

Identified Student Homelessness in Camden City Schools

2020-2021

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Report prepared by:

Ciani Green, BA, Camden City School District
Joanne Jung, BS, Nemours Children's Health
J.J. Cutuli, PhD, Nemours Children's Health
Ebony Maddox, MSW, Camden City School District
Halianny Mejia, Camden City School District
Sandra Cintron, MEd, MA, Camden City School District
Aaron Truchil, MS, Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers



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Executive Summary

Camden City School District is committed to identifying and serving students experiencing homelessness to ensure they receive a free, appropriate public education. This report provides new statistics for the 2020-21 school year, which includes the shift to remote learning. We also consider differences in educational indicators (e.g., attendance, school mobility, graduation) and accessing services and supports. We consider data from students enrolled in district-operated schools at any time during the 2018-19 to 2020-21 school years along with publicly available data from the NJ Department of Education. Our ultimate goal is to innovate new ways of identifying and supporting students who experience homelessness.

In SY 2020-21, identified student homelessness was prevalent at a slightly lower rate

- About 1 out of every 20 students (3.78%) was identified as experiencing homelessness.
- About 9 out of 10 (89.1%) of these students were doubled-up with friends or family.
- Identified student homelessness was higher for Hispanic/Latino students and for female students, and somewhat lower for pre-kindergarteners.
- Schools varied widely in how many students they identified as experiencing homelessness.
- The rate of identified homelessness was under 1.5% at each charter/renaissance agency except for KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy which identified rates of student homelessness comparable to CCSD.

COVID-19 and remote learning interfered with identifying student homelessness

- Identified homelessness rates declined by 38.5% from SY 2018-19 to 2020-21.
- Declines were pronounced for female students, Hispanic/Latino students, and pre-kindergarteners.

Homelessness was often linked to differences in education indicators

- Like in other districts that attempt to address homelessness, students who experienced homelessness in CCSD showed challenges in education indicators.
- Students who experienced homelessness had more absences and increased chronic absenteeism compared to students who were not identified as homeless.
- Students who experienced homelessness were more likely to drop out.
- 12th graders who experienced homelessness were less likely to graduate.

Homelessness may interfere with receiving some supports and services

- Students identified as homeless were about equally likely to receive transportation services compared to students not identifying as homeless in SY 2020-21.
- Individualized education plans were less likely among students experiencing homelessness.
- English language learner participation was more likely among students experiencing homelessness.
- School-based youth services were less likely to be used by students experiencing homelessness in SY 2020-21.

Background

This annual report updates metrics related to identified student homelessness in the Camden City School District (CCSD). Our goal is to inform efforts to better recognize student homelessness when it is happening and to respond so that it does not get in the way of education. This report focuses on metrics from the 2020-21 school year compared to the preceding two years. We consider metrics on groups of students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in district-operated schools at any point during these years. All metrics are based on data routinely collected by CCSD for all students, unless otherwise noted. This report follows previous ones focused on earlier school years and other metrics.¹

Student homelessness and the Camden City School District

The U. S. Department of Education defines homelessness as:

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to a lack of adequate housing;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters or abandoned in hospitals;
- Having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Being migratory and qualifying as homeless due to living circumstances as described above

(42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2))

Nationally for the 2020-21 school year (SY), about 1.1 million students were identified as experiencing homelessness nationwide and 10,539 specifically in New Jersey.² Over three-quarters (76.8%) of students experiencing homelessness in the U. S. were living doubled-up with friends or relatives, 10.9% were in shelter, 7.8% in hotels or motels, and 4.5% unsheltered. Student homelessness was linked to lower proficiency rates on state tests of academic achievement compared to low-income peers, suggesting it is a risk factor for education.

The amount of identified student homelessness declined broadly with COVID-19 restrictions. Federal data suggest a decline of about 14.2% across the nation from SY 2019-20 to 2020-21 and about a 17.3% decline in New Jersey (in SY 2019-20 to in SY 2020-21).² Preliminary reports from other school districts suggest that an even larger reduction is occurring.³ Low counts likely persisted through the 2020-21 school

¹ Cutuli, Torres-Cintron, Green, Mejia, Arambales, & Truchil (2020). Identified student homelessness in Camden City Schools. Available at: <https://camdencityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ccsd-2019-20-homelessness-report-2.pdf>.

² National Center for Homeless Education, (2021). *National Overview*. Available at: <https://profiles.nche.seiservices.com>.

³ SchoolHouse Connection and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan (2020). Lost in the masked shuffle and virtual void: Children and youth experiencing homelessness amidst the pandemic. Available at: <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Lost-in-the-Masked-Shuffle-and-Virtual-Void.pdf>

year as most districts were performing remote registration and learning, and less student homelessness came to the attention of teachers and school personnel. It is also possible that local and federal responses to COVID-19 partially reduced student homelessness, such as moratoria on evictions and cash payments to families.

On average, students in Camden, NJ face high rates of socioeconomic disadvantage, including high rates of poverty (33.60% in Camden versus 11.40% nationally) and low median household income (\$28,623 versus \$64,994), which tend to involve varied developmental risk factors. Neighborhood and housing factors also reflect disinvestment, such as low rates of owner-occupied housing (40.30% versus 64.40%) and low median property value for owner-occupied housing (\$82,500 versus \$229,800). Meanwhile, Camden City is home to a greater proportion of children and teens (8.20% under 5 years old versus 6.00% nationally; 28.80% under 18 years old versus 22.30%). This represents an opportunity to promote resilience in development. Nearly all Camden residents identify as Black/African American (42.50% versus 13.40% nationally) and/or Hispanic/Latino (50.50% versus 18.50%).^{4,5}

Camden City School District responds to student homelessness.

Camden City School District (CCSD) proactively seeks out students and families experiencing homelessness to inform them of their rights, ensure those rights are respected, and offer services to support students. The previous annual report noted a decrease in student homelessness of around 5% to 4% of students in SYs 2018-19 and 2019-20. The homelessness response for CCSD is centrally coordinated by the Office of Human Services, including the liaison for students experiencing homelessness. Identifying students experiencing homelessness has financial implications for the district: CCSD receives state funding for students from outside New Jersey experiencing homelessness and staying temporarily in Camden, and CCSD receives local funding for students experiencing homelessness when those students had been living in other districts in New Jersey.

Identifying students and families experiencing homelessness is a challenge for all school districts. Some families are unaware that their housing situation grants them special rights and access to supports. Others may avoid being identified as experiencing homelessness because of social stigma, concerns that they will be disqualified from receiving other sorts of aid, concerns about deportation for undocumented immigrants, or other concerns. CCSD is committed to overcoming these challenges and concerns to better serve students and families who experience homelessness. CCSD continuously looks to improve how to identify and serve families with sensitivity and respect.

CCSD attempts to engage families and understand their housing status in multiple ways. District staff learn about many homeless situations when families enroll in CCSD. Routine enrollment forms ask caregivers about their family's housing situation at annual or mid-year registration, when students transfer schools, and when they request a change in transportation. CCSD collaborates with other agencies that serve

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. Quick Facts: Camden City, New Jersey. Accessed July 1, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/camdencitynewjersey/PST045221>

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. Quick Facts: United States. Accessed July 1, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045221>

students experiencing homelessness, allowing the district to receive referrals and coordinate services (e.g., with the Anna Sample House family shelter and other social service agencies). Referrals also come from teachers and other school staff, trained by the Office of Human Services to recognize when a student or family might be experiencing homelessness.

When a family reports a homelessness situation or a referral is made, caregivers or unaccompanied students complete an interview with school-based Family and Operations Coordinators or staff from the CCSD Office of Human Services. It is preferred for the family/student to connect with school-based staff to begin building personal connections and access supports in a single location. Staff responses to homelessness vary based on the different needs of each student or family. Once a student is identified, CCSD promotes equitable access to education by extending rights and supports guaranteed by federal mandate, including waiving most documentation and other enrollment requirements in the short term, ensuring transportation to a student's school of origin following a residential move, and providing other services to promote achievement at school (42 U.S.C. § 11424 et seq). These rights and services continue at least through the end of the school year when the student is identified as experiencing homelessness. CCSD staff can also provide vouchers for school uniforms, shoes, bookbags, toiletries, referrals to be evaluated for other district supports (e.g., Bilingual Program/English as a Second Language; Individualized Education Plan; school-based youth counseling services), and referrals for outside agencies (e.g., food pantries, medical providers, housing services).

Areas of Focus.

This report considers routinely-collected education data from CCSD as well as publicly available aggregate data from the New Jersey Department of Education. Our goal is to describe patterns in identification and service use to innovate new and better ways of reaching and supporting students experiencing homelessness, especially in light of COVID-19-related prevention strategies. We focus on three school years (2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21). In this report, we update the identification rate of student homelessness and consider differences in education indicators and supports provided. We consider records from all students attending district schools (non-charter, non-rennaissance) at any point during school years 2018-19 through 2020-21.

The Data.

We consider education records about each student attending schools operated by the Camden City School District (non-charter, non-rennaissance) at any point during each relevant school year. We include information only about students who attended at least 10 days in any district-operated school. Additional aggregate information comes from the New Jersey Department of Education via publicly available sources, as noted.

Student and family factors. Demographic information and identified homelessness status are derived from CCSD records. This information is updated at least annually during school enrollment and as part of regular district processes during the year when CCSD staff become aware of changes in a student's situation.

Education indicators.

Absence rate and chronic absenteeism. Absence rate is based on student attendance maintained in CCSD records. Absence rate is the difference between days enrolled and days attended and divided by the number of days enrolled in the district. This helps account for instances where students might move into or out of the district during the school year, producing episodes during which their school attendance is not known. A student is considered chronically absent when they miss at least 10 percent of enrolled days in a given year. There is no attendance data available for March through June 2020 because of the sudden switch to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendance data resumed at the start of the school year in Fall 2020. To account for remote learning challenges in 2020, new attendance strategies were utilized to better understand the reasons students were absent, such as quarantining and internet problems.

School mobility – Within year. We report the rate at which students change schools during the academic year. This does not include school changes between years.

