

All In For Kansas Kids



Early Childhood Recommendations Panel

Meeting May 14, 2026



Welcome

Thank you for serving Kansas children, their families, and our state's early childhood care and education professionals!

This is a remote meeting.

- Today's meeting materials are posted on the [Panel Meetings webpage](#) on the Children's Cabinet site.
- Panel members will clearly identify themselves when they begin speaking.
- Panel members can use the "raise hand" feature to show they are ready to share.
- The virtual chat will not be used during this meeting in compliance with KOMA and for accessibility purposes.

Recommendations Panel

The Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel serves as an **advisory group** to the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (Children's Cabinet). The Children's Cabinet was established in 1999 (K.S.A. 38-1901) to assist the Governor in developing and implementing a coordinated, comprehensive delivery system to serve Kansas children and families. Additionally, the Children's Cabinet plays a key role in enabling our state to implement the **All In for Kansas Kids** early childhood system strategic plan, respond to challenges, elevate recommendations from communities and stakeholders, and make key decisions to help us achieve the vision outlined in the strategic plan.



Purpose

Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- Approval of May Agenda
- Approval of April Meeting Minutes
- Kansas Office of Early Childhood Feedback
- Kansans' Open Forum / Kansas in the News
- Panel Introductions
- Child Care Zones
- System Updates
- Key Take-Away's
- Adjourn
 - *Work Groups will meet following adjournment*

Action Items

Panel members - please clearly identify yourself when you begin speaking to make or second a motion.

- Approval of May agenda
- Approval of April minutes

Kansas Office of Early Childhood Feedback

Cornelia Stevens & Hillary Koehn, KOEC
Advisory Group Members



KOEC EC Feedback

The Advisory Group is interested in your feedback:

- Are these the right priorities for KOEC? If not, why not?
- What's missing, if anything?
- Is there anything on this list you would like to see refined, clarified, or expanded?
- What are your thoughts on how KOEC can best implement these ideas?
- Do you have any other thoughts on how KOEC can better serve providers?

Kansans' Open Forum

Kansans are encouraged to submit comments through the Kansans' Open Forum Comment Form by 5:00 p.m. the day preceding each meeting to share written comments or to sign up to share verbal comments with the Panel during this portion of the meeting.

Kansas in the News

Newsroom

Font Size:    [Share & Bookmark](#)  [Print](#)

Governor Kelly Signs Bipartisan Bill Expanding Child Care Tax Credits

Post Date: 04/27/2026

TOPEKA – Governor Laura Kelly today announced she has signed [Senate Bill 82](#), which expands access to tax credits for employer expenses for child care and contributions to third parties that expand the availability of community child care. The bill also creates income tax credits for the sale of higher-ethanol blends of fuels and the purchase of lockable gun and ammunition storage.

“Throughout my administration, I have strived to make Kansas a place where people want to put down roots. Senate Bill 82 helps strengthen child care access while ensuring our economy remains healthy and thriving — making our state more appealing to workers, employers, and families alike,” **Governor Laura Kelly said.** “This is smart, commonsense legislation that will make our state stronger.”



Child Care Tax Credits

Kansas in the News

WHAT'S NEW FOR BUSINESSES?



SIGNIFICANTLY STRONGER INCENTIVE

75%

tax credit for qualifying
employer child care expenses.

**Replaces the previous 30-50%
credits patchwork with a
clear, stronger incentive.**



SUPPORT BEYOND THE WORKPLACE

SB 82 supports organizations like
Child Care Aware of Kansas
in directly helping businesses
make child care simple and
connect funding where it's
needed most, including:

- Child care grants & training
- Materials and equipment
- Family tuition assistance

**Especially impactful in rural
and small communities where
on-site child care may not be a
realistic option.**



HIGHER CAP + CARRYFORWARD = USABLE CREDIT

\$100,000
annual cap per taxpayer

3 YEARS
carryforward for
unused credits

These changes address the two
biggest barriers under the old
credit: low limits and "use it or
lose it" timing problems.



A STRATEGIC FIT FOR RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

State leaders designed SB 82 as
a workforce and economic
development strategy.



