



CHILDREN CANNOT WAIT

Part 1 - 2023

Highest number of Children and Youth
Identified as Homeless in Pennsylvania
– 40,003!

Prepared by the Policy Department of HopePHL
July, 2023

Introduction

A new report from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) shows that in School Year (SY) 2021-2022 there were **40,003 children and youth** were identified as homeless throughout the Commonwealth, an all-time high.

HopePHL has summarized this report to inform practitioners and policy makers about children and youth experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia.

With this Policy Brief we continue HopePHL's series called the "**Children Cannot Wait Campaign**" (see <https://bit.ly/3qAQGIX>). Part 1 of our exploration of the data offered by PDE will focus on Pennsylvania; Part 2 will focus on the data specific to Philadelphia; and Part 3 will look at homelessness by school district.

The findings are cause for concern and HopePHL intends to engage public leadership on a variety of issues.

Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) is a federally-funded program managed by the PDE to eliminate barriers to education for students experiencing homelessness. PDE contracts with eight regions in the Commonwealth for local implementation. The regions use the funds to train school personnel in 500 school districts and 176 charters to, provide direct service like uniforms, transportation, mentoring, summer programming, school supplies, and more. The education system is the only federal agency statutorily required to report on children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Find the PDE report [here](#).

Who Should Read This Policy Brief?

HopePHL's Children Cannot Wait Campaign explores how Philadelphia can strengthen the resiliency of children, youth and families experiencing homelessness. Since 2022, the Campaign has produced policy briefs on homelessness and proposed recommendations for the candidates for Pennsylvania's Gubernatorial office and for Philadelphia's Mayoral office.

HopePHL recognizes the thousands of adults helping families and children experiencing homelessness every single day.

We are grateful to City, state, and federal leadership who support the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness initiative.

- We encourage policy makers and their staff, funders, child service agencies, school personnel, family advocates and others to read and to understand the data and consider expanding efforts to reach out to children and youth who experience homelessness.
- HopePHL commends educational leadership who work to support all children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Highlights

SCALE

Pennsylvania identified its highest number ever of children and youth experiencing homelessness – 40,003. Of these children, 23 percent were ages birth through five.

HOUSING

66% of all homeless children and youth are living double up (living with family or friends) due to economic reasons. These are students who are not being supported by the homeless housing system.

NOT JUST URBAN

Suburban homelessness is almost identical in scale to urban homelessness.

UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

11% of the 40,003 children and youth identified were unaccompanied by parents or guardians.

BARRIERS

Determining eligibility and transportation continues to be significant barriers to educational participation.

DISABILITY

9,867, or 25 percent of the 40,003 total number of students experiencing homelessness, were reported to have a disability.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- 60% of all 3rd Graders experiencing homelessness score below basic in Math and 40% in Reading.

- 32% of 8th Graders experiencing homelessness score below basic in both Math and Reading.
- 49% of 11th Graders experiencing homelessness score below basic in both Math and 30% in Reading.

SUPPORTS

More than 39,000 students experiencing homelessness received tutoring support.

ATTENDANCE

58 percent of students experiencing homelessness are considered chronically absent.

HopePHL Recommendations

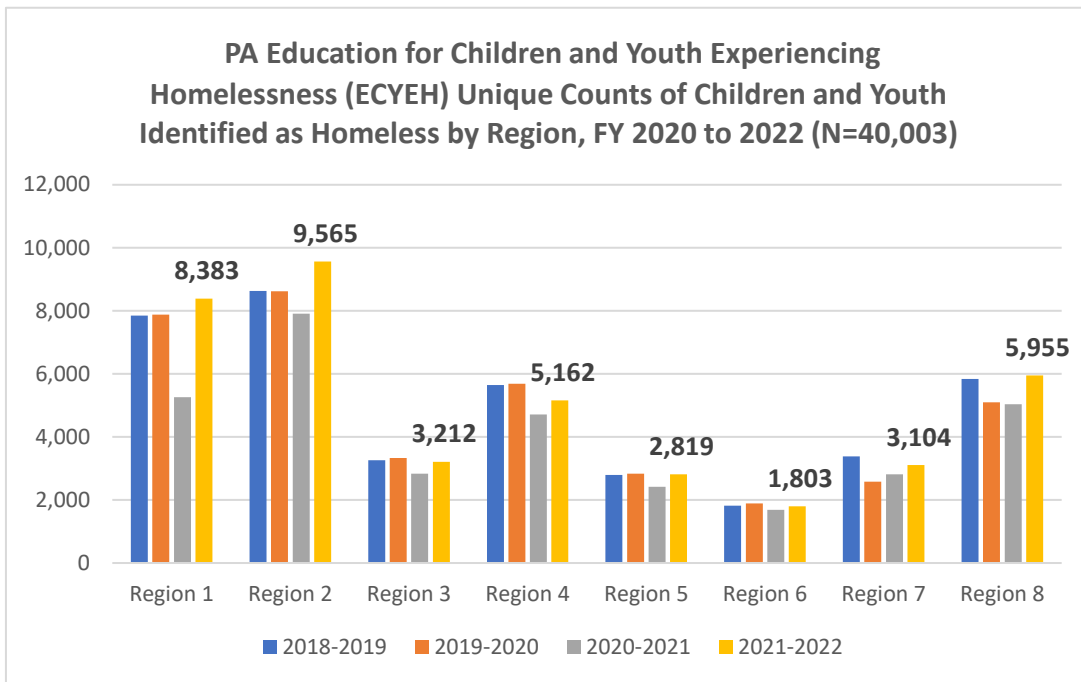
While HopePHL supports the PDE's eight recommendations in the report, especially the suggestion to establish connections between shelters and prekindergarten programs, we are also making the following recommendations:

