

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 2011-2012 School Year

482 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.

Of the 341 school age students K-12:

- 186 (55%) were male students, 155 (45%) were female students
- 139 students (41%) were White, 111 students (33%) were African American , 85 students (25%) were Native American and 6 students (1%) were Hispanic
- 8% 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.
- 62% of the students were residing in a shelter, 26% were doubled up with friends or family members, 8% were staying at a hotel, < 1% were unsheltered and <4% were unaccompanied youth.
- 68% of the students identified as seniors graduated or received their GED.

Grade Levels of students identified in Duluth as homeless:

	2011-12	2010-11
• Preschool	149 (31%)	(115)
• Kindergarten	23 (5%)	(28)
• Grades 1-5	108 (22%)	(104)
• Grades 6-8	82 (17%)	(69)
• Grades 9-12	108 (22%)	(92)
• Other	12 (3%)	(11)

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
- Social Worker to support parents, teachers and school administrators by developing successful strategies to deal with complex educational barriers

Program highlights

- Spirit of Mothering, a parent education program designed to support mothers during their adjustment from homelessness to transitional housing is offered 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 789 backpacks were distributed and 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 and on the Heading Home St. Louis County Leadership Council

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:

- 89% of all students referred were enrolled at a school within two days
- Transportation arrangement coordinated for 93% of students at shelters, transitional housing programs and families doubled up and in motels.
- Two district wide in-service opportunities were provided
- Posters and brochures are distributed annually to schools and community agencies and motels

Attendance Goal:

- 100% of the Head Start and school age children whose mothers participated in Spirit of Mothering attained the goal of 70% school attendance.

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. 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.

The MCA results for reading 3rd-5th show 16% did not meet and 62% met or exceeded and in math 46% did not meet and 27% met or exceeded. MCA results for reading 6th-8th show 25% did not meet and 89% met or exceeded and in math 71% did not meet and 16% met or exceeded.

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.