



Institute for Children,  
Poverty & Homelessness

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# Learning English While Homeless: Fast Fluency Drives Academic Success

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- The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) is a New York City-based policy research organization focused on family homelessness in New York City and throughout the United States
- All materials we produce are available for free at [www.ICPHusa.org](http://www.ICPHusa.org)

# Reports

ICPH researches the causes of family homelessness, the demographics of this growing population, the conditions that make it difficult for homeless families to become self-sufficient, and the programs that are most effective in helping them transition out of poverty. ICPH works with programs and partners across the U.S. to conduct and disseminate this research in order to improve services and influence public policy.



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Education

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**Learning English While Homeless: Fast Fluency Drives Academic Success—Part Two**



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Education

April 10, 2018

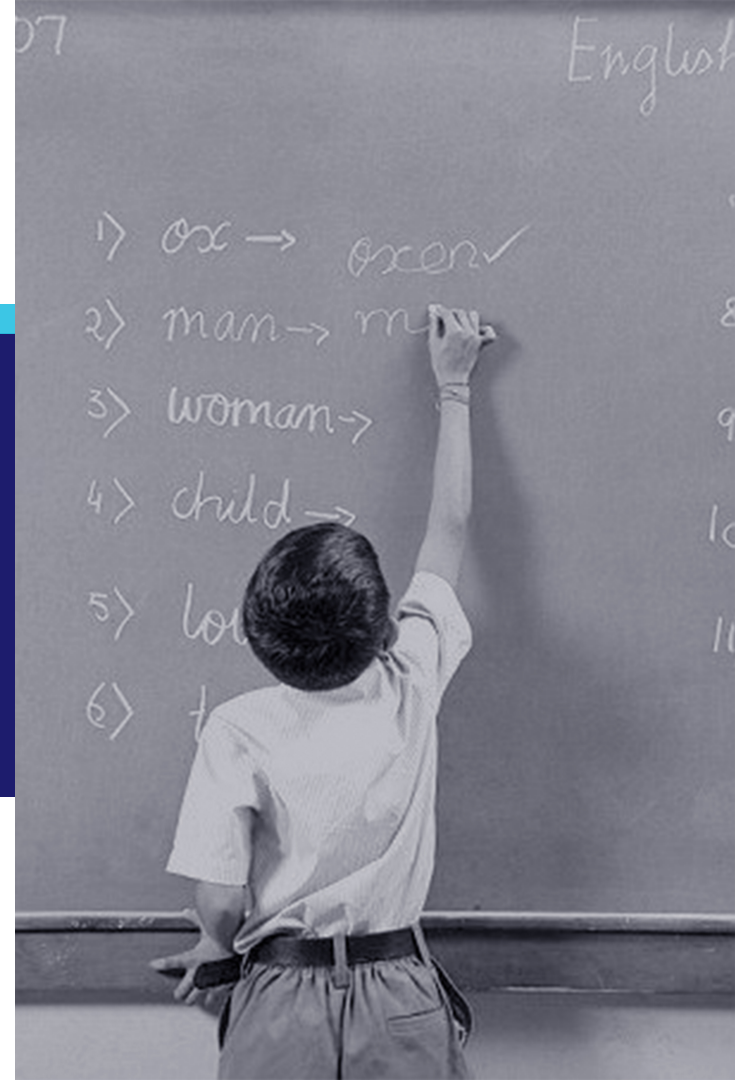
**The United States  
Of Homelessness**



# Topics To Be Discussed

1. Homeless English Language Learners (ELLs) Introduction
2. Length of Time in ELL Services
3. Fast Fluency and Academic Success
4. Why Do Some Students Learn English Faster Than Others?
5. Discussion—Experiences with ELLs
6. Mid-Year Transfers
7. Discussion—Next Steps

