



Columbia University  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
Human Rights Studies Masters of Arts

**Realizing the Right to Education for NYC's Homeless Children:**  
*Identifying and removing barriers*

Emily Teall

Thesis Advisor: Inga Winkler

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

February 2018

## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the means by which New York City's public schools, individually and collectively, can and do support the education of growing numbers of homeless students. My thesis investigates laws, policies, and individual ad-hoc practices that affect public schools, seeking to assess layers of practice against human rights standards. My research is derived from survey results and interviews with school administrators, faculty, teachers, and social workers. I identify problems that homeless students face and innovative solutions that schools implement. My research concurs with preexisting literature that transportation to school is a critical issue, yet adds that mental and emotional health is even more pressing. My research also delves into problems and solutions rising from: lack of coordination with providers of services for homeless parents and students; insufficient food, amenities, and basic facilities; and insufficient supports for homeless students with disabilities. My surveys and interviews collect information on ad-hoc supportive tactics, uncovering the most common and innovative methods of ameliorating such barriers.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                           |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b><u>I: Introduction</u></b>                                             | 1  |
| <b>A. General Background</b>                                              | 1  |
| <b>B. Overview of Issues</b>                                              | 2  |
| <b>C. A Brief Introduction to Law Applied in NYC</b>                      | 4  |
| 1. International Human Rights Treaties and Declarations                   | 4  |
| 2. Federal Legislation: McKinney-Vento Act                                | 6  |
| 3. Federal Legislation: Every Student Succeeds Act                        | 9  |
| 4. New York State Law and Constitution                                    | 9  |
| 5. New York City Law and Policy                                           | 10 |
| <b>D. Organization and Contributions of My Thesis</b>                     | 12 |
| <b><u>II: Literature Review</u></b>                                       | 14 |
| <b><u>III. Methodology</u></b>                                            | 19 |
| <b>A. Survey and Interview Designs</b>                                    | 19 |
| <b>B. Descriptive Statistics</b>                                          | 20 |
| <b><u>IV: Results</u></b>                                                 | 21 |
| <b>A. Mental and Emotional Health</b>                                     | 23 |
| 1. Emotional Health: Chronic Fatigue and Worry, Low Self-Esteem, Shyness  | 23 |
| 2. Mental Health: Anxiety, ADD, and Unnamed Medical Conditions            | 27 |
| 3. Social Connections                                                     | 27 |
| <b>B. Transportation</b>                                                  | 29 |
| <b>C. Location</b>                                                        | 32 |
| <b>D. Basic needs</b>                                                     | 34 |
| 1. Food Insecurity                                                        | 35 |
| 2. Income                                                                 | 37 |
| 3. School Supplies                                                        | 38 |
| 4. Problems in Shelter Infrastructure                                     | 39 |
| <b>E. Connections to Outside Resources</b>                                | 42 |
| <b>F. Support of Students with Disabilities</b>                           | 45 |
| <b><u>V: Gap Analysis and Proposals for Policy and Administration</u></b> | 47 |
| <b>A. Reaching Human Rights Standards: Gap Analysis</b>                   | 48 |
| <b>B. Recommendations for Policy-Makers and Administrators</b>            | 51 |
| <b><u>VI: Directions for Further Research and Conclusion</u></b>          | 56 |
| <b>A. Directions for Future Research</b>                                  | 56 |
| <b>B. Concluding Comments</b>                                             | 58 |
| <b><u>Appendix</u></b>                                                    | 59 |
| <b>A. Survey: Copy of Survey to Principals and Administrators</b>         | 59 |
| <b>B. Interviews: Examples of Common Interview Questions</b>              | 62 |
| <b><u>References</u></b>                                                  | 64 |

*As a result of the constant disruption in my living arrangements, my grades plummeted as my emotional and physical health deteriorated ... [in my graduation speech] I candidly shared how education broke the cycle of poverty that plagued my family...The McKinney Act ... reinforces ... that education is the most important tool that enables one to break the cycle of poverty...*

*--Martin 2012*

## **I: Introduction**

### **A. General Background**

Approximately one out of every 11 children in the New York City public school system experienced homeless for some part of the 2015-2016 school year (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2017).<sup>1</sup> Children comprise 38% of the 127,652 individuals sleeping in NYC's shelters each night (Coalition for the Homeless 2017).<sup>2</sup> These numbers are conservative estimates and do not fully account for homeless people outside the shelters; it is estimated that more than half of NYC's homeless children are living in doubled-up living situations (Routhier 2017, 10).<sup>3</sup>

Until all homeless children in NYC are housed, their education remains critical as a human rights issue. Homeless students test well behind their housed peers in all economic brackets (Harris 2016; Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2017). In NYC in 2016, only 21% of 3-8<sup>th</sup> grade homeless students met grade-level standards in English compared to 36% of low-income housed students and 68% of non-low-income housed students (Institute for

---

<sup>1</sup> This proportion, which is based on data from the NYC DOE, includes to the best of its ability those in the shelter system as well as in other temporary living situations, such as students living in residential motels.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers from State of the Homeless Report are compiled from NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resource Administration and NYCStat data, and from shelter census reports. It includes veteran shelters, Safe Havens, stabilization beds, and HPD emergency shelters.

<sup>3</sup> To be considered "doubled up," multiple families must be forced to live together as a result of economic crises. These situations tend to be overcrowded and unstable. There are no consistent counts of this population, though more than half of NYC's roughly 64,000 homeless children are estimated to be doubled up (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2015; Routhier 2017, 10).

Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2017). In 2017, on average, homeless children in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters attended school only 84% of school days (Coalition for the Homeless 2017).<sup>4</sup> Only 50% of students who were homeless during high school graduated in four years and 18% dropped out compared to 71% of total students that graduated in 4 years and 9% who dropped out citywide in 2016 (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2016). Clearly, homeless children are poorly positioned, compared to their housed peers, to make use of their educational opportunities. Schools must identify and diminish the educational barriers blocking homeless children from academic success.

## **B. Overview of Issues**

These children struggle with interlocking issues. Homeless students struggle most with mental and emotional health. My research finds that the state of being homeless leads to excessive anxiety, depression, chronic fatigue, chronic worrying, low self-esteem, shyness, and shame. Homeless students suffer from stigma resulting in secretive habits (preventing teachers and administrators from noticing their struggles) and isolation from peers.<sup>5</sup> My research indicates that homeless students deal with little additional bullying compared to housed classmates, but are much more likely to be shunned by classmates due to hygiene issues and unstable schedules or mental states. Students who are homeless often endure normal academic and childhood/adolescent stressors with abnormally unstable social supports. Socially isolated students suffer emotional trauma that leaves them unhappy, unhealthy, and unable to perform to their full learning potential.

---

<sup>4</sup> Obtained from NYC Mayor's Management Report: "The rate of actual attendance per number of school days per month, based on total number of school-aged children who have attendance/registration records."

<sup>5</sup> I use the term "stigma" when discussing mental health because it focuses on the person being rejected or whose rights are being violated. In contrast, words like "discrimination" highlight the person rejecting the other (Solanke 2017, 1).

School transfers are well-known to be detrimental (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Sparks 2016; Astone and McLanahan 1994; McMillen, Kaufman and Klein 1995; Mantzicoloulos and Knutson 2000; Heinlein and Shinn 2000). The mobility associated with homelessness and school mobility tend to go hand-in-hand because families often relocate far from original schools, and transportation efforts to keep students in their original schools are not always sufficient. Despite impressive efforts to comply with laws on transportation, certain isolated or distant shelter locations simply doom any efforts to transport students to school, even with aid from the City provided under the McKinney-Vento Act. School attendance is directly affected by shelter proximity to children's schools (Coalition for the Homeless 2017; NYC Independent Budget Office 2016).

Though transportation, location, and mental and emotional health are the most significant issues homeless students face, they deal with additional problems. Homeless students struggle to satisfy a variety of what I refer to as "basic needs." Children frequently use school as a resource for numerous necessities in daily life that are not consistently available to homeless children. Homeless students and their parents have trouble connecting with outside resources. School officials bemoan an inability to adequately connect parents and students to workshops, programs, and organizations that could propel their recovery from the complex state of homelessness. Finally, schools have particular difficulties in supporting special needs students who are also homeless. Homeless students with disabilities have unique barriers in school, extracurricular or after-school activities, and at their residences.

## **C. A Brief Introduction to Law Applied in NYC**

The section that follows outlines the framework of laws and policies, spanning international, national, state, and city levels, that support the growing population of homeless students through the above background of academic struggles.

### **1. International Human Rights Treaties and Declarations**

All children are guaranteed the right to education under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which the United States has ratified. The right to education is reinforced under numerous human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which the United States has signed but not ratified. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) states:

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (United Nations General Assembly 1948).

The UDHR addresses universal accessibility and attendance (“*Everyone* has the right to education...Elementary education shall be compulsory”) and quality of education, especially emphasizing that education should appeal to diverse peoples and should develop character beyond academic intellect (“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups...”).

Although the right to health remains under debate in the USA, it is included in international human rights treaties. The ICESCR and CRC (signed but not ratified by the USA), and the UDHR (signed and ratified) assert a right to health. Article 25 of the UDHR states: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (United Nations General Assembly 1948). These rights to health and to social services, and the right to security in the event of disability, are pertinent in my later results. Article 24 of the CRC critically states that: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health” (United Nations General Assembly 1990). The CRC emphasizes that health rights extend to children.

Article 5 of CERD, which the United States has ratified, states: “States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before



the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights:... (v) The right to education and training...” (United Nations General Assembly 1969). The UDHR also discusses the purpose of education to promote “understanding” among “racial or religious groups.” Similarly, the ICESCR prohibits discrimination based on socio-economic status when making education available: “[ICESCR] guarantee[s] that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour,...property... or other status” (United Nations General Assembly 1976). These non-discrimination statements, in conjunction with the fact that homeless children tend to be people of color and, of course, low income, reinforce the right to education of homeless children.

## **2. Federal Legislation: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

The primary law declaring homeless children’s educational rights in NYC is the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, with Subtitle VII-B focusing on education rights. The Act states the basic educational rights of homeless students: “homeless children and youths [will] enroll in, and have *a full and equal* opportunity to succeed in, schools of that local educational agency...” (42 U.S.C. § 11432 (g)(6)(A)(ii)). Educational opportunities must be made equally available to homeless students as to housed students.

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the *Education for Homeless Children and Youths* program, states that children and youth who lack “a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” are considered homeless. The Act applies to New York’s many children (and youth under 21, or 22 in the case of special education students) living in domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters, doubled up or overcrowded apartments,

runaway situations, transitional homes, unstable situations with hospitalized parents, and children who live in trailers.<sup>6</sup>

The Act frequently uses rights language by referring to children’s “best interest” and “rights:” “[Districts will]...provide assistance to ...each child or youth...to exercise the *right* to attend the parent's or guardian's (or youth's) choice of schools... public notice of the educational *rights* of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services under this Act...” [emphasis added] (United States Department of Education 2017). The McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) includes:

1. Allocation of resources
2. Compliance
3. Local Educational Agencies (LEA) requirements
4. Comparable services
5. Coordination
6. LEA liaisons<sup>7</sup>
7. Review and revisions.

A particular focus of the Act is on transportation provisions: The McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) requires schools to enroll students experiencing homelessness “immediately,” a term that is interpreted literally. To make this immediate enrollment possible, the Act requires that states

---

<sup>6</sup> Among children who lack a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” the Act only excludes children placed in a foster home (they instead receive similar support under an amendment to the Every Student Succeeds Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Liaisons are critical in implementing the MVA regulations. They are assigned with identifying and connecting homeless students with school faculty, shelter staff, and outside services including Head Start, physical and mental health services, housing services, and substance abuse services (42 U.S.C. § 11432).

and districts provide transportation to homeless students to “eliminate barriers” to their attendance. To aid feasibility, the Act also provides funding that can be used for a variety of resources necessary for homeless students to consistently attend and to excel at school. These include: clothing, student fees, school supplies, birth certificates, immunizations, food, medical and dental care, eyeglasses, counseling, outreach, tutoring, and standardized test fees (Duffield, Julianelle and Santos 2016). Additional funding is set aside to ensure transportation for students who decide to stay in their schools of origin after moving into permanent housing (NYS-TEACHS n.d.). Thus, the law addresses both necessities for attendance and tangible necessities to enhance performance in school.

The McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) requires the appointment of liaisons who are critical in implementing the Act’s regulations. They are assigned with identifying and connecting homeless students with school faculty, shelter staff, and outside services including Head Start, physical and mental health services, housing services, and substance abuse services (42 U.S.C. § 11432).

The MVA has been amended to delineate U.S. Code requirements for extracurriculars as part of homeless children’s school experience. In particular, Title 42 of the U.S. Code, § 11432 F (iii) mandates that schools ensure homeless students “do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities.” Title 42 of the U.S. Code, § 11434a refers to the requirement that schools “immediately enroll” homeless students and clarifies that the term “enroll” extends beyond class: “The terms 'enroll' and 'enrollment' include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.”

### **3. Federal Legislation: Every Student Succeeds Act**

The McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) is augmented and reauthorized (U.S. Department of Education 2016) by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, which took effect on October 1, 2016. The ESSA includes expanded transportation protections until the end of the school year for temporarily housed students who move into permanent housing, the inclusion of preschool in the definition of "school of origin," and changes to the dispute resolution process which include the provision of all McKinney-Vento related services (for example, continued enrollment and transportation) until a final decision is issued (Title 9 Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 §§ 9101-9215). The ESSA includes marked-up amendments to the education subtitle of the MVA under Title 9. Title 9 Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 §§ 9111-1112 focus on homeless children.

### **4. New York State Law and Constitution**

New York State is obliged to provide a basic education through high school as delineated in Article XI of the New York State Constitution: "The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated" (NY. Const. art. 1, § 17). The New York State Constitution contains a second relevant clause: "the aid, care and support of the needy are public concerns and shall be provided by the state..." (NY. Const. art. 1, § 17). This clause has been interpreted during legal proceedings, such as those in Callahan v. Carey 1979, to directly apply to New York City and State's homeless population. Thus, the City and State are responsible for the support of its homeless constituents.

New York State enacted the Education of Homeless Children Act (NY Educ Law § 3209 (2017)) to protect the educational rights of homeless children. This law is motivated by and promises compliance with the MVA. It details the role of commissioners: "...the commissioner of social services, and the director of the division for youth shall develop a plan to ensure coordination and access to education for homeless children ..." Fitting the law into the NYC administrative infrastructure, the law details that "public welfare officials" will distribute basic necessities filling basic needs. It also details the practical finances of the State's districts; for example, the district of origin is not eligible for tuition reimbursement when a student continues to attend that district after becoming homeless (N.Y. Education Law § 3209(3)(a)). This law further deemphasizes the few mentions of mental health in the MVA and ESSA: NY Educ L § 3209 makes absolutely no mention of mental or emotional health or of the presence of social workers. Notably, this law devotes the most detail to provisions for transportation (which are consistent with McKinney-Vento provisions).

Albeit somewhat ambiguously, New York State does recognize its citizens' right to health care by affirming the State's responsibility for the health of the "needy." Article XVII (the Aid to the Needy provision) of the State Constitution, while not specifically mentioning "health," has been interpreted to create affirmative rights to health. For example, State courts have recognized a constitutional duty to provide Medicaid benefits to the plaintiffs of *Aliessa v. Novello* based on the Aid to the Needy Provision (Leonard 2010, 1351-52).

## **5. New York City Law and Policy**

New York City has established unique human rights laws through its Commission on Human Rights. Although education is not covered by NYC human rights law, housing is covered

(New York City Commission on Human Rights 2017). Disability, color, and race are protected classes under NYC human rights law such as the aforementioned law on housing (New York City Commission on Human Rights 2017). Additional protections to housing are afforded with the presence of children (New York City Commission on Human Rights 2017). The City also takes measures to make certain that housing, and private and public facilities, such as schools, are accessible to people with disabilities (New York City Commission on Human Rights 2017). It has installed a grievance mechanism that is explained in simple terms in a short video—albeit one that is only available in English (New York City Commission on Human Rights 2017).<sup>8</sup>

De-emphasis on mental health in laws has resulted in de-emphasis on mental health in policies, but one significant policy does exist to protect the mental health of NYC's homeless students. This policy, the *Bridging the Gap Initiative*, was recently implemented in 2017. In fiscal year 2017, funding was allocated specifically to support the social and emotional needs of students in temporary housing and their families in the 32 NYC public elementary and middle schools with the largest number of students residing in shelters. These were schools that did not have a social worker on staff during the 2014/2015 school year. As a result of this new policy, these 32 schools now have at least one school social worker on staff to service homeless students (NYC Department of Education 2017).

On January 19, 2016, a significant new policy change by Mayor de Blasio went into effect. Mayor de Blasio decided that the Department of Education should bus all K-6 homeless students to any school in a direct effort to simplify commutes by replacing subway rides with

---

<sup>8</sup> Notably, 24% of homeless students in NYC were English language learners in the 2015–16 school year (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2017)

school bus rides. This policy is intended to serve roughly an additional 3,600 students with 150 new bus routes (Russo, Stulberger and Givens 2016).<sup>9</sup>

### **D. Organization and Contributions of My Thesis**

This research makes three primary contributions to the field of human rights. First, this thesis focuses on solutions that are or can be implemented by specific schools and districts to meet (or exceed) preexisting federal and international human rights obligations.<sup>10</sup> In our current political climate, it is important for schools to work independently of federal aid and direction and to maintain consistency with international human rights law. Second, the MVA was established in 1987 but amended numerous times, most recently in October 2016. The Act is old enough to have been critically evaluated yet new enough to benefit from criticisms to which districts, policymakers, etc. can respond. Several policies implementing it are also new or ongoing, and would benefit from evaluation. Finally, my thesis will fill gaps in the preexisting body of knowledge, particularly regarding mental and emotional health. Principals and district administrators will benefit from better understanding the issues that these students face, and in particular what measures work to protect these vulnerable students.

My thesis focuses on whether and how existing legislation, policies, and individual initiatives mitigate barriers to school attendance and academic success of homeless K-12 students. I assess these laws and policies against the framework of international human rights standards, enabling me to identify areas of law and policy that are insufficient in implementing human rights. I then draw from individualized school administrators' complaints and initiatives

---

<sup>9</sup> Mayor de Blasio stated that 3,600 children had been denied buses and would not be denied buses under this new policy. The reporters took this to be a rough estimate of how many children the new buses are intended or expected to serve. There are no numbers yet confirming that this is the number of students actually served.

<sup>10</sup> The McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 was the first and is still the primary U.S. federal law providing federal money for a variety of programs for homeless people, including students.

in order to form suggestions for bringing administration, policy, and legislation up to human rights standards. I will examine 4 main questions under a framework of 6 primary issues:

1. Do existing laws and policies meet human rights standards; are existing laws and policies sufficient to enable homeless students to attend and excel in school?
2. What is inadequate in extant law and policy?
3. How do specific schools work beyond what is required by law/policy to make it possible for homeless students to both attend and excel in school?
4. How can schools and policies be improved, as demonstrated by good practices adopted by individual schools?

I have identified 6 primary issues faced by homeless students, which are addressed in varying ways by schools:

1. Location (of shelters in relation to school, especially when children switch to a different location of residency)
2. Transportation (of students to school regardless of proximity of residence to school)
3. Mental and emotional health
4. “Basic needs” (laundry facilities, sufficient food, necessary paperwork, etc.)
5. Connections to outside resources
6. Needs of students with disabilities.



While all of these issues have been noted and are addressed through policy and individual initiatives to varying extents, my research examines which issues are of greatest concern. My thesis takes a further step to investigate how these points are addressed and should be addressed to satisfy rights of homeless students. I offer a rights-based approach, informed and inspired by localized initiatives, to sealing gaps in current laws and policies that guarantee the educational rights of homeless students in NYC.

This paper begins with a literature review before moving on to an in-depth discussion of my research methodology and findings. My major research findings are broken down into the following subject areas: location, transportation, mental and emotional health, basic needs, connections to outside resources, and support of students with disabilities. This is followed by a discussion of implications of my research on future law, policy, and administration. This analysis examines gaps in law and policy at international, national, state, and city levels. It also offers recommendations to bolster law and policy. My thesis concludes with an examination of research limitations and recommendations for further research.

## **II. Literature Review**

Relevant scholarly literature explores links between homelessness, poverty, and educational achievement of young children. Some literature provides general discussion on guidelines to apply provisions of the MVA (Duffield, Julianelle and Santos 2016; United States Department of Education 2004). Literature involving data analysis consistently finds that homeless students are disproportionately people of color (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2016; NYC Independent Budget Office 2016). Literature is sparse and relatively new regarding actual *implementation* of current formal and informal methods to bolster academic

success of homeless children. In addition, there are many articles concerning improvements of educational access in the popular press that explore innovations by specific schools and districts, as well as broader policy changes. My thesis will discuss such innovations.

Homeless students test well behind their housed peers in all economic brackets (Harris 2016; Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness 2016, 51-53). Literature confirms that poverty (Lafavor 2016; Duncan, Ziol-Guest and Kalil 2011), school mobility (Julianelle and Foscarinis 2003; Rumberger and Larson 1998), and home or shelter mobility (Julianelle and Foscarinis 2003; Rumberger and Larson 1998) have negative effects on children's academic performance. Homeless children are found to face the same and additional setbacks in education as other low-income children. They suffer from causes for their homelessness, particularly from the effects of poverty, in addition to effects of homelessness itself (Lafavor 2016; Buckner and Bassuk 2001). Challenges intensify and continue to impede achievement the longer children are homeless (Miller 2011). Much of the literature finds that laws are not backed with sufficient monitoring, staff, and financial support to fully counter these impediments (The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty 2017, 1-4).

Much literature identifies nuance in gaps in homeless students' achievement. Lafavor (2016) and Cutuli et al. (2013), for example, find that homeless children enter school later than others and suffer math and language skill impairment. Hutchings et al. (2013) examines the relationship between residential and school moves in early childhood, finding that anxiety-induced changes in homeless children's demeanor such as shyness, insomnia, and aggression. Miller (2011) notes that challenges unique to homelessness intensify the longer that children are homeless. Miller (2015) explains that the location of homeless people also influences education;

students in doubled-up homes, for example, will be affected differently by their homeless experience than those in shelters.

In contrast, many homeless children can and do succeed in school. Masten et al. (2015) begins to identify helpful resources: “Early childhood education, screening, and access to quality programs are important for preventing achievement disparities that emerge early and persist among these students ... The services mandated by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act led to substantial improvements in access to education for children experiencing homelessness.”<sup>11</sup> Masten et al.’s emphasis on resilience could offer clues into the practices already implemented by and for high-achieving homeless students; my thesis expands upon such research.

Students’ performance is affected by stress due to sleep deprivation, emotional distress, social isolation, and exposure to dangerous situations. One study found that 72% of homeless students say being homeless has a big impact on their ability to feel safe, 71% on their mental and emotional health, and 69% on their self-confidence (Ingram, et al. 2017). Homeless students disproportionately may not be sleeping soundly or safely. Homeless children living in overcrowded, noisy doubled-up apartments, shelters, and hotel rooms are deprived of sleep. Homeless children frequently live in single-parent households. Their parents may be ill or especially busy with work, leaving young children with adult responsibilities and looking after themselves and their younger siblings (Elliott 2013). Furthermore, low-income people face discrimination and humiliation through stigma both because of the state of being poor and reliant on public assistance, and because they are disproportionately people of color or belong to families headed by a single mother (Solanke 2017).

