



Education

Scott County residents see schools as the center of community activity and they take pride in committed teachers and staff. Residents recognize the need to focus attention on workforce development through education and training and favor a focus on trade certificates as an important path forward. Lower income residents place high school completion as a top priority, understanding its importance to basic self-sufficiency and the extent to which the community struggles with this essential benchmark. Lower-income families experienced first-hand the realities of a changed environment over the last 40 years. They know their kids will need the high school diploma in order to pursue further training to prepare them for manufacturing jobs that were once the next stop after high school.

Among the community's greatest assets is the Mid-America Science Park (MASP)—a facility backed by local leaders, including Samtec (a large high tech manufacturing firm that produces computer connectors). MASP reflects a vision for creating a qualified technology driven workforce. Ivy Tech, Indiana's community college system, teaches some classes out of the facility, but it has not reached the potential envisioned at its opening. This asset, however, has significant capacity for community programming, education, workforce development, and business incubation.

Economic diversification and success requires growth in education and training across the board.

Data suggest the community lags well behind the state and nation in educational attainment beyond high school. The trades certainly pay well, and interest in training for the trades is justified. In order to generate growth in good jobs, however, the county also needs to increase significantly the number and percent of adults with bachelors, graduate, and professional degrees. Widespread positive regard for the local schools and the MASP facility make this an area where the community can gain traction. The schools cannot do it alone, and the community has learned that workforce development is not an "If you build it they will come" proposition. More intentional planning and coordination needs to create a cradle to career pipeline.

Community Profile: Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an area of great opportunity for Scott County. The community lags behind state and national figures for college, graduate, and professional degree attainment. A far higher share of Scott County residents (44.2%) than state (33.5%) and national (27.1%) percentages earn no more than a high school diploma (Figure 29 & Figure 30). In a community with a strong history of farming and manufacturing, this is not surprising. In Scott County's stronger days, one could certainly raise

a family on a thriving farm or a union wage from a local factory. Manufacturing remains a mainstay of the Scott County economy, but today traditional factory jobs seldom provide a family wage and high tech manufacturing requires significant training.

Highly educated people in Scott County experience a good return on their education. Those with graduate or professional degrees have a median income nearly \$5,000 higher than the same group in Indiana as a whole (Figure 31). Those with bachelor's degrees also have a higher median income than in the state as a whole. Interviews suggest that this group includes local medical professionals, teachers and school administrators, nonprofit, business, and government leaders. Others commute to Bartholomew, Jefferson, or Clark County or they

work in Louisville, KY. Those with High School diplomas or equivalency also earn more than the state average. This may be the result of well-paid manufacturing employment and trades both in Scott County and in the surrounding area.

Interestingly, however, those with some college or an associate's degree do not fare much better than those with high school diplomas or equivalency, and they lag behind the median income for their level of education at the state and national levels. This may explain reluctance to invest time and resources in trade certificates and two-year degrees. Without a high school diploma or equivalency, the Scott County median earnings fall well below the state and national median. As noted in the *Economy* section of the report, graduating from high school is essential to escaping poverty (Figure 32).

Figure 29: Detailed Educational Attainment, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S., 2014-2018

