



# JOHNSON COUNTY CHILDREN & YOUTH TRENDS REPORT

FEBRUARY 2009



United Community Services of Johnson County  
12351 W. 96th Terrace, Suite 200  
Lenexa, Kansas 66215  
913.438.4764 [www.ucsjoco.org](http://www.ucsjoco.org)

## INTRODUCTION

During the 2007-08 school year UCS facilitated dialogues on human services in Blue Valley, De Soto, Gardner, Olathe and Shawnee Mission School Districts. These five sessions were designed with a two-fold purpose:

- to connect school personnel with information about community-based human service agencies and government organizations in order to improve the response to at-risk children and youth;
- to learn from school personnel's experiences and observations.

During the Human Service Dialogues UCS presented data regarding child population and poverty, English as a Second Language enrollment, special education enrollment, school lunch programs, reading assessment, and student use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. The Johnson County Mental Health Center presented information about early signs of mental health issues and how to connect students with mental health services. Participants took part in small group discussions about what trends they were observing, services needed and possible actions to pursue. This report is a summation of those dialogues. The "voices" are a compilation of the key observations expressed by participants. In addition to school district staff – which included teachers, administrators, nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists – several community representatives attended and their comments are also reflected in "voices."

In a recent *Child Trends Research Brief*, Pilar Marin and Brett Brown explain that research has demonstrated the interconnectedness of academics, safety and health - safety and health affect the academic environment, academics affect health and social development. This is important as school systems have become even more pressured to focus on their main goal of academic development as a result of the federal No Child Left Behind initiative. (1)

This report presents data about a variety of factors that affect the ability to learn, such as language, health and poverty. For each factor, observations, or "voices" are also presented. This information can help guide the future action of human service providers and school districts to achieve more positive outcomes for children.

## ABOUT UCS

Established in 1967, United Community Services (UCS) is a nonprofit research and planning organization that addresses human service needs in Johnson County, Kansas. Through ongoing research and planning, UCS identifies the critical human needs that most impact the community and uses those findings to inform decision-makers, guide resource allocation and advance community action. UCS is the United Way of Greater Kansas City's planning partner.

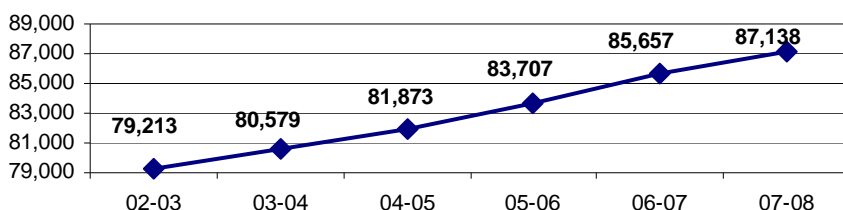
For more information about the Johnson County Children and Youth Trends Report contact Marya Schott, UCS Director for Community Initiatives, [maryas@ucsjoco.org](mailto:maryas@ucsjoco.org). For information about UCS or other data UCS has available, visit the organization's web site at [www.ucsjoco.org](http://www.ucsjoco.org).

# JOHNSON COUNTY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

## FACTS:

- Enrollment grew more than 10% over the past five years – to 87,138 in the 2007-08 school year. De Soto and Gardner School Districts had the greatest growth rate.
- Over the past five years, minority students increased from nearly one in seven in 2002-03 to one in five in 2007-08. The largest increase occurred in the percentage of Hispanic students, which grew from 4.5% of total enrollment in 2002-03 to 7.1% in 2007-08.
- Enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) increased by 129% over the past five years. During the 2007-08 school year, 67 languages were spoken by students in Shawnee Mission District; 51 in Blue Valley and 47 in Olathe.

