


Bridges Charter School		Board Policy- Education for Homeless Children
Policy Number: 6173	Adopted: 08/19/13 Replaced: 10/15/18	Amended: 9/12/22 Amended:

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The Board of Directors of BRIDGES CHARTER SCHOOL ("Bridges") desire to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational program, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state of California academic standards, are provided a free and appropriate public education, are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

BRIDGES Administration and Board Members are fully committed to full educational access for all children and youth. As such, the Board will establish, and the Director and Assistant Director will execute a policy to address the needs of homeless children and youth in our community.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

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The term "homeless children and youth" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youths who (42 USC 11434(a)):

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1. Are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;

~~4. Runaway children or children who are abandoned;~~

4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of "homeless."

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Unaccompanied youth includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. (Education Code 48859; 42 USC 11434a)

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School of origin means the school that the student experiencing homelessness attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a preschool. If the school the student experiencing homelessness attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the student was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that the student attended within the preceding 15 months and with which the student is connected, the school liaison for homeless students, in consultation with and with the agreement of the student experiencing homelessness and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student, shall determine which school is, in the best interests of the student experiencing homelessness, deemed the school of origin. (Education Code 48852.7; 42 USC 11432)

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Best interest means that, in making educational and school placement decisions for a student experiencing homelessness, consideration is given to, among other factors, educational stability, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress, and the student's access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all school students. (Education Code 48850, 48853; 42 USC 11432)

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Identification

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To ensure easy identification of students experiencing homelessness, the Director or designee shall annually provide and administer a housing questionnaire developed by the California Department of Education (CDE) to all parents/guardians of students and all unaccompanied youths.(Education Code 48851) If the primary language of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth is not English, either the housing questionnaire shall be made available in the primary language of the student's parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth pursuant to Education Code 48985, or an appropriate translation of the housing questionnaire shall be provided upon request of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. (Education Code 48851)

The Director or designee shall report to CDE the number of students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youths, enrolled in the school as identified from the housing questionnaire described above. (Education Code 48851)

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Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the School Liaison for Homeless Students.

Information about the living situation of a student experiencing homelessness shall be considered part of a student's educational record, subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, shall not be deemed to be directory information as defined in 20 USC 1232g, and shall not be released without written consent. (42 USC 11432)

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School Liaison for Homeless Students

The Director or designee designates the following staff person(s) as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 USC 11432(g)(1)(J) & (e)(3)(C)(iv).):

Cindy McCarthy

Michelle Morgan

Grades TK-8

Bridges Charter School

1335 Calle Bouganvilla

Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Hafiza Douglas

Grades TK-8

Bridges Charter

1335 Calle Bouganvilla

Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

The Director or designee shall ensure that the school liaison's contact information and other information on homelessness, including, but not limited to, information regarding the educational rights and resources available to persons experiencing homelessness, are posted on the school web site. (Education Code 48852.6)

The School Liaison for Homeless Students shall ensure that the following occur (42 USC 11432(g)):

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at the Charter School.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, (where applicable); any other programs administered by the Charter School, if any; and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.

4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places where children receive services, such as schools, shelters, and soup kitchens and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, the Charter School's charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. The School Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
9. Charter School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the Charter School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

The California Department of Education publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>

Enrollment

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The Charter School shall immediately admit/enroll the student for which the Charter School is a School of Origin. "School of Origin" means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

The Charter School shall also immediately enroll a homeless youth who seeks to enroll in the Charter School, if the youth would otherwise be eligible to attend and subject to the Charter School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School's charter and Board policy. A homeless youth who is enrolled will have the right to attend classes and participate fully in school activities, including extracurricular activities.

The youth shall be immediately enrolled even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment (such as previous academic records, records of immunizations, other required health records, proof of residency) or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C); Education Code Section 48850(a)(3)(A).)

If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Director or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the School Liaison for Homeless Students. The School Liaison for Homeless Students shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student. (42 USC 11432(g)(3)(C).)

A homeless youth may remain in the student's school of origin for the entire period for which the youth is homeless. If a youth obtains permanent housing during an academic year, the youth will be permitted to remain in the school of origin through the end of the academic year.

