

# LINC Commission Meeting

January 23, 2023



Hairstylists from Ea La Mar's Cosmetology and Barber College in Kansas City provided free haircuts for students at King Elementary School's LINC Caring Communities program on the last day before the winter holiday. The stylists were recruited by Justin Dixon, a Lincoln College Prep graduate and an Ea La Mar's student.



# 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, Jan. 23, 2023 | 4 – 5:30 pm  
Kauffman Foundation

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## Agenda

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- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. October minutes
  - a. Approval (motion)
- III. LINC Finances
  - a. FY 2022 Financial Audit
  - b. FY 2023 Budget
  - c. Approvals (motion)
- IV. Thanksgiving Food Distribution (video)
- V. Superintendent Reports
- VI. Utility Assistance
- VII. DESE/Contracts Update
- VIII. Calvin Wainright
- IX. LINC Year in Photos



## THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – OCT. 17, 2022

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

Bob Bartman  
Bert Berkley  
Sharon Cheers  
Tom Davis  
David Disney

SuEllen Fried  
Rob Givens  
Anita Gorman  
Tom Lewin  
David Ross

*A motion to approve the minutes of the Sept. 19, 2022, LINC Commission meeting was approved unanimously.*

### Superintendents Reports

- **Anissa Gastin** (Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Fort Osage School District) reported on the district's progress in bond construction projects, including a new central office and tech department which are projected to be ready in mid-December. Work on a new gymnasium is proceeding well and ahead of schedule. The district is working on changing its professional development initiatives to build more of the PD into the teachers' work day. The district is building its grow-your-own teacher workforce program, including creating internships for district graduates in teaching programs to teach in Fort schools. District students interested in teaching careers recently took a field trip to the University of Central Missouri.
- **Craig Merkersen** (Student Achievement Officer, Hickman Mills School District) reported that the passage of a bond issue and tax levy increase in August has allowed the district to boost its teacher salaries so that they are one of the highest-paying districts in the area. The district is continuing to work with LINC in providing English language classes for district parents from beginner to advanced. The district appreciated LINC's Family Night event providing food, games and support at the Sept. 30 Ruskin High School football game.
- **Anita Gorman** reported on behalf of **Dan Clemens** (Superintendent, North Kansas City Schools) that the NKC Schools Education Foundation Breakfast will be held this Thursday, Oct. 20, at the KCI Expo Center. Middle and high school student performances will begin in November. 97% of last year's freshman students are on track to graduate. Plans for the new Nashua and Crestview elementary buildings are underway. District enrollment is at 21,490 students, and 1,000 students are enrolled at the Early Education Center.
- **Kevin Foster** (Executive Director, Genesis School) reported that tomorrow Genesis will hold Literacy Night. This Friday, Kansas City Police Department officers will give a presentation on conflict resolution for Project Sankofa. Foster thanked LINC for assistance with data mapping, which established that 84% of Genesis students live within three miles of school.
- **Donnie Mitchell** (Superintendent, Lee A. Tolbert Academy) reported that the school will begin work with a culture consultant this week. The school has shifted to doing staff professional development during the school day so that students will not miss out on instruction days. Student attendance is at 90% for the semester to date.

Executive Vice President **Janet Miles-Bartee** introduced a discussion of Mo. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education funding of LINC. Since funding of LINC Out of School Time activities was transferred from Mo. Dept of Social Services to DESE, LINC has faced challenges in continuing to use the funding to support the whole child.

**Rick Bien** of Lathrop GPM presented the timeline of the transition of OST funding from DSS to DESE: following the transfer of funding to DESE by executive order and an assessment of the LINC program, on May 5, 2022, DESE proposed to extend funding for another year. On July 31 DESE sent LINC a contract with a new scope of work.

Since then LINC has been negotiating with DESE to continue the contract on the original terms. Meanwhile, LINC has been working with the governor's office and others to have the OST money back to DSS. Discussion followed.

**Clyde McQueen**, CEO of Full Employment Council, reported on the effort to create a workforce development system that is sustainable, responsive to community need, and adaptive to changing economic conditions. Strategies include making transportation, childcare, housing, and credit affordable and accessible. FEC has been working with major utility and automobile manufacturers to provide positions where staff can earn while they learn, and with childcare providers to provide a career pathway for staff.

Director of Human Resources **Trent DeVreugd** recognized **Marge Randle** for her role as Administrator of the Mo. Family Support Division in the partnership between FSD, FEC and LINC to create the area welfare-to-work system.

LINCWorks Director **Dawn Patterson** reported that the partnership has been successful due to a mutual open-door policy that allows the system to adapt to changing conditions, e.g., finding new ways to support families during the pandemic.

LINC Retirement Committee chair **Rob Givens** reported on its work with Two West, which serves as co-fiduciary, to manage LINC's retirement program. In 2019, Two West helped LINC move the plan assets to Vanguard, which provides lower fees and better customer service. LINC's program recently gained an exclusion mechanism allowing participants to withdraw money from their retirement account to pay for the cost of birth and adoption. There are currently two open seats on the committee (one Commissioner, one staff).

**Tim Jansen** of Two West reported on the services it provides to LINC staff, including individual financial consulting, and to the Retirement Committee, including fiduciary guidance provider analysis, investment analysis, and plan design. **Trent DeVreugd** reported that the Class D exclusion has been removed from the program, opening it up to part-time staff participation once they reach 1,000 hours.

