

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE MCKINNEY HOMELESS CHILDREN EDUCATION PROGRAM: 2006-07

At-a-Glance

The McKinney Homeless Children Education Program was designed to create and provide enrichment and support services to homeless children and their families. It also advocates on behalf of homeless families by educating staff and community about their responsibilities to the homeless, and about the rights and issues of homeless children, youth, and their parents. The program manager and counselor coordinate the program. Student interns and teacher/intern supervisors also help the children of homeless families. The interns are Dallas Independent School District students who were hired through the cooperative education programs at Skyline High School and Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center to work with children who live in homeless shelters and attend district schools. A student intern's teacher/intern supervisor and the program manager must approve an application before a student is hired. Student interns tutor homeless children and help with other school-related issues. They also serve as role models and sources of information for homeless children. Regular district teachers and intern supervisors teach in the homeless education program. Case managers employed by homeless shelters assist homeless families with such concerns as purchasing medicines, receiving dental care, and obtaining a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Evaluation Methodology

The 2006-07 evaluation's focus was to survey student interns, teacher/intern supervisors, and case managers about the program, examine the program's strengths and weaknesses, and recommend improvements. The evaluator analyzed and reported the survey data.

Budget and Expenditures

The program's budget for the 2006-2007 school year was \$270,000. Staff salaries, program training, and instructional materials accounted for the largest expenditure categories. The budget allocated \$3,000 for the program's evaluation.

Survey Findings

A total of 33 respondents (22 student interns, 2 teacher/intern supervisors, and 11 case

managers/service providers) completed the surveys for the 2006-2007 school year.

The majority (55%) of the respondents were African Americans, followed by Hispanics (27%), Whites (15%), and Asian Americans (3%). Most of the respondents were females.

Student Interns

- The interns said they were assigned duties directly related to the homeless students' needs.
- They said that besides getting along well with the homeless students, they also helped them deal with life's problems.
- The interns said they were emotionally mature enough to help with the homeless students' problems.
- Interns found their work with the homeless students personally rewarding.
- Interns said they exhibited empathy for the homeless students with whom they worked.
- Three interns said their work with the homeless students had made them (interns) control their (interns') emotions and understand and listen to others' problems.
- Most of the interns said they felt happy knowing they had made positive differences in the lives of the students they served.
- They also said they had seen some of the problems that withhold people from pursuing better futures for themselves.
- The interns said most of the kids they worked with became emotionally attached to them (interns).
- Student interns felt that their work had positively impacted the homeless students they served.
- Interns suggested that middle and high school principals/registrars should be more

compassionate and flexible with new clients/students especially those who failed to enroll during the second or third visits.

Teacher/Intern Supervisor

- The teacher/intern supervisors said their interns were adequately trained for the duties the school staff asked them to perform.
- The teacher/intern supervisors said the interns made their work more personally rewarding.
- Teacher/intern supervisors said that the interns performed their duties satisfactorily.
- The majority of teacher/intern supervisors and student interns said the teachers and administrators at their schools supported them in their work with the homeless.
- Teacher/intern supervisors recommended that each Dallas ISD school that implements the Homeless Education Program should have a Homeless Education Program liaison and an after-school program for program students.

Case managers

- The majority (80%) of the case managers considered the program-related meetings productive.
- Most (90%) of the case managers said they had enough time to meet individually with the Homeless Education Program manager before or after program meetings.
- The majority of the case managers found the program, the schools, and the Dallas ISD administration responsive to the needs of the children and families they served.
- The case managers suggested that the services that would be most useful to the families they served included: after –school activities, more program funding, on-site counseling, transportation, bus passes, summer camps, and the observation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education rules at all district schools. .