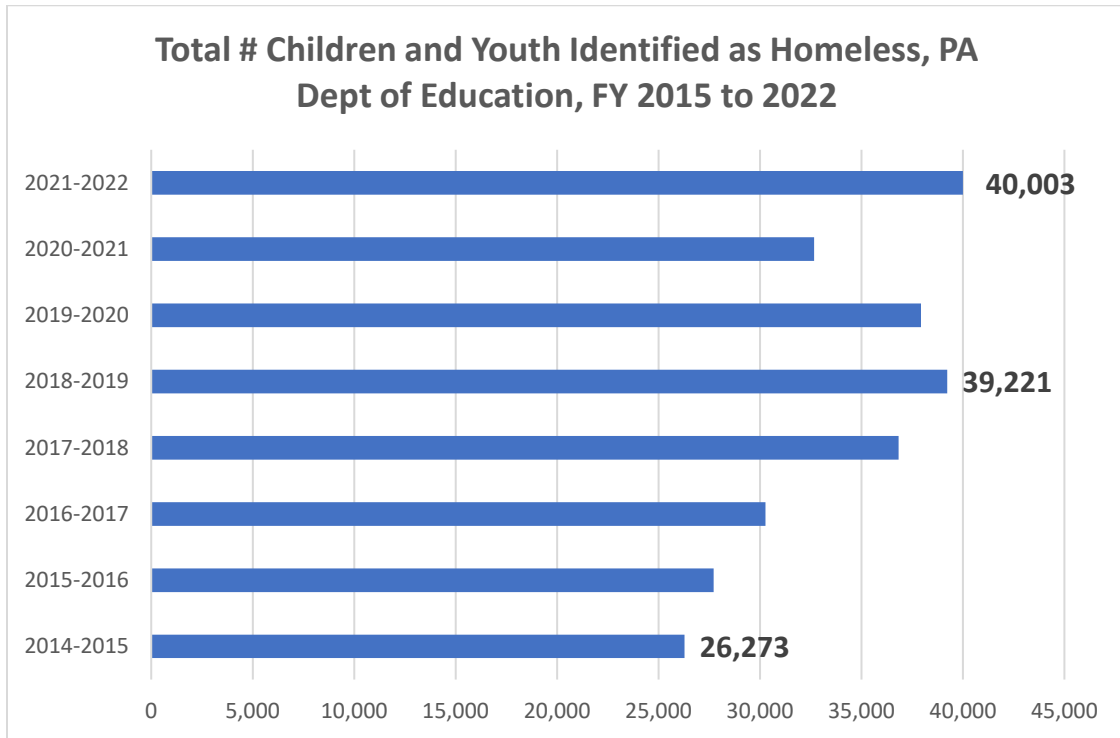
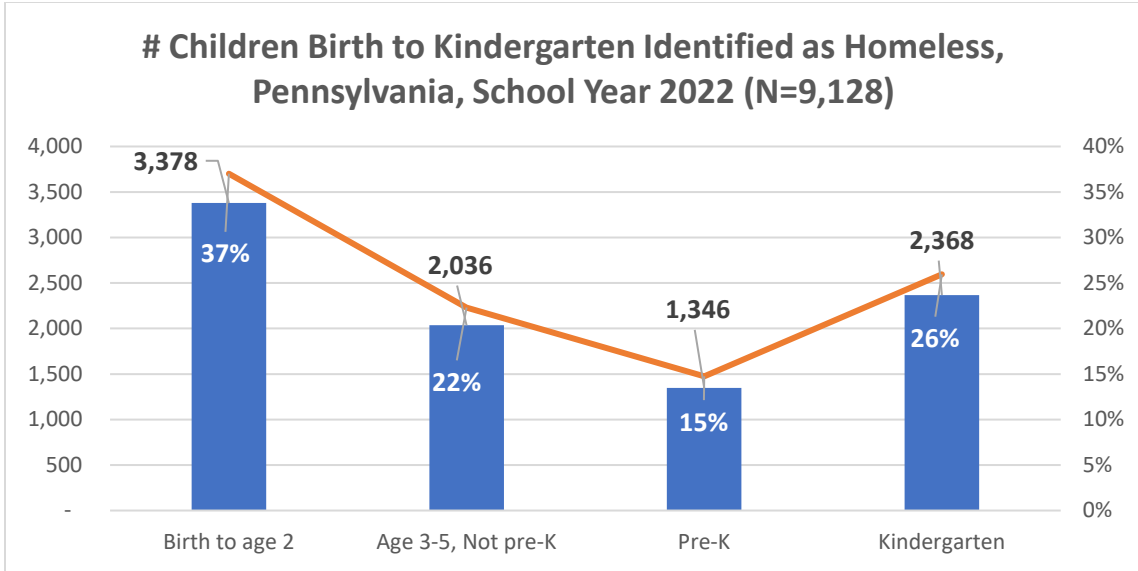
1. **HopePHL recommends that Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation support continuing the funding provided by the American Rescue Plan (ARP)** in which the Commonwealth received \$36 million to support 500 school districts and 176 charter schools reach out and support students experiencing homelessness. Prior to this investment, Pennsylvania received less than \$6 million for the entire state.
2. **The Shapiro Administration and the Pennsylvania General Assembly need to identify a funding source to supplement the federal investment**, especially if Congress does not continue the ARP funding.
3. Locally, the **homeless housing and the education systems need to cooperate to connect housing to families experiencing homelessness**, especially those families living doubled-up.

