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Students Experiencing Homelessness

Title

State of Crisis: Understanding District Educational Patterns for CA Students Experiencing Homelessness

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Rivera, Edwin

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State *of* Crisis:
**Understanding
School District
Educational Patterns**
for CA Students
Experiencing Homelessness

Anaheim Union High
Fresno Unified
Kern High
Long Beach Unified
Oakland Unified

Pajaro Valley Unified
Redlands Unified
San Bernardino City Unified
San Diego Unified
San Juan Unified



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Summary

In 2021, California made historic investments to help students and schools recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, the pandemic has adversely impacted schools and students experiencing homelessness, limited the scope and application of student data, and created new challenges for teaching and learning (CDE, 2022a). Additionally, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, **the pandemic has exacerbated the already present “discrimination experienced by racial and ethnic minority groups and people experiencing homelessness”** (HUD, 2022, p.5).

While the future after this pandemic is unclear, we must continue to support students experiencing homelessness and address the long-standing inequities that this vulnerable student group faces. Recent data from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) reports that the number of students experiencing homelessness enrolled in public schools nationwide and reported by state educational agencies (SEAs) during the 2018-19 school year was 1,387,573, a 3% increase over the three previous years (NCHE, 2021). Of those young people, roughly 270,000 students, or one out of five students nationally, live in California. Students experiencing homelessness are in nearly every district in California—each district with unique educational needs. **Each year, California data show that Latinx, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander students are disproportionately affected by homelessness.** As reported by the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools’ (CTS) 2020 statewide analysis on student homelessness, [State of Crisis: Dismantling Student Homelessness in California](#), **the number of students experiencing homelessness has risen nearly 50% in the last decade**—a statistic cited in the recently passed AB-27 bill (Bishop et al., 2020; Rivas et al., 2021). This increase has made it difficult to support students experiencing homelessness through policy alone, especially in school districts and counties with only one homeless liaison. Immediate support is essential. The pandemic has hindered data accuracy about students and families experiencing homelessness. Annual 2021-2022 California Department of Education data on student homelessness reveals an approximate 17% decline in the population of students experiencing homelessness in California since the 2018-2019 school year (**Figure 1**), suggesting student

identification loss during the pandemic (CDE, 2021). Similarly, in a 2020 report by SchoolHouse Connection, researchers highlight a 28% decrease in the number of students experiencing homelessness identified amidst the pandemic (SchoolHouse Connection, 2020). Data accuracy will be critical in identifying students experiencing homelessness, the challenges they face, and how to best support them in their educational trajectories. With unprecedented federal funding of nearly \$800 million as part of the American Rescue Plan Act for Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY), we must now, more than ever, seek transformative ways to address and support the needs of students experiencing homelessness across the state.

This brief examines publicly available district-level data across a set of variables that illuminate the educational experiences of students experiencing homelessness. This investigation is based on a new [interactive table](#) developed by UCLA’s Center for the Transformation of Schools that displays educational discrepancies between districts among unhoused young people that families, educators, policymakers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and researchers can use to explore homeless student data for every county and school district in California. This analysis is accompanied by district, county, and state policy recommendations. Our goal is for readers to use available data as a tool to support equitable educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness in California.

The number of students experiencing homelessness has risen nearly
50%
in the last decade, a number that has likely increased since the pandemic began.

Underlying Issues

One significant underlying challenge to supporting students experiencing homelessness in California is correctly identifying students that need support. Students must first be identified to receive the benefits they are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. Section 11431).

Homeless education experts estimate that between 5-10% of all economically disadvantaged students in California may experience homelessness (*C.A. State Auditor, 2019*). Therefore in 2019, it is estimated that roughly 100,000 students were uncounseled in the nearly 270,000 students identified as having experienced homelessness in California (*C.A. State Auditor, 2019; Bishop et al., 2020*). Identification is critical because it allows Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to enable students experiencing homelessness “to attend school and participate fully in school activities” and receive “wrap-around services” in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (*Sec. 2001(a)(b), ESSA Relief Fund, 2001*). Student identification data, following “state and federal laws regarding student privacy and use of student data,” allows homeless education stakeholders to access student data that can reveal education patterns, and provide targeted student support (*AB 27, 2021*). Thus, it is imperative for homeless education stakeholders at all levels, including educators, policymakers, researchers,

and school administrators to develop and implement systems and procedures for accurately collecting and reporting student data.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, students experiencing homelessness already faced disparities in their educational outcomes. They were almost twice as likely to be suspended and chronically absent, experience lower graduation rates, and are less likely to be prepared for college than their housed peers (*Bishop et al., 2020*). Due to the pandemic, we must address the substantial “learning lag” and keep up with the growing rate of students experiencing homelessness (*Pier et al., 2021*). With rising unemployment rates coupled with an end to the federal eviction moratorium, the number of unhoused students is likely to grow (*Barocas et al., 2021*). Neglecting to prioritize this crisis will exacerbate the challenges school systems must overcome to adequately support students experiencing homelessness.



5-10%

of all economically disadvantaged students in California may experience homelessness.

Statewide District Data

Data can be a powerful tool in supporting students experiencing homelessness. For example, the California Department of Education highlights how LEAs have begun to use home addresses provided by students to locate students living in hotels, motels, and “doubled-up” situations (CDE, 2022b).

Utilizing data on homelessness has also proven effective in facilitating the analysis of racial disparities and depicting accurate pictures of student outcomes (CDE, 2022a; HUD, 2020, p. 1; Bishop et al., 2020). In [State of Crisis: Dismantling Student Homelessness in California](#), 2018-2019, student data revealed that Pacific Islander, American Indian, Latinx, and Black students are disproportionately affected by homelessness (Bishop et al., 2020, p. 25). Suspension data for the 2018-2019 school year also show that Black (13%), American-Indian (11%), Pacific Islander (9%), and White (8%) students experiencing homelessness were disproportionately suspended relative to their housed counterparts (CDE, 2019c). Data for this year also shows that students experiencing homelessness were suspended nearly 2 times the rate of all students in California and were chronically absent over 2 times that for all students (CDE, 2019c; 2019d).

In 2018-2019, Latinx students comprised roughly seventy percent of the cumulative enrollment of students experiencing homelessness and were suspended approximately 17,000 times (CDE, 2019c). Additionally white students, who comprise about 12 percent of the homeless student population were suspended approximately 4,500 times and Black students who comprise 9% of the cumulative enrollment of students experiencing homelessness were suspended 6,700 times (CDE, 2019c).

