

# Overview: Homeless Students in New York City



- Student Homelessness Remains Pervasive..... 14
- Most Children Are Homeless for More Than One School Year ..... 15
- Hispanics and Blacks Are Over-Represented..... 15
- Young Students Are Most at Risk for Homelessness..... 16
- Housing Instability Undermines School Stability. 17
- Empty Seats: Who Is Missing?..... 18
- Aftershocks of Homelessness on Grade-Level Proficiency... 19
- Left Back: Who Is Retained?... 20
- Lasting Impact on Grade Retention..... 21
- Unequal Discipline: Who Is Suspended?..... 22
- Overlooked: Who Receives Late IEPs?..... 23
- Early Intervention Matters .... 24
- Defying the Odds in High School: Who Is Dropping Out and Who Is Graduating?..... 26

Homelessness impacts every school district across the city. Over 82,000 students attending New York City Public Schools were homeless in School Year (SY) 2014–15, and one out of eight students had experienced homelessness at some point between SY 2010–11 and SY 2014–15. The information presented in this section provides an overview of homelessness among students in New York City. Building off of the *2015 Atlas of Student Homelessness*, the *2016 Atlas of Student Homelessness* examines differences in student outcomes by the type of homelessness experienced, including whether students were living in shelter, doubled up, unsheltered, or housed but with a history of homelessness (formerly homeless). Additional indicators of school success, such as the timing of when students with special education needs are first identified for services (IEPs), are also included.

**Children are most likely to experience homelessness when they are young—before third grade.**

**Homelessness has a lasting negative impact on grade-level proficiency and retention rates.**

**One out of every eight students attending school in SY 2014–15 had experienced homelessness within the past five school years.**

**Only one-third of homeless students with special education needs received their IEP by the end of Kindergarten, a much lower rate than that of students who were always housed.**

**Forty percent of homeless elementary students living in shelter transferred during the school year compared to just 9% of their housed peers.**

**More eligible homeless children enrolled in pre-K in SY 2014–15 than in the prior school year.**

**Across grade levels, homeless students living in shelter had higher rates of chronic absenteeism than not only their housed peers, but also homeless students living doubled up.**

**Homeless students living in shelter during all four years of high school dropped out at rates that were no different than their housed peers.**

## Student Homelessness Remains Pervasive

One out of every eight students attending school in SY 2014–15 had been homeless at some point since SY 2010–11—over 127,000 students.

New York City continues to have over 80,000 homeless public school students in SY 2014–15.

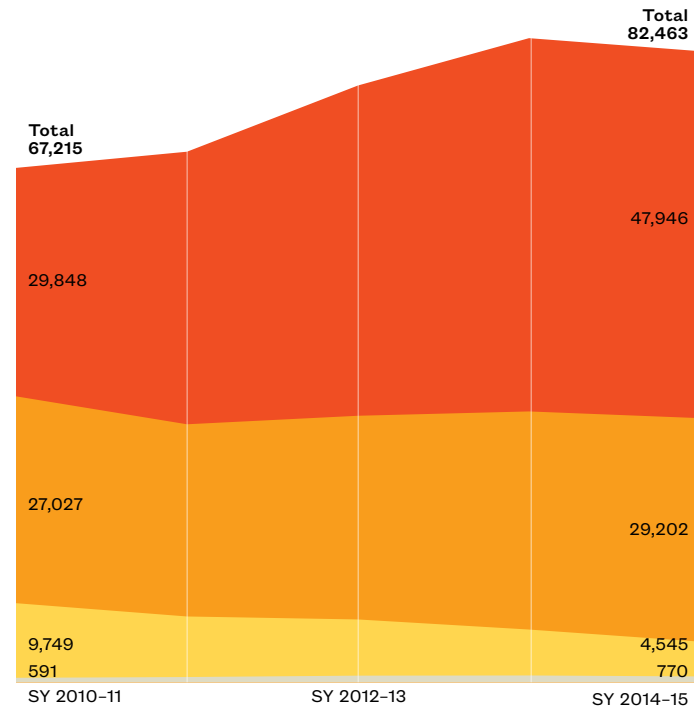
For every homeless student living in a City shelter, there are roughly two more who are homeless living in some other temporary location, such as doubled up with another family.

For the first time since SY 2010–11, the number of homeless students in New York City declined slightly from just over 84,000 in SY 2013–14 to roughly 82,500 in SY 2014–15. This decrease was seen primarily among unsheltered and doubled-up students, while the number of students living in shelter increased slightly by 2%.