Suspensions. Suspension rates refer to the proportion of students who were suspended in any way for at least one day. This includes both in-school and out-of-school suspensions.

Dropout rate. CCSD records include an indicator for all students who leave the district, reflecting what, if anything, is known about why the student is no longer in the district. We consider a student to have dropped out if they left the district for any of the following reasons: physical, mental, or emotional disability, dissatisfaction with school, economic necessity and/or entered employment, married and/or pregnant, new residence and school status unknown, or reason unknown. Findings based on this indicator should be interpreted with caution given the inherent difficulty of knowing in all cases why a student has left CCSD.

Graduation rate (12th grade). We present single-year high school graduation rates as the proportion of 12th-grade students who graduated divided by the number of 12th-grade students for each school year.

Education supports.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP). We report the rate of students who have an individualized education plan each school year. Students in CCSD are eligible to receive special education services under an IEP developed through a team-based evaluation. Typically, IEPs support students qualified for services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). IEPs and related services are available to all children and youth from 3 to 21 years old. Available services include special education instruction, speech/language therapy, audiological services, behavioral support, psychological services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and vocational services.

English language learning services (ELL). The ELL indicator refers to students who qualify for any English language learner program based on limited English proficiency. CCSD operates a bilingual/English as a second language program to support English Language Learners in grades K through 12th. This includes full time English-Spanish bilingual instruction at certain schools in addition to English as a Second Language supports and programming.

School-based Youth Services. CCSD provides a variety of health and human services through its School-based Youth Services program. This program is available to all students from grades 1-12 at five schools. This indicator in the health record denotes an involvement in one or more of the following services: Primary and preventative health services, mental health and family services, referral to community-based services, after-school and summer programs, family involvement programs, substance abuse services, pregnancy prevention, and healthy youth development programs.

Transportation. CCSD provides transportation to students who live at least 2 miles from their school and to some students experiencing homelessness and in some other situations where transportation can be a barrier to education. Transportation support can involve a school bus or passes for public transportation.

NJ Department of Education homelessness counts. We also report on annual identified student homelessness rates for CCSD and several other New Jersey local education agencies (LEAs) using data from the New Jersey Department of Education.⁶ Each LEA is required to report the total number of students identified as experiencing homelessness each year. These are counts of the number of identified cases of student homelessness involved with the LEA at any point during the school year.

⁶ NJ School Performance Report. Accessed October 1, 2021. Available at <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/>

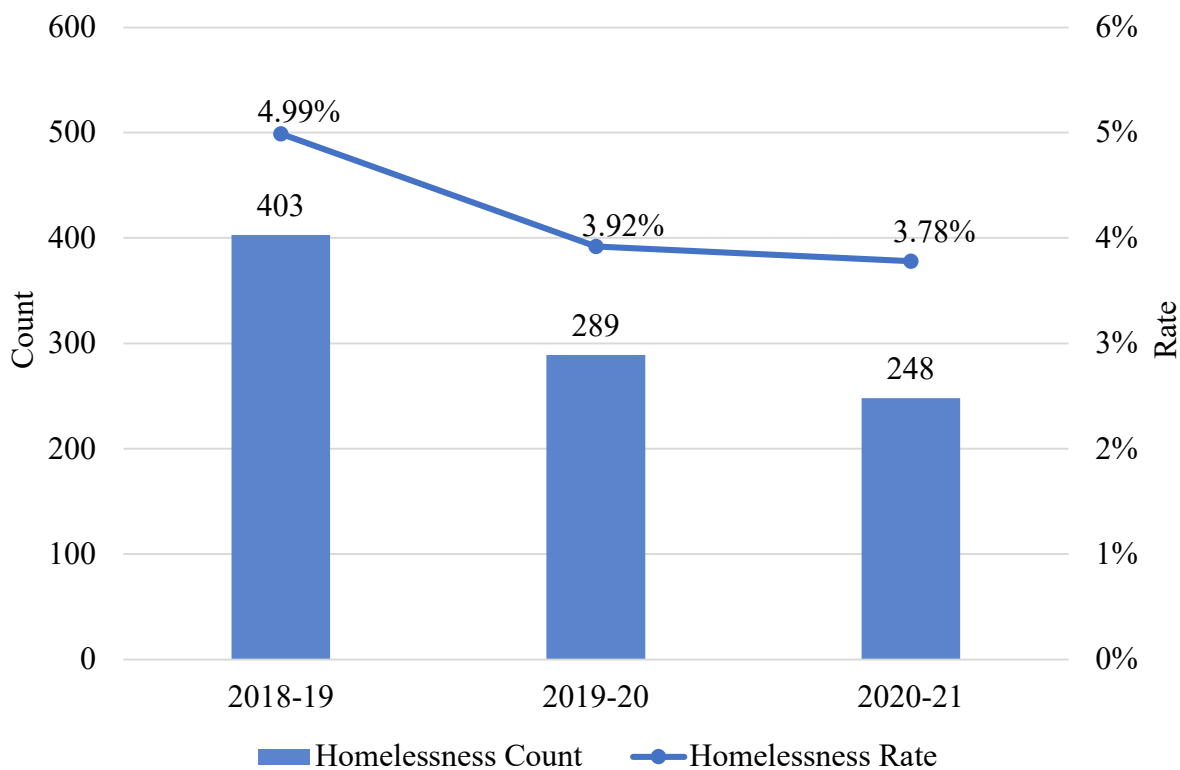
Section 1: Identified Student Homelessness

1.1 Rate of identified student homelessness in CCSD

Identified student homelessness significantly declined in SY 2020-21, from 403 students in SY 2018-19 to 248 students in SY 2020-21. This decline is not due to lower enrollment in CCSD as the rate of identified homelessness also declined from 4.99% to 3.78%. This decline is consistent with concerns that fewer students were identified during remote learning related to the COVID-19 pandemic which began in March 2020. See Figure 1.1.

The nighttime sleeping arrangements of students identified as experiencing homelessness in SY 2020-21 were overwhelmingly (89.11%) in doubled-up situations sharing housing with friends or extended family for economic reasons. Living in doubled-up situations can often make it more difficult for students to attend school and complete homework, especially due to a lack of access to stable internet and private spaces. The doubled-up rate is generally consistent across years (SY 2018-19: 87.34%; SY 2019-20: 91.35%). In addition, 2.42% of identified student homelessness involved staying in a shelter, a decline from previous years (SY 2018-19: 5.46%; SY 2019-20: 4.84%). Like in past years, no one was identified as unsheltered in SY 2020-21. The rate of student homelessness in a hotel or motel was 8.47% which is a significant increase from the SY 2019-20 rate of 3.81% and a return to the level of 2018-19 of 7.20%.

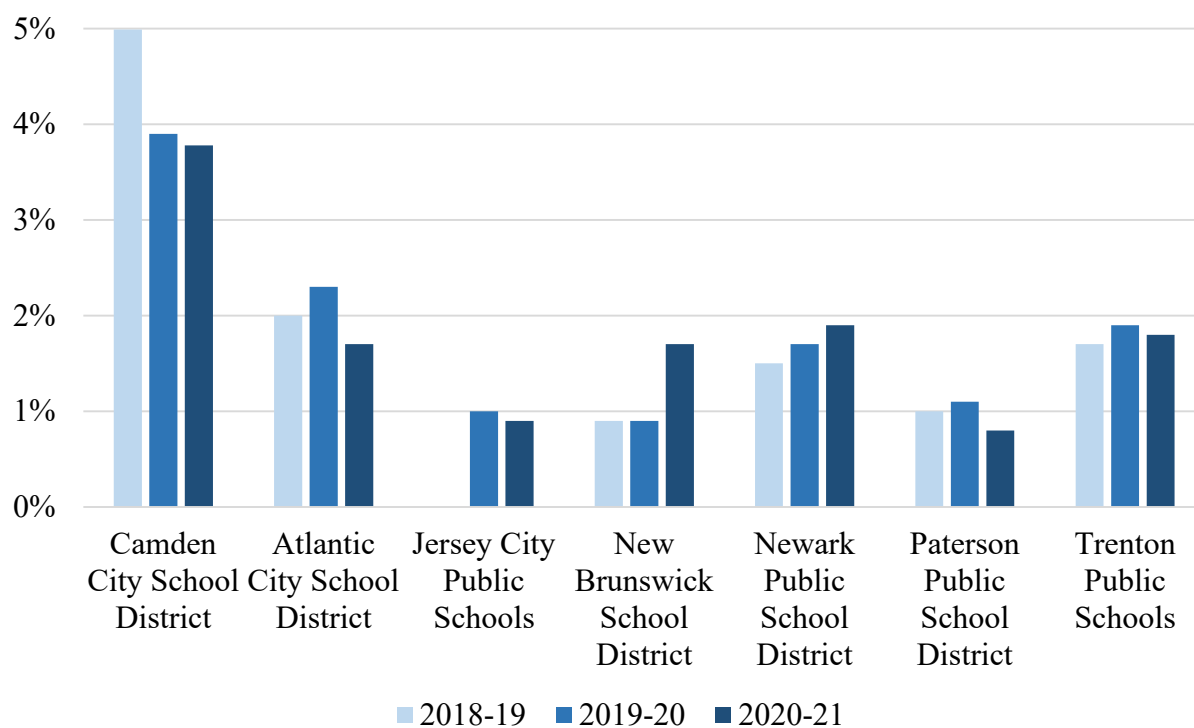
Figure 1.1. Rates and counts of students experiencing homelessness by year.



1.2 Differences among NJ districts in identified student homelessness.

CCSD consistently identifies a higher proportion of enrolled students as experiencing homelessness compared to the other districts we consider. Data from the New Jersey Department of Education⁷ contextualizes the CCSD rates of identified student homelessness.⁸ Figure 1.2 depicts rates for CCSD and five other districts in New Jersey. Overall, CCSD is the only district among these that consistently identified over 3% of students across SYs 2018-19 through 2020-21. Each of the other districts identified around or below 2% of students each year. This pattern underscores concerns that student homelessness is under-identified by New Jersey education agencies, in general.

Figure 1.2. Identified student homelessness rates in other NJ districts.