# 1 Homeless English Language Learners (ELLs)



# Homeless English Language Learners (ELLs)

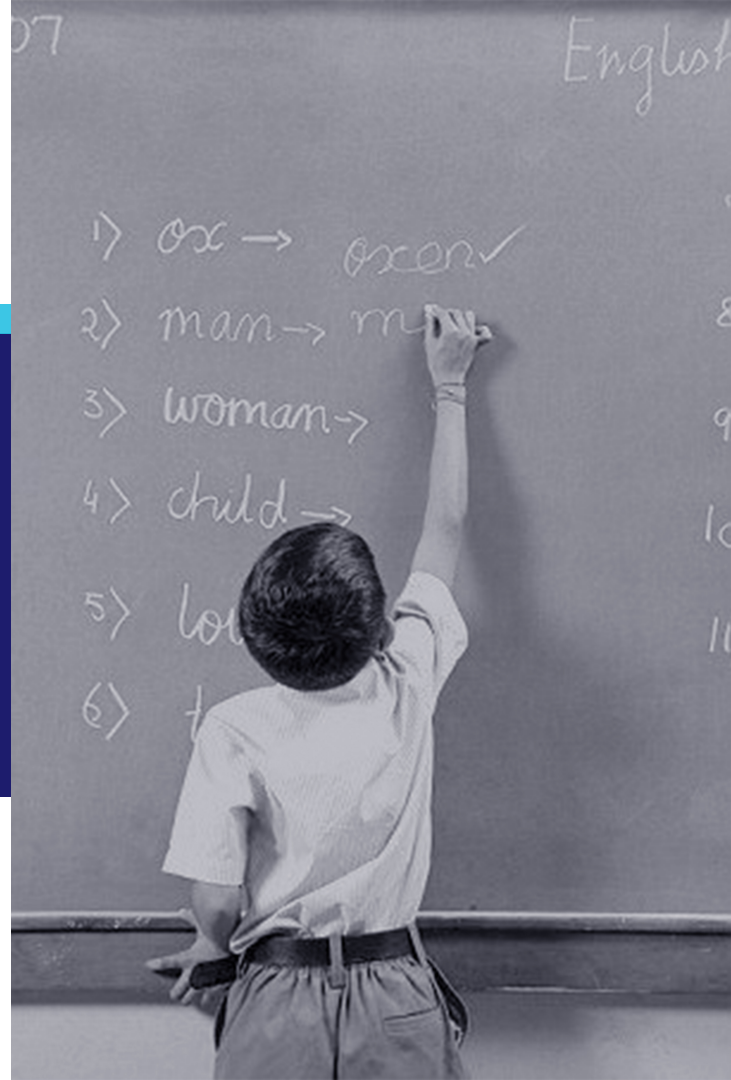
- Double challenge of homelessness and learning English
- Homeless students face not only a lack of housing but also instability and uncertainty in their daily lives. Homelessness can make coming to school consistently, remaining in the same school, and performing well in class very difficult.
- English Language Learners (ELLs) face language barriers and not only the challenge of learning subjects like math and science at school, but learning English at the same time.
- Homeless ELL students face the combined difficulties of homelessness and learning English as a new language.

# National Trends

- English Language Learners (ELLs) are a growing group in New York City and nationwide.
- The number of homeless ELL students in Seattle more than doubled between SY 2012–13 and SY 2015–16 and represented close to one in five of all homeless students.
- In 37 states, the percentage of homeless ELLs has increased from SY 2013–14 to SY 2015–16.
- The state with the highest percentage change was Nevada (192.5% increase), but other states saw large increases as well, such as Louisiana (85.2%) and Oklahoma (67.6%).
- California has the highest number of homeless ELLs—nearly 81,000 in SY 2015–16



## 2 Length of Time in ELL Services

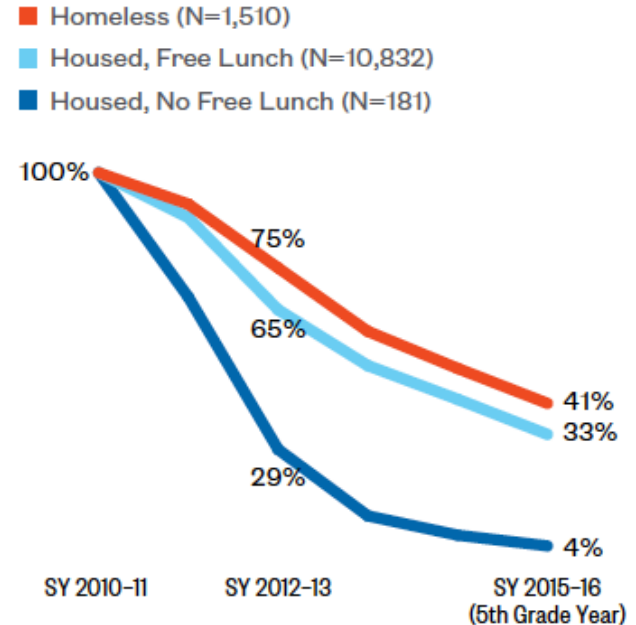


# How does time in ELL vary by housing status?

- New York City Department of Education provided data to the ICPH for SY 2015–16.
- The 2017 Atlas of Student Homelessness in New York City showed that homeless ELL students take longer to become fluent in English than both their low-income and non-low-income classmates who are stably housed.

## English Language Learners

Percent of Students Identified with ELL Needs in Kindergarten Who Were Still Identified as ELL in Subsequent Years, by Year  
SY 2010–11 to SY 2015–16



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

# Trends

- Of nearly 150,000 ELLs in New York City public schools, 23,000 are homeless.
- Homeless ELLs are most likely to be in elementary school and to live doubled up.