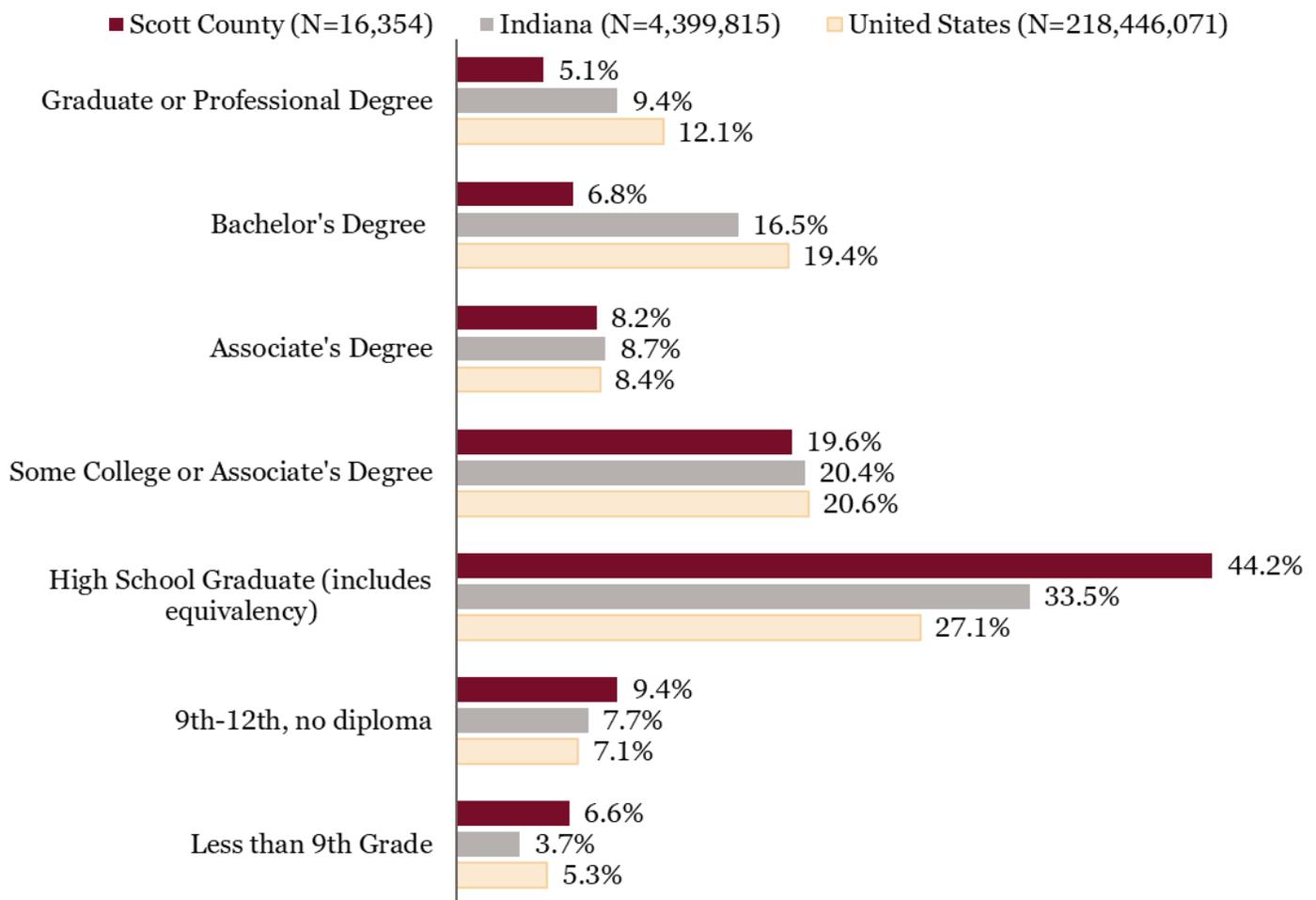
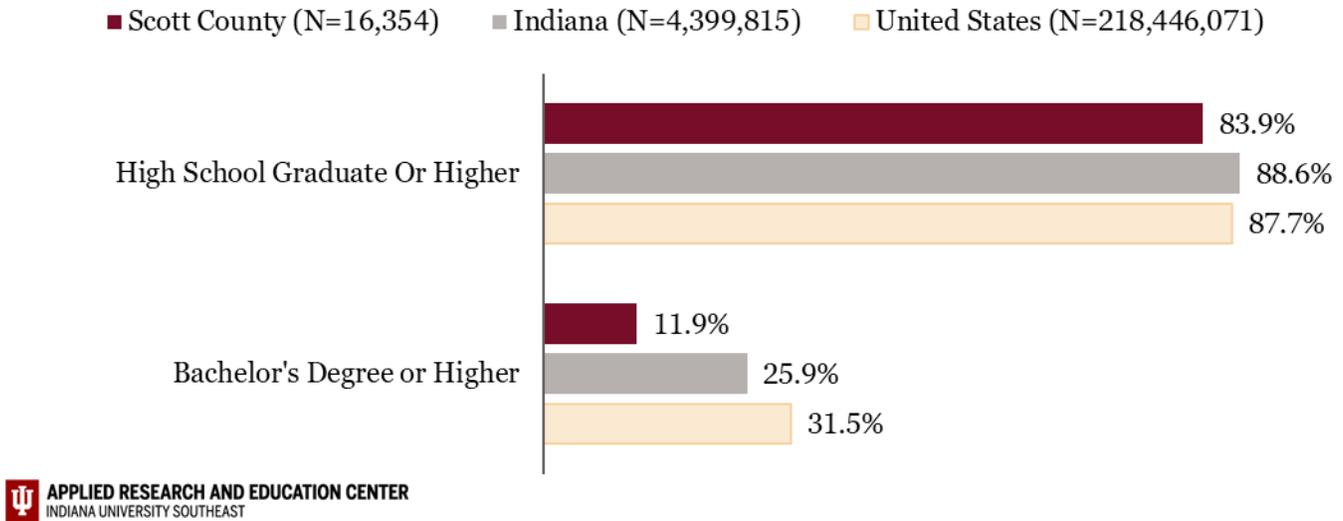
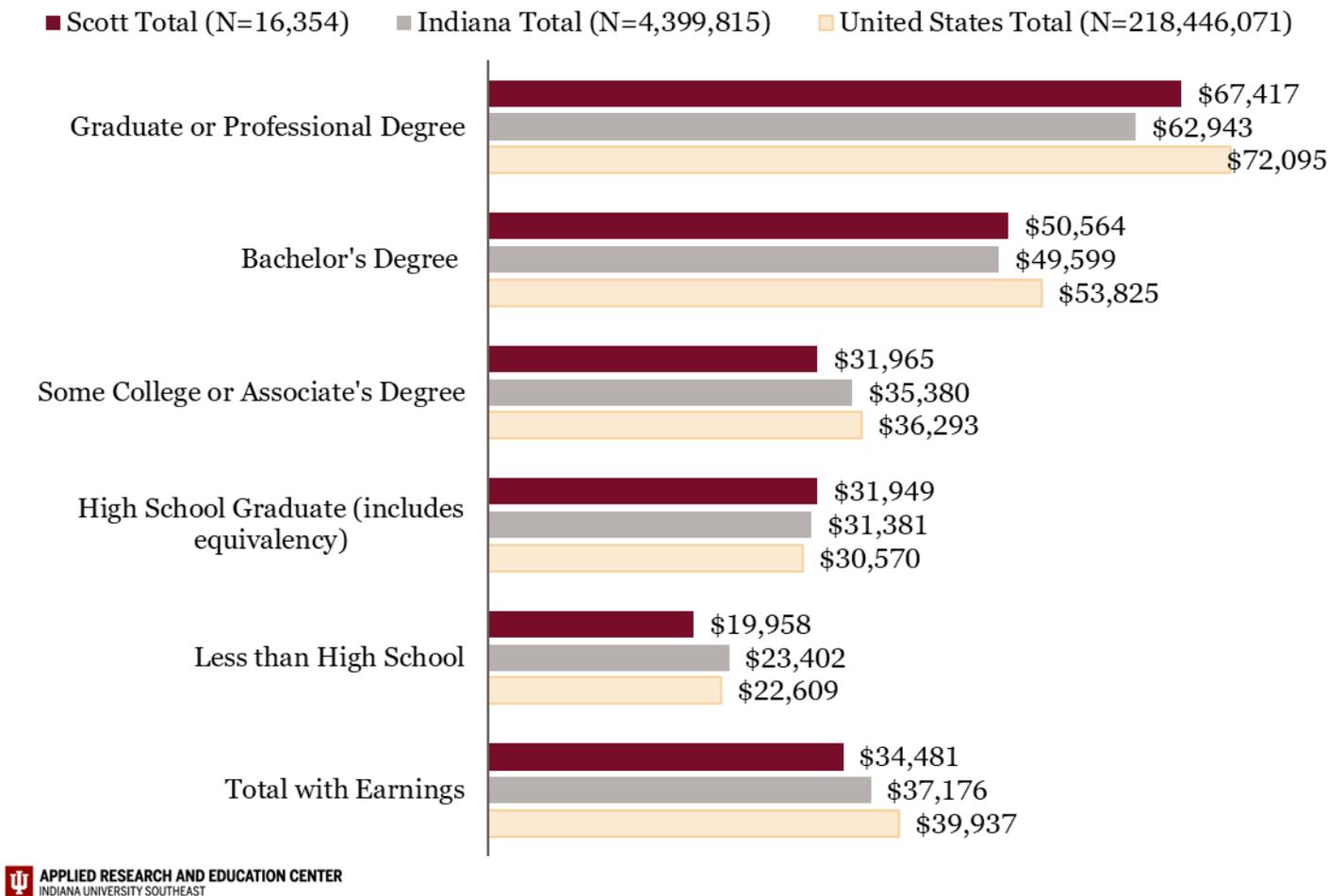


