



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Data on Students Experiencing Homelessness

2021

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.300.540](#)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background	4
Legislation.....	4
Update Status.....	5
Enrollment.....	5
Student Outcomes.....	8
Conclusion & Next Steps	11
List of Tables	13
Table 1: Change in the Number of Homeless Students	13
Table 2: Student Enrollment by Student Group, SY 2020–21	13
Table 3: Student Enrollment by Grade Level, SY 2020–21	14
Table 4: Student Enrollment and Nighttime Residence, SY 2020–21	15
Table 5: Students Graduation Rates, 4-Year Adjusted Cohort, Class of 2020.....	16
Table 6: Homeless Students Graduation Rates, 5-Year Adjusted Cohort, Class of 2019.....	17
Table 7: Homeless Absenteeism and Truancy by Student Group, SY 2019–20.....	18
Table 8: Suspensions and Expulsions by Student Group, SY 2019–20.....	19
Legal Notice	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [federal McKinney-Vento Act](#) broadly defines homelessness in an effort to provide protections and supports for students living in a variety of unstable housing situations. This ensures school stability and continued enrollment at a time when a student’s nighttime residence may be constantly changing. In Washington, the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness has increased since 2001 when the McKinney-Vento Act began requiring all school districts to annually report the number of students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in schools.

In addition to the McKinney-Vento Act requirements, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 6074 during the 2014 legislative session. This bill aims to improve educational outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness by bolstering student homelessness identification and establishing further data reporting requirements.

Table 1: Change in the Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness

School Year	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness
2014–15	33,642
2015–16	37,661
2016–17	39,189
2017–18	40,085
2018–19	39,888
2019–20	36,996
2020–21	32,335

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

Due to the widespread COVID-19 school closures, districts had difficulty identifying and serving students experiencing homelessness during the 2020–21 school year. Many districts indicated that students previously enrolled under the protections of the McKinney-Vento Act failed to connect to remote instruction and were not in contact with the districts during the closure. The number of students experiencing homelessness identified and enrolled in districts declined significantly during the 2020–21 school year. OSPI continues to support districts’ identification efforts to improve data collection and reporting.

For more information related to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the education of homeless youth, please visit the [OSPI Homeless Children and Youth](#), the [National Center for Homeless Education](#), or the [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth](#) websites.

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are more than 1.26 million children and youth experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in schools across the nation. Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer academically and are more likely to drop out of school when compared to their housed peers. Students experiencing homelessness are less likely to engage in school, have higher absentee rates, and have lower achievement test scores.

Legislation

The 2014 Washington State Legislature passed a law (Senate Bill 6074; Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.300.540), which requires OSPI to report data on student homelessness to the governor and the legislature every other year starting January 10, 2015. This report will provide a more in-depth analysis of homeless student data than is currently required by the US Department of Education under the federal McKinney-Vento Act. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, certain data are not available.

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act) defines homeless as follows:

The term "homeless children and youths"--

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes--

- (i) children and youths who 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; or are abandoned in hospitals;*
- (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
- (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

*Per Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act, "awaiting foster care placement" was removed from the definition of homeless on December 10, 2016.

UPDATE STATUS

Enrollment

During the 2020–21 school year, 32,335 students experienced homeless, which amounted to 2.8% of students statewide.

Table 2: Student Enrollment by Student Group, School Year (SY) 2020–21

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population Experiencing Homelessness
All Students	32,335	1,145,848	2.8%
Gender			
Male	16,323	592,210	2.7%
Female	15,894	552,128	2.9%
Gender X	208	2,484	8.4%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	981	15,428	6.4%
Asian	667	94,381	0.7%
Black/African American	3,089	53,871	5.7%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	11,581	283,550	4.1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	995	14,744	6.7%
Two or More Races	3,244	100,579	3.2%
White	11,794	584,559	2.0%
Student Group			
Unaccompanied Youth	4,444	5,462	81.4%
Students with Disabilities	7,164	171,340	4.2%
English Learners	6,799	139,094	4.9%

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population Experiencing Homelessness
Students from Low-income Families	31,277	527,111	6.3%
Students in the Learning Assistance Program	7,410	157,104	4.7%
Students who are Migrant	1,807	21,983	7.6%
Students with 504 Plans	1,073	50,578	2.1%
Students in the Highly Capable Program	336	71,775	0.5%
Students Participating in Running Start	279	31,888	0.9%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.

