The Missing Link: Housing Instability and Chronic Student Absenteeism

Community Development Week
How We Conceptualize Ed Policy Problems in Detroit

- The most pervasive problems of student enrollment, engagement, and attendance must be understood *ecologically*.
- This means that problems that seem like those of individual behavior or resources likely have roots in systems, policies, communities, and relationships.
- Our work seeks to uncover those root causes and work with our partners to develop research- and community-informed policy solutions, using continuous improvement methods.

Chronic Absenteeism

What is it?

Missing 10% or more of enrolled school days, or about 18 days in a regular 180-day school year.

Why does it matter?

- Chronic absenteeism is both a proxy indicator for youth wellness and a contributing factor to future youth success in school.
- This means that how much school Detroit children miss tells us important information about how well their families and communities are doing. It also points toward what schools and social services may need to do to support them.
Detroit has - the highest rate of chronic absence and - the most challenging barriers to attendance of any major U.S. city
70% of DPSCD students were chronically absent in the 2020-21 school year, compared to 62% in 2018-19.

54% were severely chronically absent.
Myths about Why Students Miss so Much School in Detroit

• Detroit parents and students don’t care about school
• Detroit parents and students don’t know the importance of strong attendance
• Detroit families enroll in schools too far away from home
• Detroit schools are not putting enough effort in to increase attendance

Why Students Miss so Much School in Detroit

• Most students do not live within walking distance to school, and 1/3 of Detroit families do not own a car
• Half of Detroit-serving schools offer no transportation for Detroit students
• Nearly ¼ of Detroit students switch schools each year, making them about 3.5 times more likely to be chronically absent
• Schools under-identify housing unstable students who need transition support
To Better Understand Student Experiences with Housing Instability, We Conducted a Representative Survey of Detroit Students

- Survey of students in DPSCD and about 40% of the city’s charter schools
  - Survey administered in January 2022
  - Only includes students enrolled in Detroit schools (i.e., not Detroit students enrolled in the suburbs)

- Excludes alternative schools, special education centers, and strict discipline academies (which each may enroll homeless and housing-unstable students as well)
Definitions

- Detroit students: attend a school in Detroit

- Housing Unstable: experiencing homelessness at the time of the survey (January 2022) or evicted in the prior year (2021)

- Homeless or Experiencing Homelessness: living with a family or friend in temporary and/or inadequate circumstances (i.e., doubled up) or in another temporary situation (e.g., motel or hotel, shelter or emergency housing, in a car, in a campground or public place, moving from place to place)
Identification of Housing Unstable Students in Detroit
For over a decade, around 2% of Detroit students have been identified as homeless.
In our survey, we identified 13% of Detroit students as housing unstable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Status</th>
<th>Pct. of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Unstable</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Housing Unstable</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Housing</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most homeless students in Detroit are doubled up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Type</th>
<th>Pct. of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Doubled Up”</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Homeless Situation</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many homeless students in Detroit are persistently homeless.

Housing Duration by Housing Type for Housing Unstable Students in Detroit, Jan. 2022

- **Less than 6 months**: 30%
- **6 months to 1 year**: 10%
- **Between 1 and 2 years**: 5%
- **More than 2 years**: 60%

Legend:
- **Doubled Up**
- **Other Homeless**
Student and Family Characteristics for Housing Unstable Students
In Detroit, fewer Hispanic students are housing unstable than Black students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pct. Housing Unstable</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>5.9%***</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***statistically significantly different than Black students, p<0.001

“Other race” includes white or Middle Eastern/North African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and multiracial students.
Housing instability is high for all grade levels in Detroit.

Percentage of Detroit Students who are Housing Unstable by Grade Level, Jan. 2022

- Lower Elementary (K-2): 15%
- Upper Elementary (3-5): 10%
- Middle School (6-8): 15%
- High School (9-12): 10%
DPSCD neighborhood schools enroll more housing unstable students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DPSCD Neighborhood</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>DPSCD Selective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Housing Unstable</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>10.6%***</td>
<td>7.1%***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***statistically significantly different than DPSCD neighborhood school students, p<0.001
Housing unstable families have lower incomes, less employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Other Housing Unstable</th>
<th>Stable Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>$18,270.08***</td>
<td>$20,006.49***</td>
<td>$30,390.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Employed</td>
<td>64.9%***</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Full-Time</td>
<td>54.0%*</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*statistically significantly different than stable housing students, p<0.05
***statistically significantly different than stable housing students, p<0.001
Many housing unstable families are not receiving social services to which they are entitled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Service</th>
<th>Pct. Housing Unstable...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Currently Receiving</td>
<td>Previously Received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC+</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8 Vouchers</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+For parents of kindergarten students only.
Example of parent losing social service benefits while they were experiencing homelessness:

SNAP: “I had missed the review because I was trying to find somewhere to stay.”

Disability insurance: “I guess they been tried to contact me through the mail and I didn’t have an address. I’m appealing that right now…”
Housing unstable students less often enroll in nearest school than stably housed students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Status</th>
<th>Attends Nearest School</th>
<th>Distance (mi) to Nearest School</th>
<th>Distance (mi) to School Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Housing Unstable</td>
<td>5.9%*</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Housing</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*statistically significantly different than homeless students, p<0.05.
Housing Instability and Transportation
Parents of housing unstable students are less likely to have a car.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Has Car</th>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Other Housing Unstable</th>
<th>Stable Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>statistically significantly different than stable housing students, p&lt;0.01</strong></td>
<td>45.9%***</td>
<td>55.1%**</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Housing unstable students more likely to rely on someone else for ride.

Frequent Transportation to School (AM) for Detroit Students by Housing Status, Jan. 2022

- **Your Car**: Homeless and Other Housing Unstable are the highest, with Stable Housing being the lowest.
- **Someone Else’s Car**: Similar pattern as Your Car.
- **Someone Else Drove**: Stable Housing is the lowest, with Homeless and Other Housing Unstable being higher.
- **School Bus**: Stable Housing has the highest percentage, followed by Homeless and Other Housing Unstable.
- **Public Bus (DDOT)**: Stable Housing is significantly higher than Homeless and Other Housing Unstable.
- **Walk or Bike**: Stable Housing is the highest, with Homeless and Other Housing Unstable being lower.
- **Taxi or Rideshare App**: Stable Housing has the highest percentage, followed by Homeless and Other Housing Unstable.
School buses and gas cards would be most helpful, but slightly less for homeless students.

Helpful Transportation for Detroit Students by Housing Status, Jan. 2022

- School Bus w/ Home Pick-up
- School Bus w/ 0.25mi Pick-up
- Coordinating Carpool
- Safe Walking Route
- Gift Cards for Gas
- Gift Cards for Taxi or Rideshare
- Bus Cards (DDOT)

Pct. of Students: 0% to 100%

Legend:
- Homeless
- Other Housing Unstable
- Stable Housing
Thank you!