Figure 30: Educational Attainment, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S., 2014-2018



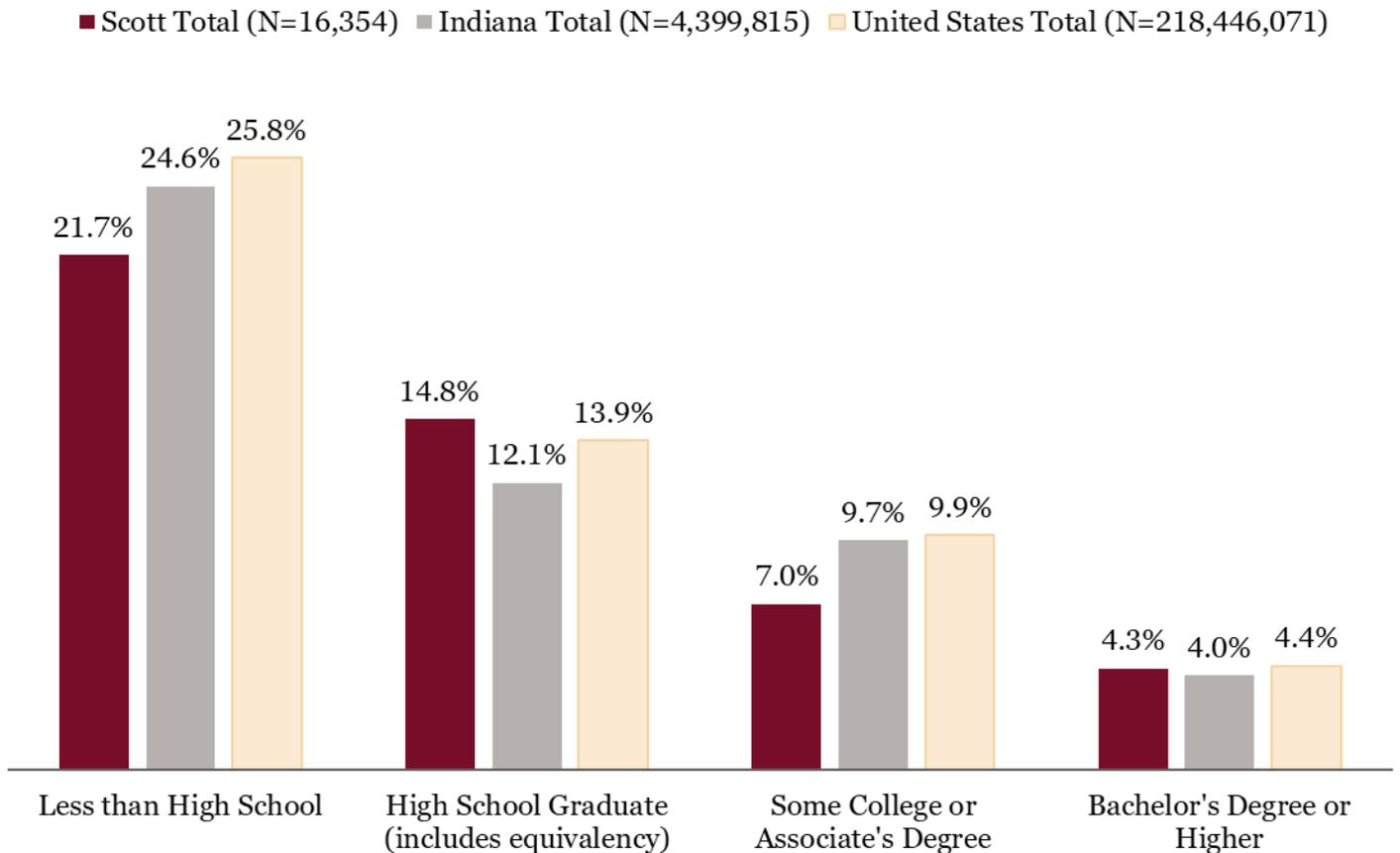
U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S1501: Educational Attainment." *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*. Retrieved 10-20-2020 (www.census.gov).

