

Supporting Students in Temporary Housing

Brooklyn, New York

H.S. for Enterprise, Business and Technology

Y-PLAN Class



**ISSUE**

Children and youth are facing the most extreme form of instability, poverty and homelessness in New York City. Not having stable housing causes students to have psychological and chronic stress. Students in temporary housing struggle more academically and face chronic absenteeism. Elementary students living in a shelter had the highest rates of mid-year transfers and chronic absenteeism (20 or more absences during school year). Our School District 14 had 1,452 homeless students in the years 2014-2015. Students in temporary housing are missing needed education in order to succeed academically and go onto higher-level education.

**QUESTION**

How can we support students in temporary housing so that they can consistently attend and succeed in school?

* How does homelessness contribute to absenteeism (absent from school)?
* In what ways does homelessness affect a student’s ability to succeed in school?

**COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

* Instructor: Ms. Chon
* Students: Y-PLAN Class
* Client(s): Deputy Brooklyn Borough President Diana Reyna, Deputy Policy Director Jeff Lowell, Principal Holger Carrillo

**YOUTH DRIVEN DATA AND INSIGHTS**

We learned about the homeless population by analyzing data from the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH) organization. We were surprised by the statistics of the students who are in temporary housing in New York City.

* In 2015-16 47,948 students in NYC public schools that are doubled up (housing shared with another family).
* 1-out of 9 students experience homelessness in the last five years.
* Elementary students living in a shelter had the highest rates of mid-year transfers and chronic absenteeism (20 or more absences during the school year).
* On average, 10% of all New York City students scheduled to graduate in school year 2013-14 dropped out prior to graduation. In our own school district 14, 18.9%-23.3% dropout.
* The overall citywide four-year graduation rate in school year 2013-14 in New York City was 69%.
* The citywide pass rate for all students in the school year 2015-16, for the 3rd-8th grade State English Language Arts tests was 38%.
* The citywide pass rate for all students on the school year 2015-16 3rd-8th grade State math tests were 36.4%.
* In a snapshot of families with children living in shelter in December 2015, only 19% had entered shelter for the first time that year—that is the equivalent of only about 2,500 of the more than 12,000 families in shelter. Homelessness in New York City has become a cycle of instability where families leave the system only to return again in the future.

Source: http://www.icphusa.org/new\_york\_city/map-dynamics-family-homelessness-new-york-city-2017/

We researched the web and found *Peak Brooklyn*, which is an organization that operates the Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center in our community.

* The website and videos were very helpful in gaining insight on chronic absenteeism and lack of student achievement.
* Students were disconnected from their schools, had lack of friends, and were not involved in school activities.
* We also learned that teachers and other students do not engage with the students who were chronically absent and the students do not feel that they belong.

We also site-mapped our own school library at the Grand Street Campus to see what resources were available to our students to succeed academically. We found out that our school library had many strengths as well as some weaknesses. There were also many opportunities as well to use the space in the library to host future events.

**Strengths**

* A room with 32 working computers, where students can complete school work and access the internet
* An area in the library where there is a sofa to be able to read comfortably, round tables and chairs to work on projects with a group. There were also independent study desks where students can study quietly
* College resource center was located in the back of the library but was not being utilized by the students
* Books, magazines of students’ interest like Anime were available and highlighted for students to find them clearly

**Weaknesses**

* Library is opened 2-9 and closed during 6th period during the day. Students have lunch during 6th period and cannot go to the library in their free time.
* Library is not opened at after-school hours
* Only one librarian supervises the library and in which you may have up to 20 students at a time. If there is an emergency there is only one adult available
* Books and magazines were outdated and new books were not available

**Opportunities**

* The library has a large room to host activities after so students can socialize and hang out
* Events for parent outreach could be held at the Library as well
* The college room could be better used by hiring a college advisor where students can make appointments with for college application process and financial aid
* If the library is opened after-school, students can use the computers to get homework completed that are on Castle-learning and type research projects

**Threats**

* Students may be cutting class if program is not checked
* Lack of security, only one librarian

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**SHORT-TERM (1-6 Months)**

* Parent Outreach- Make parents more involved and aware of students’ academics and attendance. For example, teachers use Jupiter grades to input attendance so we can teach parents to use the program.
* Make parents and students aware of programs and services that are available for students in temporary housing through creating brochures.
* Add additional staff to library to use during lunch and after-school hours.
* Utilize the school library for students to get college help, use computers, and to socialize with other students.
* Help students who are chronically absent to socialize with other members of the school so that they don’t feel left out. This can be done by students them participating in Peer Group Connection.
* Offer emotional support by announcing positive quote of the day on school website and by teachers and staff.
* More social events during and after school for students to feel needed and want to stay in school.

**LONG-TERM (1-3 Years)**

* Make a program for families at school to help parents and students to deal with difficult issues by providing a support group.
* At each high school, offer students college application service and guide them through the college application process.
* DOE should hire more staff to accommodate the growing number of students in temporary housing and to help the families to find housing near their schools without having to be absent from school. Alternatively, DOE should partner with DHS or STH.
* Create a online DOE website for students to complete lessons where teachers can have access to view student progress.
* Provide childcare services after school if parent has to apply for temporary housing during the day.

**NEXT STEPS AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY**

* Conduct school wide student surveys to identify students in temporary housing to get up to date information on our students in temporary housing population.
* Surveys will also get insight from students who are in temporary housing to help them to succeed.
* We need school administration to help with making this survey possible because of privacy issues.
* We also need someone in the school who can be dedicated in helping our students in temporary housing population to work with the DOE Liaison