

The McKinney Vento Program and the Marysville School District

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Abstract

The McKinney Vento program is a federal program that removes barriers for homeless students and helps assist them staying in school, as well as providing funding under Title I. A needs assessment of the McKinney Vento policy in the Marysville School District was conducted through two interviews with the director and the liaison of the program, transcribing themes and common needs, demographic information from the MSD and gathering information from archival sources that elaborate on policy history/barriers in schools for At Risk Youth (ARY). Common themes in McKinney Vento, ARY and the MSD include lack of trust and connection, financial strain, and strength and resilience.

Key words: Risk, youth, ARY, Marysville, school, district, access, funding, education, policy, homeless, resources.

Purpose of the Study

Historically and systemically schools have not been able to address issues with At Risk Youth (ARY) equitably. An At Risk Youth is defined as “a child who is less likely to transition successfully into adulthood. Success can include academic success and job readiness, as well as the ability to be financially independent. It also can refer to the ability to become a positive member of society by avoiding a life of crime” (What Is At-Risk Youth? - Definition & Statistics, 2016, n.p.). Some severe issues of ARY in the school system include homelessness, drug addiction, barriers to access and truancy. Students have often been criminalized and punished by rules, laws, and bills for experiencing some of these issues, such as the Juvenile Justice act of 1977 and the Becca Bill of 1995.

A monumental turning point for homeless and ARY was the passage of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistant Act of 1987 which declares schools are obligated to provide youth and children who are homeless with “equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as is provided to other children and youths” (Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, 2016, n.p.) While this program seeks to enhance access for homeless ARY within the school system, the ways that particular local educational agencies implement the program vary widely.

This Capstone research project will focus on the McKinney-Vento program in the Marysville School District (MSD), where it is reported that there are “more than 500 homeless students; 166 are ‘unaccompanied youth.’”¹ The guiding question of this needs assessment is: What do stakeholders in the Marysville School District identify as the main successes and interferences hindering the Mckinney Vento program and its vitality within the district? The

¹ <https://www.ms25.org/article/198368?org=district>, cited on June 9, 2020

needs assessment was conducted through two interviews with the director and the liaison of the program, transcribing themes and common needs, demographic information from the MSD and gathering information from archival sources that elaborate on policy history/barriers in schools for ARY. Common themes identified include lack of trust and connection, financial strain, and strength and resilience. These themes are described in details below.

Background and Literature Review

As outlined above, the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act of 1987 was enacted in 1987 to remedy the declining participation of students in the school system due to homelessness and similar circumstances (Albright, 2014). Students experiencing homelessness have a statistically significant difference in test scores when compared to students that are not experiencing homelessness. As seen in a research project done by George Hendricks titled, “The Impact of the McKinney-Vento Program on the End-of-Grade Test Scores of Homeless Grade 6 Students” Student who were housed scored higher on tests. In 2006 and 2007 the average test scores for housed students was 255.24 and 254.28. Comparatively in 2006 and 2007 test score for homeless students was 247.73 and 245.43. Homeless students scored 7.51 points lower in 2006 and 8.85 points lower in 2007 (Hendricks, 2010). The implementation of McKinney Vento programs focuses on helping students thrive by increasing participation, retention, and academic achievement (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE, 2006).

The McKinney Vento policy coincides with the Every Student Succeeds Act, otherwise known as ESSA. Data from the federal level stated that during the 2014–2015 school year, there were over “1.3 million school aged students are homeless” in US public schools (Stone & Uretsky, 2016, p.1). The need for policy reform in the school system as it pertains to homeless

youth is dire and extraordinarily imperative for the wellness of all of the children attending school and the history and state of the MSD show how needed programs are.

The McKinney Vento act was first known as the Stewart B McKinney homeless assistance act of 1987. It was the first mark of legislation that directly addressed homelessness. After multiple reauthorizations of the act in 1999 it was renamed the McKinney Vento homeless assistance act. Through multiple reauthorizations it has strengthened and expanded. The momentum forward of this act over the decades it has been progressing has shown to improve student's outcomes and experiences in the educational system (Pavlakis, 2017).

In 2016 the McKinney Vento was re-authorized into The Every Student Succeeds Act. In 1987 when it was first known as the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act the process took part in a two-year federal grant program that called for the department of education to establish an office for a coordinator. This position of the coordinator ensures that they are responsible for gathering data state-wide from the US Department of education on school attendance, rates of homeless children and also for writing a plan for education.

This policy also stated that all homeless children have the right to a free and appropriate education. It requires states to review and revise the laws and illuminate residency requirements as children were homeless and it was non-applicable and an obstacle in enrollment and admission for homeless youth. It is stated that kids who are experiencing homelessness would be able to stay enrolled in their school district and as well for children who suddenly experience homelessness. A report was also to be prepared and submitted on homeless children to congress on June 30, 1988.

Grants were required to be made by the secretary of education and from local educational agencies to create programs for children experiencing homelessness as to inform other states and

local educational agencies in order to prepare for appropriations. In 1990 a policy amendment was added, stating children experiencing homelessness should not be separated from the mainstream school environment. Grant programs were revised in order to tailor more specific conditions, accrue specified funds for native territories and provide educational programs for school personnel to shed awareness of the problems that are created in education for at risk youth experiencing homelessness. A liaison from social services was required as well.

The authorization of appropriating funds through state reserve would be requested. Grant programs were reconstructed for the specificity of children experiencing homelessness in the educational system. In 1994 title III part B of Improving America's Schools Act and also title three amendments to other acts of part B, education for homeless children and youth subtitle be included that 50% of grant requirements for education activities were removed. Preschool education was included in the definition of free, appropriate public education. These revisions are so included that districts were required to adhere to parent's requests for enrolling a homeless student in a particular school when feasible.

Educational services were set to provide funding to families and children experiencing homelessness. Liaisons were required to work with state and local housing agencies to develop strategies that would benefit families experiencing homelessness. It also authorized \$30 million for 1995 and following years. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act included that there be a liaison in every school district that would identify any child who would be eligible, arrange transportation and resolve disputes. This also prohibited segregation by housing status and the authorization level was raised to 70 million. In 2015 title I X part of the Every Student Succeeds Act required that liaisons participate in training and have new duties for preschool children, unaccompanied youth and housing.

A new determination approach for homeless children would help evaluate if it would be in the student's best interest to remain in their school of origin or transfer to another school. The definition of school and origin was also revised to include feeder schools and preschools. A requirement of state and local policies were set to be removed in order to reduce barriers to identification, fees, fines and absences. The status of awaiting foster care placement was removed from the definition of homelessness and the authorization level was raise to 85 million. Over the decades of progress and revolution of this act it has been consistently reviewed and revised in order to provide equity and justice to children experiencing homelessness. (Pavlakis, 2017).

