

2018-19 Evaluation of the Homeless Education Program

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At-a-Glance

The Homeless Education Program (HEP) was designed to serve homeless students and their families, primarily within the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD). The primary focuses of the HEP involved simplifying the enrollment process, promoting consistent attendance, and bolstering academic success of homeless students. The HEP also strove to indirectly assist homeless students and their families by reducing the stigma and stereotypes regarding homelessness.

The HEP was federally funded through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which is a United States federal law that provides funding and protections for homeless individuals. The HEP total budget was \$424,028 for program year 2018-19,¹ a slight increase from \$423,334 in 2017-18. This total included \$247,415 from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (\$249,300 in 2017-18) and \$176,613 from Title 1, Part A funding (\$174,034 in 2017-18).

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the context, process, and outcomes of the HEP program in 2018-19. Specifically, the evaluation reports 1) characteristics of the Dallas ISD homeless students, 2) services the HEP provided, 3) changes in the status of homeless students from 2017-18 to 2018-19, and 4) academic achievement for homeless Dallas ISD students in kindergarten through grade 12.

Methodological Considerations

Students were classified as homeless if they and/or their families fit into one of four categories: 1) two or more families living in one home because of financial issues, domestic violence, or other factors (i.e., “doubled up”); 2) family living in motels, often paying on a week-to-week basis; 3) family living in homeless shelters; or 4) unaccompanied youth with no guardian or permanent residence (e.g., couch surfing² or living out of a car).

Students classified as homeless were flagged as either “homeless” or “McKinney-Vento” in the Dallas ISD district database. For the purposes of this evaluation, there were no substantive differences between the Dallas ISD students identified as homeless and those

identified as McKinney-Vento.³ Thus, these students were combined into one group of students for this evaluation.

Once students were flagged as homeless and/or McKinney-Vento, they retained that flag for the remainder of the school year, regardless of whether the student transitioned out of homelessness. That flag was then reevaluated at the beginning of the following school year.

Finally, because of the transient nature of homeless students in the Dallas ISD, this evaluation reports data for homeless students who were enrolled at any time during the school year. Thus, homeless student analyses were conducted using the end-of-year district demographic file (May 28, 2019). Districtwide analyses were conducted using active students enrolled on the PEIMS date (October 26, 2018).

What were the characteristics of the Dallas ISD homeless students?

Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarize the characteristics of homeless students using the district demographic file dated May 28, 2019. In 2018-19, 3,306 homeless students enrolled in the Dallas ISD: 2,091 students were classified as both “homeless” and “McKinney-Vento”, and 1,215 students were classified only as “homeless”.

Of the total homeless students, 1,998 (60%) were in early childhood (EC) through grade five, 622 (19%) were in grades six through eight, and 686 (21%) were in grades nine through 12 (Table 1). These students made up 2 percent of the total district population. The rate of homeless students was slightly higher (60%) in grades EC to five than the rate of students in these grades overall (53%), and slightly lower (21%) in grades nine to 12 than the rate of students in these grades overall (26%). The rate of homeless students (19%) and the district overall (21%) in grades six to eight were comparable.

Of the 3,306 homeless students, 3,242 had data regarding their primary nighttime residence: 1,766 (55%) were doubled up, 516 (16%) were living in

¹ The budget was provided on October 31, 2018 by the program manager for the Homeless Education Program.

² Couch surfing refers to staying temporarily in a series of others' homes, often without paying.

³ Staff members were funded by McKinney-Vento funds or Title 1, Part A funds. The funding source of the staff members with which each homeless student interacted designated the classification of the student.

motels, 934 (29%) were living in shelters, 23 (1%) were unaccompanied youth, and 3 (<1%) were other.

Table 1: 2018-19 Dallas ISD Homeless and District Student Enrollment

Grade	Homeless Students (N = 3,306)		District Students (N = 155,237)	
	n	%	n	%
Grades EC-5				
EC	7	0.2	180	0.1
PK	490	14.8	12,737	8.2
KN	295	8.9	10,992	7.1
1	239	7.2	11,234	7.2
2	240	7.3	11,314	7.3
3	232	7.0	11,518	7.4
4	254	7.7	12,197	7.9
5	241	7.3	12,248	7.9
Total	1,998	60.4	82,420	53.1
Grades 6-8				
6	228	6.9	11,144	7.2
7	187	5.7	10,554	6.8
8	207	6.3	10,424	6.7
Total	622	18.9	32,122	20.7
Grades 9-12				
9	223	6.7	12,192	7.9
10	170	5.1	10,603	6.8
11	140	4.2	9,398	6.1
12	153	4.6	8,502	5.5
Total	686	20.6	40,695	26.3

Source: District Public Education Information Management System demographic file dated October 26, 2018 and end-of-year demographic file dated May 28, 2019.

Note: EC = Early Childhood. PK = Prekindergarten. KN = Kindergarten. District totals include only active students at the PEIMS date. Homeless totals include students enrolled at any time during the 2018-19 school year. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

What services did the Homeless Education Program provide in 2018-19?