## Homeless Students in New York City Public Schools

SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15

■ Doubled Up ■ In Shelter ■ Unsheltered ■ Other



Note: In earlier school years, the total number of “unsheltered” students may be less reliable than other categories.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15.

## Most Children Are Homeless for More Than One School Year

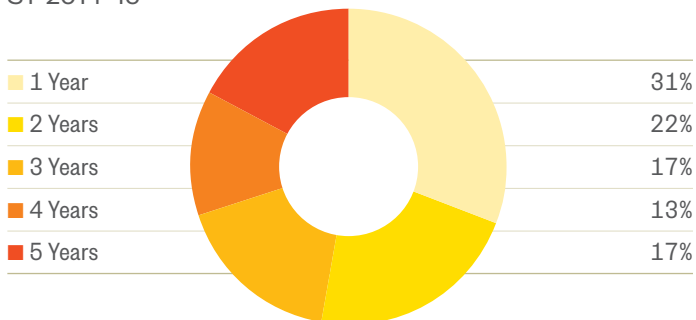
Homelessness is not a brief or isolated experience for New York City school children.

Over two-thirds of students who were homeless in SY 2014–15 had been homeless during a previous school year.

It was common for homeless students to experience multiple housing transitions from one year to the next. Among students who were homeless during more than one school year, over three-quarters experienced more than one type of homelessness or transitioned in and out of permanent housing more than once.

### Duration of Homelessness

SY 2014–15



Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15.

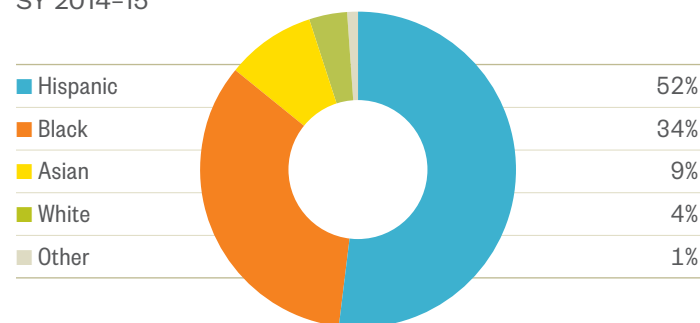
## Hispanics and Blacks Are Over-Represented

Over half of all homeless students in New York City were Hispanic in SY 2014–15.

While black and Hispanic students made up 66% of New York City public school students overall, they represented 86% of students who were homeless in SY 2014–15.

### Race and Ethnicity of Homeless Students

SY 2014–15



Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014–15.

## Young Students Are Most at Risk for Homelessness

Children are most likely to experience homelessness when they are young. In SY 2014–15, 36% of homeless students were enrolled in pre-K through 2nd grade. By comparison, only 28% of housed students were enrolled in these early grades. Homelessness prior to 3rd grade has been shown to have long-term effects on later grade-level proficiency.<sup>1</sup>

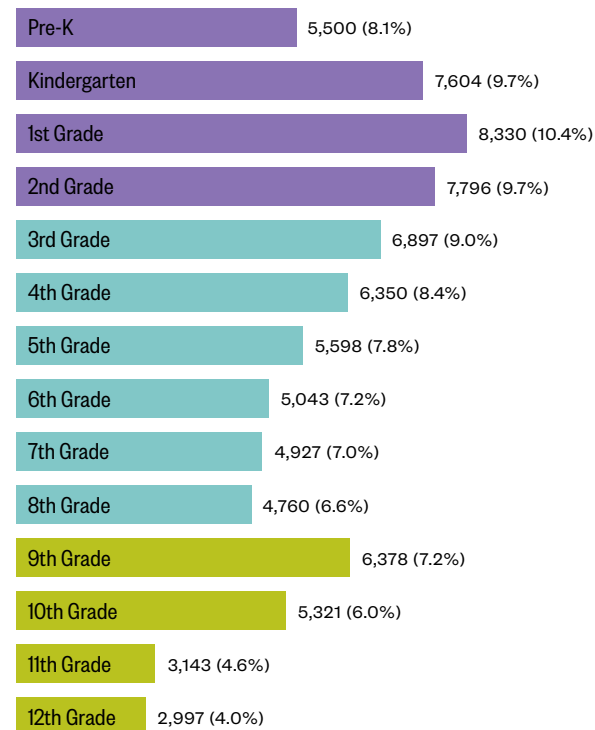
More eligible homeless children enrolled in pre-K in SY 2014–15 than in the prior school year. Enrollment among homeless pre-K students increased by 17%, or over 750 students, suggesting that New York City’s expansion of public pre-K is reaching more homeless students.

