



Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in the School District of Philadelphia, Analysis of 2023-24 Data

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Key Findings

- ECYEH identified a larger percentage of students experiencing homelessness in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23.
- Students identified as “doubled up” represented the most frequent living arrangement for those experiencing homelessness.¹
- In addition to having a higher rate of chronic truancy, students identified as experiencing homelessness also scored lower on standardized assessments, had higher rates of suspensions, and had lower rates of graduating on time compared to District students overall.
- ECYEH continued their Teen Evolution Experience Network (TEEN) program and created new partnerships that supported students experiencing homelessness.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) guarantees a free and appropriate public education for all children and youth experiencing homelessness.² To this end, the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (PDE) Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) grant program provides funding to eight regions in Pennsylvania to support students experiencing homelessness.

ECYEH’s priorities include identifying and tracking the number of students experiencing homelessness and providing supports such as school enrollment assistance, uniforms, transportation, other needs such as backpacks and school supplies, and referrals.³ Each year, the Office of Research and Evaluation works collaboratively with the School District of Philadelphia’s ECYEH offices to produce a summary of the ECYEH activities in the District. This brief summarizes activities during the 2023-24 school year.

¹ McKinney-Vento defines homelessness as a lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and thus may include youth who are “doubled up” (i.e., sharing housing with another family).

² See <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/> for more information about the McKinney-Vento Act.

³ See <https://www.philasd.org/studentrights/#homeless> for additional information about programming for students experiencing homelessness.

Research Questions

The following research questions address both the services provided by ECYEH (questions 1-4) and the student outcomes of attendance, achievement, suspensions and graduation rates (questions 5-8):

1. During the 2023-24 school year, did ECYEH approaches result in:
 - a. The identification of school-age students as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2023-24 school year?
 - b. The identification of unaccompanied youth as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2023-24 school year?⁴
2. What was the most common type of living arrangement for students experiencing homelessness?
3. How many students did ECYEH serve in the 2023-24 school year?
 - a. How many students received the following supports: enrollment assistance, uniforms, school supplies, and transportation assistance?
 - b. In the 2023-24 school year, how many students participated in the Teen Evolution Experience Network (TEEN) program?
4. In the 2023-24 school year, to what extent was ECYEH able to implement professional development, training, or awareness opportunities for educators/school personnel, social service agencies, and shelters?
5. How does the percentage of school-age children and youth identified as chronically truant and experiencing homelessness in the 2023-24 school year compare to the percentage of District students identified as chronically truant?
6. How does the percentage of school-age children identified as experiencing homelessness scoring advanced/proficient on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) for Math and English Language Arts (ELA) compare to District students scoring advanced or proficient on these same assessments?
7. How do the suspension rates for school-age children identified as experiencing homelessness compare to District students receiving suspensions?
8. How do graduation rates for school-age children identified as experiencing homelessness compare to graduating District students?

⁴ An “unaccompanied youth” is defined as a child who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Data Sources and Methods

The ECYEH office provided the primary source of information to the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE):

- **ECYEH list of identified students.** ECYEH provided a list that identified students experiencing homelessness at any point during the 2023-24 school year.⁵ The ECYEH office identifies students by several different methods. The District's online enrollment system asks about housing and flags any student who is experiencing homelessness. Additionally, students may be identified by their SDP teachers, counselors, or administrators. Finally, the City of Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services (OHS), SDP offices (including the Office of Early Childhood Education, The Office of Family and Community Engagement, The Office of Student Enrollment and Placement, The Re-Engagement Center, ELECT, and the Transportation Office), and area shelters also provide information to the ECYEH office identifying students experiencing homelessness.

ORE used District administrative data to generate descriptive information about student attendance, achievement, and suspensions.

Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness

ECYEH identified 7,481 students as experiencing homelessness in the 2023-24 school year (Table 1), which is a higher percentage of students than were identified in the previous school year (Table 2). The actual number of students experiencing homelessness is most likely higher, due to the challenging nature of identifying this particular population.

⁵ The number of students that ECYEH identifies and is presented here differs from the total number reported by the state for Philadelphia (Region 1) because other reporting agencies (e.g., the City of Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services (OHS) and charter schools) provide numbers directly to the state, which are then combined with the numbers provided by ECYEH. For example, there may be a child living in a shelter who ECYEH never works with so they are not on the ECYEH list, but they are on the list that the Office of Homeless Services submits, so the state counts them as Region 1. While the Office of Homeless Services and charter schools report their numbers directly to the state, ECYEH does service some of these students directly, and those students are therefore included in this report. ECYEH serves all of these children indirectly through their work with shelter and charter school staff.

