THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program Services and Student Outcomes, 2016-2017[1]

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Summary of Key Findings:

- ECYEH identified a similar proportion of homeless students in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16
- Most students identified as homeless are living in shelters or "doubled up"
- Similar to 2015-16, enrollment assistance, uniform vouchers, and transportation assistance are still critical services for students identified as homeless
- Homeless students responded similarly to non-homeless students on questions related to school climate on the District-wide Survey
- 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.

Research Questions

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. The research questions address both the services provided by ECYEH as well as student outcomes including attendance, perception of school climate, and academic achievement.

1. How many students did the ECYEH office identify as homeless during the 2016-17 school year?

2. To what extent did the ECYEH office provide transportation assistance, uniform vouchers, and enrollment assistance to students during the 2016-17 school year?

3. How did students identified as homeless at any point in 2016-17 compare to other School District of Philadelphia (SDP) students in terms of attendance and perception of school climate?

[1] See also the SDP Research Brief entitled: "Qualitative Feedback on the Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program Activities, 2016-2017" for additional programmatic information.

4. Is there an achievement gap between homeless students and their housed peers as measured by the following indicators:
    a. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the PSSA Math and English assessments
    b. The percentage of students who are promoted to the next grade

Methods

The ECYEH office provided the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) with information about students identified as homeless at any point during the 2016-17 school year. Student ID numbers from this list were used to retrieve data on student attendance and achievement from the District's Business Data Warehouse (BDW). Results from the 2016-17 District-wide survey were used as the measure of student perceptions of school climate.

What We Found

A similar proportion of students were identified as homeless in the 2016-17 school year compared to the 2015-16 school year

In 2016-17, the ECYEH office continued to identify homeless students using several different methods. Parents or guardians identified students by requesting services directly from the ECYEH office. Similarly, SDP teachers, counselors, and administrators also identified students. The City of Philadelphia's Office of Supportive Housing, SDP's Office of Early Childhood, and area shelters also provided information to the ECYEH office identifying homeless students. Despite these multiple efforts at identification and more than 3,300 students identified, we expect that the actual number of homeless students is still higher than presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students Identified as Homeless in the 2016-2017 School Year

Category	Number of Identified Students[a]
SDP Students [b]	2,446
Charter Students	437
Not yet school-aged (0-5 year olds)	228
Other Students Identified [c]	202
Total	3,313[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 20, 2017 (the end of the 2016-17 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 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 6,583.*

The ECYEH office identified a similar proportion of students as homeless during the 2016-17 school year compared to the 2015-16 school year (Table 2).

Table 2: A Similar Proportion of Students were Identified as Homeless During the 2015-2016 School Year

Population	N (2015-2016)	N (2016-2017)
Identified SDP & Charter Homeless Enrollment	3,329	2,883
Total SDP & Charter Enrollment[a]	202,751	201,594
Percent of Total Enrollment Represented by Homeless Students	1.6%	1.4%

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 Schools

Most of the students identified as homeless in 2016-17 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[2]. 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). Most K-12 students identified as homeless during the 2016-17 school year were doubled up (50%) or living in shelters (45%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Homeless Students by Living Arrangement

Living Arrangement	Total K-12 Students[a] N (%)*	Total 0-5 Children N (%)
Doubled up	1,558 (50%)	85 (37%)
Shelter	1,411 (45%)	141 (61%)
Transitional	55 (1%)	2(<1%)
Unaccompanied	113 (3%)	NA
Other/hotel	14 (<1%)	0

Source: Data file provided by the ECYEH office.
[a]Percentages are out of the number of students identified.
[b]Students identified as transitional may also be identified in another category.

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[2] 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 2016-17 required enrollment assistance

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, students' enrollment cannot be denied or delayed due to a lack in proof of residency; however there are schools that insist on a verified address. In such situations, ECYEH works to ensure that these children can still be enrolled by providing a homeless verification form to the school. In 2016-17, 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, and shelters are able assist in this process by providing a letter of residency for families. In the 2016-17 school year, 918 (30% of K-12 students identified as homeless) received assistance with enrollment.

Nearly 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 2016-17, 49% of K-12 students who were identified as homeless received uniform vouchers (Table 4).

Because transportation can 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. Fifteen percent of students identified as homeless received transportation assistance in the 2016-17 school year (Table 4).