Research Concerning McKinney-Vento

Previous research has examined where policies in schools were at prior to homeless students being legally able to attend school, when and why the McKinney-Vento bill was enacted and how it has grown over the years (McGarry, 2016). Factors residing in the school system attribute to causes that increase the population of ARY. These factors the school system obtains can be anywhere from testing and behavioral punishment to attendance policy and suspension protocol. Essentially the idea entertained is that the school systemically has contributing factors to students affected by homelessness, which can be barriers to a McKinney-Vento student who is already struggling to sustain their engagement, academic requirement and attendance in school (Stone & Uretsky, 2016).

While previous researchers have examined McKinney Vento programs, assessing the implementation of the program can vary dependent upon the differing variables in a study. The success of this program in local contexts is crucial in providing information to help eradicate

issues in the program structure and effectiveness. Thus, this needs assessment seeks to highlight barriers and achievements of the program in the Marysville School District.

Taking a deeper look into Hendricks' study, the author notes that "a threat to internal validity arising from selection bias" (Hendricks, 2010, p. 68) could affect results. He goes on to discuss that students who have been selected might have received prior services and utilized other programs that have affected their test scores, or more privileged students having access to more help, such as tutoring. It is important to analyze all possibilities for error, bias and selection discrepancies when researching a program's needs, as to create an authentic study that properly declares accurate areas for support.

Research done by the National Center for Homeless Education discusses the duties and purpose of liaisons in school districts that work in alignment with the McKinney Vento program. The importance of a liaison is essential for a strong working team to help homeless students and remove barriers. There is a need for proper education, training for liaisons and also funding to be able to provide more liaisons in districts. This evaluation identifies the primary duties as being outreach, identification, helping with enrollment and providing equal opportunities. They help students with Early Headstart and Headstart programs, referrals for healthcare, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other services. They work closely with parents and help to "collaborate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to students experiencing homelessness" (*National Center for Homeless Education*, 2008, p. 2)

An important part of that coordination needs to include "collecting and providing the state coordinator with reliable, valid, and comprehensive data on students experiencing homelessness" (*National Center for Homeless Education*, 2008, p. 2). The role of the liaison is

very important not only for the student experiencing homelessness and providing them with essential items and resources, but it is also very important to be able to report accurate data to the state so that stakeholders and supporters of the program as well as the federal government can see how many students are experiencing homelessness, how many students have been able to receive help, the success of those students, if numbers of student receiving help is increasing or decreasing. Being able to have accurate data can help provide and incorporate more funding and more opportunities for expansion.

It is also important for the local liaison to be able to “understand the challenges faced by impoverished and homeless children, youth and families, including unaccompanied youth and preschool aged children” (National Center for Homeless Education, 2008, p. 3). The liaison must to be able to comprehend, understand and implement services and the rights of children who are utilizing the program. In order for a liaison to be the most effective for the students they are helping, there has to be training implemented. The more funding that the district can get, the more they can utilize liaisons as well as help provide them with trauma informed care, and education that will make them extremely efficient and resourceful individuals.

A new research project about identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness touched on new emerging needs for districts who are implementing the McKinney Vento policy. Recently in the past year our entire world has gone through a pandemic crisis. The effects of COVID-19 are a new challenge that many organizations and institutions have to remedy. This research project touched on some of those issues. They mentioned that districts are going to need to weigh out “the risks and benefits of various models for reopening schools, plans must consider local COVID-19 conditions, available funding, and the realities of students home

environments” (Pavlakis, Roberts, Richards, Hill, & Mirakhur, 2020, p. 5). Schools have been shut down for close to a year now, not counting summer when there is no school in session.

Many of the issues homeless student’s face are now exacerbated as school might have been their only daily freedom from a destructive or dysfunctional home life. Now with students having to attend school online they face even more barriers and obstacles to overcome. It was said in this report that schools “often provide a sense of stability and routine, the safety and security of students home environment should be considered when assessing the viability of plans” (Pavlakis, Roberts, Richards, Hill, & Mirakhur, 2020, p. 5). They are bringing forth a new need of awareness for homeless students in a pandemic and post pandemic atmosphere. They discuss unstable housing conditions which “may increase the risk of theft, loss, or damage” (Pavlakis, Roberts, Richards, Hill, & Mirakhur, 2020, p. 5).

There is also a stress on the importance of physical activity since children now have limited access to space which supports healthy development. If students aren’t able to exert physical activity it can greatly affect their involvement and progress in schools. This is especially true for children who are experiencing homelessness and are already struggling mentally and emotionally. There is a need to consider new alternatives for student’s connectivity, assessing, resources and access to basic needs like food and hygiene. There are new stressors as this day and age there is a consistent need for masks and sanitizer. They bring up the fact that attendance needs to be more flexible even more so since there are so many more barriers, especially for students experiencing homelessness.

Another part of this article correlates with other needs that are highlighted in this Capstone research paper’s surveys and other sources. A detrimental part of the McKinney Vento program being successful is being able to report accurate data. It was mentioned that in 2016 the

New York City Department of Education and Department of Homeless Services changed their “data sharing agreement so that the Department of Education now receives daily lists of students in shelters, as opposed to monthly rosters” (Pavlakakis, Roberts, Richards, Hill, & Mirakhur, 2020, p. 4). Knowledge is key; the more information that districts have, that they can relay to the federal level and share with the other districts, the more help and resources can be rendered.

Another common theme for needs of this policy and districts is building relationships. The relationships of Community partners with districts, as well as the relationships of liaisons and students, are imperative for the growth and development of homeless students and the growth and development of the McKinney Vento program in any district. Being able to have strong, tightknit data, and solid relationships with effective communication, is a need for this policy to be effective in helping students, and for the McKinney Vento program to be successful in districts.

A research study by Cunningham (2014) from the San Marcos Texas School District conducted an investigation of the McKinney Vento act. The author brings special attention to access to information and McKinney Vento act awareness. There can be an incongruency in the level of information that district and school personnel receive. Information about the McKinney Vento act can get lost or mis-translated from person to person. With the district working on implementing the policies and procedures of the McKinney Vento act they have a higher level of awareness than a teacher who is working directly with students. He states how important it is for those who are in direct contact with students to have the awareness and the connections to those working directly with McKinney Vento policies and procedures. He went on to say that “it is imperative the adults forming relationships with students are informed of the McKinney Vento

so they can better identify and help vulnerable youth survive their ordeal” (Cunningham, 2014, p. 19). The theme of building relationships is seen in this study.

