

LINC Commission Meeting

April 18, 2022



LINC staff participated in FACT Community Partnership Day on April 5 at the Missouri State Capitol. Pictured from the left are: Janet Miles-Bartee, Executive Vice President; Danisha Clarkson, Coordinator; Kachina Powell, Program Associate; Rene Jones, Program Associate; and (front) Jason Ervin, Coordinator. LINC staff meet with Kansas City area legislators to advocate on behalf of children and families.



Rep. Ashley Bland Manlove



Rep. Richard Brown



Sen. Barbara Washington



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, April 18, 2022 | 4 – 5:30 pm
Online Meeting

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements**
- II. Approvals**
 - a. March 2022 minutes (motion)**
- III. LINC Caring Communities**
 - a. Update and Challenges**
- IV. Superintendent Reports**
- V. Summer School**
- VI. Other**
 - a. Community Partnership Day**
- VII. Adjournment**



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – MARCH 21, 2022

The Local Investment Commission met via Zoom. Cochair **David Disney** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bob Bartman
Bert Berkley
Sharon Cheers
Jack Craft
Tom Davis
Aaron Deacon

Mark Flaherty
Rob Givens
Anita Gorman
Tom Lewin
Ken Powell
Marge Randle

Disney welcomed the attendees.

A motion to approve the minutes of the Feb. 28, 2022, LINC Commission meeting was approved unanimously.

Superintendents Reports

- **Rick Chambers**, Interim Director of Public Relations (Center School District), reported the high school robotics team reached finals at the Heartland Regional tournament, and the Student Government Association was recognized as a Gold Honor Council at the state SGA convention.
- **Anissa Gastin**, Assistant Superintendent (Fort Osage School District), reported the district is working on the Fort Forward district improvement plan. Six candidates are vying for two seats on the school board in the April election. The district is working with Northpoint, which is building an industrial park on Little Blue Parkway that would bring in additional tax revenue.
- **Carl Skinner**, Deputy Superintendent (Hickman Mills School District), reported the school board has approved the district's middle school redesign plan and a second middle school will open next year. Over 200 families attended the district's Family Summit on March 5. A video of the summit was shown.

LINCWorks Director **Dawn Patterson** reported on new opportunities available for LINC to serve youth and the community through funding from the CARES Act. Funding for the LINC Chafee initiative serving foster youth was doubled, and LINC is starting a new Youth Future career readiness program. LINC is reorganizing youth initiative work processes to decrease time spent by advocates on data entry and increase time spent providing services to youth.

LINC staff **Bryan Shepard** reported LINC is making changes to the Apricot data system to better align it with accounting guidelines and to create reports that are more useful to youth advocates. LINC has increased the number of youth advocates from three to eight, and recently partnered with Lead Bank to open no-fee bank accounts especially for foster youth.

Deputy Director **Brent Schondelmeyer** reported LINC staff have reached out to Missouri state agency staff to educate them on how LINC as a Community Partnership can support their efforts. Staff recently met with Mo. Education Commissioner **Margie Vandeven** and will meet with Mo. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Childhood Director **Pam Thomas**. Staff are also preparing for an Out of School Time monitoring visit by state staff.

Executive Vice President **Janet Miles-Bartee** reported LINC is in a time of reestablishing relationships, which involves raising awareness of what LINC can do and how LINC does it. Discussion followed.

Caring Communities Administrator **Sean Akridge** introduced a presentation on the Missouri A+ program, which provides scholarship funds to eligible graduates of A+ designated high schools who attend a participating public community college or vocational/technical school, or certain private two-year vocational/technical schools. Presenters included LINC Caring Communities Coordinators:

Darryl Bush reported LINC has promoted the A+ program at Paseo High School and on its website.

Yolanda Robinson reported Faxon Elementary has relationships with Central, Paseo and St. Teresa's, whose A+ students encourage younger students to prepare for college and set goals.

Edina von Hofman reported A+ students serve as mentors to elementary school students and assistants to teachers, providing a positive role model and encouragement for the younger students.

Bert Berkley raised the question of whether recent negative news about Mo. Dept. of Social Services has had any impact on LINC. Discussion followed.

The meeting was adjourned.

THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

“We tend to put considerations of family, community and economy off-limits in education reform policy discussions. However, we do so at our peril. The seriousness of our purpose requires that we learn to rub our bellies and pat our heads at the same time.”

— Paul E. Barton, Educational Testing Service
Facing the Hard Facts of Education Reform

For children, learning is as natural as breathing or sleeping. Their young minds readily embrace and investigate phenomena they encounter and they easily gather, consider and store information from a multitude of sources. Children learn in different ways, and many factors, including physical and learning disabilities, can help or hinder the process. Creating an environment in which all children can learn at high levels is a challenge for every school in America — a challenge that community schools are designed to meet.

In this chapter, we present an overview of the five conditions for learning that the Coalition believes are essential for every child to succeed. Creating these conditions for learning is a continuous process. Depending on the needs of their own student populations, most community schools will devote more attention to some conditions than to others. Without these conditions in place, however, many children will not succeed and fewer children will realize their full potential.

The Conditions for Learning

Condition #1: The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.

Condition #2: Students are motivated and engaged in learning — both in school and in community settings, during and after school.

Condition #3: The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.

Condition #4: There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff.

Condition #5: Community engagement, together with school efforts, promote a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community.

Several recent reports from well-respected researchers and organizations have been issued on effective learning environments. Page 16 presents a brief summary of their findings. While each of these studies has approached the subject in different ways and used different terms to describe its findings, their conclusions are remarkably similar and reinforce our five conditions for learning.

In the remainder of this chapter, we briefly describe the community school approach related to each condition and cite the research from numerous disciplines on which these conditions are based. The chapter shows the clear connection between what we know about the essential conditions for learning and what community schools are doing to foster them. Vignettes provide examples from local schools.

52

6

2

Sites

School Districts

Charter Schools

LINC Caring Communities Sites

Center School District

- Boone Elementary
- Center Elementary
- Indian Creek Elementary

Hickman Mills

- Compass
- Dobbs Elementary
- Ervin Elementary
- Freda Markley Early Childhood Center
- Ingels Accelerated Elementary
- Millennium at Santa Fe
- Ruskin High School (9th Grade)
- Smith-Hale Middle School
- Truman Elementary
- Warford Elementary

North Kansas City

- Topping Elementary

Grandview

- Belvidere Elementary
- Butcher-Greene Elementary
- Conn-West Elementary
- Grandview Middle School
- Martin City K-8
- Meadowmere Elementary

Fort Osage

- Blue Hills Elementary
- Buckner Elementary
- Cler-Mont Elementary
- Elm Grove Elementary
- Indian Trails Elementary