Information about services was gathered through interviews with the HEP director and program manager, documentation review, and a survey of those overseeing the Drop-In Centers. The HEP provided a wide range of services to homeless students in the Dallas area. One of its main goals was to keep students at their schools of origin. Thus, they worked with Dallas ISD Student Transportation Services, DART, and the transportation services of nearby districts to ensure that all homeless students had consistent transportation. In 2018-19, the HEP fulfilled 488 transportation requests, consisting of 10,735 bus passes.⁴

In partnership with Promise House⁵ and Focus on Teens,⁶ two Dallas-based non-profit organizations, the HEP also provided 14 Drop-In Centers at Dallas ISD high schools. The Drop-In Centers served as hubs for homeless students to access helpful and necessary materials, such as backpacks, uniforms, hygiene items,

and school supplies. The HEP assisted 123 students by providing materials. Drop-In Center leaders also referred students to additional services (e.g., mental health services) and organized presentations from outside agencies about numerous topics (e.g., college admissions, career options, etc.). The Drop-In Centers also worked with Food and Childhood Nutrition Services to provide students with healthy breakfasts, because they previously had been providing students with unhealthy options like donuts. Beyond the Drop-In Centers, the HEP also worked to ensure that homeless students were provided the same enrichment-filled opportunities and experiences that all other students received, including access to sports teams, after school programs, and summer camps.

The HEP also helped open After8ToEducate⁷ (After8) in November 2018. After8 is a new, first-of-its-kind shelter focused on housing and supporting unaccompanied high school youth in Dallas. After8 hosted up to 35 youth each night and strove to help the youth move into transitional housing or to reunify with their families.

In addition to helping homeless students within the Dallas ISD, the HEP also extended some of their services to students outside the district. For example, if a homeless student resided in Dallas but his or her school of origin was elsewhere, the HEP coordinated a shared bus service with the other district to make sure the student could continue attending the school of origin. Because of this, the HEP helped more homeless students than those enrolled within the Dallas ISD.

Finally, the HEP strove to indirectly assist homeless students and their families by reducing the stigma and stereotypes regarding homelessness. The program provided training sessions and videos to help educate teachers, campus staff members, and the community on the rights and issues of homeless individuals, the services the HEP provides, and what role individuals can play in assisting the homeless community.

For more information regarding the HEP, please visit its website: www.dallasisd.org/Page/954.

What was the status of Dallas ISD homeless students in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18?

The evaluator used frequency analyses to determine whether homeless students in 2017-18 stayed within Dallas ISD, moved elsewhere, and/or changed homeless status in 2018-19.

Of the students who were homeless in 2017-18 ($n = 3,925$), 2,669 stayed in the Dallas ISD in 2018-19

⁴ As of June 3, 2019.

⁵ For more information, see <https://promisehouse.org/>.

⁶ For more information, see <https://www.focusonteens.org/>.

⁷ For more information, see <http://after8toeducate.com/>.

(68%) and 1,256 were no longer enrolled (32%).

Of the 3,306 Dallas ISD students who were homeless in 2018-19, 446 were also flagged as homeless in 2017-18 (13%), and 2,860 were newly flagged as homeless (87%). Of the 2,860 students who were newly flagged as homeless in 2018-19, 1,436 were in the Dallas ISD in 2017-18 (50%) and 1,424 were newly enrolled (50%).

How did 2018-19 attendance rates, graduation rates, and discipline referrals compare to 2017-18 for Dallas ISD homeless students?

The evaluator conducted descriptive analyses to compare 2017-18 and 2018-19 attendance rates, graduation rates, and discipline referral rates for Dallas ISD homeless students.

The overall 2018-19 attendance rate for homeless students was 92 percent (Table 2), which was comparable to 93 percent in 2017-18, but slightly lower than district rates.

Of the 130 homeless seniors enrolled at the end of 2018-19, 89 percent graduated (Table 2). This rate was comparable to 2017-18, when 90 percent of the 146 homeless seniors graduated, but slightly lower than district rates.

Table 2: 2017-18 to 2018-19 Dallas ISD Homeless and District Overall Attendance, Graduation, and Discipline Rates

	Homeless		District	
	N	%	N	%
Attendance				
2017-18	3,925	92.7	156,804	95.4
2018-19	3,306	92.4	155,237	95.3
Graduation				
2017-18	146	90.4	8,226	90.7
2018-19	130	89.2	8,502	90.9
Discipline				
2017-18	3,925	6.3	156,804	6.0
2018-19	3,306	8.3	155,237	6.0

Source: District Public Education Information Management System demographic files dated October 30, 2017 (2017-18), and October 26, 2018 (2018-19). End-of-year demographic files dated June 4, 2018 (2017-18) and May 28, 2019 (2018-19). District attendance files dated June 11, 2018 (2017-18) and June 4, 2019 (2018-19). District graduation files dated June 11, 2018 (2017-18) and July 08, 2019 (2018-19). District discipline files dated July 19, 2018 (2017-18) and July 18, 2019 (2018-19).

Note: Homeless student graduation Ns and rates include only seniors that were enrolled at the end of the year.

