

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Homeless Education Program (HEP) was designed to serve homeless students and their families, primarily within the Dallas Independent School District (ISD). The purpose of the HEP was to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and academic success of homeless students. Primary program services included Drop-In Centers at 18 Dallas ISD campuses, removing enrollment barriers for homeless students, and working with the Dallas ISD Student Transportation Services Department to ensure homeless students could attend their schools of origin. The HEP also provided homeless students with tools to help them succeed, such as school and hygiene supplies. Additionally, the HEP provided mentoring experiences and afterschool programs. Tutoring services were provided through After8toEducate (After8). Finally, the HEP strove to reduce the stigma and stereotypes surrounding homelessness by educating teachers, school staff members, and the community about homelessness and the HEP.

The HEP is federally funded through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which is a U.S. federal law that provides funding and protections for homeless individuals. The total budget for the 2020-21 school year was \$613,184 (\$431,290 from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and \$181,894 from Title I, Part A),¹ an increase from \$499,329 during the 2019-20 school year.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the context, process, and outcomes of the HEP program in 2020-21.² 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 2019-20 to 2020-21, and 4) academic achievement results for homeless students in the Dallas ISD. This evaluation did not report data on discipline referrals. Because of the lingering impacts of COVID-19 and many students learning at home instead of on campus, 2020-21 discipline data were not comparable to prior years.

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 surfing³ or living out of a car).

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” in the Dallas ISD district database.⁴ 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 (EOY) district demographic file (June 21, 2021). Districtwide analyses were conducted using active students enrolled on the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) date (October 30, 2020).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of Dallas ISD homeless students?

Methodology

The evaluator conducted descriptive analyses to summarize the characteristics of homeless students.⁵

Results

Throughout the 2020-21 school year, 4,390 homeless students enrolled in the Dallas ISD. Data by grade are presented in Table 1. These students made up approximately three percent of the total district population. Homeless students in the Dallas ISD were more likely to be in grades EC-5 (57%) than in the district overall (50%). Conversely, a smaller percentage of homeless students

¹ As reported by Special Revenue Funds Management on 02/28/21.

² Portions of this report were adapted from Rowles (2019) and Mickelson (2020).

³ Couch surfing refers to staying temporarily in a series of others' homes, often without paying.

⁴ Staff members were funded by McKinney-Vento funds or Title I, Part A funds. The funding source of the staff members with which each homeless student interacted determined the classification of the student.

⁵ PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/30/20, EOY demographic data file dated 06/21/21.

(23%) were in grades nine to 12 than the district overall (28%).

Table 1: 2020-21 Homeless Student and District Student Enrollment by Grade

Grade	Homeless Students (N = 4,390)		District Students (N = 145,720)	
	n	%	n	%
Grades EC-5				
EC	12	0.3	334	0.2
PK	517	11.8	8,777	6.0
K	399	9.1	10,276	7.1
1	351	8.0	10,586	7.3
2	341	7.8	10,610	7.3
3	301	6.9	10,474	7.2
4	298	6.8	10,572	7.3
5	283	6.4	10,829	7.4
Total	2,502	57.0	72,458	49.8
Grades 6-8				
6	333	7.6	10,640	7.3
7	274	6.2	10,644	7.3
8	282	6.4	10,678	7.3
Total	889	20.3	31,962	21.9
Grades 9-12				
9	370	8.4	11,513	7.9
10	254	5.8	11,228	7.7
11	186	4.2	9,739	6.7
12	189	4.3	8,820	6.1
Total	999	22.8	41,300	28.4

Source: PEIMS demographic file dated 10/30/20 and EOY demographic file dated 06/21/21.

Note: EC = Early childhood. PK = prekindergarten. Grade level percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

A larger percentage of homeless students were African American (38%) compared to the district overall (21%), and a smaller percentage were Hispanic (54%) than the district overall (71%). A smaller percentage were considered English learners (37%) than the district overall (46%). Other characteristics of homeless students were similar to the district overall.

What services did the HEP provide in 2020-21?

Methodology

The evaluator collected information about HEP services through interviews with program staff members and document and website review.

Results

The HEP worked with Dallas ISD Student Transportation Services, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), and the transportation services of nearby districts to ensure that all homeless students had consistent transportation to their school of origin. In 2020-21, the HEP fulfilled 82 in-district transportation requests.⁶ In addition, the HEP split transportation costs with other school districts to transport

167 students that either lived within the Dallas ISD boundary and attended other school districts or lived within other school district boundaries and attended the Dallas ISD.

