

LINC Commission Meeting

September 25, 2023



Back to School 2023

On Aug. 23, LINC opened its Caring Communities Before & After School programs serving families at 46 schools in six districts — including a new program at Red Bridge Elementary School in the Center School District.



Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

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

Our Mission

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

Our Guiding Principles

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



Monday, Sept. 25, 2023 | 4 – 5:30 pm
Kauffman Foundation Conference Center

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. June minutes
 - a. **Approval (motion)**
- III. LINC Finances – FY 2024 Budget
 - a. **Approval (motion)**
- IV. Superintendent Reports
- V. Caring Communities
 - a. LINC Summer Programs
 - b. Back to School
 - i. Staffing & Enrollment
 - ii. 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- VI. Funding — Visit with Governor
- VII. LINC Food & Nutrition
 - a. LINC Farm to Families
 - b. Community Gardens
 - c. Total Man CDC
- VIII. U.S. Department of Education -- Raise the Bar Tour
- IX. Adjournment



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – JUNE 26, 2023

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Cochair **David Disney** presided. Commissioners attending were

Bert Berkley
Kiki Curls
Aaron Deacon
Shawn Foster
Rob Givens

Anita Gorman
Matt Haase
Tom Lewin
David Ross
Marj Williams

Disney welcomed everyone to the meeting.

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2023, LINC Commission meeting was passed unanimously.

Superintendents Reports

- **Kevin Foster** (Executive Director, Genesis School) reported that the Cole County Circuit Court ruled that the Missouri Public Charter School Commission acted unlawfully and arbitrarily in revoking Genesis School's charter and that the Missouri Board of Education acted unlawfully in upholding the Commission's decision. As a result, Genesis' charter was reinstated on the current contract effective through 2025. Foster thanked LINC and the community for its support throughout the process. Discussion followed.

Executive Vice President **Janet Miles-Bartee** reported LINC staff supported staff and families at Longfellow and Troost elementary as the school year ended for the two schools, which are closing as part of KCPS's reorganization plan to address lower enrollment across the district. She thanked the staff for helping make saying goodbye a beautiful occasion and encouraged them to ensure the students feel they are loved and belong at their new schools. A video of Longfellow's Farewell Field Day was shown.

President **Gayle Hobbs** reported LINC celebrated its second annual Caring Communities Day on June 10. The event included dancing, drill team and drum lines, fitness shows, balloon artists, face painting, more than 40 carnival games, and two raffle drawings every 30 minutes. Elected officials mingled with guests and community partners provided resources such as voter registration, gun locks, computers, and utility assistance. She recognized the planning committee for all its hard work. **Janet Miles-Bartee** reported that everyone was made to feel welcome, including homeless persons in the neighborhood. A video of the event was shown.

Janet Miles-Bartee reported children are having a great time and staff are working hard this month at LINC summer programs in support of LINC's school district partners. Caring Communities Administrator **Sean Akridge** reported the programs feature field trips offering students new, memorable experiences such as the Spiderman exhibit at Union Station, Kansas City Zoo, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and rollerskating. Also, preparations are underway to open the new LINC program at Red Bridge Elementary School in Center School District.

Sean Akridge reported Ingels Elementary in Hickman Mills School District transitioned to a year-round calendar this month. Enrollment started off low but is expected to pick up in August. Caring Communities Program Specialist **Carl Wade** reported several site coordinators have been assigned to Ingels to help ease the transition for students and families.

Gayle Hobbs reported the Local Food Purchase Assistance program (LFPA) was discussed at the recent FACT board meeting and partnerships involved in the statewide program were doing a good job. Finance Director **Jeff Hill** reported 60,000 pounds of high-quality produce, purchased directly from an area farmer, will be distributed to area families at LINC Caring Communities sites tomorrow through the LFPA program.

Youth Services Director **Bryan Shepard** reported LINC and several area partners are applying to the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development for funding to reduce youth homelessness. As part of the application, LINC produced a video featuring youth speaking about their experiences of homelessness and the need for assistance. The video was shown.

The meeting was adjourned.

Summer of LINC: celebrating the 'authentic child'

July 10, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer

Summer at LINC throws open all the doors from the house of learning and opens children to a wider world.

“Of course we reinforce learning,” LINC Caring Communities Administrator Sean Akridge said, “and this window of time gives us the opportunity to get kids out to see some things they otherwise might not have the chance to see.”

Throughout June, many of the children unloaded from school buses and let loose that first-time stare as they took in the scene of a trampoline park, or exotic zoo, or a theater stage.

The list of experiences included collaborations with the Kansas City Zoo, Kansas City Young Audiences, the Spider-Man show at Union Station, Sky Zone, AMC movie theaters, roller skating, the Kansas City Fire Department and the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art.

Other events were brought in to transform schoolyards into festive places, like LINC’s “Water Wednesdays” at Phillips Elementary School in the Kansas City Public Schools with giant, inflatable water slides, or special Friday cookouts.

“It’s summer, we’re glad you’re here and we want the kids to know that,” Akridge said. “Learning looks different. Learning looks like fun. Learning looks like field trips. Learning can be creative.”

