

# Transcript of Understanding Dropout Prevention: Strategies to Support Children and Youth Experiencing

Lynda: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Lynda Becker, Youth Development Coordinator with Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program at the Center for Schools and Communities. I will be your moderator for this session and will be the person monitoring the questions that come through the questions pane today. We are pleased to provide you today with information, best practices and resources to assist you in supporting school success and high school graduation for students experiencing homelessness.

We have two presenters, two co-presenters for our webinar today. Jacinda Goodwin is a Program Specialist at the National Center for Homeless Education. Prior to her role at NCHE, Jacinda worked for the main department of education as their McKinney-Vento state coordinator. In addition to homeless education, Jacinda has also worked in the areas of truancy, dropout, alternative education, child welfare and juvenile justice. Jacinda has a Master's degree in Clinical Behavioral Psychology and has served as an adjunct professor of psychology and mental health for the past 10 years.

Dr. Sandy Addis joined the National Dropout Prevention Center network staff as associate director in May of 2013 and currently serves as director. He holds an Ed.D in Educational Leadership from South Carolina State University. He has 44 years of experience in public education in a variety of roles that include teacher, counselor, coach, principal, system level administrator, and director of a regional educational service agency. He has designed and administered a variety of dropout prevention initiatives that include afterschool programs, counseling and service learning. I'll now pass it over to Jacinda and Sandy to start the presentation.

Jacinda: Hi, everybody. Thank you for being here with us. So today's webinar is on Understanding Dropout Prevention: Strategies to support homeless children and youth, and it's brought to you today by the National Center for Homeless Education and the National Dropout Prevention Center. And-

Sandy: Thank you, Lynda.

Jacinda: Lynda did a wonderful job of introducing both Sandy and I, but I wanted to make sure that you heard both of our voices as you will hear us both for the next hour and a half. So as Lynda indicated, my name is Jacinda Goodwin and I am a program specialist here at the National Center for Homeless Education and will be presenting with Sandy. Sandy, would you go ahead and please introduce yourself.

Sandy: Thank you, Jacinda. I'm very pleased to be part of this webinar and thank you Lynda, and thank you participants. I'm Sandy Addis. I am director of the National Dropout Prevention Center.

Jacinda: So I want to explain to folks a little bit about each national organization today. So the National Center for Homeless Education or NCHE, as many of you know us by, we

operate the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance center for the federal education homeless ... For homeless children and youth, or the EHCY program. NCHE develops and we make available a variety of resources to assist educators, service providers and any other interested stakeholders in their work as they promote educational access and success for homeless children and youth, from preschool all the way through higher education. So we invite you to visit our website, contact our helpline with homeless education related questions. You can download or order any of our products, attend any of our webinars, sign up for homeless education listserv, or you can also engage with us on social media. Sandy?

Sandy: Jacinda, thank you. The National Dropout Prevention Center has been around for 32 years. We are the nation's oldest and currently the most utilized resource for dropout prevention information, tools, and assistance. We exist to support those practitioners in the field who work daily to try to improve outcomes in school and graduation success for our students, particularly for at-risk students and certainly that includes our homeless students.

The National Dropout Prevention Center provides a variety of resources, including technical assistance to states, to school systems, to individual schools, conferences and forum events, research guides, practice guides and consultation to help practitioners do their work and do it well for students. I invite you to visit our website, which is simply [dropoutprevention.org](http://dropoutprevention.org). We have a tremendous set of resources there that you can use that apply to a lot of different sub groups including homeless students, so thank you.

Jacinda: Thank you, Sandy. So let's take a look at where we're heading today. We have a lot of content to cover and we've got some time, but we want to make sure that we cover everything and we have some time to have some Q&A. So today we're going to look at understanding family and youth homelessness. We're going to make sure that we understand the definition of McKinney-Vento homeless. We're going to talk a little bit about unaccompanied homeless youth. The effects and risk factors of homelessness. We're going to review graduation dropout data. Provide an overview of the 15 effective strategies of dropout prevention. We're going to talk about the different ways that folks can support students experiencing homelessness and like I said, we are going to pause a couple of different times throughout the webinar today to have some Q&A with folks. So that's where we're going today.

Before we look at the definition in statute, I wanted to provide a little context as to why families may become homeless and some of the dynamics of what that looks like for our families. So overwhelmingly, family homelessness is an economic issue. So the most common cause of the family homelessness are economic challenges, and that include lack of affordable housing. So yearly, the National Low Income Housing Coalition puts out a report that basically details that in many communities, the rise of housing costs far outpaces the rise in wages.

It's very difficult for many of our families to afford housing in many communities across the nation, and that's related to experiencing poverty, low paying jobs, unemployment or under-employment, and also a lot of families there's data that comes out of HUD, the Housing and Urban Development that shows families in HUD funded shelters are often

headed by a single mother with young children. This can impact the mother's ability to work. The family is relying on a single income to pay for all expenses, which can be incredibly challenging for families, but also sometimes health challenges can cause homelessness for families and that can include a disability that may impact a parent's ability to work. Mental health or substance abuse issues, and then finally domestic violence can sometimes cause homelessness for families.

So we're going to look at some common causes of youth homelessness. So abuse and neglect within the home, such that the youth is forced from the home by the parent or guardian or the youth feels that he or she must leave the home in order to remain safe. Acute conflict. It can include conflict related to a student's sexual orientation or gender identity. Economic challenges that may create pressure for older children to become financially independent, so folks may not be able to stay together for whatever reason and parents may require their older children to go out and become financially independent on their own and we know that that can be a significant challenge and many cannot do that, which can end up with youth becoming homeless, and also shelter policies. This is clues when there may be insufficient space that can accommodate a whole family or when adolescent boys are directed to adult shelters.

So again, before we look at some statutory definitions, just want to talk about understanding that definition of homeless. When we look at the actual statutory definition of McKinney-Vento, for many of you who work in the field you may be familiar with this already, but again, I do want to do a little context setting before we move forward. So I want to explain a little bit why what you see from the statutory definition in a little bit is broader than the common conceptions of homelessness. Many people think of homelessness is someone who is either living on the street or someone who lives in a homeless shelter, and while it does represent what homelessness looks like for some people, it certainly does not represent what homelessness looks like for everyone, and there are reasons for that, and one main reason again is shelters are not always an option.

Not all communities have shelters, but even in communities where shelters do exist, many times there's simply not enough space for everyone who needs help, and so shelters unfortunately fairly regularly have to turn people away who are seeking assistance because they don't have any space. So policies can sometimes make things very difficult for families. For example, some shelters may not allow teen boys, so they may have to go to an adult shelter. There can be state limits like 30, 60, 90 days and then the family needs to find another place to stay. Sometimes shelters have curfews, which can impact a parent's work schedule if a family has to be in the shelter by a certain period of time and out by a certain period of time.

