Educational Liaison Role and Regional Collaboration to Support Highly Mobile Youth

Poudre School District and Thompson School District

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The Landing, a youth shelter in Loveland serving youth experiencing homelessness ages 15–21, opened in January of 2025. The Landing was operated by The Matthews House in partnership with Thompson School District, which donated the building. The Landing provided a "Safe Space to Land" for youth experiencing homelessness in Northern Colorado. As the Matthews House vision for The Landing developed, the need for an Educational Liaison (EL) role was identified to bridge the gap between school districts and the shelter. Poudre School District then partnered with The Matthews House to provide staffing for the EL role in the first year. The EL role was not built on an existing model, as the full scope was not yet known at the time of opening.

In the first few months of opening, The Landing was widely unknown to the community, so the EL role required a dedicated focus on outreach, education, and networking in the region. This included identifying and reaching out to district McKinney-Vento Liaisons; identifying and partnering with community organizations, community colleges, and Colorado State University's Fostering Success Program (FSP); and presenting to district mental health and counseling teams. The role evolved into building and maintaining a regional network of district partners.

The EL was an experienced, licensed educator embedded in the shelter who supported youth with McKinney-Vento transportation coordination, worked with district staff to remove barriers and ensure protections were in place, and worked with Landing Case Managers and shelter staff to support the continuation of education, re-engagement, and graduation. The EL also maintained current knowledge of education options including traditional, online, GED/High School Equivalency, and workforce and post-secondary pathways within the region. Another function of the EL within the shelter was education, professional development, and the translation of educational systems for shelter staff.



The EL connected and re-connected youth to information, services, and supports across districts so that support followed the student rather than remained siloed. Recognizing that circumstances changed quickly, the EL was responsive and worked across both academic and shelter hours. Shared problem-solving with district teams created a coordinated response. The EL provided consistent advocacy, working with shelter staff and district partners to build trust so participants remained engaged in education despite instability and uncertainty.

Following implementation, the impact was measurable: 56 youth were served across multiple districts, eight had graduated (2025), six were anticipated graduates (2026), 18 youth had maintained continuation of enrollment, and six had engaged in post-secondary

education. A significant challenge was limited funding. This restricted the number of positions that were available, reduced competitive compensation rates, and led to challenges in recruiting and maintaining qualified staff. Other challenges included misalignment with school district policies and procedures for referrals and outreach. Inconsistent staffing and fluctuating schedules could cause lower rates of participation and reduce the effectiveness of re-engagement efforts. Another challenge was the misalignment of administrative policies between traditional education and what was needed for highly mobile youth (HMY).

Securing sustainable funding from the outset was essential to ensure the role was maintained. When positions like that were reduced or eliminated, the systems and supports built were disrupted. Consistency in the role was critical to provide the stable support HMY had historically lacked. One McKinney-Vento Liaison and Mental Health Coordinator from a partner district shared: “What truly stands out is the care [the EL] takes in supporting students through transitions, especially in the space between discharge and what comes next. [The EL] helps create continuity, stability, and hope.”