Findings

- **All Regions** except for Region 4 **identified more children and youth** than in the last year for which data was not affected by the pandemic, SY 2018–2019.

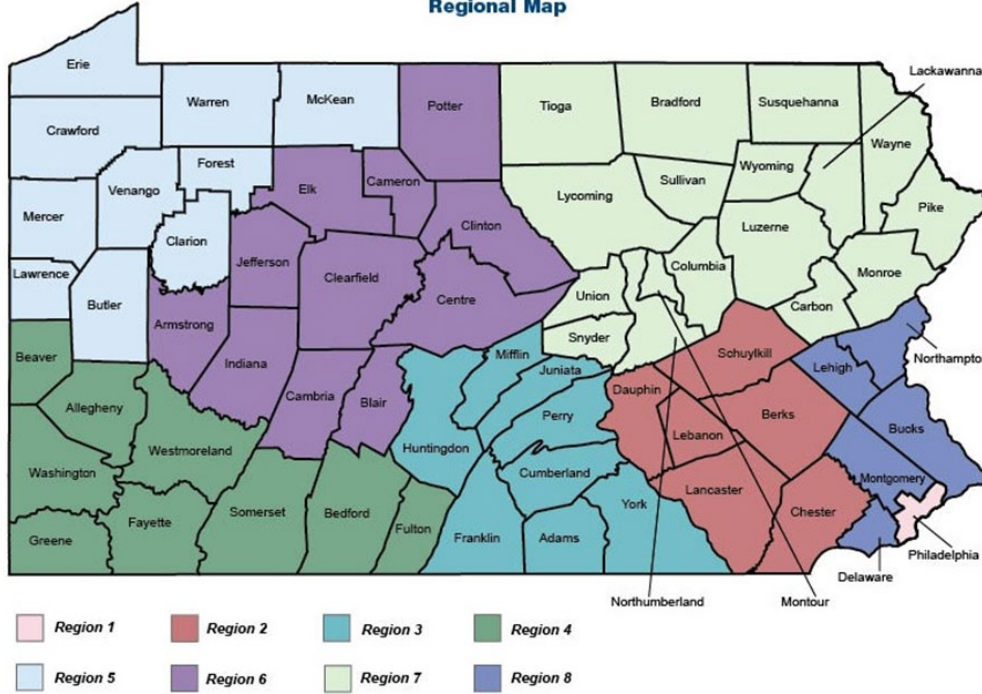
- The **number** of all children and youth increased by **66 percent** since 2015.
- While the increased number of 40,003 is shocking enough, the **good news** is that school districts used their COVID funds to increase staffing that allowed for increasing identification, providing more supports, and reporting.
- There were **9,128 young children** ranging from infant to kindergarten **identified as homeless, 23 percent of all homeless children**. Children from birth to age two made of 37% of the young children experiencing homelessness.





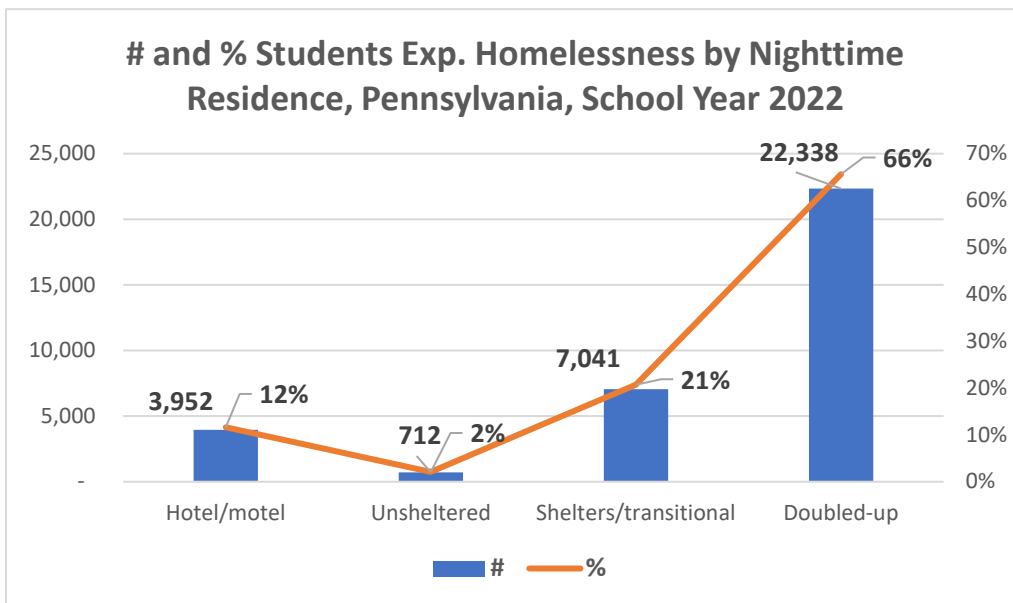
Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program

Regional Map



Nighttime Residence:

