WHERE WE STAND UPDATE

MARCH 2001 • ISSUE #6

formerly Gateway Trends

East-West Gateway Coordinating Council • 10 Stadium Plaza • St. Louis, MO 63102-1714

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION

Introduction

The schoolhouse, once considered a family rather than a business concern, is now becoming more important than the office tower or the industrial park in shaping the economic vitality of America's metropolitan areas. At the same time that the ongoing revolution in information technology is unbinding businesses from old geographic constraints, the globalizing economy is quickly eroding the competitive edge that financial incentives used to give certain American cities. In the new economy, an educated workforce can be a region's most valuable asset in attracting and holding businesses.

This issue of *Where We Stand Update* covers the beginning of the educational process, examining how our region's primary and secondary public schools are preparing students for both a "post-secondary" education and the workforce, how much they are spending to achieve their results and how the St. Louis metropolitan area measures up to other regions around the country.

Where We Stand

Since 1992, East-West Gateway has tracked and compared educational attainment for the metropolitan areas in the publication *Where We Stand: A Strategic Assessment of the St. Louis Region*. The most recent edition was released in 1999. The charts to the right, displayed in the trademark *Where We Stand* format, have been updated to reflect the most recent data available.

In the competition for college-educated workers the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is failing to keep pace with other large metropolitan areas in the country. Based upon a sampling of adults aged 25 and older in metropolitan populations, the St. Louis MSA is in the bottom third of peer metropolitan areas ranked by the percentage of population with a bachelor's degree or higher.[1] From the years 1991 to 2000, the percentage of sampled adults in the region with a bachelor's degree or more increased from 22.5 percent to 24.5 percent. This is still, however, below the average among our peers of 29.2 percent. Moreover, this increase is not as significant as in other cities. By comparison, during this same period the Kansas City MSA increased its percentage of sampled adults with a bachelor's degree or more from 27.5 percent to 34.7 percent.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

1	**Minneapolis**	**94.0**
2	Seattle	93.2
3	Kansas City	90.6
4	Portland	90.0
5	Salt Lake City	89.9
6	Cleveland	89.6
7	Denver	89.3
8	Atlanta	89.0
9	San Francisco	88.9
10	Washington DC	87.8
11	Pittsburgh	87.5
12	Milwaukee	87.3
13	Cincinnati	86.4
14	Philadelphia	86.4
Average		**86.2**
15	Dallas	85.6
16	**St. Louis**	**85.5**
17	Detroit	85.4
18	Boston	85.3
19	San Diego	85.3
20	Chicago	85.2
21	Phoenix	85.1
22	Columbus	84.9
23	Indianapolis	83.7
24	New York	83.4
25	Charlotte	81.8
26	Miami	81.7
27	San Antonio	81.1
28	Houston	79.1
29	**Los Angeles**	**77.9**

Percent of persons 25 and older with high school degree or higher, 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey—March, 2000

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: COLLEGE GRADUATES

1	**Denver**	**38.7**
2	Minneapolis	38.4
3	San Francisco	37.3
4	Washington DC	37.2
5	Kansas City	34.7
6	Boston	34.4
7	San Diego	34.0
8	Seattle	33.8
9	New York	32.6
10	Atlanta	31.4
11	Dallas	30.7
12	Chicago	30.7
13	Portland	29.4
Average		**29.2**
14	Cleveland	28.7
15	Salt Lake City	27.9
16	Philadelphia	27.8
17	Cincinnati	27.7
18	Milwaukee	26.9
19	Detroit	26.2
20	Houston	25.7
21	Los Angeles	25.6
22	Indianapolis	25.5
23	Miami	25.1
24	Columbus	25.0
25	**St. Louis**	**24.5**
26	Pittsburgh	24.2
27	Phoenix	23.9
28	Charlotte	23.1
29	**San Antonio**	**15.9**

BETTER

AVERAGE

WORSE

Percent of persons 25 and older with college degree or higher, 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey—March, 2000

1 Metropolitan areas were selected as our "peers" if they met one of two criteria: the area had a population of 950,000 or more and was within 500 miles of St. Louis, or the area had an economic function similar to that of the St. Louis region.

With respect to high school graduates, the St. Louis MSA approaches the average. The percentage of sampled adults in the region who are high school graduates increased from 82.9 percent to 85.5 percent between 1991 and 2000. The average among our peers is 86.2 percent.

