

2017-18 Evaluation of the Homeless Education Program

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At-a-Glance

The Homeless Education Program (HEP) is a federally funded program designed to provide support services to homeless children and their families. It advocates on behalf of homeless families by educating school staff and the community about their responsibilities to the homeless and about the rights and issues of the homeless. The purpose of the HEP is to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children. The program also attempts “to improve the means of identification of homeless families, children and youths by offering training and constantly increasing the range of services available to campuses to assist with their homeless students.”¹ The HEP helped to remove attendance barriers for homeless students by working with the Dallas ISD Transportation department, to ensure homeless students received school of origin transportation. The HEP provided homeless students with backpacks, school supplies, school appropriate clothing, hygiene items, mentoring and college preparation programs. The program sent a newsletter to the school registrars informing them of the HEP services offered.

Within the HEP, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B, Education for Homeless Children and Youths) guarantees educational rights and protections for children and youths experiencing severe homelessness. Section 725 (2) of the McKinney-Vento Act defines “homeless children and youths as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to loss of housing or economic hardship”. This includes children and youths living in shared housing with other persons, cars, hotels, motels, bus or train stations, trailer parks, abandoned buildings, camping grounds, and emergency or transitional shelters. It also includes students abandoned in hospitals or waiting for foster care placement. This population of homeless children and youth live under more severe conditions and their housing arrangements are more precarious than homeless students who might live with relatives. These students are more transient than other homeless children and many are regularly evicted from shelters, hotels and other transitional housing after a certain period.

Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the impact that program services had on homeless students’ attendance, discipline referrals and

achievement. Within the HEP, students served by McKinney-Vento were compared to the rest of the students. The budget for the 2017-18 school year was \$174,068, which came from Title I, Part A.

Data were obtained from the October 30, 2017 Chancery student database and the corresponding Attendance and Discipline Referral databases. Because of students’ transient nature, HEP students using HEP services were identified every six weeks through the attendance records maintained by program personnel.

Of the 2,786 HEP students, 1,826 (65.5%) were in elementary school, 420 (15.1%) in middle school and 540 (19.4%) in high school (Table 1). The total 2,786 homeless students represented 1.8 percent of the total district enrollment. Seven students were identified as McKinney-Vento.

Table 1: Enrollment of Homeless Students and Total District Enrollment 2017-18

Grade	Homeless Students		McKinney Vento		District Students	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Elementary						
PK	613	22.0	0	0.0	11,374	7.5
KN	225	8.1	3	50.0	10,900	7.1
1	211	7.6	2	33.3	11,315	7.4
2	185	6.6	0	0.0	11,649	7.6
3	209	7.5	0	0.0	12,327	8.1
4	195	7.0	1	16.7	12,484	8.2
5	188	6.7	0	0.0	12,328	8.1
Total	1,826	65.5	6	100.0	82,377	54.0
Middle						
6	172	6.2	0	0.0	10,670	7.0
7	126	4.5	0	0.0	10,541	6.9
8	122	4.4	0	0.0	10,007	6.6
Total	420	15.1	0	0.0	31,218	20.5
High						
9	186	6.7	1	100.0	11,480	7.5
10	146	5.2	0	0.0	10,097	6.6
11	112	4.0	0	0.0	8,953	5.9
12	96	3.4	0	0.0	8,350	5.5
Total	540	19.4	1	100.0	38,880	25.5
All						
Total	2,786	100.0	7	100.0	152,475	100.0

Source: Chancery file database 10/30/2017.

Note: Some percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding. McKinney-Vento students are shown separate but are part of Homeless.

Most homeless students were either Hispanic (50.0%) or African-American (42.8%). Ninety-one percent of homeless students were born in the United States. Most students were identified as economically disadvantaged (93.1%); 5.7 percent were special education, and 29.9 percent were English Language Learners (ELLs).

¹ The Homeless Education Program Action Plan, 2017-18

Services Provided by the Homeless Education Program during 2017-18

The HEP, in partnership with Focus on Teens, provided mentoring and emergency food and supplies to 18 high schools through Drop-In centers. The 18 Drop-In centers were located at North Dallas, Molina, Conrad, Lincoln, Madison, Maya Angelou, Roosevelt, Patton, Bryan Adams, Jefferson, Pinkston, South Oak Cliff, Seagoville, Hillcrest, Skyline, Sunset, Spruce and Samuell High schools. Drop-In centers were stocked with essential items such as food staples, backpacks, school supplies and hygiene items to help students to attend school on a regular basis.