A huge part of these relationships are the level of awareness and education that those who have the ability to help need to possess in order to properly help a child in need of services. Another theme seen throughout this capstone research paper is the funding of the McKinney Vento. In this Report Cunningham discussed discrepancies of the grants the McKinney Vento involved districts receive. He discusses in his paper the district “received under \$30,000; the required documentation was disproportionately tedious. The liaison supervisor was shocked by what was required, describing it as “significantly more time-consuming than other grants the district received worth several million and hardly worth the effort involved” (Cunningham, 2014, p. 225). The amount of work and documentation needed to gather and report are some of the most time-consuming processes of this policy. There simply is not enough funding allocated to support everything that this policy needs to do in order to be fully funded. There needs to be a proper budget that aligns with a congruent amount of work and services.

Marysville School District Systemic and Student Issues

The Marysville school District is one of the main district’s in the state of Washington that struggles with children and families living in poverty. A couple of schools in the district have high numbers for students who qualify for free and reduced lunches and are homeless and/or at risk youth. The qualification that the school needs in order to accept Title I funding money is the certain number of students who get free and reduced lunch, 40% of the student body being low income.

76% of the Quill Ceda Tulalip elementary school and 81% of Liberty elementary qualify for free and reduced lunches; both schools have about 500 students. That is 1000 students facing

high poverty levels of need and only two schools in the district. Funding for the schools comes from the US Department of education but the administration of funds is allocated through the State office of the superintendent of public instruction. There is a trickle-down effect of funding where schools and students might not be able to receive the adequate financial support that they need. The funding is said to provide support for subjects like math and literacy and experimental learning. Factors that determine which students will be able to receive help in the program is largely based on academic performance with students that are not meeting standard reading and math scores. Unfortunately, school districts are facing restrictions on budgets from the federal No Child left behind act which is included in the Marysville school district. In this act schools are “failing” if one student doesn’t meet math and literacy standards. It is said that most schools are in that category.

Many of the students in the Marysville School district fall into the category of At Risk youth and struggle to meet attendance requirements, basic needs, testing standards and safety. A dense policy history of criminalizing youth have exacerbated homelessness issues for students and dug a hole for future generations to get out of. Policies like the Becca Bill in 1997 set to legally punish youth for lack of attendance (many of them homeless). Accompanying the Becca Bill 6 years later was the federal bill signed by George Bush called the No Child Left Behind Act that focused on standardized testing and school ratings as well as encompassing truancy reporting by requiring districts to report truancy and attendance rates. This act largely created more barriers for schools already in need to help students struggling to hit the standard. These youth were vastly prosecuted for their inability to attend school and meet basic needs.

Washington state takes the lead with 2,705 juvenile status offenders, 1,039 were in contempt of a truancy order and 1,048 were in contempt of an At Risk Youth Order (U.S. Office

of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2011). A vast majority of ARY, runaways, CHINS youth and truant youth have been victims of abuse, neglect and negligence. In 1994 Seattle Coalition for kids and families organized a survey in King County that reported 35% of runaways ran from physical abuse and said they would return if the abuse stopped, 26% were kicked out, 25% were sexually abused (Chaney & Kysar, 1999). According to this survey, 86% of truant youth do not even have their basic needs met, such as, shelter and safety and are being criminalized for their inability to attend and focus on school because of their neglect and abuse.

Inequity in policies as mentioned above systemically and historically perpetuate marginalization of people of color, homelessness and those affected by poverty. These policies, bill's and laws have many barriers that inadvertently impact oppressed populations. A common theme within these policies is a need for funding and a need for restructuring the allocation of funds to better reach and disperse programs and provide access for help. Truant, at risk and homeless youth have the greatest need for accessing funds.

The McKinney Vento and Title I federal funding budget is \$300,000 for the Marysville School District, but it was said that although there's money in the budget it holds kids back from being able to use the services because of where the money is said to be allocated. There is a portion of the budget that is to be used for parents to pay for tutoring. Fortunately, there is a new grant called the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. This grant is going to help fund services for children in need and for the support. The budget will allocate funds to hire staff members and allow for teachers in the district to participate in the program. This grant will alleviate some of the restrictions that the No Child Left Behind Act and the Title I that keep funding restricted, inhibiting financial support for the students in need (Import, 2014).

Within the literature emerges three central objects in relation to a needs-based assessment. The main objectives are adequate funding, removing barriers/identification and staff support/training. McKinney Vento and Title I budget needs to be fully funded, as well as properly allocated to those with the highest need. Several barriers have cropped up throughout the literature, such as punishment for truancy, attendance policies and rigid testing scores. Identifying homeless youth as well proves to be a challenge. Strengthening the procedure and implementation to identifying and increasing access for student to obtain resources and support from the program are areas that need to be strengthened. More staff with proper training will help to increase the possibility of removing barriers, increasing access and identifying more youth who qualify for services. A strong and well-educated team can greatly affect the success of the program and help minimize unmet needs.

Methodology

The following needs-based assessment makes use of demographic analysis of the McKinney Vento program data within the Marysville School District, as well as interviews with program employees and counselors involved with students. Two interviews were done with Andrea Wyatt and Deanna Bashour, who are crucial directors in the MSD McKinney Vento system. These participants have agreed to have their names used in this study and in their interviews. The interview is 17 questions tailored to that person's specific involvement in the McKinney Vento program (see appendices). The interviews were transcribed in order to analyze them effectively.

Demographic data was accessed from Deanna Bashour, the programs liason who has agreed to provide the necessary information in this research study. I received data that contains information pertinent to answering the questions proposed. The data needed for this study

include: demographics, transcribed themes in interviews, data of program involvement showing participation and assessing common themes in needs, strengths and areas for improvement through what MSD provides as well as history in policies.

The strength of this assessment comes directly from the interviews and data received from the MSD. The two participants are the leading entities of this program and have the most knowledge and materials available to provide genuine and accurate insight. There is enough literature and previous research that coincides with the assessment. The commonality in other studies has laid way for a thorough and prominent needs assessment.

Limitations

The primary limitations of this study have come directly from Covid-19. This assessment was originally meant to be an in-depth program evaluation where I would be able to survey students and work directly with the MSD in person. The enrichment of understanding and analysis has been hindered by having to change to a needs-based assessment and work remotely with the MSD under strained circumstances as all school districts are over worked and overwhelmed with having to learn how to provide school virtually for all students, figuring out reopening plans and change all materials to be compatible with online learning, while getting students laptops and materials. Teachers, budgets and students are strained severely, and I have been blessed to be able to still access information and be provided with interviews and enough information to formulate a needs-based assessment.

