



Homeless Education and Literacy Project Evaluation

2006-2007 Final Report

Title X, Homeless Children and Youth
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Prepared by:

Sondra J. Fogel, Ph.D.
(813) 974-7347
sfogel@cas.usf.edu

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John A. Hilderbrand, Ph.D, Director

Department of Assessment and Accountability
Division of Information and Technology
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Tampa, Florida

Prepared for: Michael Levine (813-272-4000)
Department of School Social Work Services
Division of Supportive Services

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Executive Summary

This report provides a summative evaluation of the Homeless Education and Literacy Project (HELP), a grant-funded program intended to facilitate homeless students' access to education in accordance with the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act. The Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) has operated such a program for the past 15 years. This evaluation is based on interviews with the grant team and selected tutors, a review of a random sample of student work, and aggregate data supplied by HCPS.

HELP operates using a series of activities designed to remove procedural and logistical barriers to the enrollment of homeless students in order to increase attendance rates and the educational success of this group. These activities include case management services to these children and families, efforts to increase awareness of the rights of homeless children and their families to key stakeholders, and continuous improvements to internal and community wide systems used and available to aid children who are homeless. This is the fourth year that the program has also focused on increasing literacy skills by funding additional tutors at select shelter sites. A total of **2,224 students** were identified as homeless in the August 2006-June 2007 academic year in the HCPS. Of these, **550 students** used the services provided by this grant funded program.

This year, the program added a part-time social worker to facilitate educational outreach efforts to schools and to provide direct services to homeless students and their families. Also, a dedicated administrative support person was added to the program staff. The person filling this position significantly helped the HELP team by managing the phones, organizing donations, greeting families at the office to providing basic information, collecting various information and resources, and serving as the HELP program data manager for the UNITY information management system. Collaboration efforts within the HCPS to address the needs of homeless students met with remarkable success. Title I, Transportation, Nutrition, and Information Technology Services areas were engaged throughout the year to discuss ways to support the success of the students and the goals of the grant. A mid-term evaluation report was completed and submitted to the appropriate office.

Further development of an internal data management system is needed. As the program is expanding, the HELP staff is discussing ways to develop and streamline current recording procedures to insure quality internal data collection and retrieval. Finally, the program staff is re-allocating tutoring efforts to meet the needs of a greater number of homeless students.

This report will identify each of the goals and objectives of the grant. The general strategies used to accomplish the goals will also be listed. These goals and strategies have not changed significantly from previous years. This will be followed by a section highlighting activities of the HELP staff and specific challenges encountered. A rating statement will follow. Recommendations for future efforts are also offered. Issues raised in prior reports will not be duplicated.

HELP continues to evolve. Overall, considerable efforts were made to accomplish the goals of this grant and they **substantially exceed most of the objective standards**. This evaluative statement takes into account minor program variations from the grant proposal due to the expansion of the program and increased opportunities for collaboration and coordination of services within the HCPS.



Recommendations

Goal 1: Need for Immediate Enrollment

Increase trainings and information to key stakeholders and school leaders on the educational rights and needs of children who are homeless.

Goal 2: Need for Educational Continuity

With key stakeholders and school leaders, discuss implementing an attendance “flagging” system to alert school personnel and school social work staff when students who are homeless are at or near an identified pre-crisis state (example 10 straight days of not attending school).

Goal 3: Need for School Success

Engaging parent(s) in literacy efforts will need to be reconsidered. This task may be beyond the scope of the grant. Adult education, specifically for parents in crisis, is extremely difficult to implement with tutors trained in K-12 education. Additional collaboration or coordination with other community resources may provide additional assistance in this area. The tutoring component of this program needs to be modified to ensure the best use of limited resources.

Goal 1: Identify and recruit homeless students to ensure immediate enrollment

Objective 1:

90% of the identified homeless children and youth will be enrolled in the school of origin or a school requested by the parent(s) within 1-full day of attempt.

Strategies:

- Trainings sessions for various stakeholders including district personnel, community members, and parents are held throughout the year in order to ensure that these key persons know the rights of homeless children.