So what we find is that many of our families and youth where no shelter options may be available, they're really going to do whatever they can do to avoid sleeping on the street. So they may ask someone that they know if they can stay with them until they figure something out. Family and youth may not know what else to do or where else to turn and so sometimes these arrangements may end up working out for everyone involved, but more often than not these shared housing arrangements are unsustainable for long

periods of time and they may cause a significant amount of financial pressure and other pressures on the host family and they can change household dynamics.

So now that we've done a little of that context setting and have a better understanding of what we're talking about when we talk about family and youth homelessness, I want to make sure that we look at the statutory definition. So in the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless, this is used by U.S. public schools and our definition reads: "Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence." And I want to just draw folks attention really quick to that bold lettering there. This is often viewed as the guiding phrase of our definition. And then the definition continues and gives examples of living arrangements that would be considered homeless because they're not fixed, regular and adequate. So it reads: "Including children and youth sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason."

So again, I want to draw your attention to the fact the definition doesn't just mean the sharing the housing of other persons and then stops. There's some qualifying language there that's really important. We're not referring to every shared housing situation, but rather those shared arrangements that are due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reasons.

"Living in hotels, motels, trailer parks or campgrounds, due to the lack of alternative accommodations." So again I want to draw your attention to that qualifying language. Pay close attention to the "due to lack of alternative and adequate accommodations." So really there's no other suitable place for the family to go. "Living in an emergency or transitional shelter or are abandoned in hospitals. Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations for human beings. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings." And of course, "Migratory children living in the above circumstances." And you're going to hear we're going to get into a little bit of the term, "unaccompanied youth". This include the homeless child or youth not the physical custody of a parent or guardian, and you're going to hear this term throughout this webinar.

So therefore I just want to spend a little bit of time on unaccompanied homeless youth. According to the act, unaccompanied youth includes a homeless child or youth again, not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. So it's very, very important to note that the definition refers to physical custody as opposed to legal. So oftentimes when youth have either been forced from home or they've run away from home, his or her parents or guardians maintain legal custody, but not physical custody. So in practical terms, "not in the physical custody of" refers to when a youth is not under the care of a parent or guardian.

So just so we can make sure that we are all on the same page, we're really always wanting to look at the child or youth's living arrangements to make sure it meets the definition of McKinney-Vento homeless, so lacking that fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and then you want to look at whether or not the youth is in the physical custody of the parent or guardian, and so we have provided a link for you. NHCE does have a unaccompanied youth eligibility flow chart that most people find

really helpful when working with and parsing out those determinations for an unaccompanied homeless youth situation. Sandy, I will turn things over to you right now.

Sandy: Thank you, Jacinda. You discussed and enumerated a lot of risk factors and we know that the more risk factors a student faces, the more likely they are to do poorly in school and the less likely they are to eventually graduate. When you look at a group of kids like the faces you see on your screen, it's pretty hard to tell who the most at-risk kids are just from their faces.

You really can't tell much about who's going to be successful, who's going to graduate and who's not, but if you know some things, if we go the next slide and you know certain things about these young people for example, if you'll activate some of the characteristics there, if we know that a student averages 15 office referrals for disruptive behavior, we know a student hasn't passed math for two years, we know that a student's new to the community and the family has moved, we know that a student has been absent for 22 days the last school year, or in our case, if we know that the family of the child is homeless for whatever reasons then we can certainly begin to predict and anticipate that the more of these risk factors a student faces, the less likely they will succeed in school and the more likely they are to not complete school, and of course homelessness is not only a risk factor, but it usually represents several underlying risk factors.

Jacinda mentioned a number of causes of homelessness; such as poverty, such as dysfunctional family, such as mental illness, such as abuse and neglect, and those in themselves are risk factors, but when they culminate in a homeless situation, then the risk factors are compounded. So there's a very close link here between homelessness and non-school completion.

Jacinda: Thank you, Sandy. And so we talked about the effects of homelessness, so we know our children and youth are experiencing mobility, some very high mobility and it has significant trickle-down effects. So we're looking at our homeless children and youth having higher than average rates of emotional, behavioral and health problems, developmental delays, school problems, they're facing hunger and food insecurity, and many of them are witnessing violence in their homes. We know that there's a correlation between ACE's, Adverse Childhood Experiences and experiencing homelessness as an adult, and we know that our children who are experiencing homelessness have difficulty in school. Sandy?

Sandy: Jacinda, research at the National Dropout Prevention Center over a number of years has identified 21 categories of risk factors. Risk factors being situations or conditions that are correlated, we could probably say caused, but we will to be correct we'll say correlated, with non-school completion, and if you look at these 21 categories of risk factors, many of them are the same risk factors, or they are a category within which there are risk factors that cause homelessness, so there's a very close overlap. If you sort these 21 categories of risk factors into four domains, whether they reside in the individual, in the family, in the community, or in the school, you'll note that if you go to the next slide, you'll see that there are actually a third of the risk factors fall within the school domain and then another group, which I believe is 24%, fall within the family. Now that's over 50%,

and so what we're saying there is that of all the risk factor categories that correlate with the lack of school success and non-school completion, over half fall within either the family or the school.

Now historically, we have assigned this issue of students not graduating for whatever reason to the school. We've said well, where do they drop out of? School. Must be a school problem. What level of school do they typically drop out of? High school. Must be a high school problem. And on we go. So we narrow the focus of the dropout issue often just to the schoolhouse and even just to the high school, but yet it's a family issue, it's a community issue, and it's an issue that falls within some of the characteristics of the individual. So one of the first things we have to do if we're going to address this situation, particularly for homeless students is we have to engage participants and assistance from people and from agencies and entities that are not inside the schoolhouse. We have to engage the family, we have to serve the family.

And so many of you that are participating in this webinar, I know you work in those areas, and so we have to have you out there doing this work and we have to have you connecting with the family, and we have to convince the community that many entities also have to understand and assist us with this problem.

Jacinda: So thank you. We know that our homeless children and youth face some unique educational challenges and I just make sure we highlight some of those for folks. We know that students experiencing homelessness are experiencing a significant amount of stress, which we know can interfere with development, and we know especially for younger children, we know there are disproportionate rates of special education needs among our homeless children and youth. Our families are facing significant financial issues, so they're struggling to meet basic needs; food, shelter, those things like that, basic survival and unable to purchase school supplies to help students be able to complete projects and assignments in school, so students may fall behind because they may not be submitting their projects or whatever or be able to do their homework because they can't purchase the supplies that they need in order to be able to do that.

And there are some logistical issues as well here. Our homeless students we know some of them are extremely highly mobile students, they're lacking a space to study. There's no place for them to go to open up some books or a computer to open to do the work that they need to do because they are just trying to figure out where they're going that night. Again, they may need some materials that they just simply don't have access to, again it goes back to the financial issues, may not be able to purchase. That high mobility alone can make attendance incredibly difficult with students who are moving from place, to place, to place, and we know that our students are often missing documentation that they may need in school as well. So this is just a few educational challenges.