Results and Discussion

Marysville School District McKinney Vento Descriptive Data

The McKinney Vento program participation has grown substantially during the past three years. The 2016 to 2017 school year counted 317 total McKinney Vento students served. The

2017 to 2018 year included 421 total McKinney Vento students served, and in 2018 to 2019 there were 508 total McKinney Vento students served. There is a seasonal increase in students served in November where in 2016 /2017, 195 students were served out of 317 (61.5%). In 2017/2018, 231 students were served out of 421 (54.9%), and in 2018/2019 329 students were served out of 508 total students (64.8%). There are currently 329 students enrolled in the 2020 school year and 101 of those are considered a youth staying without a physical guardian (30.7%) (Bashour, n.d.).

Current trends in program participation are rising for multiple reasons as seen in the interviews (discussed below), including: access to care; lack of available and affordable housing in our state; rent inflation; job loss; mental instability; domestic violence; substance abuse; and under identified families coming forward who are learning about current resources that are available.

Living situations for homeless youth are described as transitional housing 4% (13 students), unsheltered 6% (20 students), in a shelter 5% (18 students), in an RV or on a campground 2% (5 students), in a hotel or motel 2% (5 students), and the majority of students are reported in doubled up housing at 81% (268 students). Doubled up housing is when students share a sleeping space with another family. The demographic information of students by ethnicity are as follows: African-American is 4% (14 students), American Indian or Alaskan native is 10% (33 students), Asian is 5% (16 students), Hispanic is 22% (72 students), Native Hawaiian or other pacific islander is 3% (11 students), White is 44% (145 students), two or more races includes 5% which is (15 students) and two or more races including American Indian is 7% (23 students), Of these 329 students 20 are Tulalip Tribe identified. (Marysville School District, 2019).

In the most recent year of 2020, due to the effects of Covid, the data has been halted this school year. What was able to be attained for the numbers in 2020 are as follows:

2020 ended with 442 total students identified, 15 of them were identified after shut down in March. Of the 442, 142 (32.1%) of them were elementary aged and 96 of the 442 (21.7%) were unaccompanied homeless youth not in the presence of a legal guardian. 4 students were in DV shelters (.9%), 269 were sharing housing, couch surfing (60.8%), 43 were in motels or hotels at some point during the school year due to loss of housing eviction (9.7%), 34 were staying in local shelters at some point during the school year (7.7%), 13 were staying in temporary transitional housing facilities with a case worker (2.9%), 78 were unsheltered at time of intake not knowing where they were going to sleep (17.6%), 1 family was staying in a borrowed RV without water or power (.2%). The district had 53 seniors and 7 of those withdrew from the district before the end of the year and only 6 of them will be a second-year senior who didn't graduate. Covid-19 has hit this district and the implementation/access to resources immensely as everything has shut down.

Title I Define by the US Department of Education Purpose in Schools and McKinney Vento

Title I serves the purpose of funding the McKinney Vento programs within districts in need. There is no Mckinney Vento program without Title I funding. Through this funding the goal is to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged youth. It is said to ensure an equal and fair opportunity for each student to gain access to prime education and as well be able to excel at state standards and meet assessment requirements. The methods used to provide this equity to disadvantaged students are done so by aligning assessments, systems of accountability, teacher training, curriculum and instructional materials with state academic standards so progress

can be measured. Schools who have the highest poverty level, limited English proficiency and young children needing reading assistance, immigrants, children who have been delinquent, neglected or have disabilities are often considered low-achieving and have a need for Title I in their school system to provide access to higher levels of education care.

Title I seeks to close the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students, as well as advantaged and disadvantaged students. Schools are held accountable through Title I for improving academic achievement of all students, identifying and improving students who are low performing by providing alternatives for students and access to high quality education. Schools who have the greatest need are targeted for distributing resources, flexibility for schools is provided to teachers to decision making authority so students can responsibility to improve student performance.

Title I is about statewide reform for schools in need who inhabit higher populations of kids in need of this implementation. The instructional content is backed by scientifically based research that challenged student's academic abilities and staff are provided with professional development, as well as provide parents with opportunities of engagement. Funding for Title I is essential for its implementation. The appropriations are to be used for improving literacy through libraries, education for migratory children, prevention and intervention for at-risk, delinquent and neglected youth, teachers associated with participating students, drop-out prevention, school reform, advanced placement, school improvement/restructuring, technical assistance, Funding is decided accordingly by year:

- (1) \$13,500,000,000 for fiscal year 2002;
- (2) \$16,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2003;
- (3) \$18,500,000,000 for fiscal year 2004;

- (4) \$20,500,000,000 for fiscal year 2005;
- (5) \$22,750,000,000 for fiscal year 2006; and
- (6) \$25,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2007.

Schools are chosen by priority of serving lowest achieving schools first, schools with greatest financial need, school demonstrating commitment to appropriate funds according with Title I protocols and able to meet the goals of the school's plan for achievement. Schools are also given grants for participating in accordance with highest priority for financial need and commitment.

Any unused funds will go to local educational agencies or carry into the next fiscal year and also schools participating with Title I need to report percentages of schools with families below the poverty line for appropriate allocations. (Title I - Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged, 2005)

Marysville School District and McKinney Vento Homeless Youth Identification

A huge barrier for funding and support for the students in need has to do with identifying the students who are considered homeless and At Risk. In order to be able to increase the number of students participating in the program and improving access to the resources that McKinney Vento and Title I offer, there has been a protocol for identifying students in need.

Housing Questionnaires are provided in registration packet that prompt a liaison to follow up which depends on the response to the students living situation for new families coming in to the MSD. A district-wide housing questionnaire is mailed out at the end of August for families who are not new to the district but whose living situation may have changed, and these are mailed out a second and third time at winter break and spring break, which are the highest mobility times for families. Envelopes are postage paid to mail back if they qualify and need services, then the liaison contacts them when it is received and sets them up.

Other opportunities to provide information on identifying homelessness is on the Free and Reduced Lunch Packet given to students upon enrolling in the new school year, which has a homeless box to check if it applies. On the packet also has community outreach and contact info for resources in different organizations such as the food bank and library. There are also opportunities printed on the packet which show other participating groups such as the Homeless Task Force Committee. Other opportunities for identification are located in the office for families to see. This marketing helps spread awareness for both homeless families and families who are able to participate in helping other families in need through donations. Counselors meet with families and when it is determined they may be qualified for the McKinney Vento and Title I funding support then an intake form is filled out that is sent to the liaison to follow up with their needs and resources.