Johnson County Headcount Enrollment  
2001-2008



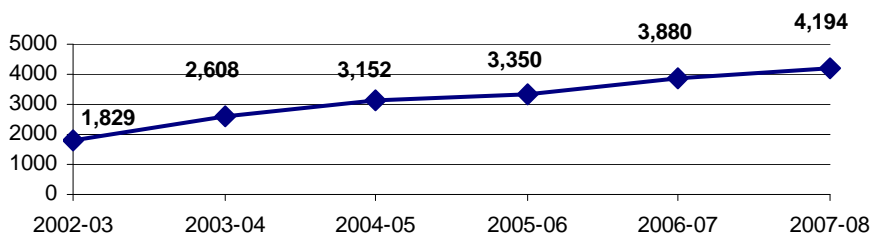
Headcount Enrollment by District

| District         | 2002-03       | 2007-08       | Percent Change |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Blue Valley      | 18,489        | 20,718        | 12.1%          |
| De Soto          | 4,104         | 6,022         | 46.7%          |
| Gardner-Edgerton | 3,215         | 4,381         | 36.3%          |
| Olathe           | 22,023        | 25,994        | 18.0%          |
| Shawnee Mission  | 29,824        | 28,158        | -5.6%          |
| Spring Hill      | 1,558         | 1,865         | 19.1%          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>79,213</b> | <b>87,138</b> | <b>10.0%</b>   |

## VOICES:

- Lack of family support, or crises such as domestic violence or unemployment, can lead to poor attendance.
- Finding ways to engage parents is a challenge.
- Growing cultural and linguistic diversity presents new challenges. Many parents do not speak English.
- It's become more difficult to bridge the gap with ESL families.
- It would help if school professionals took Spanish immersion classes and if there were more interpreters available.
- There are too many roadblocks for undocumented students or students on visas (medical issues, financial help for college).

Johnson County Public Schools  
English as a Second Language Enrollment



Number of Languages Spoken by  
Students in ESL Programs 2007-08

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Blue Valley      | 51 |
| De Soto          | 11 |
| Gardner Edgerton | 6  |
| Olathe           | 47 |
| Shawnee Mission  | 67 |
| Spring Hill      | 4  |

### About the Data

Source: Kansas Department of Education, USD Headcount Enrollment; UCS Survey of Johnson County Public School Districts, 2007-08 school year.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

## FACTS:

Nearly 11% of Johnson County public school students have special needs – as indicated by enrollment in Special Education. Students with learning disabilities comprise the largest percentage of the non-gifted special education population. Approximately 36% of special education elementary school students have a behavioral disorder/emotional disturbance.

## VOICES:

- There appear to be more students with disabilities and an increase in the severity of their disability.
- Mentoring and additional support services for special needs students would be helpful.

### Special Education Enrollment by District 2007-08

| District         | Gifted/Talented<br>Special Education | Disabled     | All Exceptionalities* | Percent of Students in<br>District with<br>Disabilities |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---|
| Blue Valley      | 1,480                                | 1,941        | 3,391                 | 9.4%  |
| De Soto          | 145                                  | 507          | 651                   | 8.4%  |
| Gardner/Edgerton | 96                                   | 572          | 667                   | 13.1%   |
| Olathe           | 818                                  | 3,131        | 3,918                 | 12.0%   |
| Shawnee Mission  | 1,512                                | 3,120        | 4,601                 | 11.1%   |
| Spring Hill      | 38                                   | 174          | 212                   | 9.3%  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>4,089</b>                         | <b>9,445</b> | <b>13,440</b>         | <b>10.8%</b>  |

#### About the Data

Source: Kansas Department of Education; UCS Survey of Johnson County Public School Districts, 2007-08 school year.

Definition: State Regulation KAR 91-40 states "special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of an exceptional child." Students who receive special education services include those who are gifted and talented, as well as those who are non-gifted and have disabilities such as visual impairment, autism, speech or language impairment.

\*Gifted students receiving services for disability are counted under both the disability and gifted category, but are not duplicated in the All Exceptional total.