Figure 31: Median Income by Educational Attainment, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S. 2014-2018



U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S1501: Educational Attainment." *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*. Retrieved 10-20-2020 (www.census.gov).

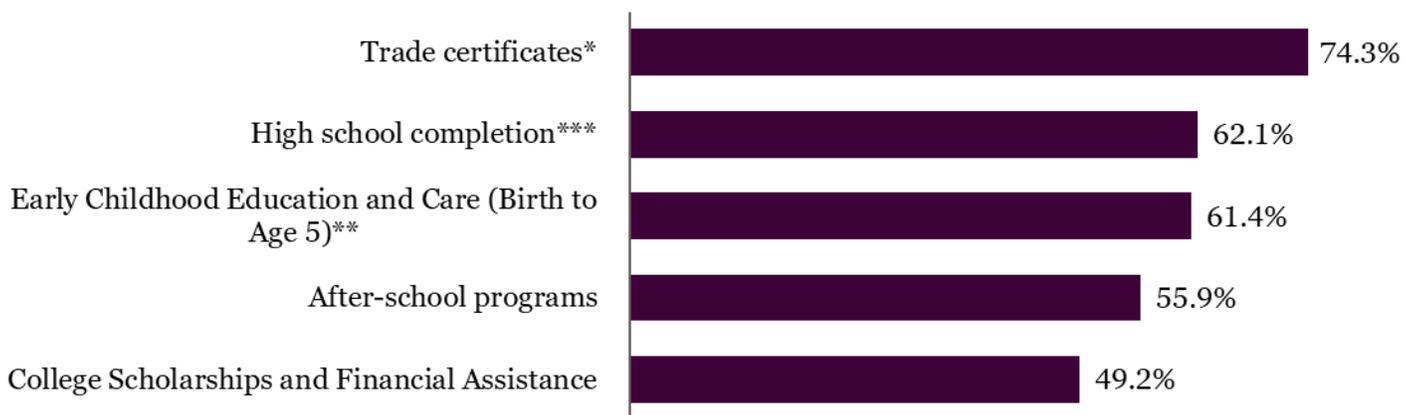
Figure 32: Poverty Rates by education level, Scotty County, Indiana, and the U.S. 2014-2018



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U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S1501: Educational Attainment." *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*. Retrieved 08-20-2020 (www.census.gov)

Figure 33: Education Priorities (N=311)



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Community Perceptions

The top five priorities for education cover a spectrum from birth to career. The strongest consensus is around trade certificates and high

school completion. A closer look at income differences in responses shows that higher income respondents were more likely to identify “Trade certificates” as a top priority (the difference was marginally significant) and early care and

education (significant $p < .05$). Trade certificates were not the most-frequently-selected priority for lower income respondents. Their top priority is high school completion and they were significantly more likely to prioritize it than were higher income respondents ($p < .001$). Despite very low college attainment rates in the county, four-year degree completion was the least frequently selected item. Some who spoke with us at survey events explained that if the other priorities succeed, college attainment rates will increase so it makes sense to prioritize those precursors.

Scott County residents feel good about the quality of education in their community. The majority of respondent rate college or career preparation “good” or “excellent,” but that is where the positive consensus ends. Respondents share concern about the quality of childcare for children birth to age five (63.6% rate it “poor” or “very poor”) and an even larger 76% think access to childcare for children birth to age five is “poor” or “very poor.”

Figure 34: Percent that selected the item as a priority for education, by income level

