

Region 50 Discussion Notes

St. Clair County

General Comments

- East St. Louis was not explicitly listed in the map, even though part of it goes into St. Clair.
- Cahokia Heights' name has changed.
- O'Fallon would generally be higher income than Fairview Heights. Surprised about the deep purple (higher Federal Poverty Level (FPL) section of O'Fallon. That is not correct.
- It would be helpful to see maps that layer some of this data, e.g. poverty and race.
- O'Fallon percent is unexpected.
- O'Fallon is pretty reflective of my experience.
- Freeburg has some more affluent subdivisions and home areas; however, we also draw from Fayetteville, which has a very high poverty level and many older homes and mobile home parks that have a much higher poverty level.
- I think the data is more understandable by city/town rather than census tract (see example map - <https://edi.erikson.edu/map/?area=gestl>).
- Dropping in some more city points to the maps would be helpful.
- Surprised at more Preschool For All (PFA) than Preschool For All-Expansion (PFA-E) slots.
- The south eastern part of the county looks very underserved even though there's high poverty.
- Interest in Pre-K in the Freeburg area continues to increase. We have one PFA-E and one Early Childhood classroom and had to add a second ECE for a second semester. Last year, we screened 59 students, with 30 who qualified for Pre-K. Screening scores show that many more children could benefit from Pre-K prior to Kindergarten. Our Kindergarten teachers continue to express concern about how ill-prepared many students are for Kindergarten.

Strengths/Assets

- Very knowledgeable early childhood educators in areas that are dedicated and working together and collaborate well.
- Collaboration - existing partnerships and collaborations that are using family engagement and interacting with different sectors to bring in more children between birth and age 3 to help increase kindergarten readiness.

Needs/Challenges

- Teacher shortage.
- More Spanish speaking students in the area. Hard to find teachers who have qualifications for bilingual education.
- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) strict teacher and director qualifications make positions hard to fill.
- Transportation.

- CHASI pays a month behind and doesn't raise the rates enough. We're approved for part days and part weeks, and we can't fill the other spots.
- Disparities in funding for home-, center-, and school-based providers.
- Early Intervention won't take children if they are too close to age 3.
- Mental health consultancy staff.
- More teacher development opportunities and information on how to be more culturally appropriate/competent.
- Children have greater needs than ever before and resources are limited.
- Mental health supports are very hard to find.
- We need English as a Second Language (ESL) support from the Regional Office of Education (ROE) for Pre-K.
- Assistants must be 19 yrs old, but you can be drafted at 18 years old...
- The State gives us new COVID rules on Friday afternoons. There is only one person at the Health Department for daycare COVID questions. DCFS won't answer questions about COVID.
- There aren't enough spots available; we have to turn people away weekly.
- We can't open more rooms because of DCFS staffing restrictions.
- Our special education population has increased significantly.
- We have to turn people away because we don't have enough staff. Our wait lists are incredibly long.
- Social Emotional Learning for children.
- I serve a wide range of communities in PFA and PFA-E programs. Those programs in very rural areas have very few resources for those in need.