**Janet Miles-Bartee** introduced a discussion of Caring Communities. LINC has had challenges with hiring and retaining site staff and therefore with getting students in the program. Supervisors are having to act as coordinators to ensure regulations are met and families are being served.

Caring Communities Administrator **Sean Akridge** reported on state licensing issues. DESE has new licensing coordinators who are unfamiliar with LINC. Each year LINC's 47 OST sites receive an inspection; this year licensing conducted three site investigations for lack of staff. Coordinators are working hard to find staff; several coordinators are working at multiple sites because not all coordinators are licensable. LINC is working with Penn Valley Community College to provide coordinators with opportunities to gain credit hours to make them licensable. All students in the A+ program (not just those who are over age 18) are now required to have background checks to volunteer in LINC programs.

**Trent DeVreugd** reported that LINC is continually interviewing candidates for part-time and full-time positions. As of today LINC is in process of bringing 11 part-time staff as well as four new coordinators in the last two weeks.

**Sean Akridge** reported that LINC sites are planning Lights On Afterschool events Oct. 19–31 with fun activities involving partners like Mad Science and Nicki Fit. The national celebration recognizes the importance of afterschool programs. LINC recently hosted Family Night at the Ruskin High School football game. A video of the event was shown.

The meeting was adjourned.



# Walking the line: How LINC connected families to millions in rent, utility assistance

January 10, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



*LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Danisha Clarkson visits with neighbors in line outside the Morning Star Youth and Family Life Center in Kansas City.*

From the beginning, LINC’s effort to connect nearly 2,000 households to more than \$2.8 million in U.S. rental and utility bill assistance funds was essentially a street mission.

All along, LINC’s team understood that the people who most needed help from the government’s relief funds were among those least likely to know about it, or least likely to have the online capabilities to access the funds even if they did.

That’s why, the week before Christmas, LINC’s Danisha Clarkson once again walked the line of cars and people lined up for a food distribution at LINC’s [Caring Communities site at Morning Star](#) Missionary Baptist Church, 27th and Prospect Avenue.

The air was gray, cold and getting colder. Clarkson, the LINC Caring Communities Coordinator at Morning Star, went car-to-car in her blue LINC wool hat and sweatshirt.

“I want to let you know we’re doing rental and utility assistance inside the center today!” she said with wispy breath into the opened passenger window of an idling pickup truck. “If you know anybody, please share!”

The man at the wheel called back.

“One of my employees lives in a house and they don’t have enough money to pay the water bill,” he said.

“All right. Tell them to come up to Morning Star,” Clarkson said. *When?* The driver asked. “They can come up now,”

Clarkson said. “You can call them right now.”

Inside the center, LINC’s team of Kachina Powell and Latricia Bradley were geared up again with their laptops, scanners and printers, linked into the regional data base and the local utilities’ payment web pages, both of them trained to navigate the government’s dense application process.

“We do all the work for them,” Powell said. “The people we assist don’t have access to computers. They may not have access to printers to print out the documents they need. We enter in all the information in the utility assistance accounts to get them some help.”

LINC [set up its assistance clinic](#) in the spring of 2021 after meeting with representatives of the local utilities — Evergy, Spire and KC Water Services — and the Mid-America Assistance Coalition who had come to LINC with a problem: Millions of pandemic relief dollars were available to help families but almost no one was accessing it.

By creating a clinic, LINC was able to bring together all the resources families needed to complete the application process, and then LINC’s Caring Communities Coordinators and partners throughout some of Kansas City’s most vulnerable neighborhoods spread the word.

The City of Kansas City used LINC’s model [to establish citywide clinics](#) and soon Kansas City became one of the nation’s most effective cities in getting needy households access to the government aid.

As the pandemic relief aid neared the end, the Morning Star team redoubled its efforts to reach families in need as the holidays — and a bitter winter chill — were coming their way.

“We’re excited to be able to go outside and perhaps bless a family whose (utilities) are being shut off,” Clarkson said.

One of the people she met out in the line said that her heat was off. She learned from LINC what documents she needed to gather and went back home, able to return within the hour and get the help she needed.

“That’s the importance of going out there and letting people know, because a lot of people do not know,” Clarkson said.



LINC’s team of Latricia Bradley, center, and Kachina Powell, right, talk with a client about utility bill assistance.

## LINC and Morning Star: By the Numbers

**Total Utilities and Rent Aid Processed**

**\$ 2.8 million**

More than 1,900 households

May 2021-January 2023  
With KC Water Services, Evergy,  
Spire, and KC Neighborhoods  
and Housing Services.

**Total Vaccinations**

**25,685**

February 2021  
3000 vaccinations. With the Missouri  
National Guard and University  
Health.

March 2021- March 2022  
More than 22,600 vaccinations  
with the MO National Guard, the K.C.  
Fire Dept., Heart to Heart Intl. and  
University Health

**Total Food Distribution**

**5 million lbs**

More than 75,000 household meals distributed

December 2020  
With Harvesters, Kanbe’s Markets,  
Church of the Resurrection  
39,335 pounds of food, distributed  
to 612 families

March 2021-January 2023  
With Community Action, Harvesters  
4.9 million pounds of food,  
distributing 75,000 household meals.