The liaison is on the board for the Snohomish County Community Services Advisory Committee, The Child Wellness Coalition, and there are other roles available such as the chair for the Marysville Together Coalition. These organizations meet monthly with other local liaisons to collaborate and support families who live in other cities.

Media awareness is a huge factor in spreading the information to resources that the MSD handles in helping homeless students and families. The MSD submits articles to local newspapers, like the Marysville Globe to help reach a larger number of people in their area with a goal to be more effective in providing access. They also list ways to donate, engage and partner to help.²

² The following is one of the articles posted on the newspaper that elaborates on the work that the districts team executes for their populations of homeless families:

<https://www.marysvilleglobe.com/news/providing-help-hope-for-homeless-students-in-marysville-schools/>

Interview Themes

Upon analyzing the interview transcripts there are some commonalities seen in the two most influential advocates of the program. Both interviewees declared that the McKinney Vento program provides a layer of support. They both agree on what kind of support this program provides for the students. One interviewee describes the program as a safety net and the other describes it as advocacy. The two specific words coincide with the same meaning. A safety net is described as a possible safeguard against adversity or hardship and advocacy is described as the act of pleading, support or recommending. The two words transpire a meaning with an emphasis on support and safeguard. The commonalities in these themes of security are the essence of what the Marysville school districts program with the McKinney Vento and Title I exemplify for homeless students who are in need of services and in need of that support to be able to be successful in school and find stability.

Lack of trust/Connection. Other themes and commonalities between the two interviews tie back to mistrust and connection. One interviewee stated that families don't always trust help and students are in need of caring relationships. Another interviewee stated counselors can help students connect on a deeper need, building trust and confidence, communicating on a deep level to create trusting relationships. Andrea described it as a "safety net" stating the program "offers supports for families in order for students of all ages in the public school system to be successful. In essence, it levels the playing field for school-related experiences." The interviewees both see that the students participating and families involved in this program are often apprehensive and unsure of the risk and benefit in receiving services. Both of the interviewees are able to assess the need for patience and time and flexibility to be able to create room for trust to be built in these relationships. The success of student participation and homeless identification are going to

be built upon a foundation of trust and connection in order for families and students to be able to receive the security and support that the program has to offer.

Strength. Another theme between the interviews is resiliency, grit and success. One interviewee used the word grit well another use the word success. Andrea emphasizes school workers important role when she says “staff members at the high school level are trained to work with students to find that grit that they might need to finish high school.” Again, we will see here how both these words emulate one another with the essence of determination. This is the determination of the employees, volunteers and support in her working in the program as well as the determination of families and students to be able to connect and comply with the process in order to successfully receive services and support as well as get students on track to graduate.

Financial Strain. Other themes in both of the interviews tied into the dire need for secure financial income to be able to support the growing rate of this program as well as the growing rate of the homeless population in order to help these children. Both interviewees agreed that the district and schools within the district need to have trauma informed care, both of them mentioned ACES which is adverse childhood experiences that create trauma which then leads to addiction, behavior issues, mental instability and eventually outcomes like homelessness. Wyatt stated that it was a top contender for an interwoven theme within the program when she said it was the “number one common theme I see in the students who receive services through our McKinney-Vento program are ACES – Adverse Childhood Experiences – coupled with trauma from those experiences.” Because of this it is important that schools, counselors, liaisons and all involved in the program have the education on how to properly help students affected by ACES.

Both interviewees agreed that there needs to be a resource center and there needs to be more staff and as much help as possible. In order for these things to come to fruition there has to

be a higher income. The themes and commonalities between these two interviews are very cohesive. It is clear what the programs needs are as well as what it's successes are.

The Success of the McKinney Vento in the Marysville School District

In the Marysville school district there are at least 500 identified homeless students. 166 of those are unaccompanied youth (Powell, 2020). The liaison Deanna Bashour is tasked with identifying and connecting these students to be able to get them the services that will help them succeed in school. Working with the liaison is Larisa Koenig. They're collaborating on a new mentor program that will connect community members with homeless kids to show them there are people in their corner who care.

Deanna is in her fourth year with the McKinney Vento program. She reports that a huge help to the program is community donations because the program is an unfunded federal mandate. The program is often in need of huge financial obligations and it goes consistently underfunded. Deanna declares that when the program is in fact implemented in a family's life it has the effect of minimizing their trauma and allowing them to focus on certain aspects of school. The program's strength and ability are more important than ever as the homeless population in the district is growing. Deanna stated that when she "started there were 216 students in the program and then it climb to 317, 420 and now 508 students."

The program is not consistently fully funded it is given title I money based on poverty levels. Deanna exclaims that the funding only pays for very basic supplies and money in McKinney Vento can only pay for educational expenses, so she rallies other workers to help. Among the three items, Bashour said she would like to see improved on, higher grant amounts was one of the items. She listed "housing, higher grant amounts, and additional staff" as three key areas for improvement. Taking special notice that you can't have additional staff or housing

without higher grant amounts. This explains that a larger grant allotment would improve all three areas. This makes the grant amount the single and most crucial factor for improvement and need.

What Funding is Used For

The McKinney Vento program in the Marysville school District helps students pay for fines, fees and meals, offering free breakfast and lunch every day for the school year, families receive access to holiday help with resources for assistance, housing programs, shelter, mental health referrals, work, medical and dental referrals and information for other county and state wide programs. Students can be helped with transportation, clothing, medical resources, backpacks, supplies and hygiene kits. Funding supports families by transporting students during their transitions to keep them in the same school in order to minimize their trauma, partnering with the local food bank to provide bags of food for students for the weekend so they don't go hungry, providing academic intervention and partnering with Sno Isle libraries to provide homework help online and inside the library, paying fees and fines/dues for anything related to their education or sports.

A goal of the program is to network and find more community partnerships so that more students can be helped. The McKinney Vento program is partnering as they try to build their extension of resources inside the community. They are becoming the ninth school district working with Snohomish County Behavioral Health to become a trauma informed school district with a goal of the C.A.R.E. designation which stands for compassion, appreciation, resilience, and empowerment. Another huge success of the program is the mentorship program. Where students can work with volunteers who provide a role model for the students. The volunteers meet with the kids in their schools for an hour a week.

How Funding Mentors Improves Success

Mentors are matched on commonality with students such as hobbies, interests and potential careers. A portion of the program is a graduation success program to help children stay on track. In the previous year only 18 out of 60 homeless seniors graduated, as most of the homeless students are first-year generation to complete high school and take another path. The success of the program is all backed by building relationships, engaging in time effort and energy to harness A connection with students to help empower them to participate. She overviews ways to engage by donating, mentoring and partnering. It is apparent that this program is successful, what the program needs is big connections with a sourced or partner to be able to provide consistent funding. This program needs consistent sources of funding to be able to get these children's needs met and continue to provide excellent resources and support for children to stay in school and graduate.