We know that our students are experiencing anger and depression, fear, anxiety. They may feel isolated and hopeless. There are significant family and life things going on. Personal and social skills may be impacted. They may be having emotional problems. Difficulty with reasoning. Often lacking support internally and externally in the school. They may have a negative attitude about themselves or others, low self-esteem, and

they may experience a lack of past success in and out of school. Sandy, did you have anything you wanted to add to those?

Sandy: Yes, Jacinda. Obviously, these are all additional risk factors. I think what I'm hearing is that we have risk factors that place a student in a homeless situation, then we have the homeless situation that generates other behaviors, other attitudes, other concerns that are also risk factors, so the homeless student faces a barrage of risk factors.

Jacinda: They most certainly do. So we can stop right here for a moment and we can turn it over to our moderator Lynda, to see if there are any questions that folks may have for Sandy and I related to some of the content that we covered. I know we covered a lot quickly, but we also want to make sure that you have an opportunity to ask us some questions, so I will turn it over to Lynda and we'll see what she has to say.

Lynda: Thanks, Jacinda. Actually the only question that's come through so far and I just want to remind everyone that you can put any question that you have in the questions pane and we will certainly try to get to it, but the only question that we've had so far is the access to the slides. So I want to remind everyone that you can get to the slides in the control panel, the handout is the slides and we did send them out via e-mail to everyone who had registered earlier today and they will be sent out with the recording after the webinar and will also be posted on the center's website. So those will definitely be available, but we don't have any programmatic questions so far.

Jacinda: Okay, so why don't we take that opportunity and just definitely want to encourage folks to take advantage of the fact that you have two National Centers at your disposal to answer any questions or express any thoughts or Sandy and I can dialogue if you just have some thoughts you want us to pass around, we're happy to do that, but please e-mail your thoughts, your questions and anything that you would like to know more about related to this content, and Sandy and I will be more than happy to spend some time answering your questions, but if we don't have any We will go forward-

Lynda: Jacinda, Jacinda.

Jacinda: Yeah.

Lynda: Two came in while you were talking.

Jacinda: Via live, all right.

Lynda: All right, so the first one is from Whitney and she's asking, "If parents do not openly give information about homelessness, how do you think I should go about regularly seeking out if there are students experiencing homelessness in my school?" Whitney, that's actually a question that would be better answered by your regional staff, and if you don't know who that is if you let me know what county you're in we can get that to you. Jacinda, do you think that we should do that alternately as opposed to a question for this particular webinar?

Jacinda: It was just throughout some coordination and outreach and sometimes folks may not recognize that they're homeless, or may not know the definition. So making sure that

folks are aware of and their rights and that they can receive under the McKinney-Vento eligibility sometimes there's a stigma, a stereotype and folks don't want to be identified, but definitely reach out to the folks in your area who can help you do some education and outreach for folks who may feel more comfortable in providing you with some information if you need it.

Lynda: Okay. Thanks, Jacinda. And there is an eligibility question as well as another question about services for an 18 year-old unaccompanied youth. For Ethan and Ashley, let me know what county you're in and I'll let you know who your regional coordinator is. Again, the eligibility questions are really beyond the scope of this webinar today. And that's it for now.

Jacinda: Okay, perfect. Thank you all so much and so we will move forward, and Sandy?

Sandy: Yes. Jacinda, if you look at this map, and it is several years old, but this map is a depiction of the school systems in the country and each school system being depicted by a small dot of color, and the darker the blue the higher the graduation rate up into the 90's, and the greener the green, the lower the graduation rate, even down into the low 70's, and of course the white spot means the data was not useful that year, but we know that graduation rates range widely across this country. If you look at a four year cohort graduation rate, which is now our standard way of looking at it, you'll find that we have states with graduation rates in the 70's and we have states with graduation rates in the 90's and we have school districts the same way.

Now here's the question: Does homelessness vary from place to place as does graduation rates? Well, it certainly does. We know that we have school systems that would report to us, they have maybe a 1% or less homeless population, but we also know that we have locations in this country with a much higher population of homeless kids up into the maybe even 10%. I was in one state working with an alternative population in an inner city setting and they estimated that they had 20% of their alternative school students that would fall into the homeless category. So we certainly know that it's out there and we know that it varies. Now, then the issue becomes what's the connection to graduation rates. So let's take a look at the next slide.

Well, we know that kids dropping out for whatever reason is a major problem. We don't have to be convinced of that, but we certainly need to make sure that our support folks around us, our agencies, our communities and our educators understand that when a kid drops out of school they're probably qualified for less than 90% of all jobs. It's not a good future for these kids. We go to the next slide, please. We know that dropouts earn less, pay less in taxes, rely more on public health, are more involved in the criminal justice system, more likely to use welfare systems, and actually have a shorter life expectancies. The next slide shows us some medical situations.

We know that cutting the number of dropouts in half nationally would save billions of dollars in Medicaid spending, particularly in the areas of alcoholism, heart disease, obesity, smoking. We also know that the future of these kids' health-wise, the medical expenses are much less and if you'll advance that slide a little further and one more click we'll note that on the average, high school graduates live six to nine years longer than a



high school dropout. If we can help a kid complete school, we're adding to their life. It is a life expectancy issue. Now, if you think about this, six to nine years longer life is a major thing.

One of my favorite quotes is, "There's nothing greater as a gift that we could give to a community than a higher graduation rate." And you also when you see the alcoholism and you see these other issues and you see the economic impact of the kid that drops out, then later in life, you begin to see a circular pattern here. We begin to see that homeless students are more at-risk, less likely to graduate. If they don't graduate, then their lives are likely to be impacted with these same risk factors, which could impact ... make their children homeless. And so homelessness may be a cyclical thing that we're seeing here. Next slide, please.

So what can we do about it? Well, let's take a look just at grades. This is a chart that reports a study that was done several years ago, a large study in Chicago of ninth graders, and across the bottom of the chart you see the freshman report card grade average, just pure teacher given grades averaged together in a report card period. And up the side table you will see the graduation rates of these students. Now, these are freshman, so the graduation rate was four years later. It's not surprising that in this study, a ninth grader with an A average or a B plus average had a 97 or 98% chance of graduating four years later. What is interesting is that when you drop down to a C average, then the graduation rate drops to 72% four years later, and when you drop down to the D range, it gets pretty bleak.

Now, you can imagine that the homeless circumstances that we described earlier that Jacinda eluded to such as not having materials, not having a place to learn, not having ... Even if we issued them a Chromebook or a school-issued laptop, no place to charge it, no place to get on the Internet, no place to learn, no time to learn, no peaceful situation to learn in. That's going to bring down grades. And so when grades drop, four years later, graduation rates drop. Now, for the homeless child if you're working with one of these children or if a counselor is or a group of teachers are focusing on the needs of a homeless child, if we can take that child from a C average to a B average, we're going to increase their chances of eventual graduation significantly. So grades are a big deal for graduation, just pure teacher assigned report card grades as this study shows. Show the next slide.

