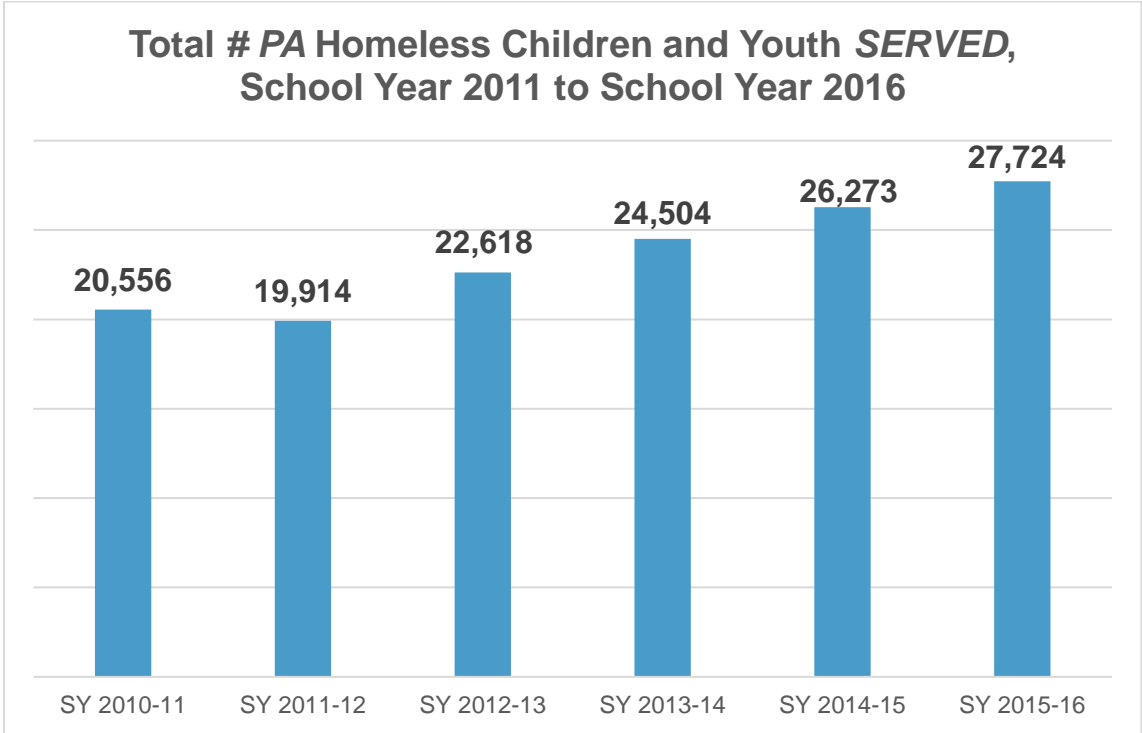




Reports indicate a 35 percent increase in Pennsylvania's children and youth who experience homelessness

Are policy makers okay with that?

The number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania has increased every year over the past four years. For the **first time in history**, the number of homeless children and youth exceeds **27,000** according to a Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) report. People's Emergency Center (PEC) summarizes the PDE report to inform the region's leadership about this population.



Highlights:

- Pennsylvania reported that **27,724** children and youth who experienced homelessness were **serviced** in School Year (SY) 2013-14, a **35 percent increase** from SY 2010-2011.
- **Most homeless students are living doubled-up** (living in someone else's house temporarily) and **not** in shelters or outdoors. In Pennsylvania, **64 percent** of homeless students lived doubled up. **Only 29 percent** were in shelters, transitional housing, or awaiting foster care placement; six percent were in hotels or motels; and 1 percent was unsheltered. This metric should be of interest to those who use Point in Time Counts to provide data addressing youth homelessness.
- There were **6,765 children, ages birth through kindergarten**, identified as homeless.
 - Philadelphia identified **1,873 children**, ages birth through kindergarten, a lower number than the **1,999 children** ages 0-5 identified through the homeless housing system.ⁱ
- **All regions** in Pennsylvania, with the exception of Region 1 (Philadelphia), experienced **increasing** numbers of homeless students.
- **5,879 high school students** were homeless in FY 2015-2016. **Region 2** experienced the highest number, and two other regions had **higher** numbers than Philadelphia. All regions but one had **more** homeless seniors than Philadelphia.
- **Coordination** between schools and agencies is the single highest service delivery funded by the McKinney Vento homeless education funding stream, followed by school supplies, clothing, and transportation.
- 65% of students **remain** in their schools. 20% had enrolled in two schools. 4% had more than 2 moves.

Who should read this policy brief? Most importantly, policy makers need to understand that homelessness among children and youth is increasing and that this phenomena is not confined to urban regions. This data should also inform services provided by social service providers, advocates and educators working with children and youth who experience homelessness.