Despite this progress, the enrollment gap between pre-K and Kindergarten suggests that over 2,000 homeless children eligible for pre-K were not reached in SY 2014–15 by the program.

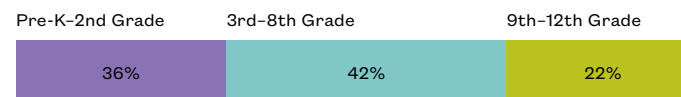
In high school, the spike in 9th and 10th grade followed by a drop in 11th and 12th is reflective of homeless students being held back and dropping out of school.

## Number of Homeless Students by Grade (% in Grade)

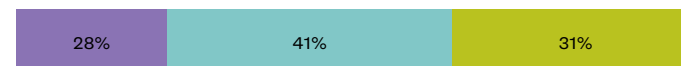
SY 2014–15



Homeless



Housed



Note: Total students by grade does not equal the total for all homeless students. Only students in grades pre-K–12 are included.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014–15.

<sup>1</sup> The Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness, *Aftershocks: The Lasting Impact of Homelessness on Student Achievement*, February 2016.

## Housing Instability Undermines School Stability

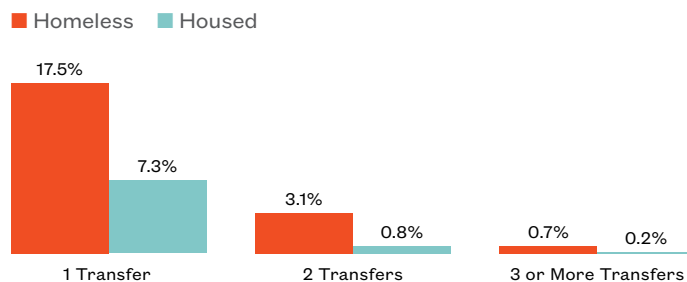
Every school transfer is estimated to set a student back academically by up to six months.<sup>2</sup>

Homeless students continued to transfer at close to three times the rate of housed students overall in SY 2014–15 (21% compared to 8%).

Homeless elementary students had the highest rate of mid-year transfers (25%) by age group. This rate was higher for those who were living in shelter; 40% transferred during the school year.

## Number of Mid-Year Transfers Per Student

SY 2014–15



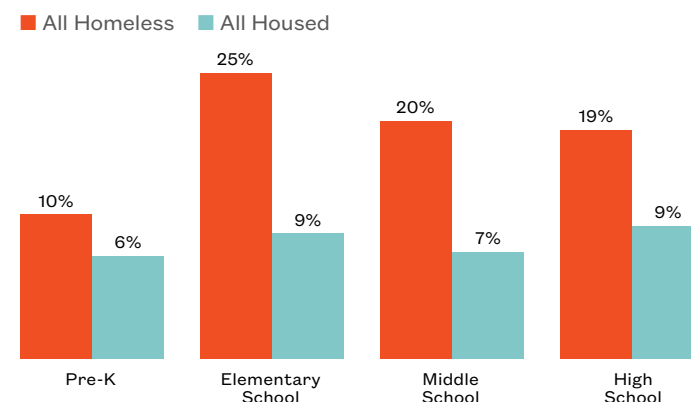
Note: The category of “3 Transfers” published in the 2015 *Atlas of Student Homelessness* is synonymous to the “3 or More Transfers” category shown here.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014–15.

2 U.S. Department of Education, *Report to the President and Congress on the Implementation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/rpt2006.doc> (accessed July 21, 2015).

## Transfer Rates by Housing Status and Grade Level

Percent of Students Who Transferred Mid-Year  
SY 2014–15



### Homeless

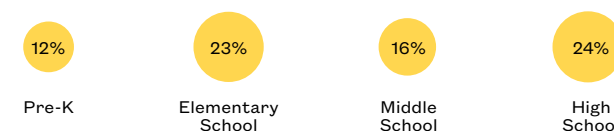
In Shelter



Doubled Up



Unsheltered



Note: “All homeless” includes all categories of homelessness. Homeless students who were awaiting foster care or paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system are not shown due to small sample size. See Glossary for homelessness category definitions.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014–15.

## Empty Seats: Who Is Missing?

Chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of student achievement and graduation.<sup>3</sup> Homeless students were chronically absent, missing 20 or more days of school, at close to twice the rate of housed students overall (37% compared to 21%).

More than one in seven homeless students (15%) missed 40 or more days of school—roughly 20% of the school year.

Across grade levels, homeless students living in shelter had higher rates of chronic absenteeism than their homeless peers living doubled up.