**Better child care access helps
businesses attract, retain, and
support the talent Kansas
needs to grow and thrive.**

Panel Introductions

- Kami Cohorst
- Beka Meitler
- Pshyra Bedell



1 minute each

Child Care Zones

Meghan Kluth, KU-CPPR



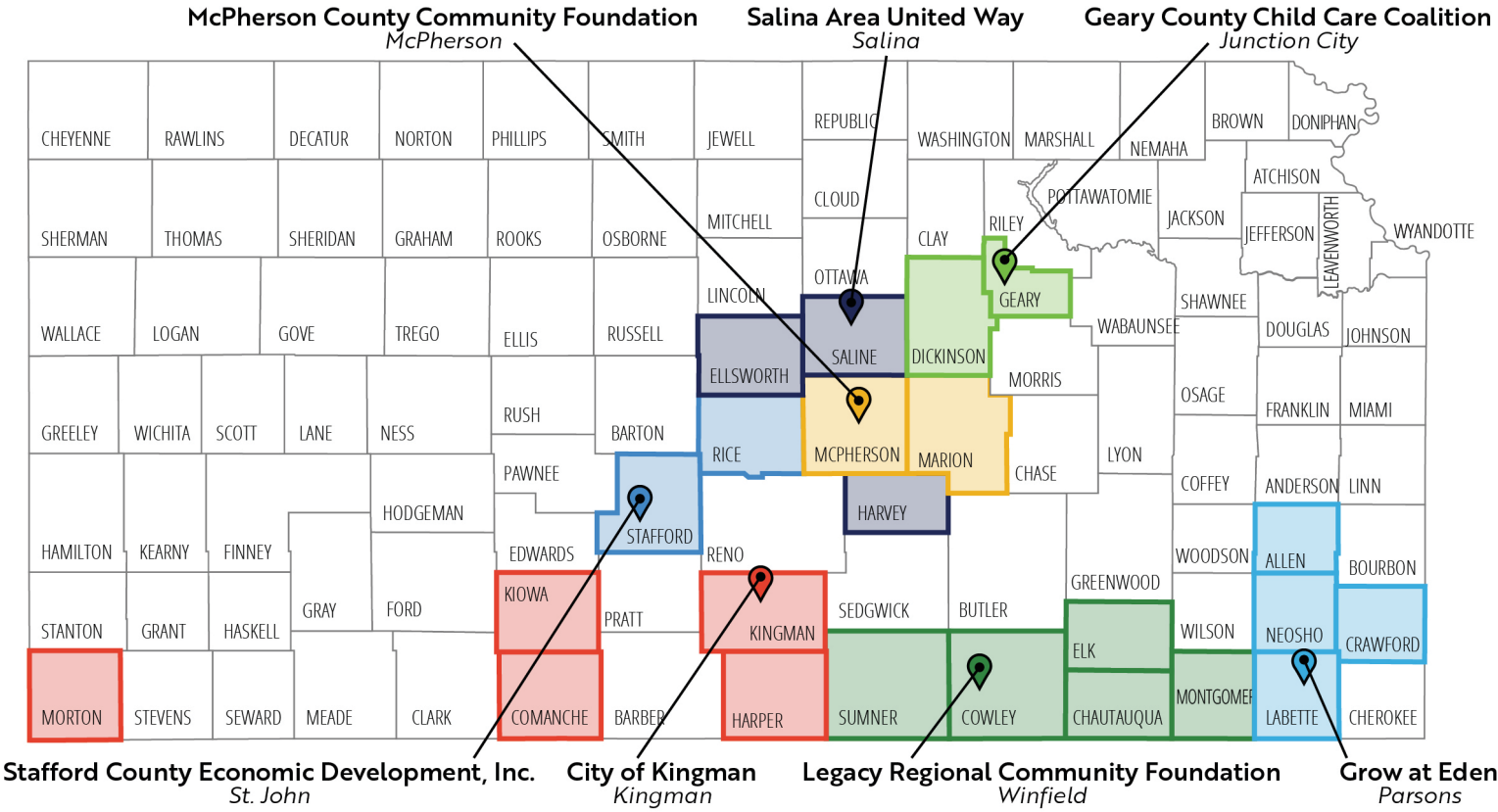
Child Care Zones

- PDG funded grant program started in 2025
- Overseen by KDHE and supported by Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund and KU-CPPR
- At least two counties working collaboratively to address self-defined child care needs
- Seven grantees that include early childhood educators, community foundations, economic development leaders, local government and community coalition members
- Projects will conclude this fall



Overview

Child Care Zones



Overview

Child Care Zones

What is different about this initiative?

- Leveraging state local partnership model from public health
- Building local-level infrastructure and resources that can sustainably increase capacity and expertise
- Encouraging grantees to build on past efforts – many grantees have received other funding to create foundational pieces of their work
- Intentional cross-county collaboration



Overview

Child Care Zones

- Betsy Davis, McPherson County Community Foundation
- Supporting McPherson and Marion counties



Grantee Highlight



McPherson and Marion County

Child Care Zone

McPherson and Marion County

- Infant and Toddler Spots
- Supporting Providers
- Increasing access to in person education
 - Building Community
- Building provider capacity
 - Mentoring
 - Sub pool

McPherson and Marion County



\$124,662

In total Technological Support,
Infant/Toddler stipends or training
released to local Childcare Centers

34

CHILDCARE PROVIDERS
SUPPORTED

21

CENTERS

IN MCPHERSON COUNTY

~\$70,000

13

CENTERS

IN MARION COUNTY

~\$50,000

RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

35

INFANT AND TODDLER
SPOTS GAINED



INCREASED OVERALL
CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY
FOR INFANTS BY 23%



INCREASE OVERALL
CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY
FOR TODDLERS BY 8%

KCCTO TRAINING
COURSE

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

**Tuesday,
May, 19 2026**

at Central Christian College
Alumni Dining Hall
6 - 7:30pm

**Every child learns in their own way,
at their own pace. This course helps
early childhood educators build the
skills to plan meaningful,
individualized learning experiences
that honor each child's strengths,
needs, and interests.**

For more information call :
620-245-9070

Scan the Code to
sign up:



Provider Directory

Explore childcare providers in McPherson and Marion counties below. Use the filter options to narrow your search—just click on what matters most to you, and the directory will instantly show providers that fit your family's needs.



INCREASED
VISIBILITY

Filter by Type of Provider

Child Care Center

Family Child Care Home

Preschool

Filter by Tags

DCF Approved

Drop-in

Infant

Preschool

School Aged

Toddler

Provider Page

Childcare

Location: Galva

EMAIL US

facebook.com/p/Christs-Kids-Childcare

Director: Haley Pavlovich



About Us

At Christ's Kids Childcare, we're more than just childcare —we're a family. Our mission is to collaborate with families to provide an engaging, enriching, and passionate place for all children to grow and develop.