At a Glance: English Language Learners in New York City		
SY 2015–16	Homeless	Housed
Number of ELL Students	23,072	124,501
Elementary School	54%	57%
Middle School	20%	18%
High School	26%	25%
Language Spoken, Elementary Students		
Spanish	74%	57%
Chinese	8%	17%
Housing Status, 2011–2016 Elementary Cohort		
Homeless, Doubled Up	75%	–
Homeless, In Shelter	18%	–
Other Homeless	6%	–
Time in ELL Progs., 2011–16 Elementary Cohort		
Newcomer (1-3 Years)	41%	50%
Developing (4-6 Years)	59%	50%

**Note:** Cohort used in this report uses data from SY 2010–11 to SY 2015–16 and includes students who were enrolled in New York City Public Schools all six years and started Kindergarten for the first time in SY 2010–11. Input variables including housing and income status, chronic absenteeism, and mid-year transfers were looked at over the first three years of school for the elementary cohort (SY 2010–11 to SY 2012–13). Outcome variables including newcomer/developing ELL status, State assessment proficiency, and grade retention were over the final three years of our data (SY 2013–14 to SY 2015–16). Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

# Definitions and Trends

**Newcomer ELLs:** Achieve English fluency in 3 years or fewer.

**Developing ELLs:** Achieve English fluency in 4 years or more.

**Homeless, Doubled Up:** Students who live with another family or with friends due to economic hardship.

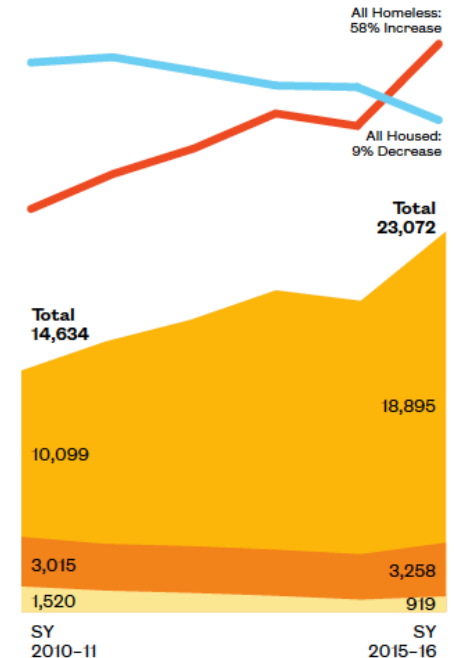
**Homeless, in Shelter:** Homeless students who live in a New York City homeless shelter.

**Other Homeless:** Students who live somewhere not meant for habitation, such as a car or outdoors.

## Homeless English Language Learners in New York City Public Schools

Number of ELL Students in  
New York City Public Schools  
SY 2010-11 to SY 2015-16

■ All Homeless ■ All Housed  
■ In Shelter ■ Doubled Up  
■ Other Homeless

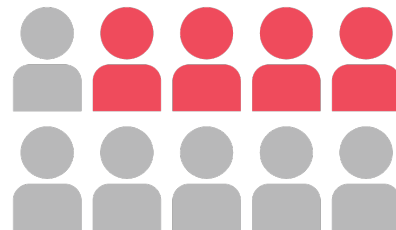


Note: In earlier school years, the total number of "unsheltered" students may be less reliable than other categories. "All homeless" includes all categories of homelessness.

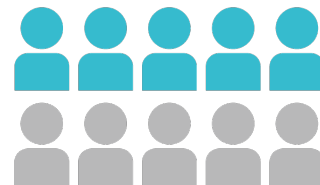
# How long do ELLs take to become fluent?

- Homeless ELLs are the least likely to become fluent in English within three years of starting Kindergarten at less than half (41%).
- Half (50%) of housed low-income ELLs were fluent within three years.
- Nearly all (87%) of non-low-income ELLs became fluent within three years of starting Kindergarten.

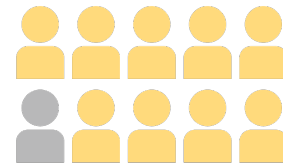
English Language Learners who **achieved fluency** within three years of starting Kindergarten



41% of Homeless ELLs



50% of Housed Low-income ELLs



87% of Non-Low-income ELLs

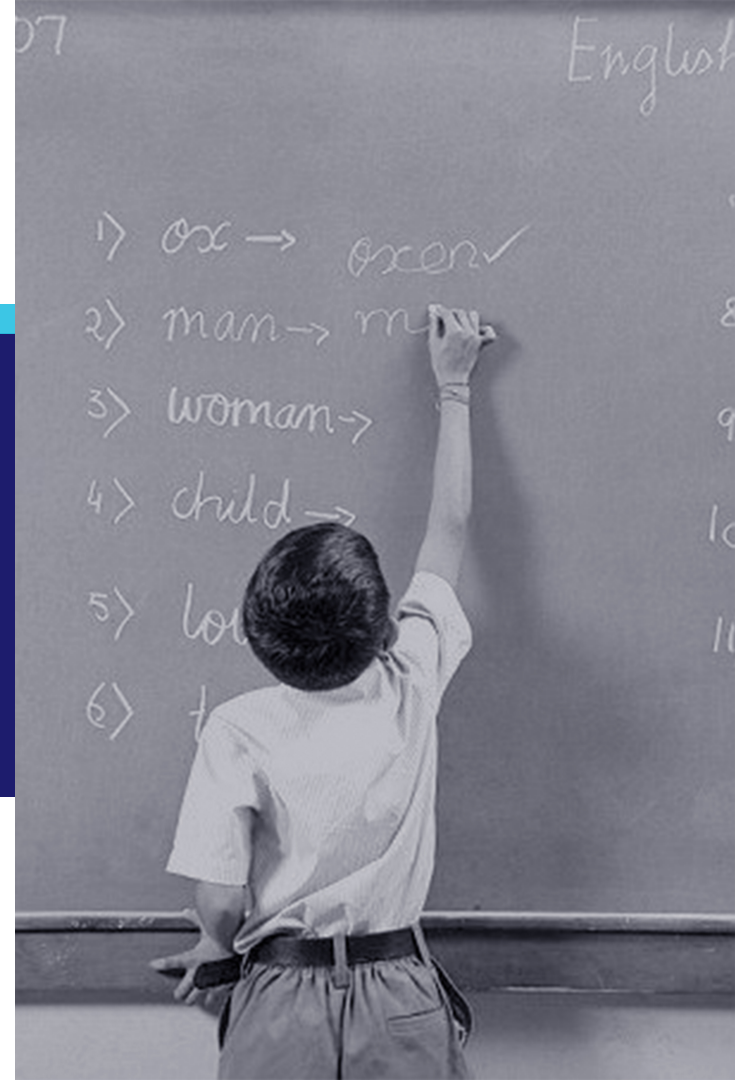
## Main Takeaways:

