



WEB-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: *Opportunity to Study Homelessness and High Mobility in Schools*

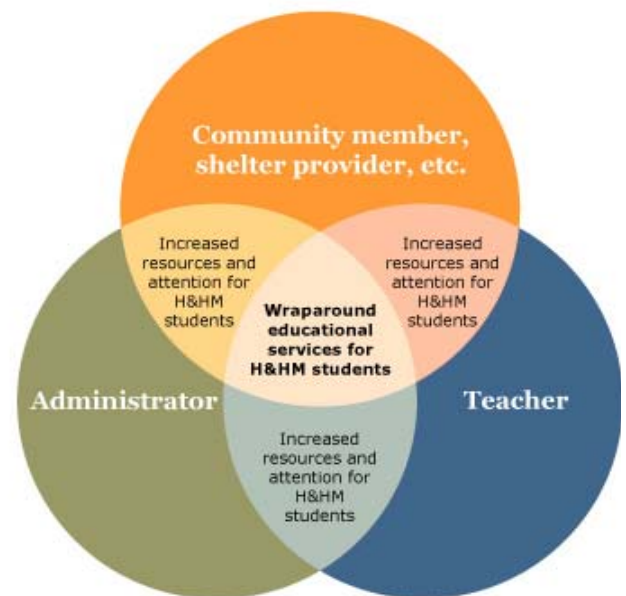
Overview

Web-based Professional Development (WBPD) focuses on improving educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness and high mobility.

Since 2003, WBPD has involved over 90 participants, 34 community teams, and eight states (Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Washington.) This accredited project is sponsored by the **National Center for School Engagement (NCSE)** and creates teams that address the needs of students experiencing homelessness and high mobility and their families. Each cohort is a year long and coincides with the school year (August to June).

WBPD begins by recruiting teams through an application process. Recruitment efforts target those who have an interest in homeless issues and are concerned about the education of at-risk students. Recruitment strategies also highlight attractive incentives, such as six graduate credits for a nominal fee, continuing education units, and stipend awards of up to \$1000 for team members who successfully complete the project. Up to 20 teams may participate each year.

Teams selected to participate in WBPD create a framework for wraparound **educational services for students experiencing homelessness and high mobility (H&HM)**. Each team includes a minimum of three members who represent specific roles (*school administrator, teacher and community member/service provider.*) Each team member works to **increase resources and attention to H&HM students** (*see Venn diagram to the right.*).



WBPD Team Model

Approach

The WBPD approach to professional development integrates: 1) Online instruction; 2) Peer learning; and 3) Participatory Action Research (PAR) to increase the academic achievement of students experiencing homelessness and high mobility.

1. **Online Instruction** is facilitated through the WBPD website, which was developed by experts in homeless education and web-based technology. The website features ten units that cover federal policies related to homeless education, research-based educational practices, data collection methodologies and other relevant subject matter. The ten units of instruction are accredited for up to six graduate credits and continuing education units(CEUs)

2. **Facilitated Peer Learning** occurs through face-to-face team meetings and a web-based *Communities of Practice*, which refers to an on-going dialogue among team members based on their roles. For example, asynchronous technology allows educators to exchange ideas on classroom instruction at times that are convenient to their schedule.
3. **Participatory Action Research (PAR)** is a qualitative research method with a rich history in contributing to educational reforms in disenfranchised communities. It is based on an iterative process that begins with an assessment of factors that contribute to educational barriers and school failure. It evolves around cycles of data collection, planning, implementing, and evaluating action to increase school success (*see diagram*). It is through the PAR process that services and intervention are provided to **students and families experiencing homelessness and high mobility**.



WBPD Results

Even though WBPD is a relatively new project, it has made significant contributions. To date, WBPD has achieved the following results:

- **24 schools and 15 school districts have benefited from action research** to increase parent involvement, improve assessment of educational needs, and foster understanding of the strengths and challenges of students who are at high-risk of school failure.
- **Over 6000 students have been effected** as WBPD participants implemented programs and made improvements to create welcoming school climates.
- **Over 1600 students experiencing homelessness and high mobility, and their families, have been directly impacted** by the efforts of community teams.
- Nationally, **29 studies** have contributed to increasing what we know about the impacts of homelessness and how to improve instruction and support for students who have faced difficult transition and multiple school changes. Studies are available online at www.schoolengagement.org
- **Over 34 rural, small towns, suburban, and urban areas have benefited** by gaining a greater awareness of how homelessness touches the lives of children, youth, and families in their community.

States with WBPD teams have benefited in the following ways:

- Heightened awareness of homeless issues in the broader community.
- Received national recognition for contributing to the knowledge base of legislation related to students experiencing homelessness and high mobility (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and Title X of No Child Left Behind Act).
- Increased understanding of educational practices that support H & HM students.