Table 4: Services Provided by the ECYEH Program in SY 2015-16 and SY 2016-17

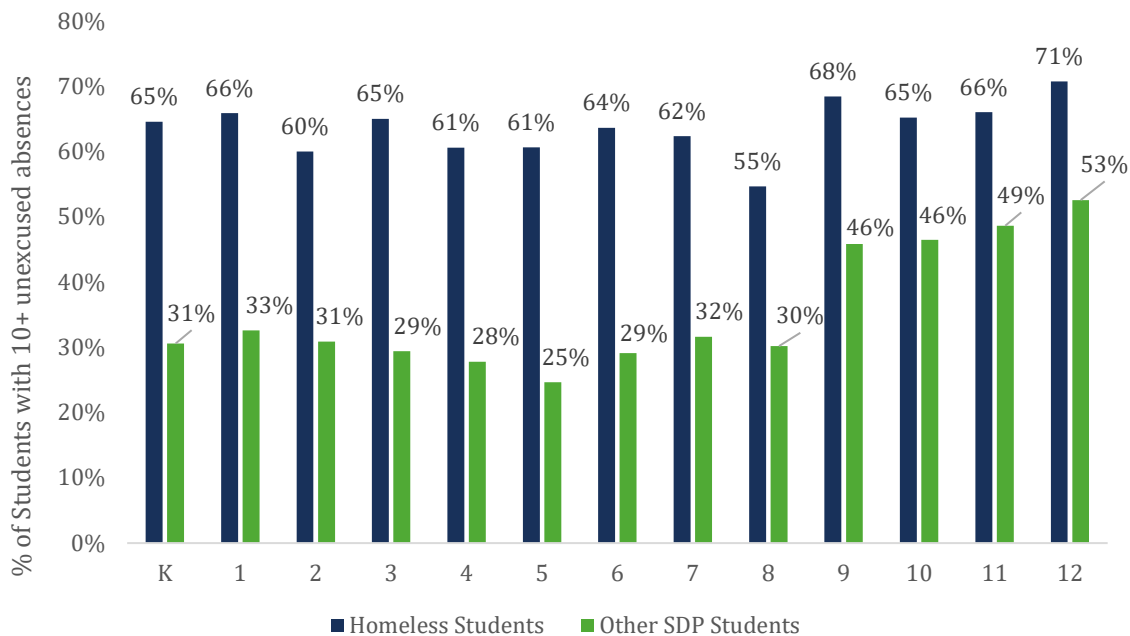| Service	2015-16		2016-17	
	Number of identified students who received service	Percentage of identified K-12 students who received service	Number of identified students who received service	Percentage of identified K-12 students who received service
Uniform vouchers	1,516	46%	1,517	49%
Transportation assistance[a]	1,167	35%	450	15%

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.

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. Overall, the percentage of homeless students in the District with ten or more unexcused absences in the 2016-17 school year was 62%, compared to 38% of other District students. Similar to other District students, among homeless-identified students, there was a higher percentage of chronic truancy in the high school grades as compared to elementary grades (see Figure 1). Although transportation assistance for homeless students was available to improve attendance rates, 68% of homeless students who received transportation assistance were chronically truant. This may highlight the various challenges that homeless students face in addition to transportation.

Figure 1: Chronic Truancy: Homeless Students Compared to SDP Students by Grade

Homeless students respond similarly to other District students on questions related to school climate on the District-wide Survey

Students' sense of belonging in school is associated with their engagement, academic achievement, and psychological well-being[3];[4]). As a measure of homeless students' perception of their school climate, we examined looked at results from SDP's District-wide Survey. The school climate "construct" is a collection of questions that ask about bullying, safety, and belonging. The climate

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[3] Goodenow, C., (1993). Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: Relationships to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 13*, 21-43.

[4] Anderman, E. M. (2002). School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*, 795-809.

construct is scored on a 0-3 scale with '0' indicating that the respondents perceive that there is very poor climate and '3' indicating that respondents perceive that the school has very good climate. Similar to results in the 2015-16 school year, homeless students responded slightly less positively than other District students. However, this difference is small when compared to the differences seen in other outcomes such as chronic truancy and standardized test scores (Table 5).

Table 5: Student Climate Response Scores on SDP's District-wide Survey

Homeless Students Climate Score	District-wide Student Climate Score
2.17 (N=789)	2.32 (N=71,791)

Homeless students had lower rates of proficiency on standardized tests compared to other District students in 2016-17

Across all grades for both math and English, fewer homeless students scored Advanced or Proficient on the PSSAs than other District students (see Tables 6 and 7). This is consistent with prior research.[5]

Table 6: 2016-17 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 District Students who took PSSA Math Test	Number/Percent of SDP Students scoring Advanced or Proficient N (%)
3	237	27 (11%)	10,763	2,389 (22%)
4	201	9 (4%)	10,518	1,677(16%)
5	184	10 (5%)	9,551	1,581(17%)
6	147	2 (1%)	8,450	1,418 (17%)
7	121	4 (3%)	8,180	1,538 (19%)
8	109	2 (2%)	7,628	1,157 (15%)
Total	999	54 (5%)	55,090	9,760 (18%)

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[5] 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 7: 2016-17 PSSA English Proficiency Rates for Grades 3-8 Homeless and other District Students

Grade	Number of Homeless Students who took PSSA English Test	Number/Percent of Homeless Students scoring Advanced or Proficient	Number of District Students who took PSSA English Test	Number/Percent of District Students scoring Advanced or Proficient
3	214	44 (21%)	10,521	3,613 (34%)
4	175	35 (20%)	10,328	3,059 (30%)
5	160	24 (15%)	9,375	2,856 (30%)
6	136	23 (17%)	8,339	2,925 (35%)
7	112	18 (16%)	8,082	2,804 (35%)
8	96	18 (16%)	7,600	2,475 (33%)
Total	893	162 (18%)	54,245	17,732 (33%)

Homeless students had lower rates of high school grade promotion from 2016-17 to 2017-18 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 (from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018) was compared for homeless students who received services to other students in the District for high school grades only (Table 8). At the high school level, students experiencing homelessness are not promoted at the same rate as their peers. The difference for 2016-17 to 2017-18 is especially large in the case of 11th graders (14.7).

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	226	90.7%	91.6%
10	88	80.7%	90.9%
11	68	77.9%	92.6%

Source: BDW December 2017
[a]Students were included in this analysis if they had an SDP enrollment record in both the 2016-2017 school year and the 2017-2018 school year. Grade refers to the student's grade in 2016-2017. Grade 12 is not included in this table as these students would be considered part of a graduation rate rather than grade promotion, which may be considered as part of a future brief.

Looking Ahead

ECYEH identified a similar proportion of homeless students in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16, and continues to offer services that homeless students use such as uniform vouchers and transportation assistance. Students identified as homeless in the District continue to lag behind other District students in outcomes of attendance (chronic truancy) and achievement (as measured by

standardized tests). However, District- wide survey results indicate both groups of students to have similar perceptions of school climate. ORE will continue to update these results for the 2017-18 school year.