PEC Commentary:

- *The fact that the number of homeless children and youth **increases every year** can suggest good news. In part, the increase means that the authorities whose task it is to serve and support children and youth are doing their job. School districts improve every year in identifying and helping children and youth. As districts hire more counselors, nurses, and social workers, it is likely that these responsible adults will help to further identify and assist homeless students. In addition, **data collection is improving**, particularly around pre-kindergarten. Now that the federal government has improved the **Head Start and Child Care regulations**, it can be expected that next year, Pennsylvania will identify even more children and youth experiencing homelessness.*
- *The fact that homeless children and youth are mostly **living doubled-up** should inform discussions around the state's strategy for outreach to this population. **Continuum of Care** programs (i.e., homeless housing system) use the **Point in Time Count (PIT)** to make strategic decisions in part because they are required to do so by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); however, many observers agree that the PIT does not adequately identify children and youth experiencing homelessness.*
- *Pennsylvania municipality leaders are working on innovative methods to conduct outreach and coordinate services.*
 - *In Pittsburgh, the **Homeless Children's Education Fund** released an app called **Big Burgh** (see <https://www.bigburgh.com/app.html#/who>) to be used by police officers and others who find youth experiencing homelessness on the street to connect them to services.*
 - *Philadelphia's **Philly Coalition for Youth** is developing a numerous new approaches to reach out and support youth. See <http://bit.ly/2FqopMH>*
 - *Pennsylvania's **Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program** supports local schools and districts to support homeless students. Advocates around the nation are seeking to expand funding from Congress. For **state information**, see <http://bit.ly/2G2kSkT> and <https://www.facebook.com/ECYEHPA/> for more information. For national advocacy campaigns, see the "**Education Leads Homes**" campaign at <http://www.educationleadshome.org/>*
 - ***Most Continuum of Care programs** throughout the Commonwealth (homeless housing system) are focused on new ways to reach youth.*

Data sources:

- Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2015-2016 State Evaluation Report: <http://bit.ly/2G2kSkT>
- Data for school years comes from PEC's previous summary reports, found at <https://www.pec-cares.org/policy-publications.html> which used reports from PDE published in those years.
- Comparative data comes from Pennsylvania Department of Education: <http://bit.ly/2FhKH36>

What does this summary contain? Key indicators found in the reports cited above include:

- **Number** of homeless children and youth enrolled and/or served by the education system and/or other community-based services.
- **Number** of homeless children and youth by region.
- **Nighttime residency** statistics for students experiencing homelessness.
- **Academic achievement** comparing 3rd and 8th graders who experience homelessness to their peers.

Number of Children and Youth Who Experience Homelessness, Pennsylvania:

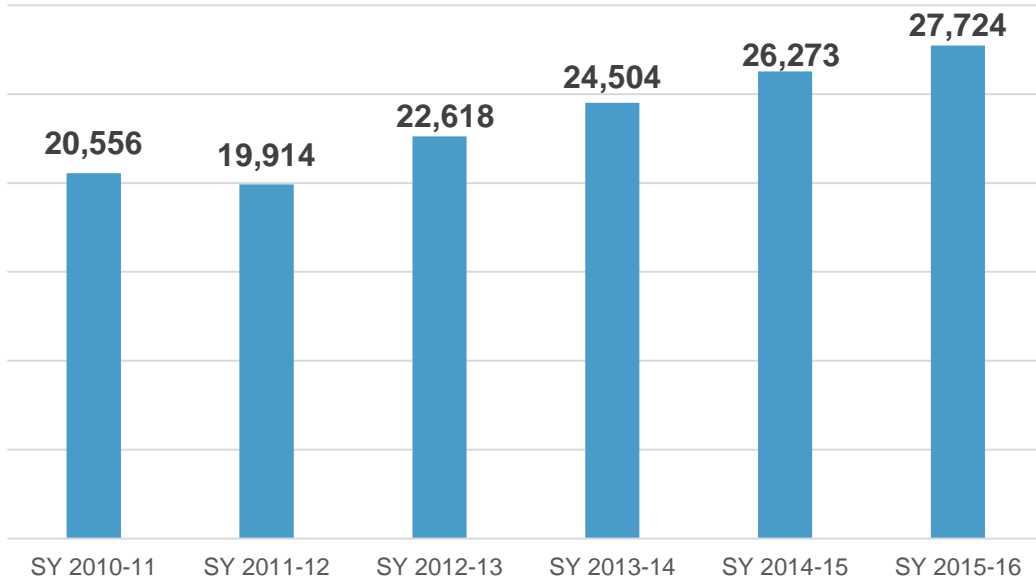
The education system reports two different numbers of homeless children and youth: those **served** by the schools and those **enrolled** in school. The term **served** includes all children and youth who are **identified** as meeting the education system's [McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness](#).

Students from Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade make up the **enrolled** category.