The Water Wednesdays was just one of many themed events at Phillips Elementary, which also had a sewing club and fashion show and included free haircuts to help children to feel good about themselves, said LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Yolanda Robinson.

“We want them to be the authentic child that they are supposed to be,” Robinson said. “Summer is a great opportunity for students to let their hair down and get away from all their home concerns and issues, and be the best kid they can be.”

Good nutrition is also an important part of LINC’s summer programming. LINC collaborates with its partner school districts and Harvesters to provide meals that might otherwise go missing during the summer months. Meal opportunities are extended to parents and families as well.

Student success and feeling good go together said the barber, DanniCutIt, as she trimmed hair at Phillips.

“Hopefully, the barber said, (a nice haircut) is giving them motivation and inspiring them to keep the good grades going and make them feel good.”

The LINC students at Holliday Montessori School in KCPS spent a lot of their class time learning about continents and science, said Caring Communities Coordinator Lisa Stephenson.

LINC’s partnership with the Kansas City Zoo provided a perfect way to bring it all together.

“The kids have been studying,” Stephenson said. “And what better way is there to end the summer with a culminating activity than to come to the zoo?”

Letting loose with some group physical activity also makes for a full summer, like the two-busload trip LINC’s program at Boone Elementary in the Center School District took to the Sky Zone trampoline park in Lee’s Summit.

This was the first time for many of them, LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Ne’Kye Sheppard said.

“It’s really cool seeing how much fun they’re having,” she said.

And the camaraderie the children build between their classmates and the adults will pay dividends as well come August.

“We try to have fun,” Sheppard said, “and get them ready and hyped for the school year that’s coming around.”

'A mighty day': LINC Caring Communities go back to school

Aug. 25, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



Third-graders Sayde and Ayla enjoy LINC's first day at Red Bridge Elementary School in the Center School District.

From North Kansas City to Grandview, from Kansas City's West Side to Buckner, Mo., LINC's Caring Communities school programs pounced on the new school year.

"I'm going to have an almighty day!" sang out LINC's program leader at Kansas City's African-Centered College Prep Academy.

"And I'm gonna do it in a mighty way!" answered LINC children in the before-school program, dressed in red or green shirts and neat slacks and skirts for opening day Aug. 21.

"Character counts . . ." sang the leader.

"All the time!" the children sang back.

"And all the time . . ."

"Character counts!"

It's not just the before- and after-school care programs that mean so much to families and neighborhoods that LINC serves in its partnerships with the Kansas City Public Schools, the Hickman Mills, Grandview, Center, North Kansas City and Fort Osage school districts and the Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy and Genesis School charter schools.

"We are always appreciative of our partnership with LINC," said Kansas City Public Schools Superintendent

Dr. Jennifer Collier at the first-day celebration at ACC Prep.

“(LINC) partners in so many ways,” she said. “Not just for before- and after-care but all the ways that LINC supports our families through rental assistance and other things, and helping refer them to resources.”

LINC’s year-round aid and support working with its communities feels a boost with the start of the new school year.

In all, LINC operates before- and after-school programs at 45 Caring Communities sites, plus community programming and eight more sites.

First-grader Kobe, checking out the back-to-school night event at Dobbs Elementary School in Hickman Mills with his mother, Marlisha Wright, is now a veteran student, heading into his second year with LINC.

“LINC is fun,” he said, “because you get to stuff like you do in class and you get to draw a lot and you can do a lot of work and you can go to the gym to have fun.”

For his mother, LINC’s support provides comfort.

“It gives parents the opportunity to go to work and have a safe place for their children to go,” Wright said.

This year, LINC is adding a site inside Red Bridge Elementary School in the Center School District. LINC added the Red Bridge program last year, collaborating with the district to bus the children to LINC’s established program at nearby Indian Creek Elementary.

It’s great to have LINC at its own site in Red Bridge, said Red Bridge Principal Rachelle Hamrick.

“I’m looking forward to having our students able to have a quality before- and after-school care program,” she said. “I just feel this is so much more beneficial for our students and parents to have it at our building.”



Hand-slapping games at Trailwoods Elementary School in Kansas City.



A game of rock-paper-scissors after school at Trailwoods Elementary School in Kansas City.



Going home from LINC after the first day at Belvidere Elementary School in Grandview.



KANSAS CITY

Genesis School will start year with full enrollment, staffing following charter reinstatement

By: [Alyssa Jackson](#)

Posted at 9:57 PM, Aug 17, 2023

KANSAS CITY, Mo — Genesis School won a battle over its charter and students, teachers and staff will start a new school year next week.

Teachers at the charter school had a shorter time this summer to get their lesson plans ready and decorate their classrooms just the way they want them to look when students arrive.

"Just getting the rest of their folders and journals ready," said Faith Novak, a fifth and sixth grade English language arts teacher. "It's not close to being finished."

The school's hallways are quiet this week, but they won't be on Monday.

Genesis School will welcome more than 200 returning students.

There is a wait list of 50 students,

At the end of the last school year, school leaders weren't sure whether that would be possible.