---

<sup>11</sup> See Miller (2011) and Masten, A., Fiat, A.E., and Labella, M.H. (2015), 315-17

Food insecurity plagues children and influences their ability to do homework and excel in school (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016). Even when children receive free school breakfasts and lunches, they remain hungry over summer months and at dinnertime (Huang, Barnidge and Kim 2015), which leads to long-term physical and mental health issues, and to reduced academic performance. Food can be low-quality and difficult to access in many shelters (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016, 18). Some shelters have only one microwave, leaving families in line for hours (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016, 18). When motels house homeless families in place of shelters, students may face even more food insecurity. Homeless hotel guests are not offered the usual complimentary breakfasts (Stewart 2015), and are often isolated from the usual infrastructure of soup kitchens and other services, due to the fact that isolated hotels are most often chosen to house homeless people (Stewart 2015).<sup>12</sup>

Research underscores detriments of switching schools and suggests that the pros of remaining in the school of origin make most commutes worthwhile despite time and logistical challenges (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Astone and McLanahan 1994; McMillen, Kaufman and Klein 1995).<sup>13</sup> Homeless students change schools more often than housed peers: In NYC, “almost 1,500 students, or slightly more than 5 percent of students in shelters in the 2013-2014 school year, attended three or more schools, a phenomenon that is rarely observed among the permanently housed (0.5 percent)” (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016). School mobility

---

<sup>12</sup> Phasing out the use of hotels to house homeless families is important so that children have access to soup kitchens and are not refused food or singled out for separate food services at hotels. Mayor de Blasio has started to phase out hotel use, but is far from completing that mission (de Blasio 2017).

<sup>13</sup> For example, Russell and Larsen (1998) examined connections of “non-promotional school mobility” (changing schools when not graduating) between the eighth and twelfth grades on dropout rates using the National Educational Longitudinal Survey’s third follow-up data from the late 1980s-1990s. The study followed eighth-grade students to see how frequently they changed schools and dropped out of high school. Detailed information on life conditions of students in the study allowed these researchers to focus solely on the effect of mobility on high school completion rates. The study determined that school mobility has a negative effect on school performance: Students who changed high schools one time were almost 50% more likely than students who did not change schools to drop out of high school. Students who changed schools two or more times were twice as likely as students who did not change schools to drop out.

leads to absences, general unease and stress, loss of social capital, loss of paperwork, resulting confusion and grade retention, and children facing new curricula that do not begin where they left off in the previous schools' curricula (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Sparks 2016). Ensuing chaos increases retention and dropout rates and is directly associated with lower grades (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Sparks 2016).

Literature focuses on transportation and location as the biggest issues faced by homeless students (Russell, Stulberger, and Givens 2016; NYC Independent Budget Office 2016; Independent Democratic Conference 2017). These issues are placed in context of school absences and transfers, which are examined above as major impactors on performance. Bus service does not meet demand: Mayor de Blasio admitted that roughly 3,600 K-6 children requested yet were denied bus service solely because the buses would be put over their route limit (Russell, Stulberger, and Givens 2016).<sup>14</sup> Literature finds that schools have primarily complied with McKinney-Vento transportation demands by distributing subway vouchers instead of altering school bus routes to accommodate homeless children (Russell and Stulberger 2015).<sup>15</sup> Long and complicated commutes by public transport can be unsafe, stressful, and exhausting for children (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016; Independent Democratic Conference 2017).

Due to the complexities of transportation, school attendance correlates with shelter proximity to children's schools (Coalition for the Homeless 2017). However, with tens of thousands of children living in NYC's homeless shelters, and extremely limited shelter space, it has thus far proven impossible to keep all children close to their schools (Russo and Stulberger

---

<sup>14</sup> The Chancellor of the Board of Education decided on this limit for all NYC school buses in order to ensure that children are not on a bus for extended time periods (New York City Board of Education, 2000; Evely, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Department of Education officials say that they offered buses to 2/3 of eligible children living in shelters (Russo and Stulberger, 2015).

2015). During the 2014-15 school year, only about half of homeless families in NYC were placed in housing located in the same borough as their youngest child's school. The report linked this to high rates of school mobility and absences among homeless children; in the 2013-14 school year, nearly 1,500 homeless children attended three or more schools, and two-thirds of students living in shelters were either "chronically absent" (missing more than 20 days, which is 10% of the school year) or "severely chronically absent" (missing more than 40 days) (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016).

### **III: Methodology**

My research draws from interviews and surveys comprised of both structured questions and open-ended questions. These methods were constructed with the aim of both expanding on current findings and common knowledge through structured questions and searching for innovative, unexpected results through open-ended questions.

#### **A. Survey and Interview Designs**

My survey (included in the appendix) asked respondents to identify and expand upon barriers homeless students face and the measures schools take to support homeless students, policies that they believe support their students, and resulting impact on student achievement. Many questions are open-ended, and all include an "other" option that grants space for respondents to elaborate. My survey clarifies the definition of homelessness that I use for my research, which is extracted from the MVA: "Children and youth who lack 'a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence' are considered *homeless* (McKinney-Vento Homelessness

Assistance Act of 1987: Sec. 725 Art.2a). This broad definition includes children who *live in domestic violence shelters, shelters, and doubled-up or crowded apartments*; are *refugees* or internally displaced or are documented/ undocumented immigrants and do not have fixed housing; are *runaway* or have long-term hospitalized parents” [emphasis added]. I include this quote in my e-mail solicitation and at the start of my survey. I e-mailed my survey to all New York City public school principals and their corresponding “survey coordinators” from 1,555 New York City public schools.<sup>16</sup>

In a second step, I followed up with requests for interviews with principals, survey coordinators, and other administrators who took my survey and affirmed that I may contact them by phone or e-mail. These were semi-structured, open-ended informational interviews, conducted under conditions set out by adult, administrative interviewees. I personalized my interviews to follow up on survey responses to identify how critical issues impact students, to learn more about unique practices mentioned in surveys, to assess whether these initiatives could be implemented in more widespread NYC Department of Education (DOE) policy, and to inquire after tangible evidence that various tactics are improving students’ educational experiences. Examples of common questions are included in the appendix.

## **B. Descriptive Statistics**

I received 63 responses from principals and “survey coordinators,” 49 of which were complete and 14 of which left certain questions (most frequently the short-answer questions rather than the multiple-choice questions) blank. Some of my e-mails did not go through or were sent to individuals who left the position and referred me to the current principal or survey

---

<sup>16</sup> listed here: <https://insideschools.org/>

coordinator. Some principals and survey coordinators forwarded my survey to other administrators to fill out on their behalf. As a result, I received an unknown number of survey responses, between 5-15, from administrators to whom I did not send my survey initially. The majority of these were social workers.

I spoke with 4 principals, one assistant principal, one survey coordinator, two social workers, two teachers, and one administrator whose exact position was unclear. Most interviews were conducted over the phone; one was conducted in an office. I researched each interviewee and his or her school before speaking. I learned that one interviewee was involved in a scandal, the nature of which compelled me to exclude his interview and survey short-answers from this thesis.

## **IV: Results**

A key portion of my results section is a product of open-ended questions. My respondents also made frequent use of the “other” option and accompanying short-answer space on my multiple-choice questions. As a result, much of the results section focuses on descriptive and exploratory answers rather than on numerical results. The results are also broader in scope than would be possible with strictly multiple-choice survey methods. I integrate my semi-structured interviews and creative survey comments into this results section.

My most significant results derive from survey questions in which almost all respondents were in accord, and from unstructured interview responses in which interviewees shared their deepest frustrations and most innovative remedies. In the tables that follow, some numbers point very clearly to the most pressing issues. For example, 82% of respondents identified difficult commutes and 79.37% poor emotional health as “major issues” faced by homeless students at



their schools (Table I). These numbers contribute to the most significant findings of my unstructured interviews: Mental and emotional health are far greater barriers than most previous literature suggests, and are disproportionately significant considering the minimal attention emotional and mental health are given in any laws or policies. As a result, my respondents have innovated a number of thoughtful actions to foster resilience, many of which center on community building, stress reduction, and esteem building. I explore these and other pertinent findings in this section.

| <b>What are the major issues faced by homeless students at your school? Check any that apply:</b> |               | <b>What are the major challenges faced by your school in supporting homeless students? Check all that apply:</b> |               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Difficult commutes                                                                                | <b>82.54%</b> | Inadequate coordination with services                                                                            | <b>61.90%</b> |
| Poor emotional health (i.e. chronic fatigue, chronic worrying, low self-esteem, shyness)          | <b>79.37%</b> | Inadequate means to support students with physical, mental, or educational disabilities                          | <b>47.62%</b> |
| Lack of other amenities (i.e. printer, school supplies, basic facilities at shelters)             | <b>60.32%</b> | Inadequate funding                                                                                               | <b>44.44%</b> |
| Frequent school transfers                                                                         | <b>50.79%</b> | Difficulty identifying students in need                                                                          | <b>36.51%</b> |
| Inadequate study spaces                                                                           | <b>39.68%</b> | Limited time among administrators and teachers                                                                   | <b>31.75%</b> |
| Food insecurity                                                                                   | <b>46.03%</b> | Complications in obtaining funding                                                                               | <b>15.87%</b> |
| Mental illness (i.e. depression, anxiety, OCD, ADD)                                               | <b>41.27%</b> | Inadequate space on or coordination with school buses                                                            | <b>26.98%</b> |
| Missing paperwork                                                                                 | <b>26.98%</b> | Inadequate coordination with administrators                                                                      | <b>12.70%</b> |
| Inadequate laundry facilities                                                                     | <b>34.92%</b> | Other (please specify)                                                                                           | <b>20.63%</b> |
| Inadequate social support from other students                                                     | <b>11.11%</b> |                                                                                                                  |               |
| Inadequate social support from teachers, administrators, liaisons                                 | <b>17.46%</b> |                                                                                                                  |               |
| Early shelter curfews                                                                             | <b>7.94%</b>  |                                                                                                                  |               |
| Other (please specify)                                                                            | <b>17.46%</b> |                                                                                                                  |               |

**Table I: Challenges Faced by Homeless Children and Schools Supporting Them**

## **A. Mental and Emotional Health**

### **1. Emotional Health: Chronic Fatigue and Worry, Low Self-Esteem, Shyness**

While transportation and location received significant attention in previous research and in policy responses, my research indicates that intangible issues—emotional health and mental health—are the most pervasive problems that homeless students face. According to my surveys and interviews, the greatest challenge homeless students face is poor emotional health. Poor emotional health is described in surveys by symptoms such as “chronic fatigue, chronic worrying [stress], low self-esteem, shyness.” As we see in Table I, nearly 80% of survey responses report emotional health problems as one of the “major issues faced by homeless students at [their] school.”

Of course, stress is not unique to those without a home, but lack of a permanent home uniquely intensifies stress. Homeless students face the same academic worries as their housed peers, but they have many additional emotional and mental health hurdles with which to contend. Students face severe “emotional trauma” (Principal 2 2017) due to “shuffling” from school to school, moving where they live, issues at home that can include domestic violence, and isolation from peers (Social Worker 1 2017; Principal 2 2017; District 75 Principal 1 2017). Principals tend to report that housed students do not bully homeless peers, in particular because homelessness is confidential. Instead, housed students may avoid and isolate homeless peers that are unable to shower or do laundry regularly. Finally, children without stable homes frequently have responsibilities and worries that exceed what children their age are equipped to handle. These children often share their parents’ worries in the search for housing, employment, and basic needs (Principal 1 2017). It is common for them to share parents’ responsibilities in

looking after younger family members (Principal 1 2017). They also may live in dangerous conditions at their shelters (Teall 2017).

When children are saddled with adult responsibilities at shelters or crowded apartments, they cannot focus on homework. A number of my survey respondents and interviewees reported that homeless students inconsistently complete homework due to stress and distractions after school. These students also arrive at school exhausted, unhappy, or distracted by problems lingering from the previous night. Extra responsibility leads to intense stress and distractions (Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Students can display “defiant” and “impulsive” misbehaviors or may instead stop talking and withdraw into themselves (Social Worker 1 2017; Principal 2 2017). Children tend to act out when stressed. One of my respondents spoke of a homeless student of hers who, she understood, did not want to attend class due to stress from his housing situation. This student regularly acted out so that he would be sent out of class. These misbehaviors stopped when he moved into permanent housing.