# Length of Time in ELL Services

- Among ELL students, those who are homeless are least likely to learn English within three years of starting school.
- ELL students are more likely to be in elementary school than in middle or high school. The same is true for housed students.
- Doubled up is the most common temporary housing situation for homeless ELL students.

# 3

## Fast Fluency and Academic Success



Among homeless ELLs, those who become fluent in English within three years are \_\_\_\_\_ their non-ELL classmates to pass their state assessments:

1. Less likely than
2. About as likely as
3. More likely than

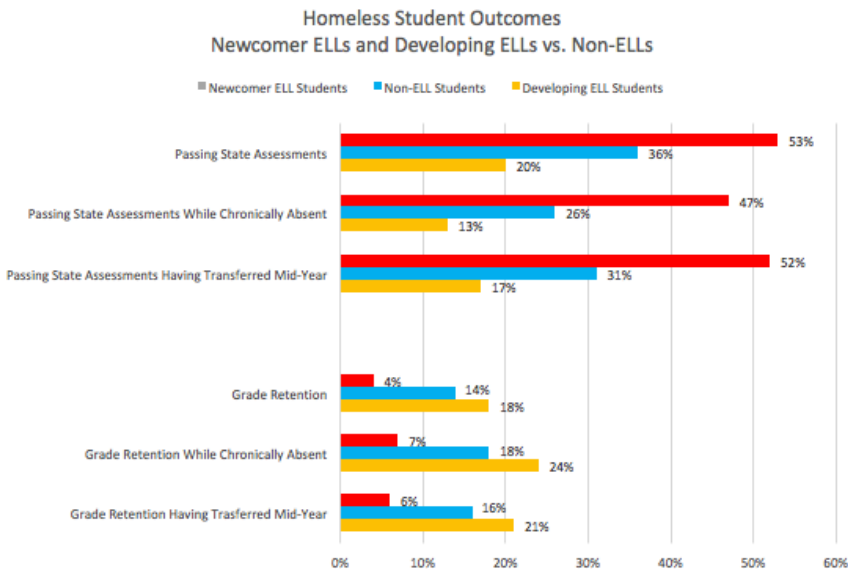


## Answer

Among homeless ELLs, those who become fluent in English within three years are **more likely** their non-ELL classmates to pass their state assessments.

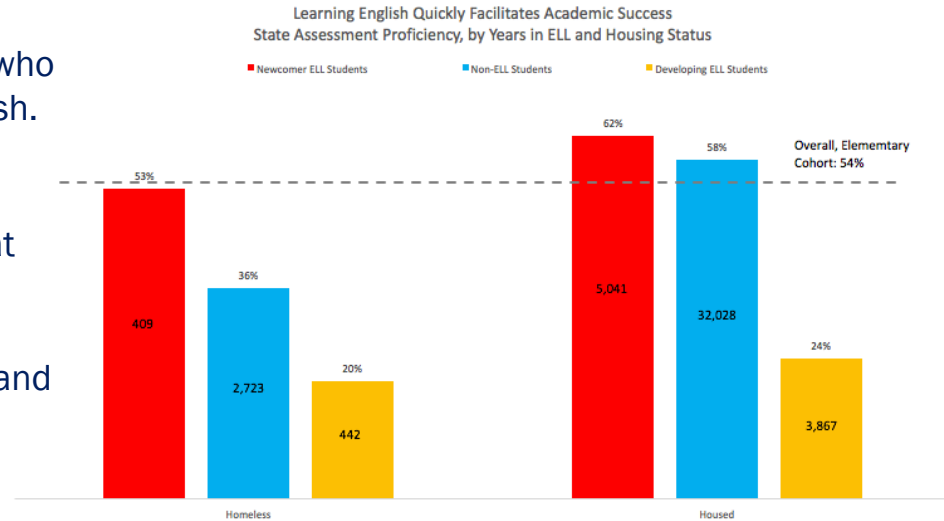
# How likely are ELLs to pass their state assessments or to be retained in a grade?