Genesis staff and families found out less than two months ago the school got their charter back after a judge [ruled](#) it was illegally revoked.

"We called, jumped in vans and drove, found where kids were attending summer school." said Kevin Foster, the school's executive director. "This is a choice, but we wanted them to know we were gonna be open."

Kayla Hansley, a seventh and eighth grade history teacher, said, "I was going to wait it out."

She's one of many teachers who didn't want to be anywhere but Genesis School.

"It wasn't the same as Genesis, so I said no thank you and got a job at Walmart," Novak said.

Rather than taking a load off, this summer was spent feeling lingering anxiety because of the possibility of Genesis closing.

"I was fully hired at another school when I found out Genesis was open," Hansley said. "I wanted to come back and made that choice."

As a charter school, they know families have a choice, too.

"Some of them call me mama," Hansley said. "These are kids in the same zip code as me. I could walk outside and see many of them riding their bikes or playing in the street."

Some teachers are ready to demand better work from students since their families are choosing Genesis

and giving the school another chance.

"I have very high expectations for them making sure they hit all their scores and when they go to the next school year knowing everything they're supposed to know," Hansley said. "As a teacher, because we were on the brink of closing, what can I do to make sure we aren't on the brink again and what can I do to make sure my kids are successful if we do?" Hansley said.

They're counting down the days they have left in their summer vacation until they are all together again.

"I'm excited for their reaction when we do get to see each other and for my little ones to run up and give me a hug," said Lauren Allen, a K-8 reading specialist.

The first day won't feel like just any first day this year.

"It is a little different, not so many butterflies, just excitement," Hansley said. "It's like I can't wait for you to run in this building because we were on the verge of you not running into this building anymore."

The teachers and staff have a message for anyone who doubts they won't be even better this year.

"I'm ready to prove them wrong and show them this school is where it's at," Novak said.

Farm fresh: How free produce from Missouri growers is getting to KC area families

Aug. 8, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



Volunteers at the food distribution at Morning Star Youth and Family Life Center in Kansas City hand out some of the free produce to some of the neighbors in the walk-up line.

his feels good, like some 60 years ago when Payton Proffer’s great-great-grandpa, Udell Proffer, was selling fresh produce out of the back of his truck to families at small Missouri markets.

Or when Nathan Moyer was growing up on a northwest Missouri farm and going on trips to Kansas City’s River Market.

Because, with the coordination of LINC Caring Communities, Missouri growers this summer are getting boxes of free produce into the hands of grateful parents like LaSha Smith of Kansas City.

Smith was saying good-bye to her children, dropping them off for another day of summer school at Banneker Elementary in the Kansas City Public Schools, her oldest son leaning his head against his mother’s seven-month-pregnant belly while she rubbed the top of his head.

Now she paused in the parking lot by her car, which had been loaded with a 20-pound box of farm-fresh toma-

toes, green peppers, zucchini squash, cabbage and sweet potatoes.

“This is a good cause,” she said, as she learned that the Missouri Department of Social Services was collaborating with LINC and other regional partners to help state farmers participate in the federal Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) cooperative program.

“It helps my kids eat healthy,” she said. “It helps the moms who struggle throughout the summer to feed their kids when they’re not in school — especially parents like me because I’m pregnant.”

The produce in her box came from Proffer Produce, based in Farmington, Mo. Other produce boxes LINC is helping distribute come from Moyer Farms in Richmond, Mo.

Since April, the DSS, LINC and local farms collaborating in the program have distributed more than \$73,000 worth of free produce at some 50 neighborhood sites in the Kansas City region.

“I really appreciate it,” Smith said. “I know other moms appreciate it too.”

The produce is coming from family-owned-and-operated farms that are an easy country drive away — fulfilling one of the Missouri Department of Social Service’s missions that the federal LFPA program support and promote local growers.

And LINC is connecting the food to families in need, initially through its Caring Community sites in six area school districts, with expansion coming to distribute produce across an 11-county area surrounding Kansas City.

In all, LINC is one of 14 Missouri community partnerships that are collaborating in the program to cover every county in the state, said Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke, the Missouri Department of Social Services' Deputy Director of Workforce and Community Initiatives.

“We've always considered the community partnerships an arm of Social Services,” she said. “They are the local agencies that know what's happening on the ground. The community partnerships also have a multitude of wraparound services already available. They know the community better than we know their community.”

The program aims to support local farmers and families, which was thrilling to Moyer Farms’ Nathan Moyer and his co-owner, wife Erin.

“The LFPA grant seemed like a good fit because it was going to get food where it needed to go,” Nathan Moyer said. “It’s going to help a lot of producers like us.”

He started Moyer Farms in 2010, carrying on a family history of farming. When you “just like growing stuff,” like he does, he said, and when you persevere through “a lot of hard labor and a lot of headaches with weather,” it feels extra good knowing households in need are benefitting.

The Proffer Produce operation likewise is a family enterprise, said Payton Proffer. The late Udell Proffer passed the business on to Payton’s grandfather and father, she said, and she works alongside “aunts, uncles,



Topping Elementary grandparent Bobbi Bramble in North Kansas City Schools picks up a box of produce.

cousins, my mom the office manager, and my little brother.”