⁷ NJ School Performance Report. Accessed October 1, 2021. Available at <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/>

⁸ Please note: Statistics based on NJ Department of Education data may differ from statistics based on CCSD data because of differences in reference frames. For example, CCSD data refer to students who attended at least 10 days in CCSD operated schools.

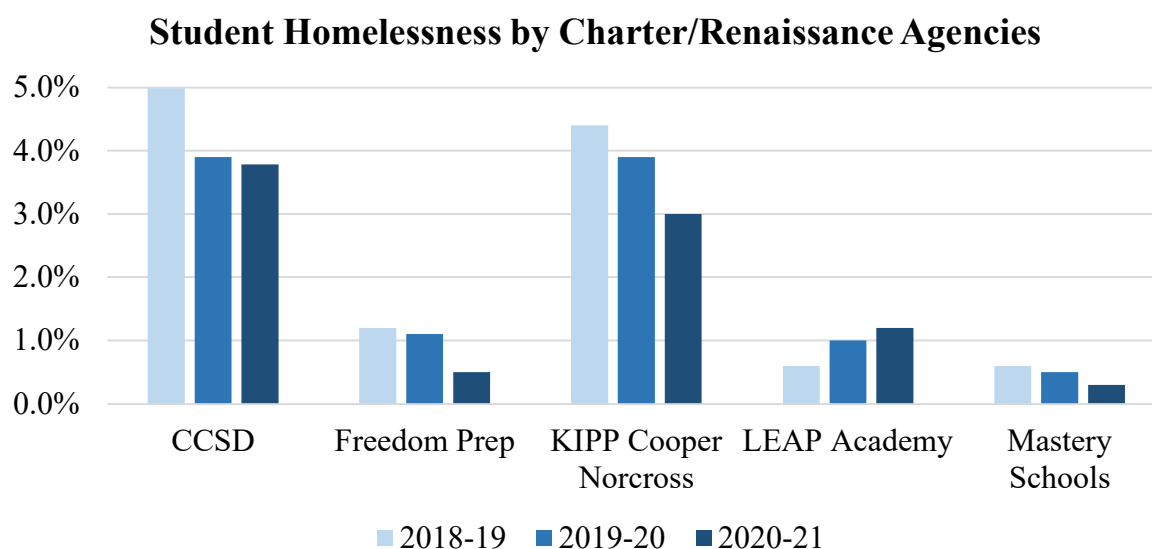
1.3 Differences between Camden charter and renaissance agencies in identified homelessness.

More than half of public school students in Camden City attend a charter or renaissance school. Most of the education agencies that operate these schools in Camden City do not identify many students experiencing homelessness according to data from the NJ Department of Education. Most charter or renaissance agencies in Camden City identified less than 3% of students as experiencing homelessness each year from SY 2018-19 through 2020-21 (Table 1.3 and Figure 1.3). Three agencies did not report any student homelessness. These low rates are consistent with concerns that student homelessness routinely goes unrecognized. KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy is the exception, identifying between 3.0% and 4.4% of students each year. We cannot tell based on available data from the NJ Department of Education whether most charter or renaissance agencies are not identifying or serving many students experiencing homelessness, or whether inaccurate counts of identified students are being received by the state agency.

Table 1.3. Rates of identified student homelessness by public education agencies in Camden.

Education Agency Name	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Camden City School District	5.0%	3.9%	3.8%
Camden Prep (Uncommon)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Camden's Promise Charter	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
ECO Charter School	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Freedom Prep Charter	1.2%	1.1%	0.5%
KIPP Cooper Norcross	4.4%	3.9%	3.0%
LEAP Academy Univ. Charter	0.6%	1.0%	1.2%
Mastery Schools of Camden	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%

Figure 1.3. Identified student homelessness rates for charter, renaissance, and CCSD agencies

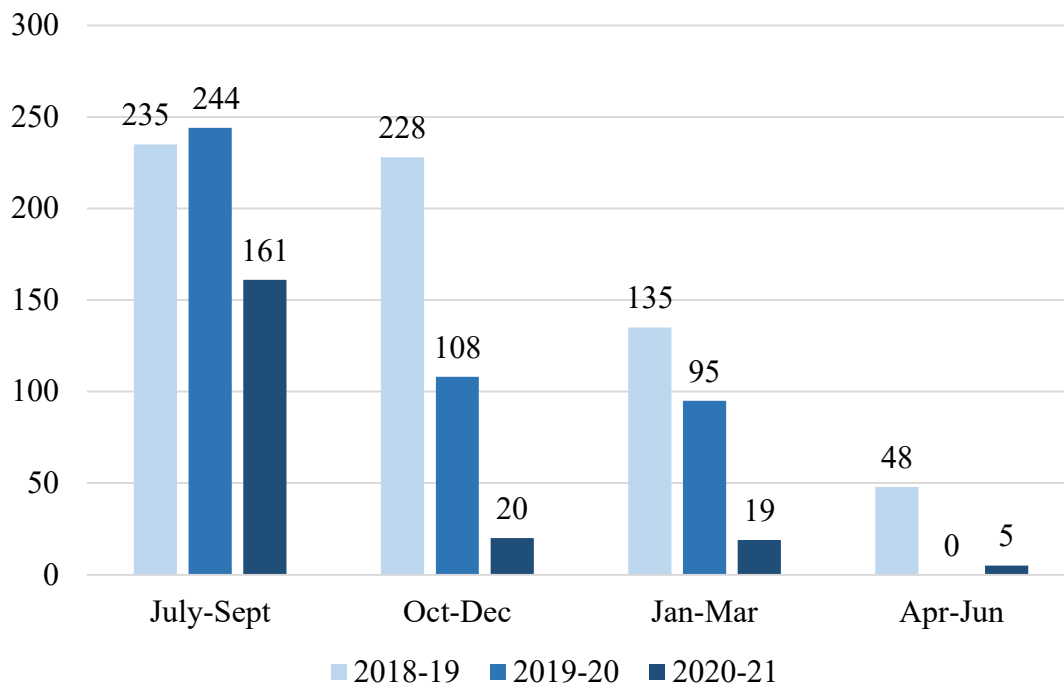


Note: Three charter agencies are not shown because they did not report any student homelessness.

1.4 Differences over time in identified student homelessness start dates.

Student homelessness was much less likely to be identified in CCSD for homeless episodes that began in the final quarter of each SY 2019-20 and 20-21. See Table 1.4 and Figure 1. However, it should be noted that most students are identified as experiencing homelessness during the enrollment period, July through September. Additionally, the majority of SY 2020-21 was remote, and fewer resources were offered specifically for students experiencing homelessness, which may have influenced identification rates.

Figure 1.4. Counts of identified student homelessness by episode start date.



1.5 Differences by race/ethnicity in identified student homelessness.

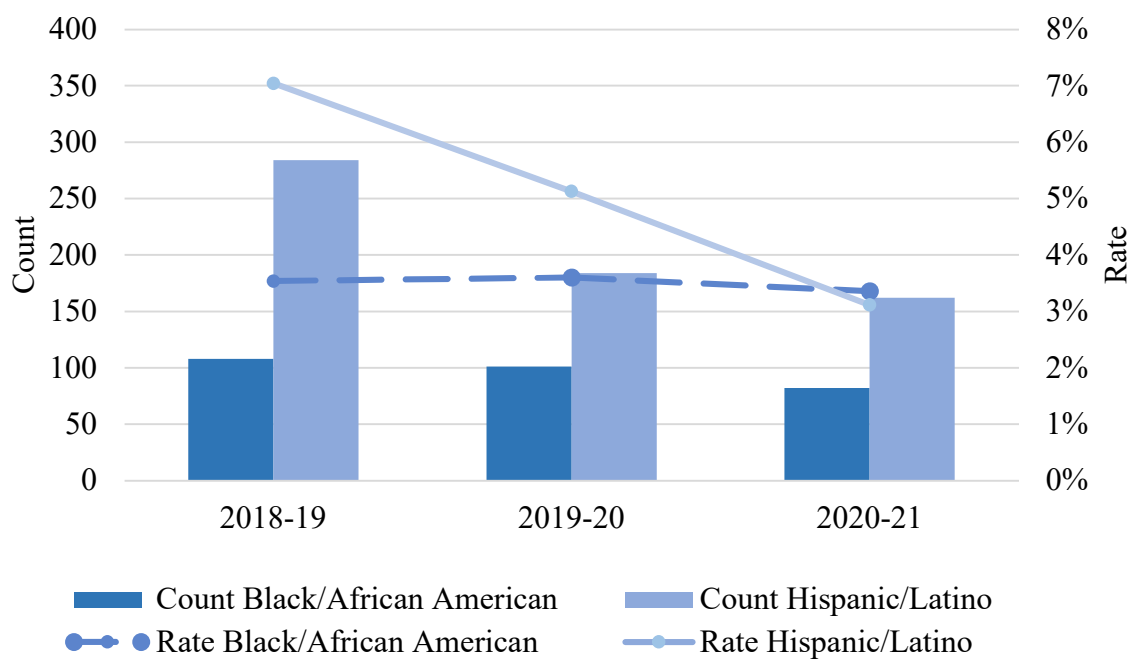
Identified student homelessness differed by race/ethnicity (Table 1.5 and Figure 1.5). Rates and counts of student homelessness declined for Hispanic/Latino students in SY 2020-21 and stayed somewhat steady for Black/African American students. These data do not speak to why this difference emerged. For example, we are not sure if the difference is related to decreased mobility into CCSD for Hispanic/Latino families, increased mobility out of CCSD, differences in success rate in identifying homelessness in this group, or some combination of these or other factors.

Table 1.5. Counts and rates of identified student homelessness by race/ethnicity.

Year	Black / African American		Hispanic / Latino		Other	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
2018-19	108	3.04%	284	6.55%	11	5.85%
2019-20	101	3.10%	184	4.63%	Suppressed	Suppressed
2020-21	82	2.86%	162	2.61%	Suppressed	Suppressed

Note: Counts and rates with less than 10 students are suppressed.

Figure 1.5. Identified student homelessness by race/ethnicity.