The Educational System

The public school system that educates our region's children is one of the most fractured in the nation. In 1992, there were 119 different public school districts in the St. Louis metropolitan area. With 4.7 school districts per 100,000 people, St. Louis is only surpassed by Oklahoma City and Portland in the number of these governmental entities per capita.[2] One symptom of such a divided system is that the quality of education varies considerably across the region, within each county and, in some cases, block by block.

This report looks at the 84 largest public school districts of the bi-state area. As of 2000 there were a total of 391,258 students enrolled in the primary and secondary public educational institutions of these districts. Slightly more than three quarters (78.8 percent) of these students, 308,230 schoolchildren, reside in the Missouri counties and the City of St. Louis. Slightly less than a quarter (21.2 percent) of these students, 83,028 schoolchildren, reside in the Illinois counties.

Almost half of the students in these districts attend one of the region's ten largest school systems. (*Identified in charts at right and the map on page 3.*) The differences in academic performance and financial resources between these institutions, however, is just as great as between the numerous small districts.

Academic Performance

The variations in academic performance between the ten largest districts are remarkable. In 2000, the Parkway School District, the third largest in the MSA, saw 90 percent of its students graduate as well as 84 percent take the ACT.[3] In 1999 Parkway students achieved an average ACT composite mean score of 23.6. By comparison, in 2000 the East St. Louis School District, the tenth largest in the MSA, had a graduation rate of only 54 percent while only 43 percent of its students took the ACT. In 1999 East St. Louis students achieved an average composite mean score of just 16.1.

Enrollment for 2000

For the Region's Ten Largest Public School Districts

1	St. Louis Public Schools	St. Louis City	43,858
2	Rockwood R-VI	St. Louis Co.	21,175
3	Parkway C-2	St. Louis Co.	20,547
4	Francis Howell R-III	St. Charles Co.	18,832
5	Hazelwood	St. Louis Co.	18,330
6	Ft. Zumwalt	St. Charles Co.	15,973
7	Mehlville R-IX	St. Louis Co.	11,871
8	Ferguson-Florissant R-II	St. Louis Co.	11,381
9	Fox C-6	Jefferson Co.	10,970
10	East St. Louis SD 189	St. Clair Co.	10,938

Total Enrollment in Districts: 183,875
Percent of Regional Enrollment: 47%

Sources: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Illinois State Board of Education, 1999-2000.

Percent Graduation Rate for 2000[4]

For the Region's Ten Largest Public School Districts

1	Rockwood R-VI	St. Louis Co.	90.8 %
2	Parkway C-2	St. Louis Co.	90.0
3	Ft. Zumwalt	St. Charles Co.	87.0
4	Mehlville R-IX	St. Louis Co.	83.4
5	Fox C-6	Jefferson Co.	82.9
6	Ferguson-Florissant R-II	St. Louis Co.	81.7
7	Hazelwood	St. Louis Co.	79.9
8	Francis Howell R-III	St. Charles Co.	79.8
9	East St. Louis SD 189	St. Clair Co.	53.9
10	St. Louis Public Schools	St. Louis City	42.6

Sources: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Illinois State Board of Education, 1999-2000.

Across the region, year 2000 graduation rates for schools in the St. Louis MSA vary to an even greater degree, from a high of 97 percent for the Ladue School District to a low of 42.6 percent for the City of St. Louis Schools. For the 1999 ACT, the composite mean scores range from a high 23.7 average for the Clayton School District, to a low 12.7 average for the Brooklyn School District. The percentage of students taking the ACT in 2000 vary from a high of 84 percent for the Parkway and Brentwood School Districts to a low of 16.7 for the Livingston School District.

2 For more information, see *Where We Stand*, 3rd Edition, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council. 1999

3 The percentage of students taking the ACT is used here as a rough indicator of how many students in a district plan on attending a post-secondary institution. Since vocational-technical schools and some community colleges do not require such tests, it is not a perfect measure of post-secondary ambitions.

4 Graduation rate is calculated by comparing the number of 1999-00 graduates with the number of students enrolled in the ninth grade in the fall of 1996, taking into account transfers.