“We love to support our home state and surrounding communities,” she said of the LFPA program. “And what better way is there to do that than providing people access to free, healthier foods?”

LINC is working on expanding the reach of the program, and Proffer is eager to expand with it as well, said CEO Bob Proffer.

“They've figured out how to get the food to the counties and areas where there's need,” he said. The LFPA program is a shining example, he said, “where food produced in the United States -- (by) the American farmer -- is going to places that need it and the government is assisting in securing these holes and helping with it. I think it's a great program, a great thing to be a part of.”

On a recent distribution day in June, Topping Elementary School grandparent Bobbi Bramble had dropped her grandkids off at the summer school program at North Kansas City Schools’ Maplewood Elementary when the LINC team surprised her with news of the produce boxes.

“Wow,” she said as she took a look inside. She searched through the squashes and tomatoes. “Oh wow — and some sweet potatoes — this is nice.”

“It really helps out,” she said. “I’m on disability and I take care of my grandchildren. It’s great to be able to give them fresh vegetables. Knowing my kids are eating good — I love that. You can’t beat that.”

School administrators like King Summer Academy Principal Kent Mailen in the Kansas City Public Schools said the free produce aid is coming at a critical time for families.

“The price of food right now is outrageous,” Mailen said. “The fact that this food is being distributed to families not just in our school but in our community is going a very long way. We are very thankful.”

LINC Caring Communities Coordinator John Herrera at Boone Elementary in the Center School District said it’s not just school parents that are happy to hear that the produce will keep coming for many months to come.

Many of the school’s teachers are straining to support their families and are accepting produce boxes as well.

“The need,” he said, “goes across the whole gamut of the community.”

The local produce from Moyer and Proffer has also boosted the weekly food distributions at the Morning Star Youth and Family Life Center at 27th and Prospect Avenue in Kansas City.

Between 500 and 700 households come to pick up food each week, some represented in the more than 200 vehicles coming through the car line, and others by the more than 150 individuals who bring their bags and baskets through the walk-up line, said LINC Caring Communities Program Associate Drake Bushnell.

The Morning Star distribution, with food coming from Harvesters and many local donations, has always been able to provide good proteins, meats and grains, he said. “But getting the fresh, ready-to-eat, ready-to-cook produce is awesome.”



LINC students Javier and Dion load a box of produce into parent Laniesha Woods’ car at King Elementary School in the Kansas City Public Schools.

From Grandview in the far south of Jackson County to Buckner to the far east, and across the river into Clay County, thousands of pounds of produce have reached Missouri households, with more and wider-ranging distributions to come.

Other regional community partnerships, working with the Missouri Department of Social Services, are carrying out the same mission across Missouri.

And with the summer growing season now in full, the menu is only going to get better.

Tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, zucchini, cucumbers, lettuce and radishes are already going home with families

“And coming down the pipeline, the sweet corn is ready,” Nathan Moyer said. “And we’re going to have watermelon and canteloupe too.”



Banneker Elementary parent LaSha Smith: “I really appreciate it. And I know other moms appreciate it too.”



Parent Crystal Goodwin in the Center School District receives her box of produce full of vegetables shown in the image on the right.

Garden therapy: LINC learns community gardening for the health of children, families

Aug. 14, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



Kansas City Community Gardens School Gardens Director Hannah Ebling-Artz hands out seedlings for planting.

At the moment, the freshly churned garden bed was surrounded by adults — LINC Caring Communities coordinators and their staff — kneading the soil with seeds and seedlings.

But it was easy to imagine where this hot August training day at Kansas City Community Gardens was leading: Kids. Lots of them. Getting their hands dirty and their hopes high for an autumn harvest of their making for their schools and their home tables.

“That’s the heart of why we do this,” said Hannah Ebling-Artz, KCCG’s Schoolyard Gardens director.

Ebling-Artz knows what LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Andrew Smith knows from years of watching what gardening does for kids.

Children in LINC’s before- and after-school programs are going to be planting seeds, tending and watering — and watching — ready to be thrilled when those first green shoots sprout.

“Gardening is really therapeutic,” Smith said. His students at Pitcher Elementary in the Kansas City Public Schools “like to touch things, like to watch things grow from a seed and transform into a plant and they’re able to eat it.”

LINC now has community gardens at 28 of its Caring Communities sites, making it one of the largest partners within the KCCG's network of some 230 school gardens throughout the Kansas City area.

LINC's role is "special," Ebling-Artz said, "because (LINC coordinators) are all out in the community at schools every day, so it's a really natural partnership for (LINC) to lead gardens and connect with the community."

LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Stacey Garcia came away from the workshop with lessons on planting, garden spacing, watering strategies and a "cheat-sheet" handout complete with garden layouts, schedules and video links from KCCG.

She's imagining LINC's garden at Garfield Elementary in KCPS can become a hub of healthful community activity.