This data is helpful in the design and implementation of policies and practices targeting historically marginalized student groups (e.g., rural, Indigenous, students of color, students with disabilities, English learners), discipline and attendance procedures, and overall student success. This data also provides baseline indicators for how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts schools and students. The California Department of Education has recently released education data that affirm and validate the learning challenges created by the pandemic and reveal similar patterns to 2018-2019 data (CDE, 2022a). These data demonstrate that achievement gaps between student

groups have widened for Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium scores, chronic absenteeism rates have increased, and graduation rates have declined. Currently, the “data is limited in both scope and use” but will be critical as data collection systems improve to meet the needs of the pandemic (CDE, 2022a).

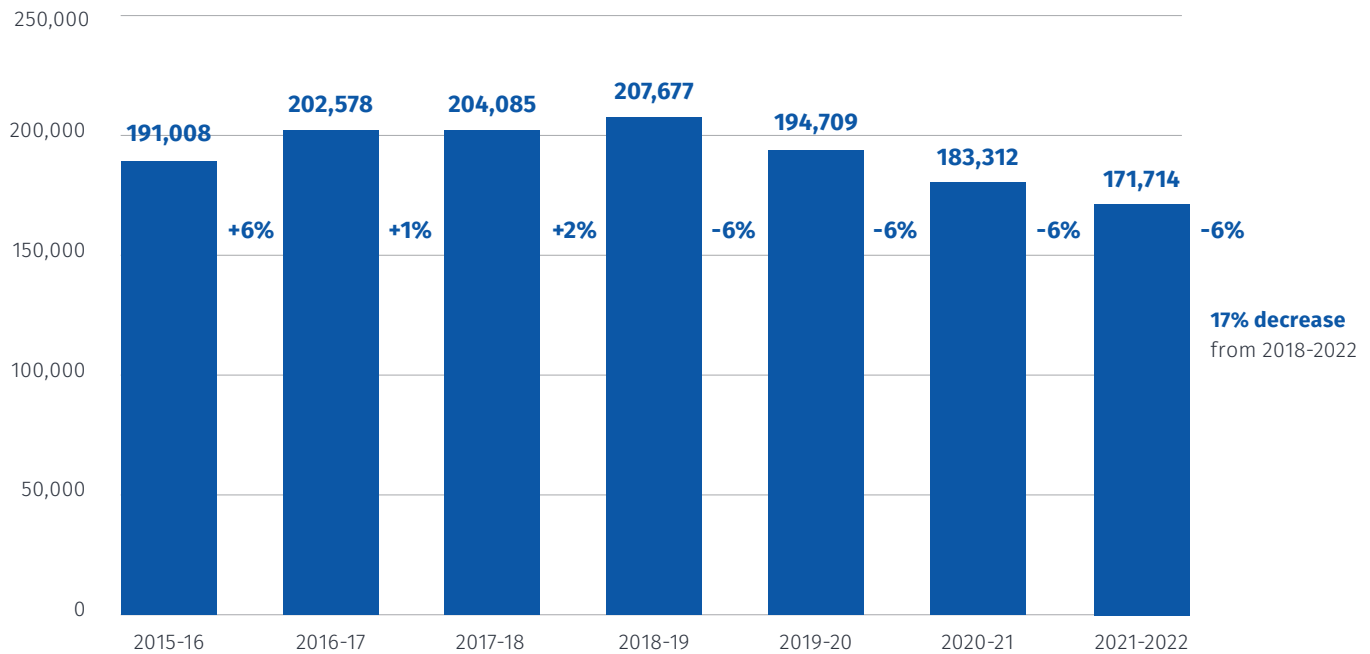
Before 2019, the annual number of students experiencing homelessness enrolled in California schools was slowly rising (**Figure 1**). Since then, the pandemic has created challenges for teaching and learning but also the collection of data. Because the CDE advises that data after 2018-2019 are not comparable to similar data from previous years, the following analysis uses California Department of Education 2018-2019 data. Ten districts across California were selected for their large enrollment of students experiencing homelessness and their demographic and geographic diversity. The data is filtered by “homeless” and “non-homeless” to demonstrate different demographic education patterns among students experiencing homelessness. District data were collected from the California Department of Education’s public datasets, filtered for homeless student data, and sorted from high to low enrollment numbers. Academic student outcome data were retrieved through the California Department of Education’s DataQuest tool. The districts range across



Achievement gaps between student groups have widened,

chronic absenteeism rates have increased, and graduation rates have declined since COVID-19.

Figure 1. Annual Enrollment for Students Experiencing Homelessness in California, 2015-2022



Note. Enrollment numbers were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Annual Enrollment and filtered by "Subgroup: Homeless" (CDE, 2019a).

counties throughout the state. Together, they present a broad view of the adverse educational patterns that persist for students experiencing homelessness.

The goal of analyzing data is not to condemn any individual LEA for student outcomes, but to identify and activate the support necessary to mitigate the barriers faced by students experiencing homelessness. By comparing data for students experiencing homelessness with non-homeless students, recurring trends in educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness are highlighted. Students experiencing homelessness in K-12 settings in California are less likely to meet Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) standards (**Figures 2-7**), and more likely to experience lower graduation rates (**Figure 8**), lower UC/CSU readiness rates (**Figure 9**), higher suspension rates (**Figure 10**), and higher rates of chronic absenteeism (**Figure 11**), regardless of ethnic/racial identity. This analysis reveals two things. First, like the statewide and county outcomes highlighted in the State of Crisis report, negative educational outcome patterns persist at a district level for students experiencing homelessness compared to their non-homeless peers. Second, it reveals the need to examine student outcome data at all levels to supply more targeted support based on the specific needs of a county, district, or school site, as

required by EHCY and ARP regulations.

Student data offers significant insight into the breadth of issues students experiencing homelessness face. District educational performance data (SBAC, graduation, college readiness) and school climate indicators (chronic absenteeism, suspensions) for students experiencing homelessness reveal that students of every racial and ethnic group are struggling academically compared to their non-homeless peers. SBAC scores "create a useful and detailed picture" of the current achievement status and mastery of the fundamental subjects of English and Mathematics (*Warren, 2018, p. 21*). Meanwhile, graduation, suspension, and chronic absenteeism data inform us about student outcomes. While further investigation is needed to better understand the relationship among these indicators, students experiencing homelessness clearly are disproportionately affected by adverse educational outcomes. Thus, it is critical for education stakeholders to explore and use this student data to direct efforts toward removing educational barriers and ultimately ending cycles of homelessness for California youth.