ACT Composite Mean For 1999

For the Region's Ten Largest Public School Districts

1	Parkway C-2	St. Louis Co.	23.6
2	Rockwood R-VI	St. Louis Co.	22.8
3	Ft. Zumwalt	St. Charles Co.	22.7
4	Francis Howell R-III	St. Charles Co.	21.9
5	Mehlville R-IX	St. Louis Co.	21.9
6	Fox C-6	Jefferson Co.	21.3
7	Hazelwood	St. Louis Co.	20.5
8	Ferguson-Florissant R-II	St. Louis Co.	20.4
9	St. Louis Public Schools	St. Louis City	18.4
10	East St. Louis SD 189	St. Clair Co.	16.1

Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Percent of the Class of 2000 Taking the ACT

For the Region's Ten Largest Public School Districts

1	Parkway C-2	St. Louis Co.	84 %
2	Rockwood R-VI	St. Louis Co.	81
3	Francis Howell R-III	St. Charles Co.	77
4	Ft. Zumwalt	St. Charles Co.	75
5	Hazelwood	St. Louis Co.	72
6	Mehlville R-IX	St. Louis Co.	68
7	Ferguson-Florissant R-II	St. Louis Co.	55
8	Fox C-6	Jefferson Co.	55
9	St. Louis Public Schools	St. Louis City	46
10	East St. Louis SD 189	St. Clair Co.	43

Sources: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Illinois State Board of Education

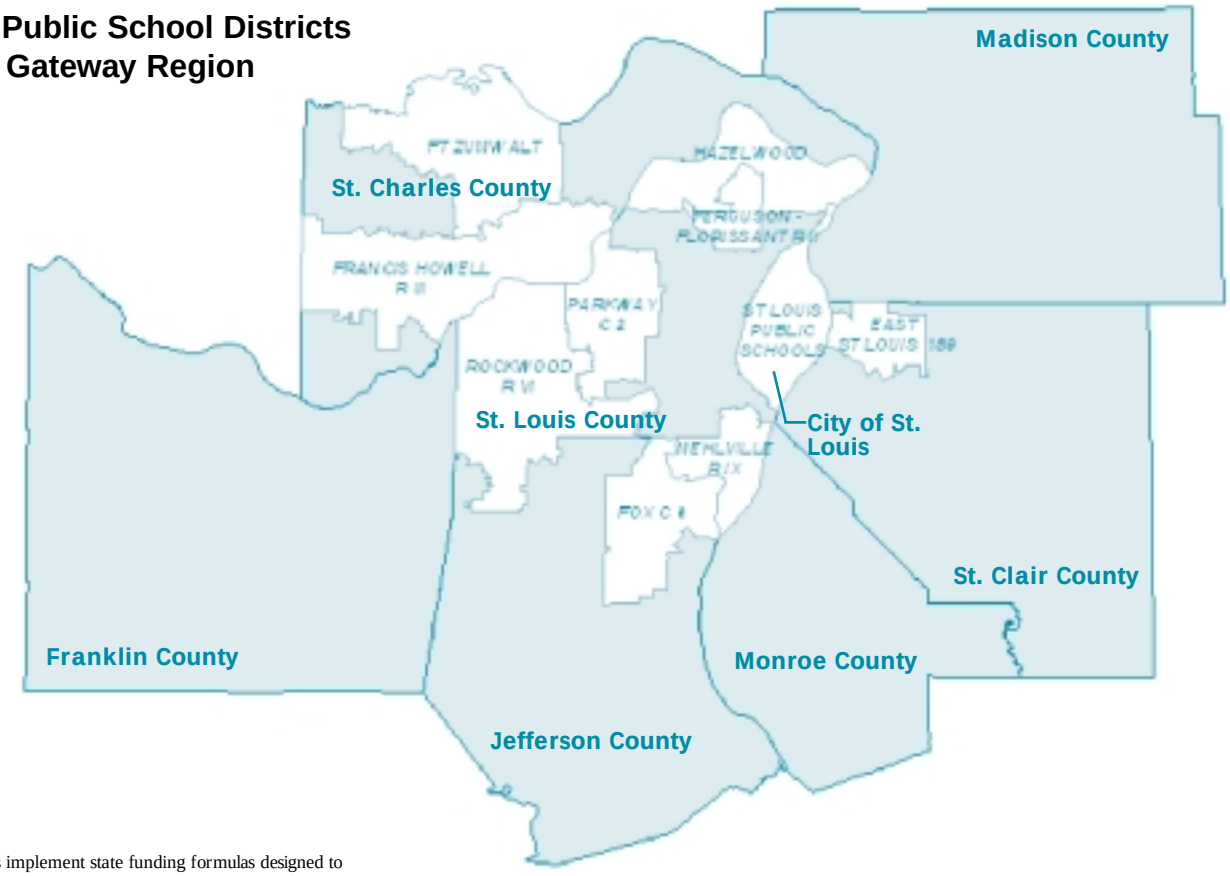
Spending and Financial Resources

As with academic indicators, the differences in spending per student between school districts are considerable.

