Santa Monica, California
- Danville, Virginia
- Brazil, Indiana
- Charleston, West Virginia
- Bemidji, Minnesota
- Liberty, Mississippi
- Chicago, Illinois
- Manes, Missouri
- Cincinnati, Ohio

You may believe that this type of violence only happens to “other people.” Don’t believe it, and remember—you are “other people” to other people.

It’s time for you to unite to protect yourselves. You have to make your voices heard and your faces seen. Don’t listen to those who tell you that you are powerless, too young, or don’t have enough money. Acting together you can be powerful if you are visible and insistent. You aren’t too young to die so you are, by definition, old enough to fight for your lives. The pressure of money has paralyzed the adults. The lack of money can motivate you to innovate, inspire, and succeed.

I grew up in the 60’s, graduating high school during the height of the Vietnam War in 1969. Students then were failed by the adult politicians who sent them off to a disfavored war, somewhat like the adult failure to do anything to protect them from gun violence now. Ironically, assault weapons were the weapons of choice in both settings.

Students in the 60’s were extremely instrumental in bringing the Vietnam War to a close. They had no voice in who was being drafted and sent off to war unless they were from families of means and/or influence inclined to protect their own with a medical diagnosis of bone spurs or flat feet. Those without such means, disproportionately black and brown, served and, too frequently, died.

Then as now, students were on the front lines. Then as now, students lost their lives when they should have been planning families and their futures. Then, as in now, students are calling BS on the excuses. They rebelled! They staged sit-ins. They marched, protested, and burned their draft cards. They took a strong position against the war, and it made the adults stop, look, and listen.

Some of the protests, like the demonstrations in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, were co-opted by the radical wing of the protest movement and ended in violence. Other protests brought about violent over-reactions by the government, when students were shot and killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State in 1970. The stance against student shootings and deaths in today’s school shooting tsunami, however, should never incite the violence of the 60’s, but it should incite the commitment and activism. Social media could actually be used to accomplish something other than fun, games and bullying.

You are more savvy than we were in the 60s. You also have more tools and resources available to you. Be innovative and smart in your approach and your goals. Be honorable, respectful and focused. Use facts and data to prove your points and achieve sustainable solutions. Recognizing that this issue is very volatile, and that some will be critical of your engagement, emphasize productive discussion rather than argument and speak to pragmatism rather than ideology. Be proud of your approach and of your commitment.

You must protect yourselves and either convince or shame the adults into following you towards common sense controls over these potential instruments of your deaths. Limit access to assault weapons. Strengthen background checks and make them universal. Take the handcuffs off of the CDC and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). You may in fact be the glue that finally helps unite and focus all the adult groups that have been struggling to pass common sense gun safety measures.

I've seen the young people from Parkland, Florida speaking out so bravely about what has happened to their lives. And I've met so many intelligent and engaged young people right here in Kansas City since I became mayor. Unfortunately, adults have proven that when it comes to sensible gun control, the politicians won't listen to us. But perhaps they will listen to you, our children. So please, show us the way.

Some of you have already started organizing, meeting, speaking out. Soon, many of you will be marching. Keep at it until they start listening to your demands for change and take action. Show us that our country's young people – black, white, brown, gay, straight, religious, atheist, poor, rich, rural, urban – can all come together to save your own lives and in the process, save our country from ourselves.

This is your time to take charge and show our nation the way. This time you lead and I, and other adults, will join. Your lives may very well depend on it.

Sincerely,

Mayor Sly James

Inspired & Led by  
HMC-1 Parents!



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