## Days Absent by Housing Status

SY 2014–15

All Homeless

■ 40 or More Days ■ 20–39 Days ■ 5–19 Days ■ 0–4 Days



All Housed

■ 40 or More Days ■ 20–39 Days ■ 5–19 Days ■ 0–4 Days



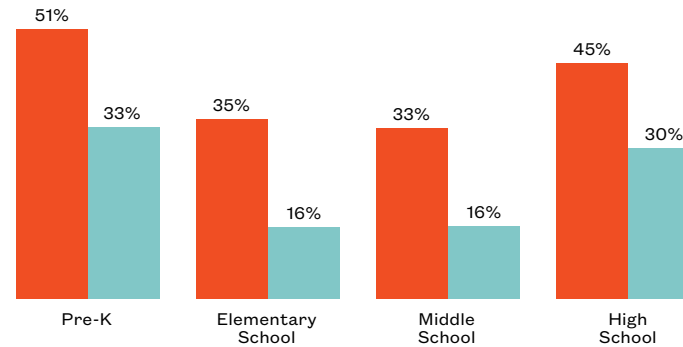
Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014–15.

<sup>3</sup> Johns Hopkins School of Education, *Meeting the Challenge of Combating Chronic Absenteeism*, October 2011; Baltimore Education Research Consortium, *Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools' Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten*, March 2012.

## Chronic Absenteeism Rates by Housing Status and Grade Level

Percent of Students Who Missed 20 or More Days of School  
SY 2014–15

■ All Homeless ■ All Housed



### Homeless

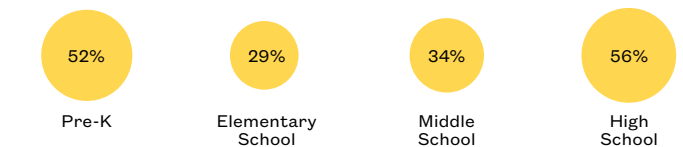
In Shelter



Doubled Up



Unsheltered



Note: "All homeless" includes all categories of homelessness. Homeless students who were awaiting foster care or paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system are not shown due to small sample size. See Glossary for homelessness category definitions.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014–15.

## Aftershocks of Homelessness on Grade-Level Proficiency

Homelessness has a lasting impact on school achievement. In both English and math, students who were currently housed but had experienced homelessness (formerly homeless) met grade-level proficiency standards at rates that were almost the same as their currently homeless peers (18% compared to 21% respectively in math and 14% compared to 17% respectively in English).

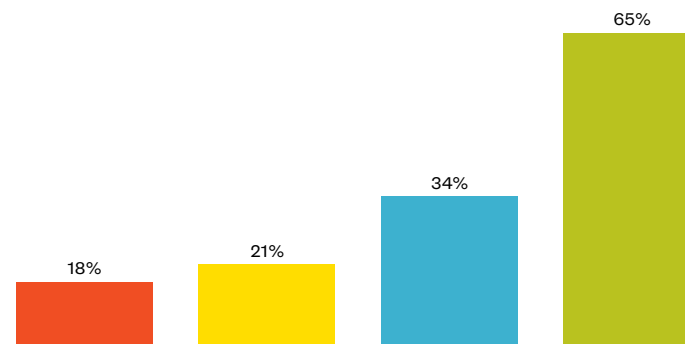
Across all school districts, formerly homeless students were grade-level proficient at rates that were lower than their peers who were low-income but had never experienced homelessness (always housed, eligible for free lunch). The gap in proficiency was on average 13 percentage points lower in math and 12 percentage points lower in English.

## Achievement Among Formerly Homeless Students

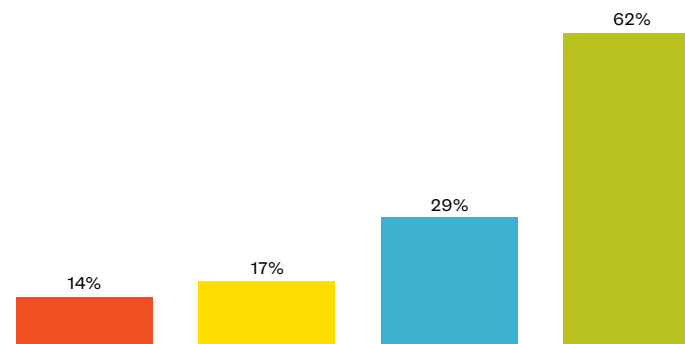
SY 2014-15

■ Currently Homeless    ■ Formerly Homeless  
■ Always Housed, Free Lunch    ■ Always Housed, No Free Lunch

Math Proficiency Rate (3rd-8th Grade)



English Language Arts Proficiency Rate (3rd-8th Grade)



Note: Formerly homeless students are defined as those who are currently housed but experienced homelessness at any point during SY 2010-11 to SY 2013-14.  
 Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15.