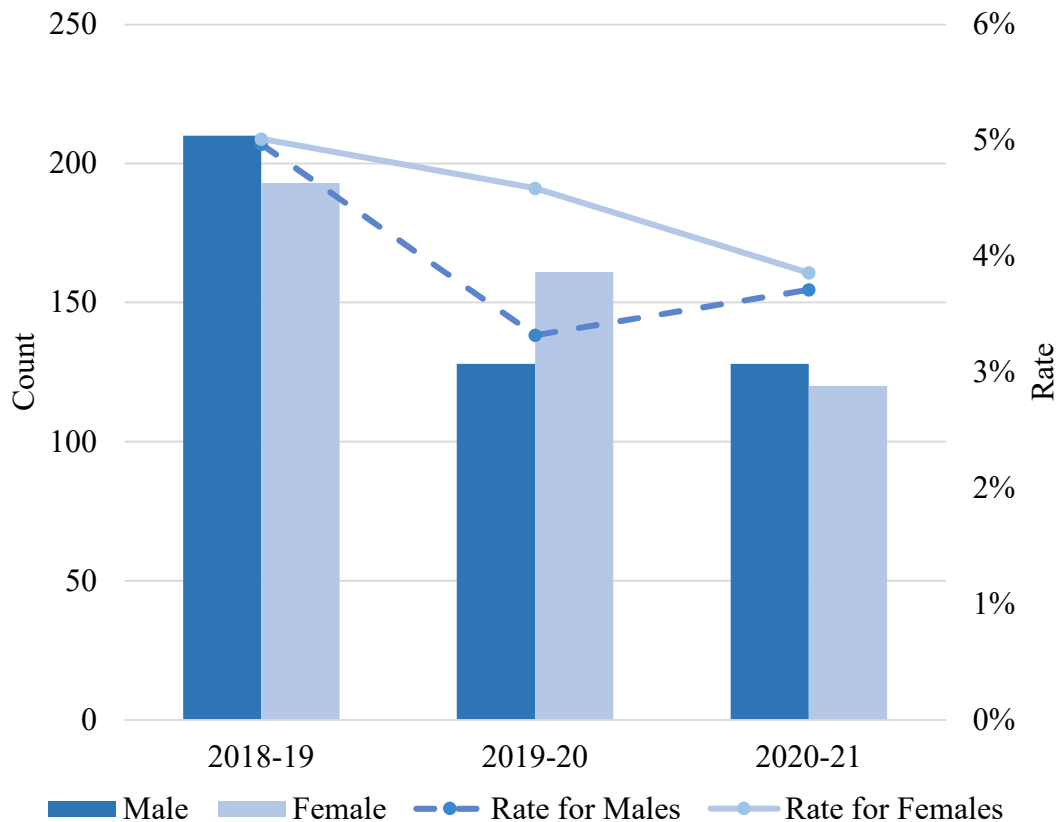
1.6 Student gender differences in student homelessness.

Identified student homelessness increased for males and declined for females in SY 2020-21. The rate declined for females to 3.86% in SY 2020-21 but increased for males to 3.71%.

Table 1.6. Counts and rates of identified student homelessness by gender.

Year	Female		Male	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
2018-19	193	5.01%	210	4.97%
2019-20	161	4.59%	128	3.32%
2020-21	120	3.86%	128	3.71%

Figure 1.6. Identified student homelessness by gender.



1.7 School differences in identified student homelessness.

Identified student homelessness varied widely by school. Table 1.7 reports counts and rates of identified homelessness, with statistics, suppressed when less than 10 students were identified. Six schools identified at least 10 students experiencing homelessness each of the three years; 15 identified at least 10 students one or more years; 4 (in red) did not identify at least 10 students during any of the years considered. This variability between schools suggests differences in school-level processes that contribute to whether student homelessness is identified when it occurs.

Table 1.7. Counts and rates of identified student homelessness by school

School	2018-19			2019-20			2020-21		
	Rate	Count	Enrollment	Rate	Count	Enrollment	Rate	Count	Enrollment
Big Picture Learning Academy	S	< 10	206	S	< 10	184	S	< 10	177
Camden High School	S	< 10	441	S	< 10	371	S	< 10	368
Catto Family School	2.74%	17	620	1.86%	12	644	3.00%	18	600
Cooper's Poynt Family School	S	< 10	449	2.89%	13	450	S	< 10	408
Cramer Elementary School	10.25%	53	517	6.53%	32	490	6.46%	29	449
Cream Family School	3.61%	12	332	S	< 10	131	S	< 10	111
Creative Arts/Morgan Village Academy	S	< 10	315	4.17%	13	312	4.41%	13	295
Davis Elementary School	S	< 10	358	S	< 10	350	3.31%	11	332
Dudley Family School	9.85%	52	528	11.92%	62	520	8.65%	36	416
Early Childhood Develop Center	S	< 10	443	3.86%	12	311	S	< 10	151
Forest Hill Elementary School	S	< 10	311	3.68%	13	353	3.31%	10	302
H.B. Wilson Elementary School	S	< 10	508	1.90%	11	578	1.84%	10	543
Medical Arts High School	S	< 10	214	S	< 10	216	S	< 10	198
Pride Academy	S	< 10	51	S	< 10	89	S	< 10	69
Sharp Elementary School	5.78%	23	398	S	< 10	364	S	< 10	341
Veterans Memorial Family School	14.40%	73	507	8.48%	34	401	7.56%	27	357
Wiggins College Prep Lab School	5.19%	23	443	2.91%	13	447	3.11%	11	354
Woodrow Wilson High School	8.28%	70	845	7.47%	51	683	7.60%	49	645
Yorkship Elementary School	4.11%	21	511	S	< 10	471	S	< 10	443

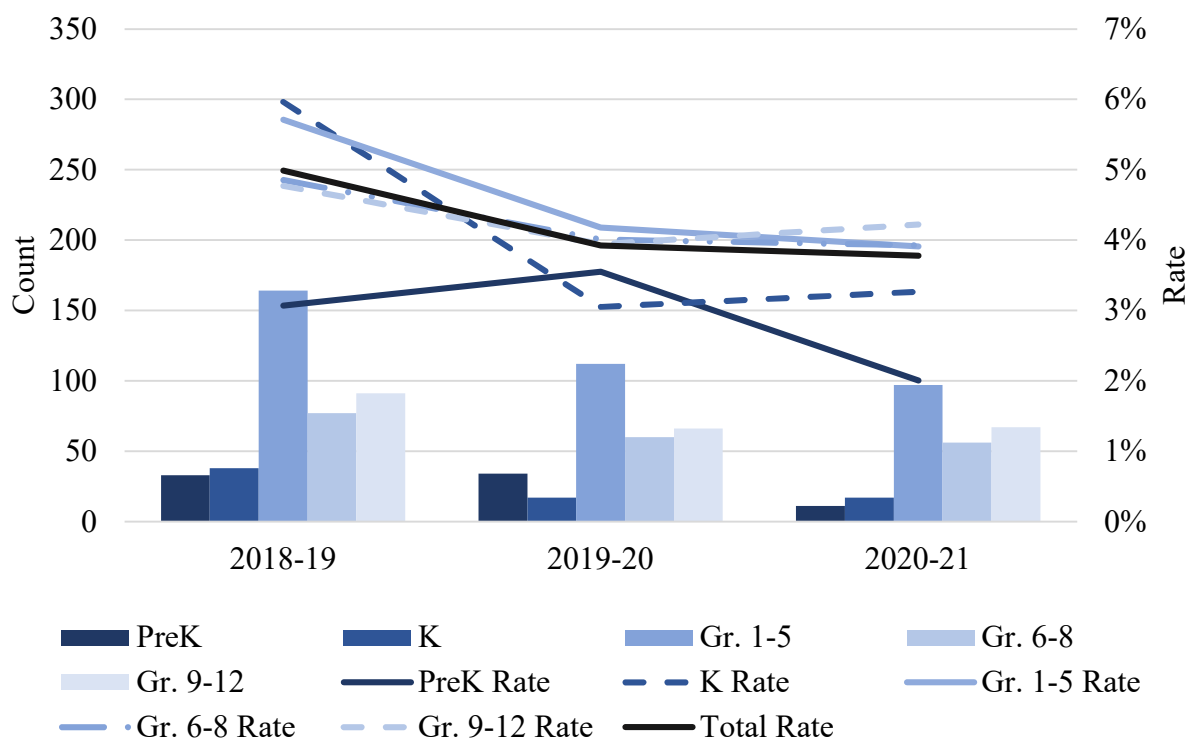
1.8 Grade differences in identified student homelessness.

Rates of identified student homelessness generally decreased in SY 2020-21 across grade-groupings in a manner consistent with the general trend of declining identification in SY 2020-21. There were several notable exceptions. First, rates declined to a greater degree for students in kindergarten from 5.97% in SY 2018-19 to 3.27% in SY 2020-21. Rates for students in grades 1-5 also declined to a greater degree from 5.71% in SY 2018-19 to 3.91% in SY 2020-21. Finally, while the rate for students in PreK only declined by about one percentage point across the three years, the absolute values of both the count and rate in SY 2020-21 are low. Student enrollment in district-operated PreK and kindergarten was relatively low during SY 2020-21.

Table 1.8. Counts and rates of identified student homelessness by grade groupings.

Age Group	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
PreK	33	3.07%	34	3.55%	11	2.01%
K	38	5.97%	17	3.05%	17	3.27%
Grades 1-5	164	5.71%	112	4.18%	97	3.91%
Grades 6-8	77	4.85%	60	4.01%	56	3.93%
Grades 9-12	91	4.77%	66	3.95%	67	4.22%
Total	403	4.99%	289	3.92%	248	3.78%

Figure 1.8. Identified student homelessness counts and rates by grade grouping



Section 2: Education indicators

This second section describes differences in education indicators (attendance, school mobility, dropout, graduation, and suspensions) comparing students who were identified as experiencing homelessness each year to those who were not. We focus on students in kindergarten through 12th grade, as many of the indicators are less applicable to children in PreK programs.