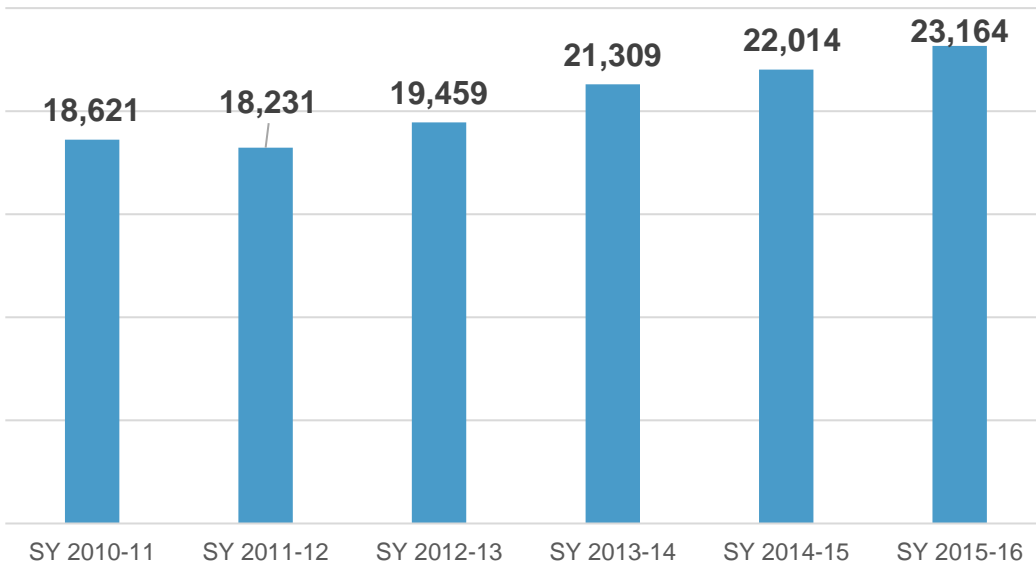
Keep informed on these issues by adding your email to the monthly e-newsletter PEC Perspective by sending your address to poliyc@pec-cares.org, and follow us on Twitter at #PAHomelessYouth.

Caution should be used in comparing counts of students. Changes from year to year could be a result from numerous factors, including improved outreach and identification as well as an increase in the homeless population.

**Total # PA Homeless Children and Youth
SERVED, School Year 2011 to School Year 2016**



**Total # PA Students Experienced Homelessness
and ENROLLED, 2011 to 2016**

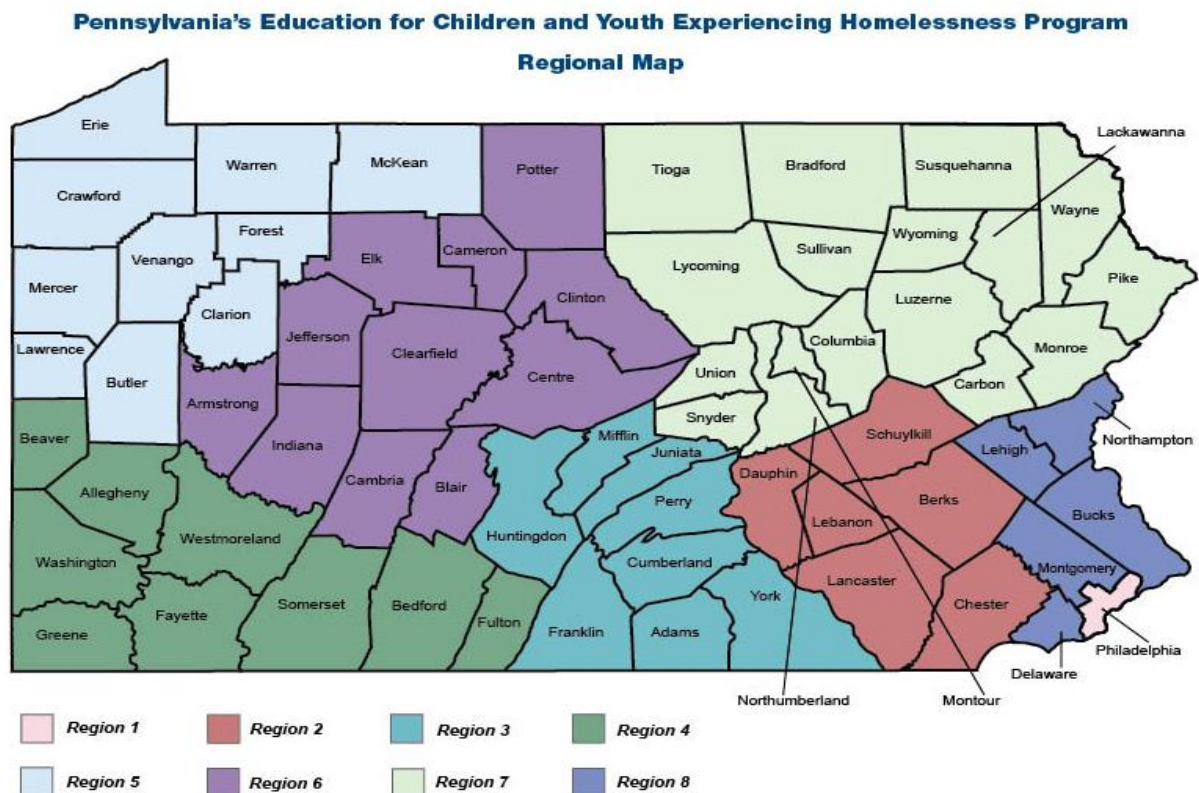


Number of Homeless Students by Region: See map below to identify regions.

- All regions but Region 1 (Philadelphia) experienced **increasing** numbers.
- Homelessness among children and youth is **not confined to urban regions** as Region 2 exceeds Region 1 (Philadelphia) and Region 4 (includes Allegheny).