Assessment:

Using data entered into the HELP system, reports are generated regarding the number of trainings delivered and services provided to HELP students. The numbers for the services provided must be interpreted with caution. Data collection forms were continually being altered to meet the requirements of UNITY. Also, due to the re-organization of roles and responsibilities within the HELP team, it is possible that some data may not have been entered into the information management system.

Activities:

Each year, HELP Advocates (Data processors [DPs] at each school) attend training on how to identify and assist students who are homeless. This year, training took place in August 2006 with approximately 250 DPs attending. The web-site for the HELP program continues to be up-dated and contains forms and detailed instructions on how to use the DOE state required coding system. There is an email alert system in place that allows the HELP team social workers to notify the appropriate transportation office when a student who is homeless needs transport to the school of his/her origin. Some members of the HELP staff attended local and state-wide conferences this year in order to learn about the law, understand the complexity of homelessness and its impact on student learning, and also to hear about best-practices for serving this population.

HELP social workers continue to visit diverse sites in the community in order to assist homeless families and their children. During these visits and when doing community presentations, they ensure each facility has current McKinney-Vento brochures in English and Spanish and that these are displayed and available. (See **Appendix A** for a listing of dissemination places and presentations.) This year, efforts were made to reach new organizations in order to increase awareness of the educational rights of children who are homeless and the needs of these families. HELP social workers efforts included outreach to the rural areas served by the HCPS including Dover, Riverview, Plant City, and Palm River. The Migrant Program within the HCPS serves as a valuable partner and resource to the HELP program. As specified in the grant, the power-point presentations were peer-reviewed to ensure timely and correct information is being presented. (Documented in email by A. Francesca to K. Baroni on 3/03/07). For the first time, principals received information about the rights of homeless youth in their handbook as well as a specialized training detailing the rights of homeless children. The HELP program social workers provided numerous individual

training and information sessions to key stakeholders within HCPS which facilitated coordinated efforts on behalf of these children in the areas of nutrition, transportation, identification, and enrollment. (See **Appendix B** for nutrition policy.) Furthermore, for the first time, HELP staff conducted a survey of agency/shelter providers to learn about what they see as the barriers and the greatest needs of the homeless children that they serve. Using this information, the HELP staff will continue to refine their services and share their analyses with district administrators. A survey of parents was also attempted; however, no responses were received.

Challenges:

The numbers of services provided and how many homeless students were served may not be accurate—the reported number may be less than the actual number served. The reasons for this include the turnover with the DPs, internal difficulties with keeping up with the data entry of all the services provided by the HELP team due to staff growth, and the newly implemented UNITY data collection procedures established and modified throughout the year. The HELP staff created new intake forms and a new combined residency affidavit that will be implemented in 2007-2008 to meet UNITY requirements and grant reporting needs.

Rating:

This objective substantially exceeded required activities. In addition to interviews with staff about activities, Appendices A-C support this rating by providing evidence of dissemination of information, training, direct support, and collaboration to coordinate services to children who are homeless as outlined in the grant proposal. In the performance of their duties, staff paid attention to the accountability measures outlined in the funded grant and continued to develop and try new internal systems to improve reporting outcomes.

Recommendations:

As indicated last year, there remains a concern among the HELP social workers that parents are easily frustrated when trying to enroll their child(ren) at school sites. These parents are often in crisis and having to navigate through the process can be daunting. In order to ensure that parents understand the process and the rights of their child(ren) for educational services, HELP social workers can create a form to document that parents have been informed of the educational rights of their children their rights.

Goal 2: Sustain Educational Continuity

Objective 2:

Students in the HELP program will demonstrate an 85% attendance rate.

Strategies:

- Provide direct intervention services to assist families to overcome barriers to school attendance.
- Provide liaison activities to appropriate referral agencies.

Assessment:

Using data retrieved from the information management system, a total count of services provided in diverse areas is provided. The total counts of homeless students served by the HELP program with 15 or more unexcused absences in a 90 day period, 20 or more unexcused absences in a school year, and 20 or more unexcused absences in a school year plus 15 or more unexcused absences in a 90 day period are used to evaluate this objective.