- Newcomer ELLs outperform their classmates who came to school already speaking English.
- About half of newcomer ELLs pass state assessments, even with academic risks like chronic absenteeism and mid-year transfers.
- Developing ELLs are the least likely to pass their state assessments.
- Newcomer ELLs are the least likely to be retained.



# How likely are ELLs to pass their state assessments, depending on housing status?

- Both housed and homeless newcomer ELLs scored proficient on their state assessments at rates higher than developing ELL classmates and those who came to school already speaking English.
- Homeless newcomer ELLs scored proficient on their state assessments at about the citywide rate.
- One in five homeless developing ELLs and one in four housed developing ELLs scored proficient on their state assessments.



Among students with academic risks, such as chronic absenteeism or mid-year transfer, are newcomer ELLs above or below the citywide state assessment pass rate?

1. Above
2. Below

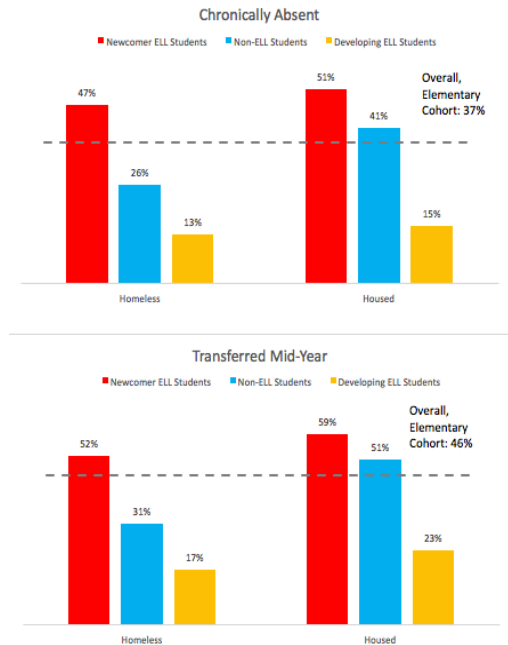
## Answer

Newcomer ELLs with academic risks score **above** the citywide state assessment pass rate.

# How likely are ELLs with academic risks to pass their state assessments?

- Homeless newcomer ELLs who were chronically absent or transferred schools mid-year were more likely to score proficient on their state assessments than both their developing ELL and non-ELL classmates.
- Homeless newcomer ELL students scored at above the citywide proficiency rate for students who were chronically absent or who transferred mid-year.
- Homeless students overall are more likely to be chronically absent and/or to transfer schools mid-year than are their housed classmates.

State Assessment Pass Rate Among Students With Academic Risks, by Years in ELL and Housing Status

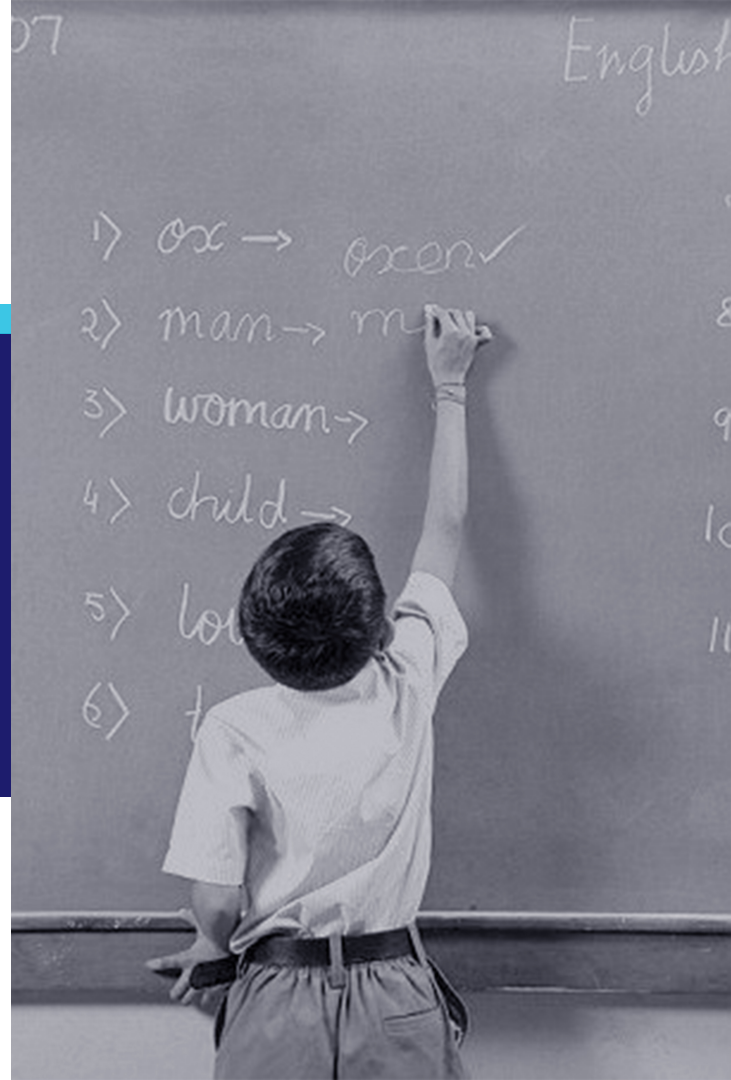


## Main Takeaways:

# Fast Fluency and Academic Success

- ELLs and homeless students face academic challenges, such as identification and access to programs. Data show that homeless ELL students who receive consistent services at an early age outperform their peers academically.
- Homeless ELL students who learn English within three years can outperform not only their classmates who take longer to learn English, but also their classmates who came to school already speaking English. This is true as well for students who are chronically absent or who transfer schools mid-year.