Table 3: Student Enrollment by Grade Level, SY 2020–21

Grade Level	Homeless Enrollment*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness	State Enrollment	Percent of State Enrollment
Pre-K	809	2.5%	29,195	2.8%
Kindergarten	2,268	7.0%	76,841	3.0%
1st	2,477	7.7%	82,604	3.0%
2nd	2,401	7.4%	83,315	2.9%
3rd	2,339	7.2%	82,928	2.8%
4th	2,337	7.2%	84,124	2.8%
5th	2,270	7.0%	84,452	2.7%
6th	2,302	7.1%	86,847	2.7%
7th	2,339	7.2%	89,170	2.6%

Grade Level	Homeless Enrollment*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness	State Enrollment	Percent of State Enrollment
8th	2,338	7.2%	89,187	2.6%
9th	2,210	6.8%	88,458	2.5%
10th	2,312	7.2%	86,721	2.7%
11th	2,486	7.7%	89,166	2.8%
12th	3,455	10.7%	93,939	3.7%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.

Table 4: Student Enrollment and Nighttime Residence, SY 2020–21

Nighttime Residence	Description	Number of Homeless Students
Doubled-Up	Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason.	24,018
Hotels/Motels	Living in hotels/motels due to lack of alternate adequate accommodations.	2,176
Shelters	Supervised publicly or privately operated facilities designed to provide temporary living accommodations. (This category included children and youth who were "awaiting foster care" during the data collection period. As of December 10, 2016, the term "awaiting foster care" was removed from the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.)	3,732
Unsheltered	Includes living situations such as cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers, abandoned buildings, and substandard housing.	2,374

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

Student Outcomes

At the time of preparation, data on student outcomes for the 2020–21 school year were unavailable. Additionally, on March 17, 2020, Governor Inslee announced school building closures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As a result, some data are unavailable or significantly different for the 2019–20 school year.

Table 5: Students Graduation Rates, 4-Year Adjusted Cohort, Class of 2020

Student Group	Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Statewide (All Students)	82.9%	8.0%	9.0%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	59.4%	17.0%	23.6%
Gender			
Female	64.0%	15.7%	20.3%
Gender X	68.0%	20.0%	12.0%
Male	54.5%	18.3%	27.2%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/ Alaska Native	57.8%	19.6%	22.5%
Asian	68.7%	13.9%	17.4%
Black/African American	59.9%	18.0%	22.1%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	58.3%	17.5%	24.2%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	70.8%	13.7%	15.5%
Two or More Races	62.5%	18.1%	19.4%
White	58.2%	16.4%	25.3%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	48.6%	23.9%	27.5%
English Learners	56.6%	17.5%	26.0%
Students from Low-income Families	59.5%	17.1%	23.4%
Students who are Migrant	64.2%	15.4%	20.4%
Students with 504 Plans	53.7%	22.2%	24.1%

Source: OSPI 2020 graduation data

Table 6: Homeless Students Graduation Rates, 5-Year Adjusted Cohort, Class of 2019

Student Group	Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Dropout Rate
Statewide (All Students)	83.9%	3.3%	12.8%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	61.1%	7.4%	31.4%
Gender			
Female	65.2%	7.6%	27.1%
Gender X	72.0%	8.0%	20.0%
Male	56.4%	7.2%	36.4%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/ Alaska Native	44.3%	10.9%	44.8%
Asian	80.1%	4.6%	15.3%
Black/African American	66.1%	7.6%	26.3%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	60.1%	7.4%	32.5%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	65.1%	5.3%	29.6%
Two or More Races	61.3%	9.1%	29.6%
White	60.2%	7.2%	32.6%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	53.7%	13.3%	33.0%
English Learners	57.6%	7.5%	34.9%
Students from Low-income Families	61.2%	7.5%	31.3%
Students who are Migrant	64.5%	7.4%	28.1%
Students with 504 Plans	56.7%	11.1%	32.3%

