

# Community Focus Education

*“As Missouri’s largest accredited school district, Springfield Public Schools are doing exceptionally well, as are the other Greene County districts. As a region, we must continue to work on decreasing the dropout rate. Also, the research is clear that increased funding for Early Childhood Education is invaluable in positive long term results.”*

— Roseann Bentley, Greene County Commissioner

## BLUE RIBBONS (2004 – 2007)

- Community Collaboration
- Student Academic Performance Compared to State Averages

## CURRENT STATUS OF 2004 – 2007 RED FLAGS

### Students Living in Poverty

The 2007 *Community Focus* report recognized the increasing number of economically disadvantaged students in the Springfield Public Schools and surrounding districts. A simple measure of poverty is the number of school-age children eligible for free and reduced price school lunches. Currently, this number continues to move upward in Springfield. Almost 45%, or 10,439 children, were eligible for free or reduced lunches in 2008. In other Greene County public schools, the number is also rising but to a lesser degree. More than 4,500 of these students can be determined to be living in poverty in areas outside the Springfield school district representing 33.9% of the student population. Missouri’s rate of free and reduced lunches continues to inch up and as much as 15% of the state’s increase can be attributed to Greene County.

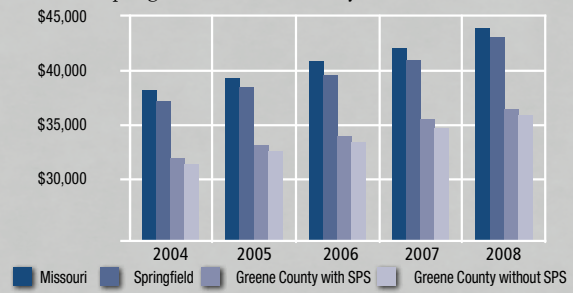
PERCENT OF STUDENTS RECEIVING A FREE/REDUCED PRICED LUNCH, 2004-2008

	PERCENTS			NUMBER		
	2004	2008	DIFFERENCE	2004	2008	DIFFERENCE
Springfield	39.3	44.7	5.4	9,345	10,438	1,093
Fair Grove	34.1	32.8	-1.3	362	360	-2
Strafford	34.3	39.4	5.1	367	473	106
Logan-Rogersville	20.5	28	7.5	379	592	213
Republic	33	35.4	2.4	1,075	1,355	279
Ash Grove	29.1	30.7	1.6	250	260	10
Walnut Grove	40.1	39.4	-0.7	122	104	-18
Greene County w/o SPS	30.4	33.9	3.5	3,606	4,549	943
Greene County w/SPS	36.3	40.8	4.5	12,952	14,988	2,036
Missouri	40.5	42.1	1.6	354,534	367,724	13,190

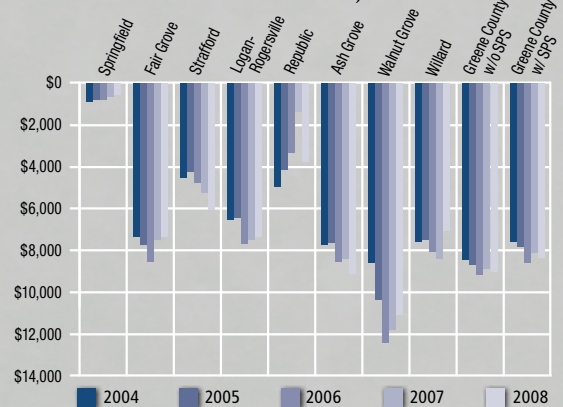
### Teacher Salaries

The 2004 *Community Focus* report identified long-standing concerns regarding the growing discrepancy between local teacher salaries and state averages. To date, wages for Springfield and Greene County teachers continue to fall short of the Missouri average, though the gap has narrowed for some. Springfield School District salaries have risen to \$42,572, just \$664 behind the state average in 2008. However, the gap continues to widen for schools in Greene County. For example, the salary gap widened by nearly \$7,000 in 2008 for some Greene County districts. To attract and retain the best teachers, salaries must be proportionate with those in other professions. Keeping the best teachers in the profession will have a direct impact on levels of student achievement.

TEACHER SALARY COMPARISON  
Missouri, Springfield & Greene County, 2004 – 2008



DIFFERENCE FROM MISSOURI AVERAGE FOR  
GREENE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, 2004 – 2008



AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY

	2004	2008	DIFFERENCE
Springfield	\$37,262	\$42,572	\$5,310
Fair Grove	\$30,945	\$36,037	\$5,092
Strafford	\$33,810	\$37,201	\$3,391
Logan-Rogersville	\$31,649	\$35,906	\$4,257
Republic	\$33,343	\$39,489	\$6,146
Ash Grove	\$30,407	\$34,111	\$3,704
Walnut Grove	\$29,716	\$32,170	\$2,454
Willard	\$32,533	\$38,106	\$5,573
Greene County w/o SPS	\$31,772	\$36,146	\$4,374
Greene County w/ SPS	\$32,458	\$36,949	\$4,491
Missouri	\$38,214	\$43,236	\$5,022