License Number: 44968

Ages Served: Infant, Toddler, Preschool
School Aged

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday
6:00am - 6:00pm

Special Amenities Offered:

ASQ screening, Family outreach,
McKids program, McPherson And
Marion County Certified Mentor,
McPherson/ Marion County SPED
co-op program, Transportation to
USD preschool, partnerships with

McPherson and Marion County

- Supporting regional business summits
- Continuation of support through child care endowments
- Hopeful expansion of care utilizing Small Center license type

McPherson and Marion County

Tristen Cope
KRSE, Family and Youth
Development Agent



Betsy Davis
McPherson County Community Foundation,
Director of Community Services



Child Care Zones

- Kandy Rushing, Grow at Eden
- Supporting Allen, Neosho, Labette, and Crawford counties



Grantee Highlight

Grow at Eden Early Learning Centers

Caring For Children. Supporting Families. Strengthening Southeast Kansas

All In For 
Kansas Kids

Welcome to Grow at Eden



Our Vision

Grow at Eden is a place where there is focus on the whole child.

At Grow at Eden, we desire to create a loving and nurturing environment in which your child feels safe and comfortable.

Children are encouraged to learn by discovery and exploration. We strive to create a harmonious balance between freedom and classroom responsibility to help your child develop a sense of independence.

Our Montessori-inspired classrooms allow children to make creative choices in their learning, while the classroom and the highly trained teacher offer age-appropriate activities to guide the process.

We would love for you to visit our center to get a feel for what we do, but in the meantime, please read more about what makes Grow at Eden a wonderful place for your children and family.

Kandy Rushing, Founder & CEO

Proudly Serving Southeast Kansas Families in Iola, Parsons, & Pittsburg

Grow at Eden currently houses 430 child care slots for children ages birth through school age, across three counties.

Projects in the pipeline will add an additional 340 spaces bringing the overall capacity of Grow at Eden and affiliates to approximately 770 child care slots across four counties.

50 jobs created since inception in 2021.

819 children have inquired, toured, enrolled and/or dropped into our Eden programs in the past 5 years.

Many of our graduates return each summer for our School Age Programs, supporting sustainment year after year.



What makes Eden stand out?

Our Environment

Screen Free Classrooms

Scratch Kitchen

Montessori Based Theory

Strong Community Focus



Child Care Zones Grant Awardee – Round 1

Funded by: Preschool Development Grant

Administered by: Kansas Department of Health & Environment

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is piloting a new Child Care Zones program in 2025-26 to support community and regional child care sectors. A Child Care Zone is a self-defined geographic area that determines its own priorities and package of support needed to address longstanding challenges and acute needs of both the child care workforce and families needing care.

Zones are formed by communities in two or more counties and include such partners as:

- Licensed Child Care Facilities
- Family Resource Centers
- School Districts
- Community Foundations
- Community-based Organizations
- Local Employers

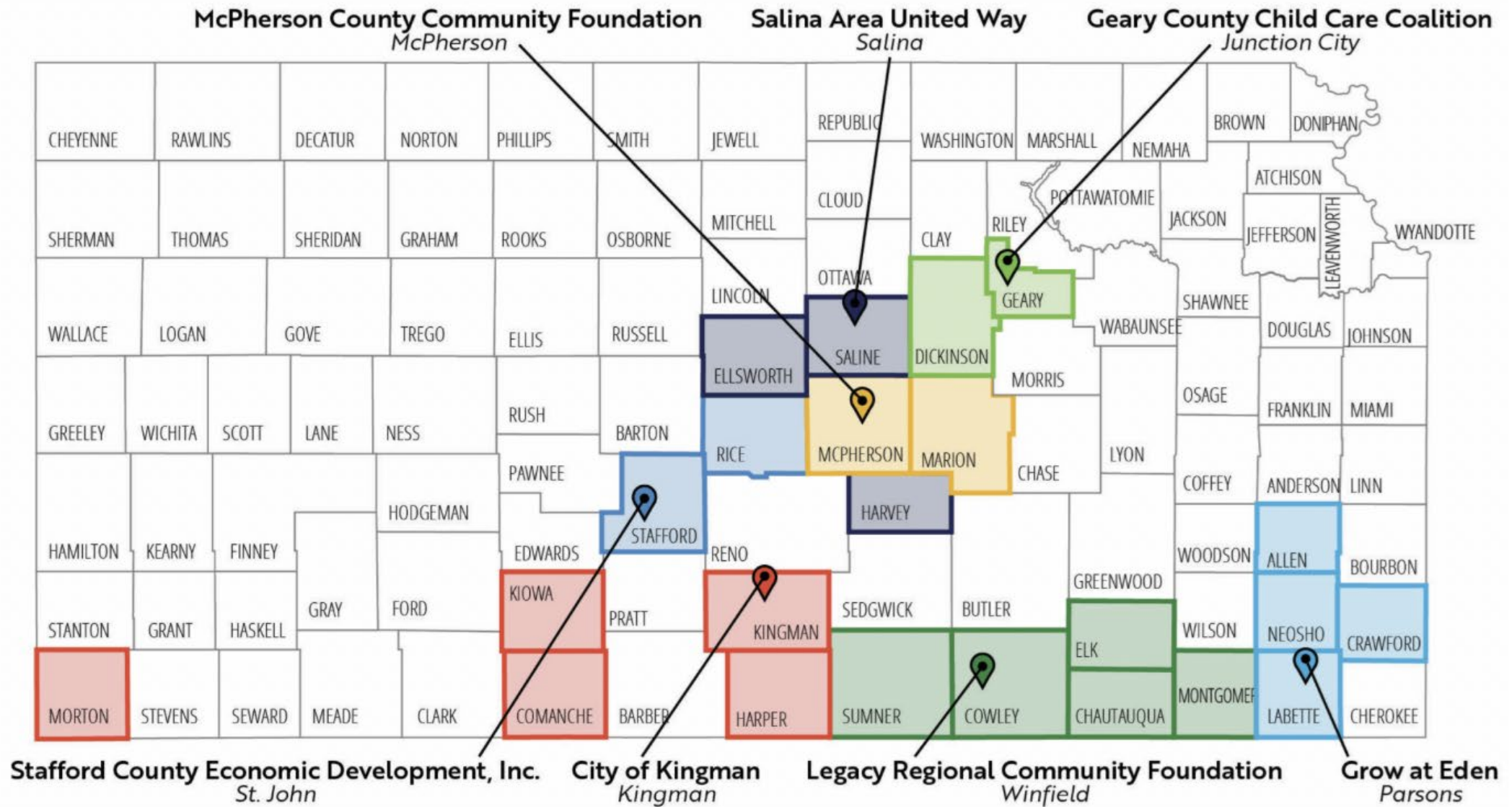
The Child Care Zones pilot program invests in communities to help local leaders and members of the child care sector address barriers, grow awareness of needs and challenges, recover from shortages and setbacks, and make sustainable system improvements.