Activities:

Appendix C provides the yearly statistics of reported effort and referrals by HELP staff, however there is a discrepancy with the numbers reported between what is listed in the DP records and internal reporting by the HELP team data collector. The HELP program (and School Social Work Services) has established a very successful partnership with a local volunteer organization, called OASIS that collects, sorts, and donates school clothes and items specifically for homeless children and their families. In this academic year, this organization has set up a lending closet at the main HELP office. This resource is used by the HELP team to assist those children who do not have appropriate clothes or adequate supplies for school work. Hygiene products are also available. This in-kind resource and on-going partnership with a community group demonstrates sustained and growing community awareness of the plight of homeless youth. This successful collaboration has been featured in local newspapers.

According to internal reports, the total number of students served by the HELP program in the HCPS was 523. Of these, 24% (n=124) had 15 or more unexcused absences within a 90 day period, 27% (n=145) had 20 or more unexcused absences during the school year, and 22% (n=116) had both 20 or more unexcused absences with in the school year and 15 or more within a 90 day period. Stated another way, 76% of HELP students **did not have** 15 or more unexcused absences in a 90 day period, 72% of HELP students **did not have** 20 or more absences in the course of the school year, and 78% of **did not have** 20 or more unexcused absences within the school year and 15 or more within a 90 day period.

Challenges:

There are numerous factors that influence whether a child can attend school; some of these are beyond the scope of this grant. These include the mental and physical health of the parent(s), the crisis state of the family on any given day, and the stresses of being homeless. However, over 33% of HELP students did attend schools regularly using coordinated transportation support provided by this program.

While the overall attendance of HELP students did not meet the stated goal of 85%, there is an overall increase in the percentage of HELP students attending school consistently from that reported last year (64% in 2005-2006).

Rating:

This object has not been met. Approximately 72% to 78% of HELP students are attending school regularly. Diverse services are being provided to meet the needs of these students. Coordinated efforts among the various departments with in the HCSP as well as within the community are keeping HELP students in school. Although the program did not meet the targeted goal, the significant increase in the number of HELP students who are attending school regularly, from the report of last year, must be recognized.

Recommendations:

If possible, it would be helpful to create an internal flag or identification system that notifies HELP social work staff of students who have been absent in excess of a critical amount of days (to be determined by HELP staff and HCPS guidelines). This can trigger an intervention plan from the staff, and in coordination with the school social worker and other personnel, to assist the youth to continue at school. It must be recognized that sometimes, it is not the student who wants to miss school, but issues impacting the family that prevent the student from getting to school. Professional assistance from the HELP staff would be warranted in these situations as well. Further analyses of the services HELP students are provided and the reasons for absences should be considered for next year.

Goal 3: Enhance academic experience of HELP students to enable success in school.

Objective 3:

90% of HELP students will demonstrate academic improvement after a minimum of 18 weeks in the program.

Strategies:

- Tutoring activities will be provided to HELP students in shelters.
- Assist with coordinating after-school tutoring programs
- Assist parents with literacy training.

Assessment:

Tutor constructed pre-post tests were utilized to monitor student achievement in the shelters where a HELP tutor was assigned. Currently, there is no procedure for monitoring the academic progress of each HELP student in the HCPS. Aggregate FCAT scores are provided to indicate HELP student progress in Appendix D.

Activities:

This year, a dedicated staff member responsible for the oversight of the literacy component for the

HELP program went to schools in the outlying areas of the county to reach and teach homeless students in the rural parts of this county. In addition, pre-post tests of homeless youth residing in shelters were conducted using the San Diego Assessment Tool. This helped to target efforts at building math and reading scores for these youth. Parent literacy parties were also tried at the local shelters. However due to the lack of response from the adults, these were canceled. Outreach efforts continued to be made to parents to engage them with homework help and family reading. Very few parents responded to inquiries from HELP literacy staff for family program ideas.