In partnership with Promise House⁷ and Focus on Teens,⁸ two Dallas-based non-profit organizations, the HEP provided Drop-In Centers at 17 Dallas ISD high school campuses and one middle school campus. The Drop-In Centers served as hubs for homeless students to access helpful and necessary materials, such as food, backpacks, uniforms, hygiene items, and school supplies. 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 the Food and Childhood Nutrition Services Department to provide students with healthy breakfasts. Beyond the Drop-In Centers, the HEP worked to ensure that homeless students were provided the same enrichment opportunities and experiences that other students received, including access to sports teams, afterschool programs, and summer camps. Throughout spring semester, the HEP provided virtual field trips to students across the district.

The HEP worked with After8,⁹ a center supporting unaccompanied high school youth in Dallas. After8 provided drop-in services, tutoring, and helped students move into transitional housing or reunify with their families.

Finally, the HEP assisted homeless students and their families through efforts to reduce the stigma and stereotypes surrounding 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 provided, and what role individuals could play in assisting the homeless community. After the February winter storm left many households without power or water, department staff members instructed campus leaders about recognizing different types of homeless situations and the process of identifying students as homeless.

What was the status of homeless students in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20?

Methodology

For homeless students during the 2019-20 school year, the evaluator used frequency analyses to determine if homeless students stayed within the Dallas ISD, moved elsewhere, or changed homeless status for the 2020-21 school year.¹⁰

Results

Of the students who were homeless in 2019-20 ($n = 3,964$), 3,135 (79%) stayed in the Dallas ISD in 2020-21 and 829

⁶ The department was available to accept transportation requests from August 2020 through May 2021.

⁷ For more information, see <https://promisehouse.org/>.

⁸ For more information, see <https://www.focusonteens.org/>.

⁹ For more information, see <http://after8toeducate.com/>.

¹⁰ Demographic data files dated 05/29/20 (2019-20) and 06/21/21 (2020-21).

(21%) were no longer enrolled. Of the 4,390 Dallas ISD students who were homeless in 2020-21, 457 were also flagged as homeless in 2019-20 (10%), and 3,933 were newly flagged as homeless (90%). Of the 3,933 students who were newly flagged as homeless in 2020-21, 2,139 were in the Dallas ISD during the 2019-20 school year (54%) and 1,794 were newly enrolled (46%)

How did attendance rates and graduation rates for homeless students in 2020-21 compare to the past rates?

Methodology

The evaluator conducted descriptive analyses to compare the semester attendance rates for homeless students in the Dallas ISD during the 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 school years with the district overall.

To analyze graduation rates, the evaluator conducted descriptive analyses to compare the 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 annual graduation rates for homeless students in the Dallas ISD with the district overall.

Results

Attendance¹¹

The 2020-21 fall and spring semester attendance rates for homeless students were 88 percent and 91 percent, respectively (Table 2). Results should be reviewed with caution because of the lingering impacts of COVID-19. These rates were slightly lower than the semester rates for homeless students during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. The rates were lower than the overall district rate of 91 percent for the fall 2020-21 semester and 94 percent for the spring 2020-21 semester.

Table 2: 2018-19 through 2020-21 Homeless and District Overall Attendance					
Year	Sem	Homeless		District	
		N	%	N	%
2018-19	Fall	2,595	92.5	151,684	95.5
	Spring	2,574	92.3	151,430	95.2
2019-20 ¹	Fall	3,610	91.9	153,393	94.9
	Spring	3,878	88.3	145,224	91.4
2020-21	Fall	3,777	91.2	141,368	93.9
	Spring				

Source: District PEIMS data files dated 10/26/18 (2018-19), 10/31/19 (2019-20), and 10/30/20 (2020-21). EOY demographic files dated 05/28/19 (2018-19), 05/29/20 (2019-20), and 06/21/21 (2020-21). District attendance files dated 06/04/19 (2018-19), 01/24/20 (2019-20), and 08/24/21 (2020-21).

Note: Sem = Semester. ¹Spring 2020 rates were not included due to recording changes after the district transitioned to at-home learning on 03/23/20. Data were analyzed by semester, thus these data may differ when compared to reports from prior years.

¹¹ Because some students were learning remotely after spring 2020 and continued to do so in 2020-21, which could lead to discrepancies in the data, results should be reviewed with caution.

¹² EOY demographic files dated 05/28/19 (2018-19), 05/29/20 (2019-20), and 06/21/21 (2020-21). District graduation files dated 07/08/19 (2018-19),

Graduation Rate

Of the 159 homeless seniors enrolled at the end of the 2020-21 school year, 87 percent graduated. This rate was lower than the 2018-19 rate for homeless students (89%; N = 130) and higher than the 2019-20 rate (83%; N = 110). However, the graduation rates of homeless students were consistently lower than the district overall rates year by year (91% in 2018-19, N = 8,502; 89% in 2019-20, N = 8,325; and 89% in 2020-21, N = 8,777).¹²

What were the academic achievement outcomes for homeless students?

