

THE Homeless Children EDUCATION ACT

Tell Olympia: Homeless Children
Deserve a Chance to Succeed!

The Crisis

RECESSION LEAVES MORE STUDENTS HOMELESS

Homelessness has spiked since the Great Recession, leaving many children vulnerable as they attempt to work through school.

27,000 enrolled students have been identified as homeless by WA public schools

96% increase in homeless students identified in Washington since the Great Recession

37,000 homeless students are estimated to be in WA public schools, including those not yet identified by schools

14% of WA school districts receive federal funds to provide mandated services and support for homeless students



What's At Stake

HOMELESS STUDENTS NEED EDUCATIONAL STABILITY, SUPPORT TO SUCCEED

Homeless students are constantly on the move, and thus constantly changing schools. Without school stability, learning becomes incredibly difficult.

4-6 Months of learning progress is lost each time a student changes schools

When homeless students are not identified by schools and given a fair shot at stability and success, they become significantly more likely to drop out and their futures are put at risk.

Inadequate support for these students is also damaging to the economy and the state budget over time.

Washington Testing Proficiency by Subject

	MATH	READING	SCIENCE
Housed Students	64%	72%	66%
Homeless Students	37%	49%	41%

\$200,000 average net benefit to taxpayers for each student who graduates from high school rather than drops out (state tax, social service, criminal justice budget impacts, etc.)

\$3.4 billion lifetime cost to Washington taxpayers if current identified homeless students who are not proficient in math fail to graduate.

Our Goal

HELP WASHINGTON'S HOMELESS CHILDREN SUCCEED AND GRADUATE

Education is the way out of poverty for these children. Washington's Constitution calls on the state to provide a basic education to "all children residing within its borders." Each and every child, regardless of their living situation or their parents' economic means, deserves a chance to learn and succeed. Now is the time for the legislature to enact legislation to ensure we are doing all we can to give this vulnerable population of students a fair shot at a walk across the graduation stage.

Time to Act: What We're Proposing

IDENTIFY HOMELESS STUDENTS, PROVIDE STABILITY AND SUPPORT

The crisis of homeless education and the imperative of providing these kids with opportunities to succeed demand action to ensure our schools are well equipped to meet the needs of homeless students. Our proposal would strengthen the ability of schools to:

Identify Homeless Students

In order to prevent homeless students from dropping out and to help them graduate, we must bring them out of the shadows. Identifying homeless students and improving our understanding of homeless populations is the first step.

- **Train teachers and staff** through existing professional development programs on how to identify and support homeless students in their school. Use a short video so training is quick and simple.
- **Improve collection and accessibility of population-wide data (such as graduation rates)** that helps schools, service providers, and policy makers answer two simple questions:
 - Who are our homeless students?
 - Are we succeeding at serving them?

Provide Support & Stability

Once homeless students are identified, the next step is to make school a place of stability, support and encouragement for them.

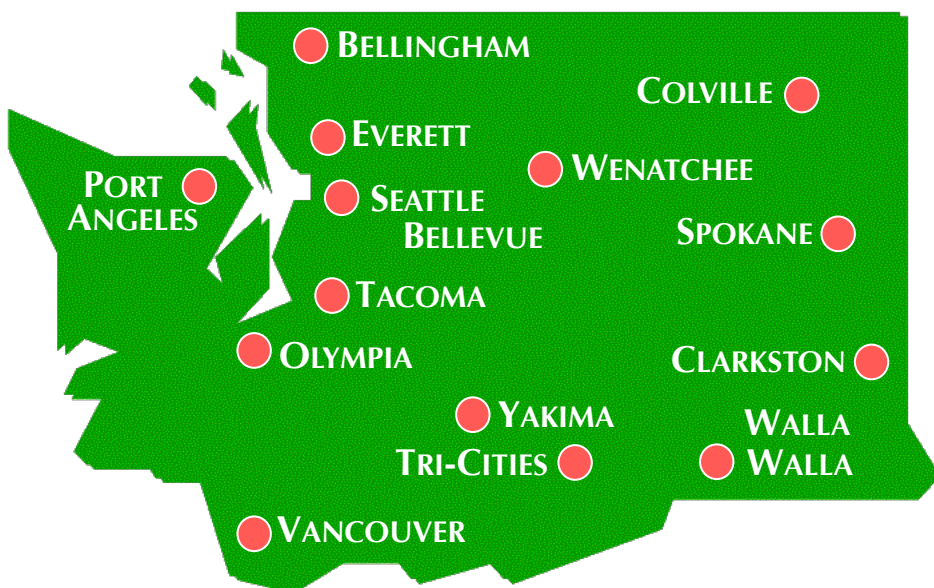
- Strengthen the ability of school districts to **provide a homeless liaison** able to coordinate services and support for homeless students across the district.
- Adopt **national best practices** that make it easier for students to fully participate and engage in school and that clarify school responsibilities. Changes include:
 - Clarifying enrollment and privacy procedures
 - Providing liability protection to schools
 - Improving outreach to homeless students
- Create a pilot housing program designed to **save schools money on transportation costs** by helping homeless families secure stable housing.

Is This Really Happening in My Neighborhood?

HOMELESS STUDENTS LIVE IN EVERY CORNER OF WASHINGTON STATE

Think homelessness is a big city problem? Think again. **32% of Washington's homeless students live in rural communities.** While homelessness may look different in different communities, students without homes live in every corner of Washington State. Due to the stigma attached to homelessness, many students hide that they live in shelters or temporarily on the floor of a relative's house due to lack of access to stable housing. It is estimated that there is one homeless child in every 1.5 classrooms in Washington State.

Number of Identified Homeless Students by Selected School District (2011-12)



185	Bellevue School District
428	Bellingham School District
221	Clarkston School District
80	Colville School District
824	Everett School District
332	Kennewick School District
440	Olympia School District
107	Port Angeles School District
1,872	Seattle Public Schools
1,220	Spokane School District
1,247	Tacoma School District
557	Vancouver School District
294	Walla Walla Public Schools
508	Wenatchee School District
486	Yakima School District