Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness, Analysis of 2017-2018 Data

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Summary of Key Findings:

- ECYEH identified a similar proportion of homeless students in 2017-18 as compared to 2016-17

- Most students identified as homeless are living "doubled up" or in shelters

- Similar to 2016-17, enrollment assistance, uniform vouchers, and transportation assistance are still critical services for students identified as homeless

- Homeless students fare worse on outcomes of attendance, standardized test scores, and grade promotion compared to other District students

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides grant funding to school districts in Pennsylvania that have a significant homeless student population through the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program. In collaboration with other city agencies such as Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services, ECYEH priorities include tracking the number of homeless students and providing support such as school enrollment assistance, vouchers for uniforms, transportation passes, and additional funding for school supplies.

The purpose of this research brief is to provide information about progress toward the goals of the ECYEH grant program and priorities of SDP staff.

Research Questions

The research questions address both the services provided by ECYEH (questions 1-3) as well as student outcomes including attendance and academic achievement (questions 4 and 5).

1. Are ECYEH approaches resulting in:
   a. The identification of school-age students as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2017-18 school year?
   b. The identification of unaccompanied youth identified as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2017-18 school year?

2. Students: How many students did ECYEH serve in the 2017-18 school year?

     a. How many students received the following support: enrollment assistance, uniforms, school supplies, transportation assistance, and tutoring?
     b. In the 2017-18 school year, how many students participated in the TEEN program?

3. School/Shelter staff: In the 2017-18 school year, was ECYEH able to implement the following?
     a. Professional development, training, or awareness opportunities for educators/school personnel
     b. Professional development, training, or awareness opportunities for social service agencies and shelters

4. How does the percentage of school age children and youth identified as truant in the 2017-18 school year compare to the percentage of other District students identified as truant?

5. To what extent do students who are identified as homeless improve on the following indicators aligned with academic success?
     a. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the PSSA-Reading and Math assessments
     b. The percentage of high school students who are promoted to the next grade

Data Sources and Methods

The ECYEH office provided the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) with three primary sources of information:

1. Information about students identified as homeless at any point during the 2017-18 school year.
2. Responses from satisfaction surveys distributed at workshops and events conducted by ECYEH program staff. These include workshops at schools and local homeless shelters that are offered to increase awareness of policies regarding homeless students and programs offered by ECYEH. For the 2017-18 school year, ORE received workshop surveys from one workshop given to providers (with 20 survey responses).
3. Responses from electronic satisfaction surveys including a satisfaction survey linked in the ECYEH program staff email signatures, which received 24 responses (most of whom were school staff) in 2017-18. The survey assessed the level of satisfaction experienced by the respondent, what they liked most about the supports/services offered by the ECYEH office, and if there were any additional supports/services they would like to see offered.

Finally, ORE retrieved data on student attendance and achievement from the District's Business Data Warehouse (BDW) to generate descriptive information about student outcomes.

What We Found

A similar proportion of students were identified as homeless in the 2017-18 school year compared to the 2016-17 school year

Homeless students were identified to the ECYEH office by several different methods. Some students were identified by parents or guardians directly requesting services from the ECYEH office. Students may also have been identified to ECYEH by their SDP teachers, counselors, and administrators. Additional sources of identification included The City of Philadelphia's Office of Supportive Housing, SDP's Office of Early Childhood Education, and area shelters who provided information to the ECYEH office identifying homeless students. Although there are many ways in which students were identified, and more than 3,800 students identified, we suspect that the actual number of homeless students is still higher than presented (Table 1), due to the challenging nature of identifying this particular population.

Table 1: Students Identified as Homeless at any Point During the 2017-2018 School Year

Category	Number of Identified Students[a]
SDP Students[b]	2,754
Charter Students	288
Not yet school-aged (0-5 year olds)	596
Other Students Identified[c]	261
Total	3,899[d]

Source: Data file provided by ECYEH office merged with information from the SDP's Business Data Warehouse (BDW).

[a]*Includes students identified through June 12, 2018 (the end of the 2017-18 school year). Students identified after the end of the school year will be included in future briefs.*

[b]*The total number of SDP students includes students in alternative and special education schools. These students are excluded from attendance and achievement analyses.*

[c]*Other students identified includes students without IDs and students that could not be located in the BDW. These students may be in private school, awaiting enrollment, or unenrolled. All "other students identified" were excluded from analyses that used BDW data.*

[d] *This number does not include certain charter schools that did not report to ECYEH and who were not included in below analyses but were identified by the ECYEH Region 1 office. The total number reported to the state for Philadelphia County is 7,288.*

The ECYEH office identified a similar proportion of students as homeless during the 2017-18 school year compared to the 2016-17 school year (Table 2).