The same thing is true of attendance. Go ahead and advance that slide please, Jacinda. This was a study that was done in the state of Georgia and it was reported out in 2016. In the state of Georgia, they looked at the attendance rates of eighth graders for the whole state, this represents the entire state of Georgia and in the eighth grade they classified students as having zero days absent, one to five, six to ten, 11 to 14, or more than 15 days absent, and five years later they looked at the graduation rates of these same students. Now, it's no surprise but it's interesting to note that students who had one to five days absence in the eighth grade had an 80% graduation rate, which at that point was right on the state average. Students with 11 to 14 days dropped significantly down into the 61% graduation rate, and students with over 15 days absent in the eighth grade had only a 38% graduation rate five years later.

Now obviously, attendance is an issue for homeless students. We know that one of the big barriers to being un-housed, poorly housed and randomly and varying housing situations over time is school attendance, and so to the extent that we can help these homeless youths be better attended and be able to attend school, then the graduation outcomes increase significantly. A lot of times educators believe that attendance means that you learn more because you're there more. There's more to it than that. Attendance also means that they are in the presence of caring adults. They're in a welcoming environment hopefully, they're in a situation where they can be engaged with people, where they have a place to be that's comfortable and a place to be that's not just physically comfortable, but psychological comfortable.

And so to the extent that we can help our homeless youths be at school regularly, we significantly increase their graduation outcomes. Next slide, please. Grade retention. We also know that when kids miss a lot of days, when kids make poor grades, they have a tendency to be retained in a grade. We also know that many states have gateway testing where there are requirements that say you don't read at a certain level at a certain grade you don't go on to the next grade. To the extent that a child is retained, and this is very old data, but it's true today as it was when this data was reported, but when a child is retained in one grade, they increase the risk of not graduating about 40%. Two grade retentions, 90%.

A lot of times we say well, you know, sometimes grade retention can be good for a kid, sometimes it means that they are more competent when they go on to the next grade and we're certainly not saying that students need to be promoted from grade to grade without knowing anything. What we are saying is that we need to find ways to make sure they do know what they need know and they're able to attend sufficiently and able to earn the grades they need to be promoted. If you look at students that are retained, we often say "Well, why is retention such a death knell for graduation?" It's a psychological cloud for a kid and we know that the homeless students already walk under a cloud. They have multiple concerns, they have emotional issues.

Imagine for a minute that we lined up 10 kids in all different grades who have been retained. They're still in school, but they've been retained somewhere in a grade along the way. And if you will ask them what grade are you in, I think you know the answer. They will usually start their response with, you know the answer; "I should be, I'm supposed to be, I was going to be in a certain grade." but they never get out from under that cloud. So if you can eliminate retention for a homeless child, if you can prevent a retention, you're going to significantly increase their chances of graduation. Let's go to the next slide.

Jacinda: I have this one.

Sandy: Okay, go Jacinda.

Jacinda: Can we go back to this one real quick? No, Sandy, can we also just make sure that we highlight the reference to a student suspended one time in the ninth grade is twice as likely to drop out of school?

Sandy: Yes, you certainly may.

Jacinda: Okay, I think-

Sandy: Suspension is a big deal.

Jacinda: Yes, I think that's an incredibly important statistic. It's important to look at around barriers to enrollment access and to engagement, and so suspending a student one time in the ninth grade, this student is twice as likely to drop out, I think that's really important and I'm hoping we have some conversation about that at our next Q&A session.

Lynda: And actually there are some questions that came through if we want to pause for a minute. Some questions just came through about the study regarding the Chicago kiddo's.

Jacinda: Sandy, are you okay with taking some questions right now?

Sandy: Yes, I am, Jacinda.

Jacinda: Okay.

Lynda: Okay, so Damian wanted to know were these grades done in the inner city of Chicago or the surrounding suburbs?

Sandy: I think it was both. I would have to go back and look. I won't speak to that directly without doing a little research, but I think it was both probably.

Lynda: Okay, and then another question about Damian just asking what schools in Chicago. And then a question from Brandon about retention, which you probably can take right now, and that is, "Does retention make it so it is frustrating for students to have to be retained that they just tend to give up?"

Jacinda: Well-

Sandy: Likely.

Jacinda: Right, I think Sandy highlighted how, you know, students in general never ... Students in general when you've been retained, again when you ask them, well then they respond, "I should be in this, but I'm in this." and they do begin sort of that ... It does begin that process or help along that process of disengagement and then you compile that with a student who is dealing with a number of different variables; trying to find a place to sleep that night, living with domestic violence, maybe substance abuse, there may be untreated mental health issues, a variety of different variables, and then the weight of the retention creates a dropout pathway that we're going to talk about next.

Sandy: Jacinda, if I may expand on that a little bit. Traditionally in schools we've assumed that students are promoted from grade to grade every year and we've assumed that they are well housed. We may have done that unconsciously, but I remember when I was a guidance counselor in a high school, I noticed that we had more students to drop out or

withdraw around ceremonial times of the school year. And I noticed that many of those students who withdrew around the ceremonial parts of the school year had been retained. For example, it's time to prepare for the prom. It's time to order caps and gowns. It's time to order our class rings. And so when those students experience that discomfort of not being able to do the ceremonial events when they felt that they should have, and probably more importantly to them, their peers probably thought they should be able to, it was very uncomfortable.

So when a kid's retained, we've got a discomfort factor that we're adding into multiple other discomfort factors if the child is in fact homeless. So I think while we can't say exactly what's in a kid's mind, we know that there's some very high likelihood of some pretty negative things going on when retention or suspension and expulsion occurs.

Jacinda: Exactly. There's definitely ... If we can't prove causation, we can certainly prove a correlation. There's a relationship there, right?

Sandy: That's correct.

Jacinda: [crosstalk 00:40:05]. Lynda, is there anything else before we move forward?

Lynda: No, that's good for now.

Jacinda: Perfect. Okay, so I think between Sandy and I alone we've met a lot of kids. We've been in a lot of schools, we've done a lot of work, and I don't know that we ever met a child that sort of wakes up one day and decides they're just going to drop out of school just out of the blue. Dropping out of school is a long process of disengagement that can begin even before a child enters schools, and I want folks to keep that in their minds because Sandy highlighted the point earlier that often folks think of drop out as a high school issue and it is not. So that process of disengagement is not a one morning as a junior I decided to leave school. It's a long process and it can begin even before the child enters schools, so I really want folks to keep that in their minds.

I want to talk about some push and pull and what we call falling out factors in school, so that provided framework for understanding dropouts. So a student is pushed out when adverse situations within the school environment lead to consequences. So push factors include school consequence on attendance or discipline, that kind of thing. Poor grades, they missed too much school, that sort of thing and when students can be pulled out ... Students can be pulled out when factors inside the student divert them from completing school so they may think that getting their GED is easier. Out of school enticements like job and family, pregnant and parenting teens, they had to go to work so they couldn't get to school, that sort of thing.