The data in **Figure 1** shows that nearly half or more of all third, eighth, and 11th-grade students experiencing homelessness in the 2018-2019 school year did not meet

the CA Math and English SBAC standards. In Oakland Unified, except for third and eighth-grade math, students experiencing homelessness were nearly 100% likely not to meet ELA and Math standards at each tested grade level (**Figures 2-7**). Additionally, students experiencing homelessness are suspended and chronically absent at alarming rates (**Figure 2**). In Fresno Unified and Kern High districts, students experiencing homelessness were twice as likely to be suspended; students experiencing homelessness were three times more likely to be suspended in San Juan Unified (**Figure 8**). In Kern High, students experiencing homelessness were chronically absent at a rate of 51% compared to 13% for non-homeless students (**Figure 9**). Within each district, students experiencing homelessness graduated at lower rates and were less UC/CSU ready upon graduation than their non-homeless peers (**Figure 3**). In Oakland Unified, students experiencing homelessness were almost half as likely to graduate compared to non-homeless students (**Figure 10**). In Fresno Unified and Kern High districts, only 20% of graduating students experiencing homelessness met UC/CSU requirements (**Figure 11**).

Enrollment

In **Table 1**, we get a quick snapshot of the percentage of students experiencing homelessness in a district. **During the 2018-2019 school year, 13% of the Anaheim Union High School District and Redlands Unified School District students experienced homelessness.**

Displaying data this way allows an overview of where students experience homelessness within the state, a county, or district. This data also allows for more directed support for areas where students experience homelessness at great rates or large numbers.

Table 2 breaks down the cumulative enrollment rates by race and ethnicity for the ten school districts. Further disaggregating enrollment data by race reveals how homelessness affects groups by race and ethnicity. **This data reveals that Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander students were disproportionately affected by homelessness during the 2018-2019 school year as compared to other racial groups.**

Table 1. Cumulative Enrollment for Selected California Districts, 2018-2019

Cumulative Enrollment	Non-Homeless	Homeless	Homeless Enrollment Rate
San Diego Unified	131,706	8,284	6%
Fresno Unified	77,615	2,183	3%
Long Beach Unified	76,554	7,251	9%
San Bernardino City Unified	58,412	5,669	10%
San Juan Unified	55,340	3,305	6%
Oakland Unified	53,118	1,179	2%
Kern High	42,317	436	1%
Anaheim Union High	28,005	3,516	13%
Redlands Unified	22,341	2,915	13%
Pajaro Valley Unified	20,797	3,208	15%
Total	566,205	37,946	7%

Note. Enrollment numbers were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Chronic Absenteeism Rate under, "Cumulative Enrollment" (CDE, 2019d).

Black, Latinx, & Pacific Islander

students were disproportionately affected by homelessness during the 2018-2019 school year.

Table 2. Student Cumulative Enrollment by Race for Selected California Districts, 2018-2019

	Latinx	Black	White	American-Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Filipino	Two or More Races	Not Reported
Non-Homeless	57%	10%	18%	0.4%	8%	0.6%	2%	4%	1%
Homeless	66%	14%	9%	0.3%	4%	0.9%	2%	4%	0.7%

Note. Enrollment numbers were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Chronic Absenteeism Rate under "Cumulative Enrollment" (CDE, 2019d).

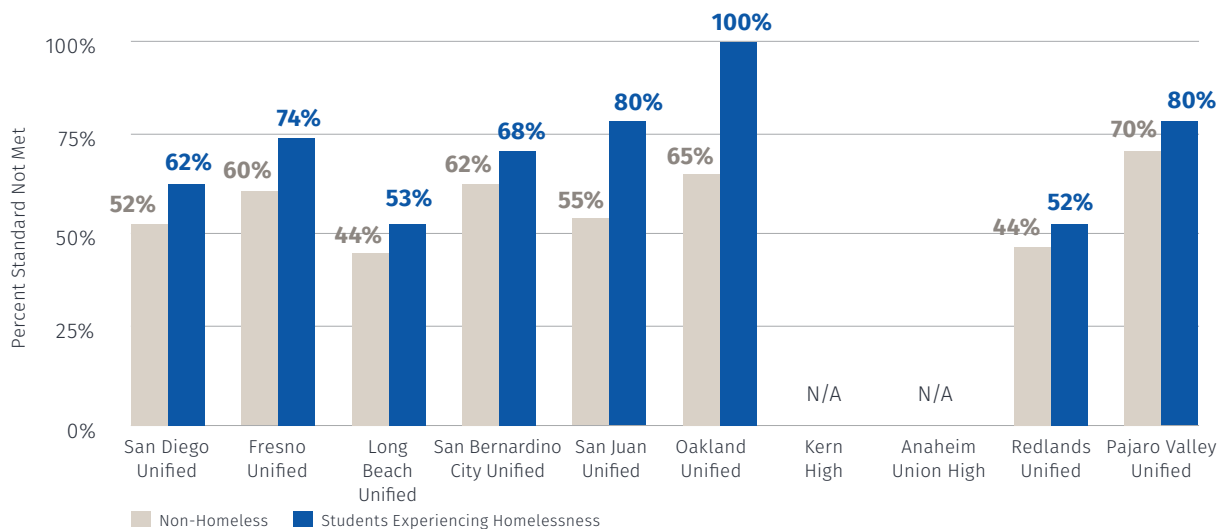
California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

California employs the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) English and Mathematics test to “measure academic progress and assess school and district performance” (Warren, 2018). The SBAC is designed “so that achievement growth can be measured as students progress from one grade to the next” (Warren, 2018). At each of the highlighted districts, students experiencing homelessness were less likely to meet their ELA and Math SBAC standards than non-homeless students. **Nearly half or more of third, eighth, and 11th-grade students who experienced homelessness during the 2018-2019 school year did not meet the CA Math and English SBAC standards.** Students not meeting SBAC standards

were those “Below Standard” and “Nearly Met Standard,” both indicating that students have not reached proficiency (CDE, 2019b). Because the design of SBAC is intended to demonstrate student progression in Mathematics and English, these data suggest that students experiencing homelessness are not maintaining the pace of learning set by California standards.

Figure 2 shows the rate of third-grade students not meeting SBAC standards in English. **In Oakland Unified, 100% of third-grade students experiencing homelessness did not meet ELA standards, compared to 65% of housed students.** San Bernardino City Unified experienced the smallest performance gap in English for homeless and housed students.