Examples of WBPD Actions:

- Increased enrollment of H&HM students in after school programs by enhancing outreach efforts, which included establishing protocols to translate materials.
- A WBPD participant offered lunchtime tutoring (called *Lunch Bunch*), which improved academic achievement of participating students.
- WBPD team members worked collaboratively with families living in transitional housing to organize a parent/child homework club. This effort increased parental involvement.
- Protocols were developed and welcoming kits distributed to help students enrolling after the start of school. This type of welcoming process is now being replicated in other schools.
- Title I teachers tailored assessments to better track academic achievement of H & HM students.
- Expanded knowledge about emergency planning related to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This occurred through online discussions, interviews with families, and action research in Arkansas and Texas.
- Gave voice to how homelessness impacts the education of children and youth. For example in Colorado: *Two high school students interviewed expressed how important it was that the school made them feel welcomed, that the teachers cared that they showed up, and that the school staff acknowledged their existence. The hardest part of staying in school for them was “getting there”, and when at school, not knowing whether or not they had somewhere to go afterwards.*

Professional Development Outcomes:

By the end of their WBPD project, team members achieve these outcomes:

1. Learn the parameters of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title I and X of No Child Left Behind, and work to improve and implement services or supports for students experiencing homelessness and high mobility in their communities.
2. Study and implement research-based best practices in order to ensure that the team’s efforts have the highest maximum potential to improve student level outcomes.
3. Learn and implement the cycles of **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**. Team members implement individual projects designed to improve student level outcomes in one or more of the **Three Domains** of practice, which encompass:
 - *Access to educational services;*
 - *Welcoming and inclusive school culture;*
 - *Flexible instructional strategies that meet the individual needs of the learner (see Cycle of WBPD Study diagram on the next page.)*
4. Work within the broader community that supports their school environment to ensure the comprehensive needs of homeless and highly mobile children are met. The goal is to assure maximum school readiness in order to increase the likelihood of student level outcomes across the three domains of educational practice.

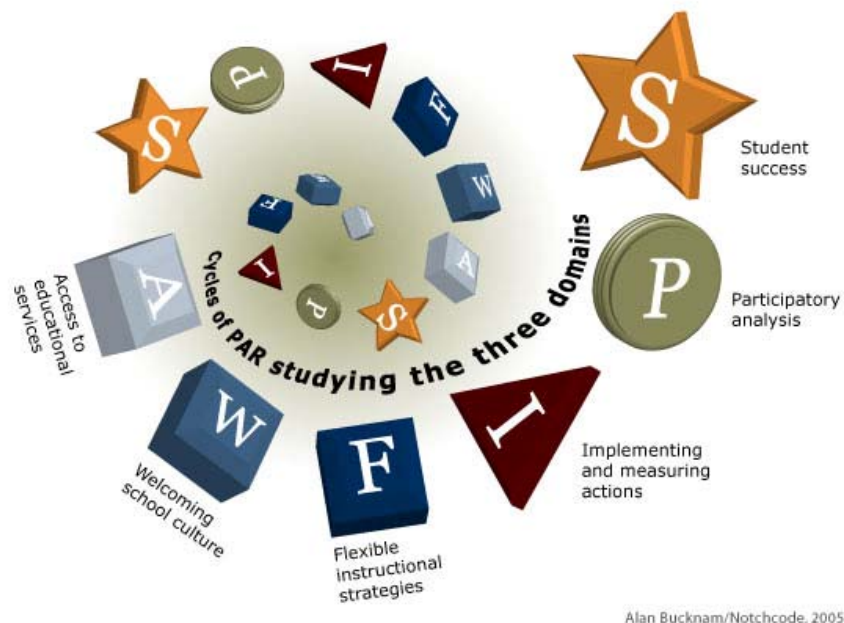
Benefits to WBPD Team Members

- Opportunity to earn six graduate credits from Adams State College Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) and/or participate in a doctoral program through Jones International University.

- It enriches their lives personally and professionally. Here's what participants say about WBPB:

I am better equipped to handle the academic achievement of a student population impacted by homelessness and high mobility. More over, I have sought out collegial collaboration on positively and effectively addressing those needs and issues through the process of action research. Finally, I gained personal knowledge that I have made, and will continue to make, a difference in the lives of the children.

Cycles of WBPB Study



Special Invitation to Invest in WBPB

NCSE is seeking support for WBPB team for the 2007-08 school year. NCSE works cooperatively with funders and national network to recruit a team. Funds are needed to coordinate the project, provide training and technical assistance to team members and distribute results to advance best practices in homeless education. Summary of expenses:

- Staffing to recruit, coordinate, facilitate, and evaluate teams.
- National, 2-day training for teams, to be held in Colorado. Funders are also welcome to attend.
- Stipends of up to \$1000 for each participant (based on successful completion of project)
- Dissemination of research through printed material, training, and community outreach.

Getting Started: Team applications are available online at www.schoolengagement.org. Contact NCSE, to **support a team** in your state by emailing: info@schoolengagement.org or calling 1-888-272-0454, ext. 105.