And so finally when we talk about the falling out factors and those refer to sort of that disengagement in students, it's not caused by schools or outside pulling factors. It isn't necessarily an active decision, but more of a side effect of insufficient personal or educational support. So if they didn't like school, or they did not feel that sense of belonging at school. Sandy, before we go forward, is there anything you want to add to those?

Sandy: No, Jacinda. I think you've covered it very well.

Jacinda: Okay.

Sandy: So let's look at effective strategies. In the broader dropout prevention context, there's something called the 15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention. This is a body of research that was done over a number of years at the National Dropout Prevention Center. The 15 effective strategies are actually a listing of 15 categories of things, interventions if you will, or actions, that school systems have successfully used to improve graduation rates, but they're more than just a shopping list. They're actually a concept map. A lot of folks look at 15 effective strategies and a lot of states use them because they're actually adopted in some form or fashion by 32 states, either in legislation or state board of education rules or something similar, as the way we should design our dropout prevention interventions, but given that, how does this apply to homeless students particularly? Let's just take a look at the next slide.

It's fairly common for schools when you look at schools that are addressing dropout prevention and most high schools and middle schools are in some fashion. When you look at strategies and you ask the school, what are we doing? What are our strategies for improving our graduation rates? They'll start naming things, but when you look deeper and you start looking into where these things came from, we often find that schools pick their dropout prevention strategies a little bit like I pick my lunch at the drive through. I look at the menu board, my eye goes to the dollar menu, I pick something I can afford, I pick something if the picture looks good or sounds good and I take a couple of items and try and see if it satisfies me for the meal.

Yet in reality, that's not the way we should decide what to do. So a lot of times someone will say when you talk to a school about their homeless population or what are we doing to assist them, they'll say well, we have the tutoring program, we have the mentoring program, we have the afterschool program, we have a technology take-home system, we have an alternative program, we have service learning. They'll start naming things off the menu of the 15 effective strategies, and yet when we look closer we find that many of those things that the school offers do not necessarily meet the needs of the homeless students, maybe they don't even hit the target of the homeless students. So let's go the next slide.

The 15 effective strategies are actually not a shopping list or a menu board at all, they're actually a structure, and this has application to our homeless youth. When we ask a school, particularly administrators, what are you doing that we can serve our homeless students with, again, they'll start naming strategies that may be good things, but what we often find is they have skipped some of the steps, some of what we call the foundational steps. I'm going to give you a short overview of the 15 effective strategy concept and that is that if you will look closer at the bottom of the structure, think of the foundation for a minute. Go to the next slide, please, Jacinda.

The basic foundation strategies that many schools and many school districts don't have in place at all are actually some of the most important, and particularly as we try to make sure that everyone in the school system, everyone in a community attends to the needs

of the homeless students. These foundational strategies of the 15 effective strategy concept map, may be most critical for homeless students. The first one on the left there, the first block says systemic approach. Now, that doesn't sound much like a service for at-risk students. It doesn't sound much like anything for homeless students, but what that means is that if a school is doing effective dropout prevention for all categories of at-risk students, including homeless students, they look at it as a systemic issue, the system, meaning the school system.

What they're saying there is, that everyone in the system understands our at-risk population, including our homeless population, and everyone owns their success, not just the social worker, not just the homeless liaison, not just the guidance counselor, but the bus driver, all of the teachers, the administrators, and the cafeteria workers understand that these students have needs, they have to be understood, and that everyone owns their success. Now when that occurs, when we can achieve that goal of ownership of the success, particularly of the homeless students, then things start to happen. Then everyone starts doing their part to attend to the needs of these kids and make sure they succeed.

So a systemic understanding and in this case of homelessness and what those circumstances of those kids are and why they are different, and maybe understanding how acting out may not be a symptom of a bad child, it may be a symptom of a bad environment that they have to function in, then we start to see results. So a lot of times what we find is, when we look at a school's dropout prevention initiatives, we find that they've skirted over this systemic understanding, particularly relative to homeless students. We have a real bad habit in education of hanging a problem on one or two people and everyone else sort of ignoring it. I'm sure if you're a homeless liaison, you understand that feeling of being thought of as the person responsible for the success of the homeless students, when actually everyone should be.

Another foundational strategy is school community collaboration. Again, the school can't be totally responsible for the success of homeless students. The community has to understand the issue, the community has to understand that we do have homeless students in our schools and they do come from homeless circumstances in the community and those circumstances need to be addressed by the community. They also need to be understood by the community and the community members, the leaders, the chamber, the faith community, those people need to own the success of homeless students, as well as the school personnel owning that success. And again and that's something that we have to go above and beyond sometime to convince people and show people that this is an issue, it is a problem, and we need to help these students succeed because their success is critical to the success of our communities.

A third foundation strategy, again one that many times we skirt past without giving it enough attention and go on to a mentoring or a tutoring program or an afterschool program for at-risk kids, is a safe learning environment. Now, safe learning environment here doesn't just mean freedom from bullying and violence, it also means a safe, nurturing place where students want to be, but particularly considering that homeless students may experience an absence of a good place to be, a safe place to be, a

welcoming place to be, a happy place to be, a comforting place to be, school needs to be that for them.

We know that when schools have positive climates where students treat each other with respect and educators treat each other and treat the children with respect, students want to be there and that fills a need, particularly for homeless students, that often goes unfulfilled elsewhere, and once that need is met by the school, then the student's attitude and behavior toward the school is going to be positively impacted. So these are foundational strategies, and when we look at dropout prevention strategies, particularly for homeless students, we often skip these, but yet the research says these are critical, and once we attend to these, then the other programs, the other interventions, the traditional dropout prevention things tend to work much better. Jacinda, next slide, please.

Jacinda: Thank you, Sandy. So I want to highlight a couple of pieces that Sandy spoke about on those foundational components and so that school climate, he mentioned how critical that is and then creating an accepting, warm and inviting climate for each student. They know that they're valued. They know that everybody has incredibly high expectations of them, and they're going to support them, provide them with understanding, and as a Northeasterner, you know, sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. Cheers. We want to create that climate in school. It's a major component and we know how that can significantly impact a student's attendance and engagement in school.

School climate is just critical in keeping kids connected in youth and school and so we know that students don't learn from people that they don't like and that they don't have relationships with, and they don't want to walk through the doors to attend classes where they don't feel safe and they want to feel hopeful. They want to be in a school that values and opportunities and creates pathways for success for each child. Removal. The suspensions and the expulsions, the referrals to school offices are not the goal. That discipline is restorative in nature. It's collaborative, it's skill building, it's relationship building. It is supportive. It isn't a culture that is punitive and adversarial. Not why, but what. So not why did you do that, but what is going on, okay?