As policies lag, individual faculty do what they can to aid students’ emotional well-being. Teachers try to be patient with behavioral problems, yet results are inconsistent. One survey respondent summed up goals for reinforcing emotional health: “Our school has built a strong social emotional component to each day so that students have an opportunity to define how they feel, express concerns that they might have as well as a tool box of strategies to use throughout the day and at home.” Setting out clear goals has helped this school pinpoint techniques that work best: “We have a big arts program and we put on a school play each year. Students...have the opportunity to be a part of this community and at the same time develop self-confidence. We have three guidance counselors as well as small class size, with most classes having two teachers most of the day” (Teall 2017). The goal of giving students a chance to “define how they feel,

express concerns...[and develop] a toolbox of strategies...” led the school to develop an extracurricular program, theatre, that develops confidence in self-expression. Small class sizes and the presence of counselors make it simpler and less intimidating for students to find an adult with whom they can “express concerns.” This example shows that having a clear understanding of what constitutes good emotional health helps schools develop precise strategies for boosting emotional health. “Self-confidence,” “express[ion of] concerns,” and “the opportunity to be a part of this [school] community” are running themes that schools point to as useful emotional health goals. Many respondents echoed these tactics for reaching these goals: emphasis on socio-emotional health and community building through extracurricular activities, counseling, and one-on-one attention.

Many survey respondents and interviewees reported providing, out of school budgets or out of pocket, more mental and emotional health counseling and recruiting more social workers than is required by law.<sup>17</sup> My interviews and surveys unearthed a number of innovative responses to student stress:

- One school established a lecture series called *What It Takes*: “Among the presenters we had Pulitzer Price [sic] Winners Junot Diaz and Sandra Cisneros, [and] Puerto Rican Singer/Actor Tito Nieves” (Teall 2017).
- “One program [one school has] implemented is [that] after identifying the students we involve them in building facilities issues such as having them attend school safety meeting, having them operate the school's sustainability plan, school garden and school

---

<sup>17</sup> Mayor de Blasio allocated funding in fiscal year 2017 specifically to support the social and emotional needs of students in temporary housing and their families in the 32 NYC public elementary and middle schools with the largest number of homeless students residing in shelters. As a result of this initiative, *the Bridging the Gap Initiative*, these 32 schools have at least one school social worker on staff to service homeless students. These were schools that did not have a social worker on staff during the 2014/2015 school year. (NYC Department of Education 2017)

store. It helps build a sense of security and belonging to a stable environment” (Teall 2017).

- One school established a comfort dog program, inspired after the initiative expanded from 6-60 other schools in two years. These comfort dogs come with a curriculum on socio-emotional learning (Principal 1 2017).
- Faculty buy a holiday gift for each student (Teall 2017).
- Faculty bring students on overnight trips to places including Washington, D.C. (Teall 2017).
- Several schools created well-established arts programs to develop community and self-expression (Teall 2017).
- Schools make extracurriculars mandatory (Teall 2017).
- One school opens early for students to play in the gym or go swimming (Teall 2017).
- One school established a health clinic inside the school building (Teacher 2 2017).
- One school established a partnership with the Child Mind Institute, whose counselors come directly to the school to meet with students. This is in addition to the *Bridging the Gap* social workers that NYC has placed in the school (Survey Coordinator 1 2017).

Ninety percent of homeless people who visit NYC shelters are people of color and their emotional health benefits from positive representation (Coalition for the Homeless 2017).

Numerous studies (Larson 2006; McCarthy 2005; Turner, Finkelhor and Ormrod 2005) indicate that representation is key to emotional health. The *What It Takes* lecture series mentioned above can boost emotional health and morale and is furthermore critical to homeless students because the speakers are incredibly successful people of color.

## **2. Mental Health: Anxiety, ADD, and Unnamed Medical Conditions**

Poor mental health is not as prevalent among homeless students as poor emotional health, but remains a significant issue. My survey gives the following as examples of mental illness: depression, anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). In Table I, we saw that 41% of survey responses report mental health problems as one of the “major issues faced by homeless students at your school.”<sup>18</sup> One of my interviewees explained that some of her students take medications for mental health issues that have problematic side effects (Assistant Principal 1 2017). She says these medications can adversely affect their school performance; for example, medications can cause children to act out and to fall asleep in class. Information regarding their specific illnesses and medications is confidential, making these side effects nearly impossible to adequately address. Another interviewee bemoaned a lack of coordination between schools and doctors. There is no apparent ad-hoc method that can sufficiently address mental illness; changes must be made at a citywide level, in law and policy, to emphasize diagnosis and professional treatment of mental illnesses (through counseling and coordination between doctors and schools).

## **3. Social Connections**

Homeless children struggle to build social capital due to the nature of their housing, the frequency with which they change schools, and stigma. The expectation of stigma can compel homeless students to develop secretive habits, hiding their situation from faculty and liaisons who otherwise could have supported them. Inevitably, students who frequently change schools lose social ties. Frequent school changes can disrupt budding friendships with peers and school

---

<sup>18</sup> Principals are not qualified to diagnose mental health issues; this survey statistic is a function of non-medical judgment.

faculty, keeping students isolated from homework assistance and valuable information traveling by word-of-mouth. My research indicates that homeless children's main social concern is isolation (Teall 2017). Homeless students are most commonly isolated from peers due to frequent school transfers, poor hygiene, or emotional issues such as poor anger management, shyness, or depression (Teall 2017).

Schools encourage inclusion of homeless students in various ways that are not mandated under the MVA or other laws. Principals emphasize the importance of fostering strong friendships among students. My respondents reported doing the following with the express purpose of improving the social lives of homeless students:

- Distributing hygiene materials such as wipes and deodorant so other students do not avoid them (Teall 2017)
- Including discussions of poverty and homelessness in social studies lessons (Teall 2017)
- Introducing "Student Buddies to support and provide social and emotional balance" (Teall 2017)
- Offering a wide range of extracurricular activities (Teall 2017)
- Making extracurriculars mandatory (Teall 2017)

Schools have adopted philosophies that emphasize community. Many respondents echo the notion that extracurriculars are key to community building (Survey Coordinator 1 2017; District 75 Principal 1; Teall 2017): "I think it is most important to make them feel a part of a community. The extracurriculars are key for this" (Teall 2017). A number of survey respondents also voiced that extracurricular activities keep students away from tumultuous living conditions

and responsibilities that are beyond the children's ages at the shelter or in overcrowded apartments (Survey Coordinator 1, 2017). They are instead welcomed where they can be supported by attentive teachers, given academically enriching rather than age-inappropriate responsibilities, and may receive extra food (Survey Coordinator 1 2017).

Unfortunately, not all schools have enough extracurriculars that are accessible to homeless students. One survey respondent said he/she cannot currently but would like to “provide after-school tutoring and field trip opportunities for students...work[ing] around social-emotional development of students and how [to] best support children through the arts, sports, and counseling” (Teall 2017). Another respondent would like “Additional funding/ resources for weekend enrichment” (Teall 2017). One interviewee bemoans that the policy of acceptance into extracurriculars through lottery rather than priority hinders availability to those students that need them most (Survey Coordinator 1 2017). One respondent even suggested that policies should emphasize community and extracurriculars: “Maybe policies should emphasize community, mental health, extracurriculars that also keep these kids away from unstable ‘home’ life” (Teall 2017).

## **B. Transportation**

A major problem preventing homeless children from accessing education lies in the choice between suffering a long commute to stay in one school and transferring to a new school. School mobility leads to noticeably reduced attendance and grades, changes in curricula and teaching style, disrupted bonds with peers and faculty, and practical maneuvering issues that come with moving physical belongings (Social Worker 2 2017). As we saw in Table I above,



50.79% of my respondents cited frequent school transfers as a major issue faced by their homeless students.

Long and complicated solo commutes by public transport can be tiring and unsafe for young children and for students of all ages who have a disability (District 75 Principal 2017; Principal 2 2017). My interviewees explained that parents are reluctant to leave young or disabled children on buses for long periods (Social Worker 2 2017; Principal 2 2017). Parents worry about leaving their children unattended for so long and also worry that if there is an emergency at school, they will not be able to arrive on campus quickly (Principal 2 2017). Another interviewee added that bored children will act out if left on buses for long commutes (Principal 2 2017). Some of her students must board a bus in the Bronx at 5A.M. to arrive at their Brooklyn school and exhibit severe behavioral issues while sitting, bored, on the bus for over two hours (Principal 2 2017). My interviewees explained that students frequently miss school after relocating as they wait for their school buses to reroute (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Social Worker 2 2017). Absences are most common among young children and students with disabilities who require supervision on the subway that working parents cannot provide (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Teall 2017). The issue is further complicated when shelters or certain housing vouchers have requirements for parents to consistently hold their jobs; families must prioritize work attendance over consistent school attendance when they conflict (Teall 2017).

Travel vouchers are popular; Table II indicates 46% of schools surveyed provide travel vouchers to homeless students, normally given directly to students by an administrator or liaison. Another 54% provide bus service to students in shelters and 11.11% provide bus service to doubled-up students (who are the majority of homeless students). My surveys do not inquire

| Which of the following does your school do to support homeless students? Check any that apply: |               | If your school distributes travel vouchers to students, how are travel vouchers distributed? |               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Provide transportation vouchers                                                                | <b>46.03%</b> | From administrator to student                                                                | <b>31.82%</b> |
| Provide bus service to students in shelters                                                    | <b>53.97%</b> | From teacher to student                                                                      | <b>11.36%</b> |
| Provide bus service to students in “doubled up” housing                                        | <b>11.11%</b> | From liaison to student                                                                      | <b>45.45%</b> |
|                                                                                                |               | From administrator to parent                                                                 | <b>11.36%</b> |
|                                                                                                |               | From teacher to parent                                                                       | <b>2.27%</b>  |
|                                                                                                |               | From liaison to parent                                                                       | <b>13.64%</b> |
|                                                                                                |               | Other (please specify)                                                                       | <b>31.82%</b> |

**Table II: Transportation-Related Activities to Support Homeless Children**

about door-to-door busing, but interviews indicate that it is uncommon, with the exception of special needs students (District 75 Principal 1 2017).

My interviewees have yet to see any change in busing after Mayor de Blasio’s new policy expanding the bus system went into effect (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Unfortunately, as seen in Table I, 27% of respondents reported inadequate space on or coordination with school buses. While schools await full effects of de Blasio’s new policy, they work individually to improve transportation for homeless students. As we will see in Table III in section IV.D, 11% of survey respondents reported that staff accompany homeless students on public transportation when needed. This action is critical when parents have conflicts such as work or mandatory shelter meetings.

My interviewees reported a significant lag time, regularly lasting around two weeks, in bus reroutes (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Social Worker 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Some administrators take steps to speed up bus reroutes as a more systematic solution: One

interviewee at a school specifically for special needs students explains that she communicates directly with bus drivers, an activity that is not required by law and may at times involve not-quite-legal requests, in order to hasten rerouting after a homeless student changes location. She does so in order to bypass the City's standard bureaucratic procedure that interferes with her students' consistent attendance. When City policies lead to slow rerouting, she speeds the process by handing notes with reroute requests directly to drivers. Bus reroutes are particularly crucial because these disabled students cannot take public transportation without supervision.

### **C. Location**

Despite impressive efforts to comply with thorough laws on transportation, certain isolated or distant shelter locations simply doom any efforts to transport students to school, even with aid from the City provided under the MVA. My interviews and surveys revealed the following examples of poor location overwhelming transportation efforts:

- A doubled-up mother was moved into permanent housing so far from her toddler's school that not even a rerouted bus would suffice; the mother was afraid to leave her child alone on a bus for so long. With absolutely no viable option for transportation, this child left the school. This points to another complication with commutes: Even when children are provided with bus service, parents are reluctant to leave them alone for lengthy commutes. Commutes must be *shortened* in addition to being simplified (Assistant Principal 1 2017).

- Numerous students from many schools commute 2+ hours from Bronx shelters to Brooklyn and Manhattan schools. This is more common among special needs students who cannot find a closer school of similar caliber (District 75 Principal 1 2017).
- Students placed in the Bronx frequently switch out of Brooklyn schools despite being aware of their right to remain in the schools (Social Worker 2 2017).
- Students placed outside of NYC no longer retain full transportation rights; laws and policies may differ. These students may no longer be able to attend their school of origin (District 75 Principal 1 2017).
- Families are frequently given almost no warning when the City transfers them to a new shelter, disrupting schedules and the ability of parents to accompany young and special needs children on school commutes (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Social Worker 2 2017).