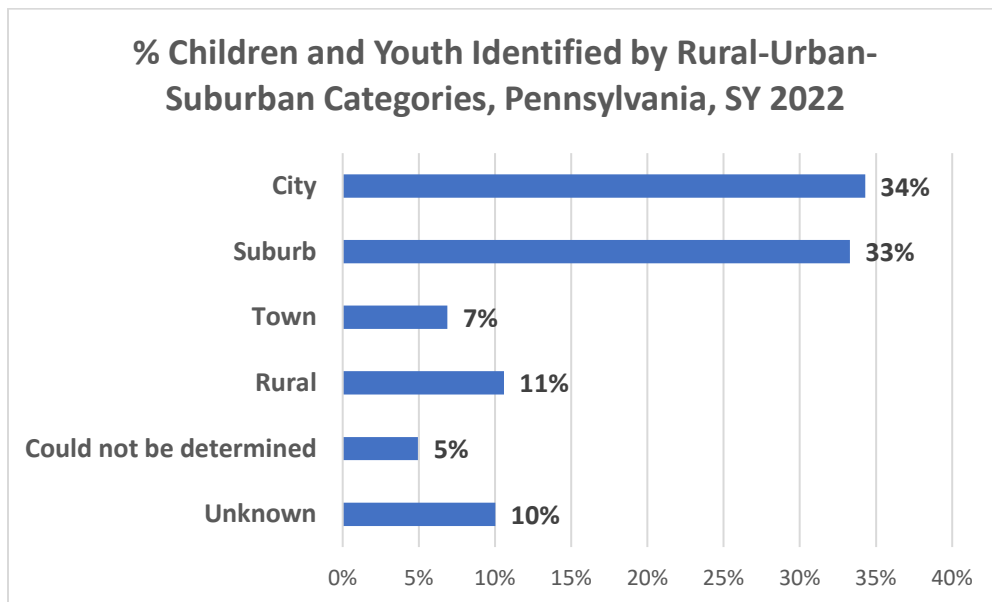
- Nighttime residence is important for **strategic planning** to serving students, whether they are in shelter or living doubled up with another family due to economic hardship. Local housing and service agencies should work with schools to



support outreach to children and families living doubled up or who are outside the shelter system. **Children in families experiencing homelessness but living outside the shelter system make up 66% of all homeless children and youth.**

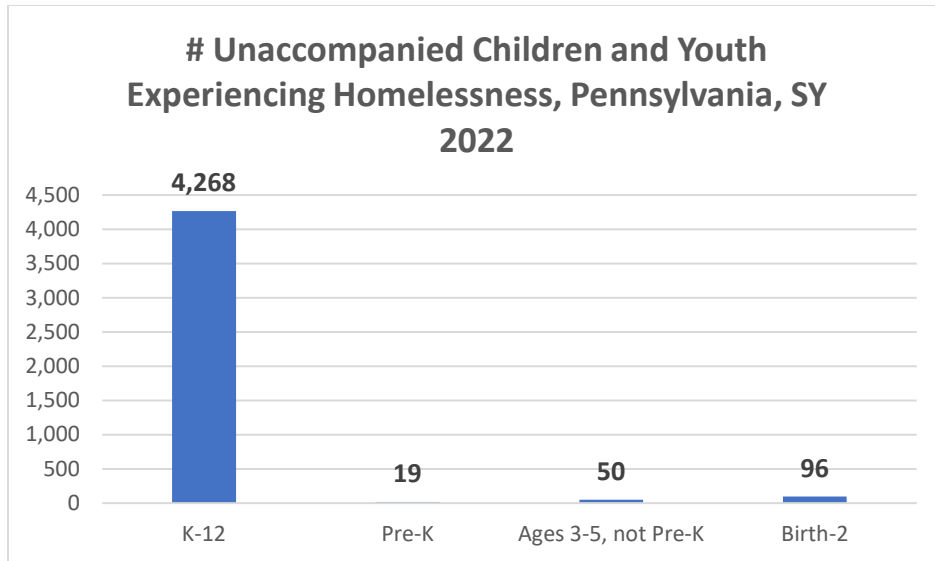
Rural-Suburban-Urban Regionalism

- Using categories defined by the National Center for Education Statistics, the PDE report includes a breakdown of the regional locations of students.
- Homelessness among children is not just an urban issue as suburban homelessness is almost **identical** in scale to urban homelessness.



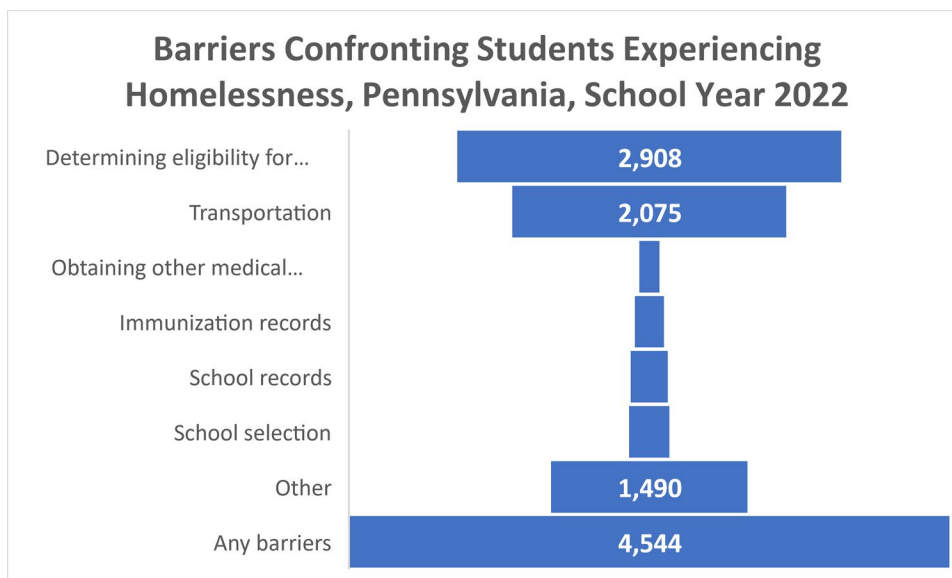
Unaccompanied Children and Youth

- The PDE report notes that “Children and youth who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homeless may also be identified as an “unaccompanied homeless youth,” meaning they are not in the physical custody of their parent or legal guardian.”
- 11% of the 40,003 children and youth identified were unaccompanied.