# ACADEMIC—3RD GRADE READING LEVELS

## FACTS:

Children not reading at grade level by the end of third grade are at higher risk of not graduating from high school. 74% of children who have problems reading in the third grade still have problems reading in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. (7)

Overall, Johnson County 3<sup>rd</sup> graders performed well on reading assessment tests when compared to their peers across Kansas. In four Johnson County school districts, there is a high degree of variability (from about 14% to 30% difference) in reading proficiency between all third graders and third graders who are economically disadvantaged or English Language Learners.

## VOICES:

- The focus on academic excellence results in fewer resources to address other issues, including lack of time to help students develop coping skills and to provide support to students who are experiencing complex problems.
- Students feel academic pressure (example: meeting college standards).
- Teachers feel academic pressure (example: test performance and No Child Left Behind).
- More collaboration between schools and community-based services would help students with non-academic issues that affect their ability to be successful in school.

**Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders Meeting or Exceeding  
State Reading Standard, 2007-2008**

| District          | All 3 <sup>rd</sup><br>Graders | Economically<br>Disadvantaged | English-<br>Language<br>Learners |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Blue Valley       | 93.3%                          | 90.3%                         | 81.3%                            |
| De Soto           | 87.2%                          | 67.8%                         | 57.1%                            |
| Gardner Edgerton  | 98.1%                          | 97.8%                         | 100%                             |
| Olathe            | 88.1%                          | 74.2%                         | 67.7%                            |
| Shawnee Mission   | 82.9%                          | 66.2%                         | 54.7%                            |
| Spring Hill       | 76.2%                          | 55.5%                         | Not available                    |
| Kansas State Rate | 83.5%                          | 74.8%                         | 65.4%                            |

*About the Data:*

*Source: Kansas Department of Education School Report Cards; Education Commission of the States (2001); Facts about Literacy.*

*Definitions: Economically disadvantaged students, according to the Kansas Department of Education, are those who qualify for a free or reduced-cost lunch.*

*Explanations and Caveats: In most cases, a small percentage of students was not tested.*

# STUDENT SUPPORT

## FACTS:

Adolescents who feel there are people who care about them in school and feel connected to school are more likely to be academically motivated and less likely to engage in a variety of negative behaviors. (2) Caring adults in schools may include anyone with whom students come into contact. All Johnson County school districts have counselors, psychologists and school resource officers; however, they are not available at every grade level. All but the Spring Hill District have at least one social worker.

## VOICES:

- Complex problems affect many children, but schools do not have resources to address all of them.
- Helping professionals are not available at every grade level in every building, and have limited time to help any one student.
- The connections between school and community-based services need to be strengthened.
- School personnel have limited knowledge of community resources.
- Helping professionals are stretched too thin.

**Johnson County Public Schools' Support Staff  
2007-08**

|                  | Counselors | Ratio Counselors to Students | Social Workers | Ratio Social Workers to Students | Psychologists | Ratio Psychologists to Students | Nurses | Ratio Nurses to Students | School Resource Officers | Ratio SROs to Students | FTE Enrollment* |
|------------------|------------|------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Blue Valley      | 57         | 1:348                        | 2              | 1:9905                           | 23            | 1:861                           | 32     | 1:619                    | 9                        | 1:2,201                | 19,810          |
| DeSoto           | 15         | 1:381                        | 6              | 1:953                            | 6             | 1:953                           | 11     | 1:520                    | 3                        | 1:1,906                | 5,717           |
| Gardner-Edgerton | 13         | 1:318                        | 3.36           | 1:1,229                          | 5             | 1:826                           | 1      | 1:4,129                  | 2                        | 1:2,065                | 4,129           |
| Olathe           | 63.1       | 1:392                        | 19             | 1:1,303                          | 25.5          | 1:971                           | 47.8   | 1:518                    | 14                       | 1:1,768                | 24,751          |
| Shawnee Mission  | 27.63      | 1:978                        | 35.5           | 1:761                            | 19.5          | 1:1,385                         | 51     | 1:530                    | 11                       | 1:2,456                | 27,013          |
| Spring Hill      | 4          | 1:449                        | 0              | 0                                | 2             | 1:897                           | 3      | 1:598                    | 1                        | 1:1,794                | 1,794           |