Tutoring services at Haven Poe, a shelter for youth 13-18 years of age continued this year. In addition, tutoring services at Alpha House, a home for pregnant teens, began in earnest. At these two sites, adolescents were monitored and prepared for their appropriate FCAT tests. New procedures were implemented this year to include mandatory homework meetings with each youth and the tutor. This has helped to ensure that students are showing their assigned work to the tutor and spending dedicated time studying under the supervision of the tutor. This in turn, enables the tutor to monitor student progress. Finally, the HELP team collaborated with Title I Neglected and Delinquent programs to enhance academic resources to children residing in shelters.

Challenges:

As in past years, it is difficult to engage parent(s) in literacy activities. This year, specific activities were tried to engage parents in the literacy objectives outlined in the grant. In addition, individual outreach to parents continued to be difficult. Outreach to Head Start and other Pre-K programs continue to be needed, although significant progress has been made in this area.

Rating:

This objective has been substantially accomplished. There is not a valid or reliable data source to measure this objective across all the students who are served by the HELP program. However, significant efforts were made this year to ensure that students who were receiving tutoring services were tested prior to their work with a tutor and after several working sessions with a tutor.

Recommendations:

There are many factors that determine how successful a HELP student will do in school. Many of these students present at school with significant academic challenges, beyond the capacity of a short tutoring session. The tutoring component of this program needs to be modified to ensure the best use of limited resources. Efforts to reach parents continue to be difficult. Additional collaboration or coordination with other community resources may provide additional assistance in this area.

Continued Program Challenges

Program Need and Scope:

This committed HELP team has continued to expand their outreach and activities to ensure compliance to the grant as written and the intent of the legislation. Even with the addition of a part-time social worker and an administrative support person, the demand for the services of this specialized program exceeds the capacity of the staff. According to the 2007 Hillsborough County Homeless Census Survey, 1,574 homeless children were enrolled in school on January 25, 2007. Another 141 children under the age of 5 years old were living on the streets or in specialized services. Most children who are homeless not only have documented educational challenges and barriers to enrollment, but also face social and environmental obstacles as well. It may be necessary to further enhance the efforts of this program through additional collaborative or interagency partnerships in order to address the target goals that can not be measured directly by the actions of this program, such as if the academic performance of students in the HELP program improve their academic performance in 18 weeks or trying to increase parent literacy.

Internal Data Management:

This year, there is considerable concern over the accuracy of the data collected regarding services provided to HELP students, the number of HELP students, and other internal monitoring systems. There are several reasons for this. For example, changes were made in data forms to conform to the UNITY system which is the county wide information management system for homeless services that all agencies must (should) conform to according to the HUD awarded Continuum of Care grant. This created some confusion for the data processor within the HELP team. In addition, certain data reporting elements were to be provided by another department in the HCPS which had greater familiarity with the internal system. However, these reports were not provided due to personnel changes within this area. Finally, the growth of the program and staff at the HELP office has led to unique recording procedures. The staff has determined that they need to establish an effective and efficient internal system that captures all the work that they are doing as well as ensures families and students receive prompt and appropriate assistance. Among the HELP staff, there is a commitment for greater internal control and attention to data entry to capture the efforts of the staff as well as the outcome of their work in the up-coming year.

2006-2007 Appendix A

Date	Materials Given	Location	By Whom	P= Presentation
August, 9th	Brochures	Spring/Connected by 25	Kathy	P
August, 11th	Brochures	DT emergency shelter	Kathy	P
August, 14th	Brochures	Mercy House	Kathy	P
August, 16th	Brochures	Church of Christ	Kathy/Kellie	P
August, 17th	Brochures	DP training	Allison	P
August 22nd	Brochures	Area 1-SWK	Kathy	P
August 29th	Brochures	Crisis Center	Kathy	P
August 31st	Brochures	Stand Up for Kids	Kathy	P
September 4th	Brochures	Wheels for Success	Kathy	P
September 6th	Brochures/Posters	Alpha House	Kathy	P
September 7th	Brochures	H.S. Guidance Dept. heads	Kathy, Mike	P
September, 11	Brochures	SACC Program	Kathy	P
September, 11	Brochures	Area-SWK	Kellie	P
September, 14th	Brochures	Homeless Coalition-Census	Mike, Kathy	P
September, 14th	Brochures/Posters	DP training	Allison	P
September, 15th	Brochures, Poster	Area 5 SWK, Mary and Martha House	Mike, Kathy	P
September, 20th	Brochures	Area 3, Principals	Kathy	P
September, 22nd	Brochures, PPT	All Social Workers	Kathy, Allison, Kellie	P
September, 28th	Brochures	Area 2, Principals	Kathy, Mike	P
September, 28	Brochures	Days Inn Hotel, P.C.	Kellie	
October, 11th	Brochures	Rotary Club	Kathy	P
October, 10th	Brochures	Met	Kellie	