Enrollment Disputes

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If a dispute arises over admissions/enrollment, the student shall be immediately admitted, (subject to the Charter School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School charter and Board policy), pending resolution of the dispute. (42 USC 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the admission/enrollment decision, including an explanation of the parent/guardian's right to appeal the decision. He/she shall also be referred to the School Liaison. (42 USC 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The School Liaison for Homeless Students shall carry out the Board-adopted dispute resolution and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 USC 11432(g)(3)(E).)

Written Notice

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~~BRIDGES shall provide written notice, at the time any child or youth seeks enrollment~~

~~in the School, and at least twice annually while the child or youth is enrolled in the School, to the parent or guardian of the child or youth (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth) that:~~

~~1. Shall be signed by the parent or guardian (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth);~~

~~2. _____~~

~~3. Sets forth the general rights provided in this policy;~~

~~4. Specifically states:~~

- ~~a. The choice of schools homeless children and youths are eligible to attend, as provided in 42 U.S.C Section 11432(g)(3)(A);~~
- ~~b. That no homeless child or youth is required to attend a separate school for homeless children or youths;~~
- ~~c. That homeless children and youths shall be provided comparable services described in this policy, including transportation services, educational services, and meals through school meals programs; and~~
- ~~d. That homeless children and youths should not be stigmatized by school personnel; and~~

~~5. Provides contact information for the School Liaison and the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths.~~

For any homeless student who seeks enrollment at the Charter School, written notice will be provided to the parent/guardian at the time of enrollment and at least twice (2) annually while enrolled at the Charter School. This notice must be signed by the parent/guardian. The notice must outline general rights, include the name of the Charter School Liaison with contact information, and specifically state:

- 1. The choice of school(s) the homeless children and youth are eligible to attend;
- 2. That no homeless student is required to attend a separate school for homeless children;
- 3. That homeless children and youth shall be provided comparable services;
- 4. That homeless children should not be stigmatized by Charter School personnel. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C).)

Such notice shall be provided to the parent or guardian (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth) in a manner and form understandable to such parent or guardian (or youth), including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in the native language of such parent or guardian (or youth).

Comparable Services

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Each homeless child or youth shall promptly be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in BRIDGES such as:

- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for students with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.
- Programs for “at risk” students
- School nutrition programs

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Transportation

In the event that the Charter School provides transportation services to all Charter School students, the Charter School shall provide comparable transportation services to each homeless child or youth attending the Charter School, as noted above. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4).)

If the Charter School does not otherwise provide transportation services to all Charter School students, the Charter School shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from the Charter School, at the request of the parent or guardian (or Charter School Liaison) if the Charter School is the student's school of origin. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J).) Transportation provided by the Charter School will be adequate and appropriate for the Student's situation, but the Charter School does not commit to any one method of transportation for all youth.

Professional Development

All administrators, teachers and employees of the Charter School will be ~~provided~~provided with professional development on the identification, services, and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless children and youth on an annual basis. (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(3).) All identified or suspected homeless children and youth will be referred to the Charter School Liaison.

Acceptance of Course Work

The Charter School will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency by a homeless student.

Reporting

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When there are at least 15 students experiencing homelessness in the school, the school's local control and accountability plan (LCAP) shall include goals and specific actions to improve student achievement and other outcomes of students experiencing homelessness. (Education Code 52052, 52060, 52064)

At least annually, the Director or designee shall report to the Board on the identification of and outcomes for students experiencing homelessness, which may include, but are not limited to, the housing questionnaire responses, school attendance, student achievement test results, promotion and retention rates by grade level, graduation rates, suspension/expulsion rates, and other outcomes related to any goals and specific actions as identified in the LCAP should it apply. Based on the evaluation data, the school shall revise its strategies as needed to more effectively identify and support the education of students experiencing homelessness.

Annual Policy Review

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The Charter School shall ~~annually~~ review at least once every three years and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths or the enrollment of homeless children and youths at the Charter School. In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship. Special attention shall be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school.