# Night English classes illuminate Hickman Mills' multi-cultural community

December 14, 2022

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



*Hickman Mills School District Superintendent Yaw Obeng, dark suit, left, visits the district's ESL class during the opening of the fall semester. Photo from Hickman Mills School District.*

To get some idea of the demands on the Hickman Mills School District's night English classes, consider this:

When the district celebrated a multi-cultural night in November, the families that came represented 36 different nations, said Swapnam Kumar.

Kumar, as the district's English language development specialist, knows the families and their countries. Many of them came to the night English classes that the district set up this school year with financial support from LINC.

Kumar's office sits in the same hallway as the district's enrollment office — keeping her close at hand to help new arrivals, refugees and migrants with their questions.

Among so many needs, one question kept coming: Where could they get help learning English?

"A lot of parents were asking me," Kumar said. "They were wanting to learn."

One of the parents was a cook at a local Mexican restaurant, said Jill Grigsby, one of the night school's teachers. The cook after several months on the job still could not understand the special requests coming from the servers taking the orders.

Another woman came with her 22-year-old daughter — a graduate of the district — so she could cross the language barrier without having to rely on her daughter. And soon after the daughter got her mom started, her father came too.

Grigsby became a teacher of English as a second language after several years as an elementary school teacher at Primi-



tivo Garcia Elementary in Kansas City's largely Hispanic west side.

She could see how parents — whatever their native language — knew how important it was to be able to speak English.

"I like seeing them learning," she said. "I just enjoy it."

Timothy Henderson, another of the night school's teachers along with Jed Yarick, came to the work out of a love for speaking languages.

Henderson built his Spanish on his own, watching telenovelas and Spanish talk shows, sometimes turning on English subtitles and then turning them off.

He's not just working on Spanish, but Arabic and Pashto too.

Henderson was working at a Kansas City grocery store and became remarkable for his ability to speak to many of the non-English-speaking customers. One customer who noticed was an administrator at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

The UMKC staffer convinced Henderson he should get a teaching degree, because he was right that Henderson would enjoy this work.

"I love to see the sparks when someone is learning," Henderson said, "whether they are 3 or 103. It can't be taken from you."

In Yarick's class, he specializes teaching English to high school students and to several Ukrainian refugee families.

Over all around 50 adults have taken the English classes since the district started them last summer — at times turning over as many as 25 children to a childcare classroom while their parents learned.

The turnout confirmed the need for help that Kumar raised up when Hickman Mills staff and community partners were preparing for the March 2022 Hickman Mills Family Summit.

LINC is part of that planning team and LINC Caring Communities Administrator Sean Akridge said the idea of a class for English as a second language made perfect sense.

LINC's Caring Communities programs — anchored at all of Hickman Mills' elementary schools and its middle school and high school, as well as schools in the Kansas City Public Schools, Grandview, Center and North Kansas City school districts — believe in partnerships that strengthen families and neighborhoods.

LINC is helping fund the ESL classes, Akridge said, "because supporting parents in being able to communicate better helps build community with all of our families."

The classrooms for the ESL courses are stocked with picture dictionaries. Posters on the walls show lessons in money denominations, colors, household items, groceries and essential questions.

"It's a long process," Kumar said.

But along the way, the teachers say, teachers and students alike enjoy the multi-cultural experience they share.

They love to share the stories of their home countries, Henderson said, and they want to feel at home in their new community. And there's optimism there, as well.

On the last days of the original summer session, the classes practiced English by exploring the list of civic questions on the test for U.S. citizenship, Henderson said. Because that's what the students wanted.

The curriculum and agenda for each class "doesn't come straight out of a box," he said. "We find out what they want to learn."

The classes will return in the spring. The district hasn't determined the date yet, Kumar said, but they'll put the word out when they do — in multiple languages.

# Looking good, feeling good: LINC families at King get holiday haircuts

December 19, 2022

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer

Razors hummed. Boys winced. Hairstylists volunteering their time eyeballed precise trims as they made their holiday haircuts perfect.

“This is really cool,” said parent B’Lasha Perkins, taking in the scene on the Friday before the holiday break, Dec. 16, at LINC Caring Communities at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in Kansas City.

“And it’s not just anybody (cutting the hair),” said parent La-Shonda Washington, as she watched her son get his special trim. “They’ve got people with *skill*.”

Those people were fellow hairstylists rounded up by Justin Dixon, a Lincoln College Prep graduate and a student at the Ea La Mar’s Cosmetology and Barber College in Kansas City.

“It’s about feeling good, looking good and getting confidence,” said Dixon, who brought what he sees as a good mental health program back to King as a reprise of a similar free hairstyling event they did at the start of the school year.

“(Feeling good about one’s hair) goes a long way from social to education to everything,” he said. “You feel good, you look good, you play good, you have a good day.”

The barber shop, set up in a lounge next to King’s cafeteria, was one highlight of a full afternoon of holiday celebration at LINC’s Caring Communities program at King. Families were sharing pizza. Children were taking home free books from First Book and toys from the U.S. Marine’s Toys for Tots.

“It’s nice they’re able to bring people in to give the kids haircuts,” Perkins said. “Food is out there. Gifts for the kids . . . This is awesome.”

LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Darryl Bush has known Dixon since he was young, coaching him in youth basketball. Families were excited to see that the holiday barber shop was coming to King, he said, especially after they saw the cuts students received in August.

King Elementary Principal Dana-Mae Abram said the holiday barbershop provides important support for the children, their families and the school.

“We want to make sure children look their best so they can do their best,” she said. “Many of these kids have gone through something. Looking good makes the heart feel happy and good.”



*Hair stylists from the Ea La Mar’s Cosmetology and Barber College give free haircuts for LINC families at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary Caring Communities Dec. 16.*

# Commission could force Kansas City charter school to close due to low performance

By Sarah Ritter  
January 4, 2023

A Kansas City charter school is at risk of closing, with a state commission warning that it intends to revoke its charter following years of poor academic performance.

The Missouri Charter Public School Commission notified Genesis School on Kansas City's East Side that on June 30, it plans to nullify the charter based on "clear evidence of under performance in academic outcomes." According to the letter sent last month, the commission also claims that the charter has failed to retain students.

Genesis is appealing the recommendation and has requested a public hearing, hoping to rally the community to fight for the school to stay open. Executive Director Kevin Foster said that since 2020, the charter's state assessment scores have improved, "despite an unprecedented pandemic" and that it has seen academic growth among the students it serves, many of whom are considered at-risk or below grade level.

"We want to serve this community, these kids, these families. And we want to be able to do that well," Foster told The Star on Wednesday. "Eliminating the school is not good for the kids that go here and not good for the community."

Genesis, at 3800 E. 44th St. in the Thornberry Unit of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Kansas City, serves roughly 200 students in grades kindergarten through eight. After years of low performance, in 2020, the state agreed to renew Genesis' five-year charter, but put it on academic probation. The next year, the state school board voted to make the Missouri Charter Public School Commission the school's sponsor, after the University of Missouri lost its authority to sponsor Genesis and two other charter schools.

Genesis would not be able to operate next school year without a sponsor.

The charter's student achievement scores have regu-



*Genesis charter school, shown in 2011 at 3800 E. 44th St., is at risk of closing after years of low academic performance, a state commission says. DAVID EULITT The Kansas City Star*

## Public Hearing

### Genesis School Charter Revocation

Monday, January 30, 2023

5:30–7:30 p.m.

KC Public Library, Bluford Branch  
3050 Prospect Avenue, Kansas City, Mo.



*Photo from genesisisschool.org*



larly lagged behind the state average, peer schools and Kansas City Public Schools, the state commission says. In three of the last four years, the school's performance has been below that of KCPS.

And over the past two decades, the commission said students' academic achievement "has been inadequate to prepare them for success in high school or beyond."

"While there have been scattered instances of growth, those instances were never sufficient to prepare students for what is next in their lives. Nor were those instances sustained. Instead, (Genesis) regularly showed one or sometimes even two years of improvement, followed by declines," the commission said in its letter last month.

The commission said that in the 2015-2016 school year, the charter school saw 27% of K-5 students scoring at proficient or advanced levels in English. Five years later, that fell to 2.6%. Over the same time period, the percentage of K-5 students who scored proficient or advanced in math declined from nearly 24% to 8%.

In 2021-22, the commission says, 12.6% of Genesis students in poverty scored proficient in English and math. For students with disabilities, 3.7% scored proficient in English and 0% were proficient in math.

"Those numbers are not even close to being good enough. Behind those numbers are real children who must soon enter middle school unable to read, write or do math at grade level," the commission said.

But Foster argued that characterization is unfair, and those data points do not tell the full story. He acknowledges that Genesis' achievement levels have trailed behind the state and the KCPS district average, but said that school officials are focused on guiding students, many of whom are behind grade level, to grow and meet higher academic goals each year.

"Of the seven years that the State of Missouri has reported growth, Genesis growth has been above the state mean five times. Three times, the growth was in the top 20% of districts in the state," school officials said.

Foster said that the charter's test scores were lower than expected in both 2018 and 2019, which he attributed to there being a new state achievement test. The school's growth in 2021, officials said, reflects a strategy to improve achievement as well as "an unmatched commitment to meet students' needs during COVID."

"Growth and improvement from pre-pandemic levels is not common within KC, the state or the nation. We are proud of the progress the school and students are making and stand ready to share and defend it," school officials said in a statement.

Still, the charter commission said that Genesis needs to achieve sustained academic growth never before seen at the school.