Source: OSPI 2020 graduation data

Table 7: Homeless Absenteeism and Truancy by Student Group, SY 2019–20

Student Group	Number of Students Regularly Attending*	Percent of Students Regularly Attending	Number of Students Reported as Truant	Percent of Students Reported as Truant
Statewide (All Students)	1,007,612	89.4%	64,738	6.5%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	24,168	70.0%	8,095	21.9%
Gender				
Female	11,809	69.8%	3,985	22.1%
Male	12,312	70.4%	4,038	21.5%
Gender X	43	34.4%	75	55.6%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	639	62.8%	316	29.2%
Asian	548	79.9%	114	15.5%
Black/African American	2,419	65.6%	1,217	30.8%
Hispanic/Latino	8,329	72.3%	2,596	20.9%
White	9,239	71.1%	2,553	18.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	638	60.4%	360	32.6%
Two or More Races	2374	66.2%	950	24.8%
Student Group				
Students with Disabilities	4,678	64.3%	1,898	24.0%
English Learners	5,286	75.5%	1,371	19.0%
Students from Low-income Families	23,301	69.7%	9,937	22.3%
Students who are Migrant	1,439	79.4%	268	13.9%
Students with 504 Plans	737	61.8%	313	25.6%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* Students having fewer than two absences per month on average.

*** Students with either five or more full day unexcused absences in any continuous 30-calendar-day period or students who have 10 or more full day unexcused absences in the 2019–20 school year. Truancy rates are based on reported absences, not if a truancy petition was filed.*

Table 8: Suspensions and Expulsions by Student Group, SY 2019–20

Student Group	Number of Students that were Suspended or Expelled*	Percent of Subgroup that were Suspended or Expelled
Statewide (All Students)	45,522	3.8%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	2,255	6.3%
Gender		
Female	715	4.1%
Male	1,538	8.5%
Gender X	Suppression: N < 10	Suppressed: N < 10
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	73	6.9%
Asian	11	1.5%
Black/African American	354	9.2%
Hispanic/Latino	612	5.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	75	6.9%
Two or More Races	272	7.4%
White	861	6.4%
Student Groups		
Students with Disabilities	833	11.1%
English Learners	313	4.3%
Students from Low-income Families	2,198	6.3%
Students who are Migrant	73	3.8%
Students with 504 Plans	129	10.6%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

**Students that received one or more of the following: short-term suspension, long-term suspension, expulsion.*

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Across the country there is growing recognition that schools are often the safest, most stable and supportive places for students experiencing homelessness, and that stability is critical to the academic success of those students. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction provides

training, technical assistance and opportunities for grant funding to local school districts as they work to serve the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

In 2016, the Legislature passed the Homeless Student Stability and Opportunity Gap Act (House Bill 1682) to amend state laws related to improving educational outcomes for homeless students through increased identification services, in-school supports, and housing stability. The resulting State Homeless Student Stability program complements the Federal McKinney-Vento program, providing additional support and resources for districts beginning with the 2016–17 school year.

The State Homeless Student Stability grant was designed to supplement the federal McKinney-Vento grant funds, improve identification of students, and build Local Education Agency (LEA) capacity to provide support to students experiencing homelessness, particularly unaccompanied homeless youth. Currently, the Homeless Student Stability Grants fund 13 local school districts and will be used for a range of LEA-determined priorities, including:

- Professional development for district as well as building-level liaisons related to meeting the needs of homeless students.
- Increased time for liaisons to carry out their McKinney-Vento responsibilities and remove obstacles to identification, enrollment, attendance, and school success.
- Addition of staff focused on the specific needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, including graduation and planning for post-secondary options.
- Increased partnerships with community-based organizations, particularly those that provide tutoring, mentoring, and mental health services.