As we saw in Table I, 83% of respondents state that children have difficult commutes. These students frequently arrive at school late and exhausted even though they are provided with Metro-Cards or school bus services in accordance with McKinney-Vento guidelines. As seen in my bulleted examples above, even a strong and fully functional bus service cannot solve all location-based problems. These students' problems can only be solved by policies giving students permanent housing or space in shelters closer to their original schools. One survey respondent left the following quote in the comments section: "What would help the most [out of any possible change or initiative] is to provide shelters in the boroughs that the students were living in prior to becoming homeless."

## D. Basic Needs

Table I noted that 60.32% of respondents reported their homeless students lacked amenities such as printers, school supplies, and basic facilities at shelters; 46.03% reported food insecurity; and 39.68% reported inadequate study spaces. Table III details school supports covering a variety of basic needs, from food support to extended school hours providing a quiet, safe place to study.

|                                             | <b>Which of the following does your school do to support homeless students? Check any that apply:</b>  |               | <b>Do students have a place that remains open ON CAMPUS to do work on weekends?</b> |               |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Meals</b>                                | Provide free lunch                                                                                     | <b>90.48%</b> | Yes                                                                                 | <b>16.95%</b> |
|                                             | Provide free breakfast                                                                                 | <b>92.06%</b> | No                                                                                  | <b>83.05%</b> |
| <b>Study Support</b>                        | Provide tutoring                                                                                       | <b>65.08%</b> | <b>How late can students remain ON CAMPUS after school to do homework?</b>          |               |
|                                             | Remain open on weekends for use as student study space                                                 | <b>9.52%</b>  |                                                                                     |               |
| <b>Laundry</b>                              | Provide laundry facilities                                                                             | <b>6.35%</b>  | Until 4pm                                                                           | <b>10.17%</b> |
| <b>Additional Teacher and Staff Support</b> | “Assign” teachers to carefully monitor and support children with a drop in grades                      | <b>46.03%</b> | Until 5pm                                                                           | <b>22.03%</b> |
|                                             | “Assign” teachers to carefully monitor and support children who are frequently absent or tardy         | <b>55.56%</b> | Until 6pm                                                                           | <b>42.37%</b> |
|                                             | Call parents if children are chronically absent                                                        | <b>85.71%</b> | Until after 6pm                                                                     | <b>5.08%</b>  |
|                                             | “Assign” a staff member to commute with children who live far away or in dangerous/ high-traffic areas | <b>11.11%</b> | Other (please specify)                                                              | <b>18.64%</b> |

**Table III: Non-Transport School Efforts to Support Homeless Children**

## 1. Food Insecurity

All homeless children are eligible for free school lunches, but this does not eliminate food insecurity. Forty-six percent of my survey responses mark food insecurity as one of homeless students' greatest concerns (Table I). Hunger greatly impacts children, leading to poor physical and mental health, behavior problems, and low educational achievements (Huang, Barnidge and Kim 2015; Teall 2017). Food insecurity is such a substantial problem that one interviewee told me that her tactics for feeding in-need students actually incentivize attendance (District 75 Principal 1 2017).

Interviews reveal that schools take a number of improvised approaches to minimizing student hunger. School staff turn a blind eye to hungry students grabbing extra fruits or packaged foods to take home. Staff often go further and send homeless students home with goodie bags of fruit, packaged foods, and food that would otherwise be discarded. Other schools send home food baskets over the holidays or as part of rigged raffles (Assistant Principal 1 2017; Administrator 1 2017). The raffles are particularly beneficial because only the person who sets up the raffle will know that it is rigged to be won by homeless parents. This subtlety eliminates both the personal shame of asking for help and the public embarrassment that comes with publicizing aid. These are creative, immediate, necessary solutions, but they are inconsistent and rely on the kindness of individuals.

These individual solutions can be formalized in individual schools' partnerships with shelters and outside resources, and in creation of more lasting infrastructure on campus. For example, one interviewee partners with the NYC Food Pantry and with the Bedford Stuyvesant Campaign Against Hunger, which feeds students over weekends, to more consistently feed homeless students. He also holds a winter holiday event, at which food and book-bags are

distributed, at the full-sized shelter across the street where many of his students live (Social Worker 2 2017). This school is additionally starting a pantry on campus, a strategy that is unique among NYC schools, because some parents have voiced discomfort going to food pantries at other locations. The school social worker hopes to take advantage of their trust in his community school to provide a comfortable on-campus location to pick up groceries.

Another school has established a culinary program and various food shops on campus, and allows students to drop off their backpacks to be discretely filled with food items and lists of nearby food banks. This principal informed me that, in fact, the somewhat common practice of dropping off food in backpacks is ambiguously addressed by the Department of Health.<sup>19</sup> She carries on anyway because she finds that it is a simple and effective response to a substantial need. These ideas battle student hunger more consistently and over a longer time frame than sending students home with leftovers or snacks.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and reliable remedies to food insecurity has been implemented in one public school in one of the City's poorest neighborhoods. In addition to starting a food pantry on campus, this school has partnered with a chef who runs a program teaching parents how to cook simple, cheap, and healthy meals with ingredients available to them in the neighborhood or through the pantry (Principal 2 2017). The result is sustainable education for parents that can be applied to keep children healthy and to help the family save money on ingredients long after the children graduate or switch schools.

---

<sup>19</sup> The Department of Health enforces strict and complex rules regarding the approved types and methods of food distribution to students. For more information, see <https://www.health.ny.gov> and <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/index.page>.

## 2. Income

Students struggle to keep up in school due to a lack of stable family income. Financial worries interfere with general well-being (Principal 1 2017) and may interfere with academics as high school students take higher-paying jobs over academically relevant ones or drop out of school in order to work (Principal 1 2017; Teacher 2 2017). Schools do the following to augment students' income:

- Financially support homeless families and even contribute to new housing funds out of pocket (Teall 2017)
- Connect parents to jobs and teach job skills; several respondents report that their schools make an effort to provide adult education and various forms of assistance with job placement (Teall 2017)
- Connect students to jobs and teach job skills
- Certain schools have been able to connect students to paid internships that are relevant to their studies.

One of my interviewees makes a particularly poignant statement regarding the need for a steady income from a relevant job in order for students to continue education: He has a student whose father was recently deported under the Trump administration's new policies, leaving her family destitute and forcing them to move in with extended family. Because this girl must support her family in her father's absence, it is critical to her education that the school has connected her with a paid internship that is relevant to her studies and therefore a continuum



of—rather than a departure from—her education. This internship resolves the conflict between studies and work (Principal 1 2017).

The school principal further explained that 2/3 of his student body, homeless and otherwise, is set up with such internships. However, he and his staff take special care to place low-income students. Schools have been connecting many or even most students with paid internships that are relevant to their academic interests (Principal 1 2017; Teacher 2 2017). These paid internships are not required by any law or policy, yet they are invaluable. As one interviewee explained, students do not have to choose between survival and school success; they can pursue money and academics at once (Principal 1 2017).

### **3. School Supplies**

Another issue faced by homeless students is simply obtaining necessary school supplies that are lost in transit or expensive to purchase. A few private organizations, such as Girl Scouts, partner with schools to provide school supplies specifically to homeless students (Teall 2017). School personnel also buy school supplies out of pocket for their homeless students. My survey respondents reported buying alarm clocks, goodie bags and basic supply bags, glasses, and hearing aids for homeless students. Several interviewees said that their and other schools carry out annual raffles in which the board secretly knows ahead of time that the raffle winners will be homeless families in need. These raffles can include school supplies (Administrator 1 2017; Assistant Principal 1). Finally, one school holds school events, located at students' shelters, where backpacks are distributed (Social Worker 2 2017).

#### 4. Problems in Shelter Infrastructure

Shelter rules, procedures, and facilities can conflict with parents' responsibilities to accompany their children to school, or with children's ability to attend (Social Worker 2 2017; NYC Independent Budget Office 2016). For example, numerous surveys and interviews indicate that homeless students are most easily identified because they attend school out of uniform or in one dirty outfit that they cannot wash. Furthermore, some interviewees admitted that dirty clothing led to classroom disruptions and the ostracism of certain homeless students. Critically, there is *no* law requiring laundry facilities for family shelters. Laundry facilities are not consistently provided or functional at family shelters (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016, V, 17). Referring back to Table I, 34.92% of survey respondents stated that their homeless students did not have adequate laundry facilities.

Schools find various ad-hoc means of getting students into clean clothes:

- Numerous schools quietly gift students extra pairs of underwear and socks. They do so discretely, sneaking clothing into homeless students' unattended backpacks.
- A few other schools, 7% of those surveyed, have installed washer-dryers or provide laundry supplies for student and parent use.
- Several survey respondents wrote that they supply haircuts to their homeless students.
- One principal of a special needs school with many homeless students proudly states that the sibling of one housed student began a Girl Scout project quietly providing homeless students with gender and age-appropriate underwear, socks, books, and toys. Her three other siblings are now involved.

Quiet, safe study spaces are elusive. Most principals state on surveys and in interviews that their homeless students have trouble completing homework both because they have other responsibilities and worries once they leave campus, and because they have nowhere quiet to work off of campus. Doubled-up students are even more likely to lack study space than students in shelters because doubled-up apartments are especially overcrowded whereas large shelters have designated study spaces (Social Worker 2 2017). Table III states that school closing times vary greatly, and schools close as early as 2:00P.M. Table III reports that 83% of schools do *not* provide a place for students to work on weekends, perhaps aggravating the challenges faced by nearly 40% of students who do not have adequate study spaces (Table II). The lack of in-school study space implies that homeless children will be studying in noisy shelters and overcrowded apartments.

Some technical procedures cause additional problems for students. Different shelters have varying job requirements in order to remain under the shelter's roof or to obtain certain housing vouchers. They also hold mandatory meetings. When there is conflict between work or meetings and school attendance, maintaining shelter eligibility holds priority. There is a complication with the Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) that negatively affects older special needs students (District 75 Principal 1 2017): When special needs students over age 18 remain in high school, they remain covered by the MVA until age 21, and are old enough to live separately from parents.<sup>20</sup> When these students choose to sign up at the PATH separately from parents, they are required to attend PATH meetings alone. However, because these students have disabilities, complications and confusions frequently arise. These older

---

<sup>20</sup> All homeless families with children must apply for shelter at the DHS' Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) intake center located in the Bronx.

students may not understand PATH procedures and may be unable to remember or produce mandatory information.

My interviewees brought to attention the immense problems with bureaucracy that schools can help students navigate. In addition to the aforementioned PATH system, parents face hurdles with bureaucracy at their shelters, when navigating housing voucher systems, and obtaining necessities through the “system” (Principal 2 2017). Shelter staff can be uncooperative even when legally required to comply with requests.

Ten to seventeen percent of survey respondents say their schools open their doors to students during weekends, and 42% of schools stay open until 6pm.<sup>21</sup> One school surveyed allows students to work on campus until 7P.M. This minority of schools that provides study space for students over weekends, breaks, and evenings could inspire other schools or policy changes that follow suit.

The interviewee who related her special needs students’ difficulties navigating the PATH system also stated that she does whatever she can to support these students behind-the-scenes, particularly by sending them and reminding them of relevant information.

The interviewee emphasized that PATH policy must change to allow trusted adults to aid in navigation of the PATH. Similarly, little can be done ad-hoc by schools to make up for job and meeting conflicts with attendance.

There are few options for individual schools and school staff to ameliorate problems caused by infrastructure. However, some schools have found ways to step in. Parents can get frustrated or overwhelmed with lengthy and complicated bureaucracy, at which point several of

---

<sup>21</sup> Ten percent checked “Remain open on weekends for use as student study space” as one option to the question “Which of the following does your school do to support homeless students? Check any that apply.” Seventeen percent said “yes” when asked “Do students have a place that remains open ON CAMPUS to do work on weekends?” This suggests that some respondents missed the option when the question was first asked.

my interviewees and their social workers volunteer to step in. These interviewees report that parents frequently make requests to their shelters that the shelters are legally required to follow, yet the shelters initially refuse to comply (Principal 2 2017; Assistant Principal 1 2017; District 75 Principal 1 2017). When a school administrator then accompanies parents to make the same request, it is attended. Parents can navigate bureaucracy much more quickly with moral support, informational support, and the authority of an accompanying school faculty member (Principal 2 2017; Assistant Principal 1 2017).