**National Recommended Ratio\*\***

**1:250                      1:500                      1:1000                      1:750                      n/a**

\*FTE enrollment from Kansas Department of Education Superintendents' Reports. Kansas Department of Education defines FTE (full time equivalency enrollment) as "the total enrollment in grades kindergarten through 12, and three and four year old preschool special education as of September 20th. Any pupil who is not enrolled full time is counted as that proportion of one pupil that his/her regular enrollment bears to full time enrollment. Pupils enrolled in three and four year old preschool special education or kindergarten are counted as half-time pupils."

\*\*Sources for National Recommendations:

Counselors: American School Counselor Assoc. ([www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org))

Social Workers: National Assoc. of Social Workers ([www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org))

Psychologist: National Assoc. of School Psychologists ([www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org))

Nurses: National Assoc. of School Nurses ([www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org))

SRO: National Association of School Resource Officers ([www.nasro.org](http://www.nasro.org)) No recommended ratio available.

*About the Data*

Source: UCS School Survey and Ks. Dept. Ed. Superintendents' Reports

# POVERTY

## FACTS:

In 2007, while children accounted for 26% of the county's population, they accounted for 34% of those people living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The poverty rate for children ages 0-17 was 5.5%, compared to 3.8% for those over 18 years-of-age. African American and Latino children are disproportionately poor. Nearly 50% of families living below the poverty line included at least one child under the age of 5. Approximately one in six public school students received a free or reduced cost lunch during the 2007-08 school year – an increase of 57% over the past five years.

## VOICES:

- Lack of affordable housing results in frequent moves and disruption in education. More families are transient.
- Low-income parents are working two jobs and no one is supervising their children. Children are forbidden to go outside when parents are not home so they play a lot of computer games.
- Family financial stress affects students' performance in school and anxiety about financing college.
- Lack of transportation is a problem.
- Families tend to hide problems; they feel pressured to appear affluent.

### Poverty Status by Age Group, Johnson County, 2007

|                               | <100% Federal Poverty Level | 100-200% FPL  | >200% Federal Poverty Level | Total Age Group | Rate <100% FPL | Rate <200% FPL |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 5 and under                   | 3,061                       | 6,976         | 35,514                      | 45,551          | 7%             | 22%            |
| Ages 6-11                     | 3,019                       | 4,252         | 38,886                      | 46,157          | 7%             | 16%            |
| Ages 12-17                    | 1,437                       | 3,719         | 38,820                      | 43,976          | 3%             | 12%            |
| <b>Total All Ages (0-75+)</b> | <b>21,998</b>               | <b>52,173</b> | <b>444,474</b>              | <b>518,645</b>  | <b>4%</b>      | <b>23%</b>     |

### Poverty Status by Race and Age, Johnson County, 2007 (<100% FPL)

|                  | All Races | White | African American | Asian | Latino |
|------------------|-----------|-------|------------------|-------|--------|
| All ages         | 4.2%      | 3.0%  | 17.0%            | 7.6%  | 13.6%  |
| 0 - 5 year olds  | 6.7%      | 2.9%  | 31.0%            | 4.9%  | 25.5%  |
| 6 - 17 year olds | 4.9%      | 2.5%  | 28.8%            | 6.5%  | 22.3%  |