## Budgetary Issues

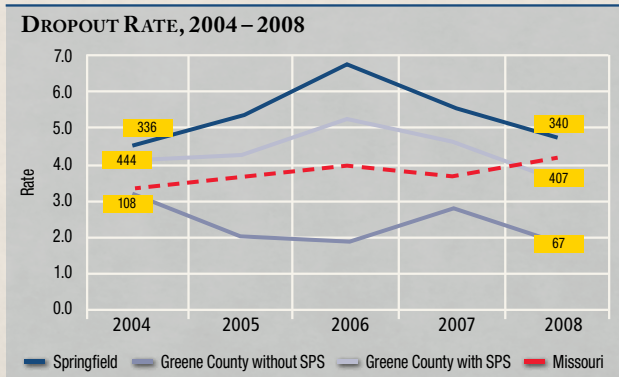
Funding hurdles and shortfalls have been issues of concern since the first *Community Focus* report in 2004. Currently, school funding remains complex and multi-faceted. All Greene County school districts receive funding from local, state and federal sources although the percentage from each of these sources varies drastically between districts. One consistent concern, however, is that all Greene county districts have seen a decrease in the percentage of total revenue contributed from the State of Missouri over a five year span. This corresponds to significant increases in the percentage of total revenue coming from local taxes while federal percentages have remained relatively stable. It appears that local patrons will continue to be asked to shoulder more of the responsibility of funding their local schools, including any desired increases to teacher salaries and benefits. Because salary and benefits traditionally represent close to 80% of a district's annual budget, a desire to address the red flag of lower teacher salaries will be very locally dependent. Districts that have the capacity to develop or maintain a strong tax base will be better positioned to adequately fund their schools and pay their staff than traditionally rural or non-commercial areas.

**GREENE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS  
PERCENT OF REVENUE FROM LOCAL, STATE  
AND FEDERAL FUNDS, 2004–2008**

	LOCAL			STATE			FEDERAL		
	2004	2008	Difference	2004	2008	Difference	2004	2008	Difference
Springfield	63.9	68.4	4.5	26.1	21.3	-4.8	10	10.3	0.3
Fair Grove	35.2	46.8	11.6	51.4	46.2	-5.2	13.4	7	-6.4
Strafford	61.5	64.5	3	32	28.6	-3.4	6.5	6.9	0.4
Logan-Rogersville	58.2	63.9	5.7	33.5	31	-2.5	8.2	5.1	-3.1
Republic	47.6	52.9	5.3	46.9	41.2	-5.7	5.4	5.9	0.5
Ash Grove	43.9	44.1	0.2	48.8	47.7	-1.1	7.3	8.2	0.9
Walnut Grove	37.6	41	3.4	55.6	52.4	-3.2	6.8	6.6	-0.2
Willard	51	56	5	41.9	37.9	-4	7.1	6.1	-1
Missouri	55.2	58.8	3.6	35.5	33	-2.5	9.2	8.2	-1

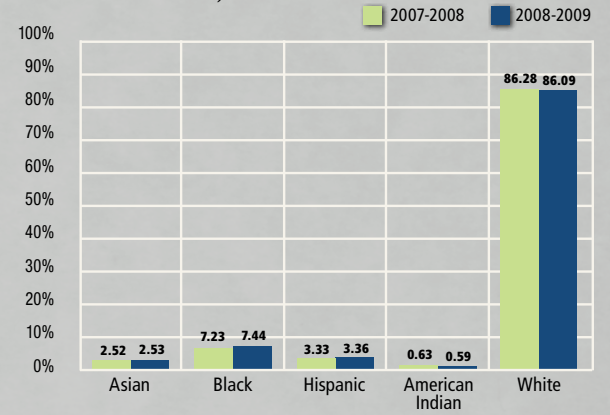
## Springfield Public Schools' Dropout Rate

After increasing sharply through 2004 and 2005 and peaking in 2006, the dropout rate for Springfield Public Schools is trending sharply downward. From 2006 to 2008, actual numbers of dropouts reduced a total of 161 students. While Springfield's dropout rate of 4.7% is still slightly over the state average of 4.2%, indicators predict a continued downward trend. The district's strategic plan, SP5, targets increasing the district's graduation and decreasing the dropout rate. A variety of coordinated community



and school based initiatives have positively impacted the dropout rate in SPS including Missouri State's Upward Bound Program, Alert Now, Caring Communities Grants-Leadership Clubs, 21st Century Grant and efforts led by reading teachers, high school personnel, school based clinicians, and attendance advisors.

**SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS  
BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2008 - 2009**



## EMERGING ISSUES

### Early Childhood Education

Strong early childhood education is vital for any community. Therefore, collaborative regional focus needs to be made on improving access to quality early childhood education for all children, especially for those living in poverty.

### College Attendance After High School Graduation

More Greene County high school graduates make the choice to attend a 2-year or 4-year college than the state average. Initiatives should be created to monitor and measure how the presence of higher education institutions in the Springfield region impacts students' decisions – both in awareness of the benefits of higher education but also in easier access to quality higher education options.

### Shifting of Funding Responsibilities to Local Communities

Attention needs to be focused on monitoring the shift of fiduciary responsibilities away from state funding sources to the local school districts. There will be a need to educate local school patrons and taxpayers about how this shift may impact their local tax rate requiring local school districts to request an increase to local tax levies to offset the loss of state funding.