Benefits of Partnering

The Marysville school district works to try and provide housing options for the students who are homeless. They are partnered with Marysville United Methodist Church, which designated it's "Miracle Mouse" to help homeless families and working with interfaith family shelter in Everett to be able to provide some shelter options. Members of this partnership work with families to help them decrease their debt so they can get into their own place in about 60 to 90 days. Miracle House is changing from helping homeless men to helping homeless families. The churches are also partnered with Everett Gospel Mission and to provide equitable help by not turning away families who struggle with substance, mental health or criminal records. Unfortunately, these locations can only help a certain number of families at a time due to space restrictions. There is a dire need for more organizations, facilities, and partnerships to be able to provide space for families in need.

The success of these partnerships is measured as follows, 80% of families went from homeless to housed. 94% of the number were still in housing a year later. \$25 donation feeds families for 4 to 5 days, \$100 donation feeds them for a month, \$250 runs the learning program for a week, 599 people were unsheltered A year ago and 78 were in Marysville. In the past five years they went from serving 43 families to 68 families, went from serving 91 kids to 147 kids, the length of the stay in shelter dropped from 86 days to 68 days until they found housing.

With the time it takes to find homeless families a residence decreasing and the number of families served increasing and the percentage of families going from homelessness to housed being 80% it is clear to see that the McKinney Vento program in the Marysville school district is highly successful. The team that they have works well, communicates efficiently and is persistent in finding solutions and partnerships that provide enough financial support to not only keep the program running successfully but also increasing the programs capabilities, outreach and resources in order to be able to identify and reach more and more homeless families involved in the Marysville school district (Service, 2020)

Benefits of Funding Training Implementation

This program helps school personnel and anyone involved with these children become educated and well-versed in how to best understand and implement the resources that these students need. Training within this designation consists of a two-day Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools course and a five-day training on Trauma Informed Certification for trainers which is resilience-based to address trauma. They meet with the Children's Wellness Coalition once a month within their partnership with Snohomish County Behavioral Health. The McKinney Vento program in Marysville School District is involved with United Way Court collaborative. They meet once a month and have created a Youth

Wellness fair to implement and engage vendors in workshops for parents to provide county resources and help navigating the difficult systems as well as teaching skills and offering entertainment to keep the children busy.

The program in Marysville school District is also involved with the Marysville Together Coalition and Collaboration to achieve a common goal for promoting wellness within the community and strengthening families who are experiencing homelessness. The program is also involved with the Homeless Policy Task Force committee who meet once a month with community members and organizations to address homelessness in the county and remedy barriers and issues. In their partnership with CSAC (Community Services Advisory Council) they meet once a month to address matters relating to poverty and tackling reducing the effects of poverty. The mission of the council is to make Snohomish County more responsive to the needs and interests of the poor by mobilizing both government and non-governmental resources and creating greater institutional sensitivity through education and advocacy.

Need for Foster Youth Focus

A huge focus in the Marysville School District and the McKinney Vento program is Foster Youth. The district has about 100 students who are currently in care or have been at some point during their education. They transport about 30 of them to the school of origin. They collaborate with the DCYF (Department of Children, Youth and Families) to ensure that all children receive the best possible support and work along side with an organization called Fostering Together; an organization that supports other foster parents and recruits for both short and long term placements, with a goal to keep children connected in the community. There is also a partnership with Treehouse Advocates who meet with the Foster Youth and connect them with their graduation success program. This organization also advocates to Foster Youth around

their educational decisions, implementing the administration of IEP's and also helps with issues surrounding discipline challenges.

The Foster Youth program also partners with RDS (Recruitment, Development and Support) team which is made up of the Smokey Point DCYF Supervisors for foster care and social workers that help to support the program. They meet once a month and are starting a pilot program called Communities Helping Children which is currently being done in King County and reportedly successful. The program looks for a short-term host homes in the community for when children are removed from their home, they can stay in the community until a permanent placement is found.

Keeping children and youth in their own communities and culture, traditions and heritage proves to help ease the strain of experiencing homelessness. The statistics prove that there are more children than placement homes and moving children in unfamiliar areas and even out of the state is traumatizing. Children who do not go to a placement right away stay in hotels with social workers. In summer in the month of June about 77 children were staying in hotels with social workers across Snohomish County. The need for implementation and growth of the resources the MSD can build upon put into motion upcoming plans for stronger outreach.

Marysville School District Plans

1. Connections Center: Grand Opening This Fall

A portable in the parking lot at the district office that was provided for the program to use in order to help serve our families and students better. It has a shower, washer, dryer, food pantry, clothes closet, hygiene kits, and a spot for kids to work on homework while their laundry is going. Deanna Bashour has been working toward building this for two years and finally she able to get it stocked and open hopefully sometime in September 2020.

2. Graduation Success Liaison:

Bashour was renewed a two year grant she wrote to obtain a staff who works with unaccompanied homeless youth who are not on track to graduate. She started in 19-20 with a one year grant as their team implemented the new program. She is a very large reason so many of seniors graduated this year and some even will be attending college this fall or going on to trade and apprenticeship programs.

3. Mentor Program Coordinator:

Another grant Bashour wrote for a three-year time frame to implement policy, procedure, and recruitment of mentors to meet with their most at risk McKinney Vento students in high school who are willing to be intentionally matched with a positive role model. They were able to get two students connected before the shut down and one of them graduated with almost \$50,000 in scholarships while before that she was at the brink of giving up. They are in the process of implementing the mentor program virtually so we that they can continue to connect and build relationships during the closure.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This needs assessment has evaluated barriers, where this program can grow and where it has been excelling. Researching and analyzing the information on Title I, McKinney Vento, MSD employee interviews, data and all sources has led to a clear and concise set of needs for the Mckinney Vento program within the Marysville School District.