Sections 2 and 3 need to be interpreted in light of the declines in identified student homelessness in SY 2020-21. Those declines suggest that under identification occurred since we do not have reason to believe that there was any real decline in student homelessness; It is likely that some students who experienced homelessness are included in the not-homeless group since CCSD was unable to identify them. This will reduce any differences in education indicators between groups of students identified as experiencing homelessness and not.

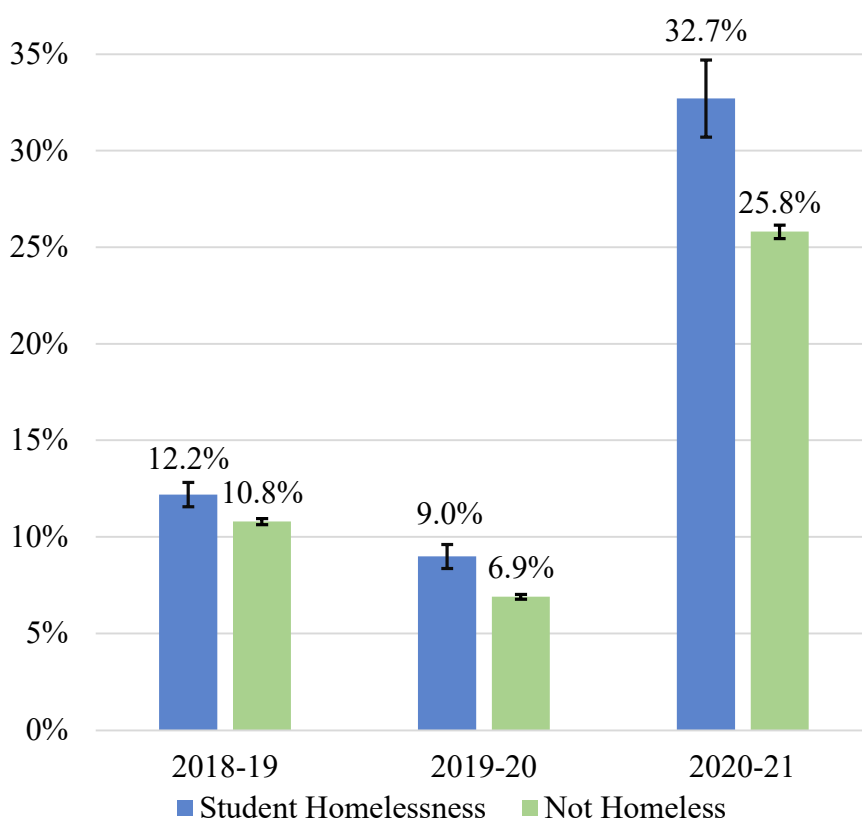
2.1 Absence rate

Student homelessness was associated with higher rates of absenteeism, considering only days in which students were enrolled in CCSD schools. Figure 2.1 describes the average annual absence rates (days absent divided by days enrolled) for students who were and were not identified as experiencing homelessness each school year. This absence rate is consistently higher for students identified as experiencing homelessness. Student homelessness is associated with fewer days in the classroom.

The absence rate appears to increase significantly for all students in SY 2020-21, but this is likely to be related to the option of remote learning that occurred in SY 2020-21 and not a true difference. Attendance data is not available for the remote learning period in SY 2019-20, and absences are more likely in the final months of any school year based on analyses of CCSD data from past years as well as general trends from other school districts.

Figure 2.1. Absence rate.

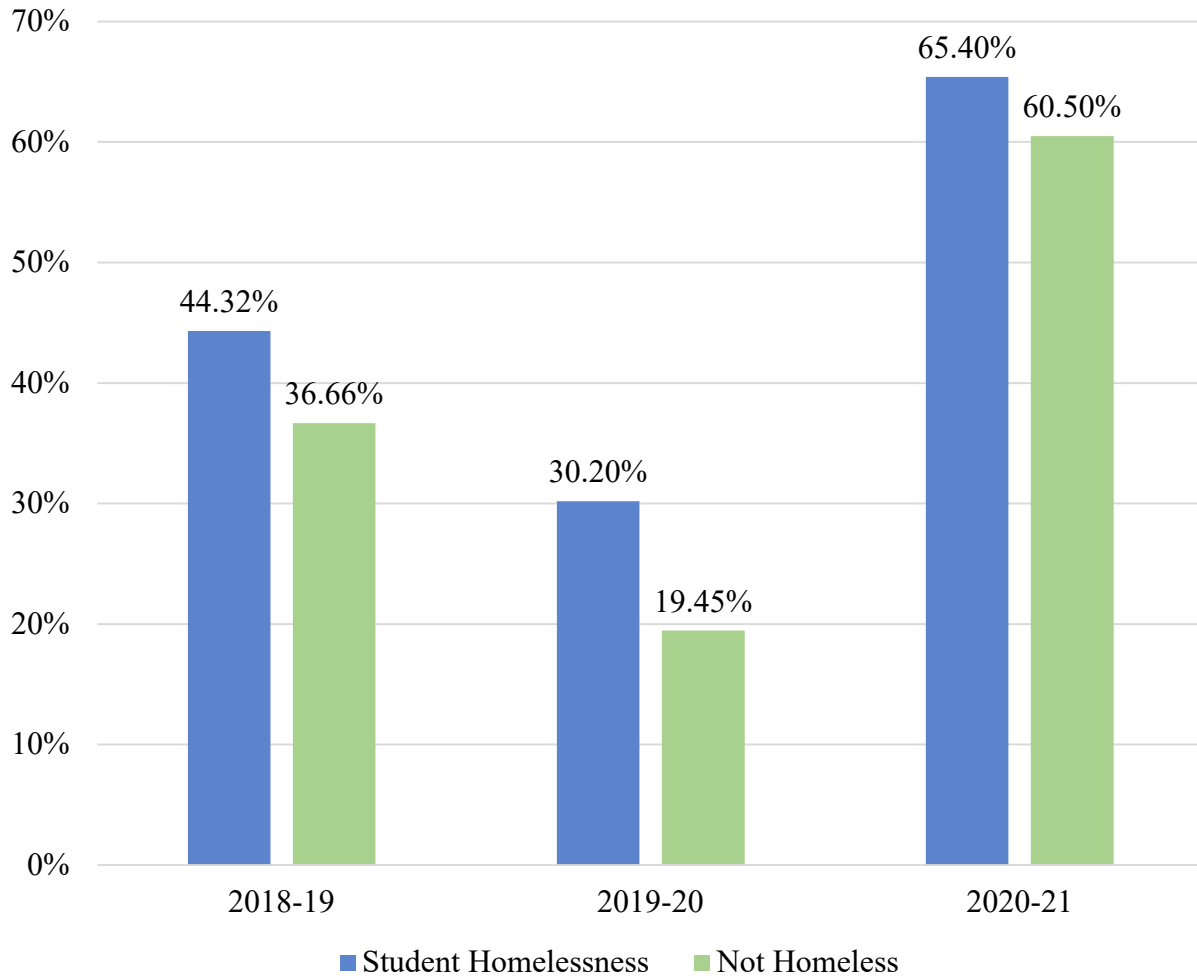
Note: Error bars refer to the standard error of the mean.



2.2 Chronic absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism refers to students who are absent for at least 10% of enrolled days. The rate of chronic absenteeism is markedly higher for students identified as experiencing homelessness relative to other students in the district, increasing from 44.32% chronically absent in SY 2018-19 to 65.40% in SY 2020-21. Also, please again note that attendance records are not available during remote learning from March through June of 2020. See Figure 2.2.

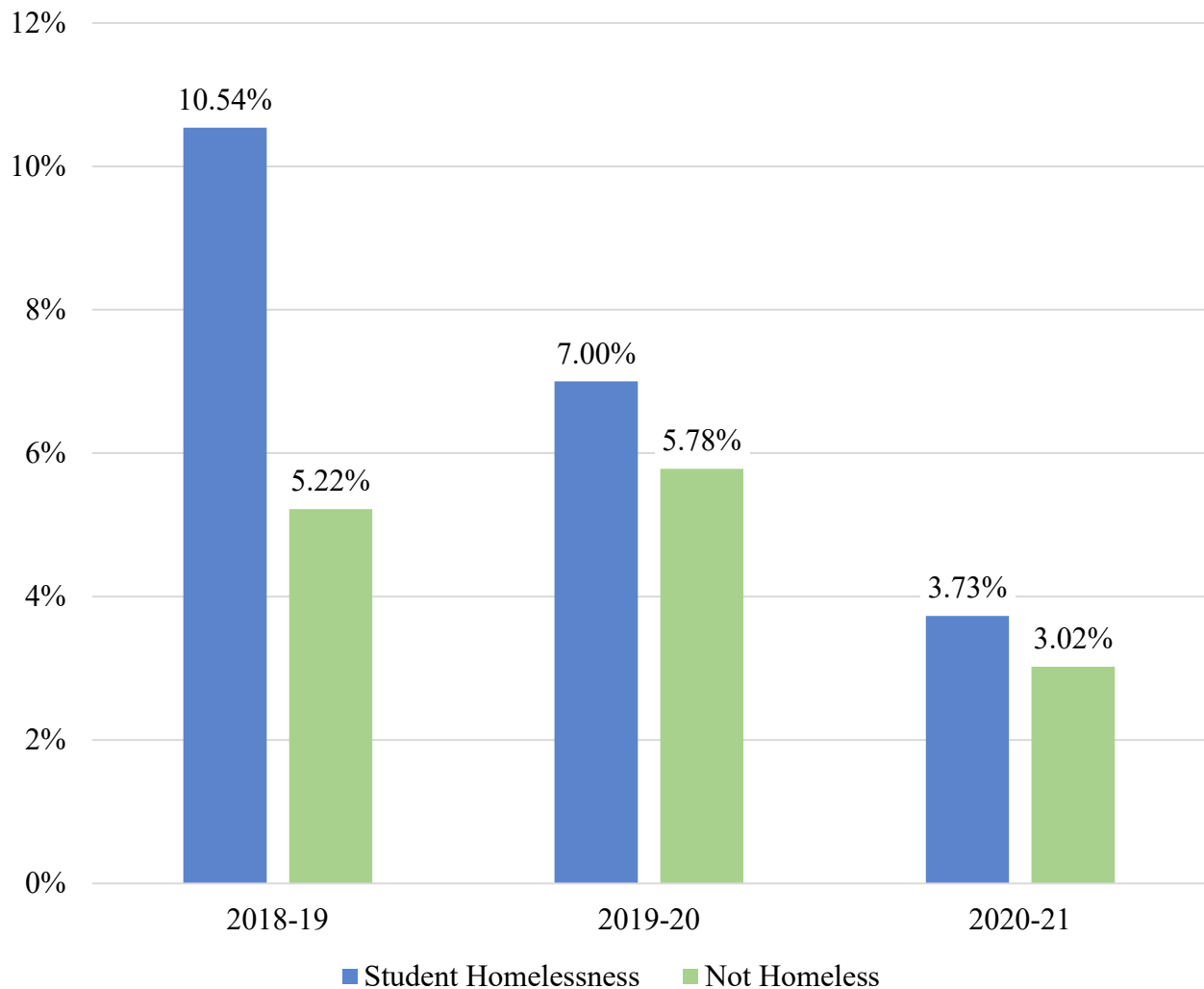
Figure 2.2. Chronic absenteeism.