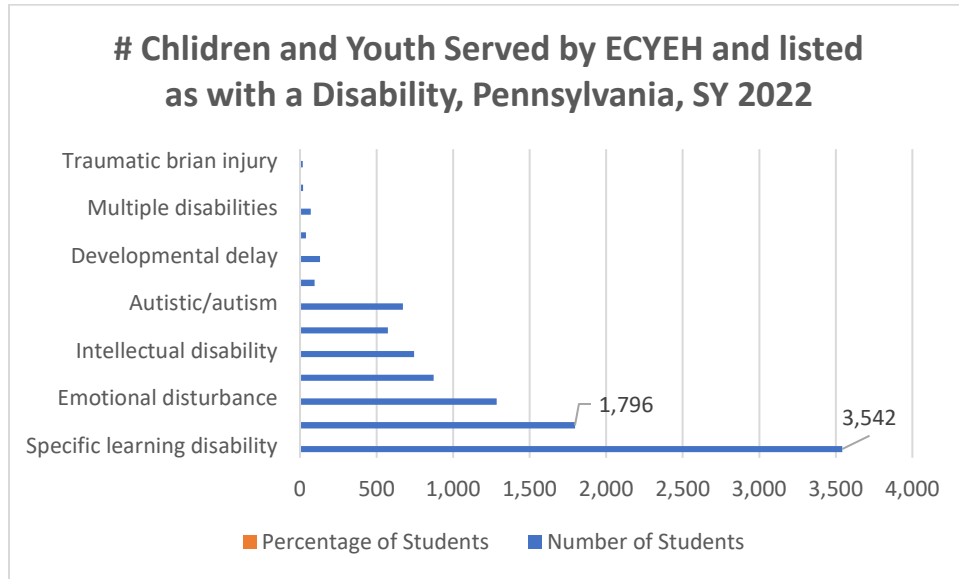
Barriers:

- The PDE explains that “Barriers are situations that interfere with children and youth’s enrollment, attendance, and/or educational success. Barrier information is only reported by LEAs [Local Education Agencies, i.e., school districts or charters] or ECYEH staff that worked to resolve a barrier situation.” **It is likely that there are more and unreported barriers due to stigma attached to identifying as homeless.**
- Determining eligibility and transportation continues to be significant barriers.



Disability

9,867, or 25 percent of the 40,003 total number of students experiencing homelessness were listed as having a disability.

