



National Center for School Engagement

WEB-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

**Action Research to Study Homelessness and High Mobility
in School Communities:
A Collection of Essays
2005-2006**

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Background

In 2005, the National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) launched a national project titled, Web-based Professional Development (WBPD) under the leadership of **Project Facilitator Alana James, EdD**, and **Margie Milenkiewicz**, then the Colorado Department of Education Title X Director. This national effort builds on the success of ***Colorado Participatory Action Research***, a yearlong, professional development project conducted during 2003-2004. This statewide project was sponsored by the Colorado Department of Education, Center for Research Strategies, and the Daniels Fund.

The Colorado Participatory Action Research project (known as COPAR) included 17 educators from nine schools joining together in teams to explore homelessness and high mobility in schools. The resulting book, Colorado Educators Study Homeless and Highly Mobile Students, can be download through the NCSE website (www.schoolengagement.org - see *Research and Publications* for the link.)

The first national project of WBPD began in August 2005, with 41 teachers, administrators, community providers, and interested citizens representing fifteen community sites from four states, including: Arkansas, Colorado, Texas and Virginia. This national professional development effort, under the sponsorship of NCSE, was primarily funded by the Colorado Department of Education and included support from State Title X programs in Arkansas, Texas, and Virginia. This yearlong project was completed in July 2006.

Participants in both the new and previous projects centered their work around three domains of educational practice proven to both build on a schools existing systems and to build the type of welcoming and safe environment that supports education for all students (James, 2005). The three domains: Access to educational services, Welcoming school culture and Flexible instructional strategies, (James, 2005) go hand in hand with NCSE's framework for school success, which integrates the "Triple A's" - Attendance, Attachment and Achievement. This model (*see figure on page 3*) is supported by parent and family involvement in schools, community partnerships, and quality programs and resources for students who are at high-risk of dropping out of school.

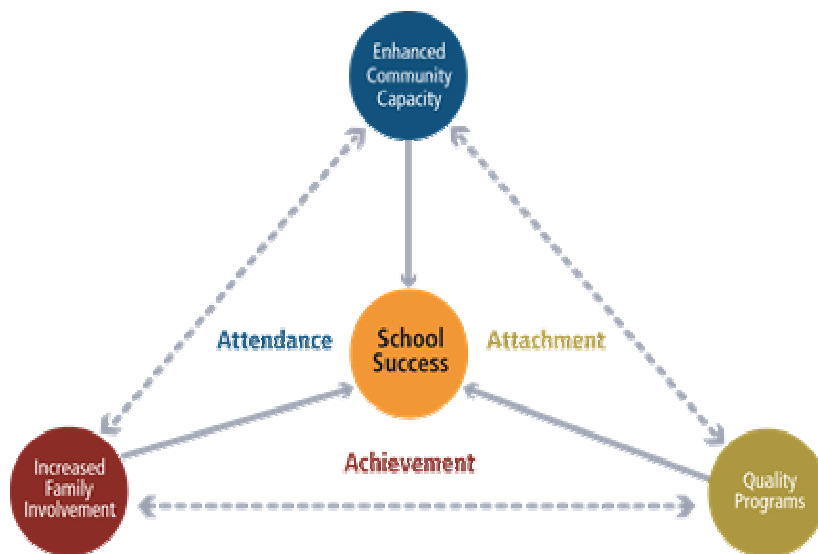


Figure: NCSE Framework for School Success

WBPD Project Overview

WBPD creates a national network of communities developing localized solutions to issues related to homelessness and high mobility. It makes use of asynchronous online learning to build a Community of Practice (CoP). Asynchronous technology allows participants to discuss important issues at times that are convenient to their schedule. While participants are communicating and exchanging ideas with the national community in the online CoP, they are working together at home conducting participatory action research focused on issues of homelessness and mobility that impact their school communities.

WBPD supports four goals:

1. For a network of communities to work together nationally and to share information and strategies related to homeless and highly mobile students.
2. For school administrators, teachers, and community members to address issues together which pertain to homeless and highly mobile students.
3. For each participant to complete a project designed to improve outcomes for these students.
4. For each individual project to be designed so that student level outcomes are measured in order to build a national database of proven results.

Report Summary

This report features the action research of 29 WBPD participants representing 4 states and nine communities. These communities reflect primarily urban areas, but also represent rural and suburban towns. The report is sectioned utilizing NCSE's framework for school engagement and the three domains of educational practice. Captured is the journey the authors traveled to increase understanding and improve practices to promote school success for homeless and highly mobile students. Personal stories and accounts are shared and many offer guidelines on how to replicate their work. Several chapters include survey instruments that were developed in conjunction with the action research.

Each chapter is prefaced with an abstract and keywords section. Please note that the essays have been edited to protect confidentiality of students and families and do not include their real names.

Reference

James, E. A. (2005). *The use of participatory action research to create new educational practices for homeless and highly mobile students*. Unpublished Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

Table of Contents

I. Academic Achievement and Flexible Instructional Strategies

- Chapter 1: *Overcoming Barriers to Parent Participation – A Study of the Barriers that Limit Parents of Homeless and Highly Mobile Children from Participating in Their Child’s Education* (Denver, Colorado) - Page 6
- Chapter 2: *An Initiative to Increase Enrollment of Homeless and Highly Mobile Students in Our On-Site After School Homework Help enrichment Class* (Denver, Colorado) - Page 31
- Chapter 3: *Assisting with Homework – A Study Focusing on the Completion of Homework with Highly mobile students in a 4th Grade Classroom* (Denver, Colorado) - Page 39
- Chapter 4: *Homework* (Denver, Colorado) - Page 51
- Chapter 5: *What Ways Can I Adjust My Teaching Style to Provide Meaningful Entry? Points into Title Math Lab for my Homeless and Highly Mobile Students?* (Longmont, Colorado) - Page 66
- Chapter 6: *Homeless and Highly Mobile Students – At Risk Factors and Educational Struggles in Northeastern Colorado* (Fort Morgan, Colorado) – Page 78

II. School Attachment and Access to Educational Services

- Chapter 7: *Our Hidden Homeless Population* (Loveland, Colorado) – Page 97
- Chapter 8: *Improving Communication and Increasing Access to Resources* (Fort Morgan, Colorado) - Page 113
- Chapter 9: *Are We Helping or Hurting? A Community Approach to Homelessness* (Roanoke, Virginia) - Page 124
- Chapter 10: *Ashdown Schools* (Ashdown, Arkansas) - Page 137
- Chapter 11: *Improving the Parent Involvement of Spanish-speaking, Homeless and Highly Mobil Families* (Denver, Colorado) - Page 143

III. Student Attendance and Welcoming School Climate

- Chapter 12: *Our Success Story: Meeting the Needs of Our Highly Mobile and Homeless Children* (Roanoke, Virginia) - Page 157
- Chapter 13: *Lessons Learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita* (Bryan, Texas) – Page 172
- Chapter 14: *Homeless and the Increase of Highly Mobile Students* (Ashdown, Arkansas) – Page 177
- Chapter 15: *Stevens Elementary Mobility Study* (Wheat Ridge, Colorado) - Page 187
- Chapter 16: *Welcoming Climate: Student and Family Transitions* (Fort Morgan, Colorado) - Page 220
- Chapter 17: *Developing a Welcoming School Culture at Lowry* (Denver, Colorado) - Page 231
- Chapter 18: *Knowing When a Welcoming Culture Prepares Students for Academic Success* (Colorado) - Page 245
- Index of Keywords: Offers an at-a-glance look at topics and materials included in the chapter essays – Page 253*