Figure 2. Percent of Third Grade Students Not Meeting SBAC ELA Standards by District, 2018-2019



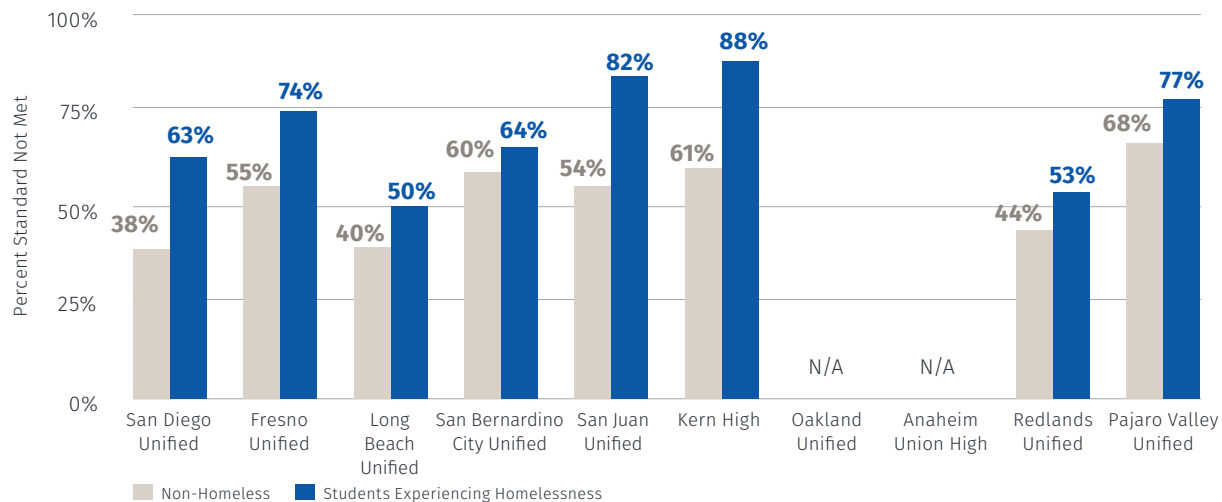
Note. SBAC data were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 CAASPP Data Results for each district and filtered by Homeless and Non-Homeless (CDE, 2019b). Data for grades below ninth were unavailable for Kern High and Anaheim Union High.

Nearly 50% or more of third, eighth, and 11th-grade students who experienced homelessness during the 2018-2019 school year did not meet the CA Math and English SBAC standards.

Figure 3 shows the rate of third-grade students who did not meet SBAC standards in Mathematics. Over 80% of third-grade students experiencing homelessness in San Juan Unified and Oakland Unified did not meet mathematics standards. Mathematics performance gaps for third-graders at Redlands Unified, San Bernardino City Unified, and Long Beach Unified were the smallest among the districts.

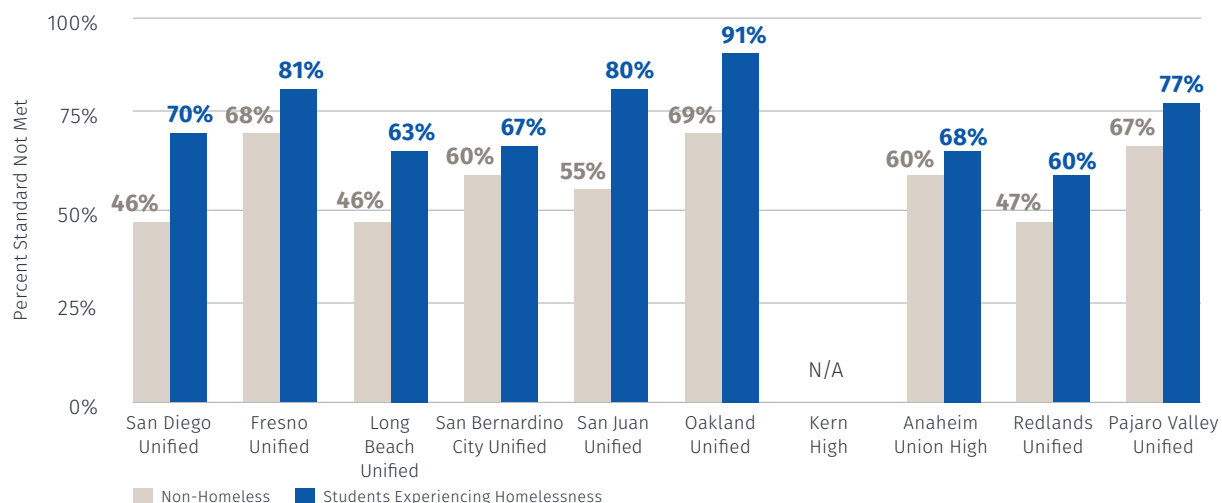
Figure 4 shows the rate of eighth-grade students not meeting SBAC standards in English. SBAC English scores for San Juan, Oakland, and Pajaro Valley Unified do show slight improvements for students experiencing homelessness. In the other districts, however, students who experienced homelessness saw decreases in the percentage of SBAC standards met, even in districts where non-homeless students saw increases.

Figure 3. Percent of Third Grade Students Not Meeting SBAC Mathematics Standards by District, 2018-2019



Note. SBAC data were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 CAASPP Data Results for each district and filtered by Homeless and Non-Homeless (CDE, 2019b). Data for grades below ninth were unavailable for Kern High and Anaheim Union High.

Figure 4. Percent of Eighth Grade Students Not Meeting SBAC ELA Standards by District, 2018-2019

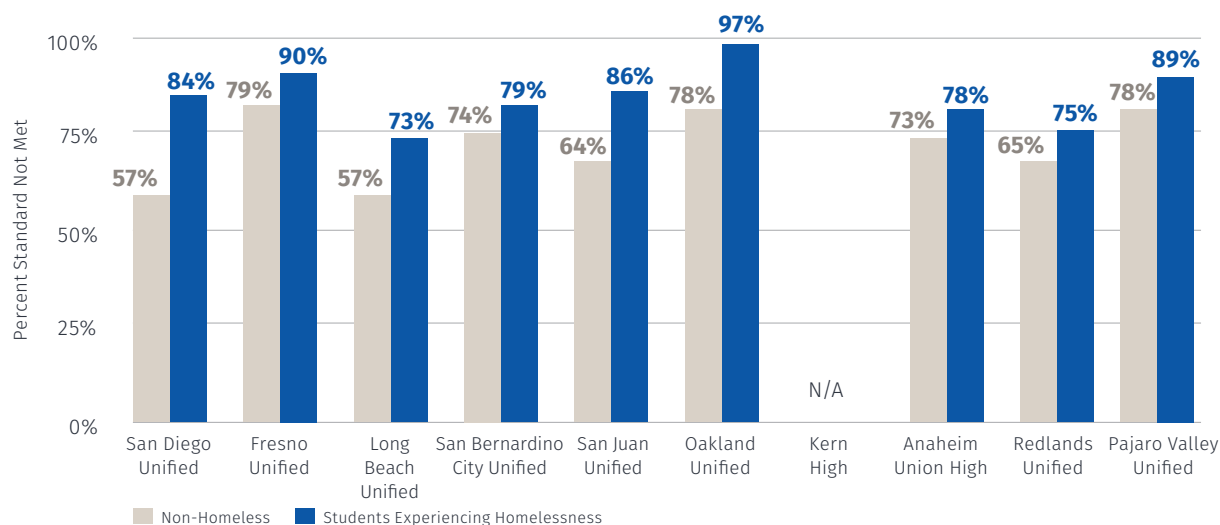


Note. Data for grades below ninth were unavailable for Kern High District. SBAC data were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 CAASPP Data Results for each district and filtered by Homeless and Non-Homeless (CDE, 2019c).