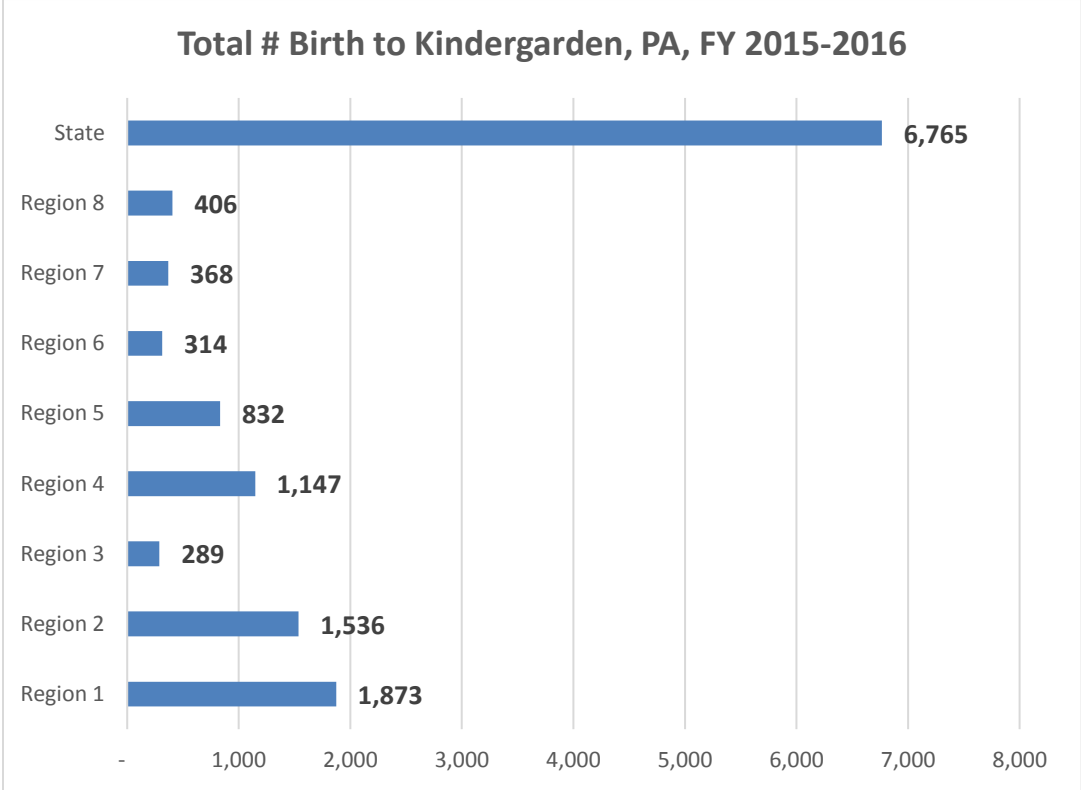
Regions	2014-2015	2015-2016
Region 1	5,764	5,518
Region 2	5,267	6,041
Region 3	1,703	1,954
Region 4	4,333	4,716
Region 5	2,615	2,798
Region 6	1,249	1,290
Region 7	1,775	1,802
Region 8	3,567	3,603
Total	26,273	27,722

