



Meeting the Basic Needs of Our Students

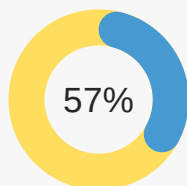
Climate Connection is a monthly publication of the NYS Center for School Safety.

The relationship between poverty, homelessness, hunger and student outcomes is well researched. For example, homeless students have some of the lowest graduation rates, and a significant percentage of students experiencing poverty are reading below proficient levels when they enter fourth grade, creating challenges for further academic success. The number of students experiencing these life stressors increased throughout the pandemic bringing more attention to inequities, and their impact on student wellness and achievement. The good news is...there is much we can do to help meet the basic needs of our students but we must understand the scope of the issues first.

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS



1,443,603



According to 2020-2021 enrollment data from [NYSED's Student Information Repository System](#), 57% of public and charter school students, or 1.4 million children and youth, were identified as "economically disadvantaged". NYSED defines an economically disadvantaged student (or family) as those who participate in an economic assistance program.

HOMELESS STUDENTS

The [NYS Technical and Educational Assistance Center for Homeless Students](#) (NYSTEACHS) reports that over 126,000 public and charter school students experienced homelessness at some point during the 2020-2021 academic year. Approximately 80% of those students were enrolled in schools in New York City. However, research indicates the prevalence rate of homelessness for youth living in rural and urban areas is similar. Perceived differences are often related to homeless youth being less visible in rural communities and less attention given to the issue of rural homelessness in research and the media. To learn more about the experiences of homeless youth in nonurban communities, read Chapin Hall's groundbreaking 2018 report, [Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in Rural America](#).



126,385



Meeting the Basic Needs of Our Students

Climate Connection is a monthly publication of the NYS Center for School Safety.

Homeless children and youth, and those who are identified as economically disadvantaged experience a multitude of challenges related to academic, social and emotional development. It's important for us to understand how students are effected, so we can develop and implement supportive strategies and initiatives. Schools do not need to do this work alone. As you review the suggestions below, consider how you can engage your community partners in your efforts to meet the needs economically disadvantaged and homeless students. In addition, there are many federal, state and local funding opportunities that can be leveraged, such as funding included in the Covid-19 economic relief legislation.

How students are effected?

Academic

- They have unreliable access to the resources necessary for schoolwork, including computers, internet, a quiet space to work free from distractions, and basic school supplies.
- Their caregivers often cannot provide educational support due to competing demands of multiple jobs, and the emotional energy and time needed to ensure basic needs like food and safety are being met.



Emotional

- Chronic stress associated with these challenges increases the risk for mental health problems, substance use/misuse & interpersonal conflict.
- The effects of these conditions are compounded by barriers that limit access to care.



Social

- The stigma and negative responses associated with these conditions has a detrimental effect on student emotional health, sense of belonging and self-esteem.



How can schools help?

Academic

- Encourage flexibility and creativity in designing lesson plans so that all students can achieve success.
- Ask families and students for input when planning before and after school programs to better meet their needs & increase accessibility.
- Offer alternative options to the school schedule that allows greater flexibility for students who may have to care for a sibling or work.

Emotional

- Develop a robust plan for SEL and mental health literacy curriculum that includes opportunities to practice coping strategies.
- Create initiatives that focus on emotional support, such as peer groups and comfort animals.

Social

- Develop opportunities that support education, student engagement and and community involvement (i.e. community gardens & internships) that will also benefit students.