Kansas City Public Schools

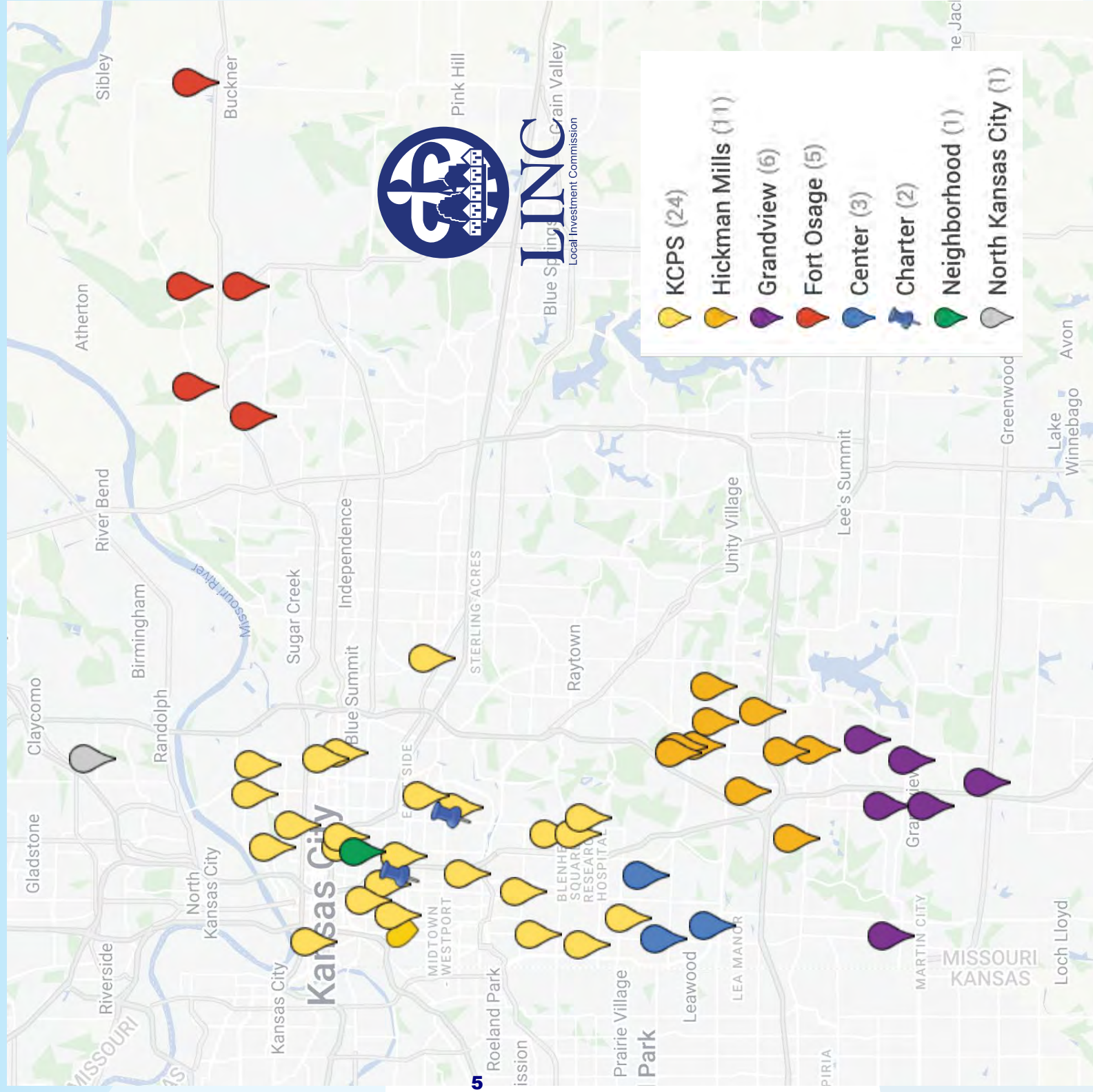
- African-Centered College Preparatory Academy
- Banneker Elementary
- Border Star Montessori
- Carver Dual Language Faxon Elementary
- Foreign Language Academy
- Garfield Elementary
- Gladstone Elementary
- Hale Cook Elementary
- Hartman Elementary
- Holliday Montessori
- J.A. Rogers Elementary
- James Elementary
- King @ KCMSA
- Longfellow Elementary
- Melcher Elementary
- Pitcher Elementary
- Primitivo Garcia Elementary
- Richardson Early Learning Center
- Trailwoods Elementary
- Troost Elementary
- Wendell Phillips Elementary
- Wheatley Elementary
- Whittier Elementary

Charter Schools

- Genesis School
- Lee A. Tolbert Charter School

Neighborhood Site

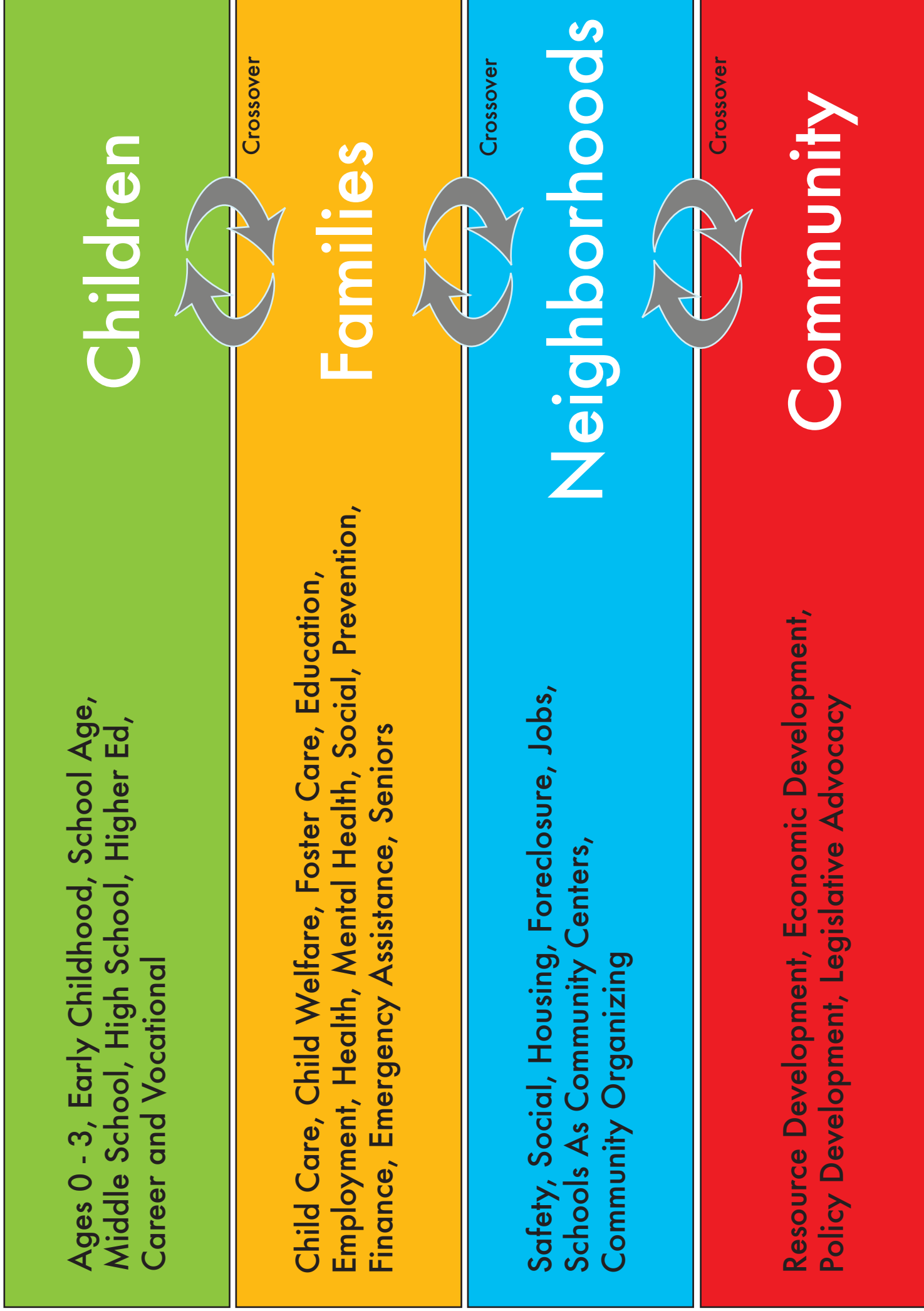
- Morning Star Youth & Family Life Center



Bold sites are LINC Caring Communities Before and After School Program locations

LINC Caring Communities sites cover low-income urban, suburban and rural communities.

Areas of Work



LINC Caring Communities

This model has been used by LINC since 1993 when it began operating Caring Communities sites in schools and neighborhoods.

LINC's Core Results

LINC's work is organized around achieving results in nine core areas.

