EVALUATION OF THE MCKINNEY HOMELESS CHILDREN EDUCATION PROGRAM: 2008-09

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At-A-Glance

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B-Education for Homeless Children and Youth), ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. It defines the term “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

In accordance with this act and No Child Left Behind, Title X, the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) responded with the Homeless Education Program to provide services to homeless children and youth that are comparable to services provided to other students in the school district. The goals and objectives of the Homeless Education Program are reflected in the mission statement: to create and provide enriching and supportive programming for homeless children and their families; to advocate on behalf of homeless children by educating staff and the community about their responsibilities; and the rights and issues of homeless children, youth, and their families.

The Dallas ISD enrolled children or youth experiencing homelessness regardless of where the child, either parent, the child’s legal guardian, or any other person having lawful custody resided. According to the child or youth’s best interest, they had the option of enrolling in their “school of origin” (school attended when permanently housed) or in the public school of the attendance area where they were currently residing. Enrollment could not be denied nor delayed, even if unaccompanied youths (living without parents or guardians) attempted to enroll on their own behalf or required documents could not be provided at the time of enrollment. All students were given 30 days after enrollment to provide the necessary documents. Homeless children and youths were eligible for the following programs:

- free-and reduced lunch program,
- Pre-Kindergarten program,
- programs for at-risk students, and
- Title I, Part A services.

The Homeless Education Program staff (program manager and a counselor) worked in conjunction with the Psychological Services Department, coordinating efforts with psychologists, visiting teachers, and social workers to provide services to homeless students.

The Homeless Education Program provided the following services.

- A continuum of care for homeless students throughout the district that facilitates smoother transitions by facilitating immediate enrollment in all Dallas ISD schools and by expediting transportation to school of origin.
- Supportive programs that included academic tutoring, homework assistance, and enrichment activities at two elementary schools (City Park and Arlington Park), and eight shelters (Center of Hope, Dallas Life Foundation, Genesis, Family Place, Interfaith, Mosaic, Nexus, Salvation Army).
- Transportation for homeless students to their school of origin upon request.
- TEKS aligned enrichment programs during Winter, Spring, and Summer camps for all family shelters in Dallas.
- The program counselor, using the Texas Education Agency Model for School Counseling, assisted students districtwide with academic concerns, abuse or neglect, grief and loss, family issues, and coping with stress. The counseling program also helped students manage with school transitions.
- Districtwide training sessions on issues concerning the homeless for counselors, principals, visiting teachers, and registrars.
- General Education Diploma (GED) and adult literacy classes for homeless parents. Informational parent workshops were also offered at shelters regarding their rights, the rights of the children, and district and community resources.
- Communication and coordination of services through monthly case managers’ meetings, sponsored by the program manager for shelters and community agencies serving homeless students.

A total of 4,486 homeless students were enrolled in Dallas ISD schools. Of these, 1,347 students in grades Pk-12 were served through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of all McKinney-Vento students were African American, 56% were Hispanic, and 6% were White. The total number of male and female students was approximately the same for
McKinney-Vento and temporary arrangement students (homeless, not served McKinney-Vento). Twenty-five percent (25%) of McKinney-Vento students were classified as limited English proficient (LEP) and 8% were special education students, compared to temporary arrangement students, where 36% were LEP and 7% were special education. More McKinney-Vento students were served in grade nine as compared to other grade levels.

**Budget and Expenditures**

The Homeless Education Program received $226,000 from McKinney-Vento funds and $147,000 from Title I. Expenditures included salaries, contracts for professional and enrichment services, materials and supplies, and other operating expenses.

**Attendance**

Due to the transient nature of the homeless population, some students were enrolled for a short time, while others attended school for the whole year. For students enrolled less than 70 days, temporary arrangement students had higher rates of attendance than McKinney-Vento students. However, McKinney Vento students enrolled more than 106 days had higher attendance rates than temporary arrangement students. Approximately 74% of McKinney-Vento and 81% of temporary arrangement students were enrolled at least 106 days.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of all homeless students were enrolled in middle schools, 70% of whom were enrolled more than 141 days. The overall result was that McKinney-Vento students had a higher percent attendance rate in middle schools than temporary arrangement students when enrolled 106 or more days.

Thirty percent (30%) of temporary arrangement and 11% of the McKinney-Vento students were enrolled in high school. Both temporary arrangement and McKinney-Vento students had similar attendance rates.

**Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)**

McKinney-Vento and temporary arrangement students were tested with the TAKS Reading and Mathematics tests. Overall, temporary arrangement students performed at a slightly higher level on TAKS Reading than McKinney-Vento students, while the opposite was true for TAKS Mathematics.

Figure 1 presents TAKS Reading scale score ranges; met standard (≥ 2,100), TEA college readiness (≥ 2,200), Just For Kids college readiness (≥ 2,300), and Commended (≥ 2,400), for both McKinney-Vento and temporary arrangement students. Eighty percent (80%) temporary arrangement and 79% McKinney-Vento students had scale scores of 2,100 or greater on the TAKS Reading test. Forty-eight percent (48%) of temporary arrangement and 45% of McKinney-Vento students had scale scores of 2,200 or greater. Twenty-five percent (25%) of temporary arrangement and 27% of McKinney-Vento students had scale scores of 2,300 or greater, while 15% of temporary arrangement and 17% of McKinney-Vento students reached Commended level.

In mathematics 60% of temporary arrangement and 63% of McKinney-Vento students had scale scores of 2,100 or greater. Thirty-five percent (35%) of temporary arrangement and 38% of McKinney-Vento students had scale scores of 2,200 or greater. Twenty percent (20%) of temporary arrangement and 21% of McKinney-Vento students had scale scores of 2,300 or greater, while 14% of temporary arrangement and 16% of McKinney-Vento students reached Commended level.

**Recommendation**

Efforts should be made to improve the data collection process in order to report the most accurate information about the district’s homeless student population.
For more information refer to program evaluation report EA09-191-3 at:
www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/