## Left Back: Who Is Retained?

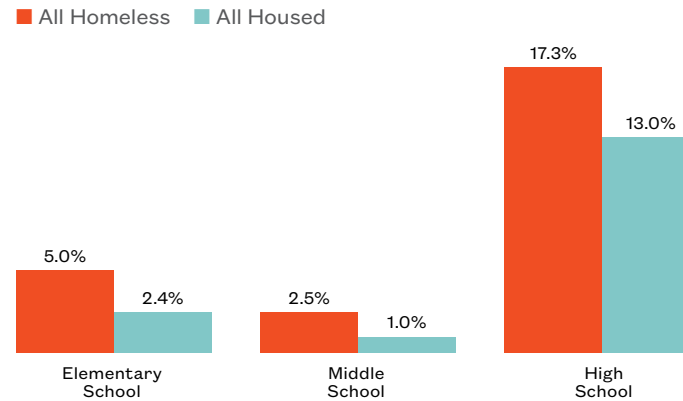
Homeless students were retained at higher rates than their housed peers across grade levels.

Among elementary students, those living in shelter had the highest rates of grade retention at 7%. This was over twice the grade retention rate of housed students overall.

High school homeless students saw the highest rates of grade retention at 17% compared to 13% for housed students overall. Retention rates were particularly high for high school students who were unsheltered and those who were homeless living in shelter (25% and 22% respectively).

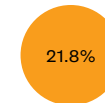
## Retention Rates by Housing Status and Grade Level

Percent of Students Held Back  
SY 2014-15

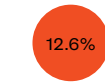


### Homeless

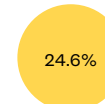
In Shelter



Doubled Up



Unsheltered



Elementary School

Middle School

High School

Note: This figure uses the words “retention” and “held back” interchangeably. “All homeless” includes all categories of homelessness. Homeless students who were awaiting foster care or paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system are not shown due to small sample size. Pre-K is not shown due to small sample size. See Glossary for homelessness category definitions.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2013-14 and SY 2014-15.



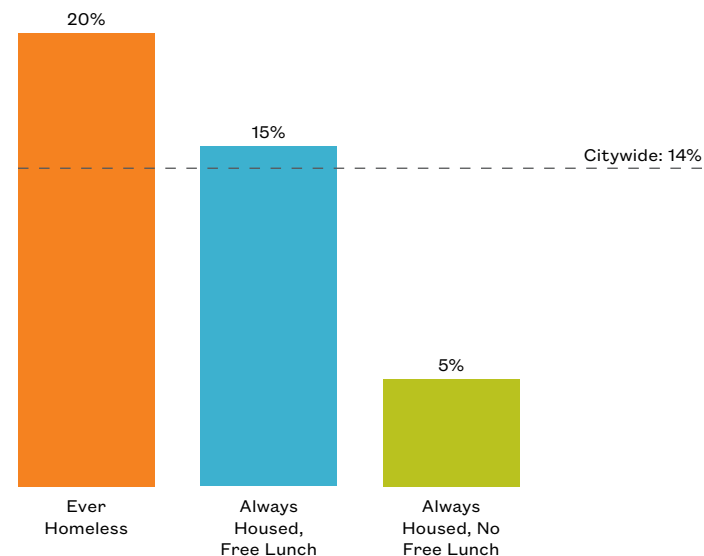
## Lasting Impact on Grade Retention

Homelessness placed students at risk educationally even after housing instability was over.

One out of every five students who experienced homelessness between SY 2010–11 and SY 2014–15 was retained after being homeless. This was four times the rate of students who were housed and not low-income (5%).

## Grade Retentions Among Students Who Ever Experienced Homelessness

Percent of Students Held Back at Some Point  
SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15



Note: This figure uses the words “retention” and “held back” interchangeably. Homeless category represents the percentage of students who were retained in any years following their first year of homelessness. Students who were retained before becoming homeless were excluded from the calculation. Housed categories represent the percentages of students who were always housed and ever retained during the five-year period.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15.

## Unequal Discipline: Who Is Suspended?

Across grade levels, homeless students experienced higher rates of suspension than their housed peers.