Date	Materials Given	Location	By Whom	P= Presentation
October, 12th	Brochures/Posters	DP training	Allison	P
October, 15th	Brochures/Guides	Halloween Horror Event	Kellie, Allison, Kathy	
October, 16th	Brochures	Children's Board	Kathy	P
October 24th	Brochures	H.S. Registrars	Kathy	P
October, 25th	Brochures	Regional Liason Meeting	Kathy, Kellie, Tracee	P
November, 1st	Brochures	Haven Poe	Kathy	P
November, 6th	Brochures	Spring	Kathy	P
November, 9th	Brochures/Posters	DP training	Allison	P
November 20th	Brochures	DeeDee Smith, Transportation	Kathy and Kellie	
November, 28th	Brochures	Area 6, Principals	Kathy, Mike	P
November, 18th	Brochures	Channelside	Kathy and Kellie	
November, 28th	Brochures, Guides	Met's Academy	Kellie and Kathy	P
November, 30th	Brochures	Steve Ayers, Pupil Ass.	Kathy	P
December, 1st	Brochures	Dir, of Student Nutrition	Kathy	P
December, 6th	Brochures, Presented	Migrant Conference, Orlando	Kellie, Kathy	P
December, 15th	Brochures, Poster	Budget Inn Hotel	Kathy and Kellie	P
January 5th	Brochures	Student Nutrition	Kathy	P
January 9th	Brochures	Area 4, Principals	Kathy, Mike	P
January 10th	Brochures	Metropolitan Ministries	Kathy	P
January 11th	Brochures	Child Care Forum	Kathy	P
January 12th	Brochures	New Beginnings	Kathy	P
January, 16th	Resource Guides	Met	Kellie	P
January, 17th	Brochures	Jeff Akins	Kathy	

Date	Materials Given	Location	By Whom	P= Presentation
January, 19th	Brochures	Carrollwood Day School	Kathy	P
January, 22nd	Brochures	Century 21	Kathy, Kellie	
January 24th	Brochures	Area 1, Principals	Kathy, Mike	P
January 25th	Resource Guides	The Hope Program	Allison	
February, 6th	Brochures	Dorothy Thomas	Kathy	P
February, 14th	Brochures/Packet	Pennys Angels	Kathy	P
February, 14th	Brochures	N and D	Kathy, Kellie	P
February 20th	Brochures, Resource Guides, Poster	International Church	Kellie	P
February 21st	Surveys	VOA	Kathy and Monica	P
February 21st	Surveys	Connected by 25	Kathy and Monica	
February 21st	Surveys	Met	Kathy and Monica	
February 21st	Surveys	Haven Poe	Kathy and Monica	
February 21st	Surveys	Salvation Army	Kathy and Monica	
February, 22	Brochures	Area 7, Principals	Kathy, Ken	P
March, 5	Brochures	DP training	Kathy	P
March, 6th	Brochures	Dorothy Thomas	Kathy	P
March, 7th	Brochures	Spring	Kathy	P
March, 8	Brochures/articles	Oasis Grand Opening	Kathy, Kellie, Allison, Monica	
March 13th	Brochures/Information	Booker T. Washington	Allison	P
March, 28th	Brochures/Agency Meeting	All homeless agencies	H.E.L.P. Team	P
March 16th	Read to class regarding homelessness	Booker T. Washington	Allison	
March, 25th	Brochures/Information	St. James UMC	Kathy	P
April, 19th	Brochures, Backpacks, Staff meeting	Homeless Liaison Meeting	H.E.L.P. Team	P

Appendix B: 2006-2007 Nutrition Policy Statement

Homeless Student Nutrition Policy:

According to the federal McKinney-Vento Act of 1987 students meeting the legal definition of homelessness have the right to receive free lunch for the remainder of the school year.