The highest need for the Marysville School District is a consistent and sufficient financial source(s) and for McKinney Vento and Title I to be fully funded. With a financial grant deficit it has shown that other key areas of need become challenging to improve and essentially unattainable. Without a higher allotment of funding and financial support the likelihood of the

program being able to have broader resources, hire more staff, train staff with trauma informed care and provide housing for homeless students and families becomes unattainable. Pushing forth this issue with the state through hiring a lobbyist could potentially move this issue into resolution, providing multiple areas of access to meet several needs by emphasizing on funding being the greatest need

There is also a need for housing sources and space to rehome and house homeless youth and families. There is a need to provide policy implementation on rezoning uninhabited/abandoned buildings. These buildings can be up-zoned and remodeled to turn into placement housing for foster youth and homeless students around the county and in the state. Among many of the cities and counties across the state there are countless uninhabited plots of land inside the city that could be better used for those experiencing homelessness. This is a possible solution to help provide space and shelter for the rising homeless youth crisis. There needs to be a reallocation of funding to support the need for homeless youth and families. The federal reserve holds a miscellaneous budget where many of the tax credits from marijuana businesses and other sources are being stored and unused. This funding could be used for remodeling and building new infrastructures with the up-zoning for these shelter homes/units to fit a higher capacity of homeless families and maximize utilization in resources.

With the rising number of homeless youth in the program it is clear that the program is reaching more students and connecting them with resources deeming it immensely successful. The impacts of Covid-19 have greatly slowed the process of access and utilizing resources, but their team clearly persists at their partnership connections and community involvement to keep resources open and accessible as much as possible through these trying times. The strongest aspect of this program is the ability to find, execute and administer resources to homeless youth,

as well as minimizing the traumatic and harmful effects of being without basic needs like food, shelter, water and safety. The vast effort of this team works to execute the allocation and administration of funding to provide these resources.

The Marysville School District clearly pushes forward through the battles of the policies and consistent underfunding that infringe of students accessing the resources provided. Grants, community involvement/partnership and manifesting new resources make this program as successful as it can be in reaching the growing number of students to learn about and seek the McKinney Vento resources and the help from Marysville School District.

The program has the highest need to be fully funded and financially supported. The potential for exponential growth in the MSD in identifying, helping, and housing homeless youth and families is detrimentally dependent on a fully supported budget. The main focus of the district must be on funding. Funding is going to be the gateway to meet the goals and to adhere to the success of this program. All needs are subsequent to a consistently and fully funded program through donations, grants, partnerships and Title I funding. Once the highest need is met, staff improvement, support, housing and resources available are able to improve and meet the goal of identifying, helping, and housing as many homeless youth and families as possible. Until funding increases through Title I and grants, the MSD can continue to engage, seek and harbor partnerships and increase the awareness of the program for new financial opportunities.

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Appendices

Interviews:

Andrea Wyatt

1. What brought you into this position of employment with the McKinney-Vento Program in the Marysville School District?

In 2017, I was hired as the director of Title I, LAP, McKinney-Vento and Foster Care. Prior to that, worked at Lakewood School District managing all Categorical Programs – Title I, LAP (Learning Assistance Program,) ELL (English Language Learners) Programs, McKinney-Vento, Highly Capable Programs – in addition to Curriculum, Technology, and Assessment.

2. How does the program help students experiencing homelessness?

The program helps students who are experiencing homelessness by creating a safety net for them. Students become automatically eligible for out-of-district transportation if they have moved outside of the district boundaries due to their circumstances, free meals (breakfast and lunch), plus fees for school-related items or birth certificates, school supplies, hygiene or clothing needs, etc. The district is able to also purchase bus passes for students to get to and from school or work, and reimburse parents or guardians for transporting students to and from school. Students are also eligible for assistance with extra-curricular activities, as well as transportation for these activities.

3. Does the program help At Risk Youth? How?

The McKinney-Vento program helps students who are considered “At-Risk” by providing additional supports if they are considered to be students experiencing homelessness. Some of these students, particularly those who are in the secondary schools, are unaccompanied homeless youth, meaning they do not live with adults. Students in this particular grouping are considered At-Risk because they have considerably more risk factors than their peers, including but not limited to accessibility to housing of any kind, ability to make it to school, access to food and healthcare, etc. The district specifically works with Cocoon House in order to connect our students in this category to caring advocates who can assist the students outside of the school to find them other supports other than those they would receive from the McKinney-Vento program.

4. Does the program help students who have a drug/alcohol problem? How?

As with any other type of counseling within the school district periphery, students who are experiencing addiction with alcohol, substances, or other issues, the district helps them to connect to agencies outside of the school system. McKinney-Vento is a program that specifically helps with educational needs.

5. What elements make the McKinney-Vento program successful? Why?

The McKinney-Vento program is successful because of supports for students around transportation, food, school supplies and other accessibility for activities that the students’ peers

have access to. In addition, the program offers supports for families in order for students of all ages in the public school system to be successful. In essence, it levels the playing field for school-related experiences.

6. What elements in the program create potential barriers? What are they?

The potential barriers of the program are around the very nature of the circumstances that families may be in, and how they are relatively distrustful of anyone considered to be an authority figure. Families in extreme need do not always trust the people in our office who could help them. In addition, the barriers of the program are specifically around how to assist a family or unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness specifically with educational needs. The additional needs a student will have – around housing, furnishings, and other financial assistance – must be found elsewhere. Luckily, our district liaison has extensive contacts around the region with other agencies who can assist with those needs.

7. Where do you see the program needs improvement? Why?

The only improvement that I would see is around identification of families or students who are experiencing homelessness. The identification process happens through staff members having a close enough relationship with students or families to be able to offer the services through McKinney-Vento, or for families or students to self-identify to a staff member.

8. What are some goals you have within your role in the program?

Some goals for the program are around an increase in staff development for our 18 buildings to not only help identify more families and students, but to also be more mindful of the stressors involved for those individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness. We are increasing some efforts for staff training around social-emotional health, and our district as a whole is learning how to become a trauma-informed district. Becoming trauma-informed will not only help those students and families experiencing homelessness, but also those who are experiencing stress-induced trauma from the effects of the pandemic, as well as other realized effects of trauma on everyday lives.

9. What are some goals you have for the program in the next five years? Why?

This past year, we have hired two new McKinney-Vento liaison positions that I would like to grow for five or more years. Each of these positions is unique to the needs of students who are receiving services through McKinney-Vento. One is a McKinney-Vento Mentorship Liaison, whose position is specifically to match students with adult mentors whose interests or goals match those of the student. The other position is a McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Liaison. This person in this position meets with students at the high school level and helps them find solutions that they might be having with academic success.

Each of these positions focuses on creating meaningful relationships for students, with the recognition that students who have relationships with caring adults have more developmental assets for entering into successful and productive adulthood. These students have fewer incidences of drug or substance abuse, and tend to have less issues with law enforcement.

In addition, after three years of dreaming, we have just been given permission to open on district property a resource center for all families and students who are experiencing homelessness. This is truly an exciting time for our program, and we look forward to making more connections with families and students to fill their needs.