Number of Children and Youth experiencing Homelessness BY GRADE

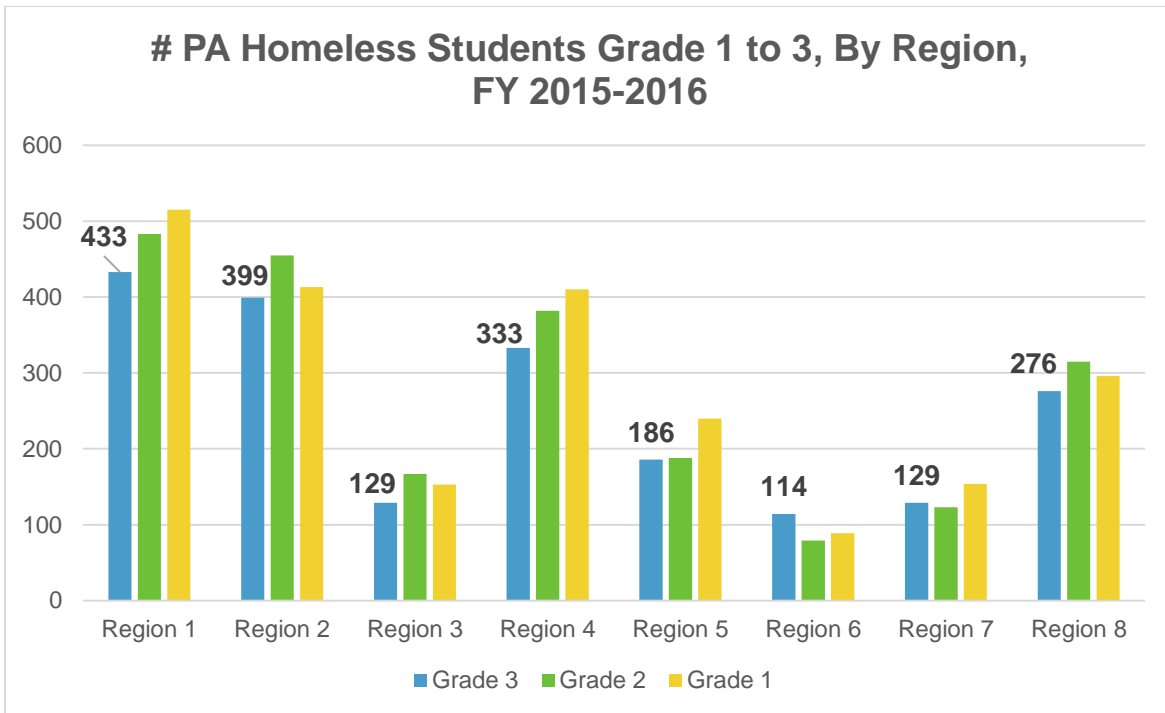


Birth to Kindergarten

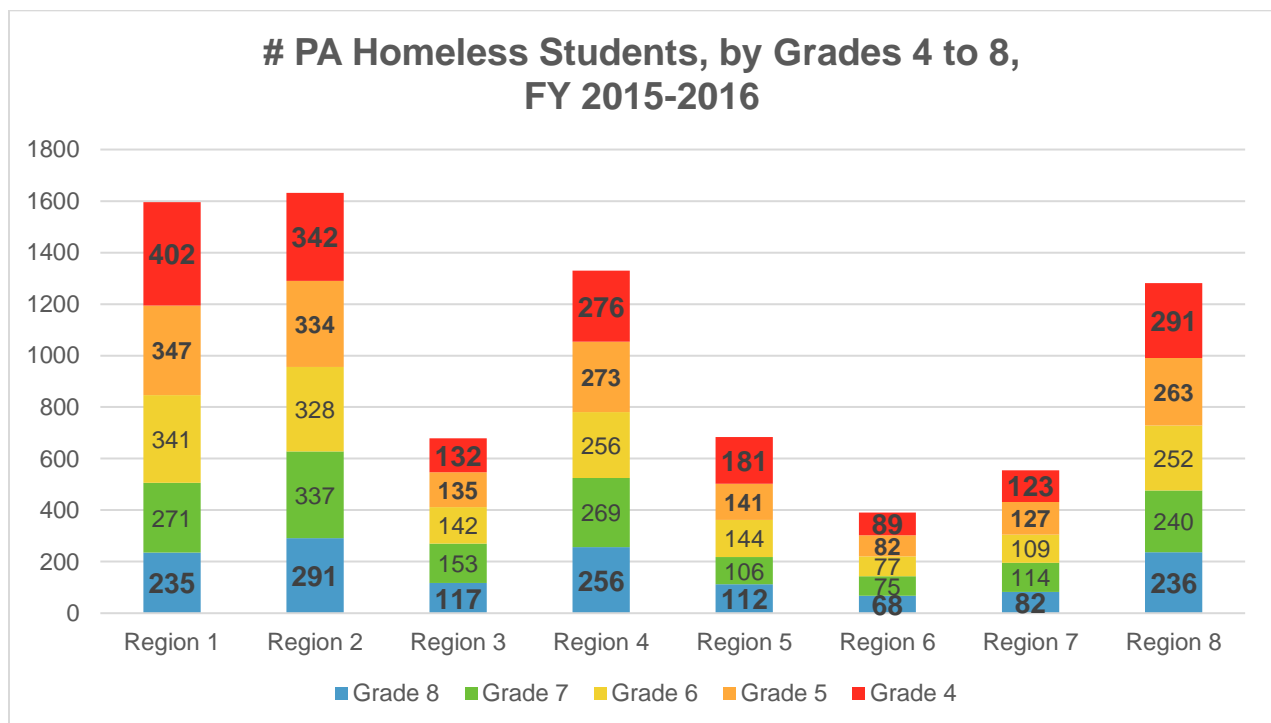
- **Region 1** (Philadelphia) has the highest number of **children birth through kindergarten**, followed by **Region 2**.