For discipline referrals, 8 percent of homeless students earned at least one discipline referral in 2018-19; this rate was slightly higher than in 2017-18 when 6 percent of homeless students earned at least one discipline referral (Table 2). This was also slightly higher than the 2017-18 and 2018-19 discipline referral rates for the

district, which were both at 6 percent. The most common type of discipline referral for both 2017-18 and 2018-19 was fighting. Homeless students were referred 179 times for fighting in 2018-19 (36% of homeless student discipline cases) and 137 times in 2017-18 (29% of homeless student discipline cases).

What were the academic achievement outcomes for homeless Dallas ISD students in kindergarten to grade 12?

Frequency analyses were used to assess reading and mathematics performance on *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* (grades K-2), *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (STAAR; grades 3-5 and 6-8), and all subjects for STAAR EOC (end-of-course).

For *TerraNova* mathematics, 47 percent of homeless students scored at or above grade level, which was lower than for the district overall (59%; Table 3). For *TerraNova* reading, 56 percent of homeless students scored at or above grade level, which was lower than for the district (68%). For *SUPERA* reading, 80 percent of homeless students scored at or above grade level, which was lower than for the district (82%).

Table 3: 2018-19 Percentage of K-2 Homeless and District Students At or Above Grade Level on TerraNova and SUPERA

	Homeless		District	
	Tested N	Grd Lvl %	Tested N	Grd Lvl %
TerraNova				
Mathematics	562	47.3	31,961	59.3
Reading	411	55.7	17,251	67.5
SUPERA				
Reading	152	80.3	14,577	81.8

Source: District Public Education Information Management System demographic file dated October 26, 2018 and end-of-year demographic file dated May 28, 2019. *TerraNova* district data file dated July 02, 2019. *SUPERA* district data file dated July 02, 2019.

Note: K = kindergarten. Grd Lvl = at or above grade level/40th percentile.

Tables 4 and 5 show the percentages of homeless and district students at Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) and Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+) on STAAR and STAAR EOCs. Homeless students scored at Approaches+ at rates ranging from 43 percent (English I EOC) to 87 percent (US History EOC). Homeless students scored at Meets+ at rates ranging from 23 percent (grades six to eight mathematics and reading) to 65 percent (US History EOC). For all grade levels (grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12), a higher percentage of district students scored at Approaches+ and Meets+ in mathematics, reading, and all EOCs than homeless students.

Table 4: 2018-19 Percentage of Homeless and District Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR and STAAR EOC

	Homeless		District	
	Tested N	Appr+ %	Tested N	Appr+ %
Grades 3-5 (STAAR)				
Mathematics	571	67.4	34,440	80.5
Reading	572	65.9	34,446	75.2
Grades 6-8 (STAAR)				
Mathematics	463	58.3	28,190	75.9
Reading	486	53.1	30,428	67.6
Grades 9-12 (STAAR EOC)				
Algebra I	151	68.9	9,032	79.7
Biology	141	73.8	10,592	83.1
English I	229	43.2	15,137	54.8
English II	179	46.9	13,342	58.5
US History	123	87.0	9,736	92.0

Source. District Public Education Information Management System demographic file dated October 26, 2018 and end-of-year demographic file dated May 28, 2019. STAAR district data file dated June 13, 2019. STAAR EOC district data file dated June 4, 2019.

Note: STAAR = State Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC = End-of-Course. US = United States. Appr+ = Approaches Grade Level or Above. Data include first and second administrations of all versions of STAAR.

Table 5: 2018-19 Percentage of Homeless and District Students at Meets Grade Level or Above on STAAR and STAAR EOC

	Homeless		District	
	Tested N	Meets+ %	Tested N	Meets+ %
Grades 3-5 (STAAR)				
Mathematics	550	33.8	33,709	48.4
Reading	551	32.1	33,715	44.2
Grades 6-8 (STAAR)				
Mathematics	453	22.7	27,543	40.5
Reading	476	23.3	29,782	35.4
Grades 9-12 (STAAR EOC)				
Algebra I	149	34.2	8,876	53.8
Biology	139	34.5	10,429	53.6
English I	227	26.0	14,977	37.3
English II	175	26.9	13,167	38.9
US History	116	64.7	9,610	71.4

Source. District Public Education Information Management System demographic file dated October 26, 2018 and end-of-year demographic file dated May 28, 2019. STAAR district data file dated June 13, 2019. STAAR EOC district data file dated June 4, 2019.

Note: STAAR = State Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC = End-of-Course. US = United States. Meets+ = Meets Grade Level or Above. Data include first and second administrations of all versions of STAAR.

Recommendations

- **Continue providing necessary services to homeless students.** The HEP successfully provided many services to homeless students and their families. In 2018-19, the HEP fulfilled 488 transportation requests (10,735 individual bus passes), gave out needed materials to 123 homeless students, and hosted informative presentations. These services allow homeless students to attend school with all necessary materials and helps support student attendance.
- **Bolster academic support for homeless students.** Academic achievement for Dallas ISD homeless students was below that of the district. An increased focus on supporting academics through more structured tutoring or programming (e.g., organized presentations on study tips, etc.) may help reduce the achievement gap between homeless students and the district.

An electronic version of this 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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