

Learning English While Homeless

Why Early Fluency Matters

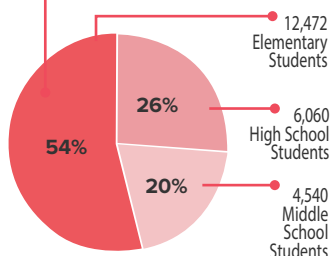
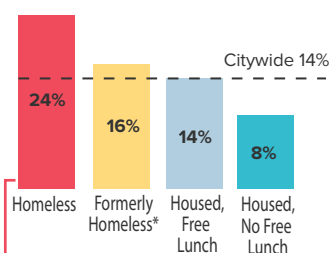
English Language Learners (ELLs) make up roughly one in every seven students enrolled in New York City public schools each year. Homeless students are a growing share of this group, increasing by more than 50% in six years. By SY 2015–16, one in six English Language Learners was homeless, a total of 23,000 students. In the midst of these skyrocketing numbers, now is the time to ensure that these homeless children are part of the conversation about how schools can best identify, serve, and be accountable to the needs of ELLs.

DATA FACTS

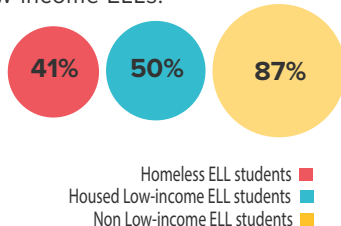
1 in 4

Homeless Students

Roughly one in four (24%) homeless students in NYC were ELLs in SY 2015–16. By comparison, just 14% of all students citywide were identified as having ELL needs.



Homeless ELLs in elementary school were less likely to achieve fluency within three years compared to their low-income housed classmates. 41% achieved fluency compared to 50% of housed low-income ELLs and 87% non low-income ELLs.

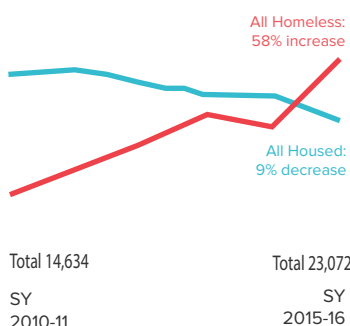


58%

Increase

As homelessness increases citywide, the number of homeless students requiring English language learning services has grown by 58%.

ELL Students in New York City Public Schools



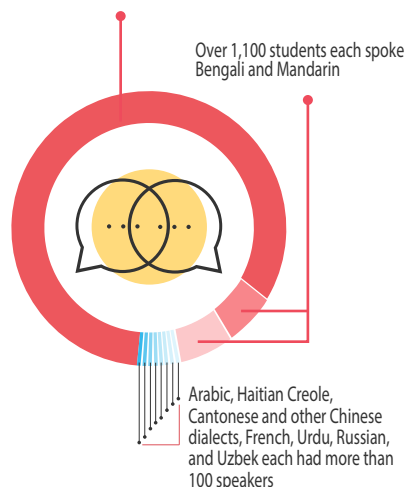
23,072
Homeless ELLs

> 160

Languages Spoken

ELLs in NYC public schools are a diverse group who speak over 160 languages other than English. Roughly half are born outside of the United States.

Spanish was the primary language for 16,500 students experiencing homelessness



IMPLICATIONS

EARLY FLUENCY RESULTS IN SUCCESS

When children learn English within the first three years of school (newcomer ELL)—they perform as well as or better than their classmates who spoke English when they started Kindergarten.

Newcomer ELLs are more likely to score proficient on State ELA or math assessments and less likely to be held back a grade.

Even among homeless students who faced school transfers or absenteeism, newcomer ELLs excelled academically.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- ELLs experiencing homelessness and housing instability who receive consistent ELL services at an early age outperform their peers academically.
- Sharing student data and ELL service plans between schools and departments, as well as supporting homeless students through housing transitions or mid-year school transfers, need to be in place before addressing and reversing the low academic proficiency among homeless ELLs overall.
- Providing outreach to non-English-speaking homeless parents in their native languages and connecting children with early and consistent ELL services is critical to students' engagement and success in school.

* Formerly Homeless includes students who were housed during SY 2015–16 but were homeless at any point during SY 2010–11 to 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 2015–16