2.3 School Mobility

Student homelessness was associated with higher rates of changing schools during the school year. This difference narrowed from SY 2018-19 through SY 2020-21, though students did not change schools during remote learning in 2019-20 and 2020-21. There was more identified student homelessness and school mobility in SY 2018-19 likely attributable to migration to Camden by families leaving island nations impacted by multiple severe hurricanes. Federal legislation provides the right for students experiencing homelessness to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest. Despite this right, students identified as experiencing homelessness had higher rates of school mobility each year.

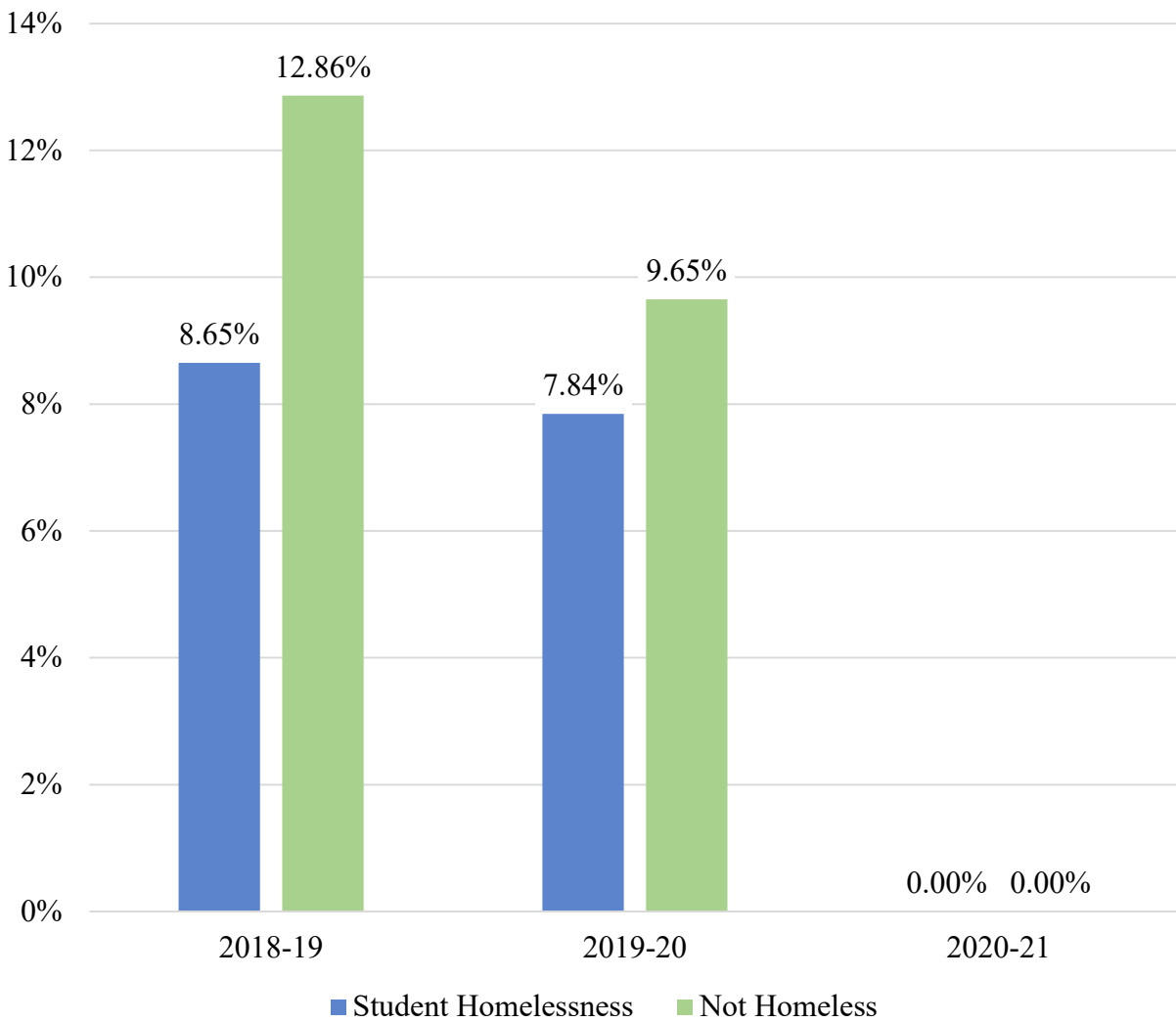
Figure 2.3. School mobility rates.



2.4 Suspensions

Students identified as experiencing homelessness were less likely than other students to be suspended for at least one day during SY 2018-19 and 2019-20. Students were not suspended during remote learning beginning in March 2020 onwards.

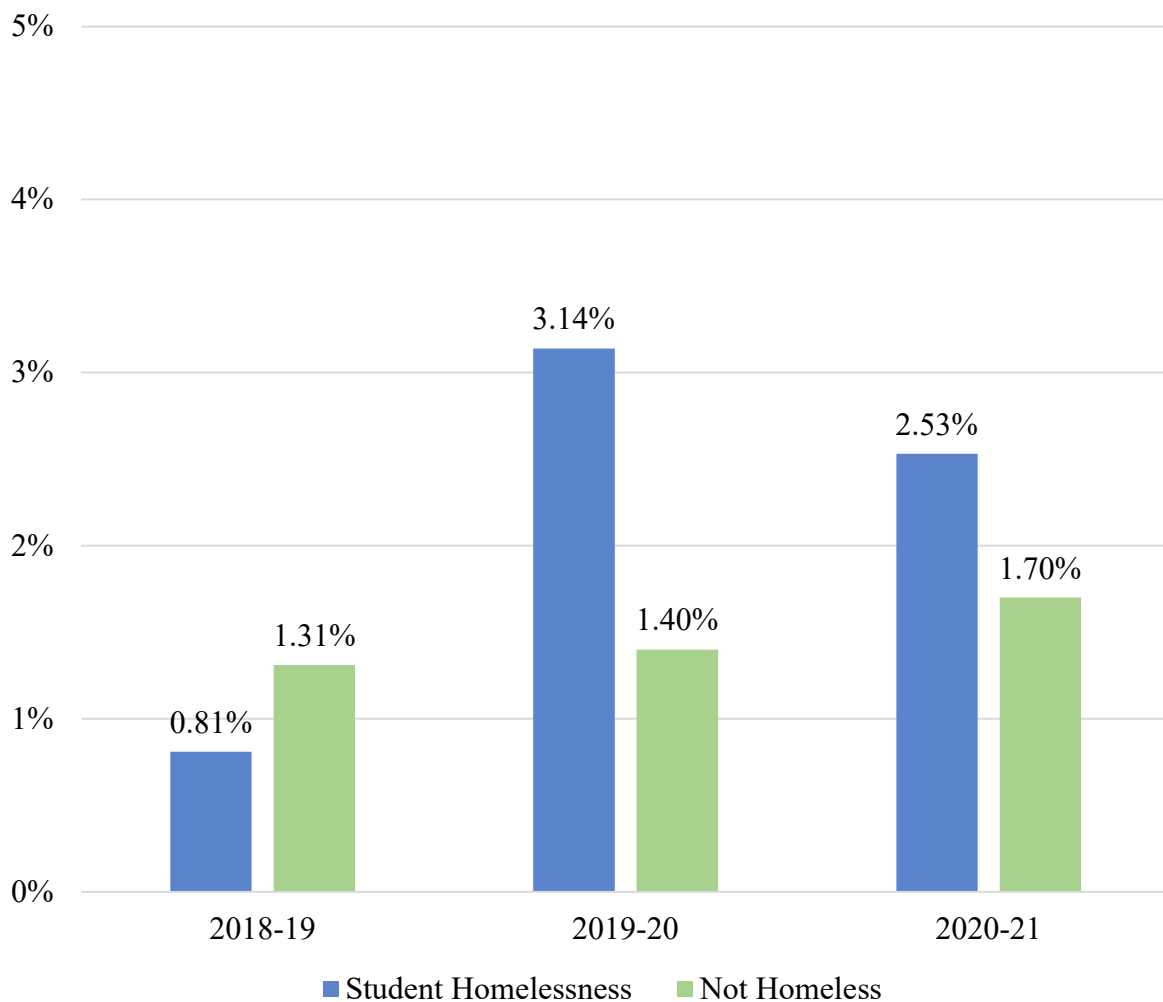
Figure 2.4. Suspensions.



2.5 Student dropout.

CCSD tracks students who do not complete the school year without transferring to another school. This circumstance is considered dropping out. Students experiencing homelessness showed lower rates of dropping out during SY 2018-19, but higher rates during 2019-20 and 2020-21. Additional analyses (not presented) demonstrated that these drop-out cases during 2019-20 occurred before March 2020, meaning that these instances of dropout are not attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and that CCSD operations were unable to document drop-outs during this period. Normal documentation of drop-outs resumed during 2020-21.

Figure 2.5. Dropout rate.