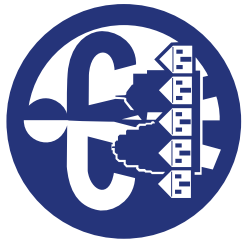
- Adults working
- Children and youth succeeding in school
- Healthy children and families
- Young children ready to enter school
- Children safe in their families and families safe in their communities
- Youth prepared for productive adulthood
- Elders and people with disabilities valued and living as they choose
- Well-informed citizens making decisions about their communities
- Strong, thriving neighborhoods

Span of involvement & decision making



Local Investment Commission
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 Kansas City, MO 64111
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LINC Caring Communities Model

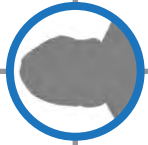


LINC
Local Investment Commission

LINC Caring Communities Administrator

LINC Site Supervisor

Site Coordinators work together to support the individual needs of schools and neighborhoods.



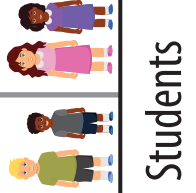
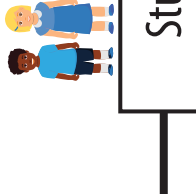
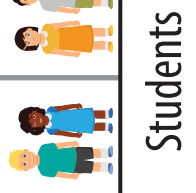
LINC Site Coordinator

LINC Site Coordinator

LINC Site Coordinator

Connection to District Leadership

Connection to School Leadership



Students

Students

Students

School A

School B

School C

LINC works with school district leadership to accomplish school and community objectives.



School District Administration

LINC Programs Outside of Schools

- Community Organizing
- COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution
- Emergency Assistance
- Family Support
- Financial Counseling.
- Food Pantries & Distributions
- Health and Nutrition
- Home Visits and Wellness Checks
- Reading, Literacy, Free Books
- Technology & Virtual Learning Support
- Utility Assistance



Individuals approved for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can get assistance from LINCWorks. Locations are open in Jackson, Clay, Platte, Cass and Ray counties. LINCWorks can help with:

- Employment assistance if you have skills and are job ready.
- Training and work experience to help you learn valuable work skills
- Support if there are obstacles that make it difficult to work — child care assistance, transportation and other social supports.

LINCWorks is committed to providing personal attention to help you find a path to skills and employment.

LINC Site Coordinators help student and parents with educational goals while supporting family needs.

Parents

Parents

Parents



LINC Programs Inside of Schools

- Arts and music
- Before and After school Child Care
- Chess
- Chronic Absence Mitigation
- Parenting Programs
- Youth Mentoring
- Sports
- STEM Activities
- Summer Programming
- Tutoring and Homework Help

LINC & Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church Partnership

The Local Investment Commission (LINC) and Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church joined forces to serve the community at the Morning Star Youth and Family Life Center at 27th and Prospect Avenue. First, families needed healthy food when schools were shut down during the pandemic. Next, vulnerable residents in hard-hit and underserved Kansas City neighborhoods needed access to COVID-19 vaccinations. See more photos, videos and updates at kclinc.org/lincmorningstar

Total COVID-19 Vaccinations

25,621

February 2021

3,000 vaccinations with the Missouri National Guard and Truman Medical Centers.

March 2021 - February 2022

More than 22,600 vaccinations with the Missouri National Guard, the K.C. Fire Dept., Heart to Heart Intl. and University Health.



Total Food Distribution

2.7 Million Pounds

More than 42,000 family food packages distributed.

December 2020

With Harvesters, Kanbe's Markets, Church of the Resurrection
39,335 pounds of food, distributed to 612 families.

March 2020 - February 2022

With Community Action Agency, Harvesters
2.6 million pounds of food, distributing 41,000 family packages.



LINC Emergency Rent and Utility Assistance Program

The Local Investment Commission (LINC) is a partner agency with the City of Kansas City, Missouri's Emergency Rent and Utility Assistance Program (ERAP), an extension of the US Treasury Department Emergency Rent Assistance Program. Eligible benefits for those impacted by COVID-19 include past due rent and utilities for up to 15 months of arrears.