Grades 1, 2, 3

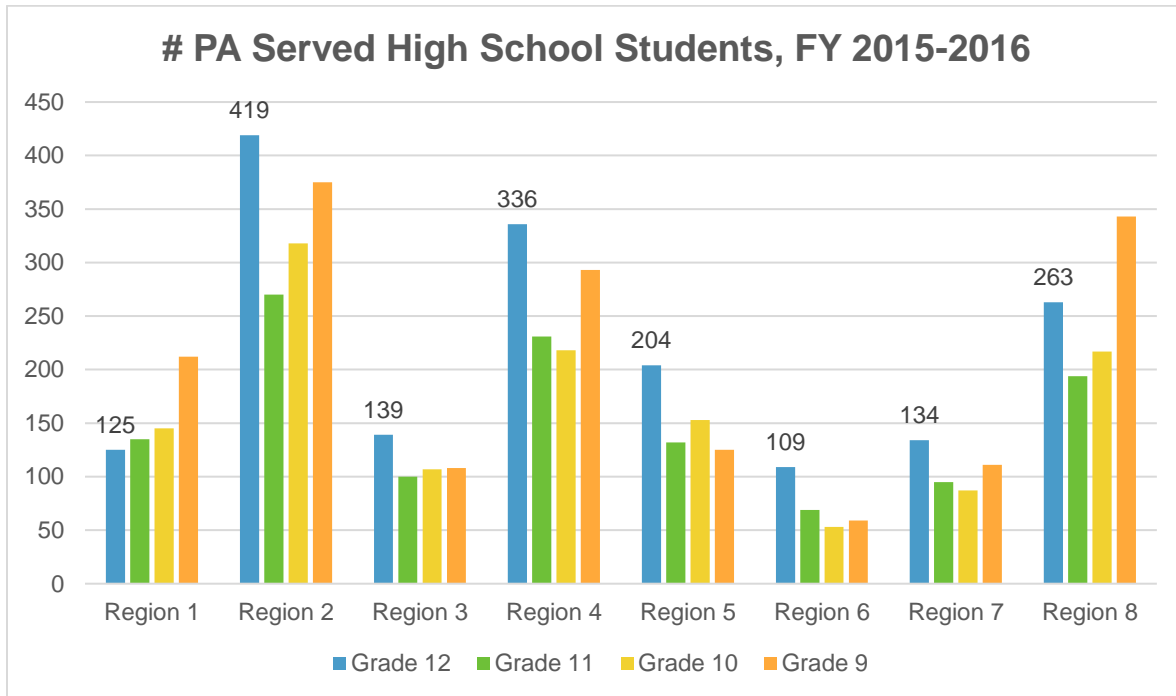


Grades 4 – 8



High School

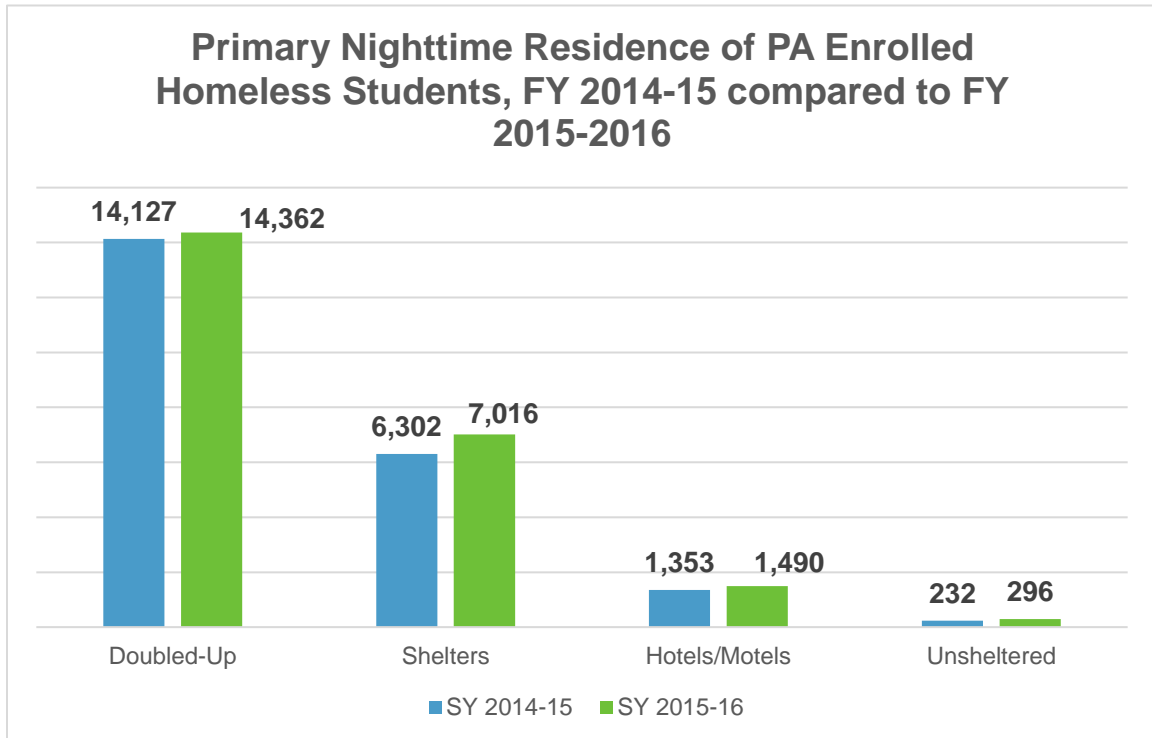
- **5,879** high school students were homeless in FY 2015-2016.
- **Region 2 has the highest number** of homeless high school students.
- **Six other regions** have identified more homeless **seniors** than Philadelphia.
- Region 1 (Philadelphia) has **only the fourth** highest number of homeless high school students.



2015-16 Served High School Students									
Grades	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	State
Grade 12	125	419	139	336	204	109	134	263	1,729
Grade 11	135	270	100	231	132	69	95	194	1,226
Grade 10	145	318	107	218	153	53	87	217	1,298
Grade 9	212	375	108	293	125	59	111	343	1,626
Total =	617	1,382	454	1,078	614	290	427	1,017	5,879

Nighttime Residence: Knowing where homeless students reside helps provide information to school personnel for their outreach strategies. It would also assist those working for **Continuum of Care programs** who are addressing family homelessness.

- The **overwhelming majority** of homeless students are living **doubled up** at a rate of almost double from students found in shelters.