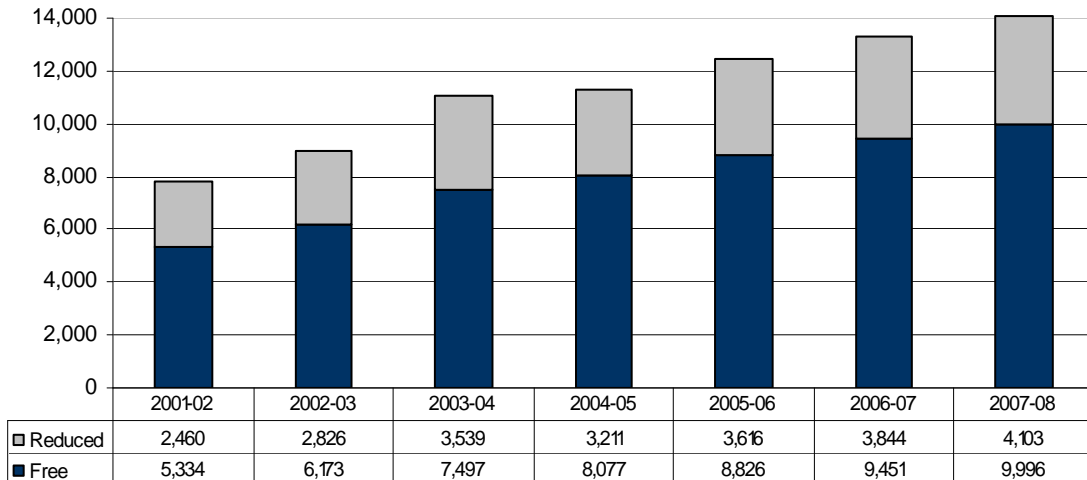
#### About the Data

Source: American Community Survey, 2007.

Explanations and Caveats: The 2007 Federal Poverty Levels for a family of four were: 100% FPL \$20,650, and 200% FPL \$41,300.

# POVERTY, SCHOOL LUNCHES

## Enrollment in Free and Reduced-Cost School Lunch Program



|                              | 2002-03      | 2007-08       | Growth in Participation over 5 years | 2007-08 Participation Rate |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Blue Valley                  | 507          | 922           | 81.9%                                | 4.5%                       |
| De Soto                      | 533          | 751           | 40.9%                                | 12.5%                      |
| Gardner-Edgerton             | 673          | 1,092         | 62.3%                                | 24.9%                      |
| Olathe                       | 3,031        | 4,788         | 58.0%                                | 18.4%                      |
| Shawnee Mission              | 4,070        | 6,164         | 51.4%                                | 21.9%                      |
| Spring Hill                  | 185          | 382           | 106.5%                               | 20.5%                      |
| <b>Total - All Districts</b> | <b>8,999</b> | <b>14,099</b> | <b>56.7%</b>                         | <b>16.2%</b>               |

### About the Data

Source: Johnson County Public School Districts; UCS School Lunch Survey.

Definition: Families at or below 185% of federal poverty level (\$38,203 for a family of four in the 2007-08 school year) were eligible for school lunch program subsidies. To be eligible for a free lunch, household income must be at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. In the 2007-08 school year, 130% of poverty for a family of four was \$26,845.

Explanations and Caveats: The actual number of students below these levels of poverty may be higher, because this data reflects the number of households who applied for assistance – not the total eligible population.

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

## FACTS:

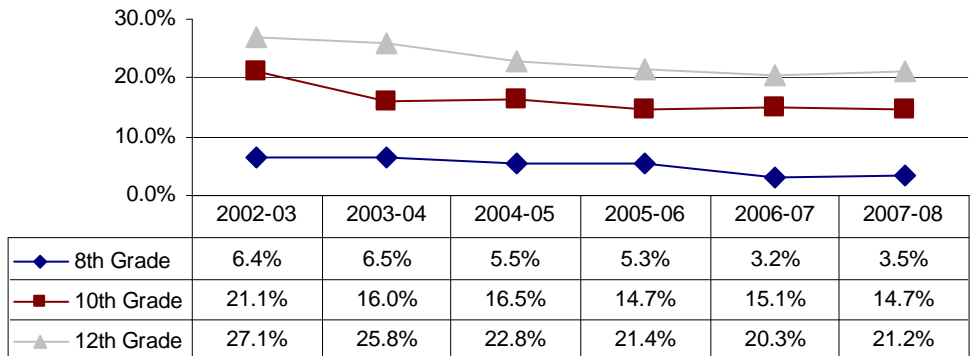
During the 2007-08 school year, 75% of Johnson County public school students in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades took the Communities That Care Student Survey in which they anonymously self-report if they do or do not abuse substances.