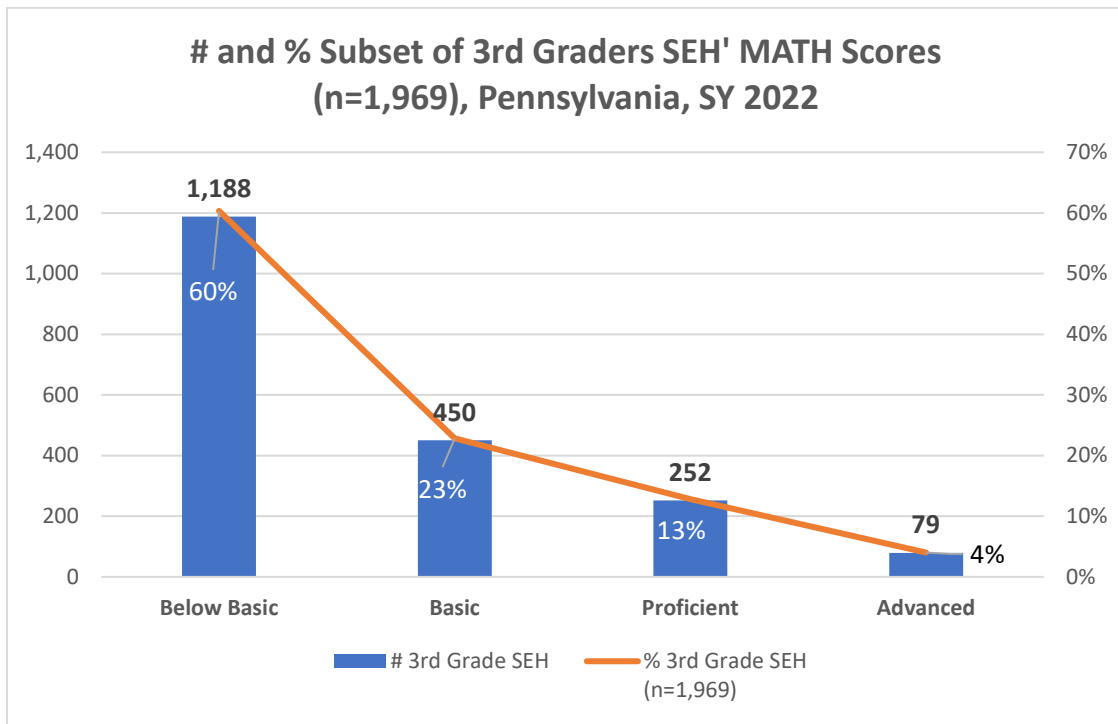


Academic Achievement

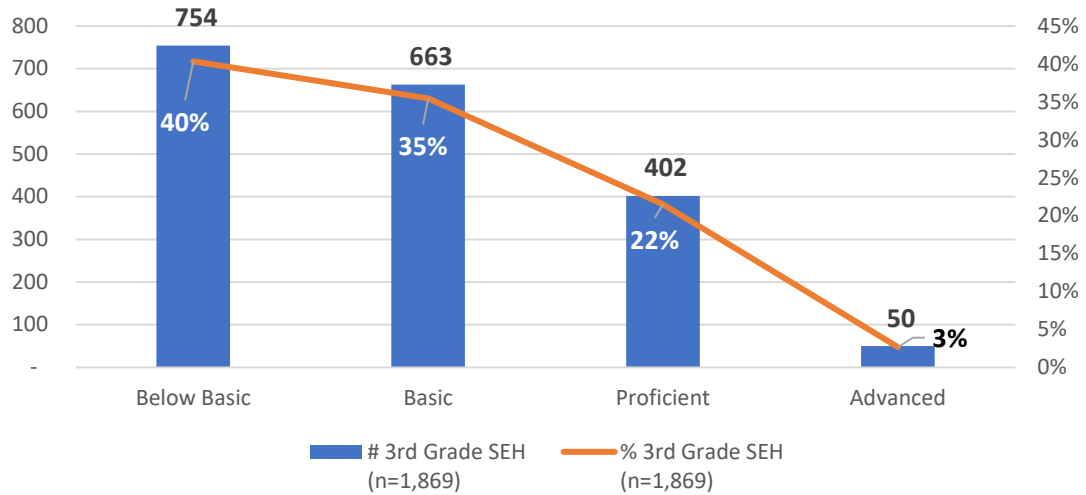
In this section, students experiencing homelessness are referred to as 'SEH' in the charts below.

- The PDE report shows results from a subset of SEH, from 3rd Grade, 8th Grade, and 11th Grade. It might not be a statistically significant number of students to be able to apply these results to all students experiencing homelessness, but this data is the only publicly available data. These three grade levels are also critical turning points in child development.
- Examining the standardized test scores of students in the 3rd, 8th, and 11th grades informs several policy issues.
 - The promise of high-quality early childhood education is that participants can be expected to have 3rd Grade reading and math scores higher than what is shown here in the PDE report.

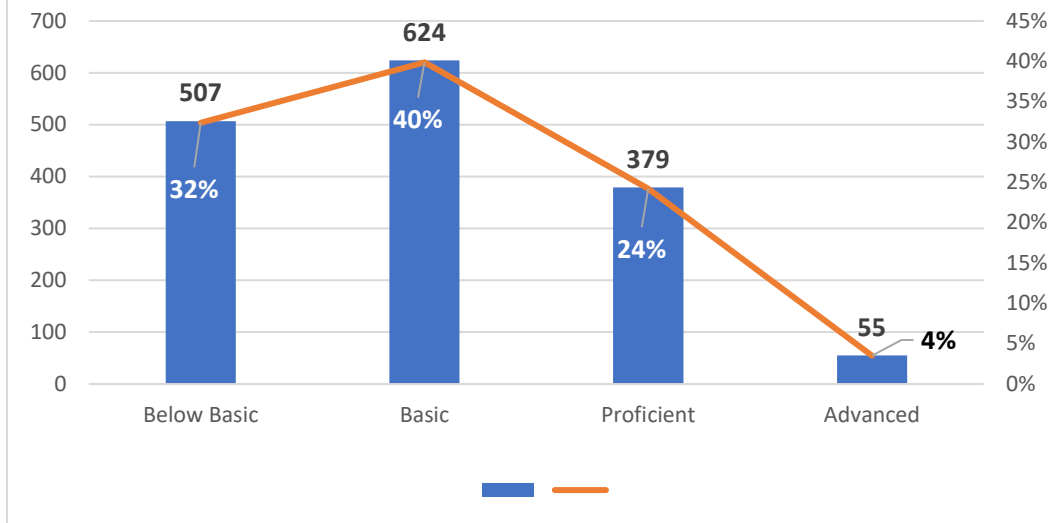
- 8th Grade and 11th grade scores are shown in hopes of more efforts to increase high school graduation rates.
- 60% of all 3rd SEH Graders score below basic in Math and 40% in Reading.
- 32% of 8th SEH Graders score below basic in both Math and Reading.
- 49% of 11th SEH Graders score below basic in both Math and 30% in Reading.