Figure 5 shows the rate of eighth-grade students not meeting SBAC standards in Mathematics. Compared to third-grade SBAC mathematics scores, the percentage of students not meeting standards increased in each selected district. The rate of students not meeting SBAC mathematics standards in San Diego, Long Beach, Fresno, and Redlands Unified districts increased approximately 20% from third to eighth grade. In Oakland Unified, nearly every student experiencing homelessness failed to meet eighth-grade Mathematics standards.

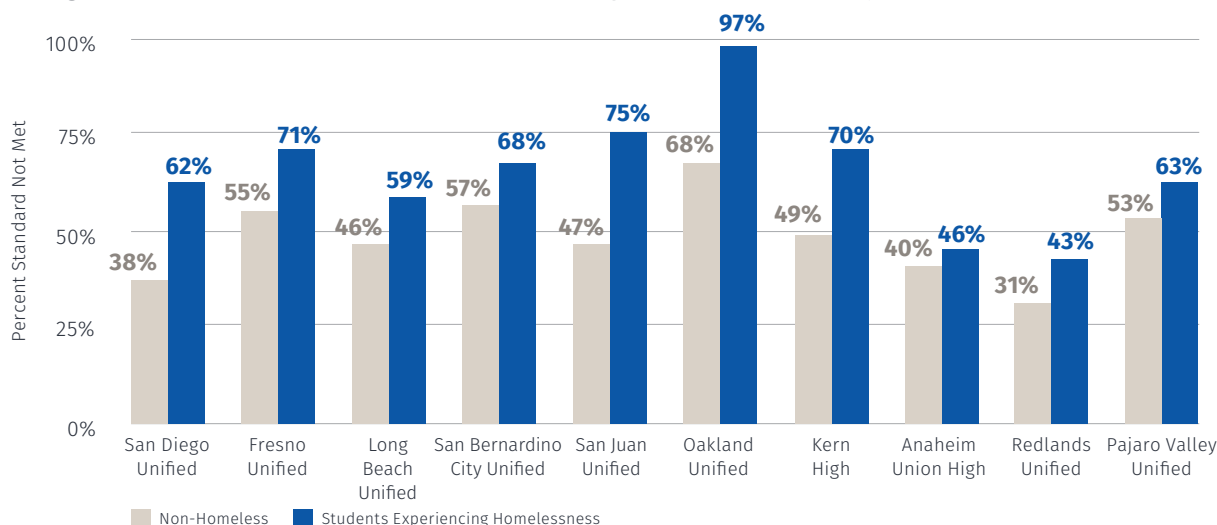
Figure 6 shows the rate of eleventh-grade students not meeting SBAC standards in English. Students experiencing homelessness in San Diego Unified, San Juan Unified, Oakland Unified, and Kern High were at least 20 percentage points more likely not to meet SBAC English standards than their non-homeless peers. In Oakland Unified, nearly every student experiencing homelessness failed to meet eleventh-grade English standards.

Figure 5. Percent of Eighth Grade Students Not Meeting SBAC Mathematics Standards by District, 2018-2019



Note. Data for grades below ninth were unavailable for Kern High District. SBAC data were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 CAASPP Data Results for each district and filtered by Homeless and Non-Homeless (CDE, 2019b).

Figure 6. Percent of 11th Grade Students Not Meeting SBAC ELA Standards by District, 2018-2019



Note. SBAC data were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 CAASPP Data Results for each district and filtered by Homeless and Non-Homeless, (CDE, 2019b).

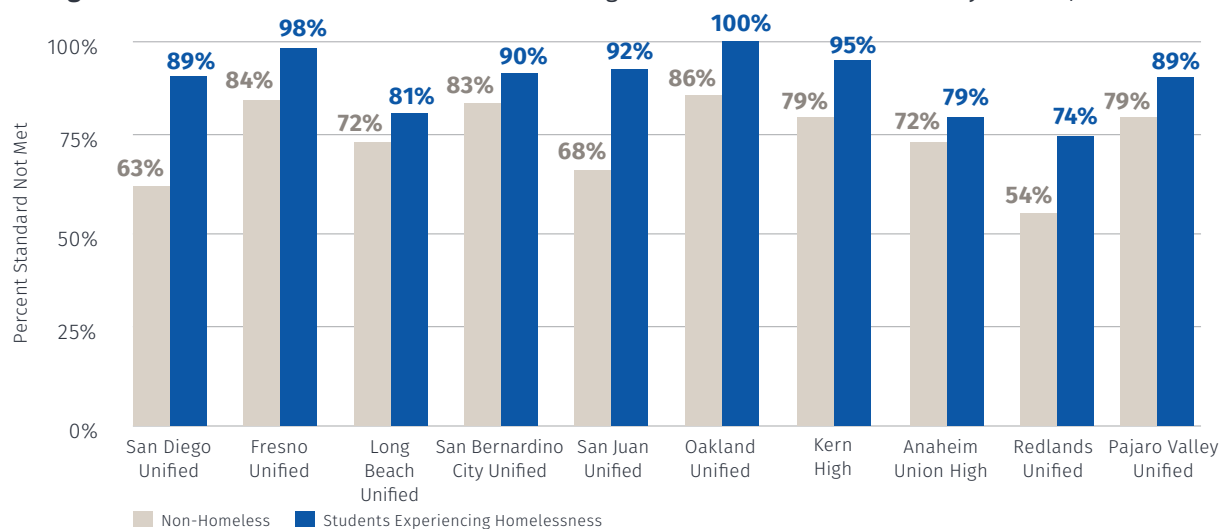
Figure 7 shows the rate of eleventh-grade students not meeting SBAC standards in Mathematics. Students experiencing homelessness in San Diego Unified, San Juan Unified, and Redlands Unified were at least 20 percentage points more likely not to meet SBAC standards. In Oakland Unified, Fresno Unified, and Kern High, almost all students who experienced homelessness did not meet California SBAC Mathematics standards.