10. Do you believe the program helps students graduate? Why?

The McKinney-Vento program helps to provide services to assist students in the educational process, including graduation. Staff are dedicated to providing every tool available to helping students. That being said, students have to decide on their own to use those tools that are available to them.

Staff members at the high school level are trained to work with students to find that grit that they might need to finish high school, recognizing that students who have experienced trauma might not be able to identify that future goals are indeed achievable, but the high school diploma is the first step to this.

11. Do you believe the program helps students find housing? Why?

The McKinney-Vento program is specifically focused on assisting students with education-related needs. The McKinney-Vento Liaison has community connections who can possibly help students or families find transitional, short- or long-term housing.

12. Do you believe the program helps students improve their quality of life? Why?

Yes, I believe that the program helps students improve their quality of life by providing them with tools they need for their educational process. All staff in our department strongly believe that education is the one catalyst for creating a better future and life for individuals.

13. Do you believe the program helps students improve their status as a student? Why?

The whole point of the McKinney-Vento program is that it improves the status of a student by giving them the same resources as their peers.

14. If you could describe the program in one word what would it be and why?

The word I would use to describe the program would be resilience. People learn resilience by the knowledge they have that resources are just around the corner of a bad time in life.

15. What is a common theme you see of students who are involved in the program?

The number one common theme I see in the students who receive services through our McKinney-Vento program are ACES – Adverse Childhood Experiences – coupled with trauma from those experiences.

If the program needed three things, what would they be?

The three things I would ask to be able to provide for the McKinney-Vento program would be more training for the existing staff (counselors, teachers, nurses, para-professionals, office staff, transportation), counseling for students and families, and for funding to provide at least short-term emergency housing.

16. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

I feel extraordinarily lucky to be working with the staff I manage, and with the resources we have. Many other districts do not have the same resources that we have, both from the funding we receive and from the local community connections we have. The staff are all passionate about providing as much support as possible to each student who qualifies for the services.

Deanna Bashour

1. What brought you into this position of employment with the McKinney-Vento Program in the Marysville School District?

I (Deanna) was moved into a position four years ago and McKinney-Vento was a part of it. Since then, a liaison position was created as our numbers continue to grow.

a. In 2017, Andrea was hired as the director of Title I, LAP, McKinney-Vento and Foster Care.

2. How does the program help students experiencing homelessness?

The program helps students obtain basic education needs such as; school supplies and backpacks, academic intervention, transportation, and free meals. This ensures access to necessary nutrition and tools so they can have the same opportunities as their housed peers. We also provide

transportation at odd scheduled times to ensure students who want to participate have access to sports, clubs, and afterschool programs.

3. Does the program help At Risk Youth? How?

McKinney-Vento specifically and only helps students experiencing some form of homelessness. A very high percentage of our older unaccompanied homeless youth are at risk. We support them by collaborating with their school counselors and connecting them to any outside resources they need. The counselors also help support parents in filing a CHINS petition if necessary. We also collaborate with the Cocoon House and connect our most at risk youth with an advocate who can work with them outside of the school day and provide another layer of support.

4. Does the program help students who have a drug/alcohol problem? How?

If students we serve have any known problems, we connect them to agencies for outside help.

McKinney-Vento is specific to educational needs. We work with the school counselors who can intervene on a deeper level with families and try to connect them with the help they need.

5. What elements make the McKinney-Vento program successful? Why?

The elements that make the program successful are the federal budget that allows us to provide basic needs and services, guidelines in the law such as transportation, meals, and connections to outside agencies, and the relationships with the families who need the support.

6. What elements in the program create potential barriers? What are they?

The elements that create barriers are that the budget is never big enough and not all families want to communicate with us on a deep enough level to create a trusting relationship.

7. Where do you see the program needs improvement? Why?

Identification and professional development can always use improvement. There are always staff who leave and new staff who come in and more and more families who need to be identified.

8. What are some goals you have within your role in the program?

My goal is to help as many as I can with as much as I have. My goal to hire more staff through specific grants came true this past year. My goal to provide a resource center came true last month.

9. What are some goals you have for the program in the next five years? Why?

My goal would be to expand the programs we started with the two grants. I would like to see larger caseloads with more students being served without jeopardizing the quality of time together building relationships. We have a liaison who is working with McKinney-Vento students who are not on track to graduate. She meets with them regularly, builds trust and confidence, and then gets them back on track with a hope for a future beyond high school that they did not have before. We have a mentor coordinator we hired from the other grant. She is meeting with at risk McKinney-Vento students and intentionally matching them with adult role models who meet weekly. Both grants are two more years which gives us the sustainability to grow and expand both programs and serve more students. I would like to see the resource center we just started up and running at full capacity helping families with every need from laundry, showers, clothes closet and food pantry. I would like to have a computer set up so families can access DSHS and apply for resources, make appointments, or write up a resume for a job interview while they have a safe internet connection.

10. Do you believe the program helps students graduate? Why?

I believe that the program provides necessary elements for students to have opportunities that they would not be able to access if they did not receive these additional services. We provide nutrition, academic intervention, pathways to look forward to beyond high school, and whatever tools necessary to achieve their own goals.

However, it is up to the student to put in the effort and work to stay on track and graduate.

11. Do you believe the program helps students find housing? Why?

The McKinney-Vento Act has nothing to do with housing. It focuses on educational needs by providing equitable services as their housed peers. However, we help connect students to the Cocoon House or other youth services who are not with their guardians and we connect families with resources and agencies that help with shelter and transitional housing.

12. Do you believe the program helps students improve their quality of life? Why?

I do believe that our program helps students improve their quality of life by providing trusting relationships that creates a sense of belonging, hope, confidence and a feeling of success within their academics. We provide support during their school day that they would not normally receive. This support builds perseverance and connections.

13. Do you believe the program helps students improve their status as a student? Why?

I believe that our program helps students improve their status as a student by providing academic support and removing barriers. By providing transportation, the student's attendance improves, their grades improve with intervention, their brains improve with proper nutrition and the feeling of being safe.

14. If you could describe the program in one word what would it be and why?

Hope, because it is what I see in their eyes when they realize we are here to help and that we will do all we can to provide whatever they need.

15. What is a common theme you see of students who are involved in the program?

A common theme I see and hear are the fleeing of traumatic events and/or environments which lead to high ACES patterns.

16. If the program needed three things, what would they be?

The three things I would like to see are district provided unaccompanied homeless youth housing, higher grant amounts, and additional staff.

17. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

I would like to add that every district manages the McKinney-Vento Program differently and every liaison does their own thing as long as the OSPI guidance requirements are being met. Not all districts have the same resources or the capacity to grow and expand services.