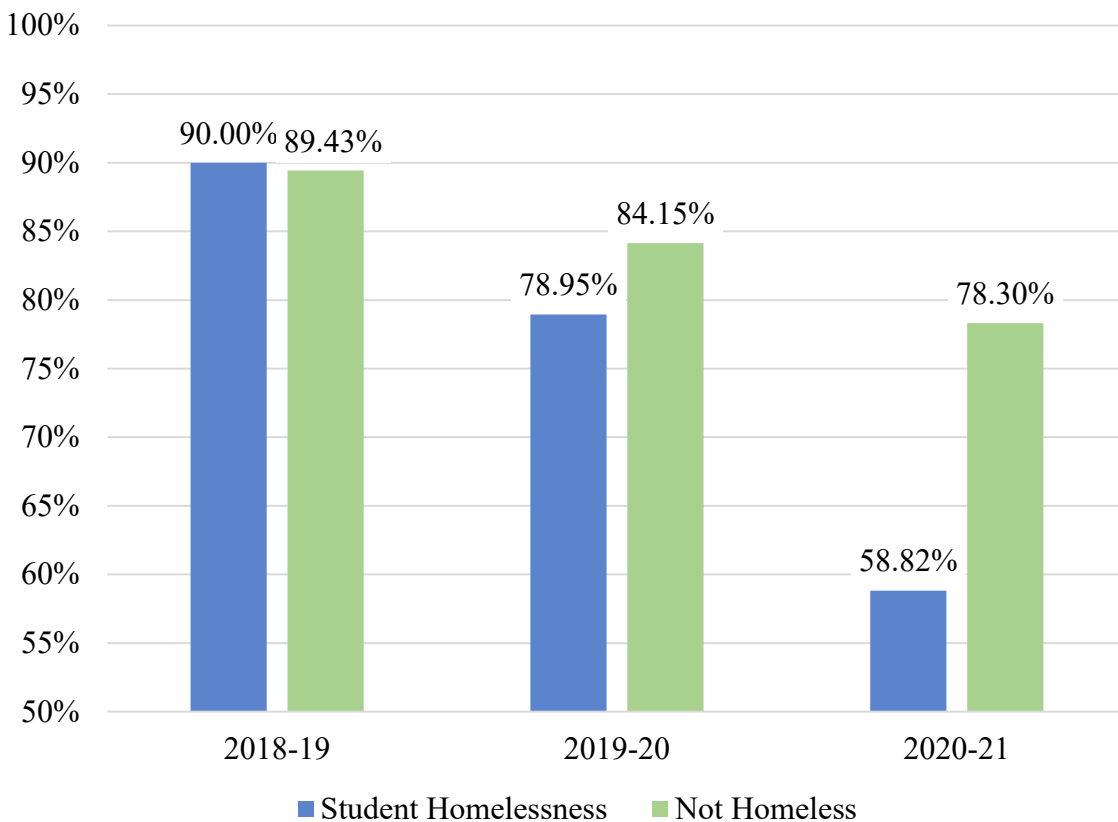


2.6 High School Graduation.

Students identified as experiencing homelessness in 12th grade were less likely than other students to graduate in SY 2019-20 and much less likely in SY 2020-21. Graduation rates for 12th graders experiencing homelessness were similar to others during SY 2018-19, around 90%. This rate showed a greater decline for students experiencing homelessness in SY 2019-20 relative to others, creating a disparity. This gap widened drastically in SY 2020-21 when only 58.8% of 12th graders experiencing homelessness graduated compared to 78.3% of other students.

Please note that state requirements for graduation were different in SY 2019-20 during COVID-19 restrictions (e.g., no standardized testing). Even so, graduation rates declined relative to SY 2018-19. SY 2019-20 and 2020-21 were similar in that both involved the COVID-19 pandemic that represented major disruptions in many students' lives. However, the entirety of SY 2020-21 was during COVID-19, which may help explain the large decline in graduation rate between 2019-20 and 2020-21. These results were also based on relatively few students in each group since they consider only 12th graders. Under 20 12th-grade students were identified as experiencing homelessness. Increased variability is likely when groups contain fewer students.

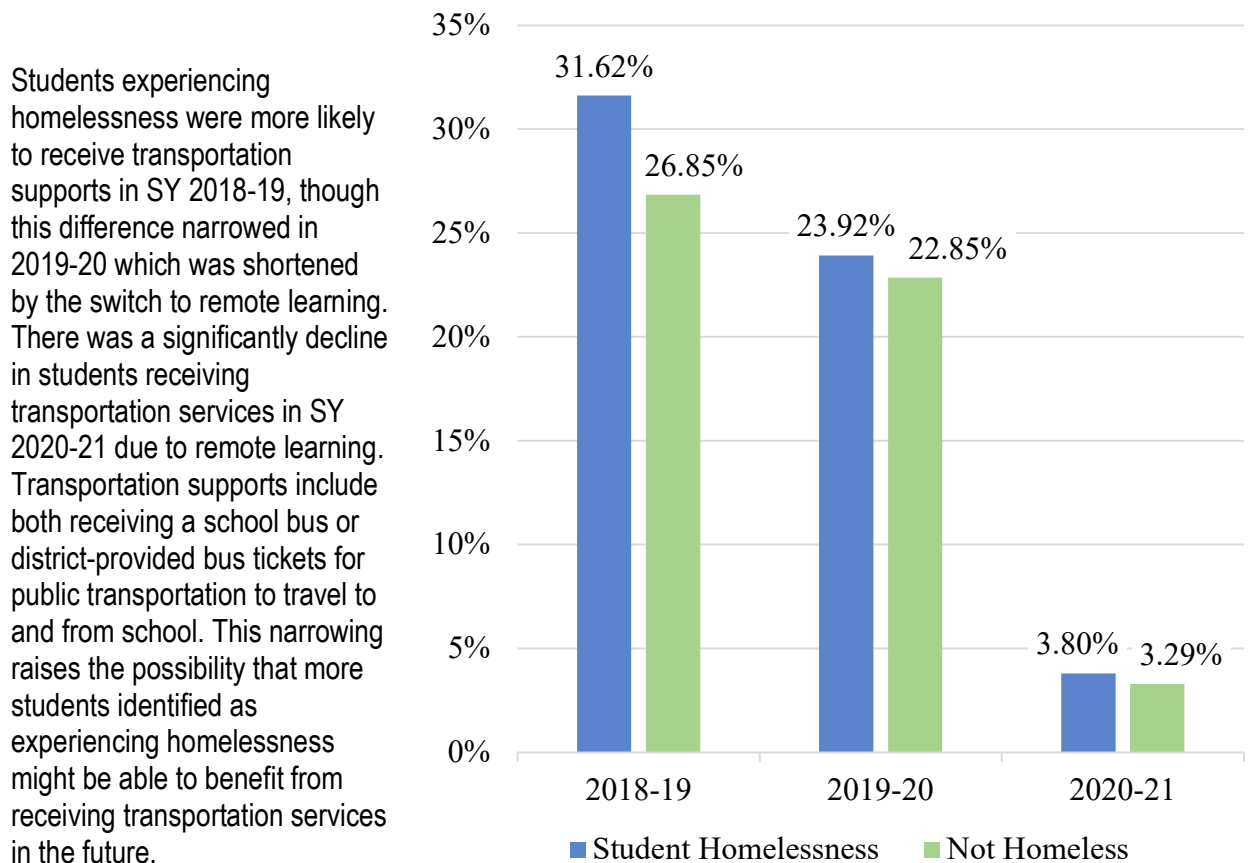
Figure 2.6. Twelfth-grade graduation rate.



Section 3. Education supports

Consistent with McKinney-Vento provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act, CCSD extends special rights and services to help ensure that students experiencing homelessness have access to free and appropriate education. For example, students experiencing homelessness are entitled to transportation to their school of origin if it is in their best interest to continue there. These rights and services are in addition to services routinely provided to students regardless of homelessness, like Individualized Education Plans/Special Education Services, English Language Learning Programs, and others. In this section, we compare students experiencing homelessness to other students on the rates of qualifying for different education supports within CCSD. These comparisons should be interpreted while recognizing that students who experience homelessness tend to also experience other adversities (e.g., deep poverty, trauma) that may interfere with education and development over years, even preceding the identified homeless episode. Students experiencing homelessness may qualify for additional supports as a result.

3.1 Transportation Figure 3.1. Transportation service by identified student homelessness status.



3.2 Other education supports.

Students identified as experiencing homelessness were sometimes more likely to receive education supports, sometimes less likely, and sometimes just as likely. Figure 3.2 depicts rates of obtaining an individual education plan (IEP) for special education services, qualifying for English Language Learner (ELL) services, and participating in any of a variety of school-based youth services. CCSD data does not allow specific school-based youth services to be disaggregated.

Students identified as experiencing homelessness were generally less likely to have an IEP despite widespread recognition that homelessness and deep poverty are a threat to education and outcomes.

Students experiencing homelessness were much more likely to qualify for ELL services during each school year compared to students not identified as experiencing homelessness. This difference is consistent with previously reported migration patterns and changes in practice that led to more Hispanic/Latino students being identified in SYs 2018-19 and 2019-20 following hurricanes that destroyed basic infrastructure in Spanish-speaking island nations.⁹

Students experiencing homelessness were less-likely to participate in any school-based youth services during 2018-19 relative to other students but were about-as-likely in SYs 2019-20 and 2020-21. While CCSD data is unable to consider individual school-based services, this indicator includes important health and prevention services (e.g., primary health care, pregnancy prevention) as well as mental health supports and a variety of other programs that target negative outcomes associated with student homelessness.¹⁰ While it is promising that students experiencing homelessness are accessing school-based services at similar rates as other students in SY 2020-21, the overall participation rate is low, around 11.39%, for students experiencing homelessness.