1. If a student is identified at a school site as homeless the Data Processor will complete a Homeless Affidavit and list the appropriate code on the E screen in SDHC. This information is electronically imported into the Student Nutrition V-boss software. This will allow the student to be eligible for free lunch for the remainder of the school year regardless of changes to their school assignment or place of residence.
2. At time of enrollment homeless students must complete a free and reduced meal application and check "Homeless" in Part 3 of the application. The application must be given to the Student Nutrition Manager who will submit it to the Healthy Meals Express Application Center. The student should be placed on free status within 48 hours.
3. The Data Processor will send a neon green "Student Update" form to the Student Nutrition Manager to alert them of a new student. This will allow the student to receive free lunch prior to them officially showing a free status in the VBOSS software program.
4. Once a month the Homeless Liaison will deliver a signed copy of the homeless student roster to the Healthy Meals Express Application Center. This will verify the authorization that they meet the federal definition of homeless according to the McKinney-Vento Act.
5. The Homeless Education and Literacy Project Team will conduct an annual training with the Data Processors to educate them on the Homeless Student Nutrition Policy and to increase their awareness of the struggles of homelessness and the resources available within the School District of Hillsborough County.
6. Student Nutrition Managers will receive updated information at their annual meeting held in August, as well as written instructions.

Appendix C 2006-2007 – Services*

Number of Children and Youth served at the Shelters/other sites:

Metropolitan Ministries	81
The Spring	111
Haven V. Poe	154
Hotel/Motel	145
Salvation Army Hospitality House	3
Mary & Martha House	2
Mercy House	0
Dorothy Thomas Emergency Shelter	0
Friend/Relative	632

**Total here does not reflect all in data base.*

Specific Services Provided to Children and Families:

Consultation with community agencies	168
Parent education to facilitate enrollment	267
School enrollment regular education	34
Consultation with current school	119
Transportation to schools	173
Bus Passes	101
School supplies	193
Consultation with previous school	3
Counseling with child/family	7
Assistance with locating permanent housing	42
Transportation to community agencies	119
School enrollment special education	11
Consultation with receiving school	31

Referrals provided for Children and Families:

Emergency shelter	35
Rental assistance	159
Utilities assistance	60
Holiday assistance	74
Food Assistance	156
Primary health care/school physicals	6
Mental health services	11
Specialty healthcare/CMS	25
Clothing	182
Adult education/job training	42
Child Care/Pre-School	6

Appendix D

FCAT Results for 2006-2007 Year Of Identified HELP Children		
Elementary School	Middle School	High School
3rd Grade: 36 took the reading FCAT, 37 took the math FCAT 12 (33%) passed reading 15 (41%) passed math	6th Grade: 29 took the reading FCAT, 28 took the math FCAT 4 (14%) passed reading 4 (14%) passed math	9th Grade: 18 took the reading FCAT, 17 took the math FCAT 3 (17%) passed reading 3 (17%) passed math
4th Grade: 33 took the FCAT 12 (36%) passed reading 9 (27%) passed math	7th Grade: 25 took the FCAT 9 (37%) passed reading 8 (30%) passed math	10th Grade: 12 took the FCAT 0 (0%) passed reading 1 (1%) passed math
5th Grade: 41 took the FCAT 13 (31%) passed reading 12 (29%) passed math	8th Grade: 20 took the reading FCAT, 21 took the math FCAT 5 (25%) passed reading 9 (45%) passed math	11th Grade: No data reported
		12th Grade: No data reported

Percentages are rounded up.