"My goal is to have people trading vegetables and making it more accessible and making sure kids don't miss out or not have access to fresh produce and vegetables," she said.

Garcia grew up in Kansas City's Northeast Neighborhood where she says she knows the reach of poverty and the scarcity of healthy food and grocery stores.

"That's why it really hits home for me," she said.

That's the kind of enthusiasm for community gardening that KCCG's Schools Gardens Coordinator Mackenzie Haas said carries the KCCG and LINC partnership.

"Honestly, just the passion that these LINC coordinators have for the garden and for inspiring students is really magical to me," she said. She expects coordinators like Garcia will "inspire" children and their families, "getting them out and having hands-on experience that is really important."

After-school gardens give children a new life skill, Smith said.

And, added Ebling-Artz, it's what children deserve.

"Kids deserve to know where their food comes from," she said. "They deserve to be involved in it and most importantly they deserve access to really fresh, good food that they want to grow."



Eating it up: LINC kids love hot after-school meals

Sept. 6, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



Grandview Middle School students line up for dinner at LINC Caring Communities after school.

The question in the moment was: Has LINC and its partnership with Total Man CDC solved a healthy dinner gap in several area school programs?

The answer, shown on the faces of children and teenagers, was happily clear.

“Take a look!” LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Jason Ervin said, with a sweeping gesture to the after-school students digging in at Grandview Middle School.

Hot barbecue chicken, a roll, fruit, sweet corn and milk were all being consumed amid a chorus of teenage chatter and laughter.

“They’re enjoying it!”

This is the continuing role of “a caring community,” Ervin said, “making sure our kids and families are provided a hot nutritious meal.”

Heading into the 2023-2024 school year, LINC wanted to help fill a gap in food service for the Grandview and Center school districts, plus Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy charter school and Topping Elementary in the North Kansas City School District.

LINC had teamed up with Total Man before, delivering meals to children during the summer months, said LINC Caring Communities Administrator Sean Akridge.

In all, the new program is serving 12 Caring Communities after-school sites, delivering a hot meal at the end of the day to complete the nutritional needs that the school districts provide during the school day with breakfast and lunch.

“Making that third meal available to a family is as important as the activities we do with kids,” Akridge said. “It’s another commitment we make for families.” With the healthy after-school meal, “kids are gearing up to continue learning with LINC.”

The motivation behind Total Man’s nutrition work is written in alarming nationwide statistics, said Total Man’s Bonita Powell in a training session with LINC’s team.

In the U.S., the diet for three out of four children is deficient in meat and fruits and vegetables, Powell said. And one in three children are overweight or obese.

The poor diets have exacerbated a growing problem with hypertension, heart stress and Type 2 diabetes, she said.

Total Man for more than a decade has developed programming in support of youth, fatherhood and healthy lifestyles. Providing good nutrition in hearty meals was another way to serve that mission.

“We understand the community that we work and serve within and the importance to do our part with the next generation,” Powell said. “Food may seem like a simple part, but it can make all the difference in a child’s well-being and future.”

The after-school meals being delivered to those 12 LINC programs include milk, meat or meat substitutes, vegetables, fruit and grains.

The food is delivered hot and the temperature can be maintained with sternos. LINC staff check the temperature of the meat with food thermometers and make a record of it before serving each meal.

Elementary children love the new meals as well. At Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy, the children in the cafeteria showed their satisfaction with their enthusiasm. And — if there was any doubt — when asked *How’s the food?*, they flashed thumbs-up all around.

On this day, the meal was barbecue chicken, a roll, fruit and corn. Other days since the start of the year they’ve had spaghetti, meatball subs and more. The menu for the season includes burritos, beef chili, fish patties, beef pasta, along with beans, cole slaw, green beans, pineapple, broccoli, tropical fruit and more.

As the Grandview middle schoolers were finishing their meal, Ervin debriefed them on what was next: reading and discussing materials for an anti-violence literature project.

And the youths gathered their things and mounted up, full and ready to learn.



A team from Total Man CDC arrives with the day’s hot meals at Grandview Middle School.



Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy children line up to get their evening hot meals during their LINC program.

U.S. Education Secretary Cardona: 'This is community coming together for children'

Sept. 6, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer

When it comes to throwing a party for education, Kansas City has all the goods, says U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.

He'd just stepped aside from the festivities gathered by the U.S. Department of Education, the Mattie Rhodes Center and LINC at Mattie Rhodes in Northeast Kansas City Sept. 5 to help get Cardona's "Raise the Bar" bus tour off to an impressive start.

"I saw community engagement," Cardona said. "I heard parents talk about how much they value the school community . . . how much they care about safety . . ."

Cardona had kicked soccer balls with children and members of the Kansas City Current soccer team.

He'd applauded the performance of a band of Kansas City high school students. He'd sat with parent leaders along with U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II and Missouri Education Commissioner Margie Vandeven.

He'd leaned in with children who were engaged in a science experiment with LINC partner Urban TEC and checked out another group of children building thinking skills with LINC Chess.

Mattie Rhodes had gathered many parents and community leaders who shared their educational hopes and fears in intimate conversations.