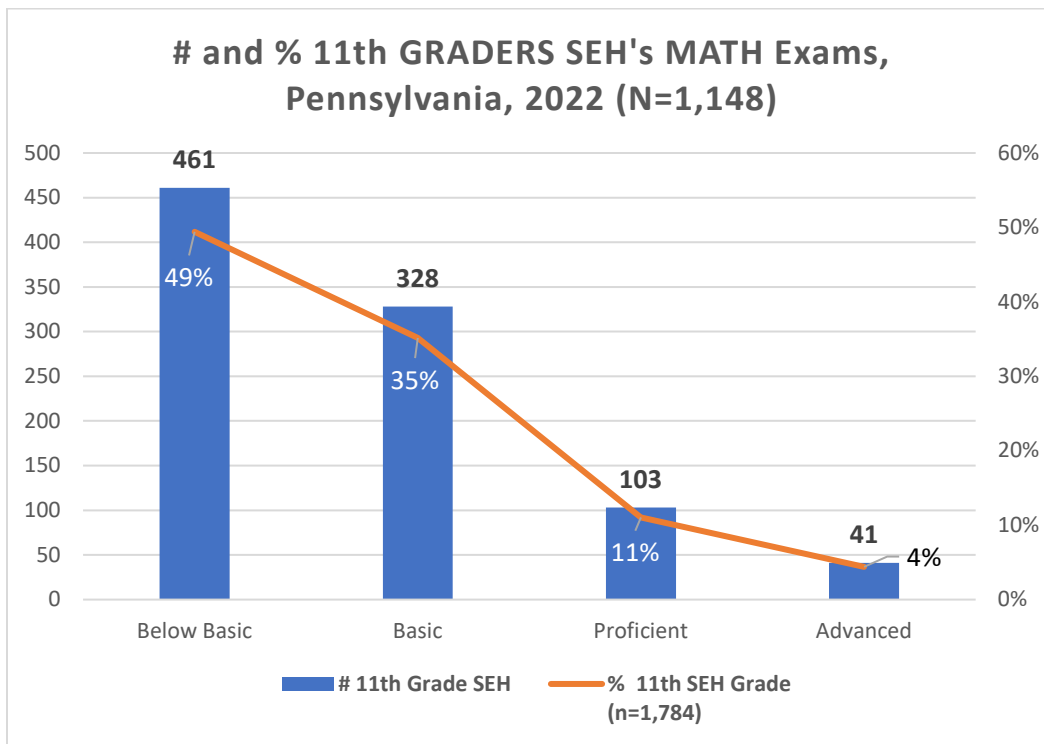
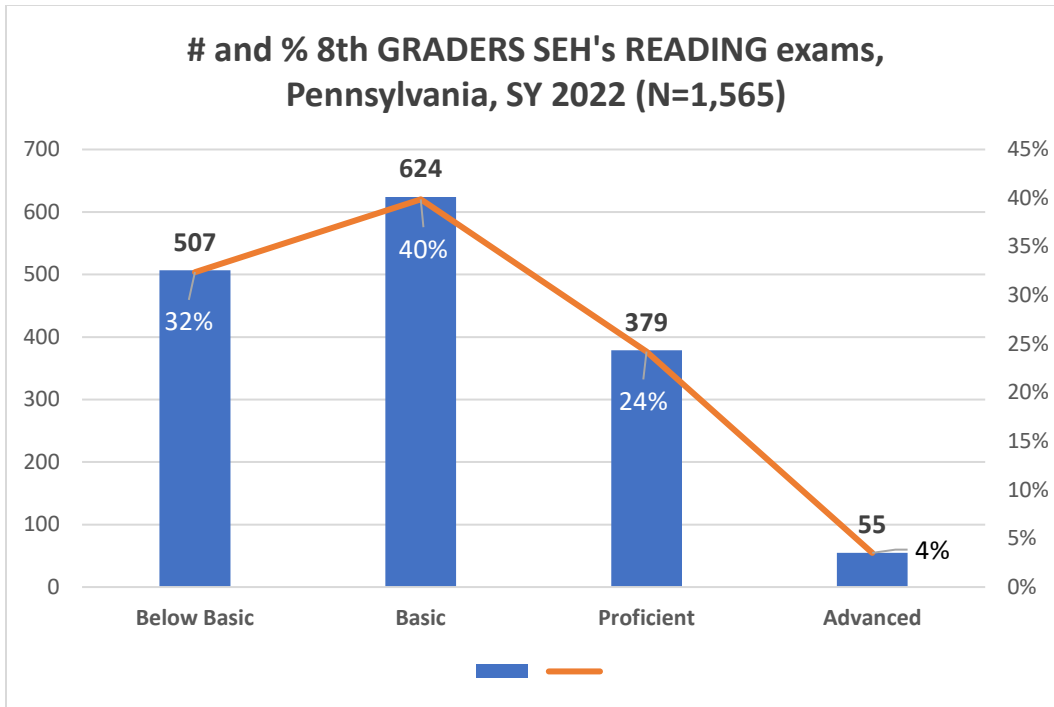


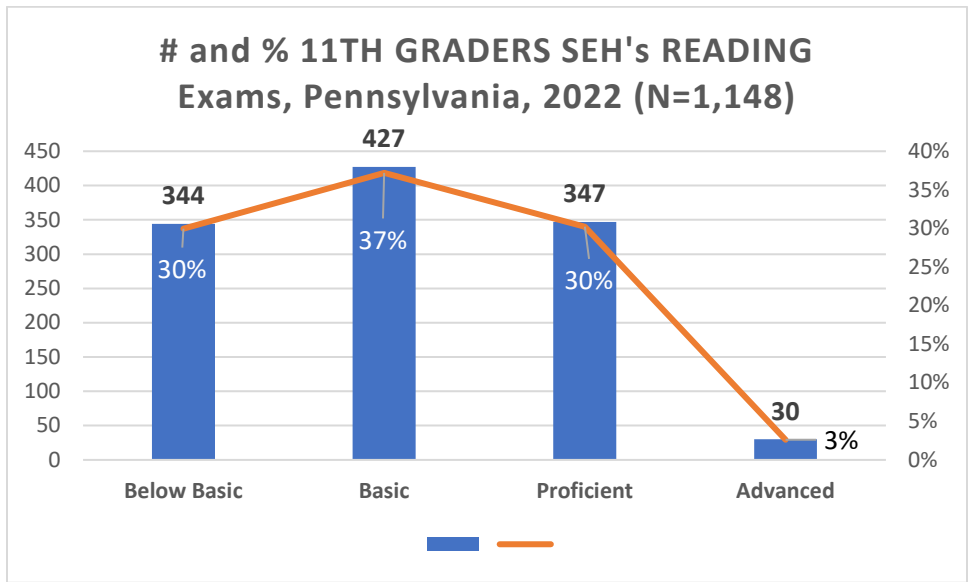
and % Subset of 3rd Graders SEH READING Scores Pennsylvania, SY 2022 (n=1,869)



and % 8th GRADERS SEH's MATH exams, Pennsylvania, SY 2022 (N=1,565)

