

The Back to School Policy Brief
On Students Experiencing Homelessness
September 2024



**More than 10,000 Children and Youth
In Philadelphia Experienced
Homelessness in School Year 2023 –
And Funding is About to Run Out!**

Support for homeless students to disappear.



Introduction

With additional funding and staffing the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) was able to support 10,000¹ children and youth who experienced homelessness in the School Year (SY) 2022–2023.

The **good news** is that *‘The School District is doing a great job identifying and supporting children experiencing homelessness.’*

The **bad news** is that the SDP’s American Rescue Plan funds (ARP) are expiring December 31, 2024, and the new capacity and supports for students will disappear. No plans have been developed to build on or continue this support; the School District informed advocates² that the new state funding is not adequate for replacing supports for homeless students; the Parker Administration and City Council are talking about this, but no actions have been taken.

The SDP supports homeless students with its Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) office, a federally funded program. The SDP uses the funds for staffing, to train school personnel in 300 public district and charter schools and provide direct services like uniforms, transportation, mentoring, summer programming, school supplies, and more. **However**, no city or state dollars directly support homeless students.

This paper shares data recently published by the SDP using its School Year (SY) 2022–23 data. This is the best publicly available source of data. The report offers insight for decision makers about the prevalence of student homelessness, challenges, and recommendations.

Who Should Read This?

We encourage the Parker Administration, the Philadelphia City Council, and private foundations to understand the data and consider continuing and expanding the new efforts to reach out to children and youth who experience homelessness.

Advocates recognize that the increase in the numbers of children and youth experiencing homelessness relate to socio-economic trends, but it also is a factor of improved data collection and training by the School District’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) office, and increased funding from the ARP.

Youth and student advocates commend the **thousands of counselors, teachers, social workers, secretaries, school administrators, and other school personnel** for their support of all children and youth experiencing homelessness. Their work is so important to stabilizing a child experiencing homelessness struggling to participate in school.

¹ Testimony from School District of Philadelphia to the Philadelphia City Council Education Committee July 31, 2024

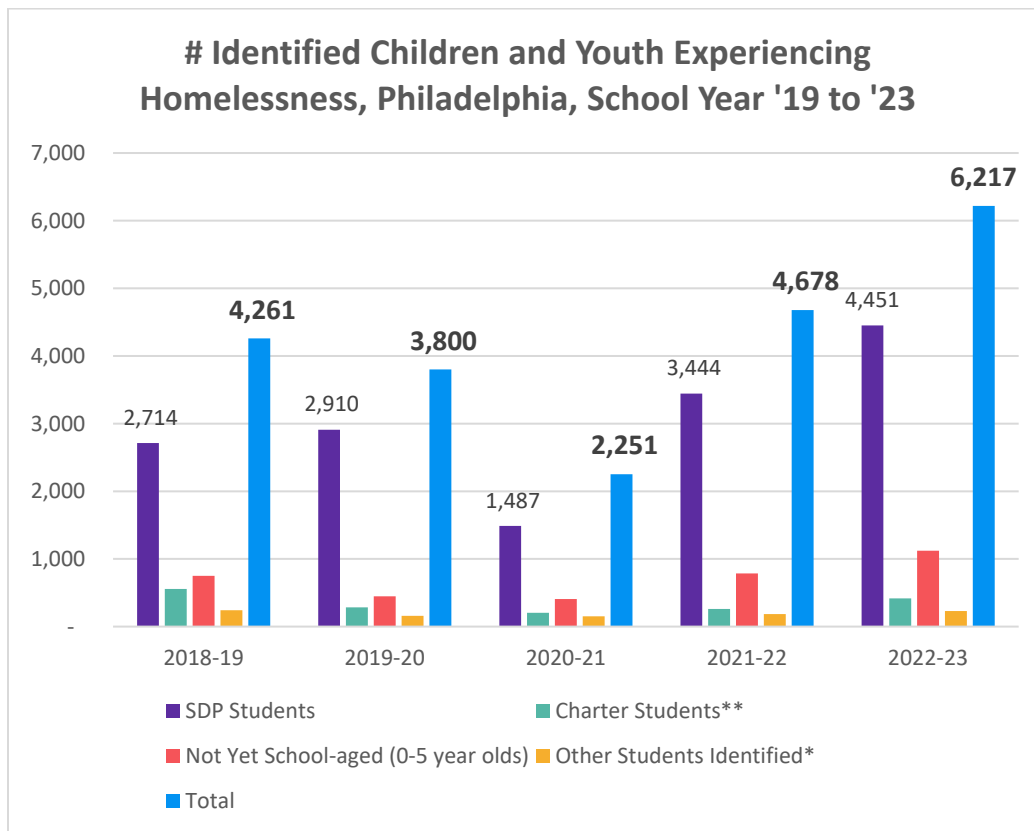
² Meeting August 19, 2024, between School District leadership and youth advocates.



Summary of Key Findings

Above, we mentioned that the SDP identified more than 10,000 children and youth experiencing homelessness. This figure was verbally reported in City Council's public hearing and is for SY 2023-24. The following data is from SY 2022-23. The original source of this data can be found at [Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness \(Analysis of 2022-23 Data\) – Research and Evaluation \(philasd.org\)](#).