A survey respondent states that he or she even helps transport families and support them in court: “I have personally driven families with their belongings to transport them from shelter to shelter. I...went to court during exceptional situations and more.” Surprise moves with almost no warning are fairly standard for shelters and are complicated by New York City’s fickle public transportation; this survey respondent helped work around such faults (Teall 2017). The respondent also presumably provided emotional support and useful input to parents navigating court procedures.

Another survey respondent helps parents navigate bureaucracy by simply providing useful physical materials: [Our school’s] “Parent Place meeting center provides a computer, printer, phone with domestic [and] long distance access, play pen with toys in a comfortable space for parents of homeless students to complete required paperwork, phone calls and meetings” (Teall 2017).

## **E. Connections to Outside Resources**

Inadequate connection to outside services (anything from neighborhood food pantries to housing assistance services) is the most common “major challenge faced by [schools] in

supporting homeless students;” 62% of survey respondents recognized this as a major barrier. Schools struggle to connect with and support parents in permanently housing their families. As a result, families do not get all the support that is available. Schools have found various methods of improving parental support but still fall short. The NYC school system simply cannot provide all supports for homeless families. One principal concisely explained: “I believe that schools are limited in what we can do. They are in need of housing and jobs. But what we can do, we do.” Schools have limited funding; almost 45% of survey respondents bemoaned insufficient funding (Table I). Teachers must concentrate first and foremost on teaching rather than on supporting diverse families in diverse non-curricular needs. Furthermore, of course, students must leave school for whatever they call home at some point each day. Teachers are simply unable to watch and care for students and families at all times. Therefore, outside supports are critical for homeless students.

Schools struggle to connect parents to outside services for abundant reasons. Many parents are too busy to attend the workshops and information sessions that schools hold in partnership with outside organizations (Principal 1 2017). Students are also unable to go to certain service centers because their schooldays end after many service centers close (District 75 Principal 1 2017). This makes it impossible to connect school-age children with a number of outside services.

School personnel struggle to make connections with shelters and with outside resources. Individual school staff and administrators report doing time-consuming “footwork” attempting to get hold of uncooperative stakeholders (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Social Worker 2 2017; Principal 2 2017; Assistant Principal 1 2017). One principal reported that she has been waiting for five months for an education liaison at a shelter to return her phone-call on behalf of a

student. She called the liaison and personally visited the shelter in order to get hold of shelter staff directly because the liaison has not facilitated communication between them. (District 75 Principal 1 2017).

Many schools have discovered creative methods to connect parents with outside services or to provide wraparound services:

- Schools provide online workshops in addition to in-person workshops to appeal to embarrassed or overbooked parents. These workshops detail what resources are available to homeless parents. They also detail advice regarding obtaining and keeping a job (Principal 1 2017).
- Schools provide adult education for parents (Teall 2017).
- Schools provide assistance with job placement for parents and children (Teall 2017).
- Schools provide connections to legal help, particularly for restraining orders and pathways to citizenship (Teall 2017).
- Frustrated faculty make a point of “pounding the pavement” (Social Worker 2 2017) to make necessary connections between their schools and their students’ shelters (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Principal 2 2017).

Several interviewees separately expressed the same policy change request: Mandatory meetings should take place between shelter staff, school administration, and parents within days of the arrival of any homeless student on campus. Such communication could resolve conflicts in infrastructure, create more efficient support systems, and give faculty and staff a venue to collaborate to support students.

## **F. Support of Students with Disabilities**

My research indicates that schools struggle more to support students with disabilities when they are homeless (Survey Coordinator 1 2017; Teall 2017). Homeless students struggle with a wide range of disabilities but particularly suffer from emotional, mental, and learning disabilities (Survey Coordinator 1 2017; Teall 2017). Table I indicates that 48% of my survey respondents named "inadequate means to support students with physical, mental, or educational disabilities" as a major challenge faced by their schools in supporting homeless students. Schools struggle to manage students' disabilities in large part because they struggle to determine the exact barriers and needs that students face. It is difficult to obtain accurate medical documentation (Principal 2 2017; Social Worker 2 2017). Such documents are often lost in transit as homeless students move location. School personnel cannot diagnose disabilities, including learning disabilities that are relevant to academics. The lack of medical documentation and diagnoses prevents schools from providing appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to address the disabilities (Principal 2 2017).

My respondents point to a lack of communication among stakeholders as another main problem, especially when students have cognitive disabilities and their needs are not immediately apparent (District 75 Principal 1 2017). These students may, for example, be left unsupervised at inappropriate times in their shelters because their mental or emotional needs are not known to staff (District 75 Principal 1 2017). One respondent asserts that everyone involved in disabled students' lives should simply be aware that these students have special needs so that they are prepared to adjust to these needs as necessary (District 75 Principal 1 2017).



Students with disabilities may face additional responsibilities and hurdles at their shelters that lead to general stress and fatigue impacting their schoolwork (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Shelters are regularly insensitive to or unaware of the needs of disabled students. One of my interviewees described how a student in a wheelchair was housed on the third floor of a shelter with a defective elevator. He had to be carried up and down the stairs each day by his mother, who was smaller than he was at the time (District 75 Principal 1 2017).

This principal says that shelters regularly give a mere 6-hour notice when transferring residents; she has an autistic student who was moved with this 6-hour notice. As a result of this already stressful and triggering move, the student's bus took several days to reroute, leaving him without reliable transportation to school. He was given a MetroCard by the City, but due to his special needs, his mother had to accompany him to school. She arrived late to work for days until his bus rerouted, and nearly lost her job.

Finally, this principal explained that some shelter opportunities are not open to disabled students; many shelters run after-school programs that are not open to special needs students at all. Schools do the following to support students with disabilities:

- Meet individually with shelter staff, doctors, or parents to sort out medical histories (Social Worker 2 2017)
- Choose to provide busing to all disabled students based on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017)

- Ensure bus routes and schedules are up-to-date by handing notes directly to drivers (District 75 Principal 1 2017)
- Provide physical therapy for students with physical disabilities (District 75 Principal 1 2017)
- Provide occupational training, sign language courses, and hearing services for students with disabilities (District 75 Principal 1 2017)
- Ensure students know of and are known to disability services and food stamp centers (District 75 Principal 1 2017)
- Create a deliberate increase in communication and transparency among school personnel, school counselors, and with shelter staff (District 75 Principal 1 2017)

Homeless students with disabilities particularly benefit from additional counseling and from teachers simply taking extra time to speak with them (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017; Teall 2017) This pertains to many emotionally disabled students (Survey Coordinator 1 2017; Teall 2017) as well as to the many additional students whose disabilities increase stress when needs are not met at school or shelters (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017).

## **V: Gap Analysis and Proposals for Policy and Administration**

In the following section, I compare current practices to applicable laws and human rights standards as outlined in Section I.C. and proceed with recommendations for policies and other actions to ameliorate shortcomings in practice. I find that the most pressing shortcomings in practice when compared to laws and/or human rights standards are in: substandard

communication between schools, shelters, and outside resources when compared with McKinney-Vento guidelines; lack of sufficient mental health resources to satisfy human rights standards; lack of transportation to McKinney-Vento standard despite significant progress and attention to this issue; and inconsistency with nondiscrimination laws.

### **A. Reaching Human Rights Standards: Gap Analysis**

My results concerning lack of connections to outside resources, undiagnosed mental health issues, and neglect of students' disabilities all point to an overarching lack of coordination between stakeholders. The MVA acknowledges the importance of communication and appoints liaisons for this purpose: the MVA mandates that “[each LEA] shall coordinate... with local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children and youths and their families” and designates liaisons who “shall ensure that... homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services ... and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services” (42 U.S.C. § 11432).

Principals and social workers report taking on extra, inefficient legwork because formal policies and liaisons do not adequately address coordination as per McKinney-Vento “coordination” and “liaison” requirements as outlined above. As discussed in my results, several of my respondents reported chasing after other stakeholders in order to communicate students' and schools' needs, with varying degrees of cooperation from the other parties. The frustrations of the principal who resorted to visiting her student's shelter to connect with shelter staff are not atypical. Principals (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Principal 2 2017; Assistant Principal 1 2017) reported feeling overwhelmed and overworked as a result. Policies must be amended to either

expand the number of liaisons or support and streamline their work with mandatory meetings, a suggestion that I will address shortly.

There are no effective policies or widespread initiatives to aid and protect students' health, especially mental health, as per human rights standards. This is in part because mental health is downplayed in the primary relevant laws, the MVA, ESSA, and NY Educ L § 3209 (2016). The MVA only requires connections to mental health services; it does not require any in-school mental health services. International human rights standards, in contrast, include health guidelines. As quoted in Section I.C.1 of this paper, Article 25 of the UDHR, which the USA has ratified, asserts the universal right to an adequate standard of living for preserving health, and to an education that promotes "development of the human personality" and friendship. Article 24 of the CRC critically states that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health." Although the United States has not ratified this treaty, and continues to debate the right to health despite ratifying the UDHR, the NYC DOE should nonetheless protect the health, including mental health, of students in order to fulfill international human rights standards.

Children cannot reach full academic potential when their mental or emotional health is compromised. Children who are distracted by other responsibilities cannot complete homework. They are more likely to "zone out" or act out, missing in-class instruction. In addition, children who misbehave due to stress, anxiety, untreated ADD, etc., cannot integrate fully into their school community. These students do not benefit fully from their schools' attempts to "promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship" (United Nations General Assembly 1948).

As described in my discussions of NYC policies and of results, Mayor de Blasio has implemented *Bridging the Gap* social workers, several of whom I spoke with in my research. At

present, schools and social workers such as these *Bridging the Gap* social workers go above and beyond the MVA and ESSA requirements for mental health, yet still fall short of human rights standards that require “the full development of the human personality,” and continue to report emotional and mental health as enormous barriers to education. I will discuss shortly the role that extracurricular activities could play in bolstering mental health through the creation of social connections, provisions for both outlets and advice, and the simple fact that they would keep children away from stressful shelter or doubled-up apartment environments.

Although the legal provisions of the MVA, ESSA, and NY Educ L § 3209 (2016) focus on transportation of homeless students and have led to significant progress in their transport overall, there remain various shortcomings in practices providing for transportation of homeless youth. As discussed earlier, Mayor de Blasio has yet to successfully “eliminate barriers,” as the MVA requires, to homeless students’ attendance by providing sufficient transportation. Despite Mayor de Blasio’s expansion of the bus system in January 2016, as of November 2017 no respondents to my research reported seeing improvements in their students’ busing (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Furthermore, as addressed in the transportation section of my results, my interviewees reported a significant lag time, regularly lasting around two weeks, when rerouting busing through the standard bureaucratic system (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017; Social Worker 1 2017). During this time frame, students struggle to get to school or cannot attend at all.

In the 2013-14 school year, 53% of students residing in shelters were black, 42% were Hispanic, and only 3% were white. (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016, 3).<sup>22</sup>This means that

---

<sup>22</sup> “The vast majority of students residing in shelters were either black (53 percent) or Hispanic (42 percent). In doubled-up housing, Hispanics accounted for the largest share (57 percent). Asian and Pacific Islanders made up a much larger share of students in doubled-up housing (14 percent) than of students in shelters (1 percent). By way of

95% of students in NYC shelters were Black or Hispanic, and some of the 2% unaccounted for were likely also people of color. This enormous overrepresentation of children of color in NYC's homeless population is inconsistent with U.S. nondiscrimination laws. Discrimination by race is prohibited in NYC at every level. It is banned in international treaties (the CERD, which the United States has ratified, asserts a right to education), federal law (e.g., *Brown v. Board* 1954), state law (the NYS Constitution bans racial discrimination), and NYC law (color and race are protected classes under NYC human rights law). My survey respondents did not discuss the race of their homeless students, yet race remains a well-known issue echoed in extant data analysis and literature.

## **B. Recommendations for Policy-Makers and Administrators**

Although there exist many gaps between law and practice as discussed in the preceding section, many individual administrators, teachers and social workers are meeting legal requirements with innovative responses. Others have been unable to do so, but have clear ambitions for what they would like to accomplish on a wider, more collaborative scale. I intend to identify current and visionary initiatives that I believe could inspire updates to DOE policy and administrative and individual school initiatives.