- 23.4% of Johnson County 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported tobacco use within the past 30 days, and 30.1% of all Johnson County youth reported it would be "very easy" to obtain cigarettes.
- Approximately one in five (21%) Johnson County 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported marijuana use within the past 30 days. Approximately one in seven (14.3%) 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported the same.
- Approximately one in three (34.2%) Johnson County 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported binge drinking; approximately one in five (21.3%) 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 6.5% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported the same.

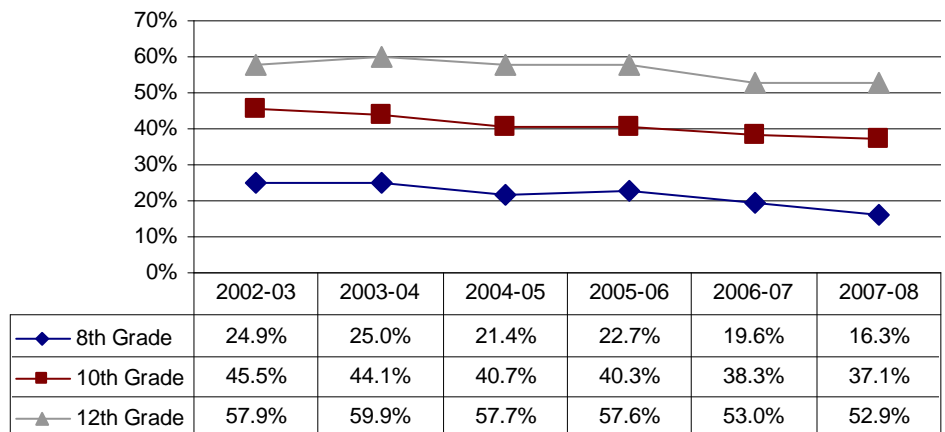
## VOICES:

- There appears to be more illegal use of prescription medication.
- Parents accept drinking; don't take it seriously; provide alcohol at home parties.
- In-school alcohol support groups would benefit high school students.
- Prevention and intervention programs should start at least in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Tobacco has been the focus of prevention efforts; now the focus should be more on alcohol.
- It is difficult for schools to find the time to address issues around drugs and alcohol.

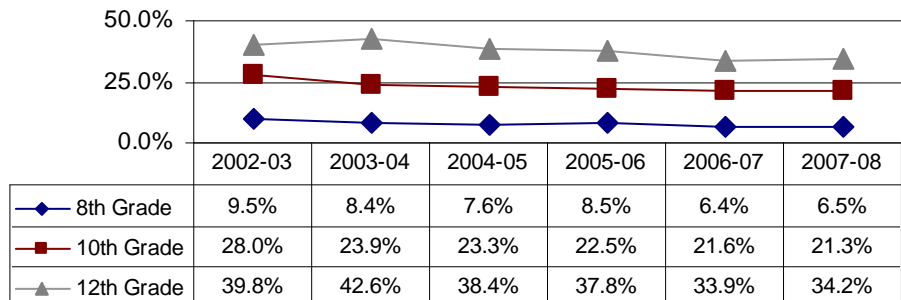
**Current Marijuana Use  
Self-Reported by Johnson County Students**



**Current Alcohol Use  
Self-Reported by Johnson County Students**



**Binge Drinking  
Self-Reported by Johnson County Students  
(Five or more drinks in a row within past 2 weeks)**



**About the Data**

Source: Kansas Department of Education, USD Headcount Enrollment; Communities that Care Student Surveys 2000-2008.