"This is a prime example," Cardona said, looking back at the afternoon's events, "of a community coming together to serve children . . . The African proverb says it takes a village, and this is what it means."

To set the scene for a community educational experience, Mattie Rhodes hosted the event with Rep. Cleaver and brought in local ethnic food, then rallied parents who were joined by many state education leaders and policy makers.

LINC and partners Mad Science, Urban TEC and the chess program provided educational fun that was accompanied by members of the KC Current women's soccer team, the teenaged band SouLuna and the Chiefs mascot, KC Wolf.

After the sessions with parent leaders, Cardona and Cleaver spoke with reporters, talking about the challenges waiting back in Washington, D.C.

"This lifts up the work we're doing in D.C. and what we're going to continue to advocate for," Cardona said. "We know public schools are the great equalizer. We need to support our public schools. We need to support our parents, our educators."



U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, center, watches with Missouri Education Commissioner Margie Vandeven and U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II as children engage in a science experiment with LINC partner Urban TEC and teacher Camille Wilcox during Cardona's "Raise the Bar" bus tour stop at the Mattie Rhodes Center Sept. 5 in Kansas City.

Missouri education board approves 'innovation waivers' for districts to opt out of state tests

One charter school and 19 districts to depart from state assessment standards for progress-focused evaluations

BY: [ANNELISE HANSHAW](#) - AUGUST 16, 2023 6:20 AM



The Missouri State Board of Education approves the Success Ready Students Network's request for an innovation waiver Tuesday (Annalise Hanshaw/Missouri Independent).

The Missouri State Board of Education unanimously approved an exemption for 19 districts and one charter school to measure student achievement using alternative assessments instead of the state's prescribed methods.

Students in these districts will begin to see changes this fall as districts in the [Success Ready Students Network](#) implement their plan.

"Progress monitoring during the school year is already taking place within these school districts, though it may not be monitored by the state at this time," Jeremy Tucker, superintendent of the Liberty 53 School District and Success Ready Students Network facilitator, told the board Tuesday. "We can really add more touch points from the start of the year all the way to the end of the year."

The state board's approval, called an innovation waiver, will allow the districts to break from components of the state's evaluation system for three years.

"(Missouri Assessment Program results) don't inform what we do on a regular basis," Branson Public Schools Superintendent Brad Swofford told the board, mentioning the delay in receiving the test's results.

Teachers prefer to look at assessments that show students progress over the school year, allowing them to adapt to the data and instill confidence in learning students, he said. Branson currently gives students NWEA assessments, tests that adapt questions to students' achievement level and outputs a number to describe their level of knowledge.

Lee's Summit R-VII School District, another of the districts in the network, will use this assessment to track students' progress over the school year, Associate Superintendent of Academic Services Christy Barger told The Independent.

State Board of Education member Mary Schrag said she has heard that in states that already have similar programs, students feel "much more vested" in their educational progress.

Students in participating districts will likely complete the MAP test to comply with federal requirements, unless districts receive a federal waiver, but their schools will not be scored at the state level based on those results.

Consequently, the accreditation status of the 20 districts will be paused throughout the three-year pilot program.

Parents should still expect accountability because the districts are responsible for reporting students' literacy and numeracy scores.

Barger said the innovation waiver allows schools to test the progress of all students, including high achievers, instead of administering an annual exam.

"We can hold districts accountable and measure district quality in a way that supports student learning," she said.

The ability to apply for innovation waivers is new, as lawmakers passed the legislation in 2022. Kansas City Democratic Sen. Lauren Arthur, who pushed for the legislation, [posted on Twitter](#) she was glad to see the new law put to use.

"These districts have proposed meaningful changes to the current system in order to center personalized student learning, support teachers, and bring our classrooms into the 21st century," she wrote.

The districts in the Success Ready Students Network are: Affton 101, Branson R-IV, Center 58, Confluence Academies charter school, Fayette R-III, Lebanon R-III, Lee's Summit R-VII, Lewis County C-1, Liberty 53, Lindbergh, Lonedell R-14, Mehlville R-IX, Neosho, Ozark R-VI, Parkway C-2, Pattonville R-III, Raymore-Peculiar R-II, Ritenour, Shell Knob 78 and Ste. Genevieve County R-II.

Poverty Rate Soared in 2022 as Aid Ended and Prices Rose

The increase in poverty reversed two years of large declines. Median income, adjusted for inflation, fell 2.3 percent to \$74,580.



By Ben Casselman and Lydia DePillis

Sept. 12, 2023

Poverty increased sharply last year in the United States, particularly among children, as living costs rose and federal programs that provided aid to families during the pandemic were allowed to expire.

The poverty rate rose to 12.4 percent in 2022 from 7.8 percent in 2021, the largest one-year jump on record, the Census Bureau said Tuesday. Poverty among children more than doubled, to 12.4 percent, from a record low of 5.2 percent the year before. Those figures are according to the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which factors in the impact of government assistance and geographical differences in the cost of living.