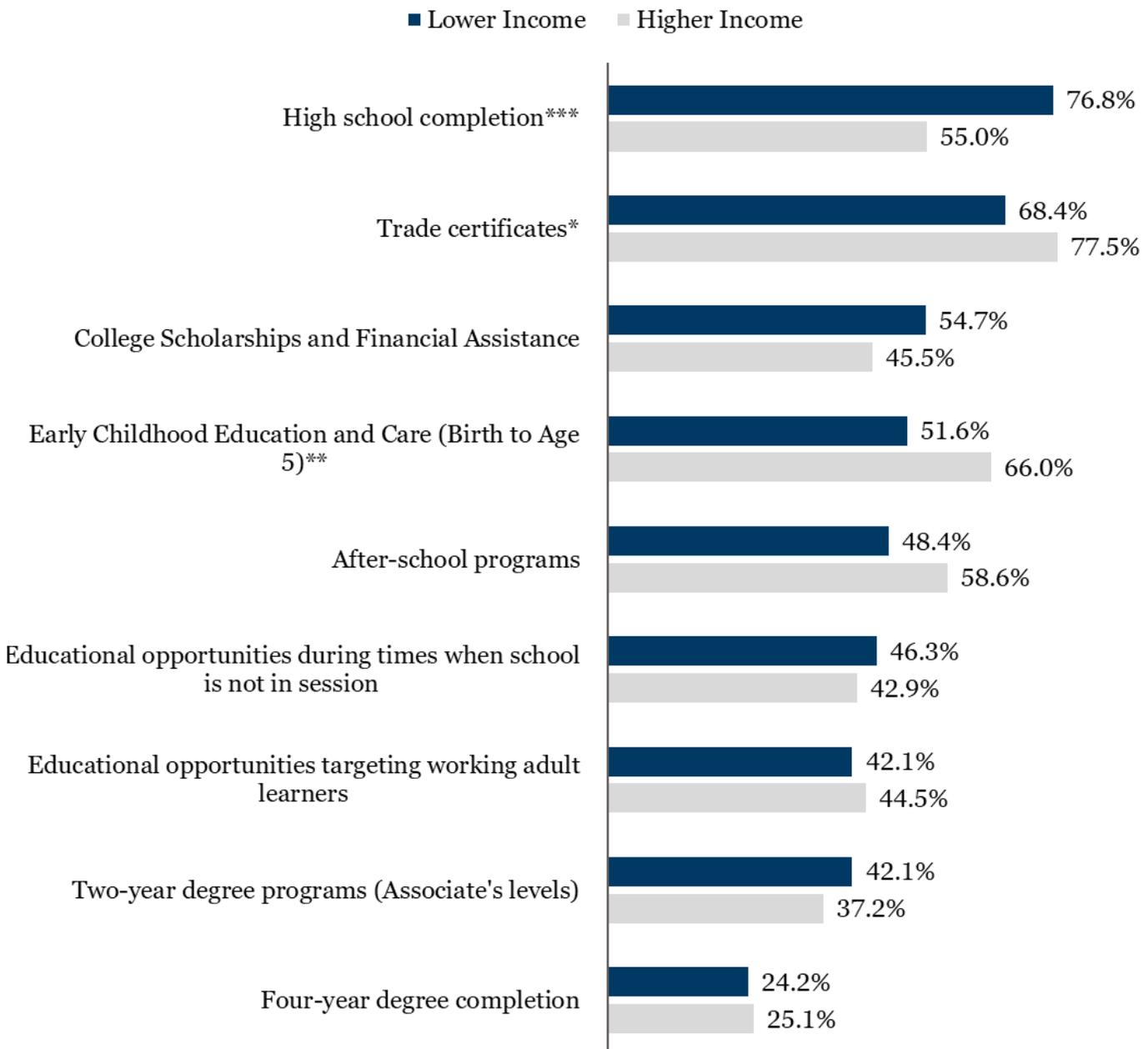
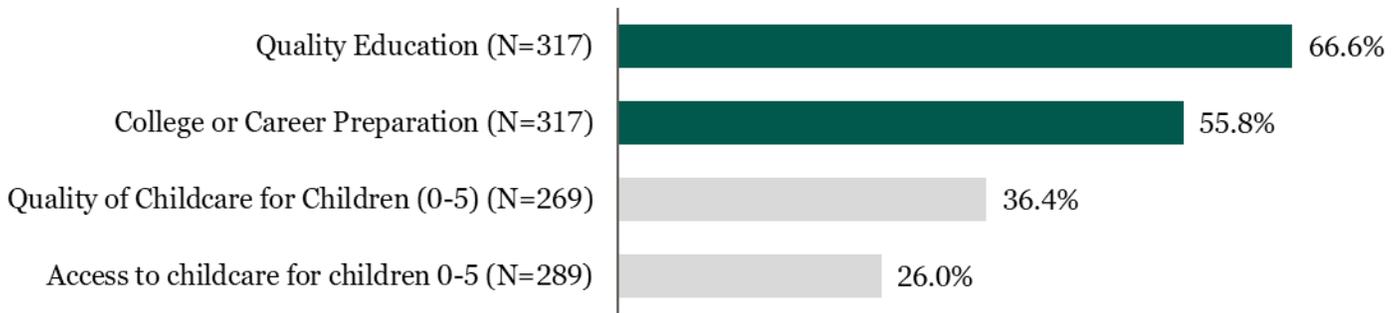


Figure 35: Percent of Respondents that rated aspects of education "Good" or "Excellent"



A local early childhood coalition took a close look at early care and education in a five county southern Indiana region. The data indicate that in 2017, an estimated 70% of Scott County children with all parents in the labor force did not enroll in known programs (Figure 36).³¹ This means that their childcare providers were not registered, licensed, or engaging the state’s quality rating and improvement system.

Among the reasons that only 34 kids enrolled in high quality care in 2017 was that more high quality ECE was not available in Scott County. According to the 2017 figures from the region’s

resource and referral agency, and population figures from the Census Bureau, Scott County had an estimated 4.1 high quality ECE spots for every 100 children birth to age five (Figure 37).³²

Community Profile: Schools

Scott County is home to two public school districts, Scott County School District 1 (SCSD 1) in Austin and Scott County School District 2 (SCSD 2) in Scottsburg, and Grace Christian Academy (pre-K-12). The public two school districts serve distinct student populations,

Figure 36: Estimated early care and education enrollments by quality for children with all parents in labor force, 2017³³