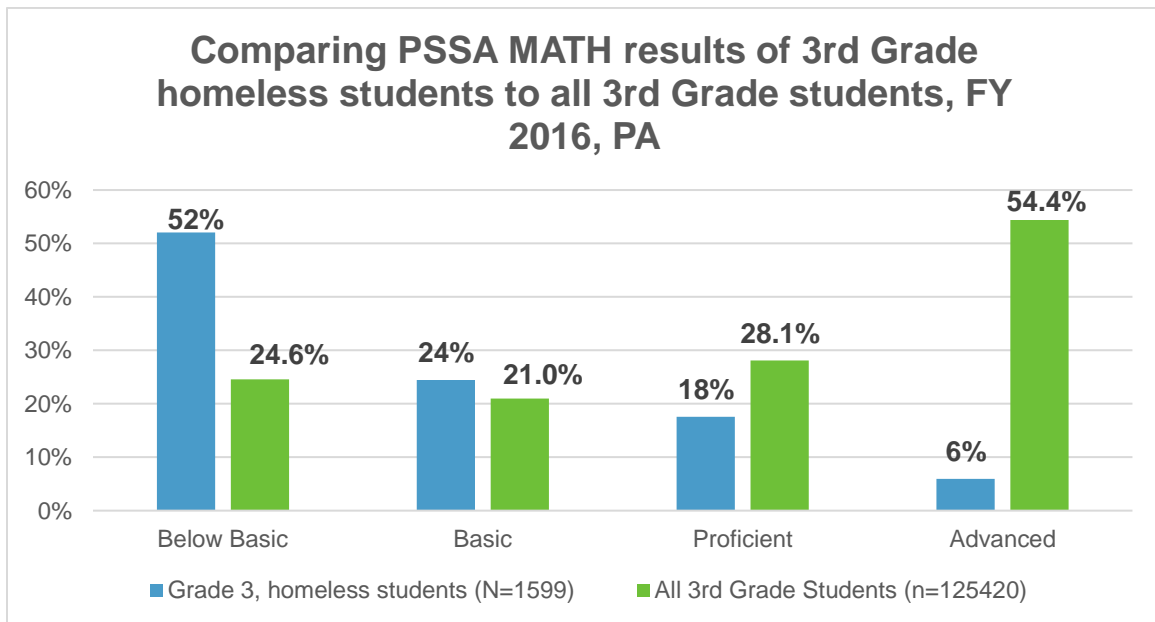
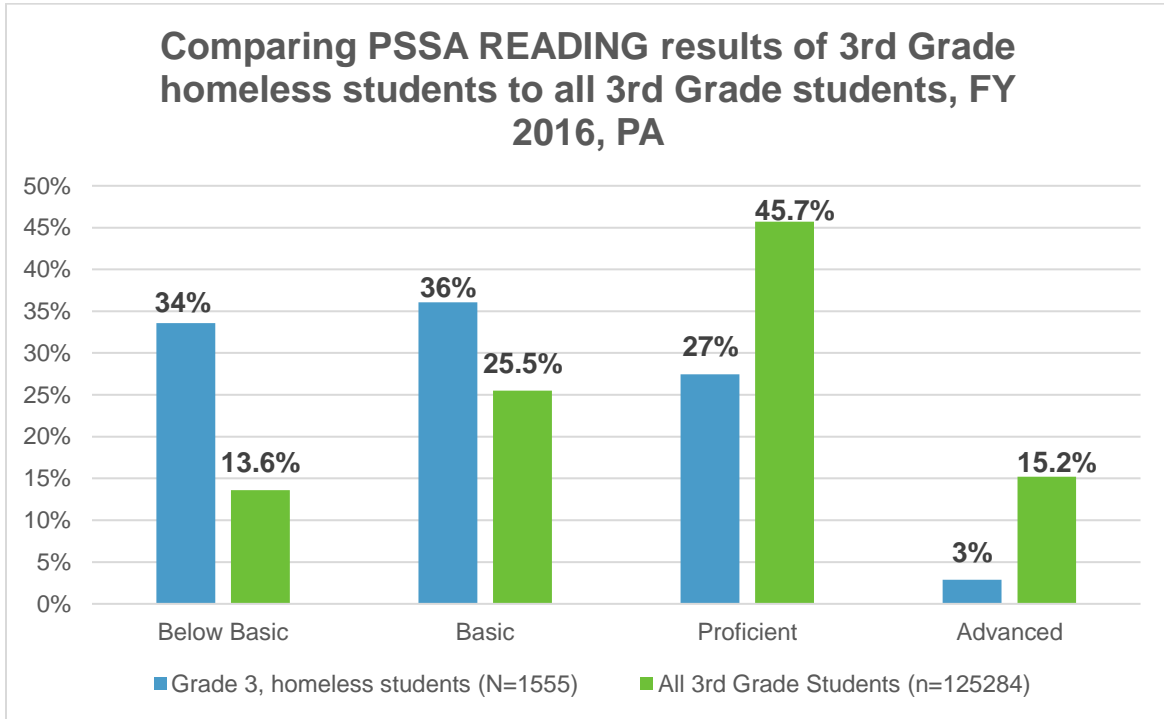