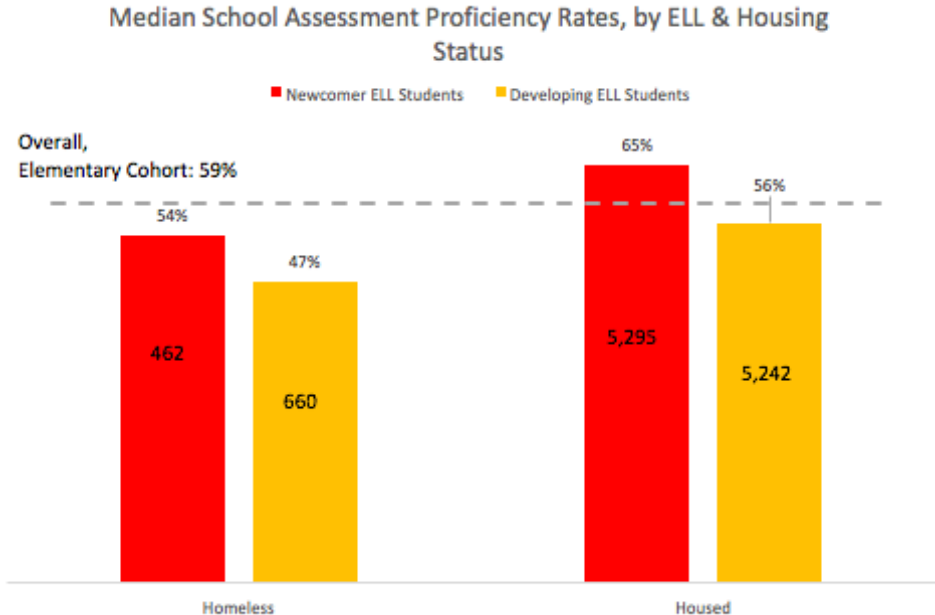
# 4 Why Do Some Students Learn English Faster Than Others?





# Did newcomer ELLs attend higher performing schools?

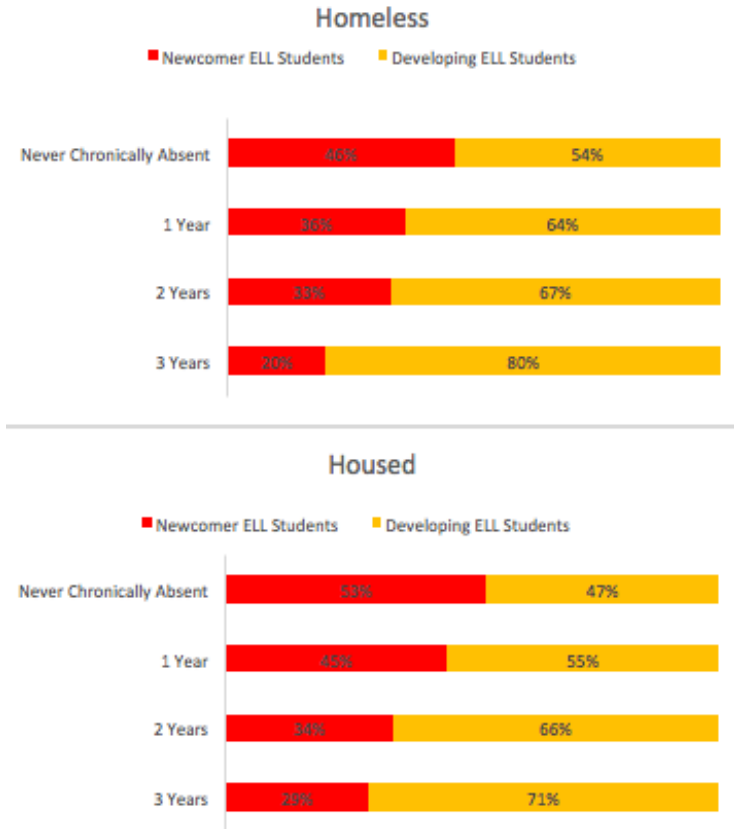
- Newcomer ELL students tend to go to higher-performing schools than their developing ELL classmates.
- Of homeless newcomer ELLs, half went to schools with a state assessment proficiency rate of 54% or below.
- Of homeless developing ELLs, half attended schools where the state assessment proficiency rate was 47% or below.