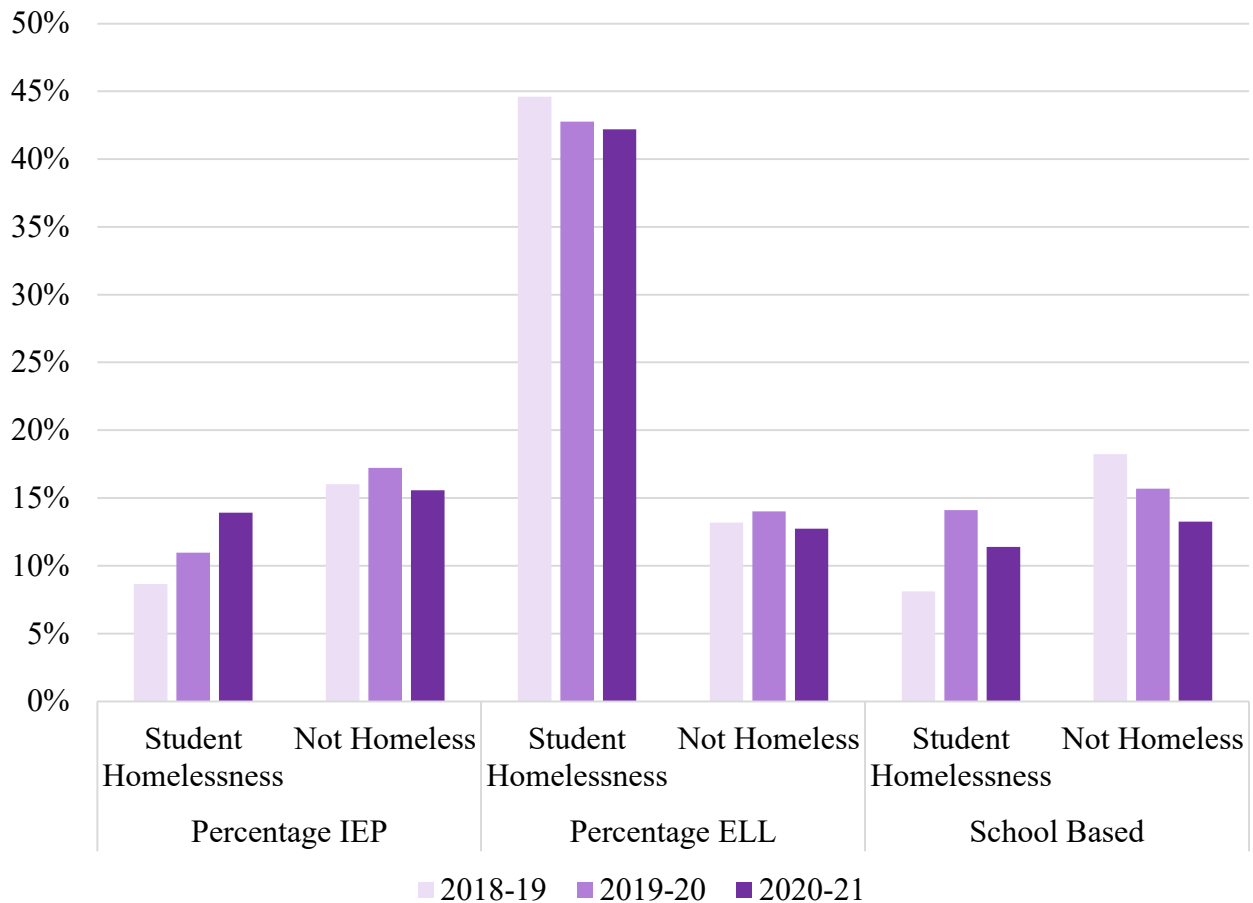
⁹ Cutuli, Cintron, Iko, & Truchil (2020). Identified student homelessness in Camden City Schools. Available at: https://works.bepress.com/ij_cutuli/47/download/

¹⁰ Hatchimonji, D. R., Flatley, C. A., Treglia, D., Cutuli, J. J. (2021). High school students experiencing homelessness: Findings from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). <https://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/shared/collateral/community-reports/yrbss-2019-high-school-homelessness-report.pdf>

Table 3.2. Rates of education supports by identified student homelessness.

Year	Individualized Education Plan		English Language Learning		School-based Youth Services	
	Student Homelessnes s	Not Homeless	Student Homelessnes s	Not Homeless	Student Homelessnes s	Not Homeles s
2018-19	8.65%	16.01%	44.59%	13.18%	8.11%	18.24%
2019-20	10.98%	17.23%	42.75%	14.01%	14.12%	15.70%
2020-21	13.92%	15.57%	42.19%	12.75%	11.39%	13.25%

Figure 3.2. Education supports received by students each year.



Summary

The rate of identified student homelessness slightly decreased in CCSD-operated schools during SY 2020-21, likely as a function of increased challenges associated with the shift to remote learning in March 2020. The decline in identified student homelessness was especially pronounced for students who were female, Hispanic/Latino, or in pre-kindergarten. Even so, CCSD showed higher rates of identified student homelessness than similar LEAs in New Jersey and compared to most charter and renaissance agencies in Camden City. KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy was an exception as staff identified a considerable percentage of their students as experiencing homelessness.

Students who experienced homelessness were at-risk for poor educational indicators. Generally, students who experienced homelessness had higher absence rates and were more likely to be chronically absent, more likely to change schools, more likely to drop out, and less likely to graduate (among 12th graders) compared to students who were not identified as homeless.

We considered four important student support services. Students identified as experiencing homelessness in SY 2020-21 were about as likely as other students to receive transportation. Student homelessness was linked to a lower likelihood of having an individualized education plan required to receive special education services and a somewhat lower likelihood of receiving any school-based youth services (e.g., preventative health services, mental health supports, family supports). These students were more likely to qualify for English Language Learning programs, reflective of differences in home language and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.

Recommendations

1) CCSD should work closely with the NJ Department of Education to plan for and use funds provided by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) specifically allocated for identifying and responding to student homelessness. The ARP acknowledges the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to student homelessness and it makes funds available explicitly to help districts like CCSD surmount those challenges. These challenges are already evident in data from SY 2020-21 and the approved New Jersey ARP State Plan outlines funds and activities aimed at addressing those challenges.¹¹ Those funds and supports should be made available to CCSD.

2) CCSD must continue to innovate more effective ways to identify and serve students experiencing homelessness, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Recovery and increased risk for student homelessness will likely extend past the end of COVID-19 restrictions. Efforts should especially consider ways to engage female students and students who are Hispanic/Latino, given the recent declines in identification rates in SY 2020-21. Efforts might include:

- a) Special training and communications to teachers and school personnel in recognizing signs of student homelessness and other concerns during the varied crises that accompany economic and

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education (April, 2021). State Plan for the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. Available at <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/08/New-Jersey-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Final.pdf>

social challenges of this moment in history. Training for school staff on how to recognize signs of homelessness and support students can be held during biweekly professional development meetings on delayed school opening days.

- b) District-level information campaigns to inform families and students about their rights and CCSD services when they experience housing instability and homelessness.
- c) Proactively asking about housing status on all student and family surveys beyond just enrollment and changes in status. These might include registration surveys, title 1 surveys, and other correspondence.
- d) Deeper engagement and collaboration with charter and renaissance agencies in Camden City on strategies, resources, and obligations to serve students and families experiencing homelessness. This is especially noteworthy given the low rates of identified student homelessness in these agencies, with the exception of KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy. It is possible that students are being identified and served but not communicated to the NJ Department of Education. Annual training with these agencies would help establish effective procedures that ensure required data are provided to the NJ Department of Education for planning and oversight.
- e) All efforts to identify and engage students and families experiencing homelessness must continue to be multilingual given the large percentages of Hispanic/Latino students who are identified as experiencing homelessness as well as the large numbers that qualify for ELL programs. Currently, there are efforts in place to hire more bilingual staff in schools and welcome centers at CCSD. These efforts should continue to remove any language barriers that prevent Hispanic/Latino students from being identified as experiencing homelessness.
- f) Migration into Camden City from other states, territories, and countries may contribute to student homelessness in CCSD. Many families may move into homelessness situations (e.g., doubled-up) when they first arrive in Camden. This underscores the importance of asking about each student's previous school district, language, and country of origin at enrollment. Close collaboration between the enrollment team and the CCSD Office of Human Services can help ensure that migrant students experiencing homelessness are identified early and served comprehensively.

3) CCSD should examine routinely offered supports for ways to increase access and engagement for students and families experiencing homelessness. Students identified as experiencing homelessness were less likely to show good education outcomes across most indicators. They were also less likely to be involved with some educational supports available at CCSD.

- a) Students who were identified as experiencing homelessness were not more likely to receive transportation services, which may contribute to higher rates of school mobility and other problems. Emphasizing the benefits of remaining at a student's school of origin, and providing augmented transportation for students experiencing homelessness, will help increase stability and offset problems associated with moving farther away from school and school mobility. Providing

transportation via bus routes for students experiencing homelessness may be especially challenged by ongoing shortages of school bus drivers. Even so, innovating effective ways to ensure homeless and mobile students have transportation is needed to promote school attendance, engagement, and educational success. Starting in the 2022-23 school year, CCSD has operated its own transportation services, providing an opportunity to further support students experiencing homelessness. This flexibility will allow the transportation department and the Youth in Transition Liaison to work together to identify and provide services amid nationwide bus shortages.

- b) Identified student homelessness was linked to lower rates of having an IEP and, presumably, receiving special education services. Mobility represents a series of challenges to the process of obtaining an IEP, beginning with recognizing that a referral for special education services might be warranted, engaging parents and the student to complete an evaluation, and establishing a workable support plan once needs are well-defined. CCSD should consider ways to prioritize students experiencing homelessness through every step of this process, including efforts to screen students for referral, acting on referrals more swiftly for this mobile group, and ensuring that supports are appropriate and available to meet potential complex and diverse needs.
- c) School-based youth services are an important set of supports for students experiencing homelessness. These services should be made broadly available and supported at a level appropriate for serving the CCSD student body, given the overall low rates of utilization in SY 2020-21. CCSD leadership would also be well-served by changes to how administrative records are maintained for different school-based youth services. Currently, records indicate student involvement of a wide breadth of services, spanning health, mental health, family services, out-of-school time activities, prevention, reproductive health, and others. Detailed records can help CCSD leadership direct, evaluate, reinforce, and innovate specific services to better serve all students, especially students experiencing homelessness who are more likely to have complex needs.

Acknowledgments

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