Total Assistance Provided
\$1,517,706

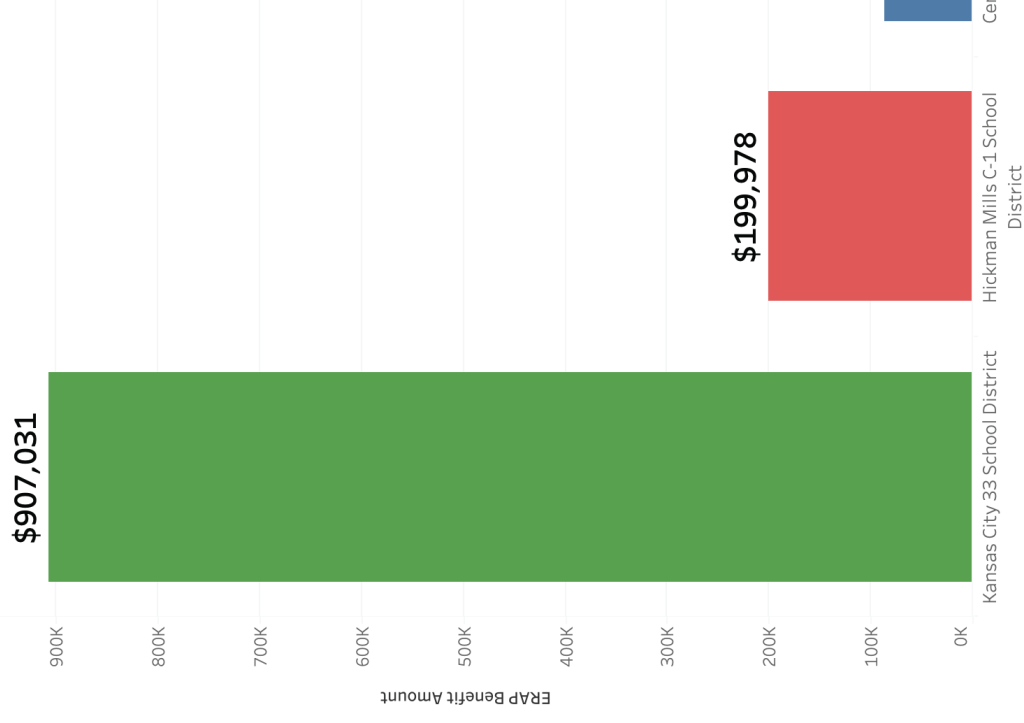
Households Served
870

Avg. Benefit per Household
\$1,736

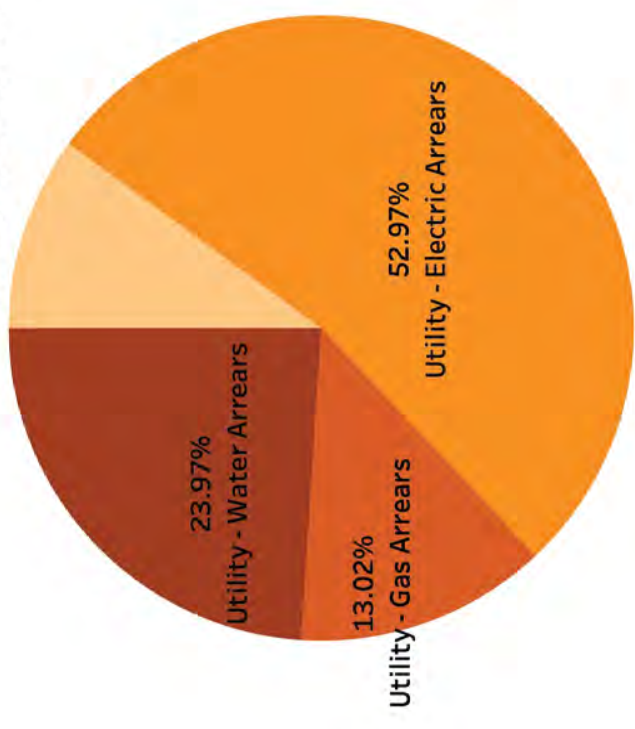
April 2021 - February 2022



Assistance per School District



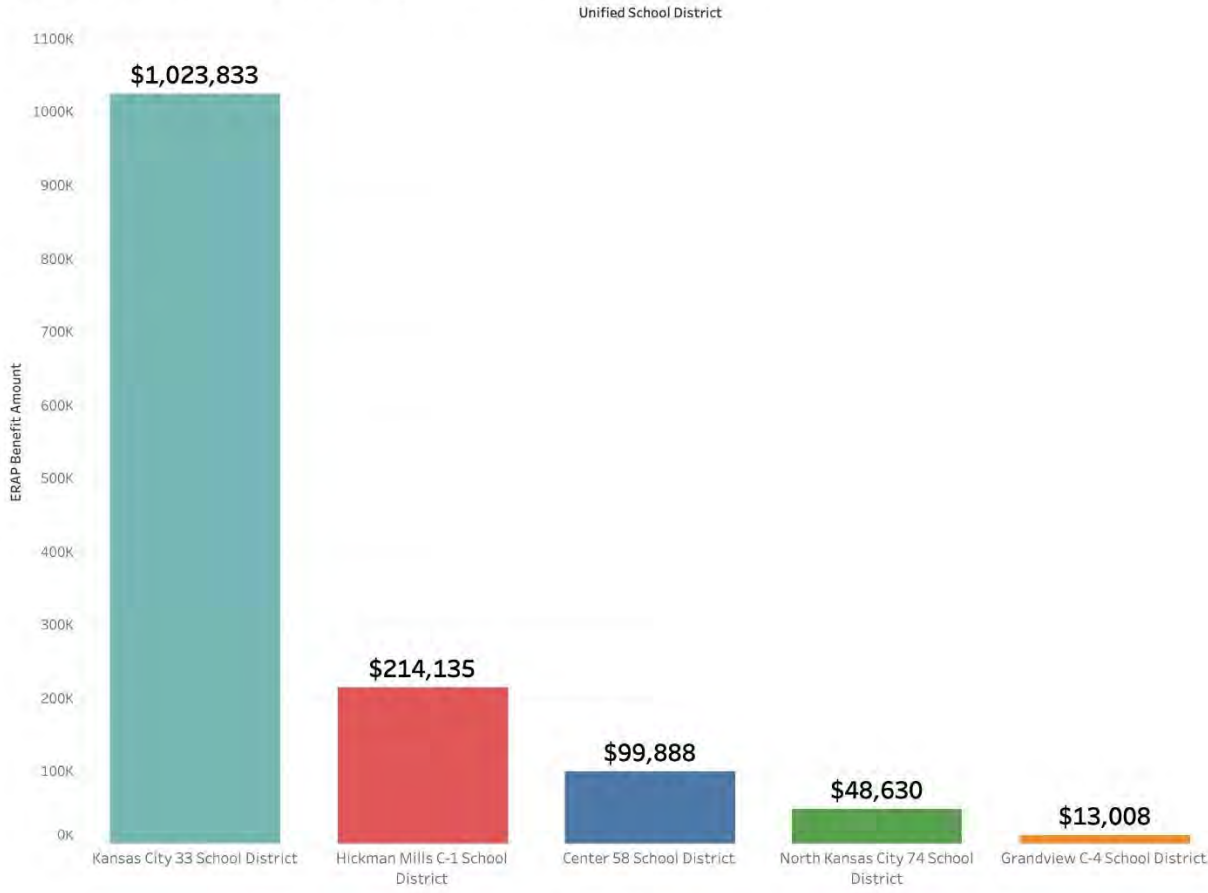
Benefit Type



Rent and Utility Assistance

\$1,533,946

LINC ERAP Rent and Utility Benefits by School District



Data: As of March 2022

Kansas City is getting \$25 million in rental assistance funding. Here's what you need to know

KCUR | By [Celisa Calacal](#)

Published February 17, 2022 at 5:32 PM CST



Carlos Moreno

The Kansas City Council approved an ordinance appropriating \$25 million in COVID relief funding for the city's Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Kansas City renters struggling to pay rent amid the COVID pandemic will soon have access to more relief after the Kansas City Council appropriated \$25 million in COVID relief funding.

The money will be used to help eligible residents catch up on rent and utility bills and provide case management to households facing eviction.

It's the largest allocation of funds to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program since it was first established last spring, when the city received \$14.8

million in federal funding for the program. Last fall, the city received another \$11.7 million.

What does the Emergency Rental Assistance Program help with?

The program helps households pay off current or past-due rent or utility bills for up to 12 months, plus three additional months of future rent. Past-due bills are accepted dating back to April 1, 2020.

Who is eligible for emergency assistance?

Renters in Kansas City, Missouri, who must prove they were financially impacted by the pandemic and are at risk of homelessness. Eligible residents must have a household income of no more than 80% of the area median income.

Who receives the money?

Once applications are approved, the payments are sent to the resident's landlord or utility company.

How much funding has been spent so far?

According to city officials, the city has spent \$19.6 million in emergency rental assistance so far, helping 4,231 households. City data also shows that, on average, households received aid covering six to seven months of rent and bills.

Where can I apply?

You can apply online by going to the city's [website](#) and uploading documents including a form of identification, proof of income and a statement showing the amount you owe in rent or utilities.

Residents who need help with their application can make an appointment at the city's Emergency Rental Assistance Center at 4400 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. or by calling 816-513-4501.

The Center is open by appointment only on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Sign up for Summer!

Pre-enrollment open for LINC's Caring Communities

April 12, 2022

By Joe Robertson/LINC Writer



Here comes summer.

It's time for families that are planning to have children in summer school to pre-enroll for LINC's before- and after-school programs.

And for all the fun that comes when the regular school year gives way to the more relaxed days of June, the mission remains serious.

Our partner school districts, the students and their families are still making up lost ground from the worst months of the pandemic that are behind us.

Summer brings opportunities in after-school time to engage children with renewed enthusiasm for creative ways to learn through recreation and targeted activities. And LINC is ready with a variety of games, activities and fun learning opportunities at 15 school sites, spread out across the Kansas City Public Schools, Hickman Mills, Grandview and Center school districts, plus Topping Elementary in North Kansas City and Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy charter school.

"As is often said, when you see one LINC site, you've just seen one LINC site," said Sean Akridge, LINC Caring Communities Administrator. "This is certainly true for students participating in our summer programming."

In most cases, he said, students are visiting a new site during summer school and may be exposed to activities, clubs, and community partners' offerings that don't occur at their regular school site.

Summer at LINC means time for field trips and chances to explore new activities, he said. For instance, how

about drone racing?

Even without a pandemic, every summer would bring a challenge to keep children and their active minds surging ahead.

Research spanning more than 100 years has confirmed that too many children lose academic ground during summer, [reports the Campaign For Grade-Level Reading](#), widening the achievement gaps between many children in low-income households from their middle-class peers.

That's why the national campaign has urged funders, policymakers, and community leaders to help communities tackle summer learning loss by supporting the new approach to summer learning that blends "core academic learning, hands-on activities, arts, sports, technology, and meaningful relationships."



Early childhood makeovers: LINC helps preschools re-imagine programs that build lives



LINC infant toddler specialist Sarah Ramirez plays with children during a consultation visit to Kids in Christ Academy in Kansas City.

The working imaginations of LINC’s pre-school makeover pros abounded with visions of curious toddlers.

What if we put the reading center there? The blocks over there? The home living center in the corner? Math manipulatives over here?

You can almost see the children who will come, ranging through this playroom that LINC was redesigning inside Kids in Christ Academy in Kansas City.

Yes, this is looking good, said Kenetha Whitmore, the assistant administrator at Kids in Christ, which is one of 18 preschools in the seven-county Kansas City area receiving LINC’s free training and consultation through Missouri’s [Infant and Toddler Specialist Network](#).

But hold on, said LINC’s Claire Harbison. She’s eyeing a mini corridor that would be created with one possible arrangement of book shelves.

“This,” she said, “says, ‘Let’s run!’”

Don’t want that, the makeover team agrees. Kid runways aren’t good indoors.

The remaking of classroom spaces is one part of the state-funded program. Participants in the specialist network also get free training courses and hands-on consultation when LINC specialists visit classrooms and work directly with teach-

ers.