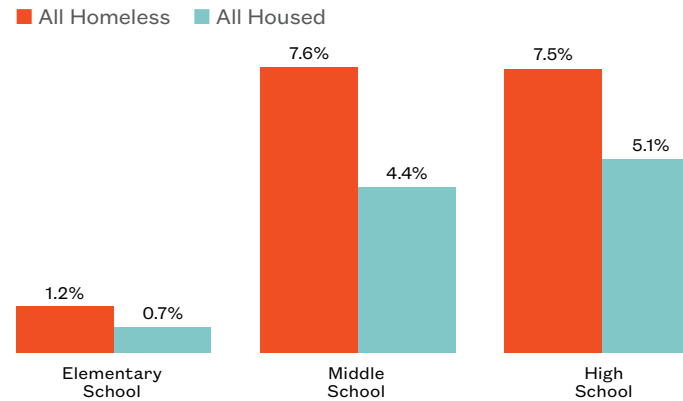
This was particularly true for homeless students living in shelter, who were suspended at over two times the rate of their housed peers.

Middle school students living in shelter saw the highest rate of suspension with one out of every nine students suspended.

## Suspension Rates by Housing Status and Grade Level

Percent of Students Suspended

SY 2014-15



### Homeless

In Shelter

2.0%

11.5%

10.9%

Doubled Up

0.7%

4.7%

4.8%

Unsheltered

2.0%

9.1%

9.7%

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

Note: "All homeless" includes all categories of homelessness. Homeless students who were awaiting foster care or paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system are not shown due to small sample size. Pre-K is not shown due to small sample size. See Glossary for homelessness category definitions.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2014-15.

## Overlooked: Who Receives Late IEPs?

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a mandated plan outlining the special education services a student will receive to support their learning while facing challenges within one of 13 disability categories such as speech/language impairment and learning disabilities. Districts are legally required under the Child Find law to identify and evaluate all children with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

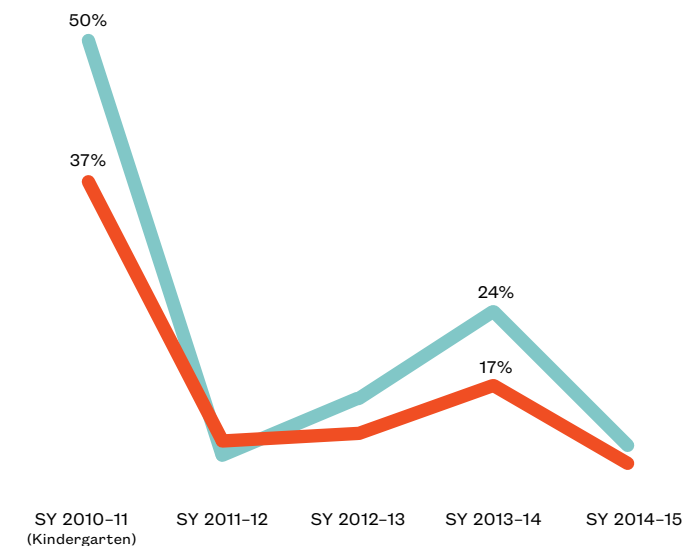
Over 36,500 students with special needs experienced housing instability between SY 2010–11 and SY 2014–15. These students face many challenges, and key among these is the early identification and receipt of services to meet their individual educational needs.

Only one-third of homeless students with an IEP were identified for their IEP by the end of Kindergarten compared to half of housed IEP students.

## Year Received an IEP

SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15

■ Homeless (N=2,219) ■ Housed (N=14,243)



Note: Data represent a cohort of students who entered Kindergarten in SY 2010–11 and received an IEP at some point during the next five years. Students are categorized according to whether they experienced homelessness at any point during the five-year period.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education, "Topic: Individualized Education Program (IEP)," <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CTopicalBrief%2C10%2C>, accessed May 19, 2016.

## Early Intervention Matters

Connecting homeless students with needed supports can increase educational success. Homeless students who receive IEPs early are more likely to achieve grade-level proficiency and less likely to be suspended.

Homeless special needs students who had IEPs by the end of Kindergarten were twice as likely to score proficient on 4th-grade State assessments (19% compared to 9%).