Our Partners:

- USD 506, USD 413
- Allen Community College - Beth Toland
- Eden Early Learning Academy



2025 Grantees



Link to Grow SEK Project Goals

Grant Program: Child Care Zones (CCZ)

Lead Organization: Grow at Eden LLC

Service Region: Labette, Crawford, Allen, and Neosho Counties

Administrator: Kandy Rushing

Project Timeline: 2025–2027

Initiatives:

1. Building Strong Families - Family Friendly Workplace Campaign
 - a. Activity Kits
 - b. Employer Partnerships
2. Increasing Access to Early Learning - USD Partnerships
 - a. Substitute Pool Development
 - b. Capacity Building - 244 slots - Pittsburg, KS Campus (Opened Fall 2025)
 - c. Capacity Building - 180 slots - Chanute, KS (Coming mid-year 2027)
3. Ensuring Classrooms for All
 - a. Sensory Lending Library
 - b. Intervention Specialists
4. Advancing Career Pathways in ECE - Allen Community College
 - a. Apprenticeship Programs
 - b. Open Education Resources (OER)



1. Building Strong Families - Employer Involvement

- ★ Promoting Family-Friendly Policies during HR visits
- ★ Subsidies for child care expenses & partnerships with local child care providers.
- ★ Drop-in Vouchers for purchase
- ★ Housing A Children's Activity Kit
- ★ Connect with a family-friendly workplace survey administrator to determine your specific employee needs.

Federal Child Care Tax Credits – 40%, up to \$500,000-\$600,000 of qualifying expenses on child care

State Child Care Tax Credits – 75%, up to \$100,000 of qualifying expenses on child care (Effective Jan 2027)

Promoting Family-Friendly Policies

- ★ Offer a private room for breastfeeding mothers to pump
- ★ Affordable healthcare benefits – FSA Plans
- ★ Education regarding local childcare options
- ★ Subsidize or reimburse employee childcare costs
- ★ Paid maternity/paternity leave
- ★ Remote work or flexible hours

<https://www.kcsl.org/resources/family-friendly-workplaces/>

Drop-In Vouchers for Back Up Care

In recent studies, the second most pressing need for families is Back Up Care when their provider is closed for the day, due to illness or vacation.

Grow at Eden used a previous grant award to purchase \$8,000 worth of Drop-In Vouchers – Each valued at \$50. Employers can purchase more.

Jentry was able to distribute all 160 vouchers during her Employer HR visits.

This is a low risk way for employers to get involved.