Among the ten largest districts, the St. Louis Public School District, the largest in the MSA, spent an average of $7,564 per student, the most of the large school districts. The Fox C-6 School District, the ninth largest in the MSA, spent only 65 percent of this, an average of $4,912 per student (*see chart on page 4*). In St. Clair County, the Brooklyn School District spent an average of $10,139 per student, while the New Athens School District spent roughly half of this, an average of $5,365 per student. In St. Louis County, the Clayton School District spent the most of any district in the region, $11,239 per student, while the Bayless School District spent less than half of this, an average of $5,277 per student. The Troy R III School District, in Lincoln County, spent the least per student in the metropolitan area, $4,261, a mere 38 percent of what the Clayton District spent in 1999.

The differences in the property values between school districts, and therefore the amount of assets available for taxation, vary the most of all the data collected.[5] Among the ten largest districts, the Parkway School

Ten Largest Public School Districts of the Gateway Region



5 Both Missouri and Illinois implement state funding formulas designed to decrease financial inequities across districts by increasing state aid to poorer districts. In Missouri, the Outstanding Schools Act was enacted in 1993 to remedy court declared inadequacies in the state's allocation of basic state aid.

Expenditures Per Pupil
For the Region's Ten Largest Public School Districts

1	St. Louis Public Schools	St. Louis City	$7,564
2	Parkway C-2	St. Louis Co.	$7,282
3	East St. Louis SD 189	St. Clair Co.	$7,202
4	Ferguson-Florissant R-II	St. Louis Co.	$6,796
5	Francis Howell R-III	St. Charles Co.	$6,404
6	Hazelwood	St. Louis Co.	$5,838
7	Rockwood R-VI	St. Louis Co.	$5,739
8	Mehlville R-IX	St. Louis Co.	$5,545
9	Ft. Zumwalt	St. Charles Co.	$5,284
10	Fox C-6	Jefferson Co.	$4,912

Assessed Valuation Per Pupil
For the Region's Ten Largest Public School Districts

1	Parkway C-2	St. Louis Co.	$148,334
2	Rockwood R-VI	St. Louis Co.	$102,496
3	Mehlville R-IX	St. Louis Co.	$98,562
4	Hazelwood	St. Louis Co.	$84,210
5	Ferguson-Florissant R-II	St. Louis Co.	$76,351
6	Ft. Zumwalt	St. Charles Co.	$62,579
7	Francis Howell R-III	St. Charles Co.	$62,539
8	St. Louis Public Schools	St. Louis City	$59,725
9	Fox C-6	Jefferson Co.	$42,846
10	East St. Louis SD 189	St. Clair Co.	$8,736

Sources: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1999 and Illinois State Board of Education, 1998-1999

District had the highest assessed valuation per pupil, $148,334, while the East St. Louis School District had only six percent of this, $8,736, the lowest for the entire region. In St. Clair County, the assessed valuation per pupil for the East St. Louis School District was only two percent of the neighboring Grant School District, which had an assessed valuation of $434,989 per pupil, the highest for the county and the region. Within St. Louis County, the Ladue School District had an assessed valuation of $281,030 per pupil, while the Jennings School District had only 11 percent of this, an assessed valuation of $30,387 per pupil.

Some Policy Questions

• Business and government leaders agree that access to a skilled workforce is an essential key to economic growth. Interestingly, however, some of the metropolitan areas with the highest job growth rates in the nation also rank lower than St. Louis in terms of the percentage of their population with bachelor's degrees. Phoenix (which had the second-highest rate of job growth among the peer regions between 1990 and 1998), Charlotte, and San Antonio are good examples. (See "Job and Earnings Growth in the St. Louis Region," Issue #5, Gateway Trends, December 2000.)

Traditional measures of academic achievement are less precise than may be needed in the context of the new economy in describing the complex relationship between the skills of the workforce and job growth. Additional measures must be developed if the region is to better gauge the capability of its workforce.

• The data presented in this report describe a financial commitment to public education in the St. Louis region that is very unevenly applied across the region's school districts. This is caused by many complex economic, social, political, and fiscal variables and results in vastly disparate levels of educational opportunity.

What equitable and implementable public policies can be put in place at the local, state, and bi-state regional level to ensure that every child has access to a quality education?

For More Information

Readers interested in learning more about public education in the St. Louis Region may want to visit the following web sites:

U.S. Census Bureau
www.census.gov

National Center for Education Statistics
www.nces.ed.gov

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
www.dese.state.mo.us

Missouri Department of Higher Education
www.cbhe.state.mo.us

Illinois State Board of Education
www.isbe.state.il.us

Illinois Board of Higher Education
www.ibhe.state.il.us