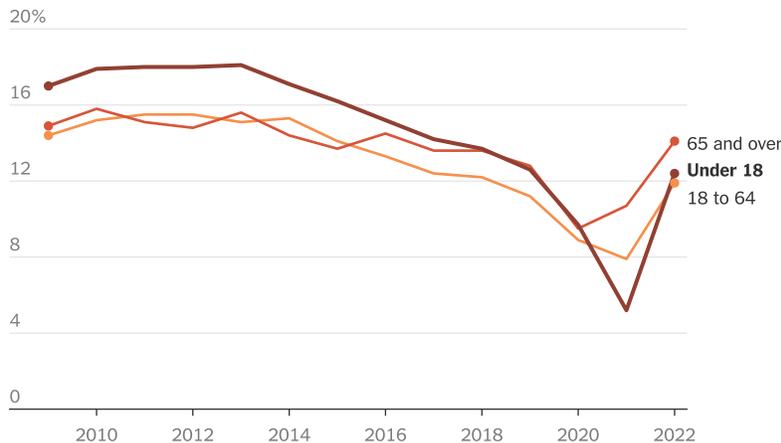
The increases followed two years of historically large declines in poverty, driven primarily by safety net programs that were created or expanded during the pandemic. Those included a series of direct payments to households in 2020 and 2021, enhanced unemployment and nutrition benefits, increased rental assistance and an expanded child tax credit, which briefly provided a guaranteed income to families with children.

Nearly all of those programs had expired by last year, however, leaving many families struggling to stay ahead of rising prices despite a strong job market and improving economy. Overall poverty now looks much the way it did in 2019, with the notable difference that financial hardship has declined among Black households, reflecting higher incomes in recent years.

The Share of Children in Poverty More Than Doubled

The poverty rate for those under 18 rose to 12.4 percent last year.

Share of each age group living in poverty



Note: Data are the supplemental poverty rates, which adjust for geographic differences. The rates also include wage income, taxes and the fullest account of government aid. • Source: Census Bureau • By Karl Russell

One pandemic program that did not expire was a temporary freeze in Medicaid terminations, a move that allowed the program to cover more Americans than ever. Because of that program, the share of Americans without health insurance matched a record low last year of 7.9 percent. But states are unwinding that temporary coverage, and the uninsured rate has probably increased in recent months.

The increasing cost of living added to the challenge last year. The poverty threshold, which is based on the cost of essential items like food and housing, rose sharply: A family of four living in a rental home was considered poor under the supplemental measure if the family's income was less than \$34,518 in 2022, up from \$31,453 in 2021.

Higher prices didn't just hit the poor. Median household income, adjusted for inflation, fell 2.3 percent in 2022, to \$74,580, as the fastest inflation since 1981 overwhelmed the impact of increased employment and rising wages.

"People are working hard," said Margaret O'Connor, who runs Common Pantry, a small food bank in Chicago. "They're just not making ends meet, the cost of living is too much." Rent in particular has soaked up a lot of people's extra earnings.

Common Pantry, like many food banks, had demand explode during the pandemic and then recede in 2021, when people received stimulus checks, enhanced unemployment benefits and the child tax credit, among other assistance. Then, as those programs lapsed, demand began to climb again.

“2022 just threw us,” Ms. O’Conor said. “We were not expecting it. I don’t think any food pantry was really expecting it.”

The White House, in a blog post previewing the report, argued that more recent data “tell a more optimistic story.” Inflation has cooled in recent months, while the job market has remained strong and wages continue to rise.

The hot job market has had clear benefits for those able to take advantage of it. Many workers, especially in low-paying industries like hospitality and retail, experienced significant wage gains in 2022. Supersized unemployment benefits and other cash payments allowed workers to hold out for higher-paying jobs. Income for the poorest 20 percent of households — excluding tax credits and some other government benefits — rose 4.3 percent last year, adjusted for inflation. Income gains also outpaced inflation for the least educated workers.

Those effects were more pronounced for women. The share of working women who were employed full time for the whole year reached 65.6 percent, the highest level on record — which also allowed real earnings to fall less for women than they did for men.

The story was not as rosy for Americans over 65, for whom the poverty rate rose to 14.1 percent, despite an 8.7 percent cost-of-living increase in Social Security payments. Labor force participation among older people remains depressed, as many lost jobs and have had a difficult time re-entering the workplace.

“People became more isolated, experienced significantly more health problems,” said Jess Maurer, the executive director of the Maine Council on Aging. “Older people had a harder time coming out of the pandemic, coming back into the community.”

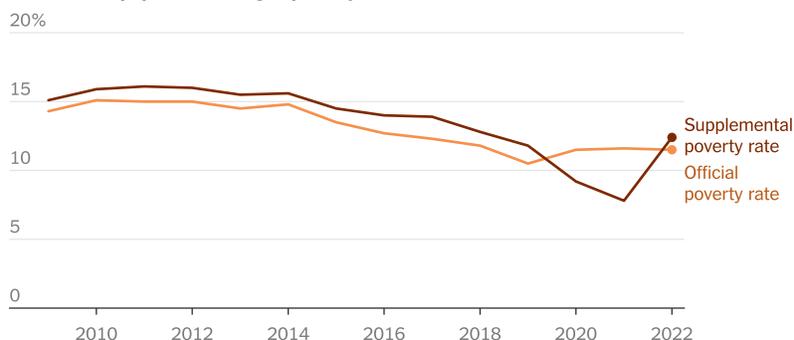
Inequality, as measured by the gap in pretax income between the richest and poorest 10 percent of households, narrowed, as most of the decrease in median incomes came from those at the middle and top of the wage distribution. Racial gaps also shrank, as white households lost ground to inflation, while inflation-adjusted income was little changed for other racial and ethnic groups.