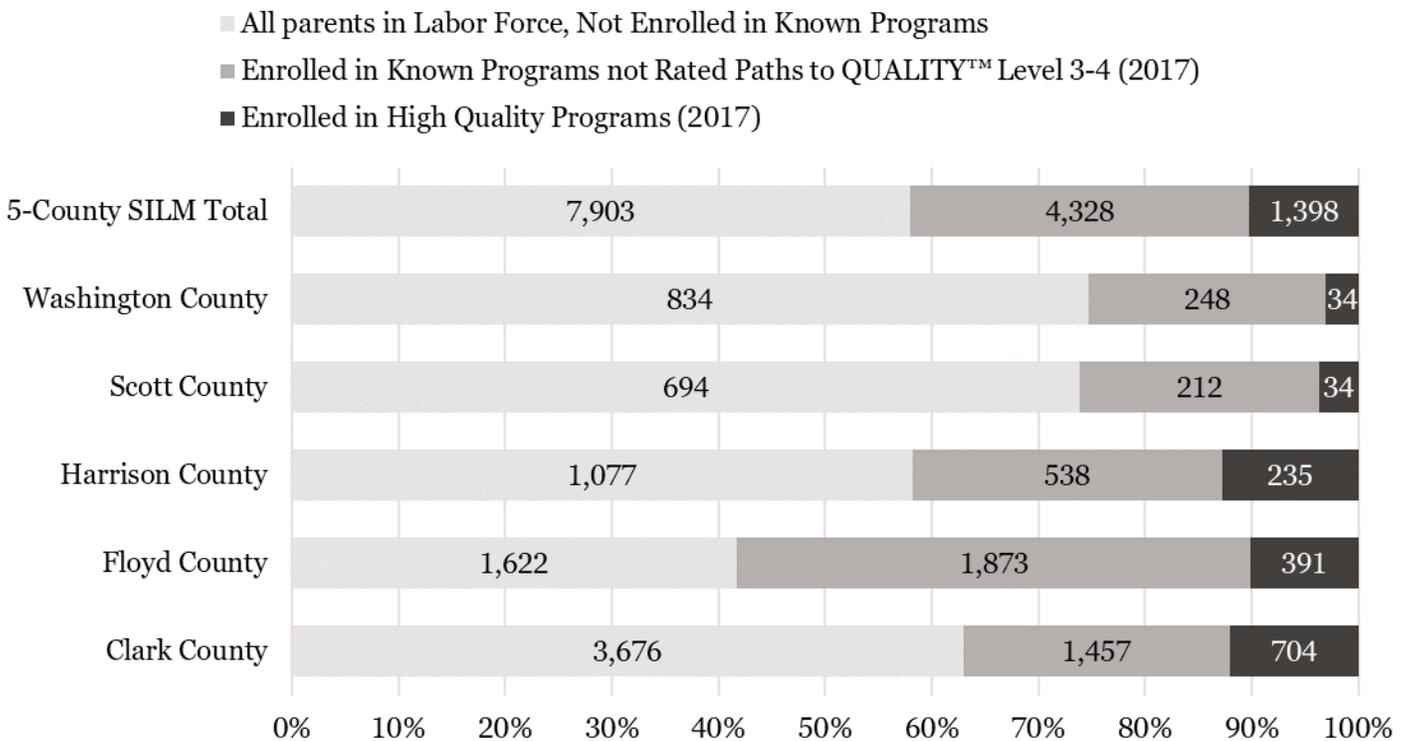


Figure 37: Number of high quality ECE slots per 100 children under age 5, Southern Indiana Louisville-Metro 2017 (Source: AREC 2019)

	Population Under Age 5	High Quality Slots Available	Number of High Quality Slots (PTQ™ Levels 3 and 4) per 100 Children Under Age 5
Clark County	7,273	515	7.1
Floyd County	4,542	492	10.8
Harrison County	2,279	280	12.3
Scott County	1,370	56	4.1
Washington County	1,577	40	2.5
Totals	17,041	1,383	8.1

Our school systems and support networks for education are quite good in our county. However, the endemic generational poverty and associated health and drug risks for our children is ever present [sic]. Our CASA cases are huge and continue to grow from a poor social economic perspective. We unfortunately do not have solid industries or high paying jobs to support our 'best and brightest' future residents. Most college bound youth will never come back to live here. Our bottom 20% of students who may or may not graduate from HS mostly will remain in our county. Unless our county can attract businesses that need highly skilled workers, then we are subject to this repeat cycle of maintaining (on average) a very low flow of highly educated young professionals.

reflecting economic dynamics across Scott County. SCSD 1 is a smaller school district and has a larger share of students from low-income households (Figure 38). A larger share of students in SCSD 1 pursue a general or Core 40 diploma, and drop out of high school short of completion (Figure 40 and Figure 41). A large share of SCSD 1 students (70.9%) graduate with a college or career credential, the district demonstrates lower performance in areas of college readiness.

SCSD 2 has fewer economically disadvantaged students and stronger performance in college readiness, though lower rates earning a college or career credential before graduation. Strong student participation in the Honors diploma and far lower dropout rates reflect strength of engagement, but performance in meeting college- and career-readiness benchmarks on the ACT and SAT, among those who take these exams, suggests room for growth. Demographic differences drive district needs and priorities in somewhat divergent ways, but both districts seek to increase college and career readiness among their student populations and recognize that parent and community engagement are essential to improving outcomes. Both districts have strong support from the community.

Community Perceptions

Community members support the local schools. When asked to identify their top concerns, “Getting

Figure 38: School District Profiles, 2018-2019

	Scott County School District 1 Austin	Scott County School District 2 Scottsburg
Grade	C	B
Number of Students (19-20)	1,208	2,691
Per pupil expenditures	\$8,613.19	\$9,168.12
Percent economically disadvantaged	64.7%	56.0%
English Learners	0.30%	0.50%
Percent with disabilities	20.0%	20.1%

Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 1." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072300000/profile>); Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 2." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072550000/profile>).

and keeping good teachers” topped the list with 70.6% indicating it is a concern. The second most frequently selected concern was the need to increase parental involvement. These were the only two items selected by 50% or more of respondents.