Table 2: A Similar Proportion of Students were Identified as Homeless During the 2017-2018 School Year

Population	N (2016-2017)	N (2017-2018)
Identified SDP & Charter Homeless Enrollment	2,883	3,042
Total SDP & Charter Enrollment[a]	201,594	202,538
Percent of Total Enrollment Represented by Homeless Students	1.4%	1.5%

Sources: ECYEH data files for identified students and Qlik Enrollment Overview sheet (which uses official October 1 enrollment counts) for total enrollment.
[a]Includes Alternative and Special Education Schools and charter schools that may not have reported directly to ECYEH.

Most of the students identified as homeless in 2017-18 were residing in shelters or were "doubled up"

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) guarantees a free public education that is appropriate for all homeless-identified children and youth[1]. McKinney-Vento defines homelessness as a lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and as such may include youth who are "doubled up" (i.e., sharing housing with another family). A majority of K-12 students identified as homeless during the 2017-18 school year were doubled up (Table 3).

Table 3: Homeless Students by Living Arrangement

Living Arrangement	Total K-12 Students	Total 0-5 Children
	Number of students (% of identified homeless students)[a]	Number of students (% of identified homeless students)[a]
Doubled up	1,869 (56%)	268 (45%)
Shelter	1,054 (31%)	321 (54%)
Transitional	281 (8%)	0
Unaccompanied	174 (5%)	N/A
Other/hotel	78 (2%)	0
Unsheltered	9 (<1%)	0

Source: Data file provided by the ECYEH office. [a]Percentages are out of the number of students identified (SDP, Charter, and 'Other'). Students may be identified in more than one category.

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[1] For detailed information about the McKinney-Vento Act see
https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html

Thirty percent of K-12 students identified as homeless in 2017-18 required enrollment assistance

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, students' enrollment cannot be denied or delayed due to a lack in proof of residency. When a school insists on a verified address for enrollment, ECYEH works to ensure that these children can still be enrolled by providing a homeless verification form to the school. In 2017-18, ECYEH coordinators continued to work with parents and students to assist with enrollment paperwork, either in person or via phone. Coordinators also contacted schools to verify the status of the student, with shelters assisting in this process by providing a letter of residency for families. In the 2017-18 school year, 1,004 (30% of K-12 students identified as homeless) received assistance with enrollment.

More than half of students identified as homeless required assistance in purchasing a uniform, and a smaller percentage required transportation assistance

In addition to enrollment assistance, the ECYEH office provides vouchers for uniforms and transportation assistance. The uniform vouchers allow students to comply with the SDP school dress code, which may be difficult for the student if the family lacks income to purchase a uniform. In 2017-18, 60% of K-12 students who were identified as homeless received uniform vouchers (Table 4). This is an increase from 49% in the 2016-17 school year.

Because transportation can also be a major obstacle in homeless students' school attendance (Tobin, 2011), the ECYEH office provides SEPTA transit passes as a means for students to get to and from school. The percentage of homeless students receiving transportation assistance was slightly higher in 2017-18 at 17%, compared to 2016-17 at 15% (Table 4).

Table 4: Services Provided by the ECYEH Program in SY 2016-17 and SY 2017-18

Service	2016-17		2017-18	
	Number of Identified K-12 students who received service	Percentage of identified K-12 students who received service	Number of Identified K-12 students who received service	Percentage of identified K-12 students who received service
Uniform vouchers	1,517	49%	1987	60%
Transportation assistance[a]	450	15%	556	17%

Source: Data file provided by the ECYEH office.
[a]Transportation assistance usually takes the form of SEPTA passes for students who qualify. ECYEH assists in this process along with the Office of Transportation and the school counselor.

ECYEH staff led, supported, or participated in 78 events between July 2017 and June 2018

One of the main functions of the ECYEH office is conducting community outreach to families experiencing homelessness to inform them of their options and available supports (e.g., transportation passes, uniforms). ECYEH staff conduct workshops at shelters and often go to events hosted by the Family and Community Engagement Office or the School Advisory Councils. In addition to providing families with information, ECYEH also runs a TEEN program and a tutoring program. The TEEN program was offered to homeless high school students with an interest in learning about career readiness and post-secondary education options. Tutoring is offered after school two days a week to students of all ages.