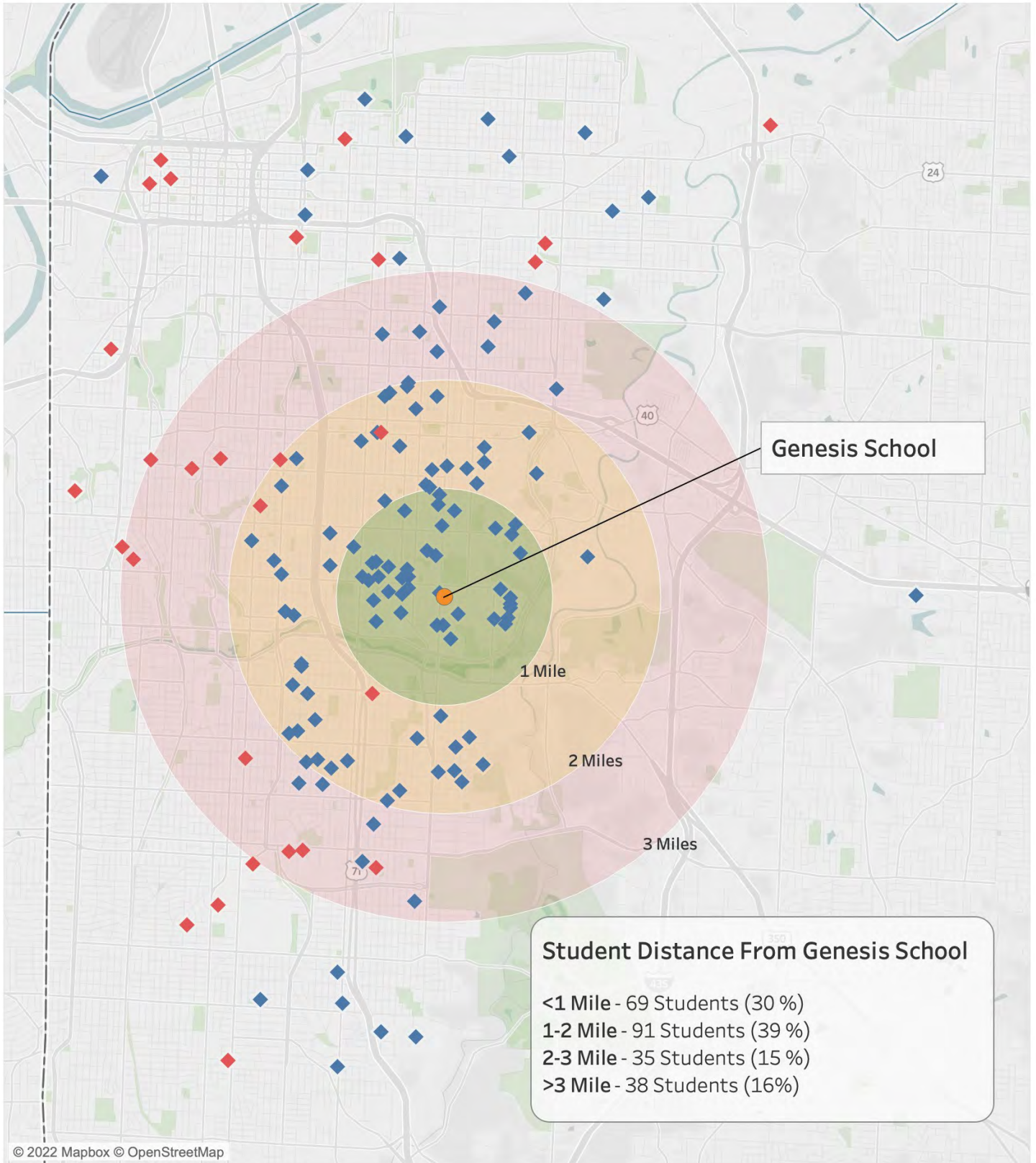
Genesis would "need to maintain a consistent and steady growth similar to the top 20% of schools in the state in both (English Language Arts) and Math to reach its performance contract goals," the commission said in its letter, adding that the school, "has not demonstrated consistent positive growth in either subject over its last two charter terms."

Genesis, Foster said, has served Kansas City's East Side for 47 years, and is now one of the state's oldest charter schools. He said the vast majority of its students live within a few miles of the building.

Foster worries that closing the school would be devastating to the neighborhood.

"Our school community will be harmed if Genesis were no longer a choice for our families," school officials said. "Other choices that the Commission seems to believe are better choices for our students and families are available to families now, but they choose us."

# Genesis School Student Geographic Distribution



**Map Points**  
■ Charter Schools  
■ Genesis Students



# KCPS revises recommendations for school closings

January 11, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



Kansas City Public Schools’ plan to close schools is taking a big step back.

Only two schools — Longfellow and Troost elementaries — are slated for closing at this time, according to revised recommendations presented to the school board before a crowded audience Wednesday night.

Most notably, the district is no longer proposing that Central or Northeast high schools be closed, as was the case in a proposal offered in October that would have closed or repurposed 10 buildings over the next four year as part of the district’s [Blueprint 2030 plan](#).

Instead, the district is proposing a renewed community process it is calling “Moving Forward Together” to inform difficult decisions that still loom for the district.

The board expects to vote on the new proposal at its meeting Jan. 25.

More closings will likely be necessary in coming years, but the district is in the process of selecting its next superintendent and also wants to focus on a potential bond issue election in 2024.

Interim Superintendent Jennifer Collier said the new plan is a “call to action” to the community to fully engage in ensuring a “thriving, sustainable school system.”

“If there is not a significant increase in enrollment we will likely be back here to discuss closures,” she said. “I wish it was not true, but it is true with the current reality.”



The new proposal comes after many crowded and emotional public meetings.

School closings have proven to be the most difficult step in building a future vision for the district as it aims to build a stronger, more equitable education experience for Kansas City children.

The district, now with an enrollment of 13,340 students, needs to close buildings after decades of declining enrollment to better focus its resources on improving the classroom and extra-curricular experiences across all of its remaining schools.

