

Duluth Public Schools Families in Transition Program

The Mission of Duluth Schools Homeless Education Program is to prevent students who are experiencing homelessness from losing ground academically through the creation of choices that promote healthy attachments between kids, family, schools, and community. The program accomplishes this by facilitating enrollment, attendance and academic success of homeless school aged children. We also collaborate with the Duluth District Head Start program that assists homeless birth to age five children.

The 2010-2011 School Year

- 419 children were identified as homeless in Duluth Public Schools under the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless. This includes children as young as 0-2, preschool students, and youth working toward their GED.
- 208 (49%) were male students, 211 (51%) were female students
- 169 students (42%) were White, 118 students (28%) were African American , 126 students (30%) were Native American
- 9% of the students were residing in a shelter in Duluth and attended a Charter School in Duluth or were transported back to their school of origin in another district.
- 72% of the students were residing in a shelter, 18% were doubled up with friends or family members, 9% were staying at a hotel, and 6% were unaccompanied youth.
- 63% of the students identified as seniors graduated or received their GED.

Grade Levels of students identified in Duluth as homeless:

- Preschool 115 (27%)
- Kindergarten 28 (7%)
- Grades 1-5 104 (25%)
- Grades 6-8 69 (16%)
- Grades 9-12 92 (22%)
- Other 11 (3%)

Support Services the Program provides:

- Enrollment and expedited registration assistance
- Transportation to school appointments and after school meetings
- Coordination of transportation to the school of origin
- Assistance with school supplies, clothing referrals, and community referrals
- Connecting students to afterschool programs and activities
- Tutoring and academic support- A full time teacher at Nettleton to offer academic and parent support
- Professional Development to school staff
- Parenting education offered at a community housing site

Program highlights

- Hired a parent educator to support parents at a local housing agency
- Involved with state, county and local events: the Project Homeless Connect Event, Wilder Homeless count and local Point in Time counts of homeless families and youth
- Coordinate the Back to School Fair where 700 backpacks are distributed--school and community information is available to families on that day
- Participate on the Affordable Housing Coalition which guides the County Plan to end Homelessness

In accordance to the aim of the McKinney-Vento Act, Duluth Public Schools and the Families in Transition program has developed strategic goals, activities, with anticipated outcomes to assist all homeless students in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school.

Enrollment Goal:

- 80% of all students referred were enrolled at a school within two days
- Transportation arrangements were coordinated for 95% of students at shelters, transitional housing programs and families doubled up and in motels.
- Two district wide in-service opportunities were provide, three building trainings, and we presented along with Duluth Head Start staff at a MDE state wide training for Head Start, school and community staff on supporting homeless families.
- Posters and brochures are distributed annually to schools and community agencies.

Attendance Goal:

- 72% of our students were in compliance with the district attendance policy.
- 92% of parents with school age children who participated in the “Spirit of Mothering” support groups at a transitional housing program attended three school activities and 70% of all parents in the group wanted individual weekly home visits by the parent educator.

Academic Goal:

In elementary on average, 1-5 benchmarks in reading (using both oral reading and comprehension raw scores) and math (using the raw score available: computation) show students who were present for fall and spring testing made gains in their raw scores from fall to spring. These gains when averaged well exceeded our goal of 3% growth towards a goal of proficiency in reading and math. Kindergarten results, in reading using clay and dolch scores and in math yielded similar results, a net gain greater than anticipated. At Nettleton where we have a teacher to provide push in or pull out instructional support students made greater gains in raw scores than the other schools except in oral reading.

GRADE	3	4	5	6	7	8
MCA I IREADING	7/16	12/26	9/12	3/15	6/12	8/14
MCA III MATH	8/16	7/25	1/11	2/14	2/11	2/12
MCA II SCIENCE			2/13			1/16
MTAS READING		2/25	1/2	1/2		1/1
MTAS MATH III		1/2	2/2	1/2		
MTAS SCIENCE			1/2			1/1

Maintaining community connections and involvement allows us to partner with agencies to identify and support homeless families and youth. This partnering also assures that we as a community can assess and address barriers prohibiting the healthy development of children and youth.