In addition to Washington’s state funded Homeless Student Stability and Opportunity Gap Act, the [federal McKinney-Vento Act](#) was reauthorized in December 2015 under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and fully implemented in all public schools on October 1, 2016. The McKinney-Vento Act, originally enacted in 1987 as the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, provides identification, enrollment and access to children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Act serves to provide school stability for homeless students, as each change of schools may cause up to a significant delay in a student’s academic progress. The Act promotes the academic success of homeless students and ensures that children and youth experiencing homelessness can enroll and participate fully in all school activities, ensuring a free, appropriate education. Provisions of the Act include immediate enrollment even if a student lacks records, the right to remain in their school of origin when in the student’s best interest, transportation, and other academic supports. Washington currently provides approximately \$1.2M in federal McKinney-Vento grant funding to two multi-district consortium programs and 39 school district programs.

List of Tables

Table 1: Change in the Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness

School Year	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness
2014–15	33,642
2015–16	37,661
2016–17	39,189
2017–18	40,085
2018–19	39,888
2019–20	36,996
2020–21	32,335

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* *Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.*

Table 2: Student Enrollment by Student Group, SY 2020–21

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population that is Experiencing Homelessness
All Students	32,335	1,145,848	2.8%
Gender			
Male	16,323	592,210	2.7%
Female	15,894	552,128	2.9%
Gender X	208	2,484	8.4%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	981	15,428	6.4%
Asian	667	94,381	0.7%
Black/African American	3,089	53,871	5.7%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	11,581	283,550	4.1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	995	14,744	6.7%
Two or More Races	3,244	100,579	3.2%

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population that is Experiencing Homelessness
White	11,794	584,559	2.0%
Student Group			
Unaccompanied Youth	4,444	5,462	81.4%
Students with Disabilities	7,164	171,340	4.2%
English Learners	6,799	139,094	4.9%
Students from Low-income Families	31,277	527,111	6.3%
Students in the Learning Assistance Program	7,410	157,104	4.7%
Students who are Migrant	1,807	21,983	7.6%
Students with 504 Plans	1,073	50,578	2.1%
Students in the Highly Capable Program	336	71,775	0.5%
Students Participating in Running Start	279	31,888	0.9%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.

Table 3: Student Enrollment by Grade Level, SY 2020–21

Grade Level	Homeless Enrollment*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness	State Enrollment	Percent of State Enrollment
Pre-K	809	2.5%	29,195	2.8%
Kindergarten	2,268	7.0%	76,841	3.0%
1st	2,477	7.7%	82,604	3.0%
2nd	2,401	7.4%	83,315	2.9%

Grade Level	Homeless Enrollment*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness	State Enrollment	Percent of State Enrollment
3rd	2,339	7.2%	82,928	2.8%
4th	2,337	7.2%	84,124	2.8%
5th	2,270	7.0%	84,452	2.7%
6th	2,302	7.1%	86,847	2.7%
7th	2,339	7.2%	89,170	2.6%
8th	2,338	7.2%	89,187	2.6%
9th	2,210	6.8%	88,458	2.5%
10th	2,312	7.2%	86,721	2.7%
11th	2,486	7.7%	89,166	2.8%
12th	3,455	10.7%	93,939	3.7%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.

Table 4: Student Enrollment and Nighttime Residence, SY 2020–21

Nighttime Residence	Description	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness
Doubled-Up	Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason.	24,018
Hotels/Motels	Living in hotels/motels due to lack of alternate adequate accommodations.	2,176
Shelters	Supervised publicly or privately operated facilities designed to provide temporary living accommodations. (This category included children and youth who were "awaiting foster care" during the data collection period. As of December 10, 2016, the term "awaiting foster care" was removed from the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.)	3,732
Unsheltered	Includes living situations such as cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers,	2,374

Nighttime Residence	Description	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness
	abandoned buildings, and substandard housing.	