Graduation Rates

Graduation rates serve as the determinate indicator of student success. In **Figure 8**, students experiencing homelessness were reported as being less likely to

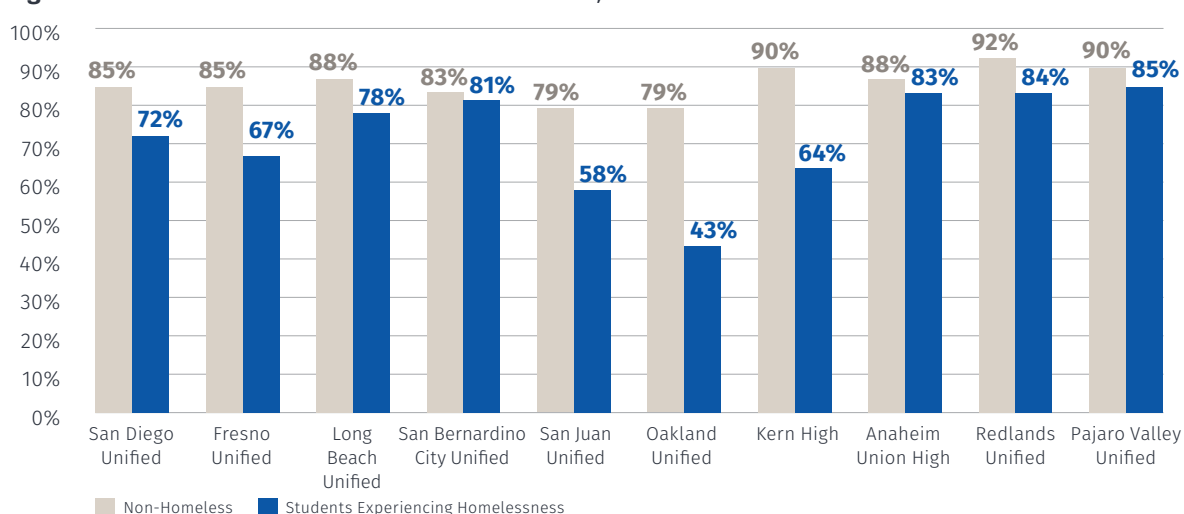
meet their 4-year graduation requirements than their non-homeless peers within each examined district. In Oakland Unified, there was a 36 percentage point difference when comparing graduation rates of students experiencing homelessness to non-homeless students. As revealed recently in Chapin Hall's Missed Opportunities report, students who do not graduate high school are "4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness [as adults] than their peers" who do graduate (*Chapin Hall, 2019*). This data suggests that we seek targeted solutions to ameliorate the gap in graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness to ensure that students are equipped to succeed upon completing high school.

Figure 7. Percent of 11th Grade Students Not Meeting SBAC Mathematics Standards by District, 2018-2019



Note. SBAC data were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 CAASPP Data Results for each district and filtered by Homeless and Non-Homeless (CDE, 2019b).

Figure 8. Graduation Rates at Selected Districts in CA, 2018-2019



Note. Graduation rates were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (CDE, 2019e).

UC/CSU Requirements Met

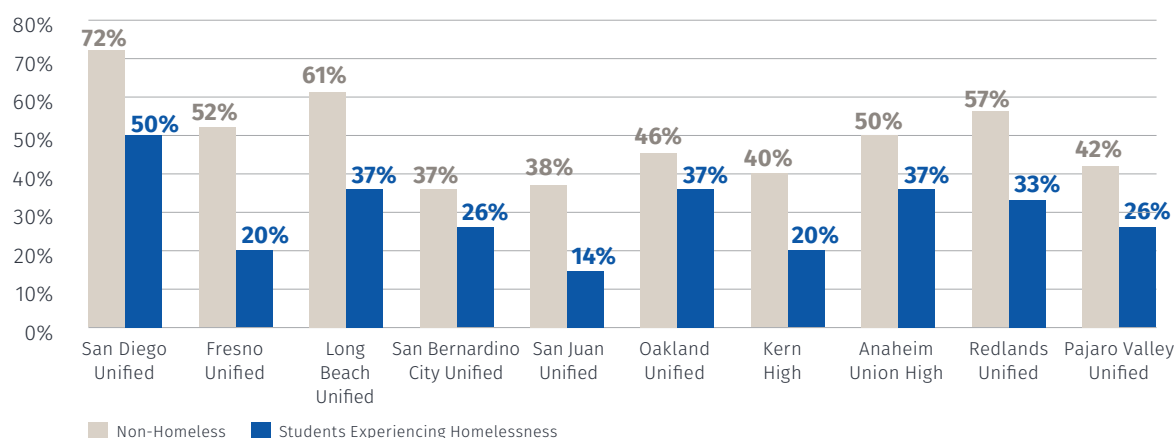
Figure 9 highlights a troubling pattern in districts across California: low rates of UC/CSU requirements met. In San Bernardino City Unified, Kern High District, Fresno Unified, San Juan Unified, and Pajaro Valley Unified, only 1 in 3 students experiencing homelessness met UC/CSU requirements. This data suggests that graduating students who experience homelessness have limited opportunities to advance their education after graduation. Funding supports such as summer tutoring programs and community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide college preparation, access, and counseling services for students experiencing homelessness is one way to immediately address this gap. A shining example of this is Sanctuary of Hope, a CBO that serves youth in Los Angeles and promote and implement support systems that meet the “cultural, educational, emotional,

mental, and housing needs” of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness (*Sanctuary of Hope, 2022*). Their services include counseling, therapy, mentoring, housing and education supports, emergency and financial assistance. Through the Sanctuary of Hope’s efforts 90% of students enrolled in a college or vocational program and 35% “have completed a degree or certification” as of 2012 (*Sanctuary of Hope, 2022*).

Suspension Rates

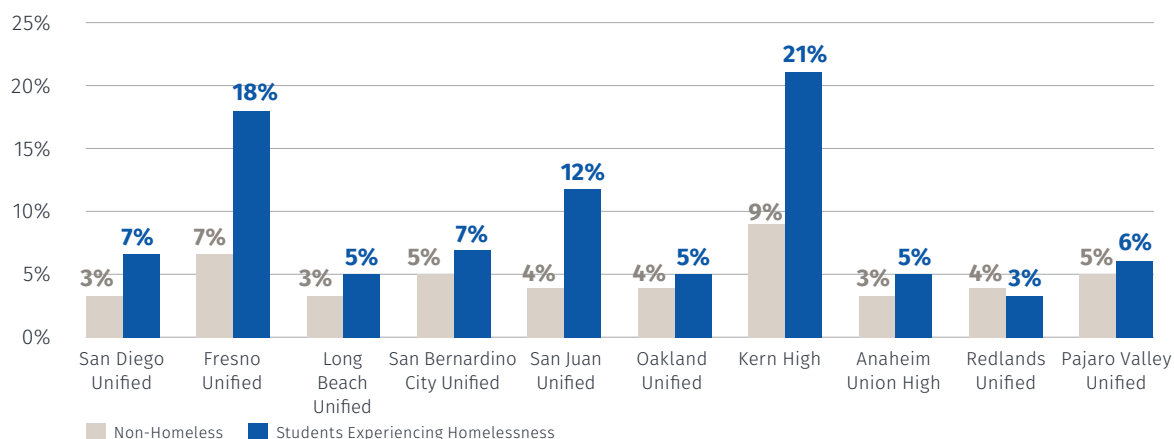
Suspension data is critical for students experiencing homelessness to understand the discipline disparities and their effect on lost instruction time (*Losen & Martin, 2018*). **In all ten districts, students experiencing homelessness are suspended at higher rates than their non-homeless peers (Figure 10).** Students experiencing homelessness in Fresno Unified and Kern