Definition: Adolescents who report using alcohol, tobacco and/or marijuana within the past 30 days are considered "current users."

Explanations and Caveats: For school years 2000-01 through 2005-06, data were collected from four Johnson County public school districts. Beginning with the 2006-07 school year, all six Johnson County school districts administered the Communities That Care Student Survey.

# HEALTH

## FACTS:

Major health issues facing adolescents include obesity, drug and alcohol use, sexual activity and emotional health. Schools seek to affect students' health in a number of ways including educating (health classes), exercise (physical education classes and extra-curricular sports), and nutrition (school lunch content). (3)

Nationwide, in the last 25 years the percent of children (6-11 years) who are overweight has almost tripled going from 6.5% in 1976-80 to 17.5% in 2001-04. (4) In 2007, a representation of Johnson County youth took the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and 28.9% describing themselves as slightly or very overweight, and 14.4% self-identified as at-risk of becoming overweight. (5)

## VOICES:

- Sometimes it is difficult for students to access healthcare due to lack of insurance or limits insurance companies place on care.
- There is an increase in obesity and anorexia.
- It is difficult to find free or reduced cost eye care services.
- Sometimes school health care professionals are pulled away to help with other things (example: academic testing), which limits their time to do what they are trained and hired to do.
- There is a lack of low-cost recreational teams or other activities for students to participate in during out-of-school hours.

# MENTAL HEALTH

## FACTS:

School environments can affect the mental health of students through both the academic and social stressors experienced there. Schools are also places where mental health problems can be identified for possible treatment. This is important in an age group where in 2007, a national survey reported 15% of students nationwide self-reported seriously considering suicide during the previous year. (6) The Kansas Department of Health and Environment reports in 2007 there were seven suicides among young people between 15 and 24 years of age living in Johnson County.

The Johnson County Mental Health Center reports in its 2007 Annual Report that 9,723 persons sought and received care in 2007; 28% of those served were under the age of 18, and 1,844 were children experiencing a severe emotional disturbance. The Annual Report also states that Johnson County Adolescent Center for Treatment (ACT) admitted 250 youth, 113 of whom lived in Johnson County. Further, 183 adolescents and their families were served in the Mental Health Center's Intensive Outpatient Adolescent Services program (178 lived in Johnson County) and 130 (118 from Johnson County) were served in ACT's outpatient after-care program.

## VOICES:

- Suicides are on the rise and they are impulsive, rather than planned.
- Students are experiencing more stress and anxiety (high expectations, dysfunctional families, more attention seeking behavior).
- Earlier intervention for children would make a difference.
- There are more students on anti-depressants; their mental health issues are more serious.
- Support groups around issues of depression, rape/ assault, and anxiety/school phobia would help students.
- Parents and early childhood education providers are challenged by behavior issues in young children.
- Mental health services provided within schools could reach a lot of children.
- Better communication and coordination between schools and out-of-home placement facilities would help students when they transition back to school.

# SAFETY

## FACTS:

A safe school environment is a prerequisite for effective learning. No Child Left Behind requires school systems to have programs in place to reduce levels of violence as part of their larger plan to improve academic performance. Students who fear violence in school are more likely to skip school. (8) By January 1, 2008 all districts in Kansas were required by statute to have policies about bullying.

During the 2006-07 school year, Johnson County school districts, in their No Child Left Behind reports, reported 822 crime occurrences (90% were misdemeanors), which is a rate of 10 per 1,000 students enrolled. During the 2001-02 school year, 713 crimes were reported (85% were misdemeanors); rate of 9 per 1,000.