- **Events and Workshops**. During the 2017-18 school year, the ECYEH office let, supported, or participated in 78 events: 26 workshops, 19 parent/community meetings, two school site visits, and 31 trainings for school staff or providers (those who work at homeless shelters). Additionally, ECYEH participated in three charity endeavors. Two involved collecting donated coats for homeless youth and participating in a coat giveaway event that serviced 1000+ students. There was also a raffle held during the SDP central office holiday celebration whose proceeds go to holiday gifts and special incentives for the students in the TEEN and tutoring programs. The number of attendees at events hosted by ECYEH ranged from one to 136 and included provider staff, school staff, students, and parents.

  At events where parents are present, ECYEH staff discuss services available to parents of homeless children and rights of homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act (for example, a child can choose to remain enrolled at the same school despite having moved into a shelter that may be in a different catchment area). ECYEH also provides professional development to school staff, central office staff, and providers around the McKinney-Vento Act, emphasizes the prevalence of homelessness in Philadelphia, and outlines the types of assistance available to homeless students.

- **TEEN Program.** The TEEN program took place on Wednesday evenings from 4-6 at the school district central office for most of the school year. Programming focused on professional development for students, such as college prep or life/business skills. Students complete an intake form at the beginning of the program that asks for their interests and their GPA, and the results from these forms help to inform programming. In 2017-18, the TEEN program meetings had participation from 4-12 students between the ages of 14-18.

- **Tutoring.** The 2017-18 school year was the fourth year for the ECYEH tutoring program, which took place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 4-6 at the school district central office. Students were provided dinner at the beginning of each session. The tutors were SDP teachers who apply and interview for this additional role (only full-time SDP teachers are considered). The number of students attending each session ranged from 2-18, and on average 8 students attended each session.

Most people who interacted with the ECYEH Office were satisfied

Overall, people who responded to the provider workshop survey (n=20) were satisfied with the workshop, rating participants' knowledge after the session as 4.8 and the practicality of the session at 4.8 (out of 5). Participants who had previously interacted with the ECYEH office were asked about the timeliness of receiving services. Out of the 12 people who requested transportation assistance and the 11 people who requested school supply/uniform assistance, all reported receiving services, though the amount of time it took to receive services varied from 1-2 days to 6-10 days (Table 5).

Table 5: Everyone who Requested Services Received Assistance

| Service	Never Received Assistance	1-2 Days	3-5 Days	6-10 Days	11-14 Days	More than 14 Days
Transportation assistance	0	7	3	2	0	0
School supply/uniform assistance	0	5	4	2	0	0

Source: ECYEH data file

Similarly, most respondents to the office satisfaction survey (93.8%, n=24) reported they were very satisfied with the supports/services they received from the ECYEH office. When asked what they liked best about the supports/services offered by the ECYEH office, responses fell into three common themes: about 46% of responses mentioned the helpfulness of the staff, another 46% mentioned the timeliness of the response, and 8% said the informative nature of materials/response provided. Respondents' suggestions for future services or supports provided by the ECYEH office included outside agency assistance and free winter coats for students.

In addition to examining services provided by ECYEH, research questions also addressed outcomes of student attendance and achievement. The following results address truancy of students identified as homeless, achievement (as measured by scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)), as well as grade promotion in comparison to non-homeless students in the school district.

A higher percentage of students identified as homeless are chronically truant compared to other District students

Students in SDP are considered chronically truant and may receive a citation for the District's Truancy Court after having ten or more unexcused absences. In the 2017-18 school year, the percentage of homeless students in the District with ten or more unexcused absences was 52%, compared to 31% of other District students. These represent declines in truancy from the previous school year for both homeless and other District students (from 62% and 38%, respectively). Similar to other District students, among homeless-identified students, the lowest percentages of chronic truancy are found in the middle grades (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Chronic Truancy: Homeless Students Compared to Other SDP Students by Grade
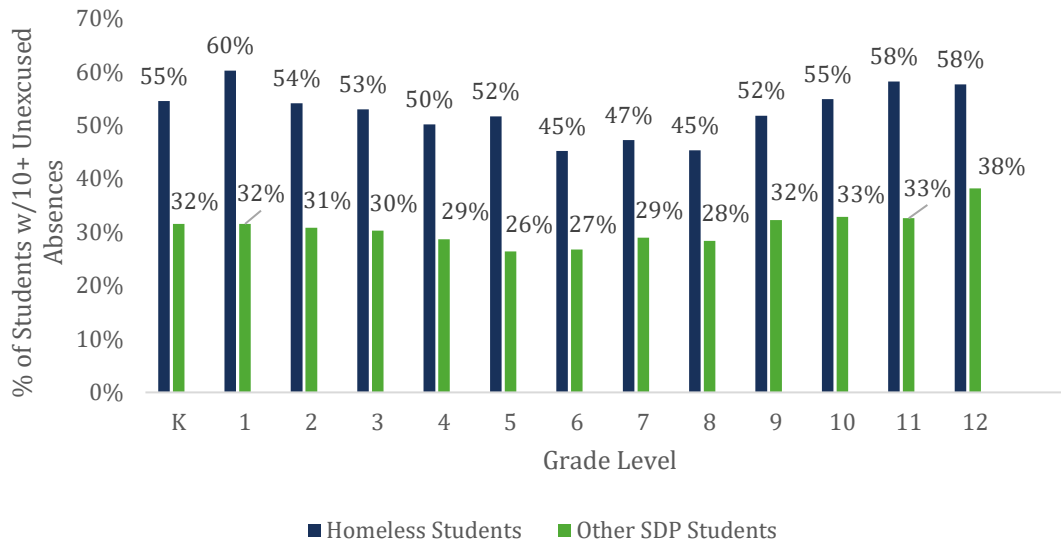
Source: BDW