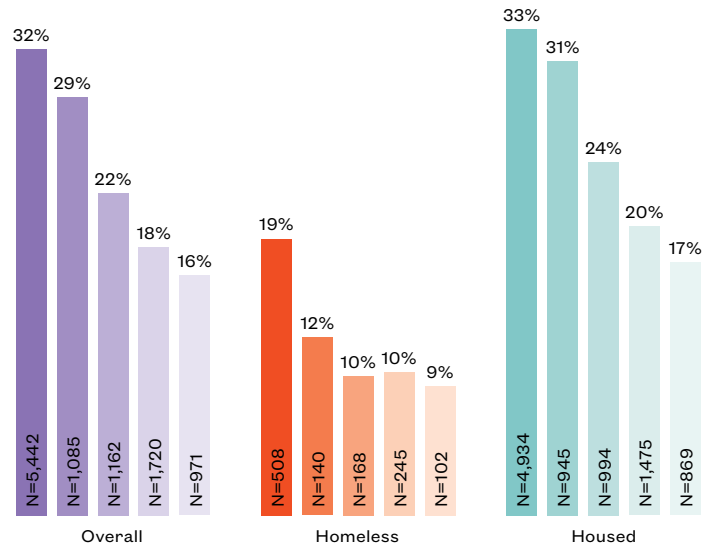
When homeless students' IEP needs were identified by Kindergarten, suspension rates were roughly half those of their homeless peers identified later.

## 4th-Grade State Assessment Proficiency Rates by Year Received an IEP

Percent of IEP Students Who Scored Proficient on One or Both State Assessments in 4th Grade

SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15

- Received IEP SY 2010-11 (Kindergarten)
- Received IEP SY 2011-12 (1st Grade)
- Received IEP SY 2012-13 (2nd Grade)
- Received IEP SY 2013-14 (3rd Grade)
- Received IEP SY 2014-15 (4th Grade)



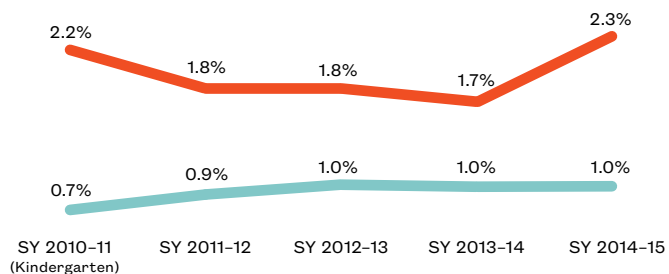
Note: IEP group students who were held back or followed a nontraditional path for another reason were excluded from the chart. Only students who progressed from Kindergarten to 4th grade over the five-year period were included. Data represent a cohort of students who entered Kindergarten in SY 2010-11 and received an IEP at some point during the next five years. Students are categorized according to whether they experienced homelessness at any point during the five-year period.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15.

## Suspension Rate Among Students Who Received IEPs by the End of Kindergarten

SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15

■ Homeless (N=811) ■ Housed (N=7,121)



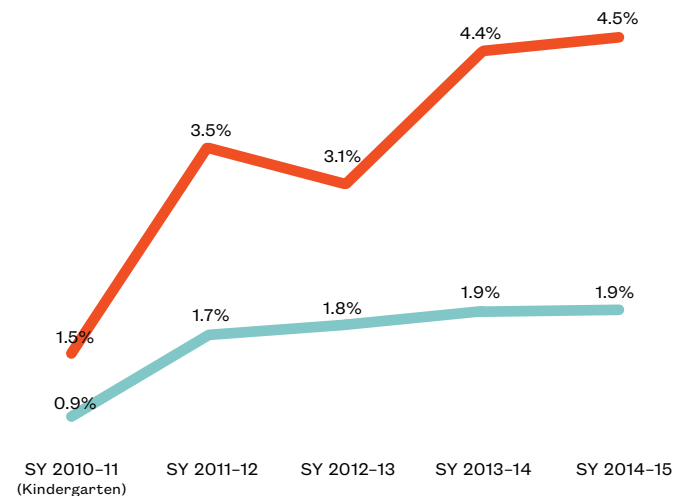
Note: Data represent a cohort of students who entered Kindergarten in SY 2010-11 and received an IEP at some point during the next five years. Students are categorized according to whether they experienced homelessness at any point during the five-year period.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15.

## Suspension Rate Among Students Who Received IEPs Late (After Kindergarten)

SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15

■ Homeless (N=1,408) ■ Housed (N=7,122)



Note: Data represent a cohort of students who entered Kindergarten in SY 2010-11 and received an IEP at some point during the next five years. Students are categorized according to whether they experienced homelessness at any point during the five-year period.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2010-11 to SY 2014-15.