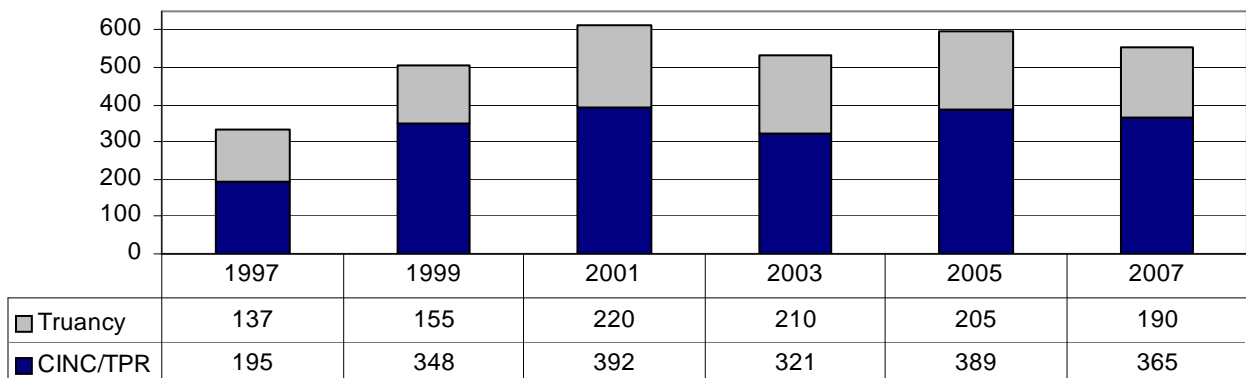
A safe home environment also affects learning. The number of Child in Need of Care (CINC) cases filed by the District Attorney's Office is one indicator of child safety. Child in Need of Care cases include children experiencing living conditions or life circumstances that have jeopardized their physical or emotional health, family and housing stability, and/or educational process. Truancy, which is a Child in Need of Care case, may indicate academic failure, family dysfunction, substance abuse, bullying, or a variety of other problems.

Although the number of CINC cases filed annually has remained relatively stable during the last several years, across the last ten years, among the two types of CINC case filings, child abuse and neglect increased by 87%, and truancy increased by 39%.

## VOICES:

- There appears to be more domestic violence within students' families which affects students' ability to concentrate on academics.
- Using technology (Myspace, Facebook, cell phones) for bullying is becoming more common.
- Bullying plays a role in truancy and tardiness. When students talk to adults about bullying, the adults should be able to help. Students need to let adults know when bullying occurs.
- Truancy in middle school appears to be increasing.

**Child in Need of Care Case Filings by Type**



### About the Data:

Source: Johnson County District Attorney's Office.

Explanations and Caveats: TPR (Termination of Parental Rights). Beginning in 2007, a second case is not filed for TPR but another charge is added to original CINC filing. Over time, other procedures and/or definitions may have varied also.

## CONCLUSION

While the main purpose of education is to prepare students academically, students' needs stretch beyond academics, and in order for students to be successful academically, these needs should be considered in the wider context of family and community. This report's indicator data, together with the observations made by those within the school system, suggest that many students face challenges beyond academics, and that the complexity and severity of those challenges are increasing - in addition to the fact that there are more students overall in Johnson County.

A stronger connection between schools and services provided by organizations outside the school system would increase the support needed to help students deal with the challenges they face. Achieving better coordination and communication between schools and human service organizations is a challenge in itself. Ensuring school staff are knowledgeable about community resources and how to connect students to resources is a good start. However, some of the students' challenges require further examination and dialogue in order to develop effective strategies that can be implemented given limited capacity of both schools and human service organizations.

It is our intent that the information in this report will be used to guide the future action of human service providers and school professionals in order to achieve more positive outcomes for children – children who are prepared academically as well as children who are socially competent, physically healthy and civically engaged.

## ENDNOTES:

- (1) (2) (3) (6) (8) Pilar Marin, M.P.P. and Brett Brown, Ph.D. (2008) "The School Environment and Adolescent Well-Being: Beyond Academics," Child Trends Child Research Brief. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.
- (4) (5) "Overweight and Obesity Report 2008," Johnson County Kansas Health Department.
- (7) Education Commission of the States (2001), "Facts about Literacy."