By consolidating students and staff into fewer schools, the district expects to provide more robust academics — such as science labs in high schools, and foreign languages and instrumental music in elementary schools — for all students in higher quality facilities.

Students will enjoy fuller and stronger extracurricular experiences like band, debate, sports and other clubs.

The mission, Collier said when the original closings plan was proposed, is to build a district community that is “connected, empowered and liberated — every child, every educator, every family, every day.”

The original closings proposal was projected to redirect \$13.2 million to Blueprint 2030 plans.

Reducing the number of closings will strain some of the budgetary gains the district factored into its improvement plans, but the district administration and the board made changes in response to strong public feedback after the original closings plan was [unveiled in October](#).

The district currently operates 37 schools. LINC provides [Caring Communities](#) services through before- and after-school programs at all of the district's elementary schools.

Systemwide, KCPS and independent public charter schools in Kansas City operate 80 schools serving a total enrollment of some 26,700 students. By comparison, the Springfield, Mo., school district, with an enrollment of 23,428, operates 50 schools.

In its original proposal in October, the district planned to shut down or repurpose Central High School and James, Longfellow and Troost elementary schools in 2023-24. Whittier, Wheatley and King elementary schools would have been impacted in 2024-25. And Northeast High School and Faxon and Melcher elementaries would have been impacted in 2026-27.

The district’s original proposal also called for three new buildings: a new south middle school, a new King Elementary School and a new elementary school in the Northeast Kansas City neighborhood.

The new King would draw students from current King, Faxon and Melcher schools.

Now only Longfellow and Troost are proposed for closing, but difficult decisions still lie ahead as the district and its community reimagine the education of Kansas City’s children.

“You've shown us you care about our district,” Collier said to the audience and the full community. “We need your input. We need your advocacy and your warm critique.”

“We need your voice.”

# Fort Osage's Jason Snodgrass named Missouri superintendent of the year

November 8, 2022

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



Fort Osage Superintendent Jason Snodgrass was named Missouri's superintendent of the year, but the seventh-year leader sees the award as an honor for the entire district.

"This recognition is truly a reflection of all of the good work taking place in our classrooms," he said in a statement [published by the Missouri Association of School Administrators](#).

MASA announced Snodgrass' honor at its annual fall conference with the Missouri School Boards' Association Nov. 5 at the Kansas City Convention Center.

Snodgrass has shown outstanding leadership in Fort Osage and is a trusted colleague in the Kansas City area, MASA Executive Director Doug Hayter said in a written statement, in large part because of the commitment he has made for every student he serves.

"Jason has always seen himself as a teacher and coach first," Hayter said. "And in those roles he placed the highest value on the personal growth of each student with whom he worked. He has taken that same philosophy into his current role as the leader of his district."

The work goes on, Snodgrass said.

"As a district," he said. " We have five core values: Integrity, Belonging, Collaboration, Achievement and Accountability. It is up to all of us to assure those values are being met, and as the superintendent, I need to make sure we stay focused to meet the needs of our young people."

# Missouri lawmakers vow to expand child care access. Governor's speech may lay out the plan

January 18, 2023

By Clara Bates

A major area of bipartisan agreement among Missouri lawmakers this year is improving access to affordable child care.

And on Wednesday afternoon, Gov. Mike Parson is expected to lay out his vision for addressing what some legislators have framed as a child care crisis in Missouri.

Missouri House Minority Leader Crystal Quade, D-Springfield, told reporters earlier this month that she expects child care to be a bipartisan priority this session, and legislators are looking to Parson's annual State of the State address to lay out his agenda on the issue.

"I am very excited to know that Gov. Parson is going to make child care a part of his State of the State and hopefully have some really good initiatives around it," Quade said in an interview with The Independent.

Parson will speak to a joint session of the legislature at 3 p.m. Wednesday.

Lawmakers have widely framed child care as a top issue facing state businesses, as well as children's early development.

"Child care is something that it seems like everybody's interested in," Senate President Pro Tem Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, told reporters last week.

Senate Minority Leader John Rizzo, D-Independence, said child care access is "a problem that Democrats said was coming a decade ago.

"So, we're glad that (Republicans) are coming to our side of the table on this issue," he said.

Parson's speech could provide clarity as to what



Photo credit: Getty Images).

## Parson proposes investments in child care

In his State of the State speech, delivered to a joint session of the legislature Wednesday afternoon, Gov. Mike Parson's \$51.6 billion state budget proposal included a request for \$56 million to expand pre-kindergarten options to all 4-year-old children eligible for free and reduced priced lunch at no cost. To further strengthen the child care network, Parson requested \$78 million to increase child care subsidy rates and establish three new child care tax credit programs:

- **Child Care Contribution Tax Credit** - Encourages contributions to child care providers to improve and expand facilities and services.
- **Employer-Provided Child Care Assistance Tax Credit** - Benefits employers who offer child care assistance to their employees.
- **Child Care Providers Tax Credit** - Assists child care providers with payroll costs and incentivizes capital improvements to child care facilities.

"Missouri businesses consistently rank the lack of child care options as a barrier to recruiting and retaining employees, and we have an opportunity to assist," Parson said. "Together these supports will help serve more Missouri families by enabling more child care providers to remain in business, start their business, or expand their business."