Figure 9. UC/CSU Requirements Met at Selected Districts, 2018-2019



Note. Graduation rates were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (CDE, 2019e).

Figure 10. Suspension Rates at Selected Districts in CA, 2018-2019



Note. Suspension rates were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Suspension Rate (CDE, 2019c).

Unified were more than twice as likely to be suspended. Data for these districts with disproportionate suspensions should be explored further to gain insights into why students experiencing homelessness are being suspended at high rates and identify ways to mitigate this issue.

Chronic Absenteeism Rates

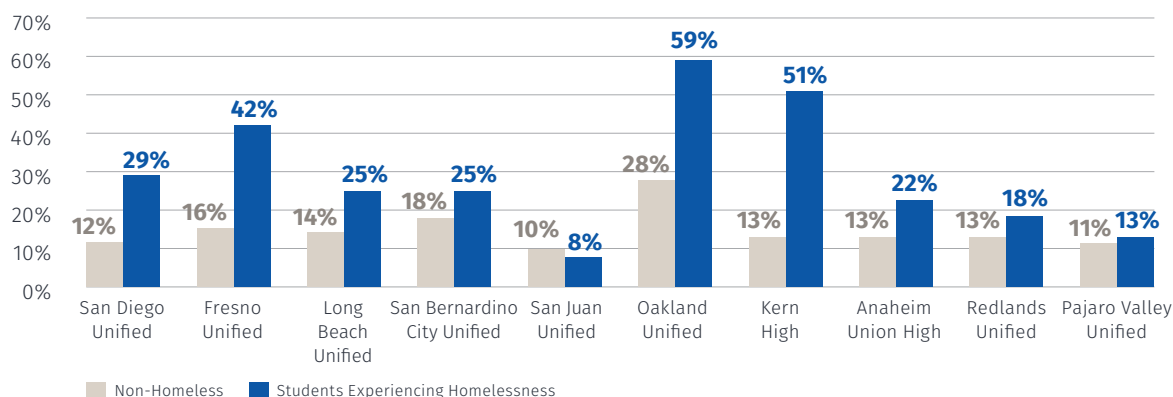
Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts academic and social-emotional development and contributes to learning loss (*Santibañez & Guarino, 2021*). While the underlying causes for chronic absence are still being explored, possible reasons include issues of transportation to school, family responsibilities such as caretaking, acute and chronic health concerns, housing instability, and school suspensions (*Perry et al., 2018; Patnode et al., 2018*).

In nine of the 10 districts, students experiencing homelessness were chronically absent at higher rates than non-homeless students (Figure 11). In Kern High, the rate of chronic absenteeism for students experiencing homelessness was 51%; in Oakland Unified, it was 59%; and in Fresno Unified, it was 42%. Per California Department of Education standards, a chronic absenteeism rate over 20% is considered “very high” (*CDE, 2019f*). Chronic absenteeism data should guide policies that provide more flexibility around attendance policies for homeless students and rethink how schools generate alternative opportunities for students experiencing homelessness to access learning.

Data Summary

Education outcome data for these ten districts are consistent with students experiencing homelessness at a county and state level. Further investigation shows that this remains true across school years, revealing a pattern of adverse education outcomes that we must disrupt. Future directions might include a more nuanced portrait of racial dimensions of homelessness amongst students. There is currently limited data and data analysis for students of color experiencing homelessness. Now, the extent of available data for students experiencing homelessness surmises that “homeless youth of color fare worse” than white students experiencing homelessness (*Carrasco, 2019, p. 60*). Aggregated student data often overlooks Black students in policy creation and implementation (*Edwards, 2020; Edwards, 2021*). As an example, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, 96% of students experiencing homelessness are students of color; Black students are more likely to experience homelessness; they comprise 19% of all students experiencing homelessness while comprising only 8% of LAUSD’s total enrollment (*Broslawsky & Schoen, 2020, p. 3*). 2017 California SBAC data for students experiencing homelessness show that only 25% of Latinx and 19% of Black students scored above standards compared to 53% White and 73% Asian students experiencing homelessness (*Warren, 2018*). Data also reveals that students experiencing homelessness across all racial groups are more likely to be suspended, chronically absent, experience lower graduation rates, and be less ready for college than their housed peers of the same race/ethnicity (*Bishop et al., 2020; CDE, 2019*). The data presented above play a critical role in starting conversations about homelessness in our schools and highlighting the issues that we must address.

Figure 11. Chronic Absenteeism Rate at Selected Districts, 2018-2019



Note. Chronic absenteeism rates were retrieved from DataQuest 2018-19 Chronic Absenteeism Rate, (CDE, 2019d).

Implications & Recommendations for Policy

Increased funding due to the American Rescue Plan Act for Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) has provided opportunities for LEAs to utilize funding, as seen in the CDE’s [ARP-HCY Resource Guide](#) (CDE, 2021). We must prioritize resources for students experiencing homelessness by strategically coordinating the distribution of resources (Morton et al., 2019).

Responses from all levels of government are vital in addressing the complex needs of students experiencing homelessness so that no system operates in a silo. Schools, community-based organizations, and county and state agencies can facilitate integrated, student and family-centered responses to the issue with federal funding support. This coordination will prove especially beneficial in supporting “rural communities and geographically isolated settings” with a high concentration of students experiencing homelessness (Bishop et al., 2020). Improved coordination across the state also ensures access to basic needs in communities that are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing severe housing instability, and vulnerable to natural disasters such as wildfires and floods. Providing high-quality access to education environments that thoroughly engage students and provide the resources necessary to succeed in school systems is costly and will take strategic coordination. Increased funding allows us to identify students experiencing homelessness, provide wrap-around services in response to COVID-19, and guarantee students experiencing homelessness have the chance to fully engage in opportunities and services, including in-person instruction and enrichment programs (summer and after-school).