The “official” poverty rate — an older measure that is widely considered outdated because it excludes many of the government’s most important anti-poverty programs, among other shortcomings — was nearly flat last year, at 11.5 percent, reflecting the offsetting forces of higher prices and increased earnings of low-wage workers. By that measure, the poverty rate for Black Americans was 17.1 percent, the lowest rate on record.

U.S. Poverty Increased Last Year

The supplemental poverty rate — which accounts for the impact of government programs — increased to 12.4 percent last year, surpassing the official poverty rate, which was 11.5 percent.

Share of the population living in poverty



Note: The supplemental rate adjusts for geographic differences. It also includes wage income, taxes and the fullest account of government aid. • Source: Census Bureau • By Karl Russell

“There has really been this resurgence in terms of the labor market fortunes of Black workers, particularly Black male workers,” said Michelle Holder, an economist at John Jay College in New York. “The most important element for people in my community is can we get a job, and if we can get a job, can we keep a job? And right now, both things look pretty darn good.”

But those unable to work, or unable to work full-time, faced a one-two punch of higher costs and lost benefits in 2022 — problems that have continued this year. Increased federal nutrition benefits, one of the last vestiges of pandemic aid efforts, expired last spring. Factoring in the loss of benefits, real income fell for the poorest households in 2022, and inequality rose.

“Tight labor markets are incredibly powerful, they’re really important, but they’re not sufficient,” said Elisabeth Jacobs, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute.

When a high-risk pregnancy forced Amber Summers to leave her job in rural Southern Illinois in 2021, the expanded child tax credit provided a lifeline. The \$250 monthly payments helped cover her mortgage and allowed her son, now 9, to play Little League Baseball for the first time.

“It was financial stability and stress relief for our family,” she said.

But when the payments lapsed at the end of 2021, the family’s finances quickly unraveled — especially after Ms. Summers’s husband, Tim, contracted Covid and lost his job as a cook. And while both of them have since returned to work, neither is receiving full-time hours, and they are falling further behind on their bills. Opportunities for better-paying jobs are limited in their area.

“The child tax credit helped pull our family out of poverty for such a short period of time,” Ms. Summers, 32, said.

Congress passed the expanded child tax credit as part of the American Rescue Plan, President Biden’s pandemic-relief package, in early 2021. But while other Covid-era relief programs were always intended to expire once the emergency passed, supporters hoped to make the expanded child credit permanent.

That didn’t happen. Faced with united opposition from congressional Republicans as well as some conservative Democrats, Mr. Biden dropped his effort to extend the program at the end of 2021; a renewed push failed again last year. The rise in poverty in 2022, social policy experts said, was the inevitable result of that decision.

“Today’s Census report shows the dire consequences of congressional Republicans’ refusal to extend the enhanced Child Tax Credit, even as they advance costly corporate tax cuts,” Mr. Biden said in a statement.

Correspondingly, the highest increases in poverty were in the South, where research has shown the child tax credit had the greatest effect, and among Alaska Natives and American Indians, for whom the poverty rate rebounded to 23.2 percent.

Critics of the child tax credit and other pandemic aid have argued that the rapid rebound in poverty after the programs’ expiration is evidence that the progress made against poverty in recent years was, in effect, artificial. Michael Strain, an economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, argued that programs that offer incentives to work — such as the earned-income tax credit and the standard child tax credit — have led to more sustainable gains.

“Yes, this alleviated child poverty, but it didn’t really do a whole lot to encourage self-sufficiency,” he said.

Progressives take a different lesson: Government programs succeeded in lifting millions of people out of poverty. An analysis by researchers at Columbia University on Tuesday found that child poverty would have been nearly 50 percent lower in 2022 if the expanded tax credit had remained in place. The programs might also have had longer-run benefits, they argue, but ended before those effects could be seen.

“The last few years just illustrated in an incredible way the power of effective government intervention,” said Arloc Sherman, a vice president at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a progressive research organization. “The last couple years, through a plunge in poverty and what is now a record single-year increase in poverty in 2022, have shown that poverty is very much a policy choice.”

Margot Sanger-Katz contributed reporting.

A correction was made on Sept. 12, 2023: An earlier version of this article misstated the “official” poverty rate for Black Americans in 2022. It was 17.1 percent, not 12.4 percent.

When we learn of a mistake, we acknowledge it with a correction. If you spot an error, please let us know at nytnews@nytimes.com. [Learn more](#)

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section B, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Poverty Rate Rose in 2022 As Aid Ended