Comments suggest that respondents see that schools play an essential role providing stability for children who come from households that struggle. Several comments suggest the need for schools to become “trauma informed” environments. This idea is rooted in the ACEs research mentioned in the Health and Wellness section. With an understanding of the extent to which trauma is the root cause of behavior issues, this approach seeks to shift the response to common behavior issues from “what’s the matter with you?” to “what happened to you?”³⁴ This approach creates safe spaces for those who have experienced trauma to experience trust and acceptance, and to learn more about how their own experiences have led them to a way of thinking and behaving that may be hurting them. The approach then works to help youth develop healthier coping skills.

Figure 39: Aspects of College and Career Readiness, 2018-2019

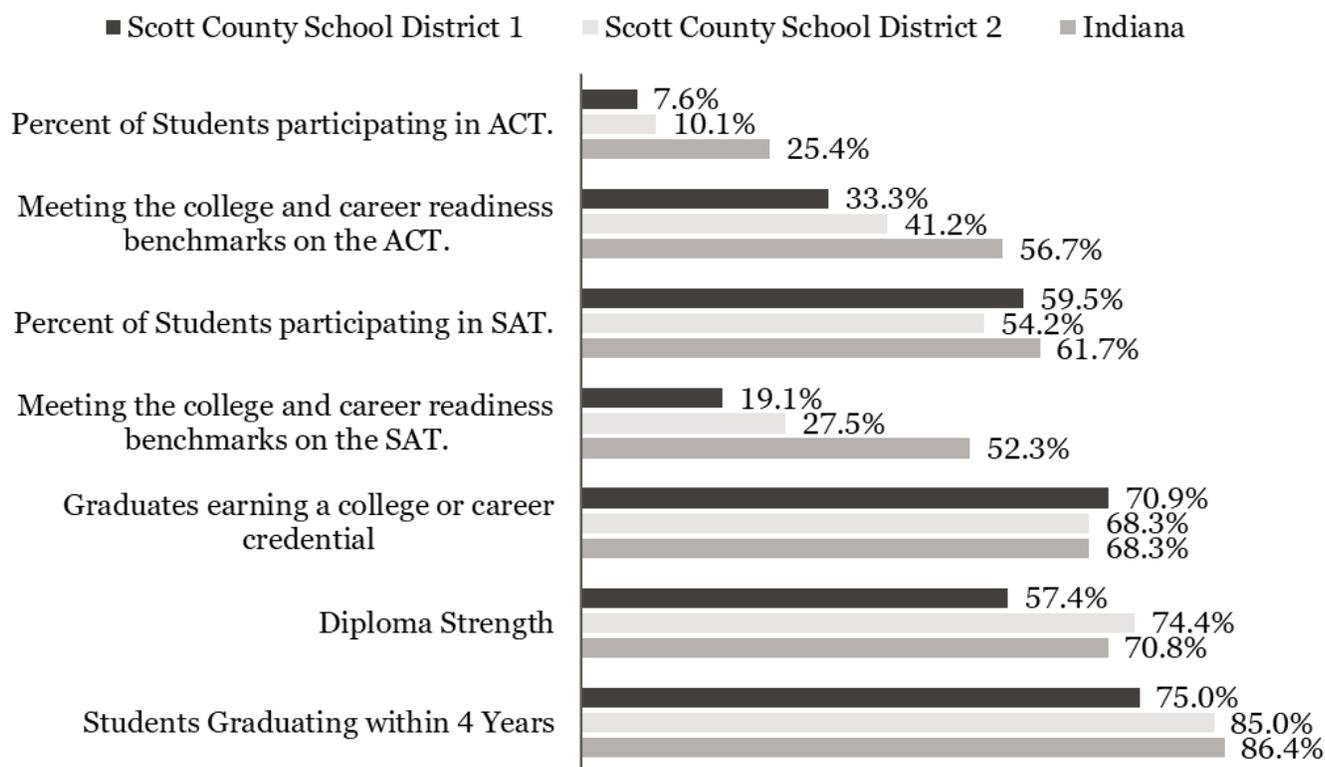
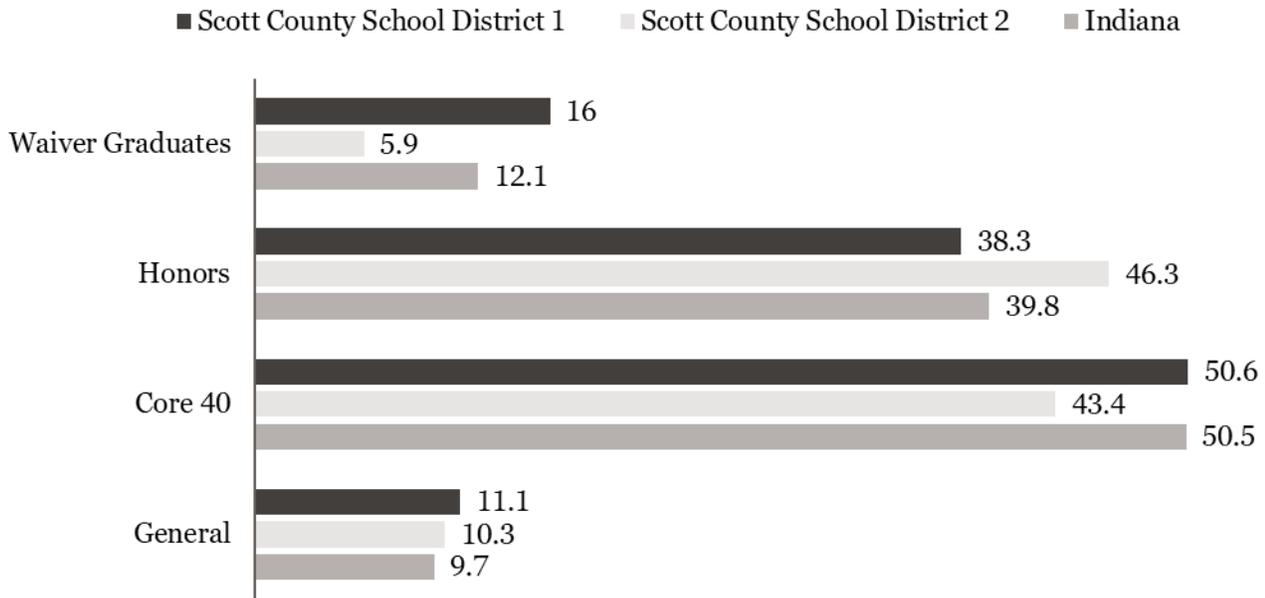