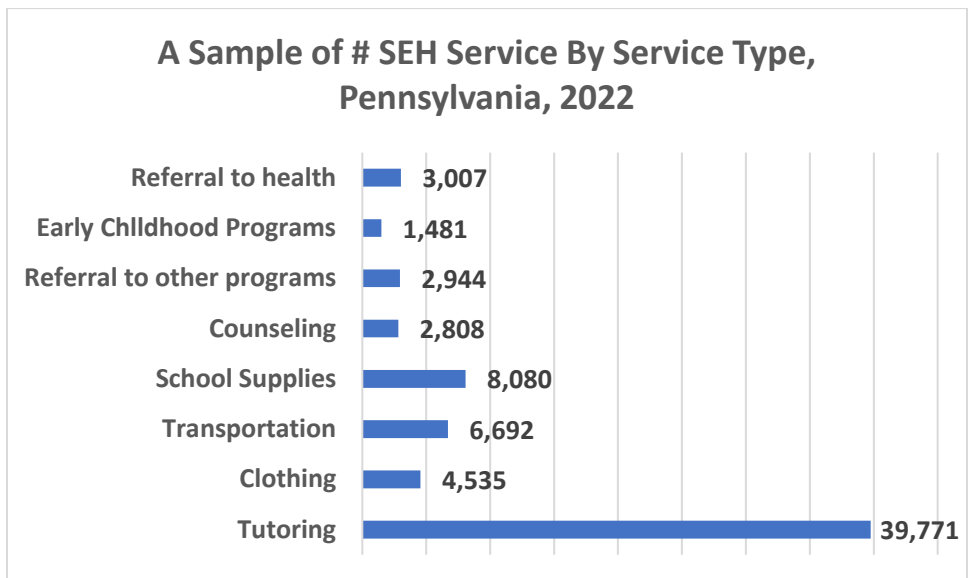






Services

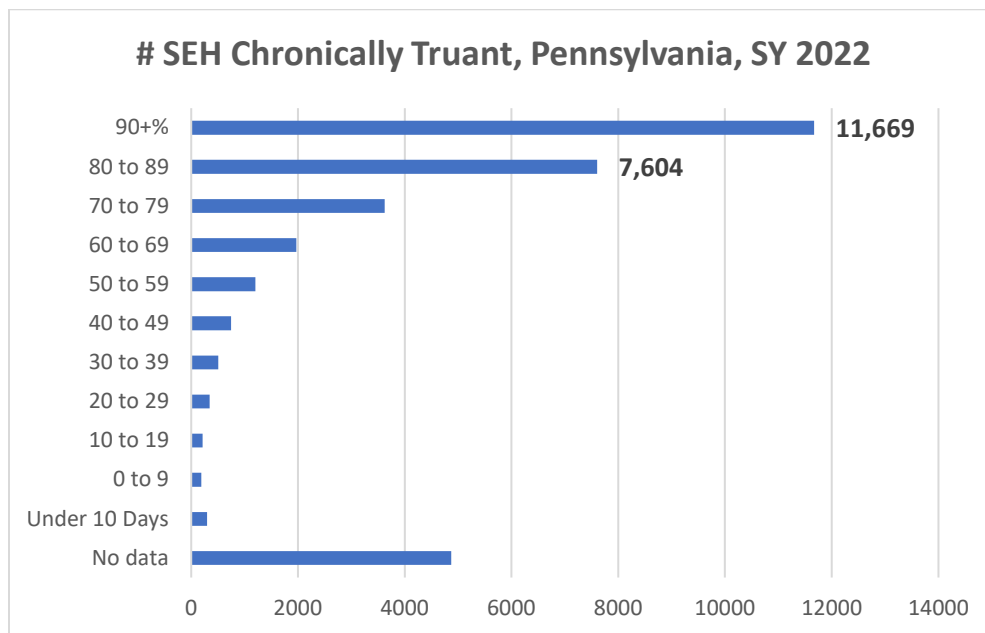
- The PDE report writes that students experiencing homelessness have the right to support services that promote academic success. Information was compiled for every student and categorized by McKinney-Vento Act authorized activity. Below is just a **small sample** of the services. Interested readers are referred to the PDE paper for details.
- Overall, **80 percent** (31,837) of the 40,003 identified children and youth were documented as receiving service at the individual level.



Attendance

Chronic absenteeism has long been a challenge for students experiencing homelessness (SEH). The PDE report defines chronic absenteeism as: “the unduplicated count of students absent 10 percent or more of school days during the year.”

- Of the 28,072 students with data, 42 percent (11,669) attended school 90 percent or more of the days in which they were enrolled;
- 27 percent (7,604) attended 80-89 percent of days enrolled, and
- 13 percent (3,623) attended 70-79 percent of days enrolled. The remaining 18 percent of students (5,176) attended 69 percent or less of the days in which they were enrolled.
- Based on these data, 58 percent of students would be considered chronically absent.



About HopePHL

HopePHL™ (pronounced “hopeful”) was founded through an integration of two human service organizations in Philadelphia, PA: People’s Emergency Center (PEC) and Youth

Service, Inc (YSI). Leveraging 150 years of combined service experience, it is HopePHL's mission to inspire Philadelphia's children, youth, families and communities to thrive by providing housing, advocacy, and trauma-responsive social services designed to promote equity, resilience, autonomy, and well-being.

HopePHL helps over 25,000 community members and residents annually to reach their goals of safe homes, economically secure and healthy families, and thriving businesses. People with Hope, thrive.

We advocate for urgently needed public policy changes on behalf of families and youth experiencing homelessness and the neighborhoods we serve. We have worked successfully with local, state, and federal government agencies to advance legislation and budgets that prioritize these communities.

The HopePHL Policy Advisory Council provides direction to the agency's public policy and research goals.

Visit www.hopephl.org to learn more about us.