# How does chronic absenteeism affect English fluency?

- Among homeless chronically absent ELL students, nearly half were newcomers.
- The more years homeless ELL students were absent, the less likely it was that they were newcomers.
- The trend was similar for housed ELL students.

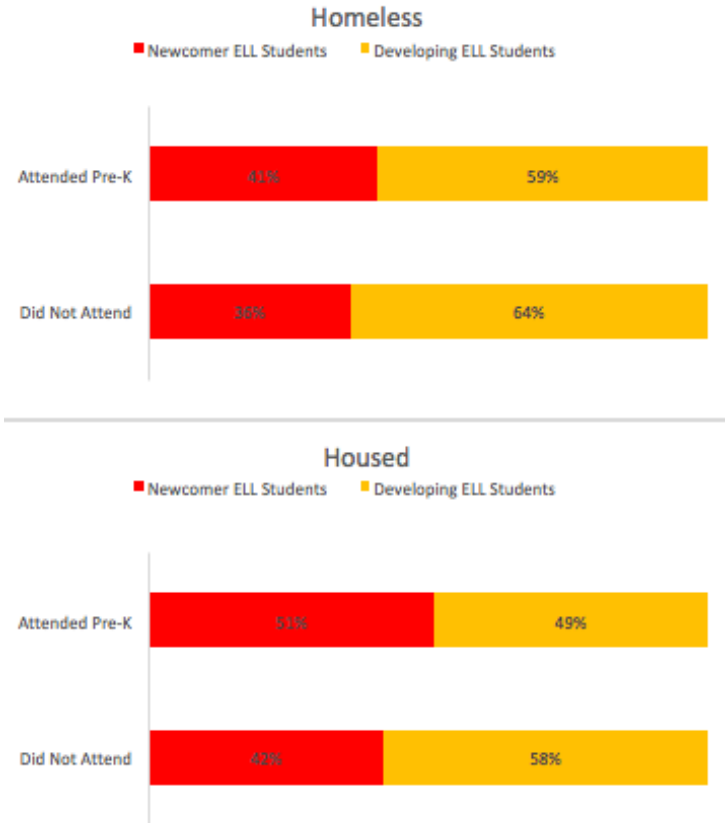
ELLs by Years Chronically Absent, Years in ELL and Housing Status



# How does attending pre-k affect English fluency?

- Homeless ELL students who attended pre-K were more likely to be newcomers than those who did not attend pre-K.
- This trend was similar for housed ELL students.

ELLs by Pre-K Attendance, Years in ELL, and Housing Status



## Main Takeaways:

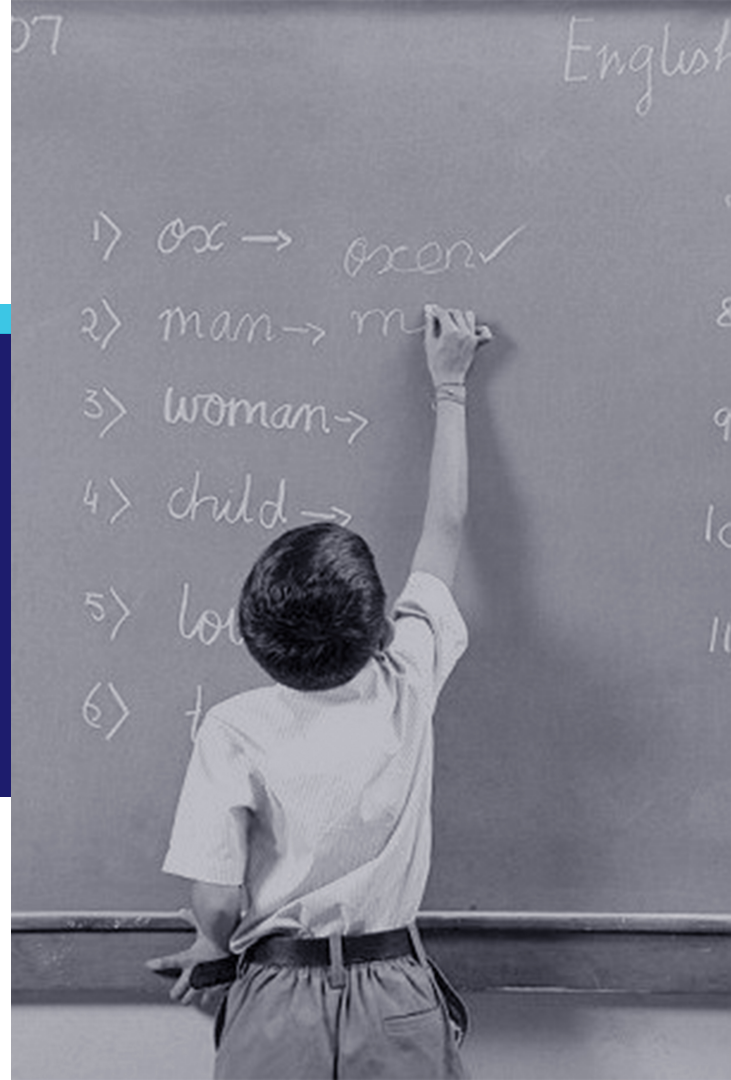
# Why Did Some Students Learn English Faster Than Others?