The most pressing need for policy change is with respect to mental and emotional health. Unfortunately, as I have discussed, the MVA and ESSA mention mental health only in passing, and make no mention of emotional health, despite 41.27% of principals reporting mental health problems and 80% reporting emotional health problems among homeless students (Table I).

---

comparison, among those students in permanent housing, 39 percent were Hispanic, 28 percent were black, 16 percent were Asian, and 15 percent were white” (NYC Independent Budget Office 2016, 3).

State and City laws and State, City, and school policies must compensate for shortcomings in federal laws to reach human rights standards.

My research subjects already implement many non-required supports that could become useful additions to policy. As several of my interviewees bemoaned, neither the MVA nor the ESSA mandates counselling for students (Assistant Principal 1 2017; Administrator 1 2017). As a result, several respondents bring in more social workers than are required by law. Many more do not bring in additional social workers, but express a desire to do so if they can afford to do so in the future. Based on these interests, the MVA and ESSA should be amended to explicitly mandate social workers' presence in all schools with homeless students. Individual schools and social workers should also consider increasing emphasis on connecting parents and students to outside mental health resources (Assistant Principal 1 2017; Administrator 1 2017). A more consistent policy supporting these amendments could follow and bolster the present individual efforts to bring in additional social workers.

Some respondents suggest that policies should emphasize extracurriculars: "Maybe policies should emphasize community, mental health, [and] extracurriculars that also keep these kids away from unstable 'home' life" (Teall 2017). An individual school policy or perhaps DOE policy in support of expansion of extracurricular activities available to homeless students would be a particularly cost-effective means to further support socio-emotional and emotional health, boost social networks, spread the word about helpful programs and expand students' support systems. The school system also should adopt a policy encouraging and perhaps briefly training clubs to integrate new members midway through the school year when needed. The policy of acceptance into at least some of these activities should be based on priority in addition to the

current lottery system so that certain extracurriculars that provide emotional or academic support would be available to those students that need them most (Survey Coordinator 1 2017).

Many of my respondents cited strong extracurricular programs as important to their students' mental and emotional health, to community building, and even to student safety because after-school extracurriculars keep students away from tumultuous life at the shelter or in overcrowded apartments (Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Title 42 of the U.S. Code, § 11432 F (iii) mandates that schools ensure homeless students “do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities.” However, many respondents say their schools do not have enough extracurriculars accessible to homeless students. Survey respondents said they currently cannot but would like to “provide after-school tutoring and field trip opportunities for students...work[ing] around social-emotional development of students and how [to] best support children through the arts, sports, and counseling” (Teall 2017). Another respondent would like “Additional funding/ resources for weekend enrichment” (Teall 2017). Those respondents who did have extensive extracurriculars cited them as significant supports to students' well-being.

There are many creative, often low-cost possibilities to expand extracurriculars. I recommend that schools follow the process described in my results in which a survey respondent summed up goals for reinforcing emotional health and then developed extracurricular programs to reach those specific goals: “Our school has built a strong social emotional component to each day so that students have an opportunity to define how they feel, express concerns that they might have as well as a tool box of strategies ... We have a big arts program and we put on a school play each year. Students...have the opportunity to be a part of this community and at the same time develop self-confidence. We have three guidance counselors as well as small class size...” [edited for clarity]. This example shows how the school developed precise strategies to



promote good emotional health, particularly the creation of a “tool box of strategies” and “self-confidence.”

Other schools could follow suit, adjusting extracurriculars to the needs of their particular student bodies. For example, it would cost schools little to implement a sketch club that could serve as a relaxing and low-stress environment to socialize, “define how they feel,” and “express concerns” as the above school administrator suggested. Furthermore, the field of art therapy has demonstrated art’s therapeutic properties.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps a different school could reach its mental and emotional health goals by forming parent clubs that would provide “help for parents to combat the problems at the root of their homelessness (jobs, education, discrimination, gentrification)” (Teall 2017). As discussed in Section IV above, one of my interviewees has already established a successful support group for dads (Social Worker 2 2017); similar groups might watch informational videos and set aside time to discuss the aforementioned relevant topics. These groups would again provide a place for participants to “express concerns” and create a “toolbox of strategies.”

Expansion of extracurricular opportunities would be uniquely important to homeless students with disabilities. As stated earlier, many extracurricular activities are unequipped to support and unable to accept students with special needs of any kind (Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Schools should be required by law, and supported by policy, to train staff in handling special needs in extracurricular settings. Many afterschool and extracurricular activities are not accessible to homeless students and to students with disabilities (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Survey Coordinator 1 2017), yet these are among the students who need them the most. In order to make extracurriculars accessible to homeless and especially to disabled homeless students,

---

<sup>23</sup> Art therapy is a form of expression-based therapy in which a psychiatrist guides and evaluates art projects that the patient makes as part of a therapeutic program.

transportation (suitable to disabled students) must be provided (Survey Coordinator 1 2017). Some extracurricular activities, like gym and art classes, might also be added into school days to beat shelter curfews or to avoid the need to arrange additional after-school busing for special needs students (Survey Coordinator 1 2017).

Policies should be placed to solidify networks and especially communication between organizations and schools in need. These could include an increase in publicity, basic organization to help efficiently match organizations with schools, or mandatory meetings between organization staff and school staff. Interestingly, multiple interviewees and survey respondents independently voiced the same policy suggestion: All suggest holding meetings, at the start of each school year and/or within days of the arrival of a new homeless student, between school staff, shelter staff, and homeless students' guardians (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Principal 2 2017; Social Worker 2 2017). As discussed in my results, many social workers and school faculty (District 75 Principal 1 2017; Principal 2 2017; Social Worker 2 2017) report taking on time-consuming "footwork" to build connections with shelters and other relevant stakeholders. The burden falls on school faculty and social workers to set up these meetings and take time to go to shelter staff and plan around their schedules. This policy suggestion would facilitate communication, encourage strategies and efficiency to support students, eliminate time spent on informal and disorganized "footwork" by individuals, and open up a mechanism for voicing grievances. It could save the City money by increasing efficiency of services.

The NYC Health Department places numerous complex regulations on the type, quality, and manner of food distribution.<sup>24</sup> These regulations, when followed, can impede individual and informal school efforts to provide food aid to students in need. Only one of my 63 respondents reported having a food bank on campus; many of my other respondents instead resort to putting

---

<sup>24</sup> For more information, see <https://www.health.ny.gov> and <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/index.page>.

snacks, leftovers, cereals, etc. into students' backpacks, raffle baskets, or hands. These latter tactics are common yet are not necessarily in accord with NYC Health Department regulations. New York State or City could implement a variation on the 1996 Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act to override Health Department regulations to provide immunity for safe contributions of food to homeless children.<sup>25</sup> Alternately, the NYC Health Department and DOE could collaborate on a set of regulations to safely accept, store, and distribute informal contributions of food to children regardless of food bank availability.

## **VI: Directions for Future Research and Conclusions**

### **A. Directions for Future Research**

This research relied on input from school staff, who are deeply involved yet nonetheless one degree removed from the subjects of my research. Future research should put the voices of people impacted by the research and resulting policy decisions front and center: Further research should examine my findings along with the input of students and parents. It should also incorporate the voices of students' doctors where necessary in order to reveal more about the experience of students with disabilities, mental illness, or poor emotional health. Principals may not be aware of nuance in the educational experiences of their homeless students. In particular, they cannot diagnose or reliably identify mental illness. Participation of the rights holders, in this case homeless students, is critical to any work defining or supporting rights; students know best their needs and experiences. Human rights emphasize the involvement of rights holders in decisions that impact them. Nonetheless, the principals and administrators that I spoke with were

---

<sup>25</sup> "If some or all of the donated food and grocery products do not meet all quality and labeling standards imposed by Federal, State, and local laws and regulations, the person or gleaner who donates the food and grocery products shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability..." (42 U.S. Code § 1791 (e)).

concerned, involved, and informed—unsurprising considering that they took time to participate in my research despite the absence of compensation.

As an outside researcher soliciting entirely optional participation from DOE employees, and without granting any monetary or other incentive for participation, I received 63 responses to 2,631 solicitations. A number of questions are fairly subjective, and while I defined terms and gave examples wherever appropriate, I chose brevity over clarity when these qualities were at odds in order to maximize response rates. Further research should be undertaken by the DOE itself in order to produce higher response rates and to minimize the need for brevity.

Due to insufficient data collected by the school system, and due to confidentiality issues in dealing with homeless students, I was unable to statistically analyze whether school tactics are directly improving test scores, grades, or attendance among homeless students. Because many of my respondents chose to remain anonymous, there was not enough data accompanied by school identification for me to conduct meaningful statistical analysis. The DOE does not systematically monitor and document the progress of homeless students relative to housed peer groups, as comprehensively as they do for other subgroups such as students with IEPs. Such systematic analysis would be indispensable to future research given the large proportions of homeless children in NYC and the unique barriers that they face. More formalized and systematic research, particularly involving rigorous data analysis, is needed to determine how successfully the MVA is implemented and how positive its direct impact is on attendance and performance. Comprehensive data and its rigorous analysis could bolster my own results.

Future research should more precisely define the age and living conditions of its subjects, specifying within the broad definition of homelessness. The definition of homelessness varies greatly and leads to discrepancies and ambiguity in research. Further research should more

carefully specify its target subjects and should filter out, or section out, any prior literature that uses different definitions. Data varies greatly due to privacy concerns and difficulties in data collection; domestic violence shelter inhabitants and doubled up families are underrepresented in data collections. It can be assumed that some children live on the street in NYC, yet I have found no contemporary literature to date that explicitly acknowledges them.<sup>26</sup> Without specifying the age range in education-related research, certain nuance in developmental benchmarks would be difficult to pinpoint.

## **B. Concluding Comments**

Existing literature has focused on problems and policy solutions concerning transportation to school and locations of shelters in proximity to school. It has emphasized these topics somewhat at the expense of other areas. My research finds that poor mental and emotional health is even more pressing for homeless students, and proceeds to fill this gap in the literature. It also expands on other areas: Basic needs, connections to outside resources, and support of students with disabilities. My findings focus on both difficulties that homeless students face and creative methods by which schools support students in handling them. I hope that this research will spark further research and activism and will ultimately improve the experience of homeless students by influencing policy, legislation, and our understanding of these human rights.

---

<sup>26</sup> I understand from seeing and speaking to homeless families that some children are living on NYC streets and in public spaces. Gibson (2011) and older literature discuss such children.

## Appendix

### A. Survey: Copy of Survey to Principals and Administrators

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

email: eft2114@columbia.edu

phone: (203) 536-1736

**NOTE:** Children and youth who lack “a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” are considered **homeless** (McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act of 1987: Sec. 725 Art.2a). This broad definition includes children who live in **domestic violence shelters, shelters, and doubled-up or crowded apartments**; are refugees or internally displaced or are documented/undocumented immigrants and **do not have fixed housing**; are **runaway** or have long-term hospitalized parents.

- What are the major issues faced by homeless students at your school? Check any that apply:
  - Frequent school transfers
  - Difficult commutes
  - Inadequate social support from teachers, administrators, liaisons
  - Inadequate social support from other students
  - Food insecurity
  - Poor emotional health (i.e. chronic fatigue, chronic worrying, low self-esteem, shyness)
  - Mental illness (i.e. depression, anxiety, OCD, ADD)
  - Early shelter curfews
  - Inadequate laundry facilities
  - Inadequate study spaces
  - Lack of other amenities (i.e. printer, school supplies, basic facilities at shelters)
  - Missing paperwork
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the major challenges faced by your school in supporting homeless students? Check all that apply:
  - Inadequate funding
  - Inadequate coordination with services
  - Inadequate coordination with administrators
  - Complications in obtaining funding
  - Difficulty identifying students in need
  - Inadequate means to support students with physical, mental, or educational disabilities
  - Inadequate space on or coordination with school-buses
  - Limited time among administrators and teachers
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Which of the following does your school do to support homeless students? Check any/all that apply:
  - Provide transportation vouchers

- Provide bus service to students in shelters
- Provide bus service to students in “doubled up” housing
- Provide free lunch
- Provide free breakfast
- Provide tutoring
- Remain open on weekends for use as student study space
- Provide laundry facilities
- “Assign” teachers to carefully monitor and support children with a drop in grades
- “Assign” teachers to carefully monitor and support children who are frequently absent or tardy
- Call parents if children are chronically absent
- “Assign” a staff member to commute with children who live far away or in dangerous/ high-traffic areas
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- **Please take a moment to describe in more depth how your school tackles the problems you selected above. Some examples could include, but are not limited to, strategies for providing tutoring; providing after-school programs designed to fit the needs of homeless students; providing for standardized testing fees; and providing food, medical care, transportation and especially bus transportation, and connections to other service providers:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- **What additional, innovative measures do you take to serve this population that are NOT required by federal, state, or city law or policy? How do you go “above and beyond” legal requirements?**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- **If it were not beyond your discretion, how might you improve the distribution of existing resources to optimize homeless students' school experience?**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_







When I asked “How do you go “above and beyond” legal requirements” you said that your school provides ... What happens as a result? Are there tangible changes in the children’s well-being and performance?