Homeless students had lower rates of proficiency on standardized tests compared to other District students in 2017-18

Across all grades that take the PSSA in both math and English, fewer homeless students scored Advanced or Proficient on the PSSA exam than other District students (see Tables 5 and 6). This is consistent with prior research.[2]

Table 5: 2017-18 PSSA Math Proficiency Rates for Grades 3-8 Homeless and other District Students

Grade	Number of Homeless Students who took PSSA Math Test	Number/Percent of Homeless Students scoring Advanced or Proficient	Number of Other District Students who took PSSA Math Test	Number/Percent of SDP Students scoring Advanced or Proficient N (%)
3	231	30 (13%)	10,472	2,417 (23%)
4	242	17 (7%)	10,535	1,588 (15%)
5	207	7 (3%)	9,917	1,858 (19%)
6	179	8 (4%)	8,634	1,565 (18%)
7	137	8 (6%)	8,416	1,692 (20%)
8	133	6 (5%)	7,974	1,213 (15%)
Total	1,129	76 (7%)	55,948	10,333 (18%)

Source: BDW

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[2] Losinski, M., Katsyannis, A., Ryan, J. (2013). The McKinney-Vento education for homeless children and youth program: implications for special educators. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 49*(2), 92-98.

Table 6: 2017-18 PSSA English Proficiency Rates for Grades 3-8 Homeless and other District Students

Grade	Number of District Homeless Students who took PSSA English Test	Number/Percent of District Homeless Students scoring Advanced or Proficient	Number of other District Students who took PSSA English Test	Number/Percent of other District Students scoring Advanced or Proficient
3	199	47 (24%)	10,270	3,541 (34%)
4	215	36 (17%)	10,332	3,124 (30%)
5	173	30 (17%)	9,759	2,983 (31%)
6	154	32 (21%)	8,529	3,074 (36%)
7	117	31 (26%)	8,308	3,250 (39%)
8	118	26 (22%)	7,851	2,907 (37%)
Total	976	202 (21%)	55,049	18,879 (34%)

Source: BDW

Homeless students in tenth grade had lower rates of high school grade promotion from 2017-18 to 2018-19 when compared to other District students

SDP high schools have clear policies on what students must accomplish before being promoted to the next grade (compared to "social" promotion in which students are promoted each year regardless of performance). Grade promotion for high school students (from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019) was compared for homeless students who received services to other students in the District (Table 8). At the high school level, students experiencing homelessness are promoted at a similar rate as their peers in 9th and 11th grades but at a lower rate in 10th grade.

Table 8: Homeless Students Advancing to Next Grade Compared to other SDP Students[a]

Grade	Number of Homeless Students	Percent of Homeless Students Promoted to the Next Grade	Percent of Other SDP Students Promoted to the Next Grade
9	172	93.6%	93.8%
10	120	87.5%	94.1%
11	59	93.2%	95.9%

Source: BDW

[a]Students were included in this analysis if they had an SDP enrollment record in both the 2017-2018 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. Grade refers to the student's grade in 2017-2018. Grade 12 is not included in this table as these students would be considered part of a graduation rate rather than grade promotion.

Looking Ahead

ECYEH identified a similar proportion of homeless students in 2017-18 compared to 2016-17. The school district continues to offer services such as enrollment assistance, uniform vouchers and transportation assistance. In addition, the TEEN program continues to be a source of support for a small number of these homeless students. However, even with these supports in place, SDP students identified as homeless continue to lag behind other District students in outcomes of attendance (chronic truancy) and achievement (as measured by standardized tests). ORE will continue to monitor these outcomes and update results for the 2018-19 school year.