“It’s very helpful to get that second eye . . . to point out things you haven’t noticed,” Whitmore said. “When somebody fresh comes in, they see things we didn’t think of and it really does help.”

Among the 18 centers that have signed up for the program since early 2020, a total of 182 early childcare providers and teachers have enrolled in the training courses.

The support and training aims “to level the playing field” in preparing all children for kindergarten, said Lauren Walls, the director of LINC’s team.

The program is open to early childhood providers who accept families that receive government subsidies for childcare.

“I think it’s amazing there is something like this for centers that might not have as many resources,” Walls said. “We want to make sure all children are receiving the education they deserve.”

Kids in Christ Academy owner and director Christina Puckett has run her program since 2007 and is serving the same neighborhood where she grew up as a graduate of Paseo Academy.

“My mother used to care for children,” Puckett said. “And kids I saw grow up, I now have their children. I knew their moms. I knew their families.”

This is her life’s work, Puckett said, and she is grateful for the Infant Toddler Specialist Network’s insight in making her center stronger.

The training teaches the power and magic of relationship-based care. Sessions that Puckett’s staff have taken include tips on recognizing anxiety in children, as well as stress childcare workers may feel. They’ve learned approaches to help comfort and ease children into the classroom. They’re working on better communication with families, including understanding cultural impacts and language barriers.

They’re learning how to strengthen the respect between the families and the teachers as allies in growing healthy, imaginative children who are ready for school and childhood.

“I’m all in,” Puckett said.

Standing at a tipping point

The training sessions are particularly needed now, Walls said, because stress on the labor market has many centers bringing in new staff with less experience in childcare.

The early childhood industry has long struggled for government and community support, needing help to provide competitive salaries and ease the high turnover of childcare workers.

The Rev. Al and Paula Smith, owners of Young Professors Daycare in Raymore, see LINC’s program and the state’s funding as overdue recognition of the importance of quality preschool programs.

These toddler years are crucial to the social and emotional foundations children take to public school, Paula Smith said.



LINC Infant and Toddler Specialist Network Director Lauren Walls and Kids in Christ Academy Assistant Administrator Kenetha Whitmore discuss redesign ideas.



LINC infant toddler specialists Elice Redfern, Sarah Ramirez and Claire Harbison debate redesign ideas in a classroom at Kids in Christ Academy.

It's the time a child can develop a positive sense of self.

"This is a tipping point," she said. "We can engage children in learning and have positive impact."

LINC's specialists collaborated with the Smiths and their staff in Raymore like "co-teachers," Al Smith said. They were encouraging and non-judgmental in their classroom coaching that complemented the training sessions.

"You can say how to do it all day long," he said. "But they really show you how to do it. They literally get involved."

After some redesigning discussions at Young Professors, the preschool took out some of the playroom's dividers and opened the space to spread out a variety of learning centers. It gave children freedom to roam to different learning stations and still be well supervised by their teacher.



A new reading corner at Kids in Christ Academy.

They helped the Smiths bring in new and engaging toys. They added stimulating rugs.

New things are coming to Kids in Christ Academy in Kansas City as well.

Some were on hand the day of the redesign, including new posters and pictures for the walls, and a trio of large stuffed animal toys that Walls arranged on the carpet beside the book shelf in the reading corner.

Other things are on order, like a new kid couch, some sock animals and puppets.

Just imagine, Puckett and Whitmore said as they surveyed the new room with the LINC team. Imagine the faces of the children when they see it all come Monday morning.



Kids in Christ Academy owner and manager Christina Puckett, in the pink hat, looks at the redesigned classroom with the LINC team.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

‘A lost academic year.’ Report shows disparities in Missouri education in pandemic

BY KACEN BAYLESS AND SARAH RITTER
UPDATED APRIL 12, 2022 5:50 PM



In an empty classroom, Katherine Hendrix, a third-grade teacher at J.A. Rogers Elementary, instructs students virtually on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2020, using a large screen. JILL TOYOSHIBA jtoyoshiba@kcstar.com

Nearly all impoverished students in Missouri’s largest urban areas and suburbs spent the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic learning remotely, while most low-income students in rural areas were taught in-person, according to a new report.

Despite the stark differences between how rural and urban school districts handled the pandemic, low-income students were hurt in both areas. Research shows that online education is less effective than in-person studies. And, in rural areas, school districts struggled to provide students with food benefits and technology.

By comparison, wealthier suburban districts were quicker to return to in-person learning and students had better access to technology. And that, the authors of a new Urban Institute report say, likely will only increase the education gap.

Over the last two years, Missouri's school districts have been placed in the difficult position of balancing safety with offering technology and resources to educate students. Without clear statewide or federal guidance, most schools were forced to craft their own reopening plans.

The report released last month by Urban Institute found 95% of impoverished students in urban and suburban areas learned virtually at the start of the pandemic.

In rural Missouri, more students learned in person, but less than half of schools offered food benefits to students living in poverty, the report found.

"The pandemic has heightened awareness of the gaps in education quality between the nation's most vulnerable students and most well-off students," the report said. "And the reopening decisions school districts made in the 2020–21 school year may have both short- and long-term impacts on the academic achievement of the most vulnerable students."

With almost all students in Missouri's urban areas attending school virtually, students in urban school districts could be faced with learning loss and a wider achievement gap than their peers in wealthier districts, the report found.

When COVID-19 first hit in March 2020, schools shut down and pivoted to online classes. Districts had to ensure that all students had access to the internet, passing out laptops and mobile hotspots, as teachers created virtual lesson plans for the first time. Some students without internet access sat in parking lots, using businesses' WiFi to attend classes, or were given packets of homework.

Educators throughout the Kansas City area said that they were noticing dozens of students "disappear," not logging into online classes or responding to messages from teachers. It was a greater problem in urban districts, where many parents were unable to afford childcare. Older children helped teach their younger siblings from home. And many high schoolers went to work.

Many parents were forced to choose between staying home to help or earning a paycheck.

"These common circumstances may combine into a lost academic year, with disproportionate impacts falling upon students who have faced historical disadvantages," according to the report by the Urban Institute.

When districts announced plans to start the following school year online, parents in the more affluent suburbs of Kansas City staged protests. Worried about their children falling behind in school, as well as their physical and mental health, they fought for in-person classes and for sports to resume.

With ongoing protests and the threat of lawsuits, it didn't take long before several suburban districts allowed sports and changed their criteria to start bringing students back to classrooms.

But while many suburban districts brought some students back, at least part time, during the first semester of last school year, urban districts were more cautious. In Kansas City and Wyandotte County in Kansas, where COVID-19 cases were exploding, students stayed online, learning from home.

In Kansas City Public Schools and the Kansas City, Kansas, district, students did not return to classrooms until last spring. Educators worried that achievement gaps would be exacerbated in the districts that serve a higher percentage of low-income students and students of color.

In rural Missouri, where most students attended in-person instruction, food and technology access was scarce during the first year of the pandemic, the report found.

As Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program applications rose throughout the state, more than 70% of rural districts did not have a plan to distribute food to students living in poverty, according to the report. Some school districts in southeastern Missouri relied on Missouri National Guard troops to feed students in 2020.

Short on resources amid numerous COVID-19 outbreaks, some cash-strapped rural school districts still struggle to deliver regular meals to students even with school doors open, the study found.

For students of color and students from low-income households, lack of internet access grew since the start of the pandemic, the study said.

Despite efforts by federal and state governments to improve technology access through aid and grants, just 54% of impoverished students in rural districts received devices at the start of the pandemic. Only 25% received both devices and access to the internet, the study said.

One way local and state governments can curtail the pandemic's impact on low-income students, the report said, is funding districts with high levels of poverty to hire employees and provide continued education to students. The students who were short on resources or whose learning was disrupted will need added attention.

"Both urban and rural students living in poverty will require additional and differentiated responses," the report said.