Academic Achievement

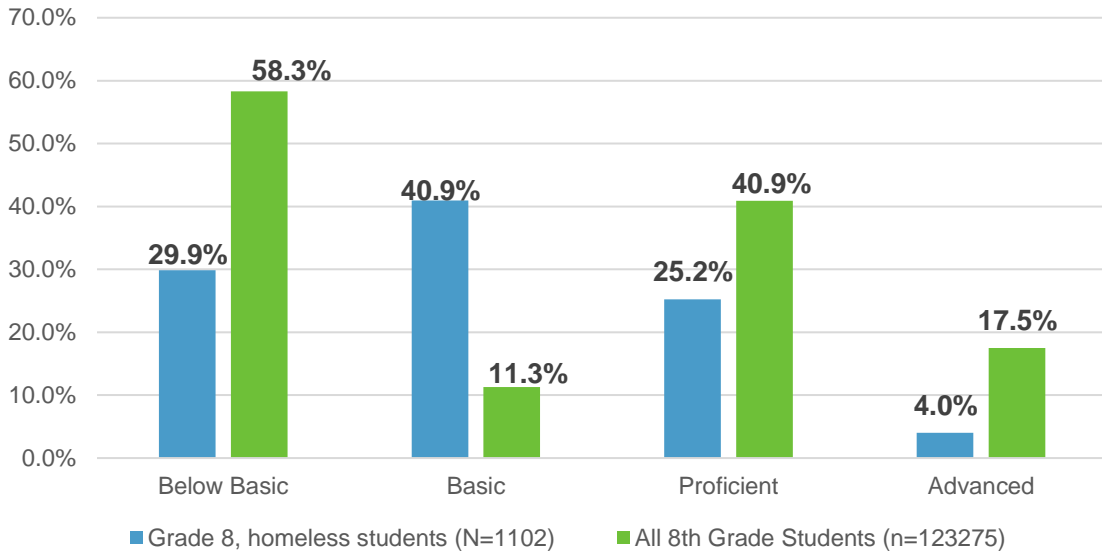
- Reviewing a sample of homeless students by 3rd and 8th grades, PDE showed how the students scored on standardized tests. Homeless students in the **3rd and 8th grades** have **fallen** very far behind their peers.
- A number of strategies around the state are focused on **increasing participation of homeless young children** into high quality early learning programs, which could affect the outcomes of the 3rd grade reading and math scores on standardized testing.
- **Strategies to increase** high school graduation rates might want to consider new interventions

for homeless students.

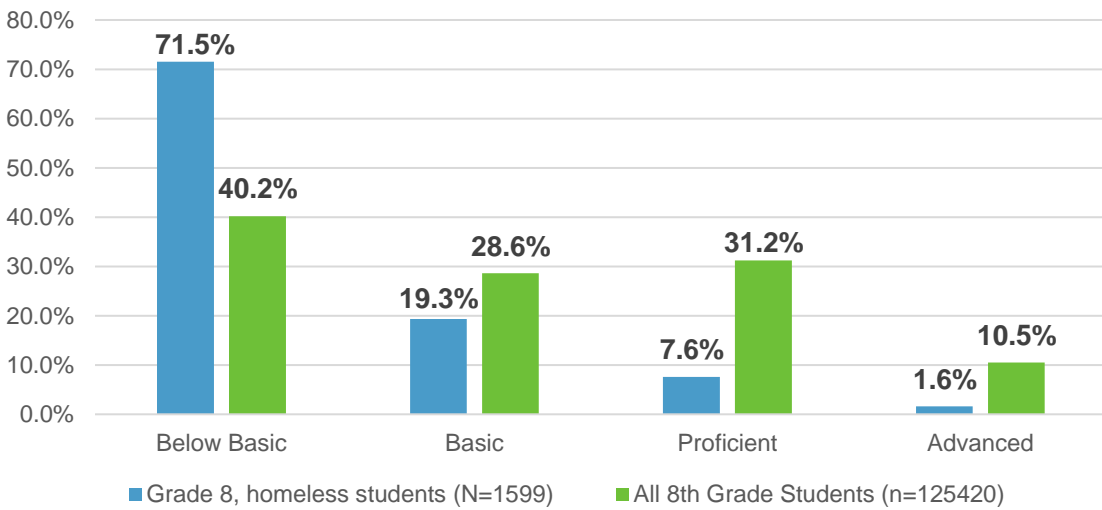
- Source of 2016 PSSA scores is Pennsylvania Department of Education: <http://bit.ly/2FhKH36>



Comparing PSSA READING results of 8th Grade homeless students to all 8th Grade students, FY 2016, PA



Comparing PSSA MATH results of 8th Grade homeless students to all 8th Grade students, FY 2016, PA



The PA Department of Education’s evaluators made these statements:

1. **The number of children/youth experiencing homelessness for more than one year** is increasing slightly each year.
2. **Transportation** remains the most common barrier statewide.
3. **65% of students remain in their schools.** 20% had enrolled in two schools. 4% had more than 2 moves.
4. **Coordination between schools and agencies** is the single highest service delivery funded by the McKinney Vento homeless education funding stream, followed by school supplies, clothing, and transportation.
5. **77%** of enrolled homeless students were documented as receiving **Title 1** services and those services were often instructional support services.

The People’s Emergency Center’s mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change in West Philadelphia. PEC offers more than 250 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology coursework. PEC seeks to change the life trajectory for the women and children who seek its services and inspire them to aspire to new heights. All inquiries can be sent to policy@pec-cares.org.

ⁱ Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services