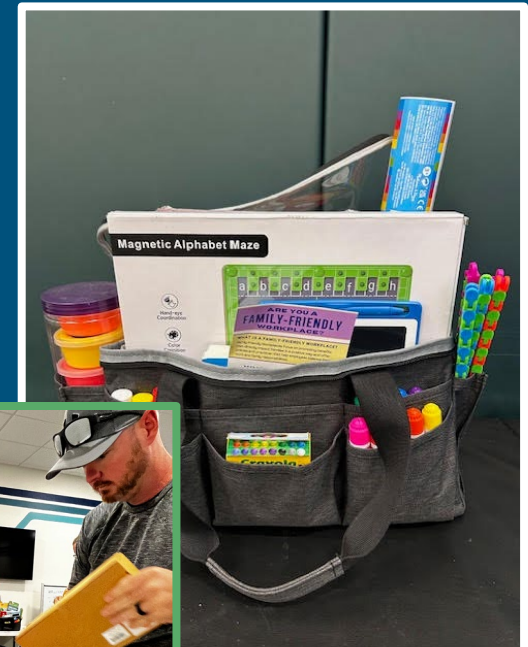
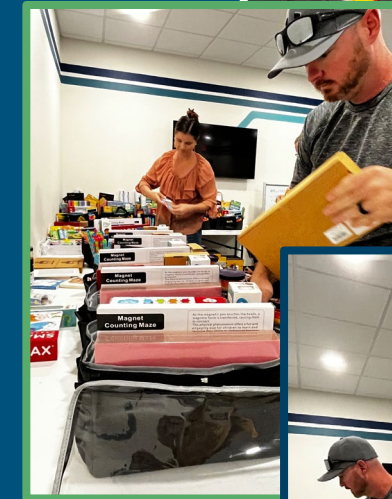
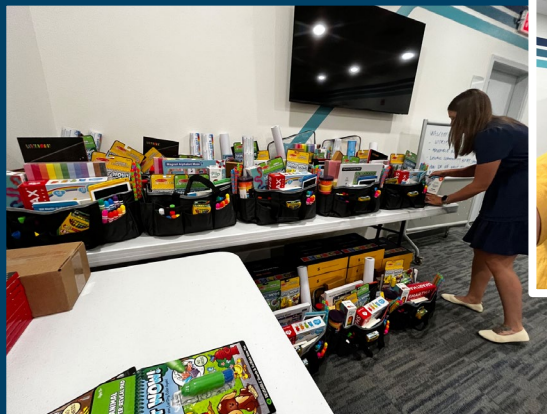


Children's Activity Kits

Approximately 30 activity kits have been donated to local businesses to support their Family-Friendly workplace.

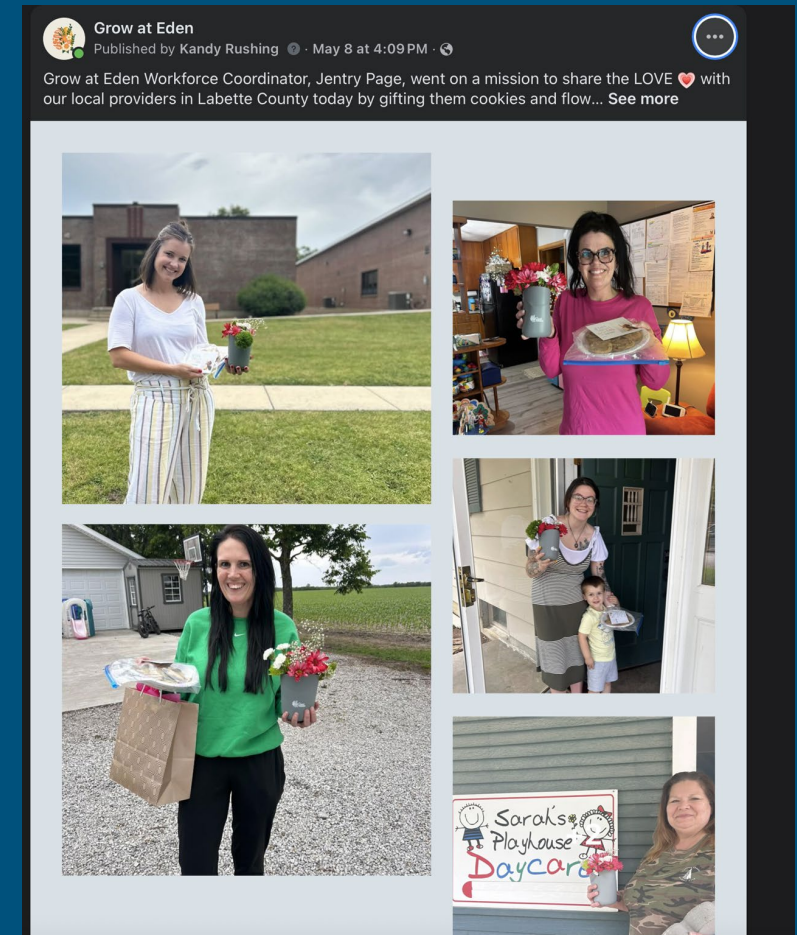
The children's activity kit is valued at \$400 of small, quiet activities for kids to stay entertained while waiting for their parent or grandparent to finish work. The kit includes items like a magnet drawing board, fidget cube, bendy snake tubes, etc.

Labette County Child Care Coalition prepped the bags for delivery.



2. Increasing Access to Early Learning

- ★ Hosted after-hours ECE education events with door prizes and resources for local providers
- ★ Sensory Lending Library
- ★ Substitute Pool Development
- ★ New Slot Creation Projects in Crawford & Neosho County