The Impact of Rural and Urban School Reopening on Missouri Students

An Essay for the Learning Curve by Andrew Diemer and Aaron Park
March 2022

Pandemic-era teaching has heightened awareness of the gaps in education quality between the nation’s most vulnerable students and most well-off students. For the most vulnerable students, access to equitable education continues to be strained, and COVID-19 variants continue to test districts and schools as they weigh the risks to health and safety against providing in-person learning. And for some students, even in this second year of pandemic-era teaching, schooling has yet to return to normal.

Given the increased attention on students living in poverty as they navigate the pandemic, we analyzed a representative sample of district reopening plans for the 2020–21 school year in Missouri. These plans help us understand how students experienced their first year of pandemic learning. They show what resources were available to help districts determine their responses last year, and they expose district-wide inequities that persist. Despite almost all plans emphasizing the importance of high-quality, in-person instruction, especially for vulnerable students, we find that:

- 95 percent of urban students living in poverty were in districts that offered exclusively distance education¹ during the first full pandemic school year (2020–21), heightening concerns about prolonged negative learning impacts, and
- rural districts, where nutritional and technological infrastructure is weakest, were less likely to provide plans to continue delivering services to students.

The pandemic’s impacts have resonated differently within urban and rural communities in Missouri. This is particularly apparent among the poorest students. Responding to urban and rural students living in poverty requires attention to the different challenges these districts and students have faced.

¹ The three instructional modes are in-person (students are physically present at school, receiving instruction from teachers on-site), distance (students learn from home, either virtually or with paper packets), and mixed (students receive a combination of in-person and distance instruction).

Poverty in Missouri

In Missouri, although race and poverty are deeply intertwined, the story of poverty changes dramatically across regions and urbanicity. Missouri is a primarily rural state of just over 6 million residents. Last year, nearly 13 percent of Missourians lived in poverty, slightly below the national average.² Rural districts with the highest poverty rates are overwhelmingly white (82 percent), whereas high-poverty urban districts are largely Black (88 percent).

Most of Missouri's Black residents are concentrated within St. Louis and Kansas City, and within these two metropolitan centers, Black residents are about three times as likely to live in poverty.³ These same areas saw significant and crushing increases in pandemic-related unemployment rates among people of color.⁴ Increasing unemployment and limited opportunities for remote work have put a strain on families assisting their children in learning this past year and may have contributed to higher rates of viral spread within communities of color.⁵ The pandemic's disproportionate economic and health challenges for students living in poverty—paired with other challenges, such as inconsistent access to food delivery services from local schools, especially among families of color—may all contribute to a generational gap in learning.⁶

The highest concentration of poverty is within the St. Louis and Kansas City regions, but in much of Missouri's rural southeastern regions, particularly in the Ozarks and Bootheel, as much as one-third of the population lives in poverty.⁷ These rural communities often have underdeveloped technological, health care, and nutritional infrastructure, each posing challenges to students and

² "County-Level Data Sets: Poverty," US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, last updated January 5, 2021, <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17826>.

³ "Concentrated Poverty," City of St. Louis, accessed March 24, 2022, <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/initiatives/resilience/equity/opportunity/neighborhoods/concentrated-poverty.cfm>.

⁴ Chad Davis, "African Americans Hit by Job Losses during the Pandemic Find It Hard to Recover," St. Louis Public Radio, September 2, 2020, <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/2020-09-01/african-americans-hit-by-job-losses-during-the-pandemic-find-it-hard-to-recover>.

⁵ See the St. Louis entry at "Health Disparities," Tracking COVID-19 in Missouri, accessed March 24, 2022, https://slu-opengis.github.io/covid_daily_viz/disparities.html#St_Louis; and Connor Maxwell and Danyelle Solomon, "The Economic Fallout of the Coronavirus for People of Color," Center for American Progress, April 14, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/economic-fallout-coronavirus-people-color/>.

⁶ Faith Mitchell, "COVID-19's Disproportionate Effects on Children of Color Will Challenge the Next Generation," *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, August 17, 2020, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/covid-19s-disproportionate-effects-children-color-will-challenge-next-generation>; and Bethany Gross and Alice Opalka, "Analysis: As Many School Districts Reopen Virtually, the Opportunity Gap Widens for Students Living in Poverty," *The 74Million*, September 9, 2020, <https://www.the74million.org/article/analysis-as-many-school-districts-reopen-virtually-the-opportunity-gap-widens-for-students-living-in-poverty/>.

⁷ "County-Level Data Sets: Poverty," US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; and see the website for the Missouri Poverty Report at <https://missouripovertyreport.org/>.

school districts during the pandemic.⁸ Last year, as the virus spread, many southeastern Missouri’s students were dependent on the National Guard to provide food, and, lacking internet access, many students were left with few ways to continue their learning following a statewide mandate to close schools in April 2020.⁹

District Plans

Following statewide school closure in April 2020, Missouri school districts began to release and update school reopening plans during summer 2020. In the weeks leading up to the 2020–21 school year, all areas of Missouri had moderate to severe rates of COVID-19 transmission, and there was little guidance or communication on how to safely reopen schools from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or federal, state, and local governments. Absent clear guidance, most school districts created their own reopening plans tailored to district circumstances, others relied on outside services to craft their reopening plans, and few released no plan at all.

The Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center conducted a content analysis of fall 2020 reopening plans on a representative sample of Missouri districts to understand the reopening factors districts considered and communicated to their stakeholders for the first day of school.¹⁰ We analyzed plans from the largest school district from each of the state’s 114 counties (e.g., St. Louis Public Schools from St. Louis City) and oversampled districts in North St. Louis County and the largest counties statewide. In St. Louis City and Kansas City, we also randomly selected a sample of charter schools.¹¹ In combination with Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program data publicly available through the Urban Institute Education Data Portal, we found critical differences between how urban students living in poverty and rural students living in poverty learned during the 2020–21 school year.

We isolated the districts with the highest and lowest concentrations of students living in poverty in Missouri and found a dramatic difference between how rural and urban students learned during the pandemic school year.¹² Statewide numbers suggested students living in poverty reopened the school year similar to students in wealthier districts, but urban students living in poverty were limited

⁸ Rita Hesse, Evan Rhinesmith, and J. Cameron Anglum, “Technology Implications for Missouri Public Schools in the Era of COVID-19” (St. Louis: St. Louis University, 2020); see the website for the Missouri Poverty Report at <https://missouripovertyreport.org/>; and Andrew Diemer, J. Cameron Anglum, and Evan Rhinesmith, “Brain Food: Student Meal Provision amid the COVID-19 Pandemic” (St. Louis: St. Louis University, 2020).

⁹ Hesse, Rhinesmith, and Anglum, “Technology Implications for Missouri Public Schools”; and Diemer, Anglum, and Rhinesmith, “Brain Food.”

¹⁰ “Prime COVID-19 Content Analysis,” St. Louis University, accessed March 24, 2022, <https://www.sluprime.org/content-analysis>.

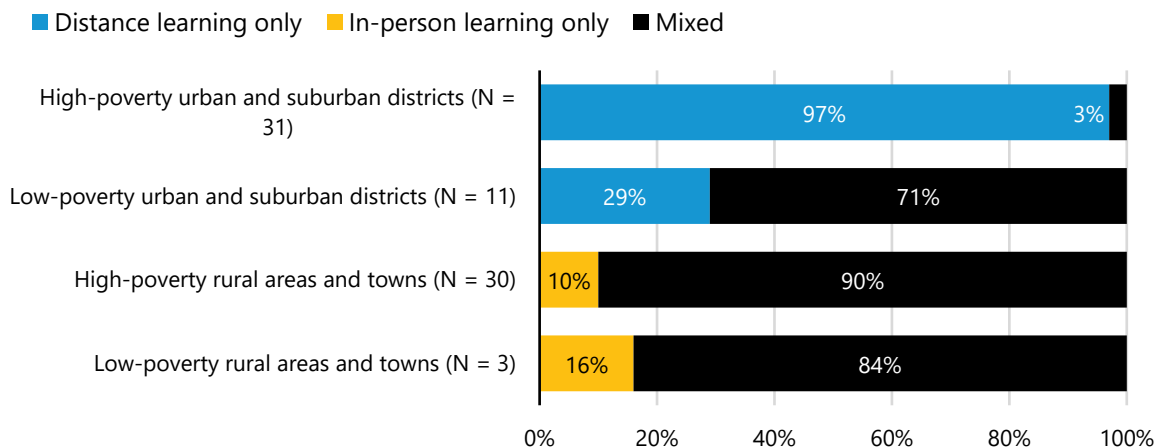
¹¹ For more information, see the [data and documentation here](#).