I want to again highlight again some of those structures that Sandy was talking about. Making sure that personnel has resources, providing professional development so folks are understanding the culture of poverty and homelessness and all of those pieces. Adverse childhood experiences, ACE's. Managerial styles verses structural versus developmental in what you're providing for your school personnel. Structure should be collaborative, a number of different perspectives coming to the table and making sure that there are alternative pathways, programs, different academic and therapeutic support and relational and family support, and that there are out of school options available for our children and youth as well when looking at those pieces around those basic systemic approaches, those basic foundational approaches. Sandy, did you have anything you wanted to add to those slides, anything I missed?

Sandy: Well yes, Jacinda. You mentioned needing to have these alternative options, afterschool programs, the summer programs and these are even more important for homeless

youth, because they need a healthy, nurturing place to be more of the time. They don't have the home to go to that we often assume that they would have. And so yet we find when you go back to those foundational strategies you find that the homeless students may or may not take advantage of these. I saw one of the questions come across; "Are afterschool programs always offered for homeless students?" Typically they are, but the issue often becomes do they take advantage of it?

One of the common problems that schools encounter when they offer afterschool programs or homeless ... Or afterschool or summer programs for youth that are particularly at-risk is they find that the most at-risk students don't participate, and so they wind up offering a very good program for students that probably enjoy it, but may not actually need it to determine whether they graduate or not. And so we have to ask ourselves why is that? Why would it be that homeless students would not participate in an afterschool program or summer program or a tutoring program or a mentoring program to the extent we would like for them to? A lot of varying reasons, but there again, you think about the school climate. Students go where they feel needed or wanted, where they feel a relationship.

I jokingly say, "Which is easier to do? Offer a mentoring program that you have to raise \$65,000 a year to offer or have 10 high school teachers stop being sarcastic?" We know which one is easier, the bottom line is that if we have a culture and a climate where students feel positively regarded by all the adults, they want to be there. They will work to be there, and that's what they need.

Jacinda: Right, and Sandy, the schools have an opportunity to be ears and eyes for some of our most vulnerable and at-risk children and youth across this nation, and they have the opportunity to provide a safe, warm, loving, supportive environment where they're making sure that our children and youth are fed and that they are connected to or provided with the resources and supports that they need to be not only academically successful, but life ready as well. So schools have a phenomenal opportunity, a great ability to be able to really significantly impact and change the trajectory of our students' lives by really wrapping around and supporting that school climate, that welcoming school climate.

Sandy: Jacinda, that's true. And let's don't kid ourselves. We're asking educators to work very hard to address these issues, there's no question about it. If all the teachers in a school, if all the employees in a school, not just the instructional and student support personnel, if all the employees understated and know more about the homeless condition, then they're more likely to be attentive to it, they're more likely to help us identify it, and most importantly, they're more likely to respond in appropriate ways that help these kids be successful.

The old days of saying, "You want me to talk about homeless? I teach math, I'm not a social worker." we can't do that anymore. We have to have everyone understanding this issue and being sensitive to it, and that's hard work. It's asking educators to do more, but that's what we must do.



Jacinda: And we do see more and more of our children and youth coming into school with high ACE scores, so we do have to change the way that we do things and how we approach things. More and more of our kids are coming in with more adverse childhood experiences across the nation. Going to the next one.

Sandy: Certainly. Now, once a school has attended to the basic foundational strategies, then other interventions tend to work better, and then we can look at the other more traditional dropout prevention interventions such as family engagement, early childhood education and early literacy, but there again, take family engagement for example. Very challenging to do. Family engagement is one of the bigger challenges that educators face. You know, family engagement is more than simply attending meetings and coming to teacher conferences. Family engagement means that the adults in the child's life are invested in their education. They're concerned about it, they're in contact with the school, and they encourage the child and they have high expectations for the child's school success.

Now, that's even harder to accomplish for homeless youth, because there again the parents may be totally disengaged from the child, much less from education. And so we have to look broader than just the traditional family. We have to look at who are the significant adults in this child's life. If the significant adults outside the school in the child's life are engaged in the child's school success and what happens at school and engage with the school personnel in a positive way, then we know that graduation outcomes are more positive. Now, those obviously that are homeless liaisons I'm sure you're thinking that's a tough one, that is very hard. Sometimes I can't find them, sometimes they have their own challenges and they're very hard to engage in a positive fashion. True, but we know the research says that to the extent that we can engage significant adults in the education life of a child, the more likely they will succeed and eventually graduate.

So those are some things that are critical that we attend to and again let's don't kid ourselves, this is hard work, this is a challenge, but we have to find ways to do that. Adults that care about a child, whether they're the biological parent, whether they're caregiver or a relative or just someone who stepped into that child's life in a positive way, they have their own challenges, but they want what's best for that child and we have to capitalize on that and we have to make sure that they understand that we need them. The school can't do it alone, we've got to have that family engagement. And of course the earlier the family engagement can occur the better, and the more likely it's going to have a positive effect and the more likely it will continue.

If we're go on to the next slide, now you'll begin to see some of the strategies that we tend to think of as real dropout prevention strategies, but they're the ones that we often go to. This are the things that I've already mentioned; the mentoring, the service learning, the alternative schooling, those type things, but there again ... And afterschool and summer programs, but there again, those things are most effective and they're typically are only effective if we've attended to the other things first, and this is particularly true of our homeless youth. And then finally if you go on to the next slide.

Jacinda: Oops.

Sandy: That's okay, but we often-

Jacinda: [crosstalk 01:00:10].

Sandy: Go ahead.

Jacinda: Okay. Go ahead.

Sandy: Well, one thing that we often do in looking at dropout prevention, we as educators we're instructional people for the most part, so we tend to think instruction. A child is not doing well in school, we'll just teach harder. We'll teach more and we'll teach harder, but actually to achieve long term graduation, the research says you've got to go below that and beyond that and go down to the more concrete foundational strategies first.

Jacinda: And before Sandy finishes the building blocks of dropout prevention, we just wanted to insert this piece in here because we talk about good dropout prevention and we talk about strategies. "States and school districts must implement procedures to identify and remove barriers to McKinney-Vento students receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at a prior school." So this is really important. This is language in the McKinney-Vento act, so we know that when our students are highly mobile they face challenges in accruing credit and they can fall further and further behind. When they fall further and further behind, it creates that process of disengagement. So if I have missed 10 math assignments, I don't see how I'm ever going to catch up.

And so now we have some support in the law that is ensuring that we are providing credit for full or partial coursework and like I said this is incredibly important for our students who are very highly mobile who often go from school to school, from place to place and tracking or trying to chunk together credits can become like solving a puzzle, but we have the language of the law now that says that we've really got to be doing that so our kids aren't falling further and further behind. So ways to do that, so there are some things to consider.