Labette County



Crawford County

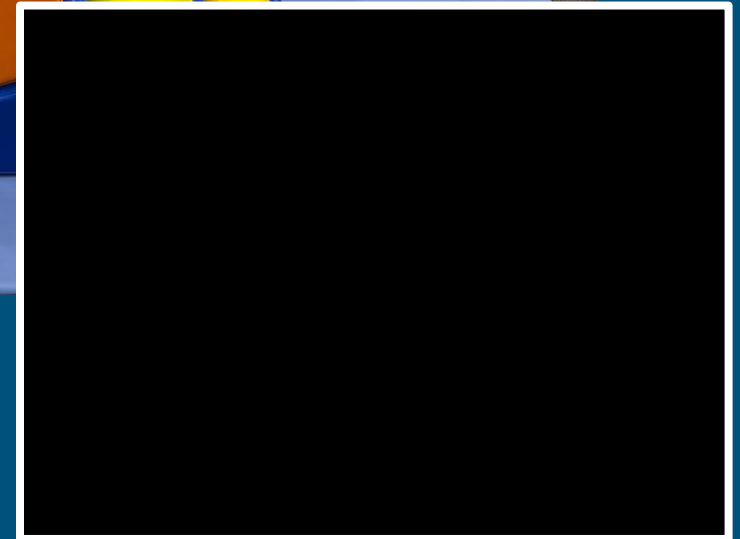
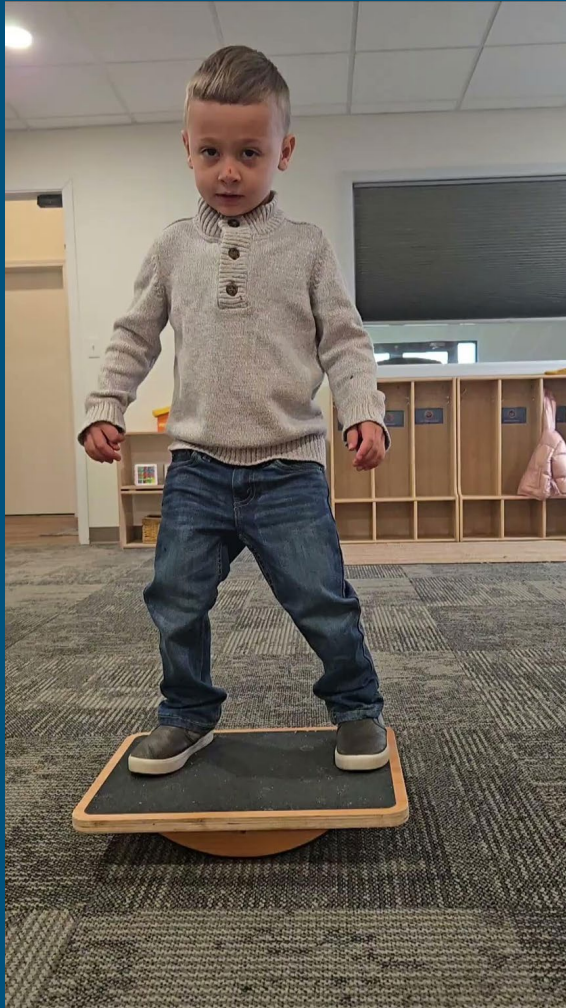


Sensory Lending Library

- ★ \$75,000 of inventory purchased to share across three counties of providers.
- ★ Equipment housed at 3 large centers with a check out date 1x per month.
- ★ Equipment is currently checked out in multiple in home providers licensed home daycares.