Are these students at all socially isolated? Do they have a good support group?

Can you elaborate on how your school amends the issue?

What are the most severe problems your homeless students face?

Can you talk about your homeless students’ commutes? Why are they struggling to get to school? Where are they coming from, and how?

Are you seeing any difference after Mayor De Blasio’s recent changes to the schoolbus policy?

Can you talk about food insecurity among homeless students at your school?

What are the problems you encounter when trying to connect homeless students and parents with outside resources?

Can you elaborate on your school’s procedures for ameliorating food insecurity?

What are the problems you encounter when trying to support homeless students with physical, mental, or educational disabilities? Is this a bigger issue among homeless students with these problems?

What is the process for giving homeless students donations of household items such as clothing and hygiene products?

Did you see a tangible improvement in grades and attendance rates after any specific programs? What changed?

## References

- Astone, Nan Marie, and Sara S. McLanahan. 1994. "Family Structure, Residential Mobility, and School Dropout: A Research Note." *Demography*, 575-584.
- Blau, Peter M., and Otis Dudley Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Buckner, John C., and Ellen L. Bassuk. 2001. "Predictors of Academic Achievement among Homeless and Low-Income Housed Children." *Journal of School Psychology* 39 (1): 45–69.
- Coalition for the Homeless. 2017. "Basic Facts About Homelessness: New York City." *Coalition for the Homeless*. Accessed January 7, 2018. <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/basic-facts-about-homelessness-new-york-city/>.
- . 2017. "State of the Homeless 2017." *Coalition for the Homeless*. March. Accessed January 7, 2018. <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/the-catastrophe-of-homelessness/state-of-the-homeless/>.
- Cuomo, Andrew M., and Cesar A. Perales. 2014. "New York State Constitution." *New York State*. Accessed July 31, 2017. <https://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution.htm>.
- Cutuli, J.J., Christopher David Desjardins, Janette E. Hebers, D. Long Jeffrey, David Heistad, Chi-Keung Chang, Elizabeth Hinz, and Ann S. Masten. 2013. "Academic achievement trajectories of homeless and highly mobile students: Resilience in the context of chronic and acute risk." *Child Development* 84 (3).
- De Blasio, Bill, interview by Bill Lehrer. 2017. "Transcript: Mayor de Blasio Appears Live on WNYC." *WNYC*. NYC, NY, (March 10).
- Duffield, Barbara, Patricia Julianelle, and Michael Santos. 2016. "The Most Frequently Asked Questions on the Education Rights of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations." *National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty*. September. Accessed January 7, 2018. [https://www.nlchp.org/documents/McKinney-Vento\\_FAQs](https://www.nlchp.org/documents/McKinney-Vento_FAQs).
- Duncan, Greg J., Kathleen M. Ziol-Guest, and Ariel Kalil. 2011. "Early Childhood Poverty and Adult Attainment, Behavior and Health."
- Education of Homeless Children, NY Educ Law § 3209 (2017).
- Elliott, Andrea. 2013. "Invisible Child Girl in the Shadows: Dasani's Homeless Life ." *The New York Times*, December 9.
- Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Public Law 114-95, *U.S. Statutes at Large 114* (2015). <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s1177enr/pdf/BILLS-114s1177enr.pdf>
- Gibson, Kristina E. . 2011. *Street Kids: Homeless Youth, Outreach, and Policing New York's Streets*. . Edited by UP. NYC, NY.
- Harris, Elizabeth A. 2016. "Where Nearly Half of Pupils Are Homeless, School Aims to Be Teacher, Therapist, Even Santa." *The New York Times*, June 6.
- Heinlein, Lisa Melman, and Marybeth Shinn. 2000. "School Mobility and Student Achievement in an Urban Setting." *Psychology in the Schools* 37 (4): 349-57.
- Huang, Jin, Ellen Barnidge, and Youngmi Kim. 2015. "Children Receiving Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch Have Higher Food Insufficiency Rates in Summer." *The Journal of Nutrition* (145): 2161-2168. <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/145/9/2161.full.pdf+html>.
- Hutchings, Hayley A., Annette Evans, Peter Barnes, and Joanne Demmler. 2013. "Do Children Who Move Home and School Frequently Have Poorer Educational Outcomes in Their Early Years at School? An Anonymised Cohort Study." *PLOS one* 8 (8).

- Independent Democratic Conference. 2017. *Horrors in Homeless Housing*. NYC: New York Senate.
- Ingram, Erin S., John M. Bridgeland, Bruce Reed, and Matthew Atwell. 2017. "Hidden in Plain Site: Homeless Students in America's Public Schools." *Civic Enterprises*. Accessed January 7, 2018. <http://civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/HiddeninPlainSightOfficial.pdf>.
- Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness. 2016. "On The Map: The Atlas of Student Homelessness in New York City 2016." *Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness*. Accessed January 7, 2018. [http://www.icphusa.org/new\\_york\\_city/on-the-map-the-atlas-of-student-homelessness-in-new-york-city-2016/](http://www.icphusa.org/new_york_city/on-the-map-the-atlas-of-student-homelessness-in-new-york-city-2016/).
- . 2017. "On the Map: The Atlas of Student Homelessness in New York City 2017." *Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness*. September 28. Accessed January 7, 2018. [http://www.icphusa.org/new\\_york\\_city/map-atlas-student-homelessness-new-york-city-2017/](http://www.icphusa.org/new_york_city/map-atlas-student-homelessness-new-york-city-2017/).
- Julianelle, Patricia F., and Maria Foscarinis. 2003. "Responding to the School Mobility of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness: The McKinney-Vento Act and Beyond." *Journal of Negro Education* (Journal of Negro Education) 72 (1): 39-54. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3211289.pdf>.
- Lafavor, Theresa. 2016. "Predictors of Academic Success in 9- to 11-Year- Old Homeless Children: The Role of Executive Function, Social Competence, and Emotional Control." *Journal of Early Adolescence* 1-29.
- Larson, Stephanie Greco. 2006. *Media & Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment*. Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield.
- Leonard, Elizabeth Weeks. 2010. "State Constitutionalism and the Right to Health Care." *Journal of Constitutional Law* 12 (5): 1351-52.
- Mantas, Marylena. 2002. "Schools Provide 'Oasis of Stability' to Homeless Children." *Education Update Online*. July. Accessed May 10, 2017. [http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2002/july02/htmls/spot\\_schoolsprovide.html](http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2002/july02/htmls/spot_schoolsprovide.html) .
- Mantzicoloulos, Panayota, and Dana J. Knutson. 2000. "Head Start Children: School Mobility and Achievement in the Early Grades." *Journal of Educational Research* 93 (5): 305-311.
- Martin, Cary. 2012. "Homeless Education: Unveiling the Truth Behind Beating the Odds." In *Educational Policy and the Law*, by Mark G. Yudof, Betsy Levin and Rachel Moran. Wadsworth Publishing.
- Masten, Ann S., Aria F. Fiat, and Madelyn H. Labella. 2015. "Educating Homeless and Highly Mobile Students: Implications of Research on Risk and Resilience." *School Psychology Review* 44 (3): 315–330.
- McCarthy, Cameron, ed. 2005. *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*. NYC, NY: Routledge.
- McKinney-Vento Act of 1987, 42 U.S.C. §§ 11301 et seq. (2017).
- McMillen, Marilyn M., Phillip Kaufman, and Steve Klein. 1995. "Dropout Rates in the United States: 1995." U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Miller, Peter M. 2011. "A Critical Analysis of the Research on Student Homelessness." *Review of Educational Research* 81 (3): 308-337.
- Miller, Peter M. 2015. "Families' Experiences in Different Homeless and Highly Mobile Settings: Implications for School and Community Practice." *Education and Urban Society* 47 (1).

- National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. 2011. "Education of Homeless Children & Youth The Guide to Their Rights ." *National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty*. June. Accessed May 3, 2017.
- New York City Commission on Human Rights 2017. Accessed January 7, 2018. <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/the-law.page>.
- NYC Department of Education. 2017. "What's Going on in STH?" *Student In Temporary Housing Newsletter*. <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/9831364D-E542-4763-BC2F-7D424EBD5C83/211972/STHWinterNewsletter1.pdf>.
- NYC Independent Budget Office. 2016. "Not Reaching the Door: Homeless Students Face Many Hurdles on the Way to School." *NYC Independant Budget Office*. Edited by Liza Pappas. October. Accessed January 7, 2018. <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/not-reaching-the-door-homeless-students-face-many-hurdles-on-the-way-to-school.pdf>.
- NYS-TEACHS. n.d. "Frequently Asked Questions: Presented by the New York State Technical & Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students." *NYS-TEACHS*. Accessed January 7, 2018. [http://www.nysteachs.org/media/INF\\_Conf\\_Adv.QandAhandout.pdf](http://www.nysteachs.org/media/INF_Conf_Adv.QandAhandout.pdf).
- Pappas, Liza, interview by Sascha Brodsky. 2016. The Atlantic, (December 8).
- Pew Charitable Trusts. 2012. *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Charitable Trusts.
- Routhier, Giselle. 2017. "Briefing Paper: Family Homelessness in NYC." *Coalition for the Homeless*. January. Accessed January 7, 2018. [http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Family-Homelessness-1-2017\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Family-Homelessness-1-2017_FINAL.pdf).
- Rumberger, Russell W., and Katherine A. Larson. 1998. "Student Mobility and the Increased Risk of High School Dropout." *American Journal of Education* (University of Chicago) 107 (1): 1-35.
- Russo, Melissa, Evan Stulberger, and Ann Givens. 2016. "Hundreds of Homeless Students Get Bus Service After I-Team Report." *NBC New York*, January 28.
- Sewell, William H., Archibald O. Haller, and George W. Ohlendorf. 1970. "The Educational and Early Occupational Status Attainment Process: Replication and Revision." *American Sociological Review* (American Sociological Association) 35 (6): 1014-1027.
- Solanke, Iyiola. 2017. *Discrimination as Stigma: A Theory of Anti-discrimination Law*. Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing.
- Sparks, Sarah D. 2016. "Student Mobility: How It Affects Learning." *Education Week*, August 11.
- Stewart, Nikita. 2015. "A Daunting Trip to School for Some Homeless Children." *The New York Times*.
- Teall, Emily. Survey of 63 NYC Public School Principals and Administrators Concerning Homeless Students. New York, NY, Sep. 2017. Unpublished Survey.
- Turner, Heather A., David Finkelhor, and Richard Ormrod. 2005. "The effect of lifetime victimization on the mental health of children and adolescents." *Elsevier* (University of New Hampshire).
- U.S. Department of Education. 2016. "Education Department Releases Guidance on Homeless Children and Youth." *U.S. Department of Education*. July 27. Accessed January 7, 2018. <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-releases-guidance-homeless-children-and-youth>.

- United Nations General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 2 September 1990. Treaty Series, vol. 1577, available from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.
- . *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 4 January 1969. Treaty Series, vol. 660, available from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>.
- . *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 3 January 1976. Treaty Series, vol. 993, available from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>.
- . *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948. General Assembly resolution 217 A, available from <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.
- United States Department of Education. 2004. "Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, As Amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: Non-Regulatory Guidance." July. Accessed January 7, 2018. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/guidance.pdf>.
- . 2017. "Part C — Homeless Education." *United States Department of Education*. Accessed May 3, 2017. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html>.