In support of the district goal to increase the graduation rate, the HEP brought in agencies to present information about colleges and college admissions, career opportunities for individuals with only a high school diploma and information about new industries and career opportunities for students graduating from high school. Such agencies included the Academic Success Program, Education is Freedom, Junior Players, Rainbow Days, Education Opens Doors, and Focus on Teens.

Attendance

Table 2 shows attendance rates for students served by the HEP and those covered under McKinney-Vento. McKinney-Vento is a subset of homeless students that received supplies from the HEP. There were 2,786 homeless students in the district as of the end of the first six weeks of the school year. Table 2 shows a comparison of average attendance for McKinney-Vento, other homeless and general education students for first semester, second semester and the entire year 2017-18. In general, homeless and McKinney-Vento students had lower attendance rates than general education students.

Table 2: Average Attendance of McKinney-Vento and Other Homeless Compared to General Education Students, 2017-18

	First Semester	Second Semester	Year End
General Education	95.44	94.19	94.61
McKinney-Vento	93.42	79.43	87.79
Homeless	92.89	91.59	92.06

Source: Attendance Data File 2017-18

Average attendance rates for homeless students served by the Drop-In centers ranged from mid-40s to upper 90s. Their attendance rates were comparable to other homeless and lower than general education students.

Discipline Referrals

Discipline referrals data indicated that while only 4.9% of homeless students were involved in discipline

referrals, 8.8% of general education students incurred discipline referrals. The offense for which homeless students were cited the most was fighting (2.1%) while 3.1 percent of general education students were cited for the same offense. In general, percentages of other offenses seem to be similar for both groups. No McKinney-Vento students were recorded as having been referred due to a discipline incident.

Graduation Rates

Ten HEP seniors graduated in 2017-18, while forty (26%) of the 156 HEP seniors graduated in 2016-17.

Academic Performance

HEP students' performance on *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* and *STAAR End-of-the-Course (STAAR EOC)* are shown in Tables 3 and 4. Homeless students slightly outperformed General Education students in mathematics for grade 5.

Table 3: Homeless Students Who Scored Approaches + on STAAR

	Reading		Mathematics	
	N	%	N	%
Grade 3				
Homeless	106	64.6	110	67.1
Gen. Ed.	8,599	72.1	8,971	75.3
Grade 4				
Homeless	101	64.7	107	68.6
Gen. Ed.	7,889	65.3	9,158	75.8
Grade 5				
Homeless	123	76.4	141	88.1
Gen. Ed.	9,708	80.6	10,497	87.2
Grade 6				
Homeless	55	44.7	67	54.9
Gen. Ed.	5,791	55.7	6,999	67.3
Grade 7				
Homeless	64	58.7	67	61.5
Gen. Ed.	6,422	62.8	6,603	64.6
Grade 8				
Homeless	49	57.6	49	57.6
Gen. Ed.	7,167	74.2	5,891	61.0

Source: STAAR data file 2017-18 and MyData Portal District Data Packet.

As seen in Table 4, General Education students outperformed Homeless students in all STAAR EOC content areas. Homeless students obtained their higher scores on STAAR EOC Biology and U.S. History than on English I, II and Algebra I. No McKinney-Vento students scored Approaches + on STAAR EOC.

Table 4: 2017-18 Number and Percentage of Homeless and General Education Students Who Scored Approaches + on STAAR EOC by Content Area

Content	Homeless		General Education	
	N	%	N	%
Algebra I	144	60.5	9,652	75.2
Biology	149	72.7	9,489	78.3
English I	105	34.9	7,855	48.2
English II	108	42.5	8,212	55.1
US History	121	76.6	9,064	89.0

Source: STAAR EOC and Chancery SMS databases.

Recommendations

- **Continue to support the district high school Drop-In centers.** The Drop-In centers provided homeless students with supplies and hygiene items needed to mitigate some of their most pressing needs. The Drop-In centers have supported homeless students by providing mentoring, orientation about further education opportunities, staying in school, attending regularly and connecting with other students and faculty.
- **Extend the academic support to HEP students to increase their performance.** Tutoring and mentoring HEP students might increase their probability to stay in school.
- **Improve the identification process of McKinney-Vento students.** As of the end of October, only seven students were flagged as McKinney-Vento in the Chancery files. This number is much lower than in previous years. It will be important to establish clear criteria for identifying and flagging students for McKinney-Vento services. By doing this, schools can identify homeless students from the beginning of the year. Assessing the extreme conditions and hardships will enable the program staff to identify students' needs and target services to students in a timely manner.

This 2017-18 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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