Sensory Lending Library



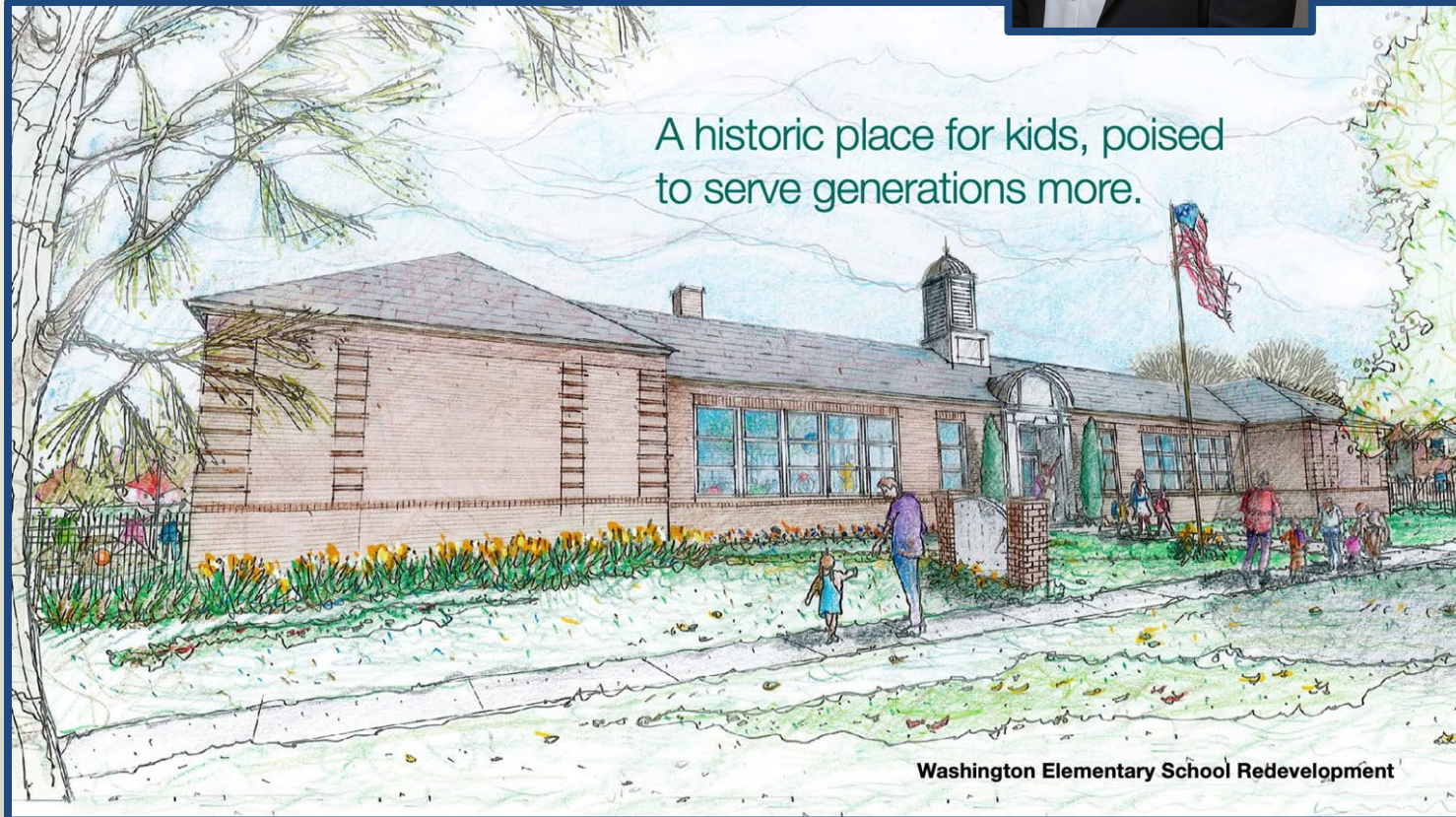
Historic Washington School

Pittsburg, Kansas

Crawford County



A historic place for kids, poised to serve generations more.



Washington Elementary School Redevelopment

- ★ Heavily invested community project, renovated by non-profit, Point Forward
- ★ \$7.5M Renovation
- ★ Historic Preservation
- ★ \$750,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- ★ \$750,000 ARPA Funds
- ★ \$4M of private investment & donations
- ★ Child Care Provider – Grow at Eden Early Learning
- ★ 244 slots created





Leadership Kansas Tour



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



Interior Fully Furnished

3. Ensuring Classrooms For All

- ★ Hired 3 Intervention Specialists, one per county covered under CCZ.
- ★ Collectively added 50 years of experience to the facilities, supporting 15 classrooms and 150+ enrolled children.
- ★ Sensory Lending Library utilized with neurodivergent children.
- ★ 0 students dismissed due to challenging behaviors.
- ★ Intervention Specialists partnered with Greenbush, Infant to Toddler services and Parents As Teachers on multiple occasions.



4. Advancing Career Pathways in ECE

- ★ Bi-Annual Professional Development Opportunities through partnerships with Allen Community College (ACC)
- ★ Wage & Bonus Incentives through Kansas Registered Apprenticeship Program
- ★ Open Education Resource (OER)



Beth Toland
Education and Human Services Director
Allen Community College

Wage & Bonus Incentives – Kansas Registered Apprenticeship Program

- ★ Competency-Based
- ★ Two additional participating facilities, The Family Resource Center and The Pittsburg Community Child Care Center in Crawford County.
- ★ 15 Total Apprentices
- ★ Hybrid and in-person trainings
 - Yr 1 Completion – Receive \$2.50/hr increase
 - Yr 2 Completion – Receive a second \$2.50/hr increase

Educational Milestone Bonus for industry related coursework completion

- ★ \$500 – ECE Certificate
- ★ \$1000 – Advanced ECE Certificate or Associate's Degree
- ★ \$2000 – Bachelor's Degree
- ★ \$3,000 – Master's Degree



Open Education Resource (OER)

- ★ Free Early Childhood Curriculum for center-based and in-home based providers, strategically designed with an abundance of practical life activities, outdoor classroom, sensory exploration and rich language and literacy emphasis by using the Dolly Parton Imagination Library books, strengthening the home to classroom relationship
- ★ Pilot lesson plans in place now – 100% of curriculum written & launched by August 2026
- ★ Six contracted partners, including a play-based therapist and ACC students
- ★ Free online library of training videos and resources (looking for other funding to finish this out)



Thank You



KANDY RUSHING

FOUNDER, CEO

GROW AT EDEN EARLY LEARNING CENTER

KANDYRUSHING@GROWATEDEN.COM

620-423-2523



JENTRY PAGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE COORDINATOR

GROW AT EDEN EARLY LEARNING CENTER

JENTRYPAGE@GROWATEDEN.COM

620-423-2389

Child Care Zones

- Tabatha Rosproy, Kansas Parent Information Resource Center
- Supporting Cowley, Sumner, Montgomery, Elk, and Chautauqua counties



Grantee Highlight

CHILD CARE ZONES UPDATE

Tabatha Rosproy
Cowley County Child Care Collaborative
Board of Directors



**SOUTH CENTRAL
CHILD CARE CIRCLE**

Championing Quality Care.
Cultivating Bright Futures.



CHAUTAUQUA | COWLEY | ELK | MONTGOMERY | SUMNER

<https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/home/our-vision/child-care-zone>

THE CHALLENGES

What We Heard Locally

- Providers are overwhelmed and often isolated
- Families struggle to find and sustain care
- Limited access to meaningful support and training
- Systems don't always include the people closest to the work



OUR APPROACH

A Different Way Forward

- Relationship-Centered (Conscious Discipline)
- Providers and families learning together
- Community-based, not program based



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<https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/home/our-vision/child-care-zone>