¹² We calculate highest and lowest concentrations of student poverty from quintiles of district poverty, weighted by enrollment. We then remove the three middle categories, thereby isolating the highest and lowest quintiles.

almost entirely to distance learning. In contrast, rural students went back to school in person (figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Almost All Urban and Suburban Students in High-Poverty Districts Learned Remotely



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center

Widespread Distance Learning among Urban Students Living in Poverty Raises Concerns for Increased Learning Loss among the State’s Most Vulnerable Students

Having urban students exclusively enrolled in distance education may be concerning because, despite the widespread expansion to online learning, evidence suggests that online education is less effective than traditional education, and, increasingly, there is the worry that distance learning for students who lack the resources and support will be especially ineffective for students living in poverty, many of whom are in districts that may not have previously been able to provide devices.¹³

Compounding this, families making low wages have less access to remote work, meaning some parents may have had to decide between staying at home to help their child grow and learn or

¹³ Michael S. Grant, “National Survey of Public Education’s Response to COVID-19,” American Institutes for Research, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.air.org/project/national-survey-public-educations-response-covid-19>; and Cassandra M. D. Hart, Dan Berger, Brian Jacob, Susanna Loeb, and Michael Hill, “Online Learning, Offline Outcomes: Online Course Taking and High School Student Performance,” *AERA Open* 5, no. 1 (January 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419832852>.

earning a paycheck.¹⁴ These common circumstances may combine into a lost academic year, with disproportionate impacts falling upon students who have faced historical disadvantages.¹⁵

For families living in poverty, the pandemic exacerbated the already considerable barriers to accessing equitable education. Parents and families living in poverty have testified to the hardships they have faced working from home while assisting their children learning remotely.¹⁶ Moreover, preliminary findings from across the nation have found that districts with high shares of students living in poverty often spend less time on instruction and are more likely to review past content to proactively respond to potential learning loss rather than introduce new content, potentially widening the already existing gap in academic performance.¹⁷ Importantly, too, in the St. Louis and Kansas City metropolitan areas, distance education did not necessarily mean virtual education; the PRiME Center's content analysis revealed that 16 of Missouri's poorest districts used paper packets, and in some, education came solely via paper packets delivered from school to home.

Students living in poverty face substantial hardships, and the differences in instructional delivery help expose the divide between the profound challenges students living in deep poverty face and the resources that their home district has available to support them. Across similar regions, we observe that students from wealthier districts had options in how they accessed learning in the 2020–21 school year. This is a dramatic difference from urban students living in poverty, most of whom were given no option but to learn from a distance, which could widen the gap. Pandemic-related conversations on responding to students tend to focus on the urban-rural divide, but attention must focus on students who face the toughest challenges within each of these regions rather than between regions. One may argue that students in rural districts, which are more likely than urban districts to offer access to in-person learning, are at advantage compared with urban students. But different challenges, such as food insecurity and inequitable access to technology that hinder learning when students stay home to quarantine, exist and affect rural students and their families.

Rural Districts, Where Nutritional and Technological Infrastructure Is Weakest, Were Less Likely to Provide Plans to Continue Delivering Food or Devices to Students

All districts in Missouri were managing moderate to severe rates of viral spread at the beginning of the school year. The pandemic has strained access to basic necessities, such as food, particularly in

¹⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Job Flexibilities and Work Schedules—2017-2018: Data from the American Time Use Survey," news release, September 24, 2019, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/flex2.pdf>.

¹⁵ "Will This Be a Lost Year for America's Children," *New York Times*, September 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/11/magazine/covid-school-reopenings.html>.

¹⁶ Gina Adams, "Working Parents Are Relying on Others to Help with Their Children's Distance Learning. But Who's Helping the Helpers?" *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, November 20, 2020, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/working-parents-are-relying-others-help-their-childrens-distance-learning-whos-helping-helpers>.

¹⁷ Grant, "National Survey of Public Education's Response."

rural areas where student food insecurity is high.¹⁸ Yet, without stable access to internet or food within communities, many rural districts cited the need to continue delivering these services to students as outweighing the risks of the pandemic, and they chose in-person learning.¹⁹ Despite this, more than 70 percent of rural districts serving students living in poverty did not have a plan to continue to distribute food (figure 2).

Despite good intentions, these districts lacked the resources and personnel to guarantee the continuance of food services even in the event of closure.²⁰ In southeastern Missouri, where student food insecurity is widespread, some areas relied on the National Guard to continue to provide food to students. Meanwhile, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program applications for families with students have soared as statewide food insecurity has increased, indicating greater reliance on school meals.²¹ But even though some social safety net programs, like the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT), have been expanded to allow families greater access to food, a significant portion of eligible families are not receiving the benefit.²² Recent changes to P-EBT may continue to make it difficult for families to receive the resources they need.²³

Even now, as rural Missouri districts continue to struggle to contain schoolwide and community outbreaks, some districts continue to struggle to deliver regular meals even with school doors open.²⁴ Even temporary and brief periods of food insecurity can have lasting implications for students.

¹⁸ Diemer, Anglum, and Rhinesmith, "Brain Food."

¹⁹ Amy Shelton, Ashley Donaldson Burle, Aaron Park, Andrew Diemer, and Kristi Donaldson, "The Pandemic Digital Divide in Missouri: Rural Students Most Likely to Lack Full Access to Technology" (St. Louis: St. Louis University, 2021); and Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, and Policy, Program in Nutrition (Tisch Center), "School Meals in Rural Communities: A Vital Service during COVID-19 and Beyond" (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, Tisch Center, n.d.).

²⁰ Diemer, Anglum, and Rhinesmith, "Brain Food."

²¹ Diemer, Anglum, and Rhinesmith, "Brain Food."

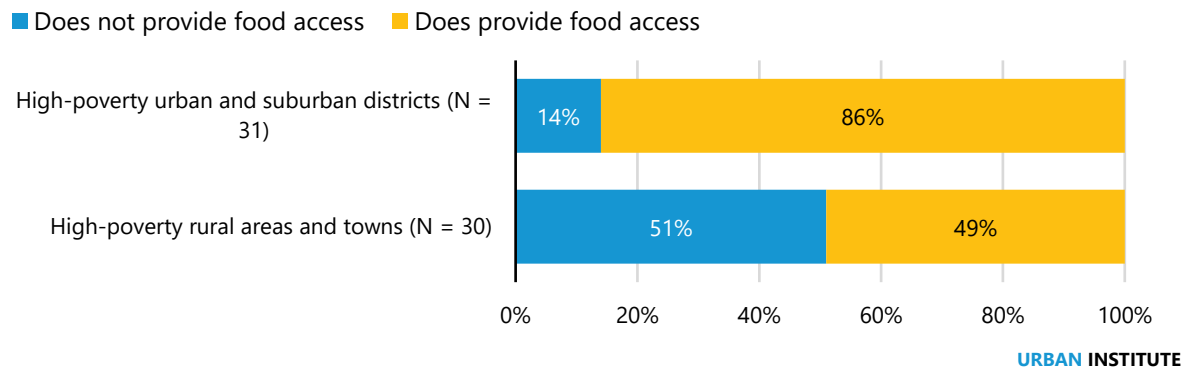
²² Ryan Delaney, "40% of Eligible Missouri Kids Missing Out on Added Food Assistance," St. Louis Public Radio, June 24, 2020, <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/education/2020-06-24/40-of-eligible-missouri-kids-missing-out-on-added-food-assistance>.