Table 1. Students identified as experiencing homelessness at any point during 2023-24

Category ^a	Number of Identified Students
District Students ^b	5,336
Charter Students ^c	690
Not yet school-aged (0-5 year olds)	1,135
Other Students Identified ^d	320
Total	7,481

Source: Data file provided by ECYEH office merged with information from the SDP's Student Information System (SIS)

^a Categories are based on final day of enrollment recorded.

^b The total number of District students includes students in alternative and special education schools. These students are excluded from attendance and achievement analyses.

^c This number does not include certain charter schools that did not report to ECYEH and that were not included in below analyses but were identified by the ECYEH Region 1 office.

^d "Other students identified" includes students without IDs, students who could not be located in the SIS, or students enrolled in cyber charter schools. These students may be in private school, awaiting enrollment, or unenrolled. All "other students identified" were excluded from analyses that used SDP data.

Table 2. Percentage of students identified as experiencing homelessness during the 2023-24 school year compared to the 2022-23 school year

Population	N (2022-23)	N (2023-24)
Students experiencing homelessness enrolled in District or charter schools	4,867	6,026
Total District & charter enrollment ^a	197,228	197,115
Percentage of total enrollment represented by students experiencing homelessness	2.5%	3.1%

Source: 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.

The majority of District and charter school students identified as experiencing homelessness were Black/African American (3,385 out of 6,026 students; Table 3). About an equal proportion were male and female (Table 4), and the grade level with the highest number of identified students was grade 9 (Table 5).

Table 3. Race/ethnicity of District and charter students identified as experiencing homelessness

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness
Black/African American	3,385
Hispanic/Latinx	1,695
White	438
Multi-Racial/Other	174
Asian	316
American Indian/Alaskan Native	11
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	6
Unknown	1
Total	6,026

Source: ECYEH data files for identified students and Total Student Enrollment Yearly (pulled August 28, 2024) for student race/ethnicity

Table 4. Gender of District and charter students identified as experiencing homelessness

Gender	Number of Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness
Male	3,073
Female	2,950
Non-Binary	3
Total	6,026

Source: ECYEH data files for identified students and Total Student Enrollment Yearly (pulled August 28, 2024) for student gender

Table 5. Grade of District and charter students identified as experiencing homelessness

Grade	Number of Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness
K	520
1	522
2	492
3	433
4	436
5	434
6	407
7	397
8	394
9	734
10	462
11	367
12	428
Total	6,026

Source: ECYEH data files for identified students and Total Student Enrollment Yearly (pulled August 28, 2024) for student grade level

“Doubled up” was the most frequent living arrangement for students identified as experiencing homelessness in the 2023-24 school year.

A majority of K-12 students identified as experiencing homelessness during the 2023-24 school year were doubled up (Table 6).

Table 6. Students experiencing homelessness by living arrangement

Living Arrangement	K-12 Students Experiencing Homelessness		Children Experiencing Homelessness, Ages 0-5	
	Number of students	% of identified students experiencing homelessness ^a	Number of students	% of identified students experiencing homelessness ^b
Doubled up	4,577	72%	746	66%
Shelter/transitional	1,532	24%	355	31%
Unaccompanied	865	14%	21	2%
Other/hotel	77	1%	2	<1%
Unsheltered	160	3%	32	3%

Source: Data file provided by the ECYEH office

^a Percentages are out of the 6,346 students identified in Table 1 as SDP, Charter, and ‘Other.’ Students may fall into more than one category of living arrangement.

^b Percentages are out of the 1,135 students identified in Table 1 as children ages 0-5. In this group, ECYEH generally provides referrals to other services such as Early Intervention and housing support.

ECYEH Initiatives

In 2023-24, 29% of the K-12 students identified as experiencing homelessness received enrollment assistance.

Students' enrollment cannot be denied or delayed due to lacking proof of residency under the McKinney-Vento Act. When a school requests a verified address for enrollment, ECYEH provides a verification form to the school for students experiencing homelessness, ensuring the enrollment of these children. In 2023-24, ECYEH staff continued to work with parents and students to assist with enrollment paperwork, either in person or via phone. ECYEH staff 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 2023-24 school year, 1,742 students (29% of K-12 students identified as experiencing homelessness) received assistance with enrollment.