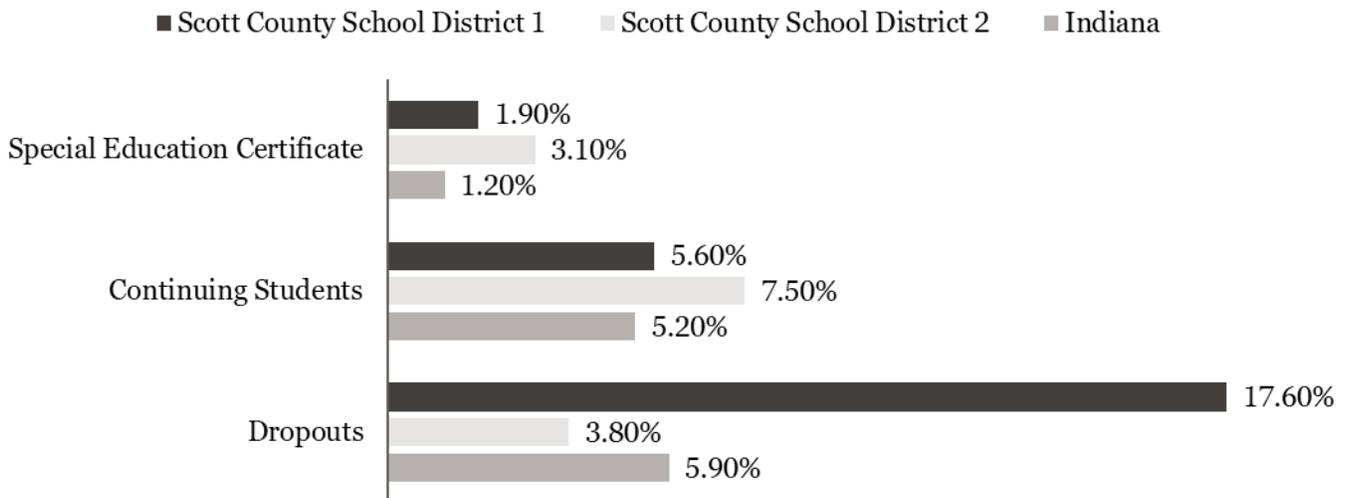
Figure 40: Percent Earning Each High School Diploma Type, 2018-2019



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Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 1." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072300000/profile>); Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 2." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072550000/profile>).

Figure 41: Outcomes for those who did not graduate in four years, 2018-2019



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Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 1." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072300000/profile>); Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 2." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072550000/profile>).

Note: These data provide a reasonably accurate record of those who did not graduate in four years, but were still in contact with the schools during their senior year. High school dropout data are necessarily incomplete as there is no system for tracking individual students nationally so when a student stops attending, a school may not know whether the child moved or dropped out. In small communities, the data are likely more accurate than in more densely populated areas where even local moves can cause a change in school.

Figure 43: Percent that Identified the Issue as a Concern Related to Education (N=313)



A lot of people here, myself included, deal with violence, poverty, drugs, abuse, etc. at home. It's a common lifestyle here. As sad as it is, schools should be a safe place for kids. Issues like bullying need to be better dealt with. More opportunities for children that are growing up in poverty and might not otherwise be able to afford being in sports or clubs that will help them to find friends/confidence/a support system.

The third priority concern, with just under 50% uptake, is “increase availability of artistic and musical activities.” Scott County youth have too few opportunities for creative self-expression. Schools struggle with high stakes performance requirements implemented over the last two decades and have eliminated many enrichment activities seen as “extras.” This conceptualization of “extras” reflects both fiscal realities and a misunderstanding of how we learn and develop key critical thinking and problem solving skills.³⁵ Research suggests that nurturing creativity through the arts improves these skills and develops the habits of mind that lead to entrepreneurship and innovation.³⁶ Youth echoed a desire to see more opportunities to pursue the arts.

Forward Together

Educational success and attainment is a cornerstone of a healthy and thriving community. Community and economic development will require developmentally appropriate and stimulating environments from birth to career. With this in mind, the community needs to consider the following strategies:

- Develop public, business, and nonprofit partnerships to increase access to affordable high quality early care and education for all children under age 5.
- Increase support and encouragement for pursuing trade certificates.
- Create trauma informed schools where faculty and staff approach student behavior issues with an eye toward the possibility that such behaviors are the result of toxic stress.
- Seek out resources for more intensive in school and after school programs to support youth engagement throughout their K-12 experience (include targeted attention to dropout prevention in SCSD 1).
- Support strategies for attracting and keeping good teachers.
- Pursue resources to provide more opportunities to experience and pursue the arts in local schools.

All citations and figure numbers consistent with full report. Full citations available at www.scottcountyfoundation.org.