You know, class offerings differ across districts, how we calculate, credit everybody. There are different graduation requirements and you have schools that have seat time rules, you have schools that really implement that anytime anywhere learning, that may have proficiency-based diplomas, and school policies can often have a negative impact on students changing schools mid-year. So I want to make sure that we highlight that we are providing opportunities for credit accrual and credit recovery for our highly mobile students. It's good dropout prevention so that they don't see or they don't feel as though they are falling further and further behind, we have that language in the McKinney-Vento act that supports a student now. That's good dropout prevention right there.

Sandy: Jacinda, you mentioned policies. A lot of times we find the policies that either school boards or local school administrators implement that actually are well intended, but can be counterproductive to the success of school completion of a child. Ask yourself this question next time someone's discussing a policy; does this policy or this considered policy assume that every child lives in a home, a real home, a traditional home? If it

does, then perhaps there's an issue there. Does this policy assume that every child has an opportunity to do their homework? Does this policy assume that every child can be present at school 170 out of 180 days if they want to. And many policies have those kinds of assumptions.

Now, once you deal ... Going back to the 15 effective strategies, once you deal with the foundational strategies, then that upper tier of strategies that we tend to often go to first, will work. But if we don't attend to the foundational strategy, if we don't have systemic ownership where everybody in the school system, everybody in the community owns the outcome and the success of those students, particularly the homeless students. If we don't have an environment where the homeless students want to be every day that they can, if we don't have family engagement in whatever form that takes, then all those other strategies may not bear the results that we would like. Next slide, please.

So if you look at effective strategies for dropout prevention as a concept map, I would ask you when you talk about what are you doing to help your homeless students graduate in these schools where you homeless liaisons professionals are serving, when you ask that question, don't just say what have we got for them off the menu board, but ask the question, have we gone to the foundation. Have we built this thing so that the homeless students will be owned by everyone, their success will be owned, so there will be a place where they want to be every day they can and where they'll be nurtured and then are we offering these upper tier interventions and maybe more importantly, can the homeless students access them? Do they have access to the career training? Do they have access to the technology that they need to be successful?

Jacinda: And Sandy, I like how this slide says, "must be strategically selected and applied." I always say with significant intentionality. And folks, Sandy and I have worked together for several years and a lot of people ask us, well, what if we don't do the basic pieces and we talk about we want to do service learning and we got a grant for an afterschool program and I think Sandy's highlighted it, but I want to stress it again. The foundational approaches are the foundation for a reason. And without that foundation built and strongly in place, and that takes some time, it takes some work. That's where our kids fall through the cracks and that's where we miss some of our kids, that's where we have missed opportunities. Those are the kids that we aren't getting through the door, and those are the kids that we can't serve.

And so when you're looking at these strategies and you're looking at strategically applying them, be very intentional and very aware that without a strong foundation, the house isn't that stable without that strong foundation. The best alternative programming, service learning, mentoring programs, things like that, we're still missing some kids because we're not getting them through the door and that's very important to think about. It's very important to consider when you're looking at these approaches, these strategies.

Sandy: Certainly. For those of you that are homeless liaisons, you might ask the question, and obviously do we have a good career tech ed program, and most schools will say sure and they'll tell you about it, but then your question can be, are our homeless students able to access it? Can they take advantage of it to the extent that other students can? A

lot of times we'll find a very good career tech ed program that has attendance requirements that says to gain admission to this particular course you must have a history of or frequency of attendance. Maybe the homeless students couldn't achieve that. So we need to ask the question not only what's out there for them, but can they access it?

Jacinda: Right, and the same goes for individualized instruction. You know, what I discussed credit accrual, it's seat time versus that concept of anytime anywhere learning and so what options are out there to really support kids who are highly mobile, who are juggling, not only homelessness, pregnant parenting teens, they're trying to work and support their families, and so we get to our next slide in how do we support student success and Sandy and I can do a webinar on just this one slide probably for a couple hours, but we want to just give you some things to consider, things you've probably already considered and things that we have talked about, but we're happy to talk more in depth as we do have some time coming up.

So for our McKinney-Vento children and youth, it is incredibly important and in their best interest to presume the last is to presume keeping students in the school of origin is in their best interest. Again credit accrual, making sure that we are awarding full or partial credit for work that has been satisfactorily completed. Looking at independent study programs, learning labs, online learning, exploring that work experience program. So the student may come to school for half a day and then be able to go to work and earn an income to support and help out the family, but they're also getting credit for being able to do that.

Alternative education programs, and when we say alternative education programs, mean high quality alternative education programs. Some alternative education programs are used as the discipline room or the discipline place, that is not the intent of alternative education programming. So making sure that your students are receiving high quality alternative education programming. Afterschool classes. People don't like it when I say Saturday schools, but sometimes that's an option and I don't mean as a suspension or anything like that, but just creating opportunities for students to be able to come back into school and catch up so they don't feel like they are falling further and further behind. Again, like I said, creating those opportunities. You want to make up missed assignments, you want to make up some time, you want to submit a project that you didn't have the time, space or materials to be able to do. How can schools really wrap around and support kids making sure that they're doing that and providing them ways to be able to do that.

Collaborating with community agencies to ensure that our students' basic needs can be met. Creating some buy-ins. So if you wanted to do and develop your dropout prevention plan and you want to create a really strong foundation, you're going need to create the buy-in of many folks in your school district. If you wanted to do some things that are sort of innovative and outside of the box that you can do, you've got to create buy-in and support as to why this could be a good idea and how supportive this would be. So knowing your numbers, knowing your data and knowing your students is going to help you create that buy-in.

We often suggest for students who are very highly mobile, creating portfolios of work that students have completed or have been working on so that if they do change schools, they have a folder, they have something to take with them shows the schools here's what I was working on. We were working on Maine history, but now I'm in South Dakota, and so I do have a state history so can again is that awarding a partial credit for Maine and then maybe you could award some partial credit for another state the student might be in.

So creating this portfolio, this can be extremely helpful in supporting students' success and getting them off and running into a new school without any barriers and without any lag time so we're not creating that process of disengagement. And again addressing barriers, so I'm going to highlight again those foundational pieces of dropout prevention.

Sandy said it very eloquently. Policies can be barriers for all students, especially some of our most at-risk students and we should be removing barriers that are harming our students' access to success in education and a policy is not a law, policies can be changed ... Laws can be changed, it's just a longer process in state government, but policies can be changed. And so looking at your policies and asking yourself some of those questions and maybe coming up with policies that are again innovative and allow for some flexibility and opportunities for the success of all students. So do you have anything you'd like to add?

Sandy: Jacinda, no. Just to say that policy piece is a major thing. I'm a school board member back home and one of the things I always ask when we consider a policy is, "Is this equally easy to comply with for all students and families?" And many times the answer is no and yet we say well, we want to be equal, everything needs to be fair and even and a level playing field for all the students. Well, these are students of circumstance, and we have to adapt to the circumstance of the students and the families if we in fact want the end goal outcome, which is for these students to be successful and graduate in spite of the circumstance. So policies can be a big deal and we have to be wise and not arbitrary in the setting of policies.