## Defying the Odds in High School: Who Is Dropping Out and Who Is Graduating?

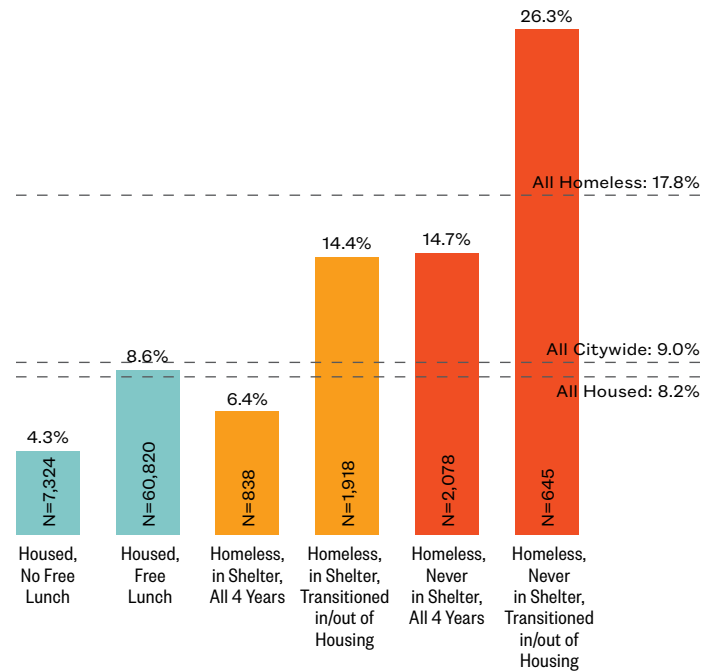
Homeless students living in shelter during all four years of high school dropped out at rates that were statistically no different than their housed peers.

Only 6% of students who were homeless and living in shelter during all four years of high school dropped out. This falls between the dropout rate for low-income and non-low-income housed students (9% and 4%).

The dropout rate for students who were homeless for all four years of high school but never entered a City shelter was over twice the rate of students living in shelter for all four years (15% compared to 6%).

Transitions into and out of permanent housing appear to have the greatest negative impact on students, doubling dropout rates when compared to peers in similar settings who experienced no transitions.

## Four-Year Dropout Rate, Class of 2015



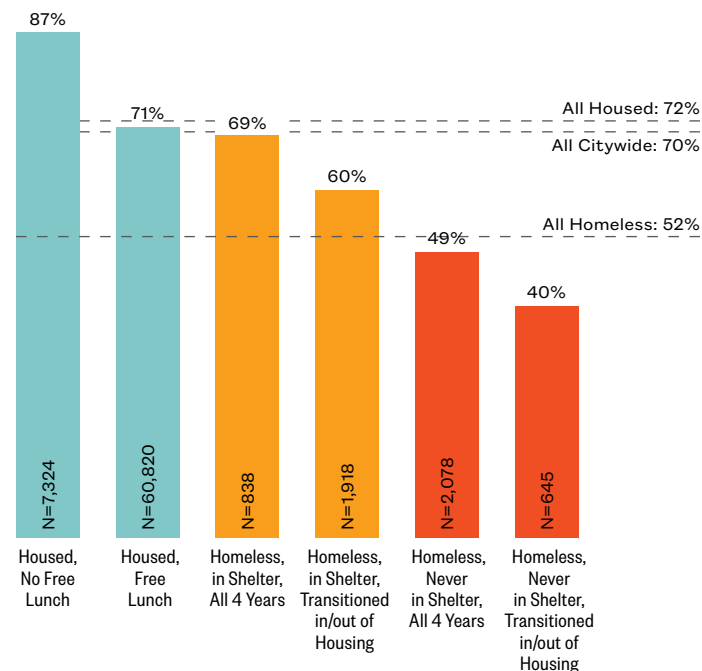
Note: Students who were both in shelter and lived in another homeless situation (doubled up, paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system, awaiting foster care, or unsheltered) at some point were excluded from the comparison (112 students). "Homeless, in Shelter, All 4 Years" is not significantly different from either housed group. "Homeless, in Shelter, Transitioned in/out of Housing" group is not significantly different from "Homeless, Never in Shelter, All 4 Years." All other pairs are significantly different. Students are categorized according to whether they experienced homelessness or were eligible for free lunch at any point during their high school career.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2011-12 to SY 2014-15.

Graduation rates for students who were homeless and living in shelter all four years were essentially the same as the rates for low-income housed students (69% and 71% respectively).

Homeless students living in other homeless situations, particularly those who experienced a transition into or out of permanent housing, had the lowest four-year graduation rate—40%.

### Four-Year Graduation Rate, Class of 2015



Note: Students who were both in shelter and lived in another homeless situation (doubled-up, paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system, awaiting foster care, or unsheltered) at some point were excluded from the comparison (112 students). All pairs are significantly different from each other except "Housed, Free Lunch" and "Homeless, in Shelter, All 4 Years." Students are categorized according to whether they experienced homelessness or were eligible for free lunch at any point during their high school career.

Source: New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, SY 2011-12 to SY 2014-15.