In 2023-24, a slightly lower percentage of students experiencing homelessness received uniform vouchers and transportation assistance.

In addition to other supports, the ECYEH office provides uniform vouchers and transportation assistance. In 2023-24, 30% of K-12 and 0-5 year old students who were identified as experiencing homelessness received uniform vouchers. This is a decrease from 38% in the 2022-23⁶ school year (Table 7).

Because transportation to and from school can be a major challenge for students experiencing homelessness, the ECYEH office works with the Office of Transportation and the school counselor to provide transportation in the form of either a SEPTA key card, a school bus, or a cab. The percentage of students experiencing homelessness that received transportation assistance was slightly lower in 2023-24 at 13%, compared to 14% in 2022-23 (Table 7).

Table 7. Services provided by the ECYEH program in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years

Service	2022-23		2023-24	
	Number of identified K-12 students who received service	% of identified K-12 students who received service	Number of identified K-12 students who received service	% of identified K-12 students who received service
Uniform vouchers (0-5 year-olds & K-12 students)	2,254	38%	2,143	30%
Transportation assistance ^a (K-12 students)	685	14%	807	13%

Source: Data file provided by the ECYEH office

⁶ For previous years' reports see: <https://www.philasd.org/research/category/equity/>

In the 2023-24 school year, ECYEH led 69 Professional Development (PD) sessions and 52 technical assistance sessions for school staff, and held 69 external event collaborations.

ECYEH provided professional development to school staff, central office staff, and providers around the McKinney-Vento Act. Sessions emphasized the prevalence of homelessness in Philadelphia and outlined the types of assistance available to students experiencing homelessness. In the 2023-24 school year, EYCEH held 69 PD trainings that reached a total of 2,627 attendees.

Additional Initiatives

The ECYEH program office implemented a number of additional initiatives designed to support students during the 2023-24 school year.

TEEN Program

The Teen Evolution Experience Network or TEEN Program provides extra support to high school students experiencing homelessness with an interest in learning about career readiness and post-secondary education options. The TEEN program provides both one-on-one and group support. Students can earn stipends for attending groups. TEEN programming focuses on professional development, college preparation, and life skills. The program helps students develop socially and emotionally by offering them both basic personal development skills and interpersonal skills. The program also provides a variety of field trips. TEEN also provides assistance with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for students exploring a post-secondary option. In the 2023-24 school year, 25 students between the ages of 14-18 participated in at least one TEEN activity. A year-end celebration recognized the students who participated and highlighted the graduating seniors.

Partnerships

ECYEH expanded its capacity to support additional students/families during the 2023-24 school year using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding, as well as contracted partners. These partners include community agencies such as Valley Youth House, HopePHL, and Eddie's House. Additionally, ECYEH contracts with the City of Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services (OHS) to staff a Liaison who provides McKinney-Vento support to students/families upon entering the shelter system. The additional partnerships with the community agencies, the OHS Liaison, and increased ECYEH staff were likely all contributing factors to the increase in the identification and support of students experiencing homelessness.

Partnership highlights from the 2023-24 school year include:

- A partnership with the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Prevention and Intervention to help support their initiative Camp Akili and to prioritize slots to students experiencing homelessness. Camp Akili is an overnight camp for children ages 14-18 rooted in culture and healing.