Missouri Governor's Office of Communications



prioritizing child care in the state could look like in coming months — and it is an issue that could align with his longtime focus on workforce development, since child care needs can interfere with people’s ability to enter and stay in the workforce.

“I’ve had a lot of folks lift up the problem to me,” House Budget Chairman Cody Smith, R-Carthage, said about access to affordable child care. “I haven’t had a lot of folks lift up solutions to me.”

A [2021 report](#) from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation estimated Missouri loses over \$1.3 billion annually from accessibility, quality, and cost-related hurdles to child care. That loss is composed of the cost to employers when employees leave or miss work due to child care issues, plus the cost to the state of missed tax revenue when employees lose income.

States’ leeway in the child care realm includes: to enact state-level tax credits for parents or businesses; to set income limits and other restrictions for the child care subsidy program, which assists low-income families; and to run state-provided pre-kindergarten programs.

It is not yet clear which policies Parson will prioritize. Rowden cautioned against a “state funded and sanctioned...monopoly,” instead suggesting tax credits might be a route for the state to incentivize child care.

Missouri is among the half of states without a version of the federal tax credit to assist parents with child care, according to the public policy nonprofit the [Committee for Economic Development](#). Studies have found low-income families [far less likely to qualify](#) for and receive those kinds of income deductions than higher-income families.

As is the case nationally, Missouri has seen the costs of child care soar over decades, outpacing inflation and frequently [topping](#) the list of household expenses — while often exceeding the cost of in-state university tuition.

The average cost for an infant in Missouri center-based child care was \$10,555, as of 2021, according to [Child Care Aware](#), meaning that the median-earning married couple would spend 11% of family income on child care, and the median-earning single parent family would spend 36% of their income on child care.

High costs, though, rarely translate into lucrative business for child care providers. Providers often make poverty-level wages with few benefits, but have legal responsibilities to maintain certain ratios of staff to children, which can exacerbate staffing shortages and increase costs.

The median hourly wage for a child care worker was just under \$12 in 2021 and the median salary was just under \$25,000, according to Missouri Economic Research and Information Center’s Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates’ [2021 data](#).

Accessibility hurdles leave over half of Missourians in a child care desert: 54% of Missourians live in what the [Center for American Progress](#) defines as a child care desert, per their most recent data, from [2018](#). That number is higher — 70% — for rural families who live in a child care desert. (CAP defines a child care desert as lacking any child care or with so few options that there are more than three children for each licensed slot.)

In fiscal year 2022, the number of regulated child care providers overall declined by nearly 10%, according to the state Office of Childhood’s [2023 strategic plan](#).

A handful of bills, including to authorize a [property tax exemption](#) for property used for child care, and to [increase state reimbursements](#) to school districts with early childhood programs, have been filed already this session.

Expanding access to child care [subsidies](#) or [state-run pre-K](#) programs are strategies other states have used to mitigate the effect of child care costs on the lowest-income families.

Only one in every three economically-disadvantaged children from birth to age five accesses Missouri's publicly-funded early care programs targeting low-income families, according to the Office of Childhood's [2023 strategic plan](#).

States' income restrictions for child care subsidies vary widely. A family of four in Missouri can make [no more than \\$41,625 to qualify](#) for child care assistance, which was just 150% of the federal poverty line last year.

Missouri was one of ten states with the most severe income eligibility requirements in 2019, according to the most recent federal [report](#): At that point, Missouri was one of ten states where a family of three earning \$30,000 would not qualify for benefits. (Now, the limit for a three-person family in Missouri is around [\\$34,000](#).)

In [Oklahoma](#), on the other hand, a family of three can make up to \$48,708 to qualify, and a family of four can make up to \$57,984.

In 2019, Parson also emphasized child care leading up to the State of the State, but [did not significantly increase funding](#) for the state's preschool program to expand.

Missouri's [state-funded preschool](#) programs have a relatively limited reach: less than 10% of 4-year-olds were served in the programs in 2020, according to the [National Institute for Early Education Research](#) (making it rank 41st for access for 4-year-olds to public preschool.) A handful of states offer more expansive programs, including neighbor Oklahoma, which also [sets the same wages as K-12](#) teachers for teachers in their pre-K program for 4-year-olds.

In 2020, Missouri was among the 10 states that [spent the least](#), in terms of all reported spending on child care, and ranked in the bottom third based solely on state spending.

Parson's priorities might take on particular importance because Missouri has received over \$1 billion in one-time federal COVID relief funds for stabilizing the child care industry, but the remainder of those funds will soon expire.

Smith said the COVID relief dollars for child care "should be a tremendous shot in the arm to the child care industry across the state."

"The question then becomes what happens after that money is gone," Smith said.