- Philadelphia identified and supported 6,271 children and youth experiencing homelessness, a 46% increase since 2019.
- School District-enroll homeless students increased by 64% since 2019.
- The number of children ages birth to 5 increased 49% since 2019

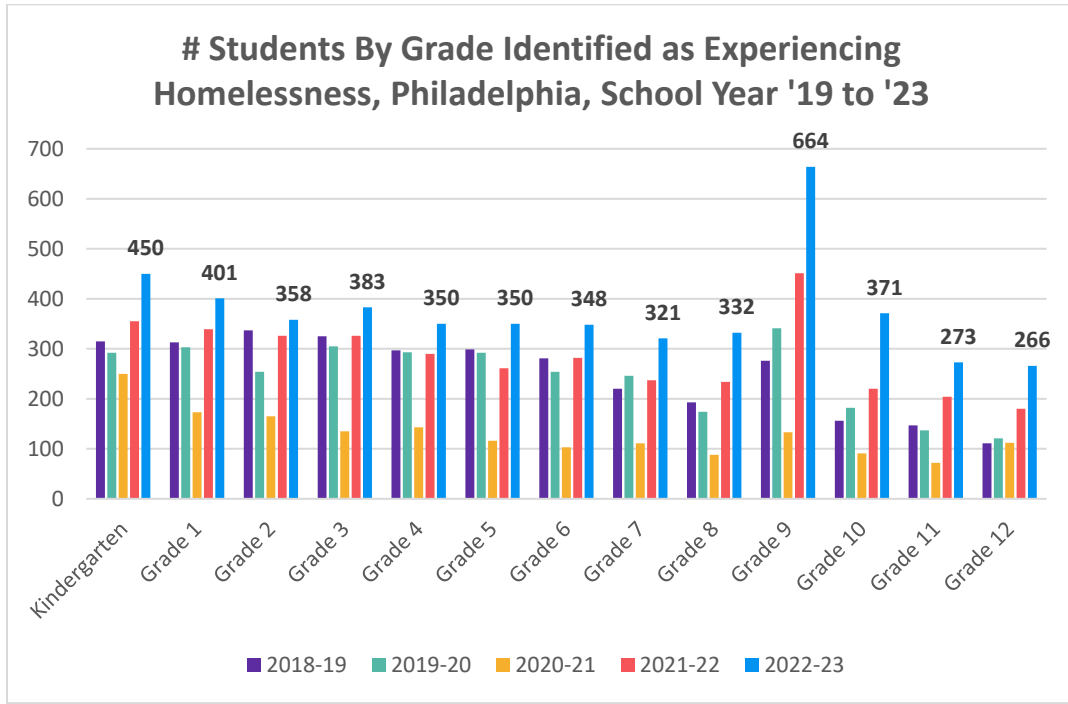


- Note: In the above chart, not all children and youth are students. The education system is federally required to report on all children and youth experiencing homelessness. Ironically, the homeless housing system reports very little data on the children it serves.

Homeless Students By Grade

- The highest number of homeless students by Grade is the 9th Grade, followed by Kindergarten and Grade 1.





Most Homeless Students Are NOT in Shelter

According to the report's data:

- 80% of all children and youth identified as homeless were living **doubled up**.
- 86% of all children ages birth to 5 identified as homeless were living doubled up.

Living Arrangement of Philadelphia's K – 12 th Grade Students Experiencing Homelessness, School Year 2022-23				
Living Arrangement	Number K-12 Students Exp. Homelessness	% identified students exp. homelessness	Number Children ages Birth-5 Exp. Homelessness	% Children ages Birth-5 Exp. Homelessness
Doubled Up	4,102	80%	962	86%
Shelter/Transitional	845	17%	147	13%
Unaccompanied	766	15%	23	2%
Other/hotel	99	2%	6	1%
Unsheltered	49	1%	5	0.5%



Chronic Truancy

The data also provides information on several circumstances that impact the experiences of students who are housed or experiencing homelessness, by way of comparison.

- Students experiencing homelessness have **higher rates** of chronic truancy than their housed peers.

Chronic Truancy	SY 2022-23
All District Students	40%
Students Experiencing Homelessness	58%

Suspensions

Students experiencing homelessness have **higher rates** of suspensions than their housed peers, in all grades except grade 9.

Number and % Suspensions Students Exp. Homelessness Compared to District Rate by Grade Philadelphia, SY 2023		
Grade	# / % SDP Homeless Students who Had At least 1 Suspension	# / % of SDP Students who had at least 1 suspension
3	15 - 4%	211 - 2%
4	18 - 5%	338 - 4%
5	23 - 7%	483 - 5%
6	44- 14%	82 - 9%
7	51 - 17%	1,031 - 12%
8	66 - 23%	1,066 - 12%
9	64 - 10%	1,411 - 12%
10	35 - 11%	904 - 8%
11	21 - 8%	530 - 6%
12	27 - 11%	414 - 4%
TOTAL	364 - 11%	7,209 - 7%



Academic Achievement

Students experiencing homelessness have **lower rates** of academic achievement on standardized tests than their housed peers.

All District Students Proficiency Rates in PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	2023
All Districts Students Grades 3 - 8	34%
Students Experiencing Homelessness, Grades 3 - 8	15%

All District Students Proficiency Rates in PSSA MATH Test	2023
All Districts Students Grades 3 - 8	21%
Students Experiencing Homelessness, Grades 3 - 8	5%

Moving Forward

Advocatesⁱ for children and youth experiencing homelessness strongly suggest that the Parker Administration, Philadelphia City Council, the School District of Philadelphia, and advocates work together on the following recommendations:

- **Provide \$3 million to continue the promising practices now being managed by Eddie’s House, HopePHL, and Valley Youth House in partnership with the School District’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness office using ARP funds.**
- **Create an ad hoc task force to identify and make recommendations to the Parker Administration, the City Council, and the School District of Philadelphia of changes to how we support students experiencing homelessness that could include no-cost improvements as well as funded efforts.** Leaders from these three networks, from housing providers, business leaders, and other networks should be invited.

ⁱ Advocates associated with this work include the agencies Eddie’s House, HopePHL, Philly Homes 4 Youth, Turning Points, and Valley Youth House.