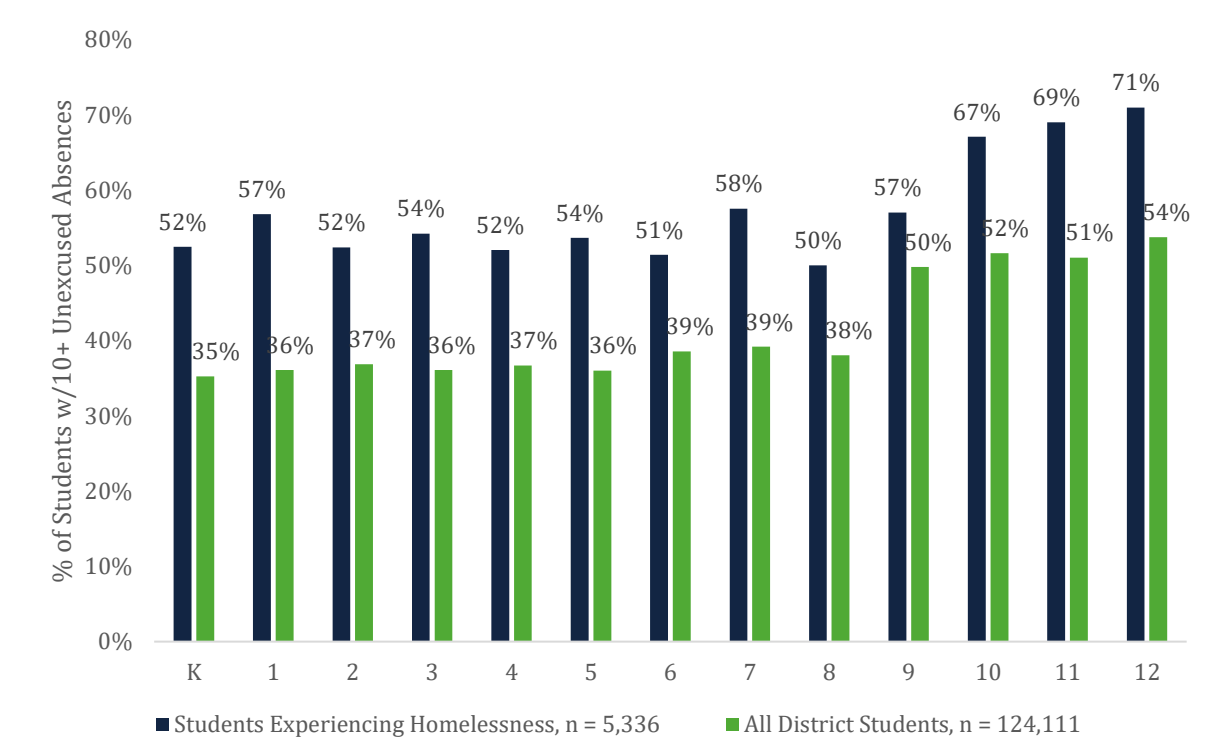
- Continued partnerships with organizations to help support students in need, including: Undies for Everyone (supplying underwear), The Auto Dealers Association of Greater Philadelphia (supplying coats), and Just4People (supplying Bombas socks).
- A new partnership with Soles for Souls to supply new brand-name sneakers for students.

Attendance and Achievement

A higher percentage of students identified as experiencing homelessness were chronically truant compared to District students as a whole.

After ten or more unexcused absences, students in SDP are considered chronically truant and may receive a citation for the District’s Truancy Court. In the 2023-24 school year, the percentage of students experiencing homelessness in the District with ten or more unexcused absences was 57%, compared to 40% for all District students. Similar to previous years, the highest percentage of truancy for both the District overall and students experiencing homelessness was in 12th grade (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Chronic truancy: Students experiencing homelessness compared to the overall District truancy rate by grade, 2023-24



Source: Total Student Enrollment Yearly for students experiencing homelessness and Qlik Climate Matter App for District students

Note: The ‘n’ refers to the total number of children experiencing homelessness or the number of District students.

In 2023-24, students identified as experiencing homelessness had lower rates of proficiency on standardized tests compared to District students.

Across all grades that take the PSSA in both math and ELA (grades 3-8), fewer students experiencing homelessness scored advanced or proficient on the PSSA exam than other District students (Tables 8 and 9). This is consistent with prior research.⁷

Table 8. 2023-24 PSSA ELA proficiency rates for grades 3-8 students experiencing homelessness and District students overall

Grade	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness Who Took PSSA ELA Test	Number/Percentage of Students Experiencing Homelessness Scoring Advanced or Proficient n (%)	Number of District Students Who Took PSSA ELA Test	Number/Percentage of District Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient n (%)
3	209	34 (16%)	7,729	2,662 (34%)
4	205	29 (14%)	7,990	2,419 (30%)
5	203	33 (16%)	7,984	2,559 (32%)
6	192	33 (17%)	7,489	2,560 (34%)
7	205	46 (22%)	7,454	2,851 (38%)
8	183	30 (16%)	7,551	2,658 (35%)
Total	1,197	205 (17%)	46,197	15,709 (34%)

Source: Report Library PSSA and Keystone Dashboard for students experiencing homelessness and Qlik PSSA & Keystone app for District rates

Note: Does not include charters. Students identified as experiencing homelessness are also included in the overall District rates.