Methodology

For students in grades kindergarten (K), one, and two, the evaluator conducted frequency analyses to determine the percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile on the EOY *Measures of Academic Progress Growth (MAP)* in reading and mathematics.¹³ The evaluator conducted frequency analyses to determine the percentage of students at the Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) and Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+) standards on the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR; grades 3-5 and 6-8)*, and all subjects for *STAAR End-of-Course (EOC)*.

Results

MAP

Homeless students underperformed the district on the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on MAP across grades in reading (K homeless: 37%, N = 209; K district: 48%, N = 8,378; grade one homeless: 30%, N = 185; grade one district: 43%, N = 9,232; grade two homeless: 37%, N = 179; grade two district: 45%, N = 9,217). The same pattern was true for mathematics (K homeless: 44%, N = 216; K district: 55%, N = 8,918; grade one homeless: 31%, N = 195; grade one district: 44%, N = 9,385; grade two homeless: 24%, N = 177; grade two district: 35%, N = 9,403).

STAAR/STAAR EOC

Tables 3 and 4 show the percentages of homeless and district students at Approaches+ and Meets+ on STAAR and STAAR EOCs in 2020-21. Homeless students scored at Approaches+ at rates ranging from 37 percent (English I EOC) to 68 percent (US History EOC). Homeless students scored at Meets+ at rates ranging from 12 percent (Algebra I EOC) to 41 percent (US History EOC). For all grade levels (grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and assessments examined, a higher percentage of district students scored at Approaches+ and Meets+ than homeless students.

06/17/20 (2019-20), and 07/21/21 (2020-21). Homeless student graduation Ns and rates include only seniors that were enrolled at the end of the year.

¹³ District PEIMS demographic file dated 10/30/20 and EOY demographic file dated 06/21/21. MAP district data file dated 06/23/21.

Table 3: 2020-21 Percentage of Homeless and District Students at Approaches+ on STAAR and STAAR EOC

	Homeless		District	
	Tested N	App+ %	Tested N	App+ %
STAAR (Grades 3-5)				
Reading	578	54.2	28,366	64.2
Mathematics	581	44.9	28,416	61.7
STAAR (Grades 6-8)				
Reading	589	46.5	26,470	61.5
Mathematics	535	44.5	22,413	54.3
STAAR EOC (Grades 9-12)				
Algebra I	225	49.8	7,058	56.3
Biology	222	61.7	10,145	72.9
English I	292	36.6	11,335	52.5
English II	190	40.0	10,649	58.0
US History	125	68.0	8,874	82.1

Source: District PEIMS demographic file dated 10/30/20 and EOY demographic file dated 06/21/21. STAAR district data file dated 07/12/21. STAAR EOC district data file dated 07/12/21.

Note: App+ = Approaches+. US = United States. Data include all versions of STAAR and first and second administrations of all versions of STAAR EOCs.

Table 4: 2020-21 Percentage of Homeless and District Students at Meets+ on STAAR and STAAR EOC

	Homeless		District	
	Tested N	Meets+ %	Tested N	Meets+ %
STAAR (Grades 3-5)				
Reading	563	26.8	27,739	37.4
Mathematics	566	18.2	27,789	33.2
STAAR (Grades 6-8)				
Reading	566	16.3	25,946	32.8
Mathematics	512	18.9	21,892	24.9
STAAR EOC (Grades 9-12)				
Algebra I	217	12.0	6,862	20.8
Biology	214	22.9	9,948	41.8
English I	284	17.6	11,143	35.4
English II	186	22.6	10,473	43.0
US History	123	40.7	8,713	56.8

Source: District PEIMS demographic file dated 10/30/20 and EOY demographic file dated 06/21/21. STAAR district data file dated 07/12/21. STAAR EOC district data file dated 07/12/21.

Note: US = United States. Data include all versions of STAAR and first and second administrations of all versions of STAAR EOCs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on provision of services, attendance, graduation, and student achievement results, the evaluator made two recommendations.

Continue to provide crucial services to homeless students. The HEP was successful in providing supplies, transportation, and other services to students as they experienced periods of in-person and/or virtual learning during the 2020-21 school year. The HEP should continue these efforts to support students.

Strengthen the academic supports available for homeless students. Rates of academic achievement on the MAP, STAAR, and STAAR EOCs were lower than the district overall. The HEP should work with campuses to ensure that students identified as homeless are consistently provided quality, targeted academic supports that could decrease the gap in academic achievement between homeless students and the district overall.

REFERENCES

- Mickelson, N. (2020) 2019-20 Evaluation of the Homeless Education Program. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.
- Rowles, S. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of the Homeless Education Program. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

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