²³ Missouri Times, "P-EBT Program Returns, but Many Changes for 2021," press release, June 15, 2021, <https://themissouritimes.com/p-ebt-program-returns-but-many-changes-for-2021/>.

²⁴ Madeline McClain, "Northwest Missouri School Districts Face Issues with School Food Supplies," KQTV, September 9, 2021, https://www.kq2.com/coronavirus/northwest-missouri-school-districts-face-issues-with-school-food-supplies/article_94f3a0be-32bc-5907-8f01-956b23c46814.html.

FIGURE 2

Urban and Suburban Districts Were Twice as Likely to Provide Food Access for Students



Source: Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center

Similarly, the pandemic has strained the weak technological infrastructure across much of rural Missouri, widening the digital divide. Before the pandemic, about 1 in 10 students (K–12 and postsecondary) and teachers lacked internet access at home.²⁵ Rural students, students of color, and students from low-income households are most likely to lack internet access, a problem that has only grown since the onset of the pandemic and has now motivated stakeholders and policymakers to take short- and long-term actions, from distributing federal pandemic aid to expand internet and device access to making long-term investments in infrastructure.²⁶ Urban students and students of color, who were less likely to have access to in-person learning compared with rural students, have a more immediate and severe need for internet access than it would have been otherwise.

Since the pandemic began, policymakers and district leaders at all levels of government have collaborated to improve technology access using federal aid. State efforts, such as the Missouri Student Connectivity Grant, help districts purchase devices and improve internet infrastructure, and the Federal Communications Commission established a multibillion-dollar Emergency Broadband Benefit and Emergency Connectivity Fund to reach marginalized communities by improving local internet infrastructure and subsidizing affordable connectivity by household.²⁷

Despite these efforts, rural districts struggled to provide technology to students. Fifty-four percent of students in town and rural districts with high poverty rates received devices only, and only 25 percent received both devices and internet access. On the other hand, 93 percent of students in

²⁵ Niu Gao and Joseph Hayes, “The Digital Divide in Education” (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2021).

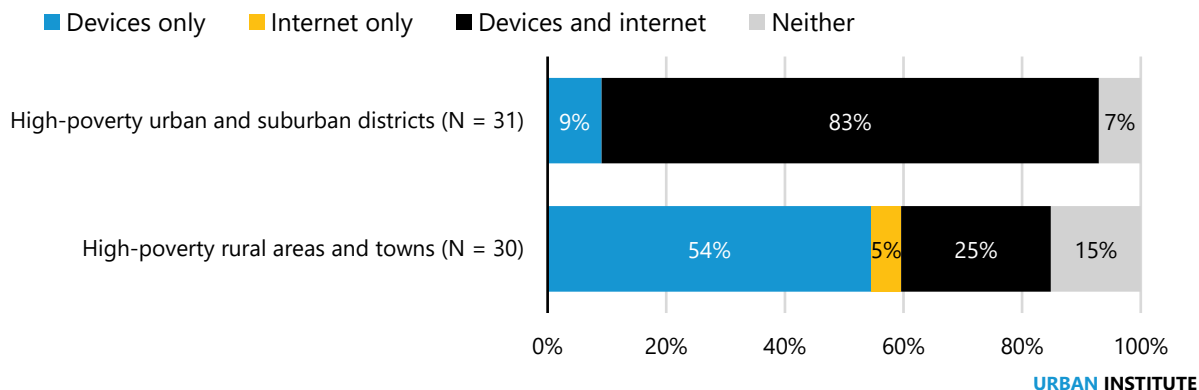
²⁶ Gao and Hayes, “The Digital Divide in Education.”

²⁷ “Emergency Broadband Benefit,” Federal Communications Commission, last updated March 15, 2022, <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>; and “Emergency Connectivity Fund,” Federal Communications Commission, last updated March 7, 2022, <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund>.

urban and suburban districts with high poverty rates received either devices only or devices and internet access (figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Most Urban and Suburban Districts Offered Both Devices and Internet, Whereas Most Rural Districts Offered Only Devices



Source: Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center

In addition to devices, stable internet access is crucial for effective distance learning. Yet students in urban and suburban districts with high poverty rates were more likely to receive home-based internet access (i.e., hot spots). Students in town and rural districts with high poverty rates were more likely to receive community-based internet access (e.g., strategically placed Wi-Fi-enabled buses and inside and outside community buildings).

For rural students unable to attend school in person, such as immunocompromised or students with Individualized Education Programs (of which there are many in rural Missouri), access to home-based internet, which is usually more affordable and subsidized by state programs (e.g., the Missouri Student Connectivity Grant), would be more useful than community-based internet. But as the pandemic highlights the broadband issues that continue to affect rural students today, expeditious adoptions and sustained support of technological infrastructure are necessary to provide stable high-quality education to all students, regardless of urbanicity and wealth.²⁸

Conclusion

Urban and rural students have faced challenges in learning and returning to school, but we find that even within these areas, there are dramatic differences between how students in affluent districts and how students in districts with high poverty rates receive their education. Though race and learning are

²⁸ Grayson Rainey, "Rural School District Faces Broadband Issues; Subcommittee Meets at Capitol," KOMU, September 29, 2021, https://www.komu.com/news/midmissourinews/rural-school-district-faces-broadband-issues-subcommittee-meets-at-capitol/article_3db25d90-2159-11ec-b454-cb20d914e285.html.

closely intertwined, the pandemic's impacts on schooling continue to disproportionately affect students living in poverty and the districts with limited ability to support them.

Nearly all students living in poverty in urban Missouri were given no option but to learn from a distance. By virtue of the concentration of Black students in urban areas, the decisions of urban districts to provide only distance education may have lasting, even generational, impacts on students of color. Conversely, rural students, often deeply reliant on school-provided social services, continue to struggle to access those resources.

While the country and Missouri continue to battle waves of the coronavirus, access to essential nutritional and technological resources may be, at best, unreliable. Districts that serve the highest proportions of students living in poverty should receive state and local support to hire staff and make plans that prioritize providing continued instruction and resources to these students. Supplemental tutoring and consistent communication on school decisions (or even locally available resources) are helpful, but moving forward, it is vital to ensure high-quality classroom instructional time.²⁹

Over the next several years, students who experienced interruptions to learning or other resources will need added attention, especially those who have been historically disadvantaged. Both urban and rural students living in poverty will require additional and differentiated responses.

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²⁹ Matthew A. Kraft and Manuel Monti-Nussbaum, *The Big Problem with Little Interruptions to Classroom Learning* (working paper, Annenberg Institute at Brown University, 2020); Carly D. Robinson, Matthew A. Kraft, Susanna Loeb, and Beth E. Schueler, "Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring" (Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute at Brown University, 2021); and Tory Christian, Molly I. Beck, Andrew Diemer, Kristi Donaldson, and Ashley Donaldson Burle, "Supporting Students with Disabilities during the Pandemic: Rural Districts Least Likely to Provide Information" (St. Louis: St. Louis University, 2021).



2022 Summer Programs

District	Location	Before & After Summer School	Summer Clubs
Center	Boone Elem.	June 6–24	
Fort Osage	Cler-Mont Elem.		May 31–June 30
	Elm Grove Elem.		
	Indian Trails Elem.		
Grandview	Belvidere Elem.	June 7–28 7–9am & 4–6pm	
	Conn-West Elem.		
Hickman Mills	Ervin Elem.	June 6–July 1 7–9am & 3–6pm	
	Ingels Elem.		
	Smith-Hale Middle		
Kansas City	Garcia Elem.	June 6–30 7–9:30am & 3:30–6pm	
	Rogers Elem.		
	Phillips Elem.		
	Faxon Elem.		
	Hale Cook Elem.		
	King Elem.		
	Carver Elem.		
North Kansas City	Topping Elem.	June 6–30 (Mon-Thur.) 7–9:30am & 3:30–6pm	
Charter	Lee A. Tolbert Academy	June 6–July 8 7–8am & 3:30–6pm	

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