⁷ 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 9. 2023-24 PSSA Math proficiency rates for grades 3-8 students experiencing homelessness and District students

Grade	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness Who Took PSSA Math Test	Number/Percentage of Students Experiencing Homelessness Scoring Advanced or Proficient n (%)	Number of District Students Who Took PSSA Math Test	Number/Percentage of District Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient n (%)
3	233	29 (23%)	8,126	2,155 (27%)
4	240	27 (11%)	8,395	2,085 (25%)
5	227	12 (5%)	8,279	1,689 (20%)
6	222	12 (5%)	7,784	1,434 (18%)
7	223	10 (4%)	7,740	1,444 (19%)
8	199	4 (2%)	7,832	1,333 (17%)
Total	1,344	94 (7%)	48,156	10,140 (21%)

Source: Total Student Enrollment Yearly for students experiencing homelessness and Qlik PSSA & Keystone app for District rates

Note: Does not include charters. Students experiencing homelessness are also included in the overall District rates.

A larger percentage of students experiencing homelessness were suspended compared to District students.

We examined the number and percentage of students who experienced at least one out-of-school suspension in the 2023-24 school year. Across all grades 3-12, a larger number of students experiencing homelessness were suspended compared to District students (Table 10).⁸

Table 10. Suspension rates for students identified as experiencing homelessness compared to District students overall

Grade	Number of District Students Experiencing Homelessness	Number/Percentage of District Students Experiencing Homelessness Who Had at Least One Suspension n (%)	Number of District Students	Number/Percentage of District Students Who Had at Least One Suspension n (%)
3	393	16 (4%)	9,139	176 (2%)
4	390	29 (7%)	9,472	349 (4%)
5	384	29 (8%)	9,311	434 (5%)
6	358	53 (15%)	8,851	783 (9%)
7	339	37 (11%)	8,845	998 (11%)
8	348	50 (14%)	8,891	1,053 (12%)
9	670	70 (10%)	11,067	1,460 (13%)
10	413	62 (15%)	10,917	1,141 (10%)
11	332	33 (10%)	9,612	636 (7%)
12	334	25 (7%)	9,576	458 (5%)
Total	3,961	404 (10%)	95,681	7,488 (6%)

Source: Total Student Enrollment Yearly for students experiencing homelessness and Qlik Climate Matters app for District rates

Note: Does not include charters. Students experiencing homelessness are also included in the overall District rates.

⁸ Suspensions are not given out in grades K-2 unless the behavior results in serious bodily injury.

In 2023-24, students experiencing homelessness graduated at a lower rate than other District students.

A student is an on-time graduate if they graduate after four years in high school. In 2023-24, students experiencing homelessness had a lower on-time graduation rate compared to other District students (Table 11).⁹

Table 11. 2023-24 Graduation Rates of Students Experiencing Homelessness and District students

Number of District Students Experiencing Homelessness (19-20 9 th Grade Cohort)	Number/Percentage of District Students Experiencing Homelessness Who Graduated n (%)	Number of District Students (19-20 9 th Grade Cohort)	Number/Percentage of District Students Who Graduated n (%)
260	182 (70%)	9,327	7,230 (78%)

Source: Total Student Enrollment Yearly for students experiencing homelessness and Qlik Graduation and College Enrollment app for District rates
Note: Does not include charters. Students experiencing homelessness are also included in the overall District rates.

Conclusions

ECYEH identified a larger proportion of students experiencing homelessness in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23, with a majority of identified students living as “doubled up.” In terms of services, over one-quarter of the students experiencing homelessness received enrollment assistance, almost one-third received uniform vouchers, and a smaller percentage received transportation assistance. Both the TEEN program and new and continuing community partnerships provided additional support for students.

ECYEH also provided professional development to school staff, central office staff, and providers around the McKinney-Vento Act, reaching over 2,000 participants. Such sessions emphasized the prevalence of homelessness in Philadelphia and outlined the types of assistance available to students experiencing homelessness.

Even with many supports in place, however, District students identified as experiencing homelessness continue to have higher chronic truancy rates and suspension rates and lower standardized test scores and graduation rates than District students overall. ECYEH continues to improve systems and relationships in order to increase identification and support for these students each year.

⁹ For briefs and reports about SDP graduation rates, how they are defined, and research related to graduation see: <https://www.philasd.org/research/category/college-career/high-school-graduation/>