Jacinda: Sandy?

Sandy: Well, you know, in summary, we have to have everyone owning and engaging these issues. We have to have intentionality. Jacinda used that term several times. We have to make sure that we look at this, not just as a surface issue, but as a deeper issue. We have to be very specific in our concerns and expressions about our homeless youth. We have to involve everyone in the effort. Now, of course the question is, how do you do that? Most people in education are pretty caring people and I would imagine that many of you that are in attendance you're a homeless liaisons, I've bet you've used that strategy. You've got to make people a little emotional. You've got to help them understand that they can help people who need help and then they can take some ownership.

Most educators, once they understand the issue and once they see that they can play a part by altering their behaviors of being more attentive, and being more adaptive to

these children and family needs, they can feel pretty good about that. We have to help them do that though.

Jacinda: Okay, so we are at the last stopping point for Q&A. I know we have about 10 minutes for folks to chime in, type in your question, your thoughts, something that you may like some more detail on, here is your opportunity to be able to do that and I'll turn it over to our moderator Lynda, to see what she's got for us.

Lynda: Thanks, Jacinda and Sandy. You guys have offered some amazing advice and background in terms of how we can support graduation and success for our students. There aren't any other questions at this point that I haven't already answered that directly relate to the content, but we did have a comment. This is from Christopher in Upper Darby and I wanted to share this and also encourage everyone if you have similar programs that you do for really any vulnerable student populations including homeless students, you can put it into the question pane and one thing that we do in Pennsylvania is that we have a statewide homeless education conference every year in the fall and we often do ask programs and LEA's to come and present if they have some excellent strategies that they're using, so we could use this as fodder for our state conference.

But the comment from Christopher was that, "They collaborate with the Center for Supportive Relationships to implement a program whereby they provide intensive real time relational skills coaching. They focus on nine specific relationship building skills. Teachers report that the program helps them to build stronger relationships with their students and that it makes their work more satisfying." I think that really points to the fact that there's benefit to both the students and the families and the school staff whenever you have these kinds of programs.

Jacinda: It speaks to the relationship component as well and Sandy, you mentioned that, but we know ... I mean research has shown that it takes one relationship for ... One connection for a student to have to be able to graduate. Those relationships matter and the relationship that schools have with the parents. Sometimes we call families and Johnny did X, Y and Z or A, B and C and it's really ... And the parents kind of get used to the school calling when not so good things happen. We could flip that narrative and really create that buy-in with the parents, that parent engagement piece that I know across the nation is sometimes a struggle, but we could call and say, "Hey, Johnny was really great in gym class today. He really helped out his fellow peers, and we're just really happy that he was in class today." It really is about relationships and those relationships go a number of different ways.

Sandy: Jacinda, you're right. You know, I'm thinking of the hundred plus homeless liaisons that are out there attending this webinar. Your job's hard. It's very difficult work and it's unreasonable for us as school leaders to think you can do it alone, that you can be the person responsible for the success of the homeless students, when in fact it's a very hard job and we all have to be responsible for it. You can guide us, you can point us in the right direction, you can help us think differently about these children and understand them more, but their help's critical. We've got to get them on board, and that's important.

A lot of times I'll say to a school superintendent, "Would it help your system and your accountability if you could have another 50 graduates or another 20 graduates a year?" and they typically will say yes, and then I'll say, "What's your graduation rate of your homeless population?" They have no idea. But yet we would assume that among those non-graduates there certainly are some homeless youth, and if we can improve the odds of those kids graduating we're going to change the numbers, so we've got to get those folks' attention and I know you're working to do that, so thank you.

Jacinda: Lynda?

Lynda: Okay, there aren't any other questions that have come through, but I did want to actually ... Let me just double check and make sure there aren't anymore. Oh, here ... There are some that came through. So from Sandra, she said that she can also share a success story with one of their students who was supported by their school and she is graduating this year and made regionals as the only female student wrestler, that's pretty cool.

Jacinda: That's incredible.

Sandy: Wow.

Lynda: All right, that's I think it in terms of any ... wait, wait. All right, and a further comment from Sandra was that it was because of her tenacity and resilience that she made it far and is making history in Philadelphia and was able to enter in a predominately male sport. She's on the news under Tatiana Ortiz at Mariana Bracetti Charter School in Philadelphia. That's really awesome. Sandra, we might want to talk to you about possibly having her come to our state conference. We often have students speakers, so I'll have your regional coordinator be in contact with you.

We have a couple more minutes and I ... There's nothing new that came through that way, but there was a question that came from ... let me just find it again. This also came out of Philadelphia and we have had conversation already, we've sort of answered the question per se, but I wanted to bring it up because it speaks to the importance of supporting these students in their post-secondary endeavors, that kind of thing.

So the question from Damian was, "How do you encourage a student who trusted the process and received an athletic scholarship to school, room and board included, but feels guilty that his family is homeless and doesn't want to go?" It turns out that he did actually go to school and my question back to Damian was is he now being supported by the folks at the college, because we know that that's so important because oftentimes our students might get into college, but if they don't have the proper support, they can't really make it.

Jacinda: Right, did the student have the support he needed when he transitioned?

Lynda: I didn't get an answer to that.

Jacinda: Got ya.

- Lynda: So I don't see any other questions that came through. Jacinda and Sandy, is there any closing comment that you want to make or do you want to just move to wrapping up?
- Sandy: I would say that we certainly would be glad to respond to any questions. If the National Dropout Prevention Center can be of any help to you at all, please contact us, we're easy to find. Just Google dropout prevention and we're the first hit or go to [www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org) or e-mail me and we'll be glad to assist you and maybe most importantly to those of you that are listening, thank you for what you do.
- Jacinda: Thank you, Sandy. So I just want to thank everyone for being here with us today. I hope that you found it incredibly helpful. You are more than welcome to contact either Sandy, myself or both of us if you have any questions, any comments, anything that you would like to speak with us about. We are here to support you in the work that you do in supporting our most vulnerable and at-risk children and youth. Thank you all so very much.
- Lynda: And I want to thank Jacinda and Sandy for this wonderful webinar today and thank all of you for joining us. We did end up with over 150 people who participated today, so I think that's a wonderful number of people who were able to hear about these fabulous strategies and know better how we can support our students. I want to remind everyone that the archive recording of this webinar will be available at the ECTEH website within a week and we will send an e-mail with a link to all of the webinar registrants, all of the homeless liaisons at ALA's across the state, as well as shelter contacts and also a reminder that when you receive the electronic evaluation via e-mail, please take a couple of minutes to complete it, as your feedback helps us to continue to offer professional development of the highest quality. Thank you again for joining us and this concludes today's webinar. Have a wonderful day.