Localized data collection and research should be centralized and easily accessible to meet the needs of historically underserved populations, including Black and other racially marginalized students, rural students, Indigenous/American Indian children, migrant students, LGBTQ+ youth, and parenting students, to list a few. Homeless liaisons will need substantial support to ensure ARP-HCY funding plans

are fulfilled accordingly and successfully meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness. We must conduct research and assess the outcomes of ARP-HCY and ECHY funded models and programs and relay them statewide to inform promising models. Below are state, county, and district recommendations to consider when designing and implementing policies targeting students experiencing homelessness.



School Districts

- **Utilize localized academic data to create and inform school boards, educators, and the public of recurring patterns** including enrollment data and student educational outcomes, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and subgroup (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities, gender) for more targeted support.
- **Prioritize funds to address student “learning lag” and other disparities in student academic outcomes caused by the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students experiencing homelessness** (*Pier et al., 2021*). This disproportionality is especially true for “historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness” as highlighted by the U.S. Department of Education.

Counties

- **Develop and implement a system that verifies that LEAs provide the required training to school personnel serving youth experiencing homelessness at least annually**, as detailed in state policy proposals.

- **Facilitate coordination between state coordinators, Local Education Agency liaisons, health and human service agencies, cross-sector agencies, and related community-based organizations to provide wraparound services.** These services include mental health, family services, tutoring, after-school programs, transportation, housing, and basic needs, among other supports.

State of California

- **Construct publicly downloadable datasets for students experiencing homelessness that disaggregate education indicators by race to be utilized by homeless education stakeholders.** Currently, publicly available text (TXT) data files only disaggregate data along one reporting dimension and do not provide cross-tabulated values (e.g., homeless by race/ethnicity).
- **Consider “geographic diversity and concentrations of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths” in the establishment of homeless education technical assistance centers (HE TACs),** as suggested in the AB-27 bill (*Rivas et al., 2021*). Public research such as the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools’ [interactive map](#) highlights counties with the highest concentration of students experiencing homelessness disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

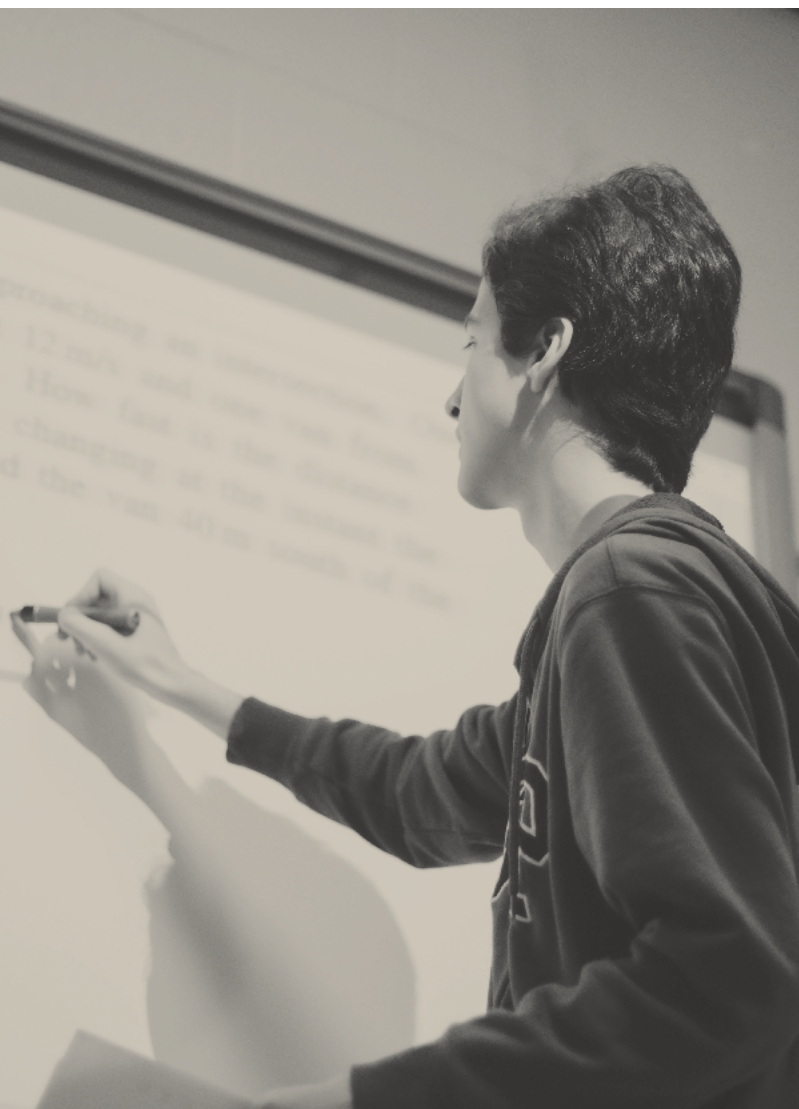


Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequities in school systems for students already affected by insecure housing. New funds present a critical opportunity to address the short and long-term challenges faced by students experiencing homelessness; together, we must ensure that students experiencing homelessness at every California school benefit fully from these historic funds.

The underlying difficulties presented above are only a few of the many barriers students experiencing homelessness face. The district data highlights a small portion of districts in the state struggling to end negative recurring education patterns for students experiencing homelessness. Better coordination, resource sharing, and

communication between school districts and counties can “foster a robust, multi-system coordination of care” that challenges “fragmented” collaboration between schools, districts, counties, and community-based organizations who are working toward the same goal (*Bishop et al., 2020; Ingram et al., 2017*).



The developments made through federal funds and programs such as the McKinney-Vento Act demonstrate that identifying subpopulations of homelessness leads to strategies and policy changes that target and support more significant numbers of students residing in precarious living arrangements (*Pavlakakis and Duffield 2017*). The leadership from the California Department of Education’s Homeless Coordinators have begun this endeavor as exhibited in their 2021 Plan for the American Rescue Plan Act Education for Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) and their ARP-HCY Resource Guide. California Department of Education student education data is also critical in policy decision-making for students experiencing homelessness. Funding from the American Rescue Plan has allowed California to explore the many ways counties, districts, and schools confront the issue of student homelessness. Thus, it is imperative to relay promising developing practices that utilize ARP-HCY funds in ways that ensure students experiencing homelessness “have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held” (42 U.S.C. Section 11431). Investment in homeless education research and student data systems is one way to establish this coordination, relay information across the state, and improve the identification of students who may go uncounseled. In California, we have the means to make this happen.

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