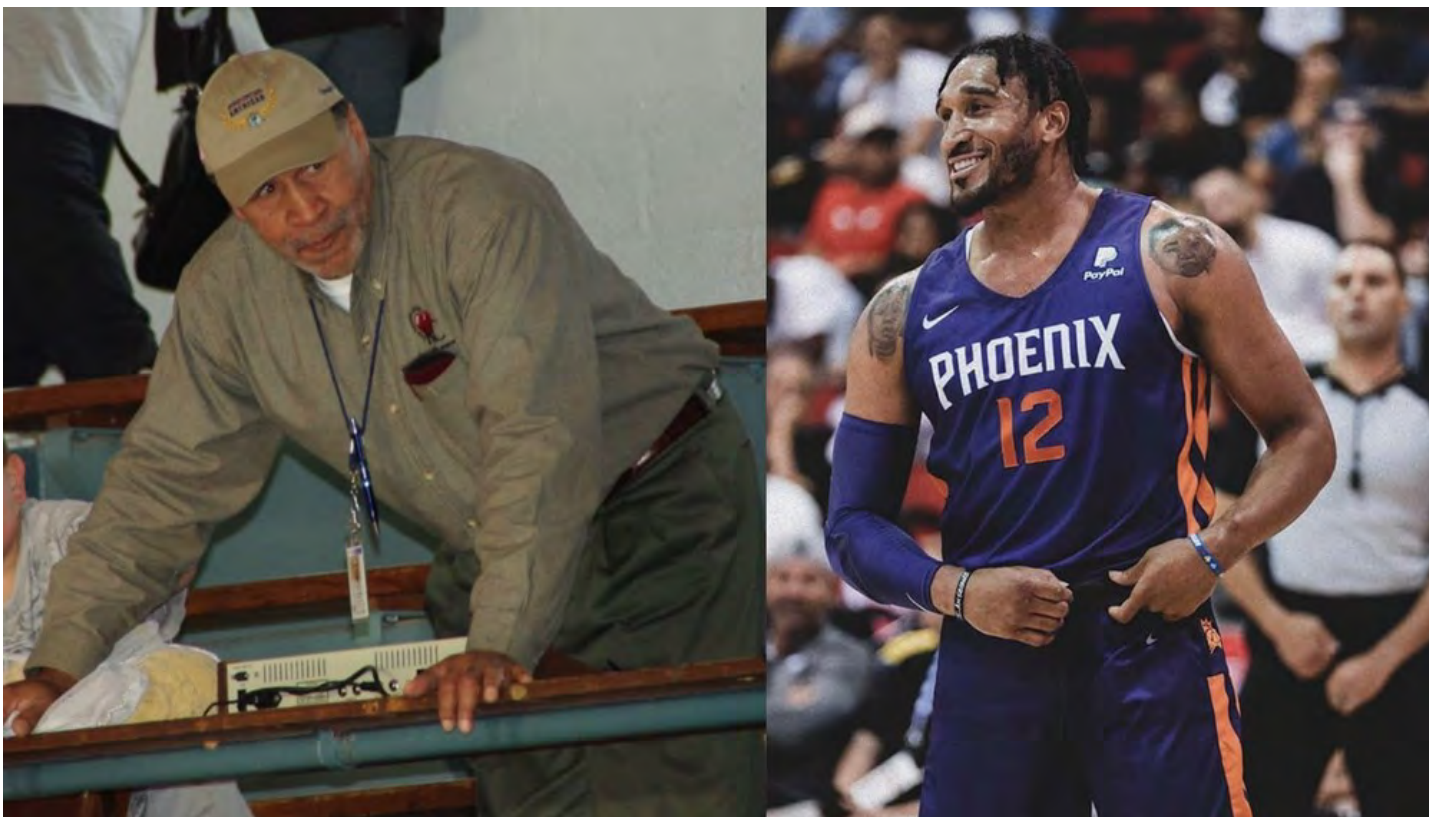
The latest COVID child care funding, awarded through the [American Rescue Plan](#), must be allocated by the end of September. A spokesperson for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education said in an email to The Independent Tuesday that of the \$325 million appropriated to the department to spend in this fiscal year, they have \$164 million left to be disbursed.

*The Independent's Rudi Keller contributed to this story.*

# 'Moving the legacy forward': NBA's Suns honor LINC's Calvin Wainright

January 6, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



*Calvin Wainright, left, the longtime LINC Caring Communities Coordinator who championed youth basketball in Kansas City, was honored by the NBA's Phoenix Suns with a \$1,000 donation to LINC on behalf of Wainright's son, Ish Wainright, right, who plays forward for the Suns. Ish Wainright photo courtesy of the Suns.*

The Caring Communities mission to carry on the life's work of the late Calvin Wainright has gotten a boost from the NBA's Phoenix Suns.

Wainright's son, Ish Wainright, is in his second year playing forward for the Suns, and the NBA team is honoring his father with a \$1,000 donation to LINC's Caring Communities.

"We are so blessed to see that Kansas City and beyond are determined and committed to 'Move The Legacy Forward,'" wrote Calvin Wainright's wife, the Rev. Cassandra Wainright, in thanks to the Suns organization.

Calvin Wainright was also a pastor — as well as a coach, organizer, life mentor, neighborhood leader and a LINC Caring Communities coordinator.

He died Oct. 31 after an extended illness at the age of 68.

Pierre DeClue, who as a youth played basketball for Coach Wainright, is now the Caring Communities coordinator for LINC program at Melcher Elementary School that Wainright led for many years.

"It's a blessing to continue Mr. Wainright's Legacy," DeClue wrote to the Suns in gratitude. "We greatly appreciate your support while continuing to impact our youth here in Kansas City, Missouri."