WHAT WE'VE BUILT

Key Components in Action

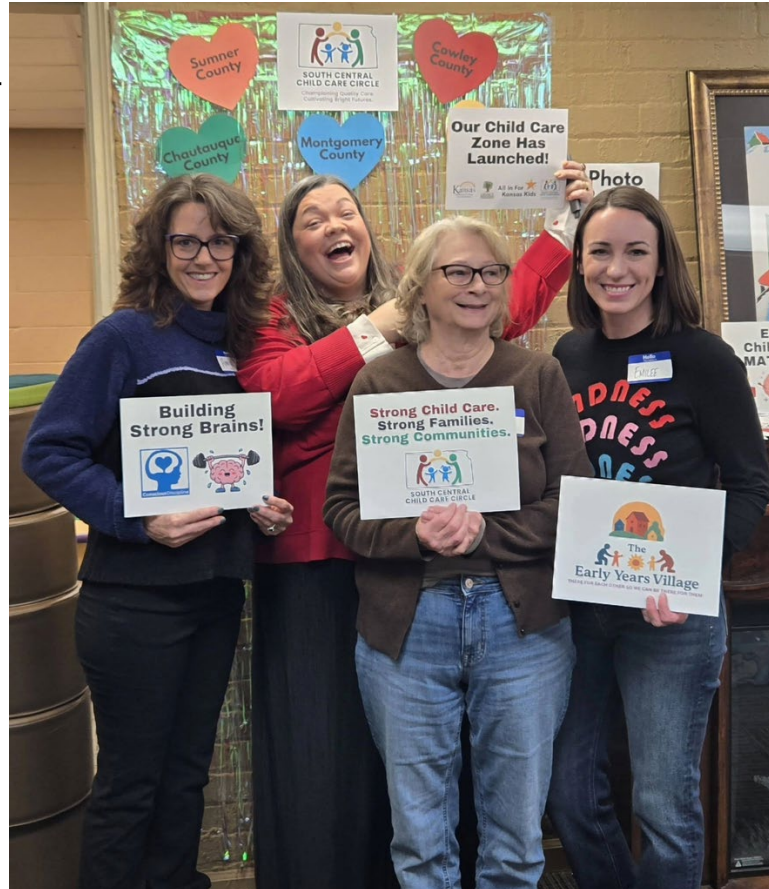
Conscious Discipline Training for Providers and

Families

- 4 Saturdays
- 6 KDHE Clock Hours
- Child Care/Meals Provided
- Stipends & Gas Cards Available
- Community Partnerships

Infrastructure

- Early Years Village in each county
- Mini-Grants to reduce barriers
- Startup Libraries
- Subsidize Pool grants



Ongoing Support

- 2 Grant Coordinators
- Monthly virtual coaching & reflection

Sustainability

- 5 Conscious Discipline Endorsed Facilitators (one per county)
- Early Years Village Startup Costs



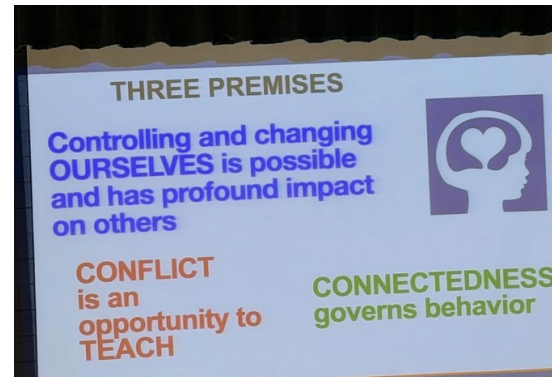
CHAUTAUQUA | COWLEY | ELK | MONTGOMERY | SUMNER

<https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/home/our-vision/child-care-zone>

EARLY WINS AND MOMENTUM

What We're Seeing

- Participation across counties (strongest in bigger counties)
- Ongoing engagement month-to-month
- Families and providers actively showing up
- Deep reflection and behavior shifts
- Growing provider-to-provider connection



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<https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/home/our-vision/child-care-zone>

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

Lessons from the Field

- Incentives help a lot, but relationships drive participation
- Families must be included from the start
- Flexibility is essential
- Community partnerships amplify impact
- Small supports make a big difference



CHAUTAUQUA | COWLEY | ELK | MONTGOMERY | SUMNER

<https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/home/our-vision/child-care-zone>

WHAT'S NEXT

Where We're Headed



- Continue cohort & coaching through September
- Launch Early Years Village in all communities
- Build provider leadership
- Refine model for sustainability and replication (Endorsed Facilitators at the helm)



CHAUTAUQUA | COWLEY | ELK | MONTGOMERY | SUMNER

<https://www.legacyregionalfoundation.org/home/our-vision/child-care-zone>

Child Care Zones

- Julie Lyon, Kingman County Commissioner
- Supporting Kingman, Kiowa, Comanche, Harper, and Morton counties



Grantee Highlight

All In For Kansas Kids



System Updates



PDG Highlights

- Care and Wellness Conferences
 - Wichita and Salina events in May
 - Olathe event on June 26th
- Employer Engagement Regional Events (Child Care Zones and Child Start) this spring and summer
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Community of Practice
- Cape Portal has more than 16k completed profiles



System Updates

PDG Updates

- KCCTO – Spring play-based lesson planning cohort with 41 early childhood professionals
- Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND)
 - 15 child care providers have completed certification program



System Updates

Key Take-Away

Key Take-Aways:

- Lasting change is most successful when solutions are designed with communities.



Lessons Learned

Meeting Schedule

Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

- June 5, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- Livestream via [Children's Cabinet YouTube](#)

Panel Meetings

- June 26 (4th Friday)



Upcoming Meetings

Stay Up to Date



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