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

Table 5: Students Graduation Rates, 4-Year Adjusted Cohort, Class of 2020

Student Group	Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Statewide (All Students)	82.9%	8.0%	9.0%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	59.4%	17.0%	23.6%
Gender			
Female	64.0%	15.7%	20.3%
Gender X	68.0%	20.0%	12.0%
Male	54.5%	18.3%	27.2%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/ Alaska Native	57.8%	19.6%	22.5%
Asian	68.7%	13.9%	17.4%
Black/African American	59.9%	18.0%	22.1%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	58.3%	17.5%	24.2%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	70.8%	13.7%	15.5%
Two or More Races	62.5%	18.1%	19.4%
White	58.2%	16.4%	25.3%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	48.6%	23.9%	27.5%
English Learners	56.6%	17.5%	26.0%
Students from Low-income Families	59.5%	17.1%	23.4%
Students who are Migrant	64.2%	15.4%	20.4%
Students with 504 Plans	53.7%	22.2%	24.1%

Source: OSPI 2020 graduation data

Table 6: Homeless Students Graduation Rates, 5-Year Adjusted Cohort, Class of 2019

Student Group	Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Statewide (All Students)	83.9%	3.3%	12.8%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	61.1%	7.4%	31.4%
Gender			
Female	65.2%	7.6%	27.1%
Gender X	72.0%	8.0%	20.0%
Male	56.4%	7.2%	36.4%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/ Alaska Native	44.3%	10.9%	44.8%
Asian	80.1%	4.6%	15.3%
Black/African American	66.1%	7.6%	26.3%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	60.1%	7.4%	32.5%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	65.1%	5.3%	29.6%
Two or More Races	61.3%	9.1%	29.6%
White	60.2%	7.2%	32.6%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	53.7%	13.3%	33.0%
English Learners	57.6%	7.5%	34.9%
Students from Low-income Families	61.2%	7.5%	31.3%
Students who are Migrant	64.5%	7.4%	28.1%
Students with 504 Plans	56.7%	11.1%	32.3%

Source: OSPI 2020 graduation data

Table 7: Homeless Absenteeism and Truancy by Student Group, SY 2019–20

Student Group	Number of Students Regularly Attending*	Percent of Students Regularly Attending	Number of Students Reported Truant**	Percent of Students Reported Truant
Statewide (All Students)	1,007,612	89.4%	64,738	6.5%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	24,168	70.0%	8,095	21.9%
Gender				
Female	11,809	69.8%	3,985	22.1%
Male	12,312	70.4%	4,038	21.5%
Gender X	43	34.4%	75	55.6%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	639	62.8%	316	29.2%
Asian	548	79.9%	114	15.5%
Black/African American	2,419	65.6%	1,217	30.8%
Hispanic/Latino	8,329	72.3%	2,596	20.9%
White	9,239	71.1%	2,553	18.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	638	60.4%	360	32.6%
Two or More Races	2374	66.2%	950	24.8%
Student Group				
Students with Disabilities	4,678	64.3%	1,898	24.0%
English Learners	5,286	75.5%	1,371	19.0%
Students from Low-income Families	23,301	69.7%	9,937	22.3%
Students who are Migrant	1,439	79.4%	268	13.9%
Students with 504 Plans	737	61.8%	313	25.6%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

* Students having fewer than two absences per month on average.

** Students with either five or more full day unexcused absences in any continuous 30-calendar-day period or students who have 10 or more full day unexcused absences in the 2019–20 school year. Truancy rates are based on reported absences, not if a truancy petition was filed.

Table 8: Suspensions and Expulsions by Student Group, SY 2019–20

Student Group	Number of Students that were Suspended or Expelled*	Percent of Group that were Suspended or Expelled
Statewide (All Students)	45,522	3.8%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	2,255	6.3%
Gender		
Female	715	4.1%
Male	1,538	8.5%
Gender X	Suppression: N<10	Suppressed: N<10
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	73	6.9%
Asian	11	1.5%
Black/African American	354	9.2%
Hispanic/Latino	612	5.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	75	6.9%
Two or More Races	272	7.4%
White	861	6.4%
Student Groups		
Students with Disabilities	833	11.1%
English Learners	313	4.3%
Students from Low-income Families	2,198	6.3%
Students who are Migrant	73	3.8%
Students with 504 Plans	129	10.6%

Source: CEDARS, 9/28/2021

**Students that received one or more of the following: short-term suspension, long-term suspension, expulsion.*

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