- Newcomer ELL students, both housed and homeless, tend to go to higher-performing schools than developing ELLs.
- Attending school consistently is difficult for homeless ELL students, but those who are able to are more likely to learn English within three years.
- Attending pre-K can help homeless ELL students become fluent in English quickly.

# Discussion Questions

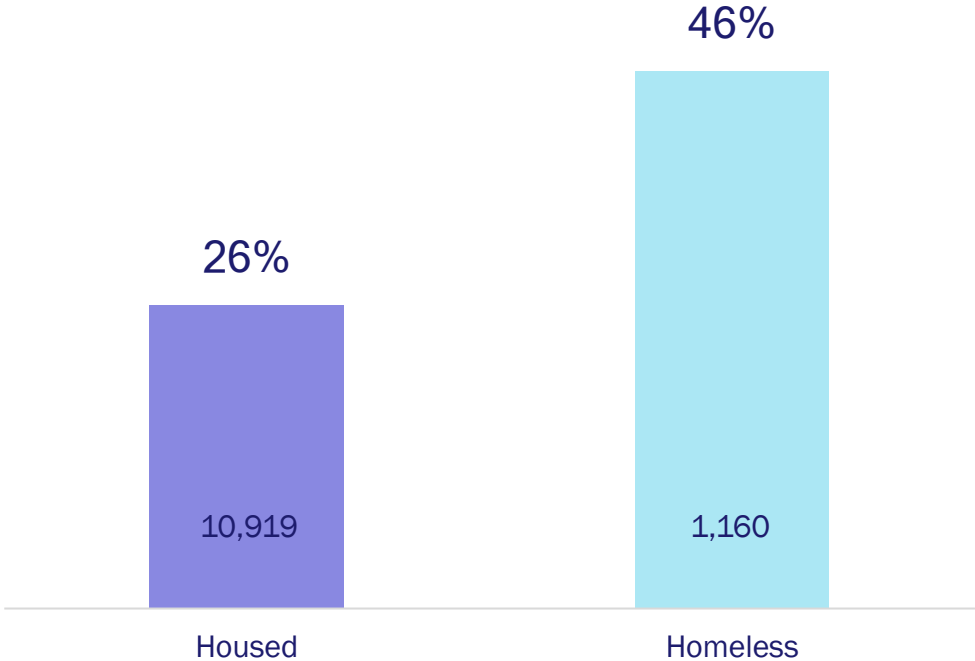
- What has been my experience working with ELLs?
- What is the most common language(s) spoken by ELLs in my school? What are some of the least common languages?
- Are these the same for ELLs who are homeless?
- How do supports in my school vary depending on language spoken?
- Who are the school staff working with ELLs at my school? Are these people attuned to the signs of homelessness and needs of homeless students?
- What differences between other groups of ELLs have I seen? What are some explanations for those differences?

# 5 Mid-Year Transfers



**Percent of ELLs Who Transferred Mid-Year During the First Three Years of School,  
by Housing Status**

SY 2010-11 to SY 2012-13



# Types of ELL Programs

**English as a New Language (ENL):** Pull-out English classes for ELLs taught in English regardless of students' home language.

**Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE):** ELL students with the same home language spend 90% of their class time in the home language and 10% in English. As the students learn more English, the ratio gradually reverses.

**Dual Language:** Half of the students in a class are native English speakers and half of the students speak the same home language. Half of class time is spent in English and half in the second language. The goal of this program is for all students to be bilingual.





# Main Takeaways:

## Mid-Year Transfers

- A mid-year transfer for homeless ELL students is not just a mid-year transfer of schools—it's also a mid-year transfer of ELL services.
- Transferring between the same type of ELL programs is often not possible, creating yet another transition for the students.

# Main Takeaways:

## Overall

- Homeless ELLs who learn English within three years can outperform not only their classmates who take longer to learn English, but also their classmates who came to school already speaking English. This is true as well for students who are chronically absent or who transfer schools mid-year.
- Attending pre-K and then attending school consistently in the following years can help ELL students learn English within three years.
- For homeless ELLs, a mid-year transfer is not just a mid-year of schools—it's also a mid-year transfer of ELL services.

# Next Steps

- Homeless students and ELLs are often considered as distinct groups by public schools. However, as the two groups overlap significantly, it is critical to eliminate barriers between programs that serve these homeless students and ELLs through clear, consistent data sharing and communication between schools and departments.
- Increasing outreach to non-English-speaking homeless families in their native languages and connecting them with pre-K and early, consistent ELL services must be a priority.
- Homeless shelters and community agencies can support homeless students through housing transitions and mid-year school transfers by ensuring that they are immediately placed in appropriate ELL programs upon transferring schools and receive consistent services.
- Doubled-up ELL students require a different approach than other homeless students. Communication and partnerships between teachers, parents, school liaisons, and shelter and community-based organizations are key in both identifying and serving these students.

# Questions?





# THANK YOU!

**For follow-up questions:**

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